

Vision & Scope of Leekfrith Neighbourhood plan

Introduction

Neighbourhood plans were introduced in 2011 under the Localism Act. They are effectively a list of planning policies written by residents that (provided they pass certain legal tests, conform with national and regional planning policies and a referendum of local people) must be adopted by the local planning authority and used in making decisions about development.

A neighbourhood plan can:
develop a shared vision for your neighbourhood
identify and protect important local green spaces
influence what new buildings should look like”

Leekfrith is a sparsely populated relatively large parish which is in the Staffordshire Moorlands District of Staffordshire and partly in the Peak District National Park. It encompasses the nationally significant Roaches and borders Tittesworth Reservoir both being popular with tourists. There are no real centres of population but there is the very small village of Meerbrook and the hamlet of Upper Hulme.

Upper Hulme has a collection of small business units in an old mill built in the early 20th century and a pub (the pub is just outside Leekfrith parish). Meerbrook has a church, chapel, village hall and a pub. There is a hotel on the boundary with Tittesworth parish.

In spite of the dispersed nature of the area the parish has a strong community spirit. There are threats and opportunities affecting our community however, such as:

1. the cost of housing making it difficult for the young to live within the community.
2. the lack of suitable accommodation for older people to downsize and remain in the community.
3. the potential for the focal points ie the church, village hall and the pub to disappear as have the post offices and shops. Could other focal points be created?
4. the disruptive effects and opportunities of being in a popular tourist area.
5. the need to balance conservation and enhancement of the landscape & cultural heritage with any development.
6. There is opportunity for employment in the area at farms and in a number of business units located in old farm buildings as well as in Upper Hulme Mill. The Hotel and pub also employ a significant number of people.
7. Access to the internet is very poor.

The community spirit of Leekfrith is strong and enhances the lives of the residents and well worth preserving and enhancing. This will be the main aim of the neighbourhood plan.

Vision

To develop a NP which will help to maintain, enhance and secure the longevity of the community in the Leekfrith Parish.

A community of all ages.

As in many rural communities the average age of our population is increasing so we want

housing suitable for young people. Many older people in the past have left the community they love because of a need to down-size their home. We would like to see housing suitable for older folk so they can remain in the community.

Upper Hulme Mill, a large dilapidated brown field site, may provide a great opportunity to provide many housing units which may fulfil and exceed the needs of the parish and thereby enhance the sustainability of the community by increasing the viability of local services such as the school.

Where the focal points of our community are valued and protected

All communities need places of focus. In our community the Village Hall, the Church, the Chapel and the pub at present fulfil this role admirably. The school is also important and although it is in Tittesworth parish it is on our border. Where possible our plan should ensure their long-term viability.

We should also look at providing other points of focus which could improve communication between us all in the community, providing benefits to health and well-being.

A community where suitable businesses can thrive and employ

There are businesses thriving throughout the parish and this entrepreneurship should be encouraged and an environment provided which encourages people to set up a range of businesses, giving employment opportunities for local people.

Because of our situation we receive many visitors which can help our businesses.

An essential part of business these days is internet access. There are many parts of the parish where this is very poor.

Conservation

Our location is beautiful being blessed with both the Roaches and Tittesworth reservoir. Any improvements we make must enhance the special character here and our quality of life.

We welcome the visitors who want to share this beauty but the numbers are such that careful management is required so as not to spoil what we have.

Scope

Local housing for the young
Local housing for the not so young
Management of car parking and rural road safety
Examination of the focal points of our community and possible planning issues
Identification of possible development sites
Examination of possible development of Upper Hulme industrial site.
Employment opportunities
Conservation areas and areas to protect

All above within the Leekfrith parish

Originally the project was expected to be delivered by Sept 2016 but lead times after submitting the plan are longer than expected so Spring 2017 is more realistic.

Main Deliverables

A designated area – Complete April 2015

Project Vision and Scope

Completed consultation plan

Evidence of policies

A plan of policies for examination

A pre referendum policy plan

A successful referendum of the parishioners of Leekfrith