

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Town Infrastructure committee
Meeting date	21 July 2022
Agenda item	11 – Neighbourhood Plan
Author	Cllr Grace Clifton

Neighbourhood plan report for Town Infrastructure Committee, 21st July 2022

I am pleased to report the following activity in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan since my report to our last committee meeting in March:

1. Annual parish meeting – I provided a verbal review of the last year of NP activity at the Annual Parish Meeting on April 28th. A written report has been placed on the parish meeting area of the ATC website.
2. Emerging themes – at our steering group meeting on 28 April, we reviewed evidence submitted in relation to the three themes presented at the March public engagement event and identified gaps in this evidence. This has resulted in three further themes being prepared (access and movement, business and employment, families and young people) ready for public engagement and review. Preparing a theme for review is a time-consuming activity – it involves identifying gaps in current evidence, pulling together a number of research questions and gathering more evidence to answer these questions. I think it is fair to say that we have encountered a certain amount of volunteer ‘fatigue’ with steering group members who have been involved in previous themes not really wanting to commit more time to these latest theme areas. To address this, we have brought two new members into steering group, are making use of the local knowledge of the Church in Abingdon network and have worked staff and pupils of Fitzharrys School. The remaining three topics are, at the time of writing this report, due to be going live on our engagement website the week beginning 18th July (we have waited until the end of the CARF online engagement activity – see below). It is fair to say that this recent drop in momentum has resulted in a small delay in NP activity, although we estimate we will be ready for regulation 14 consultation in early Autumn. This would still fit into the original timeline for holding a referendum in May 2023.
3. Central Abingdon Regeneration Framework (CARF) – members of the steering group were invited to attend one of the CARF engagement workshops on 4/5th May. I attended the 4th May event, along with two other steering group members, and contributed to discussions in relation to the town centre activity. Members of the CARF team indicated they would be holding a face-to-face engagement event with members of the public in the

town centre in mid-June. Like other councillors, we received confirmation of the event timings three working days before the event started which resulted only a few steering group members being able to attend. We continue to invite members of the CARF group to all our steering group meetings. At the June 20th meeting they were able to report back to us their early findings from their public consultation. A four-week online consultation went live on the VoWH website mid-June to mid-July. I continue to have concerns about the implications for the NP in relation to consulting on two similar projects within the same time period and the potential for public misunderstanding of what the different projects are trying to achieve.

4. I have updated the wording/information on the ATC NP website ([Neighbourhood Plan – Abingdon on Thames Town Council](#)) so that an overview of the NP project and process is provided with traffic being pushed to the dedicated NP website ([Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan \(abingdon-neighbourhood-plan.org\)](http://Abingdon-Neighbourhood-Plan.abingdon-neighbourhood-plan.org)) if residents would like to review themes or provide further feedback.

Cllr Grace Clifton

9th July 2022