

Totnes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Report on Consultation on Vision and Objectives

1st October -12th November 2016

1. Introduction

The Totnes Steering Group agreed that the emerging Vision and Objectives for the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan would be shared with the Totnes community over the autumn of 2016 prior to drafting the full plan and its policies.

The Vision and Objectives were developed from the evidence gained through the work of the Task Groups, Public consultation events and workshops. The purpose of this further consultation was to test before the drafting stage commenced, that the Vision and Objectives reflected community priorities and to ensure that nothing significant was missing.

It also enabled the Steering Group to have conversations with the community about the progress of the plan and its framework, which would enable subsequent consultation on the draft plan to be well informed.

2. Consultation events

Consultation materials were prepared in the form of a summary leaflet, Poster display and 10 page Vision and Objectives document. The consultation was launched with a presentation to the full Totnes Council on 3rd October 2016.

A display of the Vision and Objectives was set up in the town library for a period of a week with a supply of summary leaflets providing website details, contact for future information, information on events and submission of any comments.

Social media was used in sharing information about consultation events and directing people to the website to view both the Vision and Objectives materials and results of previous public consultation and evidence for the plan. The full list of consultation events is shown below.

- 3rd October Full Town Council presentation
- 8th October Stall at Transition Town Forking Local Food Festival
- 14th October Stall at WI week of Action on Climate Change
- 26th October Drop in consultation at St Johns Church Bridgetown
- 29th October Stall at Eco Homes Fair, Civic Hall
- 12th November Stall at Your Caring Town Fair

3. Press coverage

During the consultation period there was a range of press coverage on linked issues covering the Market Square, Duke of Somerset proposals for Berry Pomeroy, Great Court Farm development and ATMOS Community Right to Build referendum. This enabled useful conversations to be had with the public clarifying the position of the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on the following areas;

- Market Square protection and enhancement which was clearly set out in the SNP Steering Group response to the draft Joint Local Plan and shared on the website
- Opposition to Duke of Somerset proposals
- Support of the ATMOS proposals

- Clarification on sites which had already been given planning permission

There was a number of articles about the Neighbourhood plan

- One piece in the Totnes Times clarifying that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering committee was not supporting further development in Bridgetown (in Berry Pomeroy parish) as proposed by the Duke of Somerset
- One front page piece in the Totnes News praising the support of the Town in contributing to the Neighbourhood Plan. Free paper circulation 4500
- One similar piece in the Totnes Times with MP Sarah Wollaston
- An article in the November Totnes Directory distributed to all homes

4. Consultation results

The Vision and Objectives were well received and supported. The presence of the Stall at a range of events targeting different communities of interest in the town, provided opportunities for in depth conversations by the co-ordinator and members of the Steering group.

The type of communities reached covered Local food economy on Vire Island, Women's Institute in St Mary's Church, Local community in Bridgetown, people with an interest in the Green economy and Eco Homes businesses and 25 Voluntary Groups across the town together with people visiting all of these events. A count was made of people taking leaflets and having conversations. There were opportunities for people to leave comments however people generally did not wish to take up this offer. Those comments received are shown in Appendix 1

The majority of events reached between 20-30 people per event, more than 130 people in total. Though there was increased visibility to all attendees through banners. However, the event with the least numbers was the stand alone event in St John's Church in Bridgetown which 13 people attended.

A member of the Steering group and chair of the Housing Task group gave a presentation to a public meeting arranged by the Central Totnes Action group in the Civic Hall on the 22nd October. This was attended by over 250 people. It was well received and the content of the statement is attached as Appendix 1.

The Steering Group will need to discuss how this consultation experience together with the learning from the current ATMOS referendum on Community Right to Build Order, might impact on planning further consultation with the next stage of the draft plan.

5. Social Media and Website coverage

Prior to the consultation process, the website was enhanced and refreshed, enabling it to be used to communicate to a wider audience. The site was promoted through the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan Facebook page which now has a reach of nearly 800. This increased significantly, the number of people viewing the website for information. Website hits increased as follows

- 17 in September
- 514 in October
- 167 November (up to 13th)

6. Conclusions

The consultation exercise was extremely successful in the following areas

- Raising awareness of the Neighbourhood Plan,
- The stage of progress it had reached
- Support for the Vision and Objectives.

The concept of the three pillars of sustainability and three cross cutting themes was well received and will need to be utilised in consulting on the draft plan and future referendum.

Appendix 1- Statement by Chris Balch on behalf of the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to public meeting on Market Square on Saturday 22nd^t October 2016

On behalf of the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group I wish to make the following statement which I hope will make a positive contribution to this evening's discussions. I am afraid that it is going to take a few minutes but please bear with me as it is important that the factual position is clear and there are no misunderstandings

I am going to cover 3 points:

1. What is the Neighbourhood Plan, how far have we got and what are the next steps?
2. What has been the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's response to the Joint Local Plan consultation and specifically the inclusion of the T3 Town Centre Site
3. What role can the Neighbourhood Plan play in both protecting and enhancing the market square, car parks and Leechwell Gardens and how can the community use the Neighbourhood Plan to help achieve its objectives.

Firstly Neighbourhood Planning is an opportunity provided by the Localism Act for communities to prepare part of the statutory development plan which helps guide future decisions regarding land use change and development. To be approved it has to be in broad compliance with the policies of the Local Plan and critically it has to command a majority of those voting in a local referendum. More than 1500 communities have embarked on the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. More than 100 have successfully passed referendum.

For nearly 3 years the Steering Group, which is entirely voluntary, supported by some resource provided by Totnes Town Council, has been working away on the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan for a town which has unique qualities but like many places feels under pressure. We have held a wide range of consultation events – exhibitions, workshops and drop in sessions and have pulled together an evidence base covering jobs and the economy, housing, traffic and transport, renewable energy and the environment and public space and recreation. We have tried to draw on the work of the many organisations and groups active in the town. Where there are gaps in information we have undertaken surveys for example a housing needs survey, a business survey on the industrial estate and with sports clubs. We have also undertaken a review of potential development sites, so we now have a detailed and up to date understanding of the opportunities and challenges which face the town over the next 15 to 20 years. In our opinion this is a much more robust basis for planning at a local level than that available to South Hams.

Using this understanding we have prepared a draft vision and set of objectives which we think reflects what people have said to us. This is presently being tested out at a series of consultation events and I would encourage you to engage with this, or go online at www.totnesneighbourhoodplan.org and let us know if you think we are heading in the right direction.

We believe that a Neighbourhood Plan for Totnes should be aiming to deliver genuine sustainable development in a way which captures the unique and distinctive features of the town ensuring that these are maintained and enhanced. This means finding the right balance between economic, environmental and community objectives. We have identified 3 cross cutting themes which we feel

should be given priority – transport and movement, health and well-being and community led and owned development. It will come as little surprise to you that the market square and town centre car parks area is a critical component in planning the future of Totnes. It will need to be the subject of specific policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. We have now embarked on drafting these policies with the aim of getting a draft plan together for further consultation before submitting it to South Hams to start the formal examination and approval process.

At this point I want to address the JLP and South Hams consultation process which they kicked off in the summer. I think it is true to say that after nearly 3 years of working in a vacuum as South Hams struggled to progress with updating their Local Plan, there was some relief that the JLP documents provided some sense of the strategic context within which the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan would fit. There are definitely some things with which we agree – for example the need to focus growth on Plymouth and the surrounding fringe. We also broadly agree with the level of growth envisaged for Totnes and the conclusion that this cannot be entirely accommodated within the town boundaries. However in our detailed response which is available on the South Hams consultation portal we challenge the out of date and flawed nature of the information which they have used in relation to potential sites. In the case of T3 this simply involved reusing information assembled for the 2010 Site Allocation DPD. The site covers the land in public ownership in and around the Town Centre.

In our response we pointed out

- 1 The Grove School was no longer available given the reinvestment in the Primary School onsite rather than relocation as previously envisaged
- 2 That the Leechwell Gardens has become established as a highly valued area of public open space in which the community have invested heavily. It should not be developed
- 3 Casting doubt on the ability to develop on the car parks in such a way as to maintain car parking spaces.

While acknowledging that a small amount of development might be achievable we made it clear in our response that

- a) A Master Plan for the Market Square and surrounding properties is required.
- b) That for any development to be acceptable would need to be heavily design dependent (given that the site is part of or abuts a conservation area) and conditional on community approval
- c) The market space footprint must not be reduced including market car park and
- d) Development implementation must not threaten the livelihood of traders

The Neighbourhood Plan Group have analysed the responses which were made to the JLP consultation exercise which has revealed the following:

Of the 1000 or more responses to the Draft Joint Local Plan for South Hams and West Devon

- 45% of all comments related to Totnes (incl Dartington & Berry Pomeroy)
- 50% of Totnes responses were concerns about T3 Central Area

This shows the strength of feeling which exists about the importance of the Market Square and demonstrates the engagement of the community in the life of the town. We have provided our analysis of responses to South Hams planners and a follow up meeting is taking place to discuss the implications for both the JLP and Totnes Neighbourhood Plan. Candidly our concern is that unless

South Hams remove or dramatically amend the allocation affecting T3 there is a danger that it undermines our ability to deliver a Neighbourhood Plan which local people will support. At the moment people are struggling to understand the relationship between the JLP and Neighbourhood Plan. We will be arguing with South Hams planners that while they could identify the market square and car parks as an opportunity for positive change they should not specify any scale or mix of development and leave it to the Neighbourhood Plan to put forward appropriate policies which can command the support of the community. It would be fantastic if this meeting could endorse this approach as it will strengthen our hand in our discussions with South Hams

3 So how can the community use the Neighbourhood Plan to deliver what we want for the Market Square, car parks and wider town centre.

First, we can use the Neighbourhood Plan to designate Leechwell Gardens as Local Green Space which will protect it from future development

Second, we make it a requirement that any proposals which are brought forward in the future have to be the subject of a detailed masterplan which has been subject to consultation with key stakeholders (market traders and businesses) and the wider community

Third, we can stipulate that any future change in the Market Square and Car park area must ensure that the number of parking spaces serving the town centre and the number of trading pitches are maintained..

Fourth, we can seek to ensure that any new development which takes place in the vicinity of the Market Square and car park contributes to the improvement of the public realm which could undoubtedly be improved to enhance these important community assets.

Clearly the detailed wording of such policies needs careful consideration –so we need people who can help us make sure that the Neighbourhood Plan helps deliver what the community wants and makes Totnes an ever better place to live, work and do business.

I am happy to answer any questions which you may have as I appreciate that this is quite complex and I have included a lot of information..

CENTRAL AREA T3 Extract of Neighbourhood Plan response to JLP For information.

It is essential that the Central Area should be an important constituent within the Neighbourhood Plan for the town. A Master Plan for the Market Square and surrounding properties is required.

T3 as included in the DPD comprised four sites, the Market Square and Civic Hall car park, the Central Car parks, the Grove School and Leechwell Gardens. The original DPD gave overall allocation of units for T3 of 90.

The information included in Joint Local Plan consultation document as T3 includes the original allocation. This needs to be updated to reflect the continued use of the Grove School making it unavailable for development. The original estimate for the Grove area was 20 units out of the total of 70.

For the remainder of T3 the question is what can and should reasonably be delivered by way of new housing and town centre uses.

Work on the Neighbourhood Plan has identified support for the principle of upgrading the Market Square and Civic Hall. However the following are key principles of any development

- * Heavily design dependent and conditional on community approval
- * Market space footprint must not be reduced including market car park
- * Development implementation must not threaten livelihood of traders

The current plan for T3 incorporates the large Public Open Space opened in 2010 known as “Leechwell Garden”. This is an actively used and highly valued area of public open space incorporating play facilities which are currently being upgraded. This area needs to be removed from any potential allocation.

This leaves the existing car parks which are in the ownership of South hams District Council. Previous proposals considered decking over Heath Nursery car park to provide 38 units (with no car parking for the dwellings and no employment land).

The viability of such proposals is clearly open to question. However some indicative work undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan group demonstrates that it may be possible to achieve some development without materially reducing car park provision. However in view of the sensitivity of this location and the need for detailed master planning it is recommended that a much reduced number of houses is used (suggest 20 to 30 max)

Appendix 2

Comments from Consultation

Comment from website

With the great increase of housing and elderly accommodation, stronger, and safer, connection between Bridgetown, Steamer Quay and Totnes is needed. Footbridges connecting Steamer Quay, Vire Island and The Plains is a very desirable goal. The connection would not only be physical but psychological I would venture. The immediate objections that would be raised from the TBA, could, I believe with creative co-operation, be overcome.

I may have missed these points in your document, but in case I haven't..... Many agencies, civic and commercial, affect the visual quality, navigation and experience of our streets. They create excess and redundant signage, unsuitable and unmaintained street furniture, with bollards that have no function save to hinder pedestrians and limit pavement width forcing wheel and pushchairs into the road. Businesses can inhibit pavement space too with over use or bad placing of 'A' signs. Also there is no management of temporary posting of advertisements, official or otherwise. No one takes them down. An oversight organ is needed for control and co-ordination of all these. If Steamer Quay was re-zoned, A3, A4, A5, C1, and D2, it would be possible to capitalise on the side of the river that has space, parking and most of the days sun! Bars, cafes, hotels etc., would open up life on the poorly serviced Bridgetown side of the river. Enhancement/ acknowledgement of the rivers springs and wells, both hidden and seen, that made Totnes possible. A project for the public art and design enrichment policy perhaps?

I was reading a Totnes Times article about using house boats and containers to help with the shortage of affordable housing, good idea. There also maybe an idea worth adopting from France. All the trading estates have one or two floors of housing on top of the units.

Totnes trading estate would be ideal for this, the base units may need strengthening but putting two floors above with an easily added external lift would be simple. All of our high streets were built with a couple of floors of housing above, why waste opportunity with a trading estate.

I've just had a look at the 'Have We Got the Priorities Right?' leaflet. The pillars and themes model is a good way to present the information. Overall, I think you have the priorities right. I might add that community and/or local ownership of local commercial and industrial land and buildings is also important - perhaps it is there and I have overlooked it. In any case, well done, so far!

In response to your leaflet asking 'have we got the priorities right', I would say 'yes, you have!' I would only add that protecting the environment should extend beyond the 'local green/open space' you identify in the leaflet to include other areas of civic value e.g. the market square and adjoining car parks. Whilst you do mention the market square within 'key community projects' I am not sure that this represents a sufficiently robust response to the increasingly aggressive tactics of developers in apparent collusion with the District Council. Good luck with the rest of the process!

Post Its

Culture & Heritage	
Learn from Exeter fire- access waterside water for Medieval buildings	Embed creativity in the Plan
Art & Culture for All	Community Engagement + participation through Arts & Culture can deliver health outcomes for the town not only economic ones
Housing	
Low cost housing preferably cost price for locals	Affordable Housing for local people, that stays affordable when re-sold
No new second homes allowed in Totnes	Stop the infilling- Plenty of land around Totnes to build much needed objective of more houses
Affordable rented properties	C.I.L
Self build	
Community owned and Led	
Full access disabled toilets including Changing and Hoist facilities (i.e as in shopping Mall in Plymouth)	A community café with South facing (off road) terrace
More Facilities in Bridgetown, recycling bins, recycling site, community hub	Sports facilities (like Ashburton swimming pool)
Open Space	
More green space & Children's' play area	National Park
More nature focussed play areas. I child mind + all children unanimously prefer Leechwell Gardens over any other park. Totnes children will benefit from parks preserved with hills, trees, hedges, ponds, boulder + NATURE	Totnes Weir- Swallowfields. New Bathing recreational area by the River
Economy/ Tourism	
Small business workshops, affordable pos share	Pedestrian zone Fore street/High Street
Creating a public interest but non cultural purpose bulletin board up across the Tourist Info centre benefitting local businesses and issues in general It seems to be a space which people approach in an unbiased way	Who benefits from generalised tourism? Who suffers? A cost/benefit analysis of Totnes tourism _ Dept. of Sustainable Tourism. Institute of Place making – Manchester University
Mention Totnes Tourism in the intro +/- eg shops geared to tourists, congestion + local economy including camp site.	However, for local residents it is necessary to travel further afield for many purchases (eg men's clothes)
Tourist Centre x 3	Support Eco-tourism that encourages visitors who are interested in contributing to environment, social, economic improvement

Support retail that meets local purchasing needs (thus preventing lots of travel for shopping)	Be more specific about the sort of tourism to support rather than a blanket support (ie eco-tourism is supported whenever possible
Transport and Movement	
High Street Traffic	Traffic free centre
Pedestrian Zone High Street, just Bob the Bus and Loading/unloading before 9 am	Planning for People not Cars is all very well but not always possible
Traffic Grove	Access between carparks
Negotiate – Discounted Local fares on Dart Valley Railway linking up Buckfastleigh and Totnes	We badly need a footpath (or at least a reduction in speed limit) on Newton Road towards Littlehempston
Connects to public transport hubs	High Street owners will be required to maintain to a safe standard to prevent danger to pedestrians
Facilities for cycle parking related to common routes & purposes of cycle journeys	Any priority parking for local people
Make lifestyle exercise (ie walking & Cycling) easier	
Health and Wellbeing	
Support local food systems that are supporting healthy eating	