

## Neighbourhood Plan A Vision for the Town

Downham Market Town Council recently reformed a strategy group, under the chairmanship of Councillor Elizabeth Hendry, to create a Neighbourhood Plan for Downham Market

This is a document that is created by the Town Council, working in partnership with its community, and which will be used, together with the Borough's Plan, in deciding planning applications. This is our opportunity to create an environment which will make the town a positive and vibrant place in which to live, work and play.

Councillor Jackie Westrop commented that Neighbourhood Plans are not only about planning decisions. They are about creating an environment in which we can all feel comfortable and positive. For instance, the plans indicate to developers the types of building the community would like to see and how they are designed.

Through the plan, we can influence the sort of environment we want to see created. We can make a clear set of statements on issues such as flooding and business development and how these issues can be addressed. In effect, the plan sets the framework for the future development of the town for the next 30 years

The development of a Neighbourhood plans relies heavily on the community having its say. As part of the process of community consultation the town council has recently put information about it on its website and set up a dedicated telephone number for residents to call and make suggestions about how they would like to see their community develop.

The strategy group is made up of town councillors and members of the local community, who have been meeting on Zoom regularly, throughout 2020 and who will, in the early part of 2021, present the first draft of the plan to the residents of Downham Market. In the meantime, the committee will be asking residents about their views.

For instance: do residents want more green space?.. wildlife areas?.. trees planted?.. an upgrade to the town centre?.. infrastructure?.. more social housing?.. different types of houses?.. self-build houses?.. The group is open to any suggestions from the community at this stage as the plan is in its draft state.

Cllr Hendry commented that she hoped that, once the COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, a full 2-day public consultation will take place in the town, so that the community can more thoroughly inspect the plan, ask questions and make comments. After this, a final version will be produced for approval, which will shape the way Downham looks in the future. This will be sent to an inspector, who will approve, amend or reject it.

Once this approval has been granted, the decision will be put to the community again through a referendum.

Having passed through all these hoops, the Neighbourhood Plan will be an important part of the planning decision making process.

For further details please go to Downham Market town council's website click the Planning tab and then the Neighbourhood Plan tab. Alternatively please ring Downham Market 01366 321421 leave a message outlining your suggestions for the future of the town and what you would like to see included in any plans for its future the group will note your suggestions