

Neighbourhood Plan

Julia Davies, the chair of Stanstead Abbots Parish Council, came to our meeting in June with her team to talk about The Stanstead Abbots, St. Margaret's and The Folly Neighbourhood Plan.

The requirement for the plan is to find 94 houses within the designated area, which was displayed, for us on a map. The settlement area includes the Folly Estate – part of Great Amwell.

Planning is not simply about scrutiny but is a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives. Therefore groups are consulted on matters such as ecology – making an area plastic free for instance; historical aspects – founding a museum for example. The team has had many meetings with sub-groups and engaged with residents, schools and in public meetings. When sites are selected all three Parish Councils have to agree they are acceptable.



Because of population growth there have already been developments in the village in recent years. Problems in finding new sites include: that we are surrounded by Green Belt; there is a lot of water around (flooding occurred in the area 5 times between 1905 and 1968.) Constraints to building include protected wildlife; also there are listed trees.

There is a danger that the Village Plan is under the District Plan and Hertfordshire can impose a plan on them if they do not come up with a Neighbourhood Plan. For this reason they are concentrating on any feasible sites within the area and these were pointed out to us on the maps. For any decision they are in the hands of other people. There are battles between developers and planners. Costs have to be set off against the obligation to provide affordable housing, for instance the cost of just removing lampposts from one of the sites would cost several million pounds. Costs increase for surface water drainage. Some infill may be possible, particularly in The Folly.

Property experts are consulted to see if the plan will work. Various bodies must also be consulted: Parish Councils, County Council, Environment Agencies, Highways Agencies, also bodies representing the interests of ethnic, racial and national groups. Julia emphasised the need for them to keep constant control of the plan.

The team has clearly put a lot of time and thought into their research and Peter Troughton thanked them very much for their presentation.

Diana Matthews

