

## **Minutes of the meeting of the Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018 7pm at the Council Offices London Road Halesworth

Present: Councillor Tony Allen, Gill Everett (secretary) Michael Fagg, Councillor Keith Greenberg (chair), Emma Healey, Barnaby Milburn, Rob Roy, Bob Shiers, Charlotte Slater

Guest: Will Windell, Chair of planning and development Southwold Town Council, vice chair Southwold Neighbourhood Plan group.

1. Apologies: Jane Mcgeehan, Joyce Moseley,
2. Will described how the Southwold Neighbourhood Plan had been initiated. He spoke of how the issues that were specific to Southwold had been identified and addressed. He suggested that Halesworth was in a good place to be developing its own Neighbourhood Plan, with the Waveney District Council (WDC) Local Plan soon to be published, and with benefit to be derived from cooperation with other areas who had completed or were working on their own Plan. The Southwold Plan is expected to be approved and come into force within approximately six months.

It is important to remember that an approved Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the planning authority's Local Plan so Will advised that the WDC Local Plan should be the 'bible' for Halesworth's Plan. However, some members of the NSPG interpreted the way this should work rather differently but all appreciated what Will was getting at. He advised not to repeat anything already in the Local Plan but, rather, reinforce and add detail, such as design and materials policy for building. For example, the Neighbourhood Plan can require new housing to feature integral environmentally sound design and materials that have a low carbon footprint and the provision of solar panels.

Will advised that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group should refer to the Halesworth Town Plan, and utilise any content that may assist the development.

A Character Area Assessment had been conducted in Southwold, dividing the town into zones such as historic, industrial, newer development and identifying with an architect the vernacular building styles and materials of each area.

In Southwold, the Plan prioritised affordable homes with a local lettings policy. All new build homes should be primary homes, (i.e. not second or holiday homes), a requirement that St Ives in Cornwall had tested successfully in court. Suffolk Coastal District Council employs an officer whose role is to enforce the primary homes policy.

Will reminded the group of the power and influence of the Neighbourhood Plan as a statutory instrument.

Will recommended the use of a consultant who could advise from an independent position, and test policy. The Steering Group develops aspirations with the Community, the consultant uses this as the basis to write policy. Asked at what stage to involve a consultant, Will suggested at an early stage, so that the consultant can build an idea of local concerns.

Will spoke about the tools within the Localism Act that had allowed Southwold to designate the closed hospital site as a Community Asset of Value. Any group of 20 or more people could apply to Waveney District Council for such a designation. A Social Benefit Society with charitable status was set up to raise funds. He described how the site was acquired, and the plans for use.

There was some discussion about the Local Plan's lack of coherent and meaningful planning for infrastructure to support the level of housing it envisaged. Will said that Carlton Colville had similar concerns so it was worth contacting them.

He said he would be happy to be contacted again, should the Neighbourhood PlanSG wish to liaise on any issues arising in the future. The chair noted this welcome cooperation was reflected in his conversations with other parish councils. He thanked him for the offer and also for giving his time and sharing his experience.

### 3. Minutes & Matters arising:

3d) there had been no response from Halesworth Business Connections to the approach Rob had made. However, Halesworth Business Connections had asked for a Halesworth Town Councillor to speak at an event they were organising. Keith would check who would attend and try to make sure they spoke about the Neighbourhood Plan.

4. Halesworth Town Council (HTC) has submitted its application to register the designated area for the Neighbourhood Plan with WDC as agreed at the previous Neighbourhood PlanSG meeting.
5. HTC has also approved the Neighbourhood Plan service level agreement with WDC and this will be signed and sent to WDC.
6. Joyce and Keith had met with the WDC Economic Development Team, and circulated their notes to steering group members. Areas for potential economic development were looked at. It was noted that the 3 main industrial areas in the town were fully occupied. Joyce and Keith were able to identify an area for economic development next to the station. The Neighbourhood Plan could address use of the historic maltings building in that location.
7. Consultancy: Keith had spoken with both AECOM and Navigus, and circulated information from both organisations. AECOM offered various packages of more complex technical support, funded directly by government, in addition to the £9,000 available from WDC. There was discussion about the relative merits of the 2 agencies, and timing of their involvement. It was felt that early involvement for some quick gains could increase the influence of the Neighbourhood Plan, in its developmental stages.

It was **agreed** to approach Navigus initially, who have good local knowledge and are recommended by other local Neighbourhood Plan groups. AECOM could be approached at a later date if the group wished to pursue some of the more complex issues, and for which funding would be needed.

However, there had been no community involvement as yet from which to identify the vision for Halesworth that the group would need to convey to a consultant. The group recorded their own priorities. These revealed strong themes (see attached) that were

subsequently discussed. It was recognised that priorities from the steering group might not reflect those of the community, and these would need to be identified through the engagement process.

8. Community involvement -raising awareness: There was some discussion about how involvement with residents, service providers, landowners and businesses might be achieved. Rob had provided a very useful outline marketing plan, and Emma would circulate the draft of a leaflet she had been working on.

It was **agreed** that an initial working group of Emma, Charlotte would develop ideas, and a plan for further phases of engagement should be circulated as the focus for discussion at the next meeting.

9. Historic Environment Record: Abby Antrobus from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, who advises for Neighbourhood Plans, has contacted Barnaby, and sent information that he needs to digest before reporting back.

Any other business: none

Date of next meeting: **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May** 2018 at 7pm in the Council Chamber

**Action:**

**Keith** will

1. contact Navigus
2. Halesworth Business Connections have requested that a Town Councillor speaks at an event they are organising. Keith will check that the request is being met and ask the Councillor to introduce the Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan.

**Emma, Charlotte and Gill** will work on immediate information and awareness raising regarding the Neighbourhood Plan, and draft a strategy/activities for further stages of community engagement as a focus for the next meeting

**Michael** will follow leads regarding social rents to get an idea on the proportion of the population involved