**WITTON GILBERT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The second public consultation took place at Cooper Hall on 30th May principally looking at transport, heritage and environmental issues. Approximately 65 attended and we would like to thank all those who came along and shared their views.

There was quite a lot of support for a community energy forum and this is certainly an avenue we will want to pursue.

Heritage and conservation of the village is important to people and also the need to balance conservation with growth.

 All the comments so far have been recorded and all will be taken into consideration during the next stages.

The Neighbourhood Plan process is long and involved and we must follow government guidelines when making decisions. The public consultation sessions held so far are by no means the final involvement of the community.

 Please do not think that you have missed the opportunity to have your views heard. You can contact us at any time. As stated before we are all volunteers and residents, not professional policy makers. Suggestions and ideas from residents are always welcome, we would appreciate any help.

***Following the recent public consultation events we would like to clear up a few areas of confusion.***

* The Neighbourhood Plan steering group members are all local residents with the interest of our community at heart. The group is open to any resident of Witton Gilbert Parish. All resident comments are taken seriously and the final plan is not preordained, but will be the result of the ongoing consultations.
* The Neighbourhood Plan is intended to last 15 years. The plan is to be monitored and if the assumptions on which it is based change, then the plan can be modified.
* The Neighbourhood Plan must be based on robust evidence, if the consultation and evidence gathering process identifies a need now or in the future, then that need must be addressed or the Plan will fail.
* Current national planning legislation (The National Planning Policy Framework) has a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Without a Neighbourhood Plan in place any site could be vulnerable to development at any time.
* The Neighbourhood Plan must aim to achieve a sustainable community over and beyond the plan period. Assessing the future need for housing in Witton Gilbert will involve looking at population changes and other demographic data to forecast housing need and help arrive at a realistic number of new houses that the plan would like to deliver over its life. It gives us the chance to determine how many and where any new developments will happen.
* We will have the opportunity to draft planning policies which will control the scale and quality of development within Witton Gilbert. Better quality homes to meet a local need.
* Whatever developments adopted in the plan, they will not all be taken up immediately and should only be completed over the plan period.
* When addressing the development need the plan must have sufficient sites to meet the projected requirement. When assessing potential development sites we must make a site assessment of **ALL** available sites or the plan could be challenged by an aggrieved land owner if we haven't followed the correct procedures. All sites we assess will appear on a plan but this doesn’t mean that all those sites will be selected.
* The Neighbourhood Plan allows us to identify and protect the things we feel are important about Witton Gilbert.

***Web Page***

Community involvement is the key to success for the Neighbourhood Plan and clear communication channels are essential. With this in mind we will be creating a bespoke web page where you can find out information relating to the Plan, how you can become involved and where you can leave your comments. The site will be updated regularly so you will know how the Plan is progressing.

***What Next?***

The Neighbourhood Plan Group will study all the comments and suggestions put forward and we hope to produce a single document which will represent the first Draft Plan Proposals. Residents will be consulted again before we progress to a draft submission.

If you have any comments to make or questions to ask, please contact us.

The Group meet at **9.30am on Thursday’s** at Cooper Hall and anyone who would like to come along and help us is welcome.

***Contact Details***

**Should you have any queries, comments or wish to assist the Group please contact the Parish Council at** **wittongilbertparishcouncil@gmail.com** **or contact George Thompson on 0191 3711808.**