

Minutes of Meeting with Karen Britton, Planning Policy Manager Canterbury City Council

6pm Monday 30th January 2023, Hoath Village Hall

Present: Karen Britton, Planning Policy Manager, Canterbury City Council

Rachel Carnac, CCC councillor

Imogen Morizet, chair of Hoath Parish Council

Plus 34 members of the public

Karen Britton outlined the process for creating a neighbourhood plan.

: My job at CCC is neighbourhood planning and enforcement issues. What normally happens the first thing is to designate the area. In this case this is the whole parish area and that designation has gone through [with CCC]

The next thing is to get together a group of interested people and start preparing a draft.

What topics?

- Allocating housing sites where in the parish you want any houses to go
- Write about commercial sites or allocate land for business
- You can write about policies that would support any development if you don't want to allocate sites for example you could word a policy to encourage business growth

A neighbourhood plan is not about stopping development. It is not supposed to be negative. It is supposed to be positive.

You need to describe what the landscape is like, the important views you want to protect, important view points for example views of the church or out to important parts of the countryside.

It is about using it [the neighbourhood plan] to protect certain places.

Local green space is a special designation. It has to be somewhere close to the settlement area and should be on small pockets of land for example a village pond or a field where the village fete is held. The idea of local green space is not to designate a massive tract of farm land to stop development

Design issues It is very popular to try to influence future design or extending their houses you can set design criteria

Nationally there are design codes. That's another area to think about. You can write your own design codes for the parish.

Tree surveys/green policies/climate change policies

It is very much up to you what areas you want to concentrate on

Community facilities such as the village hall. How will they be used in the future?

A neighbourhood plan is like a business plan for your village.

Play areas/housing for older people/housing for younger people

A local plan has statutory status. Once a neighbourhood plan has been through the process that too has statutory status so they have high weight in the planning process.

The Process

1. Consider the big issues you want to focus on. Can use evidence for example from CCC
2. Divvy up jobs, find your volunteers for example someone who can construct a website
3. Put together a draft, send it into CCC who will give comments. For example, CCC will know what clashes with national policy. CCC can attend meetings like this [current meeting in village hall] to help with things, we can read things and tweak the way things are written. CCC will support you through the process once we have a draft. You might also have other partners such as KCC about highways, KCC education about the school, The Environment Agency about water, the NHS about healthcare
4. Formal consultation: The Parish Council must organise a six-week formal consultation on the draft plan.
The PC must consult, then it goes to CCC for CCC to consult on it for another 6 weeks consultation then it goes to a planning inspector. We tend to use a company that employs retired planning inspectors. CCC pays for the planning inspector and the six-week consultation.
5. Examination: testing the content to make sure it has been done properly. Usually done through the inspector looking at the comments to the consultation. They normally do this from their own home. Can be occasions where the PC did not consult properly or have to show that they have dealt with the comments. You do not have to change but you have to show that you have looked at it

You need to keep really good records: who sent comments back? what did they say? how did you action that? You have to write a statement of consultation.

6. Sustainability appraisal for example Stodmarsh or local environment sites. Bridge: they have got a bit of an issue because they may impact Stodmarsh and are waiting for information from Natural England.

Who is doing Neighbourhood Plans?

Fordwich, Thanington, Chartham, Upper Hardres was doing one but has run out of volunteers, Bridge

About 1,000 communities across the country have had their plans accepted eg Ashford has got more interest than here

Costs?

Costs are fairly minimal eg questionnaires

A lot of the cost will be the cost of publicising the plan or hiring a venue or getting in experts to help

Funding

The current funding round has just finished. The Government is still talking about planning changes. Neighbourhood Plans are something the government is still pushing forward on as part of its localism drive. I foresee there will be a new funding round shortly.

Karen Britton advised people to look on the Locality website, an organisation that would give up to £10,000 to Parish Councils. There was also cash from the lottery, councillor pots of money, KCC councillors.

Chartham is using a planning consultant. ACOM is a company which writes environmental documents.

A lot of it is for you to get together and decide what you want to do. I understand the PC has already had a discussion with Martin Hall about environment issues.

Questions:

Question: Do you need to update Neighbourhood plans?

Answer: Local plans are updated every 5 years; the government is consulting on how often neighbourhood plans should be updated

Question: When did Neighbourhood Plans come in?

Answer: 2011

Once you have got a Neighbourhood Plan in place and adopted (once it's been through the planning inspector, they have okayed the plan and the city council have adopted the plan) a referendum would be held locally. The vote we want is for more than 50 per cent of the turnout on the day to vote for the plan.

If your Neighbourhood Plan is adopted you get 25% of the money in our community infrastructure levy [for development in the parish]. That is a perk of Neighbourhood Plans

Question: Can you control the size of any development?

Answer: You might be able to do it through design or density.

Housing Need Survey

Question: What counts as a viewpoint where you can protect views from or to?

Answer: What you can see from public footpaths, public roads. ...village desirable character. For example, you could protect views to the church and then any development you do in this area would have to [Karen Britton does hand gesture with both hands to show development clearing out of a middle path to the sides]

Question: What about dark skies?

Answer: design issue

Question: is there a length of time this needs to be completed by?

Answer: Grant funding will have criteria attached to it. There is the PC six-week consultation, the six-week CCC consultation and the planning inspector takes time.

Question: what about affordable housing?

Answer: Affordable housing is not within the Neighbourhood Plan. It is outside the Neighbourhood Plan and sites for affordable housing are called exceptional land.

Question: Is there any guidance?

Answer: Look at Locality website. There is a section called a Neighbourhood Plan toolkit. The Government has a geeky website. I would look at examples in Ashford, Thanet and Dover who have some neighbourhood plans which have been through the process.

The thing about Neighbourhood Plans is not to reinvent the wheel. The thing to do is to look through existing Neighbourhood Plans and find bits that you like the look of.

Question: What if the Local Plan disagrees with the Neighbourhood Plan??

Answer: As long as you have evidence for what you are doing it will go before the planning inspector and they will decide.

It is important to keep dialogue going with the local plan team.

Question: Can you give us any examples of adopted Neighbourhood Plans which have been successful?

Answer: If you read the planning press, they give examples of planning inspectors who have used Neighbourhood Plans in the planning process.