

LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Report of a Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party

held on Tuesday, 5 February 2013
In the Town Council Offices

Present: Councillors: R Barnes
P Bettington
T Widdows

In Attendance: A Burrows
Miss M Cooper
G Holliday (Town Plan Steering Group)
Ms Nina Shields (Town Plan Steering Group)
M Willmont (Herefordshire Council's (HC) Head of Neighbourhood Planning)

Also Present: Ms D Baldwin – Deputy Clerk, Ledbury Town Council (LTC)
Mrs B Stump – Jnr. Clerical Officer, LTC

1. To elect a Chairman for the ensuing year:

Cllr Widdows nominated Cllr Barnes (presently LTC's Planning Committee Chairman) as Chairman of the Working Party (WP). Ms Nina Shields seconded, and this was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED: That Cllr Barnes is Chairman of
the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party.**

2. Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs K Francis, E Harvey and C Ridler. Apologies were also received from Mr I James of the Town Plan Steering Group.

3. Declarations of Interest:

None.

**4. Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning by Mr Mike Willmont, Head of
Neighbourhood Planning, Herefordshire Council:**

Mr Willmont gave a broad introduction to Neighbourhood Planning and confirmed that Ledbury is already registered as a Neighbourhood Area.

"Planning has been *the* contentious issue and the Government's Neighbourhood Plan policy aims to remove this tension."

The Localism Act has reformed the planning system to give local people new rights to shape the development of the communities in which they live. This is the opportunity for Ledbury to draw up its own plan. The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) will provide the opportunity to say, for example, whether we want/need new houses; the design of our housing; which areas of the town we would prefer to develop; employment development (what and where); the protection of views, our vistas; perhaps how we want the main shopping area to look. What the NP cannot do is be used to prevent development or conflict with the policies within the core strategy of the Local Development Framework (LDF) : nor can it include matters such as waste and minerals which are the responsibility of the county council. LTC will ultimately submit the draft NP documents to HC for consideration. The Plan will need to conform with planning policies and guidance at a local, national and European level and meet the Neighbourhood Planning regulations. The Plan will also need to demonstrate the involvement of the local community throughout its preparation and decision making. For

instance, we must bring together residents, businesses, local groups, landowners and developers to pool their ideas and create an agreed strategy about what Ledbury's NP should include. This will be tested in independent examination. Upon completion, the Plan will then be put to a referendum of all those on Ledbury's Electoral Roll, and as long as more than 50% vote in favour, it will become a statutory plan. It will carry equal weight to the core strategy and be part of the LDF. Ledbury's NP will be referred to when HC make planning application decisions for Ledbury.

Mr Willmont advised that HC's and the Campaign to Protect Rural England websites were key sources of information regarding the process and its execution. He passed to the Chairman a copy of HC's *Neighbourhood Planning: Service Level Agreement* and the CPRE's *How to shape where you live: a guide to neighbourhood planning*. Within HC's NP website there is a discussion forum with which we can register and where other Herefordshire market towns can communicate with each other.

Mr Willmont's team comprises five planning officers and a technical officer who will be available. Our first point of contact will be Samantha Banks who will advise and guide us through the technical aspects. If questionnaires are to be prepared, Chris Gooding could be available. Regarding costs, HC cannot provide direct financial support, apart from what the government has recently given, which will cover publicity, the referendum and the independent examination of the NP. If the WP decides to conduct a survey of all residents there will be a cost involved in that and production of documents both of which must be borne by LTC.

ACTION: Mr Willmont will notify the Chairman when the money from central government becomes available.

As already noted, the NP cannot conflict with the LDF and core strategy, which will not be signed off for another year, at least. Once HC's Cabinet has signed off, in planning law terms, it has "weight" and can be taken into account when making decisions. If we do not agree with the core strategy there will be an opportunity to challenge it during a public consultation from 4 March-22 April 2013. It is planned that on Thursday, 21 March HC will pitch a consultation van with staff in St Katherine's Car Park so that members of the public can communicate their views and have the strategy explained.

Mr Holliday expressed dismay with the chosen day and it was suggested that Saturday and at a location perhaps near Tesco might be preferable in order to obtain a wider range of opinion.

ACTION: Mike Willmont agreed to take this back to HFDS Council to reconsider the date and location.

Ms Shields expressed dismay with lack of feedback about planning decisions made in the past, particularly citing the decision to build 800 houses over the next 30 years to the north of Ledbury (near the viaduct). The NP could be used to allocate and identify the houses but, Mr Willmont emphasised, any disagreement to the 800 houses should be made clear during the consultation response period of the core strategy (4/3-22/4/13).

The geographical area covered by the NP encroaches on at least two adjacent parishes. From the start, it would be a courtesy to inform them that Ledbury's NP is being compiled and we might at that time ask what they think we need. As the NP develops and other consultees have been contacted, it would be appropriate to go back to the adjoining parishes with our proposals. They have no say in the referendum, but they are a consultee.

5. To discuss

- Membership and Terms of Reference (ToR):
Ten Council Members are already identified from the Planning Committee meeting held on 18 October 2012. They are Cllrs: R Barnes, P Bettington, A Bradford, A Crowe, L Fieldhouse, K Francis, C Ridler, J Roberts, M Roberts and

T Widdows.

Cllr E Harvey also wishes to be a member of the Working Party, as do Mr A Burrows, Miss M Cooper, Mr G Holliday, Ms N Shields and Mr I James.

RESOLVED: to defer ToR to the next meeting. Cllrs Widdows & Barnes will look at draft ToR and circulate before the next meeting.

- Co-ordination of Neighbourhood Plan with the Town Plan:
It was widely agreed that co-ordination and cross referencing with the Town Plan would save a good deal of consultation. The Town Plan Steering Group is presently compiling a questionnaire for Ledbury residents for the spring/early summer; it was thought useful if the questions could be reviewed in advance in the NP WP. Perhaps the NP WP could draft some of them? The Town Plan and NP should complement one another.
- Project Plan including timescale:
As the ToRs are not finalised it was felt this item could not be usefully discussed at such an early stage and should be deferred.
RESOLVED: to defer a Project Plan to the next meeting.
- Scoping study undertaken by the Town Plan team, including Awards for All bid:
General discussion suggested initial activities:
 - The main nationwide document to read is the *National Planning Policy Framework*, the subject areas of the current *Unitary Development Plan* and the CPRE's *A guide to Neighbourhood Planning*.
ACTION: Links to the HC website and CPRE's booklet would be circulated. Some hard copies would be held at the Town Council offices.
 - An early brainstorming session with a flipchart to devise what we are aiming to cover and what we need. Also to find out what is exercising the community and how they see Ledbury in the next twenty years, at least.
 - What has the Leominster pilot experience been?
Ian James has attended some of Leominster's meetings of the now completed pilot scheme and given his report to the Town Plan Steering Group. This information would be very useful to the WP.
 - Response to the core strategy when the consultation period takes place from March-April is vital, and early sight of the strategy document a priority in order to co-ordinate and prepare evidence to support any challenges to it.

6. **Any other matters relating to the Working Party:**

There was broad discussion about many issues; again, the compilation of possible challenges to the core plan during the consultation period, which would eventually inform the NP. Subjects discussed were:-

- the 800 properties identified and how they would impact on schools and infrastructure.
- protection of the Cricket and Football Club land (some core strategy supporting documents are on the web);
- three Dragons viabilities;
- a key part of the core strategy is a levy to be applied to all development in order to pay for infrastructure;
- an emphasis on sustainability should be in tandem with the core strategy & NP.

7. **Date of next meeting:**

Tuesday, 5 March, 2013 at 19.00 in the Committee Room of Ledbury Town Council offices.

ACTION: Items for the agenda to be forwarded to Cllr Barnes or the Town Council office.

The meeting ended at 20.55.