

Notes of Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee

23rd February 2017

Village Hall at 8.00pm

Present:

Clint Bull (CB) - Chair
Robert Sprigge (RS) – Vice Chair
Penny Berry (PB) – Note taker
Graham Dormer (GD)
Paul Ward (KPC, PW)
Jenny Harrison (JH)
Bob Hall (BH)
Paul Ambrose (PA)
Gareth Hawkins (GH)
Ian Wood (Codicote NP committee member)

Apologies:

Steve Hemingway (SH)
Jeremy Thornton (JT) - UTA due to travel disruptions
Claire Graham (KPC, CG)

1. Minutes from previous meeting

- RS raised two points; the first was on Pt 2. querying whether the Local Plan had yet gone to a judicial review. GH said that four villages had objected to the Local Plan as it does not meet the four main tests, the main one being that 76% of proposed new development is on Green Belt land. This action is a work in progress.
- The second issue was on Pt 3. around allocating actions. There are over 40 people willing to help, the committee needs to identify and engage with these people.

2. Local Plan update (PW)

- PW had not arrived at the meeting at this point.

3. Analysis of survey results (GH)

- JT had not arrived at the meeting to present the survey findings. GH managed to access the current results online and an on-the-spot explanation and discussion followed.
- Online access during the meeting showed there had been 366 responses, of which 151 were paper.
- There was a high response from the 60+ group, around 60 responses that included 0-4 year olds and around 120 responses that included 30-44 and 45-59 age ranges.
- There was a majority of two people working elsewhere, half didn't commute, half used rail services.
- The highest areas marked as inadequate were off-road parking, restaurants and bars, secondary school and traffic control.
- Those areas deemed to have an adequate supply were churches and community centres, and housing.

4. Lessons learned from survey

- From a practical point of view, there were two good collection points for the paper survey, the Post Office (58) and Village News (49). The Corner Shop (15) and The Surgery (15) might be considered again, but the Lytton Arms (9) and the Village Hall (5) would not be used. The two cafés were good for displays of a poster and extra paper copies; the station foyer and the library were not. The official ballot boxes were too big, with the smaller cardboard ones made by BH best suited to fit available spaces. Prominence was an issue. There were a number of responses via the Knebworth Parish News (KPN) but most were those delivered through individual letterboxes.
- It was generally agreed, particularly in the absence of any alternative, that there was enough data to start working on. The Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee (KNPSC) should use the priorities raised to hold an initial open meeting, inviting interested parties for further comment and input. GD said that, despite how respondents had prioritised their answers, the strength of feeling was more clearly expressed in their comments. We should try to discover the areas where the response was poor and target those in future.
- GH offered to investigate the results in more depth, checking first if JT has already done this. GD said that issues raised and not part of the NP should be passed on to relevant authorities, eg rail services, and respondents informed of who to contact with these issues. GD also offered to work on a summary report to maintain engagement and hopefully increase response rates in future. GH suggested a regular newsletter on progress, showing the KNPSC has listened to concerns. BH said that we need to go out to the whole community and GH suggested open meetings. Copy deadline for Knebworth Parish News (KPN) is usually 16th of each month.
- It was agreed that once working groups have been established, individual topic surveys would be a good idea. It was suggested that one individual should hold the complete data set, with each group requesting access to anonymised data sets as required. PW emphasized the need to maintain data protection; Claire Graham will keep all paper copies. PB wanted the complete email list for contacting interested parties and offered to populate the KNPSC dedicated email account. GH suggested that this could be supplied direct from the survey results. All email addresses supplied were supplied willingly by respondents to the survey for the express intention of being kept up to date, however all communications will obviously have other people's email addresses hidden. Information on postcodes results will also be needed and anonymised results should be similarly accessed and supplied.
- PW said that there is a lot of demographic information in the public domain which should help with comparing our results with other similar villages and national percentages. This will help to target groups. There was a discussion on whether the survey results were representative of the village as a whole and how to target certain age groups, which age groups, how to get further clarification and input. CB said that part of the purpose of a NP was to engage local residents and build the community, so, in order not to hold up the process, we should proceed with what we have already but continue to review how to engage those not already engaged and find ways to reach a broader audience.
- It was agreed that there is an urgent need to analyse the results already received, working groups need to be decided, some sort of communication strategy should be formed, deadlines need to be set, all giving a good sense of direction.

- Once again, it was agreed that business and other stakeholders, such as the school, should be left until the working groups have been established.

5. Budget (RS)

- RS had done a lot of research on this and found some budget information from other NP committees. The amount of work done, ie research and content, varied widely and did not correlate to the budget amounts. For instance, one committee had budgeted £18,000 but found they had greatly underestimated and really needed £28,000. Some had used consultants costing around £5/6,000, so with this estimate for each working party of say five subjects, eg traffic, housing, etc, our budget could be quite high. PW suggested a working party on progress and governance. He is to ask for assistance at the next NHDC meeting on planning matters so that this will go on record. NHDC appear to only give the minimum amount of assistance to NP groups, whereas others councils elsewhere give a lot more help and guidance.
- There is no correct amount of work to be done, but it must be relevant to the village. We need a good evidence base and be focused. RS wanted each topic working party to submit a business plan to help estimate an accurate budget, we must demonstrate that we are working within strict rules. A budget would also be needed for the overall process.
- Funding was discussed. There are grants available and PW suggested contacting Claire Graham for relevant information. The Parish Council also has some money reserved for the process. Again, a budget is required. Separate fund raising was not a popular idea due to the additional work and time required for this. BH said that there have been studies done recently that would be available without cost; there is a lot of background data in the Local Plan. Even the number of cars using the main road can be found by information collected on the speed restriction posts. It would be helpful if there were experts in the village who could help with the process. Again, potential volunteers need to be contacted.
- It was agreed that the KNPSA should now focus on deciding what the village needs, decide on a framework and produce a draft plan. This would help PW and the Parish Council with small developments such as Chas Lowe, Hamiltons, the Station Pub. GD offered to produce a draft plan/framework and forward to PW.

6. Next Steps

- PA suggested the most urgent items to address are
 1. Subject matter,
 2. Demographic checks,
 3. Data analysis,
 4. Learning and development communications strategy,
 5. Engaging businesses and school,
 6. Open meetings.
- Governance and budgeting must also be addressed. BH suggested that there should be links between all of these and each topic matter.
- The most obvious subjects from the survey results would appear to be:
 1. Traffic,
 2. Parking,
 3. Restaurants and bars,
 4. Schools,
 5. Housing.

- GH is interested in being part of a working group on housing.
- PW suggested looking at areas where the KNPSC could have influence.
- PB suggested that, although not rated highly within the results, environment/heritage/preservation perhaps could be combined under a 'Quality of life' type of heading. This had been a large part of the Pirton NP where they had put a lot of emphasis on views in and out of the village and how large developments would change this and alter their quality of life.
- GH said that environment and Green Belt carry a lot of weight with planning applications.
- GD, GH and JT will analyse the data collected. They will initially look separately and then together to develop a strategy to deal with comments. A report needs to be circulated as soon as this is done, with feedback to the whole village. KPN as a starting point (deadline for the April edition is 16th March). Following this, working groups can be established.

7. AOB

- BH is interested in starting the communications strategy, as is PA.
- BH had been in discussions with HCC. Apparently primary school provision had always been allowed for in the developments west of Knebworth as it was thought that this is where the housing would be. This would have to be offered as a possible academy, or a free school or a community school. With potential development to the east of Knebworth, there is talk of expanding the current primary school to three-form entry, although geographically this would be challenging. It was said that a secondary school is not needed as there are sufficient places in current schools nearby. GD queried this idea, saying that it was supposed to be a plan until 2031 when, almost certainly due to the increased housing proposed, a new school would be needed.
- PW gave a brief update on the Local Plan, Steven McPartland is very supportive of local villages regarding the Local Plan and has written a good response relating to this.
- The Parish Council are trying to determine whether The Station Pub has actually been sold or whether it is sold subject to planning approval, more difficult now it has been registered as an Asset of Community Value. A change of use would still need to be agreed.
- Chas Lowe's business has been sold to Gibbs & Dandy, with current staff offered jobs in the new branch (in Stevenage), it was felt essential that shops and businesses should be on that site, the emerging Local Plan states that it aims to protect the economy.
- GH circulated a copy of a résumé of a new White Paper on Housing, with particular reference to Green Belt and neighbourhood planning.

8. Date of next meeting

- Wednesday 15th March 2017 at 8pm in the Village Hall. (This is now confirmed as booked.)