

Neighbourhood Planning in the town of Harrogate

People who live and work in the town of Harrogate have different visions of how they would like the town to look in the future. A local plan process is led by a local planning authority and the end point is a plan which shapes a 'place' by identifying where and when future development should take place - including topics like design, services and infrastructure to support that development. A vision forms the basis of a local plan and, from this, a set of objectives are identified which may be realised through planning policy. **But how does a local planning authority reconcile a wide range of different visions particularly when it has its own objective to deliver national housing targets?**

Harrogate Borough Council has been abolished and our local planning authority is now North Yorkshire Council. There has been consultation on a potential town council for Harrogate but its creation could be a long way off. The Harrogate District Local Plan is to be replaced by a county-wide North Yorkshire local plan. **Can we expect the new local plan to address issues local to the town of Harrogate and deliver a vision acceptable to our community?**

We will have various opportunities to engage in the local plan process via North Yorkshire Council consultations. The majority of people are likely to leave it to others to respond and make comments. Those that do respond are likely to have many different visions and objectives and the planning authority must reconcile those widely different viewpoints. North Yorkshire Council may well take more notice when consultation responses are co-ordinated – perhaps through a lower tier of governance such as a town council. But we don't have a town council and there is currently no structure in place to help co-ordinate responses to achieve a local vision. **There are benefits if we can find a way to work together to realise an acceptable vision for the town but how can we do this?**

The Localism Act 2011 gave power to local communities to produce their own local 'neighbourhood plan'. This type of plan can deliver a locally accepted vision and would become a statutory document which sits alongside the county-wide local plan to shape future development in the town of Harrogate. The neighbourhood planning process is similar to the local planning process and there are, of course, legal requirements to fulfil. The key first stage is 'getting established' and collate an evidence base which includes what vision is appropriate for the town's future. To do this we need a core group of individuals – called a forum - to move things forward and ensure there is strong support from the community. It may be many years before the town has its own neighbourhood plan and it may be that a new town council will complete the process. If so, they will have the support of a forum of people from the community. **Do you think the neighbourhood planning process is a good idea for the town of Harrogate and do you want to get involved**