

Draft Report to Wells Town Council 12th April 2021

Wells Neighbourhood Plan Working Party

Background

The Plan has to be evidence-based. That means that any proposals for the allocation of sites whether for housing, industry or green space have to be supported by evidence of need and suitability. Any proposed planning rules whether for new or existing buildings have to be shown to be in accordance with agreed principles. The views of local people are key to this. As a result a number of documents have been produced.

1. A **Data Profile** has been produced by Emma Harrison of RLA and has been presented to the Working Party. It provides data on the town, basically describing it in numbers under the following headings;
 - a) **Demographic data and community infrastructure**, "population, health and wellbeing, qualifications, deprivation, crime, education, community, open spaces and recreation
 - b) **Housing and the built environment**: History, housing, second and holiday homes
 - c) **Transport and access**: public transport, cycling and walking, car ownership and travel to work, air quality
 - d) **Environment and Landscape** Landscape and character; biodiversity and geodiversity, rivers and the sea
 - e) **Business and employment** employment

This is a background document from which some of the proposals will be made and is available to members who wish to see it.

2. **The stakeholder consultation** is continuing mostly by telephone. What we are doing is contacting members of local organisations and asking them general questions about what they like about Wells, what they dislike, what they think about community services, sport and leisure, housing – tenure, design, what needs protecting and enhancing; what they value in the environment – what views, what needs protecting, climate change; about business and how to attract appropriate kinds and what they think about transport, parking etc. We are carrying on this work.
3. Work on a **Design guide** now being begun. Funding is being sought for the work of the specialist agency AECOM who will produce a guide as to what kind of housing is appropriate and what kind of developments of existing buildings are appropriate. When incorporated into the Plan this will empower the Town Council when making decisions about any development large or small and any planning applications.
4. **Placecheck** This site seems to have been very popular with over 179 hits to date. It allows people to comment freely about what they like, what they don't like and what can be improved.
5. **Character Appraisal** This is a document that describes the distinct appearance and feel of a settlement or an area. It communicates the key physical features and characteristics that combine to give a particular settlement or an area its local distinctiveness and unique

identity' It is another background document to back up proposals and is the next stage of the work.

6. **Housing Needs Assessment** (see Item 10 of the Agenda) The working Party is due to meet on April 29th and will report on a possible response to the the issues raised in the survey
7. **Funding** There is a hiatus in the process of government grant giving which has to be bridged by our continuing to pay the consultants out of Council funds. This money cannot be recouped from Locality but the amounts are small and the council has already set aside a fund from which the costs can be covered. (This has been dealt with by the Clerk under item 9 of the Agenda)
8. **Consultants** We continue to be supported by the excellent service provided by Rachel Leggett and Associates without whose guidance and expectations that we adhere to the timetable we would not be making the progress that we are now achieving. We are well satisfied that we are getting value for money.

Roger Arguile 12/4/2021