

## **Talk by Sean Traverse-Healy Campaign for the Protection of Rural England**

I have concentrated on the Neighbourhood Planning aspects of the Bill. Though I know others are important -- Neighbourhood Development Orders, Community Right to Build, Community Right to Acquire.

Because in my 10 allotted minutes that I suspect that is the area that is the issue of most interest to you in rural areas.

In most rural areas we have a head start over our urban colleagues.

Parish and Town Councils are the approved bodies under the Bill. They are used to dealing with Planning Applications To a lesser extent have engaged with the Development Plan process.

Some have undertaken Parish Plans

We have resources though extremely limited.

We have a defined Geography, though we might wish to group ourselves with others.

Why get involved with what could be quite a time-consuming process for volunteers.

I could say improving your community cohesion, Protecting and enhancing your community Assets, projecting your vision.

But there is a practical reason. Planning won't stop and there is a simple adage "he who is absent is Wrong". So if you are not part of the process others (often the Local Authority) will presume rightly or wrongly that they are doing the correct thing or they will understandably put their priorities at the head of the list.

Some Health Warnings at this stage.

We do not have the regulations yet. And though we have been assured that they will be "light touch". The devil is in the detail. (CPRE understands that there will be a consultation on them during the summer.

The Bill itself has yet to pass through all its stages. It is currently in committee in the House of Lords. It has not yet got to report stage. Where in the Commons the Government tabled around 130 amendments.

And we still do not have the draft National Planning Framework due at the end of this month.

All this does matter because the system does need to bed down. You might remember the debacle over the introduction of Local Development Frameworks. South Cambs had to issue thousands of new documents. And Hunts DC I think it was had to stop their Examinations because they were advised it would be found unsound.

However in a sense the Government has achieved its initial objective. Local Authorities in particular are having to reassess their relationship with Local Communities in the Planning process.

With the Help of my Colleagues at CPRE Cambridgeshire we have done a quick trawl of the Cambridgeshire Local Planning Authorities (excluding Cambridge City).

Huntingdon- Is likely to produce a template for Parishes to follow. This is very much in outline at the moment but I am sure they will be involving you.

East Cambs- Have been quick off the mark and have recently seen a public questionnaire to consult Parishioners on their vision for the community and have included questions on development even down to specific sites.

Peterborough -- We have asked for their view in light of their current site allocation process but we have had no response as yet. Though there was an unsubstantiated rumour that they were thinking of lumping all 30 odd rural Parishes into one NP.

South Cambs -- Assured us that they want to work with Parishes and I know that a number of you here have been to their very good NP briefings. As yet though they have not decided on how they will take the dialogue forward but we have reminded them that they are on track to consult on a Core strategy revision next

summer and it would be nice if we had some dialog well before then.

Fenland -- They say that they have consulted their Parishes during the run up to the core strategy consultation which they will undertake from the end of this month for six weeks over the summer holidays- clearly they want to maximise their response. I make no comment until we have seen the draft.

But what might a Neighbourhood Plan look like.

The best guidance I can give you for local examples is the Area Action Plans . Have a look on South Cambs website at Northstowe and the Cambridge Fringe or on Hunts at the West of Huntingdon AAP.

I am not suggesting for a moment that you will have to go into the same complex level but it will give you an idea of the type of issues that might be covered, the sort of evidence base, and the type of language used.

Remember that a NP must be in general conformity with the Local Plan and the National Planning Framework.

It cannot be used to stop sites allocated under the Local Plan but it could help in their design and direct growth.

The key remains the Local Plan. I would strongly urge that Parishes concentrate their efforts on getting that right before determining whether they wish to undertake a NP. You do not have to have a NP but can rely on the Local Plan.

If you wish to move forward on either fronts. You will need to make sure that you have an evidence base. I won't list sources here but your Parish plan will be of value. In addition have a good look at the Local Plan to see whether you can extend some of their policies. For example "important Countryside frontages". We will need to establish an audit trail in the consultation process. Remember that as part of the Development plan it could be subject to Judicial Review.

There are some vanguard projects promoted by the Government on NP currently being undertaken by Parishes and others though to my knowledge there are none currently in Cambridgeshire.

However there is a new tranche being selected. The closing date is in November and I understand there is quite a lot of money still available. You have to apply through your District council. I understand though that this requirement **might** be dropped after the Bill is enacted. Currently the sum available is about £20000 per plan.

Help!

Government Funding is likely to continue after enactment but just how much is not clear.

Local Authorities have a duty to cooperate. But how much real help we will get from cash strapped Authorities is anyone's guess.

Other Organisations offering assistance some of whom have been give government grants are:

Planning Aid

Princes Trust

Cambridgeshire Acre

Cambridgeshire CPRE and CPALC

We will be offering workshops, advice lines and on web facilities.

The key must be to take your own community along - all your hard work is for knout if the plan is rejected at the referenda. "No one gets interest in planning until a line is drawn on a map and then all hell breaks loose".

My View

Far to early to start on a Neighbourhood Plan. The system needs to bed down but we should carefully monitor the outcome of the trials. I am happy to be a good second in this race.

Concentrate on getting the Local Plan to be neighbourhood plan friendly and where possible reflect your requirement.

Articulate and consult your community on your vision.

And If you have time -oh volunteers -start gathering together your evidence base.

