Sandy Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Thursday 21 January 2021 at 7pm via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Present: Nigel Aldis, Robert Baker, Anne Elliott-Flockhart, Tim Gardiner, Amanda Gibson (Chair), Arnold Gilpin, Joanna Hewitt, Ruth Lock, Anne Ramsay and Gary Wearing.

In attendance: Richard Barlow, James Hunt (CBC), Caroline Maudlin (CBC Cllr for Sandy), Chris Patterson, Tom Price (CBC) and Chris Robson (STC Clerk).

Apologies: There were no apologies.

1. Welcome

The Chair, Amanda Gibson, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Then each person introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record.

3. Neighbourhood Plan Tools and Support

Tom Price, CBC's Neighbourhood Plan officer gave an overview of neighbourhood planning. (Slides of the presentation to follow.)

Tom explained that Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the Government in 2012 to encourage local people to get involved in shaping their communities.

The Locality Roadmap is the bible for Neighbourhood Planning.

There are 79 parishes in Central Bedfordshire with 39 of those currently undertaking a neighbourhood plan, with 8 who have completed the process. Policies from the neighbourhood plans are used by CBC's planning department when determining planning applications. Once the plans have been adopted they become part of CBC's statutory plan.

CBC have a duty to support towns undertaking a neighbourhood plan but they cannot write the plans. Communities need to decide on the context of their plan and tailor them to suit their towns.

Neighbourhood Plan Scope

Town and Parish plans don't carry any weight but a neighbourhood plan does.

Neighbourhood plans have no need to duplicate CBC's policies, but need to contain complementary policies specific to their town.

Neighbourhood plans can identify projects and aspirations for S106 monies.

Common themes include key projects, housing, infrastructure and design.

Chapters can include housing, employment, traffic, natural environment, heritage and historic environment.

Contents of a neighbourhood plan must be backed up by evidence which can include:

- Town Council minutes
- Question's asked
- Data including census and ONS data
- Green infrastructure plan
- Housing needs survey
- Design statements/codes
- Site surveys & assessments
- Mapping
- Conservation area appraisals
- Local plan evidence base, including assessments of flood risk, archaeology, housing infrastructure, settlement capacity, green belt, employment and retail.

Neighbourhood Plans can designate local green space areas that are valued which provides the spaces with a certain level of protection similar to green belt.

The Government provides additional financial support to groups who look at residential design.

Neighbourhood plan requirements

Neighbourhood plans must have regard to:

- National policy
- Conform with strategic policies in local plan
- Contribute towards sustainable development
- Must be compatible with EU obligations
- Only relate to one neighbourhood plan area
- Specifies the plan period

When submitted the neighbourhood plan must be accompanied by:

- A basic conditions statement that outlines how the plan conforms with the conditions mentioned above.
- A consultation statement detailing engagement undertaken.
- All supporting evidence.

Neighbourhood Plan Process – sequence of events

- The town council initiates the process
- Designate the neighbourhood plan area
- Identify issues and aims through public engagement and evidence gathering
- Draft plan policies

- Pre submission consultation (Regulation 14) 6 weeks
- Revise plan
- Submission to CBC (Regulation 15)
- Submission consultation (Regulation 16) 6 weeks
- Examination
- Referendum (CBC will arrange)
- Adoption
- Delivery, monitoring and review.

The question asked at the referendum is: Do you want CBC to use the Neighbourhood plan to determine planning decisions.

Funding & Support

- Can be funded by Town Council
- £10,000 basic grant through Locality
- Additional funding available for certain aspects
- Technical support packages
- Support from CBC who can act as facilitators, offer advice, provide and print maps, assist in gathering evidence, responsible for examination and referendum.
- Greensands Trust and BRCC can also offer support
- Wealth of information online
- Consultant's can be used using the money from the basic grant
- Chat with other parishes about their experiences.

4. Q & A

Questions had been sent to Tom ahead of the meeting which he dealt with at this point. Is TOM PROVIDING HIS WRITTEN RESPONSES?

a) What are the pros and cons of consulting on the needs of discrete areas of the Town rather than looking at an issue e.g. Environment across the whole area of the NP?

The plan can cover issues across the whole parish but can focus on specific areas such as industrial or Beeston. For example, there can be more than one policy on the environment for different parts of the town.

b) The Sunderland Road industrial estate rejected a BID a few years ago. What is the most effective way to engage with the business community?

- You need to support and understand who and what the businesses are.
- Clear communications
- Work with the chamber of commerce (unfortunately Sandy doesn't have an active one)
- Be time efficient businesses are busy
- Understand their needs
- Lots of examples of engagement online

c) In what circumstance should we consider asking a consultant to write one or more parts of the NP?

A consultant can be used, not necessarily to write the whole plan but to sense check what you are doing, refine policies or work on more technical aspects to check wording and compliance.

d) In a documentary about the fishing industry in Mevagissey the referendum on the NP seems to concentrate on a single question about providing local homes for local people? Is this a recommended approach to getting a good response to the NP referendum?

e) How does the referendum process work? Should it be held on the same day as a local election to get the maximum turnout?

There is no minimum turnout but need 50% of attendees to vote yes. It's too much of a logistical nightmare to combine with a local election. People can vote via postal vote. A typical response is 32-35% of residents.

f) What evidence can CBC provide us regarding Sandy needs that is available from previous consultations (to avoid repetition). Where and how we can access. I think this will be a good source for us to derive our initial vision and aims consultation.

CBC have evidence from their local plan consultations including documents for Sandy. Sandy also has a town plan and community plan. CBC might have some information from their Visions 2050 consultations.

g) How are other NP Groups managing consultations and publicity when face to face meetings aren't possible?

It is difficult at the moment but there is guidance on CBC's website about the relevant requirements for conducting safe consultations. Other groups are managing via digital channels and video presentations. You can do interactive workshops online, online surveys, telephone consultations. Physical post which people can respond to by writing in or calling in. Banners, posters and leaflets are good too.

h) How do we access detailed scale maps of Sandy to identify protected area's and locations with existing designations. (Can we have a proper OS data from CBC to help us with the plan in dxf format.)

CBC can supply GIS & ordnance survey maps. There is also a tool on the CBC website called My Central Beds which has different layers. CBC can also print larger maps when needed for consultations.

i) What policies in CBC Local Plan are strategic that we need to be aware of when determining our area's of focus?

In CBC's local plan the strategic polices are numbered SP1-SP8 and a neighbourhood plan's policies need to be in general conformity with these.

j) Site Assessments for potential deveflopment – is there a blue print for conducting assessments or do we need to develop specific for Sandy?

CBC have their own template which is generally consistent with other councils. This can be provided to the group and CBC can help with that aspect of the neighbourhood plan.

k) At what stage should we apply for grant funding – details required?

Grant funding can be applied for when you have a project plan. There are various windows for applying for the funding. Funding can be used to hire venues for consultations and to pay for consultants. It's worth having a project plan in place which identifies what items are needed so that the grant can be applied for in chunks up to a maximum of £10,000. When money is allocated there will be a spend by date attached.

l) Do we have a CIL in CBC, if not why not.

CBC currently use S106 but are looking into CIL.

m) Are you aware of any plans to reroute the A1.

There are no plans to re-route the A1 at the moment but the A1 is definitely a constraint.

n) What's the latest news regarding the Local Plan

CBC are waiting to hear back from the Inspectors regarding the last hearing session in December. There will be further consultations regarding changes that need to be made. CBC are hoping to have the plan adopted in the second half of this year. Then 6 months after adoption it will be reviewed.

o) Should we be worried about the changes suggested in the planning white paper?

Some of the suggestions are quite radical. At the moment CBC are working on the basis as business as usual. Once the changes come in there will be a period of transition which will give time to make adjustments.

p) Do you have any examples where a local plan has helped in a local decision.

This is hard to quantify as plans get decided on a regular basis. However there have been some cases which have gone to appeal that have used local plans to advantage.

q) Whose responsibility is it to update Green Infrastructure plans?
In the first instance check how old the plan is, if old then grant funding can cover the cost. The most important part is designation of green spaces as this gives a high level of protection. It's worth checking to see if the current plan designates the Sandye Place site as a green space.

r) Does the neighbourhood plan area have to be consulted on?

In some cases where the plan crosses boundaries then yes there needs to be a six week consultation. However, Sandy's NP area is in line with the parish boundary so consultation is not necessary.

Amanda thanked Tom and James for attending and for the in-depth presentation.

5. Action Updates

a) Confirm Designated Neighbourhood Plan Area

The Neighbourhood Plan area has been applied for and accepted by CBC. Sandy now shows as having a NP in progress on CBC's website.

b) Community Engagement Plan
There is still an issue about how we are going to focus the plan either by discrete areas or areas of the town or a combination of the two. For example, a one way system in the town centre could impact on the A1 and on Beeston. We might need to do some initial engagement before this can be decided upon.

6. AOB
A member of the group asked if the previous Town Plan and Community Plan could be circulated. We could then see if the themes within these documents are still relevant.

Another member asked if a Dropbox account could be set up so all the documents could be in one place. Dropbox is free to use up to a certain level. **Tim, Rob and Gary** will organise this. A member asked if someone could create a guide on how to use Dropbox for those not familiar with the tool.

The Chair introduced Chris Patterson and Richard Barlow, and where technology allowed, they said a few words about why they are interested in joining the neighbourhood plan steering group.

As the terms of reference state that membership would consist of 10 people they will need to go back to town council to be increased to 12 people. **Amanda to organise.** All members were in agreement with this.

The Chair asked if everyone was happy to share their contact details with the other members of the group. All members were in agreement with this. Once the terms of reference have been updated they will be circulated to members to sign and return.

The Town Council has given the group a budget of £10,000 but the expectation is that the group will also apply for grant funding. The Council's Policy, Finance and

Resource Committee will need to be applied to for use of the funds allocated to the group and will act as governance.

A member suggested that an aspirational timescale is put in place for where the group ought to be in the next six months.

It was suggested that the group talks to other town's who have undertaken a neighbourhood plan to get ideas of timescales. **Amanda** will contact Potton to see if they would be willing to talk to the group.

It was also suggested that there be interim meetings so as to keep the momentum going.

The Steering group will need to decide key themes then working groups can be set up and then the work will naturally split out.

As well as a Dropbox account it was agreed that the group needs some form of collaboration tool which means the group can chat between meetings. **Gary, Rob and Tim** will look into creating a communications strategy.

The group will eventually need a Facebook page and website which can be used for community engagement. The Town Council has a page on their website for neighbourhood plan information.

Members also need to start thinking about what areas they would like to work on when it comes to splitting up into working groups.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 18 February at 7pm via Zoom. However, another meeting may be arranged in the interim with Potton to discuss their neighbourhood plan experiences.