

Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan

allotments

greenspaces

where
you
live

the
shops
you
use

play
areas

cycle
paths

Workshop Report
12th April 2016

*Produced by Place Studio for
Ross Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group*

engage • design • deliver

place

INTRODUCTION

This is the full report of the first Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan workshop held at the Larruperz Centre on 12th April 2016. The aim of this event was to bring together a wide range of people – primarily representatives of local groups and organisations - to:

- add to, widen and broadly agree the list of issues already known,
- offer a medley of ideas/actions to address these issues and
- draft and agree (for now) plan-ready objectives to deliver relevant actions.

Invitations were sent to around 45 groups and organisations from Ross itself and 8 Parish Councils in areas around the town. The response was slightly disappointing, probably to some extent our responsibility for advertising just before and after the Easter break but also because two other significant events were booked for the same evening. The final participants list, which includes some apologies, is in Appendix 1.

The overall format of the event was as follows:

- On arrival, people noted questions about Neighbourhood Plans generally and the one for Ross specifically.
- Following an introduction there was a 'walkabout' for people to comment on, add to and elaborate local issues.
- Following a break, people divided into Topic groups to develop possible plan Objectives based on what had emerged as the key issues.
- A short final 'where next' session looked ahead in particular to next stages for the Plan.

Each stage is described more fully, and the full results are listed, in the sections that now follow. Apologies if we misread any place/street names!

Everything recorded at the workshop is included in this report. All text as here, in italics, is explanation and description, everything in plain text is as noted by participants themselves.

Most importantly, though we may have been disappointed by the numbers, we could not possibly be disappointed by the commitment of those who attended – that was remarkable, greatly appreciated and bodes well for next stages. Thank you all!

Jeff Bishop and Katie Lea, Place Studio

THE ROSS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

Most participants had been asked in advance to look at the 'Frequently Asked Questions' (and the answers) on the Plan website and were then asked to think of further questions they might wish to raise. On arrival participants noted their questions on post-its that were then grouped around similar themes. Any questions already addressed on the website are not included here unless there were further related queries. The notes that follow are therefore very simple: questions raised and answers given. Because of limited time, not all questions were answered on the night but answers are provided here. (Most of what follows will also be used to update the FAQs on the website.)

- Q: What is the Plan timetable, how long will it take?
- A: The aim is to have it 'made' by summer 2017. This is challenging but achievable. It will however depend on the finally agreed scope of the plan; for example, adding in allocations for several sites could well extend the timetable.
- Q: How can Bridstow get involved?
- A: Any future success with reinvigorating the town centre will depend as much on doing so in a way that engages those in communities around Ross (its 'catchment area') as Ross residents themselves. To that end all surrounding parishes were asked to send representatives to the workshop. Despite an invitation and a reminder, none responded. We will keep pursuing this.
- Q: Who can vote in the referendum?
- A: Only those on the electoral roll in the Ross Town Council area.
- Q: What is being done to address education and health provision, especially given another 900 homes?
- A: We asked Herefordshire for information on both topics; none has yet arrived so we will chase this. The mention of the £15m initiative on school sites and buildings sounded interesting, important and timely. It may well be possible to link this to the Neighbourhood Plan – we will check that.
- Q: When does CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money start coming in?
- A: Developers have to pay it to Herefordshire when they start on site (which may however be just for a first tranche of, say, 40 houses). Even now, before the Plan is made, the Town Council will receive 15% of any sum. Once the Plan is made, that rises to 25%.
- Q: How do I fit in?
- The aim of the neighbourhood plan team is to engage with as many people as possible through a variety of interesting and even fun ways! We would like to arrive at a plan that will reflect local aspirations. Only local knowledge and understanding of challenges and opportunities for Ross and the local area can inform and shape a truly local plan.

We know that some people will have the time and opportunity to get involved in things like working groups, or to come along to the steering group, but others may only have time to complete a survey or pop into one of our open events to ask questions and contribute ideas. We will be working with a wide a range of groups including the local primary and secondary school pupils – the future community! Find out more and keep in touch via the website: rossplan.org.uk, or drop in to the library where we have a permanent display.

ISSUES AND IDEAS

Previous work by the Plan Steering Group had raised a number of 'issues' for the Neighbourhood Plan to address. Place Studio used their experience from other similar plans to develop and extend this list. The issues were also divided into 5 Topics, also as suggested by the Steering Group:

- Housing
- Working and Shopping
- Getting Around
- Leisure and Well-being
- Environment

A1 sheets were placed around the room listing (numbered) issues per topic and participants were asked to tick any they agreed with, place a cross if they disagreed, elaborate any if appropriate and add any they felt were missing. They could also add ideas and suggestions for things they felt would improve Ross and any completely different issues not fitting under the given topics.

The notes that follow below, per topic, show (a) the ticks and crosses per issue, (b) any elaborations (by reference to the issue number) and (c) any added issues. The items in all capitals refer mainly to the town centre but, for this exercise, they were kept under their topic heading.

HOUSING

NB. Herefordshire Council allocated 900 new homes to Ross. 880 have already either been built or have permission. That might mean the Plan only needs to look for another 20 but targets are still going up so – for our own protection – it would be good to look for sites for more.

1. Lack of affordable housing for local people	6✓ 1X 1?
2. Not enough variety of house sizes, types, prices in new developments	4✓ 1X
3. LACK OF HOUSING IN/NEAR THE TOWN CENTRE	1✓ 1X
4. Too many very large developments	2✓ 2X
5. Development spreading into the countryside around the town	2✓ 1X
6. No houses planned to enable people to work easily from home	4✓ 1X 2?
7. TOO FEW HOUSES FOR THOSE WITH LIMITED MOBILITY	1✓ 1?
8. Houses poorly insulated, few use renewable energy etc.	1✓ 2X 1?
9. Nowhere for people who want to build their own homes	5✓ 1X
10. No appropriate local properties for older people to downsize to	2✓ 3X
11. Developers don't also provide green spaces, footpaths, play areas etc.	8✓

Notes/Additions

- 1+2+3+4 et al. build more houses and stop prices rising- in fact build enough to make prices fall.
- 4 - New developments need variety of styles to fit in with Ross. Don't want a sea of sameness. (1✓)
- 6 – Look at other market towns – Crickhowell.
- 9 – Issue of housing – opportunity to think differently about housing. Use more 'continental' cooperative open 'pod' living...build COMMUNITIES not build more houses where people don't talk to each other!

- 11- They do but always space for more
- 11- Planning policy states open space in developments of a certain size – developers know all the loopholes to avoid providing this!
- New housing developments need parking space. (1✓)
- Local style should be encouraged / vernacular style.
- Convert shops to live /work, workshops / studios.
- More houses = more people= gives shops more customers.

WORKING AND SHOPPING

NB. It is currently very difficult under planning law to stop offices being converted to housing.

1. Loss of employment premises/opportunities in and around the town	2✓ 1?
2. Not enough good quality, new employment premises	3✓ 1?
3. LOSS OF JOBS IN THE TOWN CENTRE	1✓ ?X
4. Lack of higher quality/better salary jobs	3✓ 1?
5. Not enough jobs linked to visitors and tourism	1✓ 2X
6. Not enough overnight accommodation for visitors/tourists	3X
7. TOO MANY EMPTY TOWN CENTRE PROPERTIES FOR BUSINESSES	9✓ 1X
8. KEEPING LOCAL SHOPS IN THE TOWN CENTRE	8✓
9. NEED MORE NATIONAL CHAIN SHOPS IN THE TOWN CENTRE	4✓ 5X
10. Loss of small shops in our neighbourhoods	7✓
11. Not want another large supermarket store	2✓ 4X

Notes/Additions

- 2+4 - Release land to build factories and offices and jobs will be created.
- 5 - Lack of 'paid' work around tourism...all traders, those who work in Ross are 'marketeters'
- Too many charity shops (better than empty ones though) – No!
- 5 - More guides required.
- 7 - But what to do about it?
- 7 – Think that work is in progress behind the scenes often in sorting out 'legals'
- 7 – More working together with landlords – directory so Town Council knows who landlords are.
- 8 - need for better quality shops
- 8 – Celebrate 'independents' however also BRAND Ross...attract more people, tourists, visitors...plus more shops (independents etc.).
 - Brand for Ross than can be used to market the town, develop its identity and find a USP.
 - Could convert some of the empty shops back into housing - Gloucester Road?
 - Charity shops limited in number in town? (classed as a service?) Converting shops into residential properties
- 9 - No!
- 11- Need another supermarket to provide competition and to draw in more punters.
- 9 - Need to encourage Ross' uniqueness. Not to encourage a street scene that mirrors others
- 10 – Greedy estate agent landlords.
- 11- Disagree – need balance of national + local shops. Some in the town do want!
- 11 - We need another supermarket etc – agree.

GETTING AROUND

NB. There are limits to how much a Neighbourhood Plan can do about some of these – which does not mean they should be left out (as we will explain).

1. Danger of losing current bus and coach services	12✓
2. Poor signage for foot and cycle paths around the town as a whole	4✓ 2X
3. Town paths don't link to the wider area network for locals and visitors	1✓ 1X
4. TRAFFIC CONGESTION HOT SPOTS IN THE TOWN CENTRE	9✓ 2X
5. NOT ENOUGH CAR PARKING FOR THE TOWN CENTRE	5X
6. Poor signage for drivers into and around town	8✓
7. POOR SIGNAGE FOR PEDESTRIANS AROUND THE TOWN CENTRE	5✓ 2X
8. Unsafe junctions and stretches of roads around the town	5✓ 1?
9. New developments have poor pedestrian links to the town	7✓ 1?
10. NO PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY AREAS AROUND THE TOWN CENTRE	4✓ 2X
11. NO FULLY PEDESTRIANISED PARTS OF THE TOWN CENTRE	5✓
12. Parking provision in new housing is never enough	8✓ 1?

Notes/Additions

- 1 - Public transport must be better used to ensure its viability. Ditto!!
- 2 – No / poor cycle paths – poor signage, poor driving / respect for cyclists.
- 3 – Opportunity to have more trails that link town centre to areas within 3 to 5 miles.
- 4 - Traffic congestion in Ross is not bad – try going outside HFSH
- 5 – Some car parks are empty during the day
- 5 - Parking is cheap compared to elsewhere.
- 5 – Parking is good providing you can walk (a bit)
- 5 – It's PRICE not SIZE
- 8 - Unsafe junctions and stretches of road
 - To provide pedestrian crossings at high street / EDDE Cross junction, and Copse Cross street plus Alton Street where pedestrians need to cross for the hospital and GPs.
 - Copse Cross Street and High Street should be made one way to improve safety.
 - Parking signs upgraded to encourage use of car parks rather than on road.
 - Open up the railway line for walkers plus Cyclists from Kerne Bridge via Walford, Tudorville to the existing cycle path aka town plus county trail.
 - Pedestrianise the area around the market house to improve both safety and footfall into shops and cafes.
- 8 – Crossing at top of high street / Edde's Cross (very dangerous)!! – agree plus Copse Street plus Alton Street
- 9 – Historically access is terrible in other towns
- 9 – Chase Walk View example – only access down Tanyard lane - no lighting.
- Slip road from Star Bucks to roundabout to left to by-pass
- 13 – Have we already lost our bus service?
- 12 – Every lane should have two off street spaces.

ENVIRONMENT

1. The design of new developments, conversions and shopfronts is not sympathetic to the character of Ross	11✓
2. The landscape setting of Ross is threatened by development	8✓ 1X
3. THE QUALITY OF THE CONSERVATION AREA IS DECLINING	8✓
4. Historic sites, listed buildings etc. are at risk	8✓ 1X 2?

5. Flooding	7✓ 1X
6. There is getting to be less wildlife and biodiversity	6✓ 1X
7. Too few more renewable energy projects by residents and businesses	3✓ 1X 1?
8. PUBLIC AREAS IN THE TOWN CENTRE NEED IMPROVING	9✓ 1X
9. Too many house front gardens are becoming hard parking areas	9✓ 1X
10. Lots of different forms of pollution	1✓ 1X

Notes/Additions

- 1+2 - Corporate image is making all towns homogenous- to maintain tourism need to be distinctive(ly) good!
- 3 - Expense for owners of listed buildings / responsibility of Herefordshire council.
- 3 - Conservation area has achieved a declining town – maybe to try removing the deadening hand?
- 4 - Historic buildings....? Why are they at risk?
- 4 - Lack of incentive to maintain?
- 5 - Effects on local sports teams
- 5 - Flooding not an issue
- 5 - Flooding now more controlled – if maintained
- 7 - Not so much about renewables...more about people using less energy. Hear, hear!
- 8 - Public area- make more wild meadows – plus pollinators – plus more colour! YES!
- 9 - More risk of flooding!
- 9 - Hard surfaces – less biodiversity – less pollination = less hedgehogs
- 10 - Street lighting
- 10 - Pollution? Noise? Light? Dust

LEISURE AND WELL-BEING ISSUES

1. Concern about being able to keep all our current community facilities (eg. pool, halls, sports pitches etc.)	10✓
2. Some new facilities are needed because of new development	9✓
3. Need to protect, retain and improve all our public parks and open spaces	12✓
4. New developments should contribute properly to extra school places, health provision etc.	12✓
5. Can we retain, improve and add as necessary to allotment provision (including in new developments)?	4✓
6. We need to retain, improve and add to play space provision (including in new developments)	7✓
7. Not enough places, spaces and attractions for tourists/visitors	2✓ 1X 1?
8. NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT PLACES OF INTEREST IN THE TOWN CENTRE FOR VISITORS/TOURISTS	5✓ 2X 1?

Notes/Additions

- 3+7 - Make more of the riverside (2✓)
- 4 – Medical centre / play group etc
- 4 - The builders must provide – social centers (medical, children, etc)
- 4 – Should support other infrastructure plus amenities. Libraries, leisure facilities, GPs, footpaths etc.
- 5 – Make more 'wild' – more about getting people outdoors! ...more 'preventative' measures...open air tai chi, etc...
- 7 - More ideas, more events eg picnics, more people doing pop-up activities, more opportunities to use area around band stand...how to make it easy for people.
- 8 - Signs on buildings giving age and any historic connection

- 8 - Market House needs to play a central role as a sign post
- 8 - Who says this?!
- 8 – More guides.
- 8 – Recently improved due to tourism plan.

OBJECTIVES

On arrival at the workshop, participants were asked to choose a first and second choice topic (topics as above) to work on after the break. Each topic group was then given, relevant to their topic, (a) some draft objectives prepared by the Steering Group and (b) some additional ones prepared by Place Studio.

The task was to look at what had emerged as the most important (most ticked) issues in the first main session and agree as a group some objectives based on them. Some guidance was offered about the way to draft formal plan objectives and about what can, cannot and might be tackled through a Neighbourhood Plan. This was a difficult task – it always is! - and the beginnings of objectives and associated notes drafted by each group follow below. This does however provide a strong base from which we ourselves can develop 'planner-speak' objectives

HOUSING OBJECTIVES

- 40% is in current CIL proposal. No live / work (so redundant in NP?)
- Need affordable rental units
- Respect character of location
- Houses on Tesco site? (A caravan park? - disputed)
- Good quality innovative building

WORKING AND SHOPPING OBJECTIVES

1. A more concentrated and thriving town centre

Achieved by: Greater communication between the Council, landlords and estate agents.

2. Attracting businesses and employment suitable for this town, ie. a county market town

Achieved by: A cohesive branding and expanding policy:

- Any development deemed as 'large' is required to have a 'corner shop'. Those 'very large'
- Allowing new mixed use development so appropriate businesses can operate from homes
- More industrial jobs

Achieved by: identifying land for industrial development so appropriate development strengthening and supporting economic activity - can we bend policy on model farm?

GETTING AROUND OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the meaning or interpretation of "the character of Ross"
'Character' - only historic town in AONB (*that is a*) Conservation Area

Issues!

- Enforcement action on planning?
- What is 'at risk' and why?
- What are the current boundaries of the planning/ design of new developments, conversions and shop fronts?

- Canoeing - canoeists - no cheap accommodation.
- Launch site - no parking for vans.
- Launch site - canoeists have to walk canoes to the river.
- Infrastructure - joining the dots.

ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES

1. To green the open spaces with local, appropriate, indigenous species of plants that encourage and attract pollinators and wildlife to create wildlife corridors taking into consideration access and amenities of open spaces.
2. To ensure all development and renovation takes account of the historic and natural environment of the town through the use of building materials in sympathy with the unique character of Ross-on-Wye and its distinctiveness.

LEISURE AND WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

Vision

There should be vibrant comprehensive leisure and health services within the town, and in the town centre where possible, encouraging a fulfilling and healthy lifestyle for residents and reducing the need to travel to other centres.

Objectives

The plan will support (see A1):

- 1 - To maintain and promote existing indoor and outdoor activities through the provision and development of suitable amenities (go to Library for evidence)
- 2 - Facilitating better provision for the elderly and those with families and young people.
- 3 - Promoting the natural resource of the town to enhance the visitor experience. (See note below).
- 3a - Protect, retain, improve, our town's natural resource*.
- 5 - Ensure new developments contribute properly to the enhancement of educational leisure and recreational facilities.

* Natural resource: public parks / open spaces / river (historic buildings / woodlands... etc.

The group also liked the following objective in the Draft Ross list: Encourage novel, environmentally friendly and sympathetic construction techniques – as well as self-build zones.

NEXT STAGES

A broadly similar list of issues together to the above will be shared at the open events. The open events took place over two days on Saturday 30th April (at the Market Hall) and Sunday 1st May (at the River Festival). This open events present an opportunity to share the work to date on issues for the plan – further refining with a wider audience of residents and visitors.

After those two days, and once the feedback from a questionnaire is received then a final draft version of the issues and objectives will be shared, once again for comment, over two weeks at the end of May. This will be via an exhibition in the library and information on the rossplan.org.uk website.

It was also suggested - and those present agreed in principle – that some Topic Groups should be set up, one on each of the five main topics as introduced above but also one specifically on the town centre.

Mid June will see us arrive at a final set of issues of objectives to start taking forward into policy for the Plan.

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANTS AND APOLOGIES

Participants

1 st name	Surname	Organisation	Topic group
Chris	Bartrum	Ross Town Council	Housing
Neil	Bennett	Ross Baptist Church	Leisure/Well-being
Christine	Cherrington	Tudorville District Community Association	Getting Around
Nick	Critchley	Wye Valley AONB	Environment
Elinor	Greenacre	Everybody fitness	Leisure/Well-being
Tina	Hogg	U3A and Mental Health	Getting Around
Belinda	Jones	Ashfield School	Leisure/Well-being
Colin	Leggatte	St. Mary's and Proross	Working/Shopping
Vic	Lockley	Visitor information	Getting Around
Antony	Lowther	TDDC and EnviroAbility	Housing
Jan	Nesaratnam	Ross Library	Leisure/Well-being
Melvin	Reynolds	Chair, NDP Steering Group	Housing
Sarah	Robson	Town Clerk, Ross Town Council	Environment
Amanda	Smith	Neighbourhood Plan Clerk	Working/Shopping
Caroline	Utting	ProRoss	Working/Shopping
Debbie	Wareing	Greytree Residents Association	Housing
Yolande	Watson	Hedgehogs	Environment
Sue	Williams	Association of Ross Traders	Working/Shopping

Apologies

Caroline Bennett, Ross Town Council
 Colin Davies, Ross Roadies
 Hayley Knapper, John Kyrle School
 Ed O'Driscoll, Gig Club
 Mandy, Ross Voice
 Jo Scriven, Ross Gazette
 Jenny Symington, Leos

Workshop Leaders

Jeff Bishop, Place Studio
 Katie Lea, Place Studio