

Informal presentation by Mike Rigby to the Project Team 30th January 2017

Introduction:

Mike explained that Bishops Lydeard (BL) Neighbourhood Plan (BLNP) was the first plan in Somerset to be adopted. He said that the key drivers for doing a NP were:

- BL has approximated 1000 houses and it is in the Core Strategy to have another 200 homes; a 20% increase.
- There is not much for tourists to do in BL.
- They wanted to look at further employment options.

Their initial survey showed that 25% of people live and work in BL which surprised them.

They formed a sub-committee of the Parish Council of which 4 Parish Councillors joined the sub-committee. This sub-committee reported to the Parish Council. They held mainly monthly meetings which were open to the public. Their discussions could be heard by those attending and then it was opened to the public to comment. From a population of approximately 3000, 5 to 20 people turned up each month. From the interest, they drew on the public to have input on topic groups which helped break down barriers. They split into topic groups and had a leader for each section and co-opted the public on.

Policies came out of the information they gathered.

They had a 50% return on the business questionnaire and a very high return on the residents' questionnaire.

They had one person driving the project through which was the clerk in their case. The clerk made sure that milestones were reached.

Their questionnaire?

The questionnaire was key to gathering information. The clerk broke down the data and produced the report for using as plan information to take forward.

At the referendum, you need 50% +1 to vote for it. They also needed clarity that the community has taken part in the process and it's what they want.

All their events and meetings hammered home what the plan can achieve. They talked about CIL money. Development money being spent in BL was a driver to the public.

Anne Rhodes, Taunton Deane, was very helpful.

Adapting the plan, getting good information and consultation kept the process going which took them about 4 years.

Costs?

The main cost was on the planning expert. In hindsight, their advice was cautious. They regret not taking a stronger line on housing in small spaces; they feel they should have stood their ground, put it in and seen whether the Inspector threw it out. Taunton Deane pretty much ignore this part of what's in their NP.

Consulting with the public?

They held public exhibitions. They set up options on displays for comment ie asked landowners and public to put ideas of where they wanted housing; community chose.

Produced leaflets.

Put posters on noticeboards

They started with putting up flow charts of the process, asking "what do you think of a NP?", "any other topics you think we should look at?".

Every house got a questionnaire and at the end a leaflet.

Formal or informal consultations with Highways or Planning Department as they went along?

Yes, especially with Planning. BLNP group threw their ideas to Anne Rhodes and she gave quick responses. Not as much involvement with Highways as their considerations were obvious and nothing was unexpected.

In hindsight, were there any areas they wish they had spent more/too much time on?

The test will be how their NP guides housing (200 homes expected). Wish they had spent more time on how some policies would be used in the future ie would it work? Wished they had not just spoken to the policy makers. Should have spoken to the decision makers as well. They spent most of their time on the housing development issue.

Any plans in place regarding increasing tourism now?

Wanted to put it in NP as a defence mechanism as there was a planning application 10 years ago, which resulted in just housing. The tourism part of that application has not yet happened but the housing has.

Have you been influential in influencing the road – any advice?

At BL, they have been fairly influential at Taunton Deane. They have put things coherently and in a way that they Planning Officer can understand it. It has been possible to influence planning. However, in larger strategic infrastructure projects, they can't really have a say. The way the government now deals at local level has been taken away and now national decisions are made.

We know the A358 will be bypassed. In BLNP the focus was on housing, was there not much on the environment or heritage?

We had to finish the NP by last year as we knew housing was coming. We had to work to that timetable as it was a priority.

How did you deal with CIL priorities?

We asked the specific question at events; cycle path was a big priority. Homes will deliver large chunk of cash. The worry is how having the money will affect the Parish Council.

Any other ways of using the Borough Council?

It was not something they encountered. Maybe have a conversation with Anne Rhodes about any issues for the Steering Group to consider.

Core Strategy review should have started last year. Tim Burton says it will take at least 2 years.

Thoughts?

My advice is crack on as there are diminishing resources for Parish Councils to put together NPs.

Household survey process?

Printed and enveloped then hand delivered. Got a good response.

Had to chase businesses and there were different questions for the businesses.

They were returned to the Clerk by freepost and they also had boxes out. There was a 6 week return period.

Worry is the impact from other Parishes ie traffic from other areas coming through our Parish. Any issues for you?

No, not really an issue for our NP. Will have to be dealt with if Norton Manor Camp is developed. You can address it in your NP by saying it is an issue but you don't have to solve it/find a solution.