

Tollesbury Vision Workshop

Synthesis Report

Jamie-Scott Baxter | Neighbourhoods Made | 26 September 2015

Summary

Tollesbury Vision is a community workshop and participatory event designed by Neighbourhoods Made on behalf of the Tollesbury Neighbourhood Planning Subcommittee (TNPS) to gather and build evidence for the development of Tollesbury's Neighbourhood Plan (TNP). The event was carried out on 26 September 2015 at The Congregational Church, East Street, Tollesbury. It was carried out over a single day and divided into two stages.

Stage one. A general public forum advertised prior to the event and open to the entire community;

Stage two. A focused group session with TNPS.

The workshop was facilitated and steered by Neighbourhoods Made whilst being led by members of the TNPS and the wider community. It was designed to fulfil the following criteria:

- To synthesise the existing survey based consultation material distributed to the wider community by TNPS.
- To raise the profile of the neighbourhood planning process and TNPS to the broader public;
- As a forum for the community to share opinion about a future vision of Tollesbury;
- To review the existing material in preparation of the draft vision;
- To spatialise and critique through a scale model the specific challenges and opportunities in Tollesbury which can be addressed through the neighbourhood planning process.

Methodology & Outputs

Qualitative Research: Participatory Design & Consultation

The workshop was structured around a 1:1000 scale model of the existing village with an accurate representation of topography, infrastructure, field patterns, paths and roads, houses, farms, industrial and other buildings. The coast line, sea wall and tidal mud flats were also represented in the model. The model served as a participatory design & consultation tool as follows:

- A focus for an initial discussion about the physical and spatial challenges and opportunities faced by the village;
- To capture locally embedded knowledge and opinion and to test and refine ideas generated within the forum immediately by the facilitator;

In the initial stage the model anchored the discussion focusing it around specific urban and rural design challenges and opportunities which had been recorded in previous surveys carried out by TNPS. The forum expanded on the responses captured in the surveys, opened up the discussion further whilst drilling deeper into specific issues. In addition the event brought to the surface a shared, qualitative character study of the existing village. Challenges and opportunities were recorded. Gradually the conversation was directed away from the existing condition and participants were encouraged to generate viable and/or 'blue sky' solutions in response to the challenges and opportunities they had identified. These ideas and suggested solutions were quickly captured during the conversation and modelled to scale in foam and paper and placed within the model of the village. As these buildings, roads and rural and urban infrastructure were placed in specific locations - again, locations derived from the initial discussion - the group was able to test the impact of their proposals in terms of quantity, scale, massing, location, orientation. Ultimately, the participants generated and contributed to the urban design of the village, judging the suitability of their proposals and discounting options as the event progressed. The process of being able to immediately visualise, critique and in-turn, modify proposals is crucial to this form of participatory design.

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Outputs

This method of participatory design is a powerful way for groups to be embedded and play an active role in the outcomes. It is a complimentary method and may be used along side traditional quantitative and qualitative data collection.

The key outputs of the event were:

- To 'break down' the neighbourhood plan into manageable, thematic clusters, in this case a suite of key projects;
- A scale model of the village with the key projects;
- A synthesis report enabling a set of draft principles or a draft vision to be produced.

In addition to the model, the event was captured on film with sound and by photography as a record of the content discussed. This content has been reviewed and included in this report and can be added to the NP evidence base.

The event, model and this report leads to the preparation of a draft vision that can be used for further, focused consultation. This continuous, incremental consultation strategy will ensure the wider community is embedded in the Neighbourhood Planning process and individuals have every opportunity to contribute to the future development of the village and the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. In addition, this strategy should reduce the risk of the plan being rejected at public referendum.

Challenges & Opportunities

The following is a list of challenges and opportunities captured thorough out the day. They are thematically gathered, specific to Tollesbury and cut across key policies within Maldon District Council's Local Development Framework.

- Infrastructure
 - Traffic loads through the village are perceived to be a significant issue impacting flow along the B1023;
 - It was suggested traffic accessing the light industrial areas in Woodrolfe Road and the marina contributes to traffic jams through the village;
 - On-street parking along the B1023 within the village contributes to perceived traffic problems;
 - As a result new development is suggested to the west of the village to avoid additional traffic loading in the village centre;
 - New roads and routes to access the waterfront partially or entirely bypassing High Street were considered to help alleviate traffic loading;
 - New roads to alleviate traffic could be brought forward by house builders and should be considered prior to development. Some possible locations and preferred options were tested on the model. Further consideration and consultation required as preferred option are developed;
 - Time restrictions on traffic accessing the industrial area could be considered to alleviate loading;
 - Additional off-street parking in discrete and convenient locations through the village should be identified;
 - Clarity around the capacity of the existing sewage works is needed;
 - It was suggested to alleviate additional loading on the sewage system sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) should be considered with any new development;
 - It is anticipated that the bus depot on New Road may shut in the near future due to the new bus depot at The Hythe in Colchester and imminent changes regarding accessibility;
 - The shutting of the depot at New Road could signify a reduction to local bus services to and from Tollesbury which is unpopular and will have biggest impact on the local youth and elderly populations;

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- In general it was considered that an increased bus or public transport service would be desirable;
 - The interface and linkages between land based activities and water based activities is an opportunity but needs further consideration.
- Business, industry and retail
 - It was suggested to help alleviate traffic loading in the village from large vehicles associated with industry in the future, industrial zoning is located to the west of village and possibly supplying storage and/or live work units;
 - An employment zone was considered a good idea for the waterside location although the community is mindful of an increased traffic through the village;
 - Live-work and small business units could offer space for small scale local enterprise, possibly with shared resources either located to the west of the village or near the waterside as part of an employment zone;
 - Additional shops and services are welcome although it is recognised villages are often difficult locations for such businesses drive economically. Tollesbury, however, does have a focused selection of existing shops and services including a post office, supermarket, a pub, a garage, a butchers, a couple of eateries and a cafe. It was generally agreed these services should be retained and supported;
 - There is a desire for additional food based establishments such as a restaurant, possibly located near waterside with good access and parking;
 - Some of the existing eateries are considered to lack accessibility and parking.
 - Examples of recently established and successful restaurants in remote locations were shared. It was suggested that people will travel to visit good restaurants and this type of economy is desirable in the village.
 - Community infrastructure
 - Doctor's surgery:
 - It was suggested that the doctor's surgery is willing to expand. A figure of 250 new patients was suggested as a possible capacity. This needs to be confirmed and recored in further consultation with the surgery, possibly through a letter from the practice partners;
 - It was suggested the existing building could cope with this expansion;
 - School:
 - It is suggested the local school is at capacity. This needs to be verified and further focused consultation should be carried out with the school;
 - To accommodate expansion an upgrade to the existing or finding new premises may be considered;
 - It was suggested near by schools (1/2 mile away) were not at capacity and could take additional students as the village accommodates more housing. This needs to be confirmed with the schools.
 - Pre-school:
 - The operators of the pre-school suggested the school is at capacity in its current location;
 - Moving the pre-school to a larger premises is a preferred option. Relocating to a share of a currently available ex-industrial unit on Woodrolf Road was suggested. The entire space would be too large for pre-school but possibly could provide space to be shared with other local facilities or services;
 - There exists in the village additional demand for pre-school services.

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- Parish hall, rooms and associated facilities:
 - Potential upgrade and restoration;
 - Review and audit of facilities and needs should be carried out;
- Leisure and Tourism
 - The salt pool near the marina was very popular this year attracting many visitors from within and outside of the village. It is considered to be a fantastic asset;
 - The Essex Coastal trail runs through Tollesbury waterside providing an opportunity to engage with a district wide tourism agenda and capture local benefits for the village;
 - Increased connectivity between the village and waterside would be a benefit encouraging visitors using the waterside to access village services. Growth in this area may also encourage additional local services such as a restaurant and provide local jobs;
 - Fellowship Afloat is a successful local charity working with young people engaging in outdoor and water activities. This and other local organisations should be directly consulted and engaged within the NPing process;
 - There is opportunity for the parish to consider growth in leisure and tourism in partnership with such organisations where all parties can benefit;
 - Although sailing is limited due to tidal mudflats, it was suggested over the next 15 years the popularity of this coast line will grow, partially due to its current low costs moorings;
 - The sailing club has grown to capacity. A new rescue boat is required to meet demand for new members.
- Waterside, marina and industrial area
 - Tollesbury's waterside location and the associated employment and leisure industry is a major asset to the village;
 - Increasing tourism in the area was generally agreed to be necessary and positive, although how to capture the economic potential needs further consideration.
 - The question of how to make Tollesbury's landscape assets work harder for the village in terms of capturing economic activity through tourism was raised;
 - The Essex coastal path runs through Tollesbury waterside;
 - A ferry link project across the Blackwater estuary has been discussed at district level, this could link Mersea, Tollesbury and Bradwell. In 2008 the Dengie establish a food and leisure trail as has Mersea Island. Connections between these three areas could strengthen this food and tourism economy for all, strengthening the shared identity of the Blackwater estuary region;
 - Many examples were given of successful local restaurants and cafes attracting an increasingly aspirational population;
 - Places to stay for tourist in the area are limited. Suggested sites for hotel uses could be provided in the NP;
 - It was suggested the waterside area could be designated an employment zone, encouraging more office based and creative and professional business. This is supported by a recent trend in small office based business moving into the area;
 - This all adds up to a potentially strong and economically vibrant area, with small discrete intervention increased tourism may be encouraged;
 - As there is already housing in the area, additional but limited live-work units may be appropriate encouraging local business opportunities and start-ups;
 - Many of the existing businesses in the area rely on their waterside location and associated communities for trade;
 - As a means to alleviate traffic over the 15 year plan it is suggested future light industrial business not associate with waterside activities maybe better located to the west of the village.

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- Housing

- Maldon District Council's rural allocation is currently at 420;
- Tollesbury is designated by the Distinct Council as a 'large village' which is a 2nd tier settlement and therefore considered a suitable location for growth;
- The LDF does not allocate a specific amount of housing for Tollesbury. Tollesbury Neighbourhood Plan if allocating sites and quantities will take precedent over the districts SHLAA;
- It was generally agreed in the workshop that additional housing allocation within the NP should predominantly be to the west of the village reducing the risk of any additional traffic loading on the High Street;
- Housing types including size of units, social, community-led, developer-led should be specified within the NP;
- It was suggested that Game Estates, a local estate agent, has a list of up to 70 people waiting for 1 - 2 bedroom units;
- The village is considered to have a good balance of services to residents, therefore as the village accommodates more residents some services may need to expand;
- There are a nominal amount of infill sites within the village left to develop;
- It was generally agreed Tollesbury could provide up to 100 new homes over the next 15 years. At least 60 new homes were tested on the model during the event which was regarded as an acceptable level of development.

Identified Projects

During the workshop appropriate sites were identified for housing and growth areas for other industries. These projects will need further assessment with preferred options developed and additional consultation carried out, particularly with landowners, but a selection can form the foundation of Tollesbury's Neighbourhood Plan. The following housing capacities on the edge of the village are based on 12-15 plots/acre (approx. 30-35 plots/hectare):

- Cape's Land

- South of West Street
- West of allotments
- Access from St John's Crescent
- Approx. 1.1ha / 2.8 ac
- Suggested housing capacity of 33 - 37 plots

- Butt's Farm

- South of West Street
- Between Capes' land and the cemetery
- New road connecting to Elysian Gardens
- Views south towards estuary
- Approx. 6.5 ha / 16 ac
- Suggested housing capacity over full site 192 - 240 plots

- Parish owned land adjacent to cemetery

- Potential for car parking
- Potential access from West Street connecting to St John's Crescent (through Butt's Farm)
- Approx. 0.8 ha / 1.9 ac
- Suggested housing capacity of 22 - 28 plots

- Scott's Farm

- North of West Street
- Behind petrol station and garage

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- Access from West Street through garage land. Retaining garage
 - New access road connecting to North Road
 - Consider light industrial, storage or employment designation as well as residential
 - Consider live/work units with shared yards or allotment style gardens
 - Consideration to traffic junction with West Street to determine feasibility of site
 - Approx. 0.63 ha partial (10.82 ha full site) or 1.6 ac partial (26.7 ac full site)
 - Suggested housing capacity of 15 - 22 plots on partial site depending on housing type
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- Old Bus Depot
 - Speciality housing - sheltered/assisted/down-sizer/starter homes
 - 1 or 2 bed
 - Accessible
 - Small, possibly shared gardens
 - Approx. 0.37 ha 0.9 ac
 - Suggested housing capacity (higher density) of 16 - 24 units, 1-2 bed apartments
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- Wilkin and Son's Farm
 - Northern edge of village
 - Access from top of Station Road
 - Parish council has been approach about future planning application for 16 houses
 - Site owned by Tiptree Jams
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- Woodrolfe Road
 - Parish owned land
 - Tabled as a "Green Fringe" between industrial zone/ water front and village
 - Car park site currently holds approx. 35 cars could increase to 45-55 to cater for leisure activity near waterside
 - Public toilets on site
 - Planning decision for 24 new homes pending on adjacent site.
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- Marina, waterside and industrial area.
 - Consider additional/ alternative land use designation to include, class A , B1, C and D promoting small office based business, profession services and food, hotel and leisure and tourism
 - Suggested sites to be considered for possible hotel and/or hostel use
 - This area should have a special focus in the NP with possible detailed master plan to protect the existing economies and encourage further activity though tourism, including but not limited to landscape and walking, sailing and water activities, food and agritourism, birdwatching and nature activities
 - Possible location for pre-school expansion
 - Identify locations for retail and housing and/or live/work units
 - Location of river crossing landing to be considered and how Tollesbury can maximise benefit from this infrastructure
 - Green 'infrastructure' connecting waterside to village via Woodrolfe Road, green fringe and parish land
 - Salt pool and cruising club swimming pool are fantastic and unusual assets considered within the master plan ensuring ongoing use and longevity. Additional facilities to support their use may also be considered changing rooms, car parking etc.

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Draft Vision

In conjunction with the workshop event, this synthesis report, the site model and the previous surveys a draft vision for the future of Tollesbury can be begun. To streamline the NP process the next stage of consultation may be focused around a draft vision, or draft principles informing the vision.

Recommendations

The following is a list of recommended next steps to help TNPS progress the development of Tollesbury's Neighbourhood Plan:

- Meet and discuss with school, capacity and expansion strategy as required. Letter from school or minuted meeting to form evidence base;
- Consult and record with doctor's surgery capacity and expansion strategy as required;
- Reach out to local youth groups, clubs including Fellowship Afloat to consider and record young peoples opinion about the future for the village;
- Formally meet and consult with other established local groups, including business, voluntary social, housing associations etc. Compile a list of groups;
- Considered additional consultants needed to progress plan. Maldon District Council is required to support the NP and should be able to provide professional skills including, planning policy or highways/traffic management, for example;
- Further clarity on the future of the bus depot is required. This a key site for provision of specialist, social housing;
- Review survey of industrial and waterside area, consider focused master plan within NP for this area;
- A review and audit of existing parish facilities and needs should be considered;
- Further site specific project investigation needed, consulting land owners, housing associations and developers;
- Further evidence for housing needs maybe required to support any suggested housing allocation. A review of Maldon's SHLAA and associated consultation and evidence should be considered and may negate the need for a further local housing needs survey to be carried out.
- Develop key principles leading to a draft vision;
- Consider using a draft vision and the scale model for the next stage of consultation with specific local community groups and Maldon's Planning Department.

Jamie-Scott Baxter, September 2015