

Prebendal Farm Community Led Plan

Prebendal Farm is a housing estate on the outskirts of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire and is a relatively new community having been built in the 1970's. As the name suggests the site was originally a farm and was well known locally for the breeding of the Aylesbury Duck. Over the years the estate has been in decline and is considered to be one of the most deprived areas in the county. In partnership with Community Impact Bucks and Aylesbury Town Council, Prebendal Farm Residents Association (PFRA) held an open meeting on 21 March 2011 for residents to take part in a 'Have your Say' consultation event and for volunteers to come forward to take responsibility for the production of a Community Led Plan. It proved difficult to get residents engaged in the process and as no one came forward PFRA took the lead with support from Community Impact Bucks, Aylesbury Town Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council. Further consultation events were held at the Community Centre and with the local youth club and primary school.

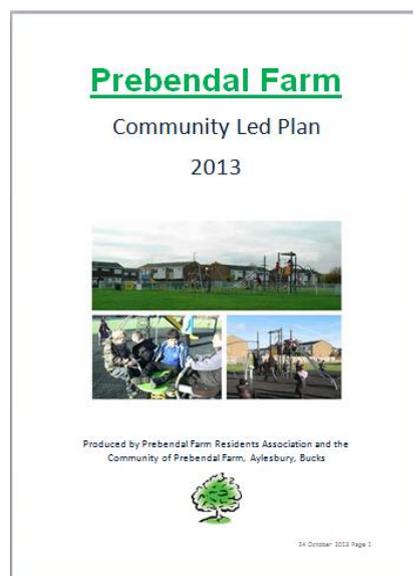
A household survey was created from the responses to the consultation events and hand delivered to approximately 700 households. Whilst the 10% response rate was disappointing it was not wholly unexpected in this urban area. Residents were known not to engage in community activity and have a general lack of interest and pride in the area. At the outset of the process PFRA were hopeful that this trend could, in some way, be reversed by producing a local plan with realistic and achievable actions.

The lesson I have learned about the process is that we need to get the community involved. Filling in forms and surveys is one thing but involvement is another. However it is important for those who are involved to ensure that this is pushed forward and not allowed to fall away. Interest must be maintained.

Michael Young, Prebendal Farm Residents Association

Meetings were held at a PFRA member's home to keep costs of hiring meeting space to a minimum. With 2 members of PFRA able to commit time to the process, and with no other support from residents, Community Impact Bucks provided an intense package of support covering all aspects of the community led planning process from attending consultation events, questionnaire design and delivery, help with the analysis of the results, drafting, collating and printing the final plan. A local town councillor also regularly provided support to the group and helped PFRA with printing and delivering the questionnaire. This is not seen as a failing of the group; experience shows that urban areas often need a higher level of support by other partners. Once the questionnaire had been analysed a member of PFRA wrote the draft action plan. The plan was distributed electronically to partners including Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust, town and county council members and the local Neighbourhood Police.

An electronic copy can be viewed at www.clp-se.org.uk





What is a Community Led Plan?

A Community Led Plan is a process that underpins a community's vision for itself across all aspects of social, environmental and economic life. It celebrates positive features and activities, highlights local needs and contains a detailed action plan to help meet those needs. Traditionally it's as a process undertaken in rural areas, but community led planning is seen as the ideal tool for any community, rural or urban, to shape the area in which they live.

These plans are produced by and for communities, based on a detailed survey and consultation which is widely inclusive, prompts action and influences others. Good plans use the Community Led Planning Toolkit framework, are supported by external facilitators from the Rural Community Action Network and include a robust evaluation process that ensures their quality.

Now and in the future

One of the high priority issues was drug and substance misuse on the estate. Information from the household survey was shared with the relevant authorities and certain areas of the estate have now been identified as a priority by the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Other successes are:

- a new bus service has been introduced on the estate
- an area of hard standing has been redeveloped and is now a grassed area with cherry trees to be planted in the near future
- new benches have recently been installed

Other areas of the action plan PFRA are working on are to improve communication on the estate with the introduction of a regular newsletter, street lighting improvements and getting the mobile library to visit.

There are however some actions which have had to be abandoned. The petition to widen a busy road junction was unsuccessful due to cost and although the community wanted more activities on the estate the newly created coffee mornings at the community centre have not been well attended and are likely to stop at the end of November 2013.

Urban neighbourhoods are traditionally more reliant on public services and statutory 'presence' and find it difficult to accept that they, themselves, can lead the search for a solution to many local issues. PFRA are hopeful that this will change in the future once local people can see the benefit of their Community Led Plan.

Unlike many of our rural communities this small urban population had little or no interest in getting involved in community activity due, in part, because many residents appear not to value the area or put down roots or identified with local facilities. Some community activities were cancelled because PFRA did not have the manpower to organise them and although local people were vocal about wanting more community activity they were not prepared to come forward and be involved. The residents association is committed to doing its best for the community and they should be congratulated for their perseverance.

Carol Nutkins, Community Projects Officer Community Impact Bucks