



Centre for Rural Economy,
Newcastle University

Startforth Neighbourhood Plan

Report of the workshop day – 20th January 2018

Overview

Two workshops took place on Saturday 20th January, facilitated by theatre company Cap-a-Pie and recorded by Dr Paul Cowie of the Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University. Forty six people attended the two workshop sessions, with the same number having attended Cap-a-Pie's production of *Town Meeting* the week before. The aim of the workshop was to make a start on understanding the challenges and opportunities facing the community and to begin developing a vision for the plan.

The first stage of the workshop looked at what was important to the community of Startforth.

A community map of Startforth

The first task of the workshop was to get participants to draw their favourite place in their community. This could be anything, a building, a view or somewhere that was special to them. The group then laid out their drawings on the floor and created a map of their community. There was much debate about how each element related to each other both physically but



also socially. It was at this point that a discussion about the three parts of Startforth started to develop.

When asked to draw a picture of their favourite place locally, the most popular favourite place drawn was participants own house and/or garden and its relationship to the wider locality. Many people spoke of the open aspect of the village and its long-distance views to Barnard Castle and the wider countryside. Two people, one in each session, related how they feel as they return to the village after being away, on holiday perhaps. They both described the feeling of 'being home' when they caught sight of the village on their approach.

The next most drawn place was Deepdale. This was chosen both for its intrinsic beauty and its use as a place of leisure and recreation. It was described as a tranquil place, with some specifically using routes to the village through Deepdale whenever possible.

The church was drawn by three people as being important to the community. There was some debate about the loss of community space within the community at this stage. This is particularly relevant now that the school has closed and there is a degree of uncertainty about its future. While only one person drew the school, it was mentioned time and again as key to the future of the community, if possible as a school but if not as a community building.

Open space was also drawn as a special quality of Startforth. There was a focus on the open space between the school and Gill Lane, but also on other areas of open space in the community. This related to the loss of open space within Startforth Park and the ongoing threat to the open space near Gill Lane. The discussion about open space also sparked a discussion about the nature of Startforth as a place. It was pointed out that, in reality, Startforth has 3 distinct areas: Low Startforth; High Startforth and Startforth Park. This reflects the history of Startforth and the way it has been developed over the centuries. **It is not clear that Startforth is one community spread across three areas or indeed three semi-detached communities.** This is something the plan will need to tackle.

One person drew the Green Bridge - the pedestrian bridge that links Startforth with Barnard Castle. Barnard Castle was discussed at times in relation to the neighbourhood plan but Startforth is definitely its own community.

Priority Setting

The next part of workshop used a fictional scenario as a mechanism to explore more deeply the issues facing the village. The workshop was presented with a potential planning decision which would affect the village. The fictional planning application was that the school site being developed into a digital and creative business hub. The group were then asked to think of positive and negative consequences of such a development in the village. The aim of this activity is to show the link between the neighbourhood plan and any subsequent planning decision. The policies developed and agreed as part of the neighbourhood plan will have a significant influence on any future planning decision. It is important to bear this in mind as the neighbourhood plan is being developed.

The main point of contention was the fact that the building would be lost as a school or community venue. However, a number of people in both workshops highlighted the benefits such a development could bring in terms of jobs for younger members of the community. There was a distinct lack of younger people attending either workshop and this was acknowledged. There was a debate about who would be attracted by such jobs. Many felt the jobs would go to people living outside Startforth although it was agreed some new people who may work for the new businesses may be attracted to the new housing being or about to be built.

There was a debate about the increase in traffic to and from the school, should such a development take place. However, it was acknowledged that reopening the school would also have some impact on traffic in the area.

The next step was to create a list of positive and negative aspects of the proposed development:

Positives	Negatives
Jobs and people being part of the community	Loss of school and potential community building
Bring young people into the area	Loss of green open space
A relatively clean business	Increased traffic
Create demand for housing so keep house prices up	Loss of community cohesion
Better broadband	Adjacent house prices would fall

Opportunities for local contractors	Could result in social isolation – community centre vital for older people.
Could make the building greener	Car parking capacity
Could reduce commuting if people lived & worked in Startforth	Style may not be in keeping with the village.

There was a discussion here about the speed of the neighbourhood planning process and the speed at which things are happening in the village. The plan may take up to 2 years to complete but the decision about the school will need to be taken much quicker. This suggests the neighbourhood plan needs to be about longer term issues.

Neighbourhood planning in a nutshell.

A quick presentation on the steps in the neighbourhood planning process.

1. Define the Neighbourhood area	2. Decide on boundary for the area	3. Prepare statement of suitability	4. Prepare statement of how the group qualify to do a Plan	5. Submission of application to the LPA
6. Formal Consultation on the application (min 6 weeks)	7. Decision is then made and group allowed to carry on	8. Apply for Neighbourhood Forum Status	9. Development of a Neighbourhood Forum	10. Prepare formal application
11. Submission of application to the LPA	12. Formal consultation on application	13. Decision is then made and group allowed to carry on	14. Prepare a project plan to get from A to Z	15. Develop a strategy to engage with the community and begin the conversation
16. Analyse that community engagement	17. Identify a vision for the Neighbourhood Plan	18. Review or develop an evidence base to back up what you want to do	19. Carry out site assessments of land to be made available for development if needed	20. Develop policies, proposals and justifications to become the back bone of your neighbourhood plan
21. Engage with community a second time on your emerging options for the neighbourhood	22. A draft plan should be emerging now and will need to be assessed against	23. The sustainability of the policies in the plan will need to be tested in a process along with any other impacts on Env	24. Agree a plan process for the formal consultation phase on the draft neighbourhood plan	25. Consult those who live, work and do business in the area and statutory consultees for a minimum of 6 weeks

	the Basic Conditions			
26. Prepare a Consultation Statement on How, When and Where the community were consulted along the way from start to finish	27 Amend or adjust anything in the plan after your consultation	28. Submission of your new draft plan with supporting statements. Basic Conditions, Consultation, (Sustainability Check)	29. LPA publicise the draft plan to those who live work and do business in the area and statutory consultees	30. Working alongside your LPA an independent examiner will be appointed to examine the draft plan by the LPA
31. Agree when the examination should take place, how long would it take etc.	32. Provide draft plan and supporting statements to the examiner – you may want to provide extra evidence to help	33. Independent examination takes place and plan is tested against the Basic Conditions by the examiner	34. LPA Receive examiners report that advises and helps LPA to make their decision	35. Report will say that the Plan should proceed to Referendum, should proceed with changes or should not proceed.
36. Referendum funded by LPA	38 Agree date and process with LPA/Council	39. Prepare for referendum	40. Referendum takes place	50% or more of the turnout say YES plan is adopted by LPA

NB Stages 8 – 13 only apply to Neighbourhood Forums. At this stage, Startforth is at stages 14 – 17 on this map. Developing a project plan, developing a strategy to engage the community and developing a vision can happen simultaneously. The workshops outlined in this short report are part of the process of developing a vision for the plan. The next stage once these three tasks are complete will be to develop the evidence base. Look for existing evidence to use:

- Evidence used by Durham CC for their plan
- Socio-economic data from the Office for National Statistics/ NOMIS
- Transport studies and public transport data
- Details of environmental protection designations, such as tree preservation orders and sites of special scientific interest

Ask other organizations for data: Natural England, Campaign to Protection of Rural England (CPRE), Visit County Durham, Northern Heartlands etc. You will also need to collect your own evidence – this workshop is part of that process.

Positive change for the Community

The final exercise asked the groups to outline what they would like to see as positive change for the community. The answers were:

- The school re-opened as a school
- The school developed as a community resource
- More unity between the parts of Startforth
- More services useful to the community and that can be sustained
- A conscious retention of the good things that exist
- To maintain the open and tranquil nature of Startforth

Useful resources

A 'how to guide' for neighbourhood planning - <http://locality.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-roadmap-guide/>

Easy to use local statistics at the Parish level - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea>

Campaign to Protect Rural England's guide - <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/2689-how-to-shape-where-you-live-a-guide-to-neighbourhood-planning>

Book – Jeff Bishop. The Craft of Collaborative Planning, in the RTPi series and published by Routledge