**WITTON GILBERT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION EVENTS**

The Neighbourhood Plan Group have spent a considerable time understanding neighbourhood planning and what is expected to produce a sound plan for the community. After much discussion over a range of topics and the collating of supporting evidence, the group has formulated some initial policies and suggestions to take to the local community and generate discussion.

The 2 areas deemed to be the most important to people were **housing** and the **village centre** and it was with these themes in mind that the first public consultation was arranged.

A pre meeting was organised with the land owners and residents directly affected by the main suggested site for new housing, south of Front Street. This took place on **16th February 2015** attended by NP Group and Planning Aid taking the form of an informal Q&A session. Attended by 15 land owners/ residents the initial reaction from some land owners was supportive. Reaction from affected residents not so supportive. The fear of development being imposed was the main objection but these seemed to diminish as the nature of Neighbourhood Plans and community involvement were explained.

The first community consultation event took place on **21st February 2015** taking the form of an informal drop in session. Leaflets were posted to every house and business in the settlement and to some outlying properties inviting all to the event.

The session was held in the large hall at Cooper Hall Community Centre and featured a video loop with slides explaining the nature of neighbourhood plans and how the community could get involved. A series of tables and exhibition boards were set out with maps and information collected so far.

* Welcome table at the entrance with information sheets to take away. A registration sheet for people to sign and leave contact details
* Table with a large scale map showing the Parish and the settlement area
* Wall maps showing green belt boundaries

Exhibition boards showing:

* Introduction to the Neighbourhood plan
* Housing site allocation suggestions
* Village centre suggestions

Post-it notes were provided to encourage comments and feedback

Members of the NP group and a Planning Aid representative were on hand to explain what has been done so far and why and answer any questions.

The event lasted 3 hours and was well attended by around 100 residents.

Village Centre – The concept of a village centre for the village was welcomed and 36 people expressed support for the outline proposal the NP group had put forward. Others expressed support in the notes left.

Housing – Proved to be a controversial subject. There were a few objections to any new housing at all but the majority voiced support for some new development of acceptable design. The Front Street allocation proposal was generally favoured, but there was some strong opposition to the Norburn Park site.

**Conclusion**

Session went well and exceeded expectations of attendance. Informal approach seemed to encourage discussion and comment.

The second community consultation took place on 30th May following the same format as the first. Approximately 65 people attended, not all whom attended to first session.

Transport – the main concerns were over traffic rather than transport issues. Many complaints were related to speed through the village and congestion on Front Street in the evening rush hour. Some suggestions were quite rational and understandable but would be prohibited by highways legislation, eg 30 mph repeater signs and changes to traffic priorities on Front Street. Possibly the best course of action is a united community approach maybe in the form of a petition to address all concerns.

There were still comments about housing, even though the event did not include it. Most were negative comments on the need for any new housing and we feel that some detailed research now needs to be done to try and put forward the case for some new housing.