

RS PRESENTATION FOR 11 JAN 14

Introduction

Hello. We've put together this exhibition to enable the people of Oundle to understand what's going on with the development of your Neighbourhood Plan. And I need to stress that this is your Plan it's not our Plan it has to be owned by the people of Oundle. There are 2 parts to the exhibition: first a brief overview from me in which I want to cover what the Neighbourhood Plan is and what it can, and (equally importantly) cannot, do for us; hopefully add clarity around the work already done and the relationship with the Oundle 2020 Vision; then look at the substance of the Plan and the time period over which we need to develop and complete it: and finally the contribution required by the towns people of Oundle in considering the objectives and the actions we need to address. The second part of the exhibition is the displays you can see around the Church and the members of the Neighbourhood Planning Working Party who are here to provide more detail, answer your questions and show you how you may contribute.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan

So, first what exactly is a Neighbourhood Plan? Essentially, it's a new way for communities to decide the future for the place where they live. The Plan will enable you to choose where you want new homes, shops and offices to be built, to have your say on what those new buildings should look like and what supporting infrastructure should be provided. However, "no development" is not an option because the number of homes we need to accommodate is set at a higher level in the government chain!

Central government introduced the right of communities to do a Neighbourhood Plan through the Localism Act and when it's completed, the Plan is adopted by Oundle Town Council and East Northants District Council and becomes part of the Local Development Plan; it carries real legal weight and decision makers are obliged to consider proposals for development in the neighbourhood against the Neighbourhood Plan.

The other major advantage of developing a Plan is financial; within the housing development process there is going to be a pot of money called the Community Infrastructure Levy, which is paid by developers to support additional local infrastructure; with a Plan we will get 25% of this pot but without one we get only 15%. And the important point is that we get to decide how the money is spent.

It's also worth mentioning at this stage that there has been a good deal of activity in support of the Neighbourhood Plan but under other banners. We have an almost complete Town Design Statement; this is another piece of work which will be adopted by East Northants Council and will be used to guide planners and developers about the style, look and feel of Oundle. Next, the Portas Implementation Group has been working on taking some of Mary Portas's work on protecting town centres and applying them to Oundle. Finally, the items which we recognize as being worth pursuing on behalf of the town but which won't, for one reason or another, be suitable for the Neighbourhood Plan will be installed into a Community Plan; some elements of this work have already been addressed and others will continue to be developed after the neighbourhood Plan has been finished. I must also mention that we are commissioning a Transport Study to better inform us about the potential solutions to the difficulties we encounter with traffic.

The Journey so Far

For Oundle, the journey towards a Neighbourhood Plan started back in 2010 when a group of Parish Councillors decided to work on something they called the Oundle 2020 Vision. They recognised that a number of aspects of the Town's development needed careful management and they came up with a vision for Oundle:

"Our vision for Oundle in 2020 is that it is a stunningly beautiful thriving market town renowned for being a fantastic place to live and work and a joy to visit". The aim was for the vision to be realised through the delivery of 5 key strategic objectives:

1. The protection and preservation of the heritage of the town;

2. An expanded tourist economy, built on the rich and diverse cultural identity the town already has;
3. Increased recreational use of the local countryside and riverside amenities;
4. A re-designed infrastructure to accommodate current growth in housing and population;
5. Improved and developed services for all the population.

With those objectives in mind, work began on a wide range of topics but before work on the 2020 Vision had progressed very far the Government introduced the Localism Act which I mentioned earlier and in Oundle the focus changed slightly to enable us take advantage of the benefits offered by the Neighbourhood Planning process.

The Substance of the Plan

The substance of the Plan is shown here and these points are set out on the Objectives boards; these are the draft objectives we think we need to address and we think we've covered everything we need to in the strategic, land-use based, category but if you think we've missed something then let us know. As you go around the exhibition you will see that we've offered a range of actions against each Objective and it's here that there is enormous scope for you to be involved. You'll find a member of the Working Party at each of the Objectives boards armed with "stick-its" and pens; they are ready to add your ideas for the development of the Objectives to our lists of actions. So please don't be shy; do engage and let us have your ideas, your views, so that we can better understand what's best for Oundle.

The Timeline

We have necessarily engaged a couple of consultants to assist us in taking the Plan forward and we now have a clear understanding of the timeline we hope to follow and the events we need to mount to ensure that we reach the end of our journey with an acceptable Plan. I haven't attempted to put all the detail on the screen but you will be able to see the programme on one of the boards; the headline is that we aim to

complete the exercise by the middle of next year (2015). This may seem a long time but if the Plan is to have the necessary validity it needs to be supported by a substantial evidence base and we need to complete a lot of consultation with potentially interested parties. In addition to the folks living in Oundle these “Stakeholders” include local businesses and landowners, adjoining Parishes, East Northants Council and Northamptonshire County Council. When the Plan is complete it will go forward for independent examination to ensure that we’ve ticked all the necessary boxes and there will be a referendum which gives the people of Oundle the chance to have the final word.

Conclusion

To summarize before letting you have the opportunity to see more of the detail on the boards: I hope you now have a better idea of what a Neighbourhood Plan is and what it can, and can’t do; how the Oundle Plan is linked to the 2020 Vision; the timeline we’re following; the substance of the Plan and finally what you can do to help. In order to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Localism Act we need to pull together, prioritise our ideas, and draw up our plans. With a Neighbourhood Plan, the community is able to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in the Parish. We will be able to say where new homes and offices should be built, and what they should look like. The Neighbourhood Plan will set a vision for the future but it can only be achieved with your help.