

Leicestershire Neighbourhood Planning Networking Event, meeting note

Tuesday 30th September 2014

Billesdon: Leicestershire's 2nd Neighbourhood Plan

In September 2014 Billesdon achieved a YES vote in their Neighbourhood Plan referendum: 84% YES 16% No. Billesdon was one of Leicestershire's 7 Frontrunners who began their plan in 2011 when Neighbourhood Planning was nationally introduced with very little guidance and examples to follow.

Billesdons Neighbourhood Plan group consisted of 15 volunteers and 6 parish councillors. This group gave legitimacy to the plans development, allowed ideas to be shared outside the Parish Council and enabled tasks to be divided up. They found having a good working relationship with the liaison officer at the district council invaluable; however, they were reactive and not proactive in their approach so would promote an 'if you don't ask, you won't get' approach and to keep pushing.

The group received £20,000 from DCLG because they were a Frontrunner and did use all of this. The majority of this funded a planning consultant (Colin Wilkinson) but stated that they couldn't have done the NP without him because of his specialist knowledge.

Total cost of the plan: £25,000 in total

Good Practise points included:

- Use existing evidence where you can e.g. their plan included a Village Design Statement which existed previously but was revised and brought up to date for the NP.
- Stressed the importance of communication with the public through events and monthly articles in parish magazine to keep interest.
- They obtained a statement from the district council that a sustainability appraisal was not required for the purposes of this plan.
- They would recommend spending the majority of your time on production of good supporting documents required rather than the plan itself.
- Be prepared for Nimby groups.
- Developers need to be effectively managed and dealt with, particularly where a developer is not getting what they want. In their case one such developer had produced a glossy brochure against the NP the day before the referendum; this meant swift action being required by the group to counter-act this.

Examiner feedback:

- They did not support requested mix of bungalows and small family homes, stating there was not sufficient evidence for now and in the future.
- Travel packs were requested but struck out by the examiner

- Examiner also struck out the Heritage Assets element despite support from English Heritage on this. EH were taking this matter up nationally due to the potential impact for other NPs.
- They felt that the examiner was very risk adverse
- They had been given 3 examiners to choose from but felt that only 1 was appropriate in their case.
- HDC was disappointed with this examiner's decisions.

Next Steps:

- NPs are the beginning and not the end so think about your monitoring and vision for the future.
- The chair had concerns about the knowledge and commitment towards this once the key group had moved on.
- The Chair felt there was room for an alternative and that it should be a legal requirement for the district council to work closer with Parish Councils to achieve the same results.

Feedback from Your Locale and DCLG re Billesdons experience:

- Gary Kirk was challenging examiners' inconsistencies across the board and felt this needed to be dealt with.
- DCLG said there was a small village in Oxfordshire who had recently completed a plan for £12,000 and was happy with the result and the examiner's decisions.
- DCLG felt it was a shame about these inconsistencies and that examiners should work with NPs not against them. He also stated that examiners make recommendations to the district council and they can choose which ones they accept.

Frontrunner Update

Broughton Astley:

They were happy with their examiner and felt this was the luck of the draw. Successful referendum achieved in January and they have now formed a development and monitoring group. PC acutely aware that this can only be achieved in partnership with other organisations.

NP progress is quite slow and S106 delayed the process. They are currently awaiting a high court challenge by a developer.

HDC – the NP will hopefully align with HDC plan but will need a review, they have future proofed their housing figures by 35%.

They were receiving numerous requests from other groups for advice etc but felt that not all plans were the same. They stated that developers can be very aggressive.

Asfordby:

With a new chair the plan is now progressing again.

Fosse Villages:

Will be consulting on their issues and options in December 2014.

Market Bosworth:

Began their plan 2½ years ago, at the start spent much of their time winning over hearts and minds. Wanted to spend time on evidence which supported slow growth to enable the community to remain cohesive, enabling time for new development to integrate into the existing community. Their focus has very much been on 'what is a community' rather than focussing purely on housing.

They have completed the community consultation and are now looking to submit their NP to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council in approximately 2 weeks.

Waltham on the Wolds – looking into funding.

Your Locale (see presentation)

Gary Kirk – Set out Government proposals for NP from the July Technical Consultation. NP section introduction reinforces government support for NPs.

DCLG Update (see presentation)

- Mick Duggan – There have been 30 successful NPs to date, 1 is a Neighbourhood Development Order not a Plan.
- Further support can be found at www.mycommunityrights.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning/further-support
- A Plan can be a small number of policies.
- More funding will be coming soon and they are currently out to tender for the production of a tool kit with templates etc. This should be complete by March 2015.
- On cost – Case Studies will be available soon. Every plan is so different that there is no standard cost. Woodcote, Oxfordshire was £12,350, Billesdon, Leicestershire £25,000.
- Planning schools students were getting involved to help in Oxford, this was an avenue that we could perhaps explore in Leicestershire.
- NPs have been and can be done without have a 5 year supply or core strategy in place.

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 10th February 2015, Leicestershire County Council, 5.30pm. Please contact Nik Green, Communities and Places Officer to book a place. Nik.Green@leics.gov.uk

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