

Notes from the NDP 'Warm-up' meeting held at the Salutation Weobley on Thursday 3rd September 2015 at 6pm.

Present: 6 people linked to farm businesses operating in Weobley:- Steve Ware, Patrick Wrixon, Michael Carr, Jackie & Ben Synnock & Roger Marshall.

NDP Steering Group: Pru Lloyd (PL), Lesley Brook (LEB), and Lyn Bruce (LB)

PL introduced the meeting and welcomed everyone, explaining some of the background information and why an NDP is thought to be necessary for the village and the parish.

LEB introduced the first question emphasising that we are looking for issues and solutions and that the reason for holding this event is because the NDP is evidence based, evidence to be collected from as wide and varied an audience as possible:

1. How can economic growth and employment needs be best fostered in the parish over the next 15 years?

Problems include:

- Provision of temporary accommodation for migrant workers (comprise 66% of Throne Farm staff)
- Increases in minimum wage/living wage will cause a reduction in labour employed in farming
- As labour is reduced this will be replaced with new technologies
- Businesses should not underestimate the value of having a post office in the village.
- It might be possible to go some way to replacing it with a shared business hub for technology such as future colour laser printing, 3D printing, parcel collection services (such as Hermes) but we should not underestimate the range of services offered by the post office that include banking, licences, postage, foreign exchange etc...

2. How can we best support local agri-businesses and services that contribute to the life of the village, including diversification and the use of new technologies?

Issues identified included:

- Desperate need for fibre optic fast broadband – lack of it making expansion of small businesses very difficult.
- Identification of land around the village for business expansion for business units perhaps
- Dairy farmers – redundant buildings could re-developed for business/office premises
- Low population area – difficult to 'add value' to services and products
- What opportunities are there to 'add value'?

3. How can we reduce and improve the impact of road traffic through the village? Are there alternatives?

The 'most maddening things' about the village:

- Cars and parking – cluttering up the main part of the village
- Parking also a problem by the schools

- Possibly timed parking opposite the surgeries which is a major bottleneck – e.g. residents can park there from 7pm to 8am
- Making deliveries to out-lying farms is often difficult as many deliveries are via huge artic lorries and not small vans; these lorries often need to negotiate the village en route to their farm destination and are hindered by parked cars, mobility scooters, local bus etc.
- Visitor coaches blocking access and not parking in the best place – need for more negotiation with coach/bus companies to co-ordinate coaches/visitors and help visitors to be more informed about the village they are visiting to improve their ‘visitor experience’.
- Need for more health services i.e. surgery space and parking space
- Need for relocation of surgeries to the edge of the village but where they are still accessible to patients eg Whitehill? Change of use of the village hall to surgery?
- Field by abattoir to be purchased for surgery?
- Pedestrianise the village centre (as per High Town in Hereford)
- Have timed parking in the village centre – the problem is who would monitor to make this work?
- The back lane is very narrow however, and would need to take more traffic – one way system?
- Mobility scooters are also a current traffic hazard – both on and off the pavements

4. What needs to be considered when siting new developments in the parish in terms of appropriate infrastructure, services and facilities?

Some of the issues identified included:

- Some developments are unsympathetic to farmland – the so called ‘green boundary’ eg the proposals opposite the village hall
- Preference was shown for developments to be at the fringes of the village rather than ‘infill’ in the village centre
- Small clusters of housing preferred – not huge estates
- Before houses are built – consideration must be made re employment opportunities locally, or the demographics of the village will alter, with new housing only attracting retired people to live in the village
- Need a wide range of villagers – young families to older people
- Participants not in favour of as many garden developments as there had been recently in the centre of the village
- Sewerage capacity – Welsh Water always say that there is plenty of capacity for new houses – is this true?
- Several people highlighted recent situations in the village where flooding has occurred after heavy rain and probably as a result of new developments where spare water couldn’t escape into the drains because of new roadways, ditches over-full, tarmacked drives etc
- Sadly current building regulations are focussed only on energy conservation and not the use of grey water (important point to make in NDP final report)
- Phosphate issue – Aspire Dance Studio were unable to proceed with their planned opening because HC planning dept concerns over phosphates levels, causing an unreasonable delay.
- Herefordshire Council – it seems are against out-of-settlement developments
- Need for Agri-business, business and residential developments in and around the village but not an over emphasis on any one at the expense of the others

Concerns were expressed re the 'clout' that an NDP report/final plan would have. After some discussion - it was agreed that the village is better to have one than not, as the final report is a legal/statutory document and can inform future planning applications.

Thanks were expressed to everyone for their contributions and everyone was encouraged to keep in touch via the web and by email.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm followed by refreshments served by the Salutation staff.