

MINUTE of the meeting of Bristol City Planning Department and Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network

Thursday the 19th July 2012 - (5.30 – 7.00 p.m.) at Brunel House.

Present

Bristol City Council (BCC)

Zoe Willcox	Service Director Planning & Sustainable Development
Sarah O'Driscoll	Service Manager Strategic Planning
Peter Westbury	DM North Area Team
Julie Seaton	Service Manager Development Services

Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network

Name	Group
Alison Bromilow (Chair)	Redland & Cotham Amenities Society
Jeff Bishop	Localism Network
Katie Lea	Localism Network
Melissa Mean	Redcliffe Way NDF
David Holford	Myrtle Triangle NDF
Martyn Chinn	Lockleaze Voice NDF
Richard Curtis	Planning Solutions
Jill Kempshall	Sustainable Westbury on Trym
Clare Wilks	Westbury Park Community Association
Susan Carter	Ramblers Association
Nigel Tibbs	The Bishopston Society
Andy King	SPU / Portland and Brunswick Sq
Hilary Long	Westbury on Trym Association
David Mayer	Westbury on Trym Association
Wendy Pollard	Richmond Terrace Residents Association
Peter Badger	Old Market Community Association
David Farnsworth	
Paul Bradburn	Old Market Community Association
Willie Harbinson	Old Market Community Association
Helen Bone	Lawrence Weston
Mark Pepper	Lawrence Weston
Val Pospischil	Lawrence Weston
Margaret Viner	Lockleaze Voice NDF
Maggie Shapland	Clifton and Hotwells Improvements Society
Rosemary Evitts	
Chris Jefferies	CHIS
Iris Eiting	Knowle West RPG
Ken Jones	Knowle West RPG
Bob Franks	Northern Slopes Initiative
Dennis Gornall	Hotwells and Cliftonwood Community Association
Helen Pillinger	FoE, Bristol Civic Society, Horfield ROSE
Martin Fodor	Sustainable Bishopston
Jane Cunningham	FoE, Horfield and Lockleaze NP
Nancy Carlton	BS3- Windmill Hill
Colin Brain	BS3 Windmill Hill

Main Agenda item: **Neighbourhood Development Plans**

1. **Welcome /Introductions** - *Alison Bromilow & Sarah O'Driscoll*

2. **Getting involved in planning for your neighbourhood** - Jeff Bishop

Jeff Bishop set out the ways in which the community could get involved in planning. Neighbourhood Development Planning is hitting the headlines but there are other ways of communities having an effect on how development happens in their area, all of which are less onerous than producing a NDP under the Localism Act provisions.

The main opportunity is for community members to get involved in shaping the planning policy for their area is through the local planning authority planning consultation process. Bristol is currently considering the responses to the **Sites Allocation and Development Management Policy** documents, and to the **Bristol Central Area Action Plan**. Further stages of consultation will be the Publication Stage.

Development proposals are still coming forward through the **planning application** system and communities in Bristol are able to get involved at the earliest stage, thanks to the provisions of the Statement of Community Involvement and the work of the NPN pre application monitoring team in helping to get developers to talk to the planning groups before they have finalised their designs. Communities must continue to engage in this area of planning, in order not to miss out on the opportunity to shape development in their area.

The principle of **pre application community involvement** has been included in the new National Planning Policy Framework; developers are to be encouraged by the LPA (local planning authority) to engage with the community at pre application stage, as well as with the LPA itself and other 'consenting bodies'. *NPPF paragraphs 188 – 191.*

Bristol has 33 conservation areas and is currently doing **Character Appraisals** for those areas. This will be a consideration when planning applications are determined. Planning groups are invited to work with the Conservation officers to draw up these appraisals. Groups for areas not within conservation area boundaries can use the same tool to produce Character Appraisals for their areas.

Other tools such as **community plans**, and **design statements**, can be used by communities. In Bristol, two **community led plans** are being used as evidence in the drawing up of the Central Area Action Plan – Hotwells and Cliftonwood Community Traffic Strategy and Old Market Community Planning workshop report (*see BCC Central Area Action plan webpage*). In Wolverhampton, the Neighbourhood Development Plan drawn up as a front runner project has been incorporated into the emerging strategic planning documents.

3. **Neighbourhood Development Plans in Bristol** - Sarah O'Driscoll

a) **How to apply for Neighbourhood Planning Area and Neighbourhood Development Forum status**

The three front runner NDFs went out for consultation on the formal Neighbourhood Planning Area and the Forum designation. Invitations for the next round of applications will be sent out in October 2012, with the first stage being the agreement of a Neighbourhood Planning Area.

Groups who are considering applying for NPA and NDF status are encouraged to discuss this with Sarah O'Driscoll before submitting an application. It is important that the boundaries of the areas are appropriate, to avoid leaving any areas out that might need to be part of the plan, and to avoid including areas that other community groups might want to bring forward.

The next NPN / LPA quarterly meeting in October 2012 will be an opportunity to discuss this further.

Designation is by the LPA and the process is set out in the Localism Act.

Neighbourhood Development Plans are expected to enable growth and development and bring forward the right type of housing and employment for their area. They cannot be used to

prevent development in a particular area, except by identifying other areas within the Neighbourhood Planning Area where development is appropriate.

b) **How BCC support and resources will be prioritised.**

The community must produce the document themselves using their own evidence and evidence provided by the LPA.

There is a duty for the LPA to provide support for Neighbourhood Development Forums who wish to bring forward plans under the localism act. However, no additional resources have been allocated by central government to the LPA to help with this. Bristol as LPA has therefore identified criteria to prioritise which groups they can give the most help to and which will be supported by information provision only. Criteria such as levels of deprivation (as defined in LSOA deprivation indices), location of area with regard to Core Strategy regeneration areas and clear opportunities for development will be used to identify which Forum groups will be given most support.

c) **Key skills required by Neighbourhood Planning Forums**

A number of skills have been identified as important for groups to take forward a ND Plan. The ability of a group to show that they already have or don't have those skills will not preclude their designation as a Neighbourhood Planning Forum, but the group will need to be prepared to get training or assistance in those skill areas. BCC and NPN will aim to help identify possible sources of training for these groups.

A programme for involving the wider community throughout the drafting of the NDP will be required. A group's ability to communicate with the wider community will need to be considered and methods of communication set up. The group will need to ensure it is able to plan and manage a project to a deadline and to deal with funding and other resources. A group that has already had experience of involvement in the planning process through engagement with the strategic plan consultation and the planning applications system will be in a better position than one with no planning experience.

4. **Resource implications of Neighbourhood Development Plans**

- lessons from front runners

Lockleaze - *Martyn Chinn*

Martyn gave a brief update about the progress of the Lockleaze Voice NDF and some of the issues that they had encountered.

The issue of skills within the group had been a major issue for the LVNDF. There were no local residents with planning or design backgrounds, such as the other NDF had, although the group had been involved in the drawing up of the Lockleaze Vision with the help of Planning Aid and BCC over a 3/4 year period. The group had been able to use agencies such as Princes Foundation, Campaign for Protection of Rural England, Planning Aid and University of Cardiff students. They had also found funding for an architect to draw up some of their ideas. There was no funding from government and the LPA had retained the £20,000 to pay for the independent inspector and the referendum (though the LPA had offered £2,000 of this to all three groups, LVNDF had not taken this up).

The group had been able to tie some community involvement with the Site Allocations consultation process, which had been helpful. The turnout for their community involvement events had been very low. Martyn said that they had found it difficult to keep 21 people engaged in the group and only a core group attended the meetings. Meetings could be as many as 3 a week. The group was trying to use small sub-groups to look at individual topics but this was proving difficult to organise.

Bedminster - *David Holford*

David Holford explained that the Myrtle Triangle Neighbourhood Development plan had come out of the Sites Allocation response, as the BS3 planning group suggested that a couple of sites in separate ownership should be considered together, and the site of the BCC care home

which was to be closed should include a small park help with the low level of public open green space in the neighbourhood. The group worked with a number of organisations including University of Bristol and with professionals, though an issue with indemnity insurance for free advice was identified for groups using members of companies like engineers. They calculated that the work value to date in people's time was of the order of £150,000. They too had identified the difficulty of keeping 21 people fully engaged as a Forum, but felt that this was in the context of a span of participation which included a few minutes for people responding to street surveys, to group involvement over say 5 years. They pointed out the expectation of community involvement for a 1 hectare site meant that 4 hectares of houses needed to be kept informed about the project, as well as the wider community. The issue of the cost of a referendum also was of concern, because the site is on the corner of two wards and does not have a polling station within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Redcliffe - *Melissa Mean*

Melissa Mean explained that the Redcliffe Way NDF had started with a vision of turning a 12 acre site in their neighbourhood which was currently 8/9 acres of tarmac and road, into a site with 3/4 acres of road and 8/9 acres of development and public open space. Melissa too pointed out the lack of resources because the £20,000 government fund was given to the LPA not the front runner groups. It had been assessed by BCC that the project would cost £180,000. The Neighbourhood Development Plan produced by a NDF would therefore save BCC that cost. Getting work done for a group meant begging favours from organisations. Students could not do exactly what a group wanted because their work needed to be part of their course work. The Princes Foundation enquiry by design process was a particular tool and did not allow much customisation. There was an issue with some of the BCC departments who were not prepared to work with the group, though some were. There was no enthusiasm within the council for the project.

The number of people in the group was set by government at 21, the group found that this was too many for a consensus to be achieved and too few to allow effective sub group working.

Engaging with other community groups and with members of the local community was very hard and time consuming, but needed to be done to ensure that the plan was approved at the referendum stage.

Finally, Melissa pointed out that in the end, the plan was just a piece of paper. It would not guarantee that the development would take place unless a group is able to get developers on board to work with them to come up with a design.

In Questions at the end, the following points were made:

All the projects were on Bristol City Council owned land.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan process discriminates against disadvantaged communities. Communities with higher land values will be able to achieve more. The city will need to address the issue of how to challenge the disparity.

Community involvement will need to be carefully designed to ensure engagement but avoid consultation fatigue.

A NDP can go for a higher standard of energy efficiency / sustainability / climate change response in the plan than is included in the Core Strategy but it will have to be deliverable, so viability checks will be needed.

5. Training opportunities and future events - *Jeff Bishop*

Jeff Bishop briefly outlined the programme for bringing council officers up to date with the provisions of the Localism Act and in particular with the Neighbourhood Development Plan process. Neighbourhood Partnership coordinating officers in particular need to understand this as they are responsible for engaging with the communities in their partnership area.

Neighbourhood Coordinators have already been informed of the Network Planning Groups in their areas and updated about the pre application community involvement process which is led through the Network planning groups.