

THURLESTONE PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillor Tony Goddard

The committee charged with assisting the community of the Thurlestone Parish to face the challenge of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish awaited its first formal meeting with the community on the evening of the 29th September with anticipation and it must be confessed, with some trepidation.

Although the event held in the Parish Hall had been extensively advertised there was always the worry that people would not turn out as had been hoped. Happily the community did not disappoint and an encouraging number of both residents and others attended.

Tony Goddard, the Chairman, made a brief opening presentation highlighted by slides explaining why a Neighbourhood Plan was now required, and providing a background to what had been done by the committee to date, and what was still required to complete the plan. A copy of an actual Neighbourhood Plan from another parish was available for inspection.

Tony reminded those attending that the concept of Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the Localism Act at the same time as the National Planning Policy Framework introduced the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Although the Act encourages communities to have far more say in how their towns and villages develop they cannot prevent development which would be permitted under the framework or by the District Plans which are in the process of development. However, once approved by the Planning Inspectorate and accepted by a Referendum of the residents of the parish the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will be given equal weight with the policies of the District Plan when planning applications are considered.

An essential ingredient of Neighbourhood Planning is the contribution of the views of the local community to the development of the Plan and the meeting was the first opportunity for the committee to canvass the views of the Parish. Although only residents are allowed to vote in the Referendum, the views of all of those who have properties in the Parish or who just visit are welcome.

To allow the committee to get a good idea of the views of all parts of the community (and not merely of those shouting the loudest!), on the suggestion of District Councillor Judy Pearce it was arranged for boards to be set up around the hall, each labelled with one of the Questions shown below.

Under each question were some "prompts" of the kind of things that might stimulate people to express their thoughts on the subject of the question. Post-It slips were freely available and people were encouraged (when they had considered what they wanted to say) to write it briefly on their Post-It slips and stick them on the boards.

Members of the committee were posted by each of the boards to answer questions and to encourage people to have their say.

Attendance sheets were available to record how many people attended and from which part of the parish. Those who wanted to be kept informed or even participate in the Neighbourhood Planning process were encouraged to provide their e-mail or ordinary postal address so that the committee could communicate with them.

If for any reason you were unable to attend, but would still like to express your views, please do so by sending them (briefly please) to Village Voice at Vvoice@aol.com or by post to 25 Mead Lane.

All the points you raise will be fully considered by the committee and used to develop policies which will form the framework of the Plan to be voted on by residents in a Parish Referendum.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING - 29 September 2015

Questions posted on boards round the room. Please post your comment on the appropriate board.

1. What do you like most about living in the parish?

Things to think about:

- Location
- Community
- AONB status
- Coastline/Avon estuary
- Anything else?

2. What are the disadvantages of living in the parish?

Things to think about:

- Access/roads
- Parking
- Broadband speeds
- Mobile phone signal
- Accessibility of higher and tertiary education
- Anything else?

3. What are the most important issues in developing new housing in the parish? Bear in mind that a Neighbourhood Plan is meant to manage development.

Things to think about

- Age profile – currently much older than average – assisted living accommodation?
- All recent housing development has been in Thurlestone with very little in Bantham and West Buckland – should the balance be changed?
- Second homes
- Replacement dwellings
- House prices
- Affordable housing
- Houses to rent rather than to buy
- Anything else?

4. Should there be more employment opportunities in the parish? If so, what and how?

5. Would you like to see new facilities in the parish?

Things to think about:

- New shops
- New restaurants/cafes
- More parking
- Community leisure facilities – sports facilities, parks, etc.
- Community toilets
- Better public transport
- Anything else?

6. Should preservation of the historic and natural environment take priority over all other issues? If not, why not?

7. What 3 things would you most like to see happen in the parish over the next 20 years?