

## Ripon's Neighbourhood Plan and Harrogate's Local Plan

**With Harrogate Borough Council currently consulting upon their Local Plan, this month we thought it important to try to explain the relationship between our Neighbourhood Plan and the Harrogate District Local Plan.**

Between 17<sup>th</sup> July and 28<sup>th</sup> August, Harrogate Borough Council are running their "Harrogate District Local Plan: Issues and Options consultation." This is part of their process for creating a new Local Plan for the whole district for the period to 2035 which seeks to identify: where new homes should be built, where new land and premises for businesses should be accommodated, the infrastructure needed for sustainable development (such as transport infrastructure, sport, open space or recreation facilities, schools, shops and community facilities) and the protections and enhancements to the natural and built environment. Given that the Ripon City Plan deals comprehensively with these issues for our city, you can see why there may be some confusion.

The Issues and Option stage is the first public consultation on Harrogate's new Local Plan, which will see two further public consultations during its development and before submission to the Secretary of State, independent examination and adoption in 2018. The consultation itself seeks views to 30 issues and poses 36 questions. Further specific details can be found on the Harrogate District Council website.

The publication of the Issues and Options consultation is an important first step in understanding some of the emerging thinking about the possible contents of the Local Plan. From our perspective, as a City Plan team, we had two reasons for carrying out a comprehensive analysis of the consultation documents when they were published. Firstly, it provides an important strategic planning context to the Ripon City Plan, and secondly given all of our work to date we are well placed to be able to respond to the consultation and ensure that the views of Ripon are heard.

A key principle of all Neighbourhood Plans is that they have to be in "general conformity" with the Local Plan for the area. That is, it cannot be used to go against the principles of the Local Plan, by for example, proposing a lower level of housing growth, although it can seek to shape and amend the way in which some of the objectives are delivered, such as by identifying different sites to deliver the level of housing identified. Since the work on the new Local Plan started, we have always been aware that with our Neighbourhood Plan being at a more advanced stage and continuing to progress, that we need to ensure that at all times we remain in "general compliance" with a document that will be emerging.

From all of the work that we have done so far, in collecting the evidence for, preparing and consulting upon the draft Ripon City Plan, we are also in a good and well-informed position to be able to respond to Harrogate's Issues and Options consultation to put forward the case for ensuring that the needs of Ripon are considered. After all, if all of the policies we wished to see for Ripon were put in the Local Plan we wouldn't need to produce a neighbourhood plan!

At our committee meeting on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July, we considered a report prepared by Alan Weston, City Development Manager, in conjunction with Christopher Hughes, one of the City Plan volunteer team. The report highlighted that at this stage, there are no significant concerns in relation to the Ripon City Plan not being in general conformity with the emerging Local Plan and furthermore that

within the consultation document there is a recognition of the important role of neighbourhood plans. Whilst this is plainly evident from the legislation, which states that neighbourhood plan policies have the same weight as the district-wide policies in the Local Plan and that they are not of lower priority or lesser importance, it is nevertheless reassuring to see this recognised.

The committee, which comprises both Councillors and residents of the city, also thoroughly debated some of the key issues and agreed the basis on which the consultation response is to be drafted to try to ensure that Ripon's needs are considered in developing the new Local Plan.

A copy of consultation response will be published in due course but if you require any further information, please contact the Ripon City Plan Team: [cityplan@riponcity.gov.uk](mailto:cityplan@riponcity.gov.uk) or call (01765) 604097.