

Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

Bi-monthly Progress Note to Abbots Langley Parish Council – Report Eleven – 31st December 2017

The Neighbourhood Planning Group last met on 23rd November 2017. Their next meeting is planned for 7pm on Thursday 25th January 2018

Work is continuing on:

- Phase 4 'Public Engagement and Consultation'
- Phase 5 'Building the Evidence Base'
- Phase 6 'Identify the key Themes, Aims, Vision, Options.'

Housing Needs Assessment Study

The Final Report of the independent 'Housing Needs Assessment for the Parish' by AECOM was received on 19th December 2017. The initial draft report was received on 20th November. Comments and questions on the Draft were sent to AECOM on 11th December. AECOM confirmed that the Government has not made clear when a decision will be given for directives on 'calculating the Housing Needs for a Neighbourhood Plan Area.' AECOM's working assumption is that clarity will emerge together with the revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework towards the end of the first quarter of 2018.

AECOM were asked and confirmed that they can provide advice on methods to build houses below the normal market prices to make them more affordable for the younger generation of families. This may involve some form of Community Trusts in cooperation with local landowners and may involve self-build projects rather than just allowing developers to purchase the land. AECOM sent a paper summarising the possible approaches based on work they have done for the Northill Parish in Central Bedfordshire.

Analysis commissioned from Consultant, John Austin.

The work commissioned from Consultant, John Austin was completed and received on 13th December 2017. The output from his work was explained in the last Progress Report. It includes the following sections:

- 1) Database design and management of all the material being assembled for the Neighbourhood Plan (NP).
- 2) Design structure for a web site for the Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan
- 3) Source data for the statistical profile of the Parish of Abbots Langley, building up from ward level data.
- 4) Further analysis of the public comments received from the Commonplace web site for Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5) Identifying the main sources for accessing current Neighbourhood Plans that have been approved and published and identifying Neighbourhood Plans of 'similar areas' to Abbots Langley.

Meeting with Claire May, Principal Planning Officer at Three Rivers District Council

As agreed with the Parish Council at their meeting on 13th November, some members of the Neighbourhood Planning Group arranged to meet Claire May, Principal Planning Officer at Three Rivers District Council. In attendance were: Claire May, and her colleague, Marko Kalik, Cllr Brenda Kersey, Cllr Owen Roe, Jon Tankard and Peter Warman. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Update Claire on the current progress on our Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and seek her professional judgement on possible sites within the Parish that we have identified as suitable for possible ‘change of use.’
- Understand how the Local Planning Authority sees the constraint(s) on development of the identified sites.
- To coordinate the future work on the Neighbourhood Plan with the relevant information to be published in 2018. This includes:
 - a. Government Statement on National Housing Policies and assessment on Housing Needs. (Expected by April 2018)
 - b. Publication of the independent study of Green Belt land in the Three Rivers District. (Expected in May and published by September 2018)
 - c. Publication of possible sites for development by the District, for public consultation in the development of the new Local Plan for Three Rivers District Council.

Claire understood that the selected sites for possible ‘change of use’ have not been discussed or approved by the Parish Council or the public as suitable for evaluation in the Neighbourhood Plan. A copy of the aerial photograph of the parish with the selected sites highlighted was sent to Claire in advance of our meeting. Also highlighted on the photograph are the broad categories of the current land uses across the Parish associated with residential, employment, public facilities (education, health, leisure etc.) open spaces and the Metropolitan Green Belt. Many of the selected sites are currently classified as Green Belt. Only the District Council and National Government can determine any changes in Green Belt policies for our area.

A six-page paper was written summarising the main points arising from the two-hour meeting Claire. This was shared with Claire for her comments and correction, as an accurate record. It was emphasised that the planning policies of the Neighbourhood Planning Group are totally consistent with the views expressed in the Parish Council’s response on 9th September 2017 to the Planning Authority’s Consultation on the New Local District Plan.

Claire confirmed that the NP for Abbots Langley had assembled good evidence at this stage. She confirmed that there is a need for a ‘Scoping Study and Sustainability Report.’ Our NP Consultant, Alison Eardley has been commissioned to prepare this report in Draft during the next three months. The format will be based on the work she has done on other Neighbourhood Plans. Funds for this work are available from our Government NP Grant, which must be used by mid- March 2018.

Abbots Langley forms 23% of the District’s population. The Government’s Consultation Paper on Housing suggested that the allocation of new housing in a NP should be in proportion to its population of the District. This would imply the new housing required in Abbots Langley is of the order of 2070 dwellings (i.e. equivalent to Abbotswood Estate x 4) over 15 years or equivalent to 138 dwellings per year. This compares with AECOM unconstrained estimates for Abbots Langley of 116 to 161 new dwellings per year.

Claire said that the Three Rivers Planning Authority did not agree with the National Government suggestion of allocating housing in proportion to the current distribution of population. However, she did confirm that the significant demand for new housing could not be met by past policies of in-filling the spaces available in existing urban settlements. New housing must be associated with much larger new settlements possibly expanding and adjoining current smaller settlements. Claire assured us that the Three Rivers Planning Authority is working with the neighbouring District Planning Authorities in the development of the Local Planning Strategies.

Each of the ten selected sites for possible 'change of use' in the Parish of Abbots Langley was discussed at the meeting. Claire explained the impact of existing planning policies on the selected sites and her professional view on the likely viability of each site given the need for associated improvements in infrastructure and any known constraints on changes in use.

Given the National and District guidance that will be forthcoming in 2018, with regard to site suitability and selection, Claire agreed that the Neighbourhood Planning team should focus its attention during the next six months on preparing the draft planning policies for their Neighbourhood Plan rather than conducting detailed evaluation of the selected sites.

Peter Warman, Chair, Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Planning Group,
Tel: 01923 265258
Peter@warmanconsult.co.uk.