

## **From Parish Plan to Neighbourhood Plan – is it a good idea?**

In March 2021 I tabled an agenda item to discuss whether we should consider developing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) that would provide us with a measure of control over planning in our parish and also complement our existing Parish Plan.

At the PC meeting I reported on a meeting I had with the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Planning team to discuss the steps they had gone through to gain acceptance of their plan. (For those interested I have a ppt presentation explaining the NP process.)

Developing an NP is a 7 stage process and at a PC meeting in late 2021 it was agreed that I would at least look into Stage 1 which is to register our interest by submitting an application of intent to DCC.

On 1<sup>st</sup> February I attended a CDALC Neighbourhood Planning briefing. There was a presentation by a member of DCC Spatial Policy Team explaining what an NP is and the resources and funding available for those considering setting up an NP. Lanchester Parish Clerk gave a very good presentation on the issues they had faced in getting their NP developed and adopted by DCC.

### **Observations**

- Lanchester had a team of about 12 people working over a 7 year period (Covid caused some delay). Witton Gilbert had a similar sized steering group working for about 6 years. In both cases, there was a lot of community involvement and some appropriately qualified professional people on the teams.
- The process is lengthy, requires a project champion and, at the very least, an enthusiastic steering group prepared to commit to probably a 5 year project. Do we think WR&L would be able to create such a group?
- Both Witton Gilbert and Lanchester seemed to generate a lot of community involvement. Would we in WR&L get the necessary community buy-in to the project?
- The question still remains – is it a good idea to develop an NP for our parish?  
Given that an NP focus' on planning matters only and we could not rescind any existing planning permission, e.g. Station Road development, the answer might well be negative. Possibly the DCC development plan can address any planning issues we might have. Indeed, perhaps the issues we need to address in the parish are not planning related, in which case we do not need an NP.

### **Recommendations**

1. Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the process are submission of standard forms so I recommend that we at least register our intent by submitting the forms to DCC. There is nothing lost by so doing.
2. The most active members of our community are to be found in the Village Partnership. I recommend a presentation at one of their meetings to gauge their interest and comments.
3. We as a parish council give some thought to the strategic issues (including planning) that may face the parish in the next 5 -10 years. The following table indicates policy areas we may wish to consider. (They generally align with those in Neighbourhood Plans.)

<b>Policy Area</b>	<b>Features</b>
<b>Housing</b>	Design and location of future developments
<b>Amenities</b>	Schools, doctors, pharmacies, etc.
<b>Community facilities</b>	Shops, cafes, entertainment, public buildings, etc.
<b>Local economy</b>	Business development, service providers, etc.
<b>Natural environment</b>	Landscape, biodiversity, green spaces, etc.
<b>Social environment</b>	Care for the elderly, support for young people, etc.
<b>Energy</b>	Conservation, off-grid generation, renewables, etc.
<b>Telecommunications</b>	Ultra-fast broadband, etc.
<b>Voluntary sector</b>	Development of Village Partnership
<b>Transport</b>	Traffic control measures, cycle tracks, walk ways, parking, etc.
<b>Community engagement</b>	Greater involvement of residents