

Holt Neighbourhood Plan – Public Meeting

We held the public launch for the Neighbourhood Plan at a well-attended meeting in the Village Hall in May. About 50 people came, which was very encouraging for the Steering Group as the Plan, when it eventually emerges, must reflect the views and ideas of as wide a section of the village as possible. It will also, once it has jumped through all the hoops, only have any force if it is endorsed by a referendum of the whole village – so the more people become engaged and involved, the better the Plan will be and the more likely it is to be supported in this crucial vote.

There were no great revelations at this meeting, but it was an opportunity for the Steering Group to outline the reasons why it matters, to describe the process for developing it and to suggest a (possibly optimistic!) timetable. It is likely to take at least a year to reach the final version. The next key stage will be to devise effective ways of involving and consulting the community. These will include creating small neighbourhood focus groups to feedback ideas and comments. There were also some useful suggestions from the meeting about using electronic communication tools, including Facebook and creating a dedicated email address.

The first draft for this consultation process is currently being sketched out and, so far, has these sections:

- Vision and objectives
- Introduction to Holt
- Housing
- Traffic, parking and transport
- Commercial and economic development
- Environment, energy and green spaces
- Community facilities

Again, any immediate thoughts and suggestions about this framework would be welcome.

Much of the detail of the process is unclear because the legislation is still so new and no community has yet been through the whole process to the final vote. Holt is one of the pioneers, which is both exciting and a little daunting. There were several questions which we genuinely can't answer yet. The most fundamental is – will a Neighbourhood Plan finally count for anything, or will any Plan simply be ignored if it becomes inconvenient? The honest answer is – we don't yet know. But we do know that if we do have a Plan endorsed by the village, we will stand a much better chance of having

our views respected, than if we don't. This is why we feel it is worthwhile to invest the time and effort to create the Holt Neighbourhood Plan.