



# Delivering Community Led Planning in Cambridgeshire 2012-13



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# Introduction

This report is aimed at rural communities and service providers. It highlights the wealth of community activity driven by Community Led Planning in Cambridgeshire.

It explains what Community Led Planning is, what it involves, what the benefits are and how it links with Localism.

Detailed case studies highlight the experiences of three communities involved in preparing Community Led Plans.

The report shares the experiences of communities where Community Led Plans have been completed, through our recent evaluation of the Community Led Planning process.

Cambridgeshire ACRE is the rural community council for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

We provide encouragement, practical help and support to communities throughout Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to enable them to plan and develop as vibrant places to live and work. We identify what local people need and the issues that are important to them. We then champion these things with those who set policy and make decisions in the county, helping to ensure that rural Cambridgeshire has a voice.



# What is Community Led Planning?

## Community Led Plans

Create a vision for how a community wants to develop and identify the actions needed to achieve it.

Are led by members of the community. They are not owned by the Parish Council, although Cambridgeshire ACRE recommends that the Parish Council has a role in the Plan Steering Group.

Focus on the things people in a community care about, from traffic to healthcare to local shops to affordable housing. They should involve the whole community and give everyone a chance to comment on the issues affecting their lives.

Are a way of mapping out existing services and facilities, identifying the gaps and providing a plan of action to protect what is valued, deal with problems and grasp opportunities.

Include prioritised action plans guiding community action to improve local services, the physical environment and community activities.

Can help to secure funding for projects identified in them by providing evidence of robust community consultation.

Can influence service delivery by showing evidence of need to service providers.

Get people from across the community talking, and provide a voice to all members of the community, including those who might not otherwise get involved in community life.

Can inspire more people to get involved in community activity

# Why is Community Led Planning important?

Public sector spending is under increasing pressure and many public services are vulnerable, particularly in rural areas. As well as providing vital benefits to local people, Community Led Plans can help local authorities and other service providers to maintain levels of service delivery through better understanding of community needs

## Community benefits

### Robust and comprehensive evidence

- Identifies and prioritises key areas requiring action in the community
- High consultation response rates of up to 85%
- Provides robust evidence to support funding applications

### A shared vision

- Driven by community needs
- Led from within the community
- An inclusive and deliberative process

### Empowers community action

- Community delivers many identified actions and works alongside service delivery partners to deliver others
- Plan process strengthens local democratic connections between the Parish Council and the wider community
- Provides a voice to all members of the community
- Visible success inspires further action

## Partner benefits

### CLP evidence:

- Provides the most comprehensive and cost effective form of local consultation, informing policy
- Enables service providers to target resources to priority issues.
- Provides feedback from service users and taxpayers on the effectiveness of service delivery.

### Empowered communities:

- Take responsibility for action rather than waiting for service providers to act. This changes the role of local people, in relation to service providers, from that of customer to partner.
- Initiate dialogue with service providers, leading to closer working relationships being built.

# How does Community Led Planning work in Cambridgeshire?

## WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

More than 80 rural communities have so far created action plans as a result of the Community Led Planning process and support from Cambridgeshire ACRE

## WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Fenland, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils and Cambridgeshire County Council fund Cambridgeshire ACRE to facilitate CLPs across Cambridgeshire

## BEFORE PLANNING BEGINS

We can give presentations and advice to community groups, Parish Councils or public meetings on how to tackle a CLP

## WHEN YOUR STEERING GROUP IS UP AND RUNNING

Our Community Advisor will attend your key meetings and provide advice and guidance throughout the process

## WHEN THE PLAN IS COMPLETE

We can help you to implement your actions and give expert advice for actions relating to community facilities, affordable housing and church buildings.



# Community Led Planning and Localism

**The Localism Act** was intended to give more power to local communities by giving them more power and responsibility to create better neighbourhoods and local services.

Community Led Plans are a tried and tested way of creating a comprehensive shared vision for the community. They are already delivering real localism by making sure that actions are supported by the community and that communities are empowered to act for themselves.

The Localism Act includes a set of Community Rights that help local communities make improvements in their area.

**Community Right to Challenge** allows communities challenge to take over local services that they think they can run differently and better

**Community Right to Bid** provides a chance to bid to buy and take over the running of assets of value to the local community

**Community Right to Build** helps communities bring forward small developments to build homes businesses and community facilities without going thru the normal planning process

**Neighbourhood Plans** allow local communities to make plans that will say what can be built and where

**DID YOU KNOW?** In the

the past **7** years in the East of England region,

**231** communities created Community Led Plans that contained over

**9,000** individual actions to improve their

locality. **47%** of the actions were able to be taken on by the community themselves without external support.

Of the rest, **34%** need negotiation with public service providers.

# A Year in Community Led Planning



## Parish Councils:

Cambridgeshire ACRE provides guidance to Parish Councils to engage local people and get community led plans started

## Steering Groups:

Cambridgeshire ACRE supports dedicated groups of community volunteers to shape their plans



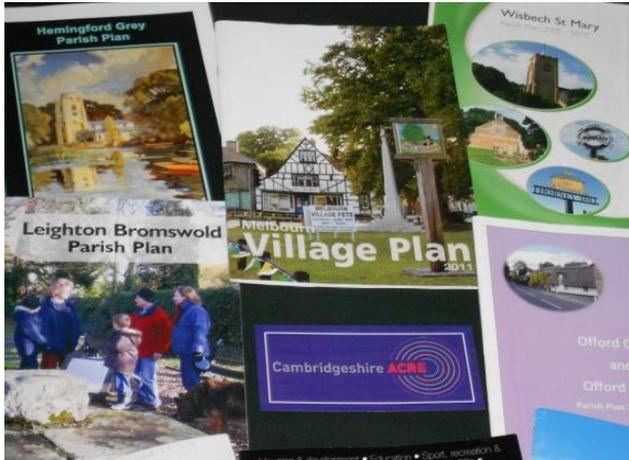
## People power:

Community engagement is vital to produce a plan that reflects local people's needs and wishes

## Open house:

Sharing ideas and feeding back to people keeps them interested and involved

# A Year in Community Led Planning



## Plans and Actions:

Cambridgeshire ACRE has supported around 30 communities with their Community Led Plans in the past year

## Consultations:

Informal consultation events help communities gather initial data to develop a questionnaire



## Seminars:

Cambridgeshire ACRE's Community Advisors run events and seminars to help communities with their plans and ideas

## Blog:

We share news and developments about community led planning and localism through the **Cambs Community Plans** blog

# Case Study:

## Manea FENLAND



**Manea** is an expanding village in the Fens with a population of 2,035. It is only eight miles from March and six miles from Chatteris, but transport connections are poor. The area has been inhabited for centuries, and in the seventeenth century Manea was one of the sites where Charles I planned to build the new town of Charlemont. The RSPB Welches Dam nature reserve on the Ouse Washes is close by.

The Manea Action Plan (MAP) Group was formed to drive the Community Led plan, branded *Mapping the future for Manea*. The group identified clear roles for its members and ensured they were independent of the Parish Council while maintaining strategic links with it.



The MAP Group secured Awards for All funding, provided regular communication about the plan through the village website *Manea Connect*, the newsletter *Manea Matters* and the *Fenland Citizen* newspaper. Cambridgeshire ACRE have provided ongoing support.



*“The actions in the plan are not pie-in-the-sky-aspirations but achievable goals, some easier than others. Some will definitely prove very difficult to achieve, but we are determined to try our best on behalf of the people of Manea” – Manea Action Plan Group*

# Case Study:

## Manea FENLAND

The MAP Group issued a questionnaire in summer 2012 and received a 39% response rate, a good return for Fenland. Data analysis was carried out by a specialist company, enabling a comprehensive report to be produced with a range of evidenced conclusions.

A robust, outcome-focused Action Plan was produced, covering a range of social, economic and environmental issues. Interim findings were shared with the Parish Council and with the community at a public meeting in February 2013.

The project was kept on track using a simple timeline chart. Aware that many Community Led Plans stumble at the implementation stage, the MAP Group will ensure handover to an implementation Group once the final plan is published.



# Case Study:

## Perry HUNTINGDONSHIRE

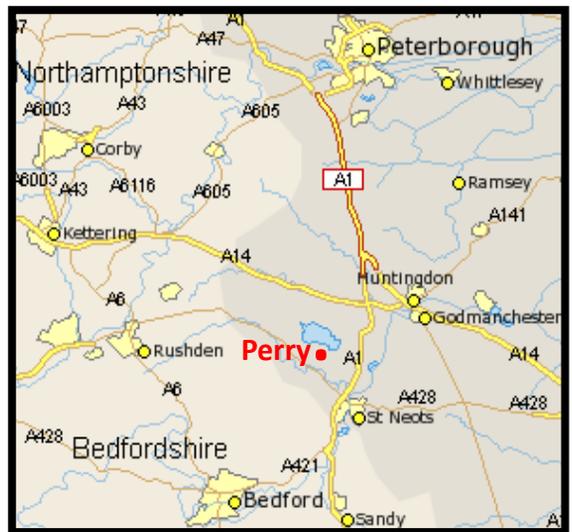


*Perry has a population of 1,310 and lies on the shore of Grafham Water, close to the A1, seven miles from St Neots and eight miles from Huntingdon. Before becoming a parish in its own right the village was divided into West Perry (in the parish of Great Staughton) and East Perry (in the parish of Grafham). Perry has a village shop, a pub, a watersports activity centre and a restaurant. The village also includes Littlehey Prison, built on the site of a former borstal.*

The preparatory stages of the Perry Community Led Plan provided a good example of how the Parish Council is the initial driver in starting the process before handing over to a Steering Committee to guide the project.

Parish Councillors convened a well-attended public meeting in the village and received sufficient interest from the community to indicate that the project would be viable.

A Steering Committee was formed and, despite a slow start, roles were assigned and the project gathered momentum.



*"We want to engage with the community in Perry, conduct a community consultation and collectively determine social, economic and environmental priorities over the next five years. We want to get to the core of what matters locally, ensuring that gaps in service provisions are identified, local inclusive activities enhanced and amenities improved" –*

*Perry 2018 Steering Group*

# Case Study:

## Perry HUNTINGDONSHIRE

The Steering Group decided to brand the plan *Perry 2018* to reflect the forward-looking nature of the project and the five-year timescale of the action plan to be developed.

As with other Community Led Plans, the Steering Group was keen to be independent from the Parish Council in developing the plan, while maintaining links with it.

Perry is a small community, but a group of willing volunteers emerged from the public meeting and through contact with other community groups. The Steering Group is producing a questionnaire to find out what matters most to people in the village.

The Steering Group is deploying a structured project planning approach to keep the plan on track. They have received support from Cambridgeshire ACRE and are following guidance in the Community Led Planning Toolkit. 12



# Case Study: Oakington & Westwick

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE



***Oakington and Westwick*** is a parish of 1,485 people, four miles north-west of Cambridge and close to the A14. Formerly two separate parishes, Oakington was merged with neighbouring Westwick in 1985. Nearby Oakington barracks (a former immigration detention centre) and airfield will become the site of the new town of Northstowe, linked to Cambridge and Huntingdon by the guided busway.

The Community Plan initiative was launched in Spring 2012 at the Village Day, which attracted over 400 people.

The strong sense of community pride in these two small Cambridgeshire villages is reflected in the project, which is focused on the needs of the community, now and in the future.



A questionnaire is being devised to gather the views of the whole community. The consultation will reach as widely as possible and will include sections targeting young people, local businesses and other organisations.



*“For two of the smaller Cambridgeshire villages, there is a surprising variety of activities and business here. The Plan initiative was launched to harness the growing local desire for a more cohesive and forward-looking community. The goal is to define a range of specific and achievable targets to guide decisions over the next five years.”* – Oakington and Westwick Community Plan Steering Group

# Case Study:

## Oakington and Westwick SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The Steering group, chaired by a local sustainability consultant, is working in close co-operation with the Parish Council and is receiving support from Cambridgeshire ACRE.

The group is keen to embrace innovative ideas, such as incorporating photography workshops and piloting a new approach allowing communities to use maps to introduce a spatial dimension to their plans.

The Community Led Plan can help to articulate a vision for the two villages, which are certain to be impacted by the future growth of Cambridge and development of a nearby new town at Northstowe.

Large-scale growth of the kind envisaged here could have a positive effect on Oakington and Westwick by strengthening local infrastructure, while the community is also keen to minimise any negative impact.



# Putting the Plan into Action

*What happens when the plan is complete?*

A Community Led Plan is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Once the plan is complete, it must be implemented and monitored to ensure its goals become a reality

*How does a Community Led Plan help with funding?*

Based on a structured and robust consultation, a Community Led Plan can help provide evidence of need for communities seeking access to funding or running fundraising activities

*What else can the Plan be used for?*

The Plan is a community-building tool. The process of developing a Plan is inclusive, helping to articulate a vision and celebrate all that is good in a community as well as setting out what could be better

*What is the Local Authority role?*

Fenland, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils, together with Cambridgeshire County Council, fund Cambridgeshire ACRE to provide support for Community Led Planning

*Who else can help to implement the plans?*

As well as involving the local authorities, the implementation group should talk to other service providers such as the NHS, water and energy suppliers, telecoms companies and environmental bodies

*What further help and support is available?*

Cambridgeshire ACRE can help with an Action Plan review and offer other community services such as a Housing Needs Survey and advice on community facilities and access to funding

# Putting the Plan into Action

Great Staughton village shop created as a direct result of the Community Led Plan



Reduction of 40 mph speed limits in Christchurch following Plan recommendations



Playground Group launched following film and consultation by young people in Pidley



New Melbourn community hub facilities influenced by the Community Led Plan



Extension to the sports pavilion at Wisbech St Mary



Access for disabled people and pushchair users created at Meldreth railway station



# Evaluation Survey

We surveyed a sample of communities where a Community Led Plan has been completed within the past two years. The responses we received were generally very positive.



*“We’ve got a village shop now. That would never have happened without the Community Led Plan”*

*“We needed to understand people’s thoughts, fears and ambitions and to have evidence to support our relations with agencies”*



*“ACRE provided us with initial guidance and helped us throughout the process with advice and encouragement”*



*“One outcome of the plan is that we have got planning permission for a community building”*



# Evaluation Survey

Naturally, some communities responding to our survey had views on how the way Community Led Planning works across Cambridgeshire could be improved.

*“We had low numbers at meetings as we are a very small community”*



*“The main problem was sustaining interest and commitment in the project”*

*“The support we received could have been better targeted”*



*“The transition from publishing the plan to implementing it wasn't managed properly”*

Other Cambridgeshire ACRE produced Localism information materials, available on our website, include:

- Localism factsheet: Neighbourhood Plans
- Localism factsheet: Community Right to Build
- Localism factsheet: Community Right to Bid (Assets of Community Value)
- Localism factsheet: Community Right to Challenge
- Localism Briefing: Community Led Plans and Localism



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