

## **Notes of Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting, Monday February 15th, 16.00-1730**

Present: Liz Sanders, Alf Dewis, Frank Payne, Paul Dowse, Christopher Clark, John Nowell, Michael Hinman, Oliver Bird, Maureen Burns-Jones, Ann Lewis

Apologies: David Salkeld, Michael Haley

1. Ron Simpson, Chair of Uppingham NP, was in attendance to give an overview of the Uppingham Steering Group's approach to their NP. He stressed the importance of the following:

- community-led approach from outset to referendum is key - UTC hosted a Consultation Day
- on-going dialogue/close relationship with RCC is advantageous
- work with numerous community structures already in place (NB. My Community Champions)
- talk to developers, get them to engage with community —> positive outcome - asked people what they wanted by way of design etc. NB. Met also with Design Council
- offer the community options in a first public draft of plan - and offer proposals not policy
- NP may be 'generally compliant' with the Local Plan but room for manoeuvre
- keep a data handbook of all findings as this can later be referred to if challenged
- when NP is submitted for final external examination, ask for a panel from which to choose rather than accept RCC choice

Ron spoke enthusiastically about the empowering nature of the process, in spite of having to get to grips with technical areas of Planning and all the accompanying documentation - SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) - the pros and cons of a site; CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) - planning charge paid to councils to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of the neighbourhood. The benefits of the process were the involvement, commitment and support of community and business, the sharing of a vision, the generation of ideas, the working together of TC, RCC, developers and community in the creation of an action plan for the future. There was a 92% 'yes' vote at the referendum in which 26% of Uppingham's population voted. He

summarised by stating that, after 36 months of hard work, 30+ meetings of the Task Group, 20+ drafts of the plan, 3 of which were public, a NP was successfully produced. The latter was printed in a user-friendly, 40-page booklet which was delivered to every house in Uppingham at a cost of about £5,000. Total expenditure for the NP was under £12,000.

Thanks to Ron for giving of his time and expertise in sharing his experiences with us.

**2.** Alf reported that the submission of Oakham's NP Designated Area and Submission Statement had been passed by the Town Council and is now with RCC. With a six-week consultation period, time can now be devoted to forming a framework for moving forward.

**3.** Liz drew attention to the importance of communicating and engaging with the community and distributed leaflets produced for earlier public awareness events. Members can distribute these appropriately.

- Alf highlighted the importance of engaging with community groups of which RCC has a list
- Michael Hinman kindly agreed to set up and keep an archive and evidence base
- Frank distributed his helpful 'Starting the Process' in which he puts forward first steps and the way ahead
- Maureen distributed a useful document in which she outlined ways in which schools and colleges could be informed and engaged through competitions, presentations, art work, debates, public speaking etc.

Whilst it was agreed that social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) would be useful tools for engaging young people, Oliver felt that a website would be a more professional and generally acceptable way of communicating with the wider community.

**4.** Feedback from Paul and Christopher on the setting up of a website: Paul favours Wix which is user-friendly, easy to set up and change. They had discussed layout of initial pages and Paul agreed to produce something for us to access with a password which we can play with. Google Drive was suggested for the storage and sharing of documents - can also be linked to people's pcs. Paul is to look into the ownership of stored material and likely costs of setting up the website. An email account (possibly gmail) also needs

to be set up.

5. Review of Draft Press Releases (one from Liz and one from Alf): now that the NP Submission is with RCC, it is in the public domain and the SG's press release must be with the local papers urgently. However, it was felt that the wording of this initial information and engagement with the community are of prime importance. It was felt that both drafts could be reworded to form one accessible press release. This process was begun in the meeting and continued afterwards.

6. AOB - to prevent a barrage of emails from numerous sources and to streamline communication, it was agreed that official communication would come from the Chair through the Secretary and any requested responses would be sent to the Secretary.

**The next meeting is on Monday, 29th February at 16.00 in the Town Council office.**

The meeting ended at approximately 18.00.