

Neighbourhood Planning

Introduction

I represented Carlton PC at a workshop on Neighbourhood Planning, arranged by H&BBC Planning, on Tuesday 27th October. Presentations were given by Andy Killip (Planning Policy Manager, H&BBC), John Wasteney (Chairman, Market Bosworth PC), John Pope (Chairman, Market Bosworth Neighbourhood Forum), Jonathan Green (Policy Advisor, DCLG), John Preston (Project Delivery Officer, RCC). This is a summary of information of direct relevance to the Parish of Carlton.

Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood Plans (NPs) must be in conformity with National Planning Policy and the Local Plan. Within this framework a NP can allocate land for housing, open space, give design guidance, and cover other local issues.

There are six steps in preparing a NP:

- (i) designate the Neighbourhood Area, often the parish boundary, and sometimes including several parishes. This is subject to a 6-week public consultation, and must be ratified by all of the PCs involved.
- (ii) designate a Neighbourhood Forum, which must include a representative cross section of people who live, work or conduct business in the NP Area. At this stage a dedicated website should be created.
- (iii) build an evidence base for the NP, which may involve research into published information, commissioning new research, and consulting statutory consultees and everyone who lives or works in the NP Area. This stage may take more than a year, and will involve the preparation and repeated revision and modification of plan objectives and policies. The supporting evidence base must be published. H&BBC has a statutory duty to support NP development, advise on rules and regulations (including EU regulations), and involve statutory consultees.
- (iv) produce a draft NP, which must be validated by H&BBC, and then published for public consultation. The results of this consultation must be documented and published, and will probably require changes to be made to the draft NP.
- (v) appoint an Examiner from the National Panel, who reports and makes recommendations. If major changes are required, a further public consultation may be necessary.
- (vi) H&BBC conducts a referendum. If the NP is approved by the referendum it is 'made' by being adopted by H&BBC and the PC.

Once adopted, H&BBC will use the NP to determine planning applications, guide developer inquiries, and resist inappropriate development. An adopted NP carries significant weight in the planning process, *unless material considerations indicate otherwise*. Examples of material

considerations would be a national infrastructure project such as HS2, or a failure on the part of H&BBC to demonstrate a 5-year land supply at appeal.

Market Bosworth Neighbourhood Plan

Market Bosworth was one of the first PCs in the country, and the first PC in the Borough to undertake a NP. They began in 2011, held public meetings to recruit volunteers, and the first meeting of their Neighbourhood Forum took place in June 2012. This was constituted as a sub-committee of the PC.

Community engagement and involvement – in the form of public events, stakeholder events, stakeholder meetings, information postcards, questionnaire, and involving local press and Neighbourhood Forum website – took from January 2013 to October 2014. Building the evidence base took from January 2013 until February 2014, and was used to generate a community vision. The draft plan went through 30 iterations before the final draft NP was prepared. This was then subject to public consultation – through 2 whole-day events, 6 drop-in events, email responses, paper forms and an on-line form – which generated 230 specific responses from 53 respondents. All feedback was analysed by the RCC, and led to significant amendments to the draft NP. Some non-planning issues such as traffic management, mobile phone reception, broadband connectivity and tourism promotion were identified for action, but do not form part of the NP.

The draft NP was then submitted for independent examination, revised again to take account of the Examiner's feedback, approved by H&BBC, and passed by referendum on 3rd September 2015 (88% in favour; turnout 22.6%). The final plan is 19 pages long, but is backed by many more pages of supporting evidence.

Market Bosworth PC is now responsible for delivery of an implementation plan prepared by the Neighbourhood Forum, and for monitoring the NP.

The Market Bosworth NP covers the period 2015-2026, but will be reviewed every 5 years, and must remain compliant with the Local Plan. The evidence base also needs to be kept up to date, and must be robust or it will be open to challenge at appeal.

Project support

The DCLG has a 3-year £22.5m funding package for neighbourhood planning, and currently offers grants of up to £8k.

In addition to its statutory checking role, H&BBC will provide support to a Neighbourhood Forum through a service level agreement in the form of Planning Officer time and support, access to evidence bases, attendance at relevant meetings, advice on policy preparation, and assistance with consultation events.

The RCC can advise on project planning, and can provide advice on why, whom, when and how to consult, together with professional project support and data analysis.

National position

The regulations governing the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans came into force in 2012, but many communities began work before this. At present 1,600 NPs are in preparation, of which 230 have been submitted for examination and 135 have been adopted. 90% of NPs follow parish boundaries, and the population of plan areas ranges from 200 – 30,000. The average NP contains 19 policies, most commonly covering housing, transport and design. Costs range from £4,220 - £27,681 (average £13,758), and will be supported by a grant programme which has 2 years to run.

Information on neighbourhood planning and completed NPs is available from www.mycommunity.org.uk; planning guidance is available from planning.portal.gov.uk

Carlton and the Local Plan

The Core Strategy of the Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan classifies Carlton as a Rural Hamlet (4.45) in which development will be confined to infill housing development, local choice schemes and conversion of agricultural buildings to employment uses (4.46).

Policy 13: Rural Hamlets includes the following statements:

In the Rural Hamlets, the council will:

- Support housing development within settlement boundaries that provides for a mix of housing types and tenures as detailed in Policy 15 and Policy 16
- Support development that complies with the Policy 17: Local Needs
- Support development enabling home working and other small scale employment uses within settlement boundaries
- Resist the loss of local shops and facilities in rural hamlets unless it is demonstrated that the business or facilities can no longer operate in a viable manner. Initiatives to establish local stores and facilities will be supported
- Deliver the strategic green infrastructure network detailed in Policy 20. To achieve this, strategic interventions involving Shackerstone, Gopsall Park Multifunctional Route, River Sence Corridor Management and the Shackerstone to Ibstock Multifunctional Corridor will be implemented
- Require transport improvements in line with Policy 14
- Support the development of the tourism industry in line with Policy 23
- Require development to be of the highest environmental standards in line with Policy 24.

The Site Allocations DPD is currently under examination, and is expected to be adopted early in 2016. This defines the settlement boundary and areas of special character and open space within it; land outside the settlement boundary is defined as open countryside. Carlton PC has been consulted on this document.

There is currently no requirement to designate additional land for development in the Parish of Carlton. Infill within the settlement boundary, redevelopment, extensions, alterations and changes of use are regulated by the policies listed above and the associated design codes and regulations.

Review and recommendation

The preparation of a NP for Carlton would involve a great deal of work, would probably take two years, and would be expected to cost in the region of £5k. The initial cost would probably be covered by grants, but ongoing monitoring and review would not. The ongoing work involved would represent a significant administrative burden for a small PC, and it would not be easy to recruit and retain volunteers to serve on a Neighbourhood Forum.

Given the policy background set out above, there does not appear to be any good reason to prepare a NP for Carlton at this time.

This conclusion should be reviewed if and when (a) the National Planning Policy Framework is under review, (b) H&BBC proposes changes to the Local Plan which could result in the allocation of new development to rural hamlets, or (c) the PC is considering some kind of development which is not covered by existing planning policies.

I suggest that any proposal to prepare a NP for Carlton should include a statement of the reasons for the proposal and the benefits that might be expected to accrue, so as to allow preparation of an objective cost-benefit analysis.

I also suggest that Carlton PC continues to liaise closely with H&BBC on local planning matters in general and the ongoing reviews of the Local Plan in particular. It will be very important to ensure that the Local Plan includes appropriate policies for the control of development in rural hamlets. Any proposals in future to allocate development to rural hamlets should be site-specific, and on sites negotiated in advance with the relevant PC.

I recommend that Carlton Parish Council does not prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan at this time.

C J Peat
Parish Clerk
30th October 2015

Abbreviations used in this report

DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DPD	Development Plan Document
EU	European Union
H&BBC	Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
NP	Neighbourhood Plan
PC	Parish Council
RCC	Rural Community Council (Leics & Rutland)