

Dorstone Neighbourhood Plan

Consultation and Communication Statement

Consultation and Communication

From the outset the Steering Group placed great importance in involving the community in the neighbourhood planning process as well as providing regular updates on progress of its preparation.

Regular reports have been included in the Parish Council Update, a quarterly report which is circulated by the Dorstone Front Room (DFR) via E Mail to over 120 homes in the parish. Hard copies of this Update are also available in the DFR and on Village Notice Boards.

A Neighbourhood Forum was also established consisting of over 40 Parishioners who were willing to take a more detailed interest in the development of the Plan. Members of the forum assisted in trialling the Questionnaire. They also received copies of the fourth draft of the “core” policy sections of the Plan and were able to submit their comments.

A Neighbourhood Plan section was also established with the Dorstone Community web site. This provided open access to the notes of the Steering group, papers prepared for the Group, relevant maps and other information about the Group’s work.

Early Stage Consultation

The Group recognised the importance of effective consultation in the early stage of the preparation of the Plan (January – August 2013) in order to identify the issues which were of paramount concern to Parishioners. This information would form the basis of the Adult and Youth Questionnaires, the results of which form a significant evidential basis for the contents of the Plan itself. This process can be summarised as follows:-

- To systematically collect this information a simple arrangement was devised using small cards, with attractive graphic art, prepared by a member of the group, covering the likely major topics to be covered by the Plan and a question to guide the kind of response that would be helpful:-
 - **New Housing** – “What do you think about future housing development in the area.?”
 - **Farming and Small Business** – “What can we do to support our farmers?” / “How can we encourage small business?”
 - **Infrastructure** – “What improvements do we need?” – mobile phones/broadband/transport/flooding/sewage
 - **Landscape and Heritage** – “How can we protect the landscape?” – conservation/wildlife.
 - **Renewable Energy** – solar- wind – water
 - **Tourism** – “What leisure facilities to we want?” / Do we want to encourage tourists? If so how?
- These cards were used in a variety of situations, for example:-
 - On the annual Plant Day (equivalent of a Spring Fair) on May 19th 2013 the Group had a stall to talk of Parishioners and invite them to write down their thoughts on the cards. There was a leaflet drop to all households before Plant Day to tell parishioners that this opportunity to give their views would be present. 55 contributions were received from this event alone.
 - Members of the Group visited all Village organisations, (Village Hall Committee, Playing Fields Committee, the Church, Youth Club and Toddlers group and the local WI. Again the cards were used to record members views.

- Cards were left in the Dorstone Front room and visitors were encouraged to fill in the cards.
- Given the importance of the farming community and small business owners a specific meeting was held to discuss their views on the future development of the parish.
- The Annual Parish Meeting held on May 22nd 2013 concentrated on the Neighbourhood Plan, explaining its nature and purpose and asking for views, recorded on the comment cards referred to above.
- By the end of June the Group felt they had sufficient feedback to commence work on the design of the Parish wide questionnaire.

Questionnaire Preparation, Distribution and Analysis

The importance of having an effective Questionnaire was seen as critical by the Steering Group and therefore the period of June – December was devoted to its preparation, distribution and analysis. It was agreed that there would be an individual adult questionnaire and a shorter Youth Version for 10-15 year olds.

The main stages were as follows:-

- **Preparation** – the Consultation Sub Group was responsible for drafting the Questionnaire. The objective was to keep it as simple and short as possible. The Parish Plan Questionnaire was used as a starting point and some questions were simply repeated without modification. Others were changed slightly to reflect experience gained in preparing the Parish Plan. The Herefordshire Neighbourhood Planning team also produced model questions which proved a helpful. New questions devised by the Sub group were also included. A third draft Questionnaire was submitted to the Steering Group at its meeting on September 4th. An amended fourth draft was trialled with six members of the neighbourhood Forum. Data Orchard who was engaged to undertake the final analysis of the Questionnaire, also provided very useful guidance in finalising the 6th Draft. The final version was approved by the Steering group on October 2nd. This version was formatted, ready for printing by a Parishioner John Platts. A copy of both Questionnaires can be viewed on the Neighbourhood Planning web site.
- **Distribution** – Each member of the Group was allocated a list of houses to personally deliver questionnaires. A questionnaire was provided for each adult and young person in the household. They were collected personally two weeks later. As an incentive, parishioners had the option of entering a cash prize draw for each completed questionnaire.
- **Analysis** - Data Orchard, a local Hereford research company was employed to undertake the analysis and they presented the results to the Steering Group on January 6th 2014.
- **Response rate** – the response rate was 74% of adult residents and 63% of young persons. The age of respondents also reflected that of the 2011 Census. There was also an even distribution in terms of length of time that respondents had lived in the parish. The Steering Group was very satisfied with this response rate and felt it is a very sound basis for assessing community views in terms of developing the policies contained in the DNP.
- **Feedback to the Community** – an Open Parish meeting was held on January 12th 2014 to present the results of the Questionnaire. The full results were also placed on the Neighbourhood Plan section of the Dorstone Community web site. Hard copies were available in the DFR.

Drafting the Plan

The three Sub Groups were charged with going through the Questionnaire results and to report back their conclusions to the Steering Group with a suggested first draft of the Plan itself. These were discussed and refined at the February and March meetings of the Steering Group. A consolidated version was then considered at the meeting held on April 30th, and considering these drafts occupied most of meetings held during the early summer. A third draft was agreed at the meeting held on July 16th and a fourth draft was then circulated to Neighbourhood Plan Forum members, with comments invited by the end of August. A hard copy of the 4th draft was also available in the DFR.

A critical factor in the development of the DNP was the re-introduction of a Settlement Boundary for the main village area. Given its importance the opportunity was taken for further direct consultation with the community. Again a stall was organised on the Annual Plant Day on May 19th which concentrated on explaining to visitors to the stall the rationale for having a settlement boundary and the proposed boundary itself. The stall attracted a stream of over 40 visitors the vast majority of whom supported the proposals as contained in the draft Plan. The Annual Parish Meeting held on May 21st also concentrated on this issue as well as explaining the proposed approach on the range of key issues contained in the DNP. Lastly another meeting was held on July 1st 2014 with Farmers and Small business owners to discuss the settlement boundary and related issues.

In the final stages of drafting the Plan the Steering group decided it was necessary to carry out a further Questionnaire in order to determine the community's views of three topics which had emerged as important during the final drafting of the Plan. These were:-

1. The development of intensive livestock installations
2. The possible future development of commercial scale Polytunnels
3. The development of new houses on existing dwelling sites outside the Settlement Boundary area, in order to meet the need to provide inter-generational housing for elderly grandparents or young adult children or to support the development of a small business on the existing premises.

The Group decided to carry out the questionnaire in the same manner as the original questionnaire, distributing it personally to all households and collecting the completed questionnaire. All adults 16 and over were eligible to complete the questionnaire. Replies were anonymous.

Given that only 4 questions were asked members of the Group carried the analysis and published the results on the Dorstone Front Room e mailing service. A 70% response rate was achieved.

During this drafting process the Group continued to benefit from the advice from Samantha Banks of the Herefordshire Neighbourhood Planning team and our Consultant Claire Rawlings. Advice was also sought from Hayley Crane of Herefordshire Housing Department on the importance subject of affordable housing.

Regulation 14 consultation formally starts on November 25th 2015 and will last until 31st January 2016.