

Neighbourhood Plan

Brief Update for Parish Council Meeting – 21st April 2021

Housing Needs Survey (HNS)

As agreed at the last PC meeting the closing date for the HNS was extended to 26th March. I have been advised by RCCE that a total of around 550 completed questionnaires have been submitted which equates to about 32% of the households in the village. Although we were hoping for a 50% return we have been advised by RCCE that this represents a satisfactory response in terms of providing a validated evidence base for housing policies which we may develop based on the results of the HNS.

The questionnaires are currently being collated and analysed by RCCE and we should have their report in the next few weeks.

The next step, following receipt of the HNS Report, was discussed at the NP Steering Group meeting held on 7th April. As it is vital for the policies in our NP to be supported by BDC it was agreed that we should arrange a further meeting with BDC to share this information and discuss potential policies for inclusion in the NP. The Steering team also feel strongly that we should request direct involvement from our District Councillors in these discussions.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

Following further discussions with Jan Stobart at RCCE and a review of the existing LCA documentation produced for BDC it has been concluded that a specific LCA for Earls Colne is considered to be an essential requirement for inclusion in our Neighbourhood Plan. The scope of the proposed study will include:

- Identifying and mapping local landscape character areas
- Assessments of landscape sensitivity for each area
- Assessment and categorisation of local landscape character areas adjacent to the built-up area boundary
- Preparation of draft policy text on the conservation of local landscape character to be incorporated in the NP

Quotations were requested from three landscape consultants (recommended by RCCE) to carry out this work. The cost for the study is around £5,000 to £6,000. Detailed discussions are currently ongoing regarding the exact scope. On completion of this, selection of the preferred consultant will be made and a funding application will be submitted.

Design Code

Another critical aspect of the NP is the creation of a Design Code for future housing developments in the village. The main aim of this will be to ensure any future development is influenced by and reflects the views of the local community. The code will also try to ensure that developers respect existing assets and encourage walking and cycling and reduce the impact of traffic.

Professional assistance is provided to formulate the design code through one of the “free” technical support packages available to NP Groups. It is proposed that this will be applied for at the same time as the funding application for the LCA.

Current Status of Funding

- Maximum funding available to us £17,000 but additional funding may be available if we decide to investigate a community led development or other specific housing schemes
- We must retain £3,000 for preparation of the “*Basic Condition and Consultation Statements*” later in the NP process
- Each time we apply for funding we can also apply for one of the free Technical Support Packages

Item	Cost
Maximum Total Funding Available	£17,000
Used to date (Communications programme £1,200 + Housing Needs Survey £3,766)	£4,966*
Landscape Character Assessment	£6,000
Funds to be Allocated for “ <i>Basic Condition and Consultation statements</i> ”	£3,000
Balance remaining for future activities	£3,034

*Note: The funding application for the HNS was based on 50% return of questionnaires. As actual result was 32% the fee has been reduced by £850

Tony Calton
14.04.2021