

COMMUNITY MONITOR REPORT ON STEERING GROUP MEETING 23rd JUNE 2017

The agenda was:-

1. How we proceed to the next stages of the Neighbourhood Plan - a review and discussion, using the advice & experience of both Noel and Nigel;
2. Resolving the Land Allocations issues;
3. Accentuating the positives - how we communicate more effectively as a team, highlighting the significant benefits of neighbourhood planning and our plan specifically;
4. The Environmental Assessment Process (David Ginsberg is coordinating this work)
5. Any other business.

Present:- Jannice Wilkinson, Tony Hill, Mark Cropper, Claire Ellwood, David Ginsberg, John McCurdie, Jennifer Harrison, Noel Farrer and Nigel McGurk.

1 How we proceed

Those members of the SG present acknowledged the need for better communication, and to be more open and to have a community that worked together to achieve the draft Plan. There needed to be a recognition that we are still at an early stage in the process. Mistrust, apathy and opposition to the Plan were recognised. The SG hadn't listened or shared the Vision and re-engagement with the community was required.

Questions were raised as to why there was no sense of community, and how to involve people; the SG had lost sight of what it should be doing and needed a master plan with which to go forward.

The majority of the meeting then involved a very effective presentation by Noel Farrer on a programme for the next 6 months all to be led by Farrer Huxley.

Noel detailed the key goals and actions for change in the Vision particularly emphasising a focus on the core of Burneside; development at a higher density in the heart of the village was a priority and **there should be little need to expand the settlement or fill the green gaps around it and the allocations should be linked to positive improvements to the village.** (my emphasis)

Month 1 - digest what's happened and respond, agree strategy and engagement, advertise the time line and opportunities for engagement with a basic response to the community asap.

There should be a focus on a revised Vision, a Master Plan was required and the Allocations decisions should be deferred pending its preparation.

Comment was made that allocations need to be justified and that each land allocation should be linked to the particular benefits that will result.

The route map forward should be publicised and the Planning Group would be more involved.

Month 2 - Community involvement – advertisement, posters etc, updated vision outcomes, how allocations contribute to this and a masterplan of outcomes and allocations would be produced.

The Plan should continue to be for the Parish and FH would be made aware of consultation responses.

There was some unresolved debate on how or not to use social media.

Month 3 – Detailing the need for change and how the NP will support the Vision.

Months 4-6 Ongoing consultation, keep listening, responding and building trust; plan modification and improvement seeking the widest possible endorsement.

Drafting of policies, finalising the Plan, design codes etc

2 Land Allocations – deferred until a master plan has been considered. It was recognised that there is a need to respond to those who have commented on the LAs.

3 Accentuating the positives –to be covered in the steps detailed above.

4 The EA Process – David detailed the work on the LA sites that would take place over the next 6 months between July, and the finances available.

Conclusion

The meeting was, in my view, very positive in that members of the SG recognised what had gone wrong with the process and a way forward was detailed by Noel. The challenge will be to re-engage the community by better communication in a variety of ways that are clear and easily understood.

Government guidance that:-

“Neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity for communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their community to develop over the next 10, 15, 20 years in ways that meet identified local need and make sense for local people “

....is now being recognised.

The meeting was well run and managed and focussed on the key issue of the next steps in the Plan preparation– it was effective insofar as the SG have started a process to review and improve communications and deliver a master plan that the community can address.

In the longer term its effectiveness will depend on the actions that are taken and whether the SG listen and respond to the concerns and aspirations of the community.

For example the message from Tony, Jannice and Nigel at the meeting on the 13th May was that if there is clearly a lot of objections to a site it would be pointless to include it in the Plan – a point still not recognised by some on the SG given the spread sheet responses. To pursue some sites would, in my view just compound previous failures to connect with the community and re-inforce perceptions of an uncaring and arrogant Parish Council.

With regard to communication here's some other thoughts:-

The web should not just be relied on for passing on information - many do not use it. However, there needs to be an effective way of using social media and reaching younger people

If using the Parish News letter, more factual information is needed – extra sheets?

Consider posters on notice boards and a poster display/information in the Church Room/Bryce/shop.

Have more open public meetings at different times perhaps focussing on particular issues. Have evening(s) where a panel representing the PC, SG, and residents hold an open forum.

The Steering Group could be open to public observers with publicity of its minutes in the Parish newsletter or online, or have an independent monitor's report available online.

Start to use the NP web site to facilitate constructive two way discussion

Produce a time table of meetings for the Planning Team with agendas

Use the Gazette Village News, and try to get items of information in it

There is a danger that in using consultants in London to do the communications there will be a loss of connection with the PC and the community and a perception of huge costs involved..

Have meaningful scrutiny, debates and discussions at PC meetings on NP issues.

Properly acknowledge and respond to comments from the community.

As a final comment, this could all get very expensive if top quality plans etc etc are produced by the consultants; consideration should be given to members of the community becoming more involved, thereby reducing costs.

Hope this helps

Peter Ashby

