

## **Berrington Parish Council – Community Led Plan**

Over the past 12 months the Parish Council has discussed the suggestion that the Parish of Berrington should undertake either a Neighbourhood Plan or a Community Led Plan. It was initially agreed that we should undertake a Community Led Plan to ensure that all the residents of the Berrington Parish were given an opportunity to bring forward their issues and aspirations and that Community Infrastructure Levy funds could be allocated accordingly.

A suggestion was made that the Parish should undertake a Neighbourhood Plan instead of a Community Led Plan. We have had three visits from officers from Shropshire Council who are currently involved with both schemes. The advice from the officers on all three occasions was that the right plan for the Parish of Berrington was a Community Led Plan. This was because a Neighbourhood Plan is a development plan which means that we may get more development than currently allocated through the adopted SAMDev Plan or the emerging Local Plan Review.

Parish Councils in areas which have an adopted Neighbourhood Plan receive 25% from total CIL proceeds rather than 15% in non-Neighbourhood Plan areas. This increase in the CIL allocation to the Parish Council is a Government initiative to encourage Parish/Town Councils to accept increased development. You can use your Neighbourhood Plan to allocate the sites you wish to be developed but it cannot be used to stop development, or overturn decisions made in other part of the Development Plan, i.e. the SAMDev Plan and Local Plan Review

The information regarding Neighbourhood and Community Led Plans contained in this article has been checked for accuracy by Shropshire Council's Planning Policy team.

To further understand our reasons for opting for a Community Led Plan an explanation of both schemes can be found below.

**Community led plans (CLP)** can help a community assess current and future potential issues and think about all aspects of community life in an area and set out a plan of action. A CLP is evidence of a strong community that has given clear thought to its needs. It can include land use, planning issues/issues around development locally. Shropshire Council has resolved to adopt several Community-Led Plans (Kinnerley, Albrighton). Whilst this does not carry the formal weight of an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, it can nevertheless be used as a material consideration and could be taken into account in considering e.g. planning applications in the area and grant applications. It may sometimes be appropriate for communities to complete a CLP as a preliminary to preparing a neighbourhood plan. CLPs cannot formally allocate sites for development, but they may be used to provide more detail on locally important policy issues, such as the layout and design of development or the tenure of proposed housing.

**Neighbourhood planning** empowers communities to shape the development and growth of a local area through the production of a neighbourhood development plan, a neighbourhood development order or a Community Right to Build Order. Neighbourhood Plans, once adopted, become part of the local statutory development plan and will form the basis for determining planning applications in that area as well as protecting green spaces. A Neighbourhood Development Order enables the community to grant planning permission for the development it wishes to see. A Community Right to Build Order gives permission for small-scale, site-specific developments by a community group.

Both types of plans are led by a steering group from within the community not by the Parish Council.

### **How are they similar?**

- Both help communities to take action for themselves so they can bring about local improvements.
- Both can be used by communities to alert policy makers to local issues and gain support for projects.
- Both can help communities consider the need for land use development such as new housing or infrastructure.

### **How are they different?**

- A community led plan has no formal statutory status. Whilst they can propose policies of a range of locally important issues, the weight that be attached to these policies is usually more limited compared to the formal development plan.
- Neighbourhood plans could focus on just one issue or action. Community Led Plans encourage people to think about the wellbeing and sustainability of their community as a whole.
- **Due to the statutory weight afforded to a Neighbourhood Development Plan, their preparation can be more complex, time-consuming and costly than preparing a Community Led Plan. For a Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted it must be subject to an Independent Examination and Referendum. Community-led Plans can follow the same general preparation process, but would not include the examination or referendum stages.**

### **Benefits of doing a Community-led Plan:**

- **Mandate for Parish Council** – A parish plan can be adopted by the Parish Council as their plan of action over the life of the plan usually 5 years. The Parish Council will then be acting directly to implement the communities wishes
- **Quality of Life** – A plan is ultimately about improving the quality of life for everyone

in the community. It's a particular opportunity to hear about the needs of those who might be disadvantaged

- Participation in local democracy – A parish plan encourages everyone to have their say and to realise that they can help shape their community's future.
- Publicity – A parish plan can help put your village on the map. It can also help residents become more aware of the groups and activities within the village
- Action Groups – A Parish Plan gets new people involved, who might become parish councillors or other activists. It can help create stronger action groups or give them a higher profile within the village.
- Influence Decision Makers – A chance to influence the district and County Councils and other authorities, by presenting the comprehensive views of the villagers and a clear plan of action for the future.
- Meeting Needs – Some people feel excluded from the community where they live. A parish plan can help those at the heart of the community to include and listen to those on the fringes. The plan should act to address the whole community's needs.
- Improve Local Facilities – A parish plan is a chance to identify ways that the village facilities can be improved, or to identify new services that need to be provided.
- Evidence for Funders – if you want to apply for a grant for a local project, a parish plan can provide required evidence about the need and proof of local people's wishes and involvement.
- New Skills – A Parish plan can give people the opportunity to develop new skills or become more confident about their contribution to the community. It should be a chance for people to learn from each other.
- Community Spirit – A parish plan should give lots of opportunity for people to get involved in activities and debate about where they live.
- Quality Parish Status – A parish plan could be evidence of a vibrant, active parish council, helping towards 'quality parish' status.

### **The benefits of Neighbourhood Planning are:**

- Carries statutory weight: Forms part of the statutory planning documents (Local Plan). Planning applications are assessed against them; Appeals are determined against them.
- Gives more certainty to development that is supported by community:
  - Decide where and what type of development should happen in the neighbourhood;
  - Influence and/or identify where new homes, shops, offices and other development should be built;
  - Identify and protect important local green spaces;

- **Promote more development than is set out in the Local Plan;**
  - Influence through design criteria what new buildings should look like
  - Influence through evidence of need or deficiency, what infrastructure should be provided
  - Influence planning decisions made by the Council because the Council must take note of the policies in the neighbourhood plan.
  - Include local policies that give more detail than the Local Plan (provided they don't conflict with its strategic priorities).
- Gain 25 percent of the revenues from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) arising from the development that takes place in your area within the life of the plan.
  - Develop a shared vision for your neighbourhood A neighbourhood plan can include policies on the development and use of land in a parish or neighbourhood area, **however they cannot be used to propose a lower level of housing growth than that proposed within local authority planning policies.** A neighbourhood plan must meet 'basic conditions', which are that the plan:
    - must have appropriate regard to national policy and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State
    - must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
    - must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area
    - must not breach, and be otherwise compatible with, EU and Human Rights obligations.

I am sure that everyone would agree with that our Parish would benefit from those items listed under the Community Led Plan Section.

A Neighbourhood Plan is expensive and time consuming to produce. An estimate of cost is in excess of £20,000 and professional planning expertise is usually required given the complexity of preparation and the need to support policies with evidence. Grants are sometimes available to support a portion of these costs. Whilst a Neighbourhood Plan would give the Parish an extra 10% of CIL monies on any properties built within the life of the plan (plans generally last for a maximum term of five years and then need to be renewed) this has to be weighted against the cost of increased development.

Shropshire Council has recently received the Independent Examination report for Market Drayton's proposed Neighbourhood Plan. In summary the examiner has recommended the Plan **cannot** proceed to referendum and therefore **cannot** therefore be adopted in its current format. His report is available on the Council's website at <http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/neighbourhood-and-community-led-plans/neighbourhood-planning/market-drayton-neighbourhood-plan/>. Whilst the examiner raised a number of concerns which are locally specific, he has also raised some more general concerns about the lack of evidence to support the proposals coming forward, which is

relevant to all potential Neighbourhood Plans. The Council are also expecting the Examiner's report into the Woore Neighbourhood Plan by mid-December, and it is expected this will also be useful for other areas considering undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan.

We acknowledged the legal status that a Neighbourhood plan would bring, however the main reasons why the Parish Council voted against undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan was the areas marked in bold above. As stated earlier the majority of residents who came to the Local Plan meeting wanted no further development. It is clear from the Neighbourhood plan rules and from the advice given to us from the officers who attended our meetings that by opting for a Neighbourhood Plan we would be opening up our parish for further development than that which has already been allocated by Shropshire Council.

I hope that this explains why your Parish Council has opted to undertake a Community Led Plan.

We are really looking forward to hearing all your ideas for the future of Berrington Parish and our Community Led Plan launch event is arranged for Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 11am – 2pm at the Chapel Community Centre (see advert below for more details) and further details will be in the February/March edition of the Village Pump. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the launch.

**Claire Wild, Chair**

Berrington Parish Council