

Bi-monthly Progress Report for Abbots Langley Parish Council Report Twenty-Nine - 1st January 2021

The Neighbourhood Planning Group has not met in the last two months because of the measures in place for Covid-19. It is hoped that a Zoom meeting will be arranged with the Planning Group towards the end of January 2021.

Progress on the Public Version of the Neighbourhood Plan

In response to my last Progress Report and Briefing Paper, presented at the November meeting of the Parish Council, questions were raised about when the Public Version of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan would be available. The answer given was by the end of March 2021. Work could not start on this immediately because the Chair was due to have hospital treatment over a five day period in mid November. This has been completed successfully.

The current Draft of the Neighbourhood Plan has been reviewed and edited by the Chair in December. The Draft is now being reviewed by Alison Eardley, our NP Consultant. When her editing has been completed, it will be circulated to members of the Neighbourhood Planning Group for their comments. Alison will prepare a checklist of all the key tasks we have to complete before publishing the the Public Version of the Neighbourhood Plan on the Parish Web Site. The intention is to complete this work by mid-March 2021.

No specific sites chosen for new housing in the Neighbourhood Plan

The Public Version of the Neighbourhood Plan will not contain any specific sites for new housing development. This is because, at this stage, the Parish Council does not wish to specify these sites. They wish to wait for the selected sites in the Local Plan to be published in June 2021.

The Neighbour Plan will acknowledge the need for new low-cost housing for rent or for first-time buyers and building units for residents wishing to 'downsize' in their retirement (based on our own professional assessment of housing needs.)

In terms of the number of units, I believe we could accept 25% of the Annual Housing Need Target for TRDC based on 2018 ONS data i.e. $0.25 \times 227 = 57$ units per year. So for the period 2020 to 2036 this would be: 912 new housing units. (New Government housing targets for Three Rivers is 514 units per year. So 0.25 of this figure over 16 years is 2056 new housing units. (Note: the choice of a factor of 0.25 reflects the proportion of Three River District households living in Abbots Langley.)

Suggesting the key factors affecting the use of land in the Parish

In choosing the location for new housing sites, we could set criteria on what constitutes suitable places for new development and the best use of land. For example, taking into account all the demands faced by the Parish e.g. need for biodiversity and re-wilding areas, tree planting, productive land for growing food, more self-sufficient communities allowing easy access to all basic facilities such as schools, shops, medical and leisure - by walking and cycling etc., carbon neutral dwellings, not subject to flooding, etc. etc.

When we consult again with the public on the published Neighbourhood Plan, we can seek their agreement on this approach. Also, when the new Local Plan 'Selected Sites for Development' are published, the Parish Council can respond to TRDC consultation using similar arguments as given above.

Application to Locality for a £1000 Grant and a request for a Project to identify the distinctive and valued features of each local community

The above application was submitted to Locality in December 2020. The Technical Project will be conducted by the Aecom Consultancy and paid for by National Government. The purpose of the Project is to identify which features of the fourteen communities in the Parish are particularly valuable and distinctive, adding real character in defining each area. Such features may include particular buildings, green spaces, natural features and views/vistas. They could include community/public buildings, valued shopping facilities, listed buildings and walks/access to the surrounding countryside, etc.

Identifying what is distinctive about a community can be assessed by a professional planner, even though they are new to an area. They can explain their first impressions and provide an objectivity, free of any vested interest of living in an area. Material from the project (in the form of photographs and text) can be used by the Neighbourhood Planning Team as they stage local exhibitions and conduct Focus Groups to establish the views and priorities of each community.

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