

4. Community Views on Planning

Kenilworth is a Town in which people want to live and there is a strong sense of community evidenced by the number of organisations concerned with different aspects of the town. The majority of residents, whether old or young, whilst seeing opportunities to improve and develop its features and facilities, are essentially appreciative of what is here today rather than hoping for some major improvement promised for the future. Indeed many view growth as a threat rather than an opportunity.

The continued growth of the Town has been managed in various ways over the years from the Conservation Plans of 1973 and the Inset Plan of 1988 to the Abbey Fields Plan of 2004. There was a "Planning for Real" exercise in 1997 and when the need for additional housing was included by Warwick District Council in their consultation on the Draft Local Plan the Town Council conducted a wide-ranging Survey in 2013.

This survey resulted in 1852 responses, which is equivalent to around 20% of households, indicating the level of interest and commitment of the residents. The responses included a large amount of written comment which was analysed using expertise from the University of Warwick.

The output from the Survey was a draft Action Plan published in 2014 which greatly influenced the aspects of the WDC Local Plan relating to the Town. However when the scale of housing development in the Town was virtually doubled in 2015 in the revisions to the Draft Local Plan following its initial Examination it was considered that a Neighbourhood Plan was needed to formalise the Action Plan and this was agreed without any significant local objection in August 2016.

Since that date consultation has continued both by involving relevant organisations in the working parties and also by involving the general public in stalls at events such as the Siege weekend in Abbey Fields, coverage in the local newspaper and three open mornings in the Town Council offices. The result was lots of useful feedback with particular concerns for the effects of the high level of growth now envisaged in the latest version of the Local Plan which has recently been adopted by the District Council

Following this stage a Pre-consultation version of the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared and subjected to a formal 6-week consultation which was extended because of the intense interest generated. Many of the concerns, such as the allocations for housing, actually originated from the Local Plan rather than the Neighbourhood Plan, and it was quite difficult to explain the relationship to the general public. The major challenges during the formal Consultation have therefore been the management of expectations of what a Neighbourhood Plan can actually achieve and the balancing of some conflicting issues relating to developments.

During the Consultation period there were four Saturday morning open meetings and one major Public Meeting plus several presentations to organisations in the Town. The result was 408 formal responses many of which covered a wide range of issues with several comprehensive responses from developers, from knowledgeable

organisations and from statutory authorities. These have all been analysed and where relevant the resulting output has been used to strengthen or amend the background information in Section 2, 3 and 4, the Policies and commentary in Section 5 and the additional information in Section 6.

The resulting evidence is detailed in the Consultation Statement.

An overriding theme that emerged from all this consultation was a feeling that development in the town should be infrastructure led, rather than the infrastructure being apparently justified development by development with the details effectively determined by the relevant developer. In particular, echoing the strong concerns for traffic in the future, there was a wish for a holistic plan for the road structure for the town to cater for the cumulative effects of all the anticipated development.

Indeed apart from those concerned that too many additional houses were being planned and those specifically concerned about proposed sporting developments at Castle Farm, the main concern of the general public was the likely effect of the additional traffic arising from the new developments on the infrastructure of the Town, and its inability to be absorbed.