

BUNTINGFORD TOWN PLAN: A Critique

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10 September 2012

TERMS

- To produce a critique of the Buntingford Town Plan with advice to the Civic Society on what/where the Town Plan lacks in transferring to a robust Neighbourhood Plan
- **Advice on what steps need to be taken to ensure that the Buntingford Town Council can seek to influence the East Herts Core Plan**
- Advice on what steps need to be taken to ensure Neighbourhood Plan Regulations are met by Buntingford Town Council

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

- Background to neighbourhood planning
- Do we need a Neighbourhood Plan?
- The eight steps to adoption
- Conclusions and Recommendations

THE CPRE 8 STEPS

- 1. Getting Started
- 2. Identifying the Issues
- 3. Develop a Vision and Objectives
- 4. Generate Options
- 5. Draft the Neighbourhood Plan
- 6. Consultation and Submission
- 7. Independent Examination
- 8. Referendum and Adoption

WHAT IS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING?

- Context of the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012
- Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders
- Neighbourhood Plan helps local communities to develop a shared vision for planning of their area
- In Buntingford can only be prepared by the Town Council
- Preparation is *optional*
- LPA cannot prepare, but required to give advice

SCOPE AND CONTENT

- Should be positively prepared
- **What type of development and its location**
- **May promote more development than the Local Plan**
- **Policies on protection and design standards**
- **Cannot be in conflict with a Local Plan or the NPPF**
- **Nor used to prevent development shown in the Local Plan**

DO WE NEED A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

- If Local Plan addresses all the issues, may be no need for Neighbourhood Plan
- **Other options:**
 - a Local Development Order
 - Supplementary Planning Documents
 - Town or Parish Plans
 - Design Statements
 - Community Action Plans

GETTING STARTED (Step 1)

- Follows same procedures as a Local Plan
- **Examine context of NPPF**
- Check against East Herts Local Plan 2007 and emerging District Plan Part 1
- **Scrutinise housing figures and assumptions**
- Involve the whole community
- **Set up a Project Group**

DESIGNATING THE AREA

- **Buntingford only – or an extended area?**
- **Apply to the LPA for designation (Reg. 5)**
- **LPA must publicise (Reg.6)**
- **After designation LPA must publicise the decision (Reg.7)**
- **Need to prepare a programme of work**
- **Plan must be evidence-based, with a Sustainability Appraisal**

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES (Step 2)

- Many will have been identified by the Action Group, but will need to re-check
- **Engage the community**
- Concentrate on planning issues
- **Must conform generally with the Local Plan and its successor**
- Therefore seek to influence the emerging District Plan Parts 1 and 2

VISION AND OBJECTIVES (Stage 3)

- Re-define the Vision – long term and strategic
- Define the Objectives – should express the desired achievements and aspirations
- Consult with the local community
- Re-visit the vision and issues in the Town Plan to help define objectives

GENERATING OPTIONS (Stage 4)

- Important – even though there may be some clear ideas about what should happen
- **Use Sustainability Appraisal to test “reasonable alternatives”**
- Group around issues and options identified at earlier stages
- **Check that realistic and can be delivered**
- May be constrained by policies in the East Herts District Plan – need to check
- **Consult with community on preferences – which can be taken forward into the next stage**

DRAFTING THE PLAN (Step 5)

- Policies informed by the issues, objectives and preferred options
- **Use the Sustainability Appraisal**
- For format of policies, see East Herts Local Plan 2007 and other planning documents
- **Plan should be concise, with focus on policies and reasoned justification**
- All other material in the “evidence base”

TYPES OF POLICIES

- Allocation of sites for development
- Requirements for specified areas of land
- Locations to be protected from development
- Protecting land and buildings from change of use
- Area-based approaches, setting out places reserved for certain uses
- Criteria against which development proposals will be judged

THE PROPOSALS MAP

- **An essential component**
- **Shows which areas are allocated for uses, which are protected, or where criteria may apply**
- **Clearly linked to policies and proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan**

DELIVERY

- Need to have strong section on delivery and implementation
- **What actions are necessary to ensure policies and proposals are carried through**
- **How? By whom? When?**
- **Ensure everyone is signed up to the Plan**
- **Link to monitoring and review**

CONSULTATION AND SUBMISSION

(Step 6)

- Before submission, Town Council must (Reg. 14):
 - publicise details of the proposals
 - consult any relevant body
 - send a copy to the LPA
- **Certain bodies must be consulted;**
 - Hertfordshire County Council
 - the Environment Agency
 - English heritage
 - Natural England
- Others will include neighbouring parishes, landowners, and community organisations, plus the general public

SUBMISSION

- After consultation, analyse the results and make any necessary changes
- Regulation 15 requires that the submission should include the following:
 - a map identifying the area
 - the proposed Neighbourhood Plan
 - a Consultation Statement
- After submission LPA must publicise details and where and how to make representations (Reg. 17)
- Any comments or representations passed to the Examiner

EXAMINATION (Step 7)

- LPA will appoint an Examiner
- Reg.17 requires the LPA to send the Examiner the plan proposal and any other relevant documents, plus representations made
- Examiner to decide whether plan is “sound” and whether it can be recommended to the LPA that it can proceed to referendum
- Neighbourhood Plan must comply with NPPF and the Local Plan
- Recommendation in a report from the Examiner

REFERENDUM AND ADOPTION (Step 8)

- LPA to organise referendum
- Need a clear majority in favour from those who vote
- If so, LPA must adopt the plan
- Regulation 19 requires publication of a “decision statement”
- After adoption LPA should publish the plan on its web-site (Reg.20)
- Neighbourhood Plan is now part of the Development plan

CONCLUSIONS

- Town Plan falls far short of Neighbourhood Plan Regulations and requirements
- **BUT much has been achieved – Town Council should harness enthusiasm and involvement**
- Should not under-estimate time and resource constraints
- **Is a Neighbourhood Plan needed?**
- **Should it embrace a wider area?**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Debate whether a Neighbourhood Plan is required?
- **Should it embrace a wider area?**
- Short term priority should be to scrutinise the emerging East Herts District Plan Part 1, and to formulate a clear view on the appropriate planning strategy for Buntingford

OVER TO YOU !!!