TheSedgefieldPlan

Shaping the future of our area

Progress Report 24/01/14

This has been a particularly busy and productive couple of weeks, we have distributed about 2750 Community Survey questionnaires including to all of the outlying farms and have had in excess of 300 returned in hard copy and online, there were complaints from some areas that they had not received a copy so Janet and Mort Spalding volunteered to fill the gaps for which we are very grateful, and we extended the deadline till Friday 31st January, I now know that some people have had two deliveries. I have remonstrated with the delivery company who also redelivered in some parts so anomalies are a mystery. The web site has been well received and commented on as very good by some of the agencies we have met.

We met with the economy group and have agreed to survey all of the businesses on Netpark, Trading Estate and the High Street to get an accurate picture of how many, employees, issues etc.

Through the good offices of Michael Gobbet, the rector, we also met with Smiths Gore Ltd (representing the Durham Diocesan Board of Finance) and Nathaniel Litchfield Partnership (representing Storey Developments) in regard to the Eden Drive site. It is now clear that Storey Developments will submit a full planning application for 150 houses on half of the site by the summer of this year; these appear to be high quality dwellings of 4 and 5 bedrooms, and some 'affordable homes' . The DDBF will apply for outline planning permission on the same site and then seek developers to build a further 300 houses. We queried their proposals to reroute Stockton Road to exit the site on to the roundabout on the 689, they are adamant that this was not their preference but the issue was being forced on them by Durham County Council Highways Department and they have no choice but to comply, an issue that we need to clarify and address.

We have also had a very helpful and constructive meeting with the three schools including St Williams with whom we had a very interesting discussion about current capacity, their concerns and plans/ aspirations for the future, it is clear that capacity is a major issue for all except St Williams and that funding expansion is very difficult which brings into question how? Development in Sedgefield will attract Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) however in our discussions with the Eden Drive developers it emerged that there has already been discussion with DCC on this subject and we believe it has been allocated to the schools, we may need to clarify this as legislation intends it to be for the community and that ours should have some say in its dispersal. We have agreed with the schools that we will survey the opinions of the young people which will be set up soon managed by Sarah and Tony Guest who are heading the Community and Environment group.

We need to engage a very much wider cross section of our community so I propose that when we have the final report of the community survey we hold an open event (or two) at which all can come to hear the outcome of the survey followed by a session in which we seek to gather ideas and contributions from those who attend. I envisage that these should take place in mid to late February and organising volunteers will be welcome.

Morton Spalding and I will attend a countywide meeting of local communities on the 30th at which we will hear how the Upper Eden Valley got their neighbourhood plan approved. We have agreed that we need to meet formerly with the senior planning staff at DCC to clarify a number of issues that are, will or could affect our plan. We will also seek some pro bono legal advice on a couple of issues.

The next and very important task will be to plan how we will write our draft plan, the chapter headings, layout, etc and I anticipate support from Planning Aid for this.

I hope that this is helpful and please get back to me if you wish clarification on specific or general issues emerging.

David Bowles