



WORKING GROUPS WORKSHOP REPORT
14th July 2016

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

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INTRODUCTION

This event was the first for the newly formed Working Groups for the Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan. Although two groups had been formed - one for the Town Centre, one for the Wider Town – it was decided to have one event for both together because some of the material was common.

The main aim of this first workshop was for group members to check and refine the emerging Aims/Objectives for the Plan. Given that some of those attending were relatively new to the Neighbourhood Plan, its content and processes, it was decided to do a short 'updating' session at the start. The Plan was also at a key stage in terms of the need for some further community evidence collection, so the final short session sought volunteers for that work. (* This request required a slight apology because everybody had been told that they were required for 2, perhaps 3 meetings only!)*

This report includes notes on all three sessions – updating, aims/objectives and evidence collection. The list of those attending is also included. All text as here, in italics, is explanation and description, everything in plain text is as noted by participants themselves.

We would like to thank all those who took part for their obvious commitment and hard work (and to apologise again for the added request about evidence collection). This was a key stage for the Neighbourhood Plan and, along with other things falling into place, it helped enormously for everybody to begin to see the all-important end-point – the Neighbourhood Plan itself.

Jeff Bishop and Katie Lea: Place Studio

UPDATING

Jeff started by outlining the national picture for Neighbourhood Development Plans, often just termed NDPs. Around 1,000 are now on their way, approaching 120 completed (formally 'made'). They have proved their value already in delivering appropriate projects and preventing inappropriate ones although, as with any plan, this is never absolute. In that national context, the decision to advance an NDP for Ross was entirely appropriate.

Katie then ran quickly through work to date on the Ross NDP and the overall programme to completion. The website has been up and running since March and that, together with the Facebook pages and press releases to the Gazette and the Voice, has been central to raising awareness. We have also produced leaflets and posters and have a permanent display in the library. Our main events so far have taken the form of a workshop in April and a 'pop-up' or drop-in stall at the Market on the last Saturday in April and a gazebo at the River Festival. We also held a week-long exhibition at the library and will again be at the Riverside on the 6th August at the Ross Carnival. Based on the responses we've had from people to date we have narrowed the plan issues down to look at the Town Centre and the Wider Town and have now arrived at a long list of objectives or aims – which is what we asked you to look at in the workshop.

*Jeff's second contribution was to give a picture of what a successful NDP might look like. The example was the recently, and successfully, examined NDP for Stroud town centre, highly relevant to Ross. Sample sheets from the Stroud plan were handed out, to illustrate Vision, Objectives, main Policies, Development Briefs, support (Promotional) statements, Projects and how it all fits together. **This NDP is very well worth looking through generally, including pages not handed out.** It is available at: <http://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/2223/ndp-submission-draft-web-version.pdf>*

At this point Katie introduced Andy Hough from Herefordshire Council who is managing a 'Schools Capital Investment Strategy' for Ross and its surrounding area. Given that this is likely to result in physical changes to local schools, perhaps needing a new one on a new site, there are obvious links to be made with the Ross NDP. Andy will produce a note about the initiative and we will send this on to you.

Finally, Jeff outlined what is a rapidly changing picture about new housing for Ross. Of the 900 new houses allocated by the Local Plan, some 880 are already built or have permission. However, housing targets across Herefordshire will be going up so it would seem sensible for the Ross NDP to manage this. Those present agreed with this. The only potential large site (yet to be confirmed technically) would be the old Somerfield warehouse north of the A40. That site might accommodate c.100 houses. (The site behind Morrisons is still in Flood Zone 3 so generally not appropriate for housing.) Beyond that, some 12 suitable but very small sites were identified a few years ago, several in the town centre. In total they might accommodate c.100/150 houses. Work will now start on site selection and assessment but it was recommended that the NDP should not attempt to formally allocate sites because of the considerable extra time and cost involved. Instead, the NDP would introduce general principles, design criteria and perhaps development briefs for key sites (eg. Somerfield) as was done successfully for Stroud.

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

This was the main session. To make it manageable, those signing up to the Town Centre group and those for the Wider Town group were each divided into two smaller groups. The task was very simple. People had been sent, in advance, the full list of emerging aims or objectives. They were asked to work as a group to (a) show where they supported any on the list, (b) to amend, elaborate, query, subdivide or even remove any aims, and perhaps (c) add some. It was made clear that this was the long list and that any NDP would group these together into a far smaller number, even if there were the specific policies for each. For practical reasons, each small group looked at around 50% of those on their overall list.

The results follow below, although it was also stressed that this was not a final list; new ideas, further evidence and so forth could add or change the list as work proceeds. (NB. Jeff and Katie have added occasional comments, and an explanation of Community Land Trusts is included in Appendix B.)

TOWN CENTRE

Supported:

- TCA5: Protect views out to and in from the surrounding countryside.
- TCA6: Encourage appropriate renewable energy initiatives (such as solar/photovoltaic panels).
- TCB1: Encourage housing development on currently empty, derelict or underused land.
- TCB2: Optimise opportunities for people to live over town centre shops.
- TCB3: Design new housing to enable people to work from home.
- TCB4: Encourage development of self-build new housing.
- TCC1: Support existing and welcome new independent businesses, including shops, cafes and market traders.
- TCC2: Encourage a creative approach to the evolution of the town centre, and support changes of use where this adds to vitality.
- TCD1: Promote and encourage a range of ways to get easily into and around the town centre by all modes of transport.
- TCD2: Provide safe, well connected, convenient routes, well signposted to car parks.
- TCD3: Improve the usability of the town centre by pedestrians, cyclists and those facing mobility challenges.

- TCD5: Encourage appropriate charging (or no charging) for town centre car parks.
- TCE1: Ensure existing community services and facilities, such as the library, are retained and enhanced.
- TCE1: Ensure existing community services and facilities, such as the library, are retained and enhanced.

Comments:

- TCA1: Make the town centre a welcoming, safe and secure place where people are encouraged to spend time.
- Should it include a reference to accessibility – this could include good signage?
- *(NB. Should be picked up later but also important that the eventual plan highlights key links between issues.)*
- TCA2: Improve the appearance of the town centre by maximising the historic character and using a high standard of design for any new development.
- Add 'by referencing local historic building styles'.
- *(NB. Good to add 'referencing' to avoid requiring pastiche - something an Examiner would not like.)*
- TCA3: Improve the appearance of the town centre through the design of shopfronts.
- Add 'through the creation of guidelines'.
- TCA4: Improve the appearance of the town centre through the introduction of 'greening'.
- Add 'and the promotion of public art'.
- *(NB. Great – we forgot that and it is important!)*
- New TCA7: To reduce the number of empty retail units.
- TCC4: Support the development of a further small supermarket within the town centre.
- Remove, not support.
- TCD6: Introduce centre-wide traffic management to reduce congestion.
- Remove, not support.
- *(NB. We might come back to this with you because it is often objected to because people assume speed bumps etc., but there are so many other forms of traffic management now.)*
- TCE3: Encourage the development of a full time cinema within the centre.
- Not keen on cinema, prefer an arts centre.
- *(NB. Arts centre with cinema?)*

WIDER TOWN

Supported:

- WTA2: Protect existing wildlife and ensure appropriate provision in new developments.
- WTA3: Discourage the hard-surfacing of house drives and front gardens.
- WTA4: Ensure high standards of locally distinctive design and construction in all new developments.
- WTA4: Ensure high standards of locally distinctive design and construction in all new developments.
- WTA6: Protect and enhance historic and heritage assets.
- *(NB. Mention of Market House taken out – did not belong there!)*
- WTA8: Protect and reinforce the setting of the town in the landscape.
- WTA9: Protect key views into and out of the town.
- WTA10: Encourage appropriate renewable energy initiatives (such as solar/photovoltaic panels).
- WTA11: Introduce initiatives to work towards a 'carbon neutral' town.
- WTB3: Encourage development of self-build new housing.
- WTB5: Control over-developments in residential gardens.

- WTB6: Set standards of locally distinctive design, layout, access etc. specifically for new housing.
- WTC2: Encourage starter units, shared serviced accommodation etc. for new businesses.
- WTC4: Encourage and support home-working.
- WTC5: Retain existing employment except where inappropriately located.
- WTC7: Resist proposals for major out of town shopping.
- WTD2: Introduce appropriate forms of traffic calming in residential neighbourhoods.
- WTD3: Provide clearer signage into and around the town from main roads.
- WTD4: Introduce clear 'gateways' to welcome people to the town.
- WTD5: Improve walking and cycling access around the town.
- WTD6: Improve walking and cycling access into and from the surrounding countryside.
- WTD7: Ensure new developments maximise the ease of walking/cycling access into the rest of the town.
- WTE1: Designate Local Green Spaces of significant community value.
- WTE2: Improve existing and develop new allotment areas.
- WTE4: Improve existing and develop new play areas.
- WTE5: Ensure play areas within any large new housing development.
- WTE6: Diversify town-based events for residents and visitors.
- WTE7: Retain existing social/community facilities.

Comments

- WTA1: Link existing green assets and areas into a coherent 'green infrastructure'.
- Does this mean a physical connecting corridor or a cohesive management plan? Either way we support but clarify.
- *(NB. The overall principles will be in the county plan. Corridors do not have to be bluntly physical; for example, a series of back gardens can sometimes serve the purpose.)*
- WTA5: Refresh those parts of the Conservation Area not in the town centre.
- What do you mean by 'refresh'? Maintain, enhance, improve?
- *(NB. Yes, all of those!)*
- WTA7: Consolidate and expand information, services and facilities for visitors.
- Visitor facilities, eg. toilets, lockers for walkers? Can this be a core land use?
- *(NB. You are right – toilets will be built facilities so core land use, but not lockers.)*
- WTB1: Deliver a small amount of new housing over and above the 900 homes allocated.
- Add word 'appropriate'?
- WTB2: Ensure 40% social/affordable housing in all new developments.
- More work to be done on local choices for affordable housing.
- WTB4: Encourage new housing through models such as Community Land Trusts.
- *(NB. Community Land Trusts are explained in Appendix B.)*
- WTB7: Ensure appropriate parking standards in all new housing.
- *(NB. Many NDP groups wish to do this but we are not aware of any NDP that has managed to change county highways parking standards in new housing. We will come back to this.)*
- WTB8: Encourage development on previously used land.
- Change to 'consider suitable development on appropriate previously developed land'.
- WTC1: Encourage employment developments to provide higher quality jobs.
- Query use of the term 'higher quality jobs'.
- WTC3: Provide more higher grade employment in tourism.
- *Perhaps should be about providing more higher quality tourism opportunities.*
- WTC6: Retain small shops and shopping areas in town neighbourhoods.
- 'Encourage the retention of small shops in town neighbourhoods'.
- WTC8: Develop a detailed brief for the Model Farm development (if not agreed yet).
- Part of LEP plans. Find out their view.
- *(NB. Yes but no action for a long time so we suspect there is still scope to contribute in some way through the NDP.)*
- WTD1: Support, promote and develop local bus and coach services.

- Focus on smaller, ecologically friendly vehicles.
- WTE3: Ensure allotments within any large new housing development.
- Remove, not needed.

NB. Given limited time, a few aims were not evaluated so are not in the lists above.

EVIDENCE COLLECTION

A lot of the necessary evidence to support emerging aims and then policies already existed before the NDP started, more has emerged and several community groups are underway with further specific evidence collection work – for which many thanks.

Having looked in detail at the emerging objectives, several small and two large evidence collection tasks remain. These were outlined to the participants and they were then asked to fill in a sheet with their initials for some task for which they would take responsibility. It was stressed that this did not necessarily mean actually doing the work themselves. The aim is in fact more about finding others to do any of the actual work because this helps to widen awareness of the NDP. The chart with tasks and initials follows below, but only where offers were made. The tasks are explained here more fully than in the shorthand used for the workshop. NB. Some of this is only to top up or update existing information.

Smaller Tasks

Task	Initials
Space over shops: The aim is to make an estimate of how much space is used for what and how much is empty. Note on access also useful (to suggest whether more use or conversion is possible). Chat to agents?	IM/CU
Traffic incidents: Some basic information ought to be available from the police although they may not be able to pick out the town centre as we define it. If so, get information for all of Ross.	AW
Pedestrians in the centre: An audit of easy, difficult, dangerous, comfortable places, features etc. around the centre. Map provided.	CB/VL/IM
Cyclists in the centre: As above, an audit on cycling.	HS/SP
Limited mobility issues in the centre: As above, an audit of issues (and good features) for those with mobility challenges: wheelchair users, zimmer frame users, buggy pushers, blind people etc.	NG
Traffic congestion and danger spots: Informal sounding of local people plus conversation with police and traffic wardens. Maybe quick look at any particularly bad locations.	VL/AW
Signage and gateways into town: Checking what signs exist to direct people (individuals, visitors, deliveries, HGVs, through traffic etc.) into and to avoid the town and the town centre and signs nearer the centre, especially to car parks.	MP/NC
Public transport information: Contact with the bus company/companies to establish current usage, recent usage and any projected (noting trends), also triggers to adding or removing or extending/changing any services.	HS
Facilities audit: We have a good list though it needs checking. Then all this needs is a note on what rooms etc. are provided and for whom, at what cost etc.	CLW
Broadband coverage issues: What is coverage and speed like now in various parts of the town. Just a matter of asking key people?	WW
Empty/charity shops: Note of these and location, ideally how long empty or charity shop. Chat to agents?	CU
Centre footfall: Several people have suggested that the centre is too	EK

strung out. Quick check at few key times of footfall.	
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Larger Tasks

Task	Initials
Town Centre Character Assessment: There is a county 'Rapid Townscape Assessment, but it was rapid. There is also only a draft Conservation Area Character Assessment. Both need topping up with an Assessment linked to the now emerging aims. Several people out in 2s/3s to do a 1 hour or so assessment with a form and maps provided. Photos taken.	CU/NC/AW/CLW
Site Search and Assessment: This will be mainly for housing sites. It may include employment sites and even perhaps a primary school site. This uses a (well-proven) community-friendly analysis method. Details to follow.	MR

All those who offered will be contacted to confirm their commitment (they may not be able to find any helpers for example). Once agreed, they will all receive a draft brief from Place Studio, to be discussed and agreed.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS

ATTENDEES

TOWN CENTRE GROUP

- Chris Bartrum
- Eleanor Kercher
- Ian Murray
- Caroline Utting
- Vic Lockley
- Mandy Price
- David Ravenscroft
- William Wilding

WIDER TOWN GROUP

- Nick Critchley
- Andy Hough
- Jan Nesaratnam
- Sam Phillips
- Helen Saunders
- Nigel Gibbs
- Clare Llewellyn-West
- Melvin Reynolds
- Amanda Smith
- Andrew Wilson

The following were on the initial list, sent full invitation details but did not arrive:

- Nathan Avard
- Simon Clarke
- Jeannette Draper (sent apologies)
- Maggie Kilcar
- Nick Richmond
- John Taylor
- Debbie Wareing

All of the latter group will be sent this report and encouraged to still be involved.

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS

What is a Community Land Trust (CLT) ?

This note was produced in another context by Ian Crawley, a national adviser on CLTs and involved in CLTs across Gloucestershire.

A Community Land Trust is a community-led organisation, operating in and for a defined geographical community, usually the area of a Parish Council. What is most important is that the community area is one that people identify with as somewhere they live and/or work. The CLT is run by local volunteers. It is set up to develop and own land and buildings the community needs. It holds that property in trust; it can never be sold for private profit. Any surplus from the CLT's activities is reinvested in that community. A CLT is legally defined in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, but must still be registered as a Community Benefit Society, Community Interest Company or Company Limited by Guarantee. These types of legal structure provide limited liability protection for those involved with governance.

Why set up a local CLT?

- Interest is increasing from communities to have a CLT to develop affordable housing for local people in housing need and owned by local people collectively.
- This is due to the following:
 - loss of affordable rented homes through the Right To Buy (RTB), which will accelerate with the new voluntary RTB for Housing Associations(HAs);
 - the reduction in new affordable homes from private, HA and local authority development, exacerbated by changes to planning rules and the reduction in Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) grant per new home;
 - the recognition that an increasing proportion of the population do not wish to buy or will never be able to afford to buy, their own home;
 - the recognition that if a Neighbourhood Plan is to be fully implemented that community needs its own development agency; and
 - the likelihood that only CLTs will be fully exempt from the RTB and thereby an important means of providing affordable rented homes in perpetuity.
- There is a worsening housing crisis. Local CLTs have a role to play through focusing local expertise experience and enthusiasm in understanding local housing needs, bringing in external investment; and developing genuinely affordable rented housing to meet those specific needs.

How are individuals involved?

CLTs help communities become more resilient and sustainable by giving all those living and/or working over 16 years of age a stake (through a £1 share for life) in the CLT assets; and a say in what the CLT does through membership, or standing and being elected as a Director. The test of whether a CLT is fit for purpose will include the clarity of the vision and its relevance to local people; the size of the membership and their involvement; and the transparency of how it conducts its business. These give credibility to the CLT in the eyes of local people, local government, government agencies and the business community.

What do CLTs do?

There are over 170 CLTs across England and Wales that have built over 650 homes. There are 2400 homes are in the pipeline. The CLTs are located where people have come together to build affordable homes or refurbish derelict homes for local people in housing need; build a village hall or community centre; rescue the village shop or pub; grow food on allotments and through community orchards and farms; and plant and manage woodland - to create a better quality of life for all.

Approaches to Delivering Affordable Homes through a CLT

There are a number of different approaches to providing affordable housing by CLTs that have emerged in recent years. Approximately 90% of CLTs either already partner with an HA or intend to do so. Of the 175 CLTs, seven are Registered Providers, and therefore able to manage and maintain their own stock. Otherwise the CLT will have to contract with a Housing Association. The options are:

- **Direct development on land obtained by the CLT at less than market value.**
 - This involves the CLT obtaining grant/loans to meet the costs of obtaining planning consent and employing its own professional advisors, borrowing to build the scheme and employing contractors. The CLT could become a Registered Provider via the HCA and then manage and maintain the homes, or employ a HA to do so.
- **Partnering with a Housing Association throughout.**
- This usually involves the following:
 - CLT owning the freehold of the land - most CLTs start by obtaining a site, then choosing a HA.
 - The HA has a long term (usually 125 year) lease from the CLT, with a break clause only in the CLT's favour.
 - The HA funds and develops the homes, by agreement with the CLT at every stage.
 - The HA manages and maintains the homes, allocating them through a Local Connections Policy agreed with the CLT and the local authority.
 - The HA pays the CLT an annual ground rent, say £200 per home.
 - The CLT has the option to buy out the lease for one or all the homes at any time, funded through borrowing.
- **Other options:**
 - Obtaining the freehold of the land for the affordable housing in a private development and then developing directly or with a HA.
 - Purchasing the completed affordable homes in a private development through funds raised from sources such as the Resonance Fund; the Public Works Loans Board, via the Parish Council ; or banks. Management and maintenance is then through a HA.
 - Purchasing or accepting the gift of the freehold of existing homes. Management and maintenance is then through a HA.
 - Including serviced land for self-build or homes for sale to meet particular local needs and/or cross-subsidise the affordable homes for rent.

You are never on your own!

Advice and financial assistance is available specifically for communities wishing to set up a CLT - to develop the vision, prepare a business plan, become registered and obtain professional advice. The National CLT Network (www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk) is an independent social enterprise with full time staff. One of its roles is to manage the CLT Start Up Fund, through which grants and loans are available.

There is a network of regional umbrella CLTs which exist to provide advice and support. There are CLT Technical Advisors, who will work with your community to help build the competence and confidence to set up a CLT and develop assets for the benefit of the community. There are also the volunteers themselves who have set up a CLT in their own community and developed assets, who are keen to share their experience with those just starting out.