

BEAUDESERT AND HENLEY IN ARDEN
JOINT PARISH COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2 REVIEW

ADVISORY PANEL MEETING
14TH OCTOBER 2024
AGENDA ITEM 5

TOWARDS A VISION STATEMENT

Almost every approved NDP has a vision statement (VS) and objectives derived from it. This is not mandatory but is seen as best practice. Indeed Henley has an agreed Vision Statement (Annex 1) in the current NDP and will stand until replaced formally. A well thought out vision statement guides everything else that happens in the plan itself. The successful VS drives the objectives and the links between the two levels are easily traceable. There are well known risks in preparing a VS one is that the process consumes a lot of energy the other is that the statement becomes watered down or so high level it is vacuous. "Making our town a better place to live" is of little value to real improvements. In the short term the review cannot replace the existing VS but in order to indicate the direction of travel of the process a VS must be clearly in development and be capable of being discussed by the community as a whole. We have already discussed the external challenges that the town faces and the trends that make the review necessary. As further changes will take place in months rather than years we must ensure that the town gives clear views as to how the JPC responds on their behalf. A developing VS and objectives is an asset in helping to build a new consensus. This paper suggests ways to move forward with this.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

It is always valuable to look at how other places have used a VS in their documents. We have therefore selected several for members to read and from which to draw ideas.(Annex2). As can be seen they vary a great deal in both style and content (and length!). If the yardstick is used "how clear is the direction the towns or villages want to take?" then the statements vary from very valuable to very little help. The main value for us is in seeing how the elements can be used as building blocks for our process.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

The current VS for Henley is clearly one of continuity and conservation. The main objective has been to protect the assets of the town, to improve and maintain those assets and to allow only very limited growth. These principles matter a great deal to the community and are a valuable tool in preventing random developments and threats which is why the JPC and SDC approved the Plan. Major changes now make the current review of the whole plan including the VS essential. The key ones are

- The NDP was written in line with the SDC Core Strategy which is the overriding Local Plan for the District. This plan is being comprehensively overhauled by the South

Warwickshire Partnership and has already decided on a more ambitious growth target based around existing settlements. If we hadn't already started to review government would require it in line with national/local changes

- A green belt review has already been announced and is expected to report soon
- Government policy has been announced which is even more ambitious than the SWLP
- Affordability of homes in the town has continued to decline rapidly
- Infrastructure weaknesses both physical and social have increased significantly particularly flooding, transport and medical capacity
- The decline of the High Street has continued especially in retail services
- The disparity in wellbeing between the two parishes has been evidenced by the 2021 Census results

QUESTIONS WHICH A VISION STATEMENT AND THE PLAN OBJECTIVES SHOULD ANSWER

The VS cannot change the town in itself but it can change longer term views of what is desirable. Some of the key questions built into the VS and Objectives are

- What is special about Henley and where are its major opportunities?
- Does the town wish to grow and on what conditions?
- What should be the priorities for resources available to or desired for the town?
- What weaknesses need to be tackled as priority?
- What are the constraints to future health?

SOME WAYS TO DEVELOP IT

As was stated above a final version of the VS and the objectives cannot be completed in the next few months. However because the level of change on the horizon it makes sense to begin the process and to test with the local community what responses they will consider and what is unacceptable.

A possible approach would be

- Each theme group to indicate their views on the issues set out above and the elements most effective in the work of others (provisionally mid -November)
- The Advisory Panel to synthesise this as far as possible (provisionally late November)
- The results of this to be discussed with stakeholders (provisionally December) and innovative approaches should be considered for this and community consultations
- An open community event be held after the SWLP preferred option has been published (provisionally January)
- JPC/AP formulate and publish an interim report on the NDP 2 process (provisionally January/ February.)

Although this is a significant task it is not one which should be avoided. If a successful process is undertaken it will be the glue that holds the whole review together. The AP views are sought on the ideas set out above so that a work stream can be taken forward effectively.

Richard Clark/Gary Kirk
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