

Barrowden & Wakerley Neighbourhood Plan Character Assessment

On 26/06/17 Trina, Jean and Chris met at the Council Offices with Colin Dunigan who provided a very helpful outline and guidance on the preparation of a Character Assessment.

Colin had prepared a very detailed presentation with an accompanying document, which provided helpful details on background information and historical details of the area, which will provide a good context for the document we aim to produce. In addition he provided the following context headings with accompanying notes and question prompts to guide the creation of the Character Assessment.

Surrounding Landscapes

- How people in the past have used and divided up the landscape?
- Topography – how settlements relate to the land?
- How have people moved through the landscape?
- Landscape setting

Village Layout

- Is the village arranged around a green or along a street?
- Population demographics
- Is the parish church at the centre, on edge or distant from it?

Landmark buildings and places of worship

Streetscape

- The materials, styles, scales, detailing and groupings of buildings within the villages.
- Relationships with streets, plots, boundaries, open spaces and views.

Green and natural features

- Village ponds, water meadow, rookery, spinney, trees etc.
- Road verges, hedgerows – habitats

Views and site lines

- Views to the landscape beyond or views into from the surrounding countryside
- Which views are more sensitive and important to the community as a whole?
- Consider how these might be affected by development

Roads, streets, routes

- Role of PRow paths, lanes, roads, river and disused railway

Spaces

- Playing field, allotment, cemeteries, village greens
- Important open spaces
- Local green spaces

Planning Aid England, for which we have a range of helpful documents in our Dropbox, provides a slightly shorter pro forma with accompanying guidance notes with the following contexts.

Topography

Land Uses

Layout

Road, streets and routes

Streetscape

Views

Two approaches can be taken to collating information for each criteria, the first is to treat the area we have defined for the NP as a whole and then to look at specific features for Barrowden and Wakerley when for example, looking at Layout, Roads, streets and routes, Streetscape and Views or to identify character areas as was done when the VDS was drawn up.

In addition to covering these aspects, it will be helpful to create a short piece providing an historical background to our communities.

Next Steps and Way forward

It was agreed that from work done so far on conservation and that provided by the VDS, which although created 17 years ago still has a wealth of relevant information. It was felt that it was important make use of these materials avoiding duplication of tasks, however we do need to distil this information into a document that clearly fits the purpose of a Character Assessment for the NP.

Colin is able to provide us with a wide range of photographs and documents, maps etc. and these as well as the materials we already have available will be helpful in illustrating each of the aspects of the final document.

In scanning the notes and materials available in our Dropbox there was a specific quote that appeared to be relevant to our task – *“The document should provide a clear guide to any developer as to the character and environment of our communities and what makes them special and that any development should be sympathetic to these issues.”* And that the purpose of a character assessment is to, *“Understand and record key features which combine to make its unique character.”*

It will be helpful to discuss the points raised in these notes at our meeting on July 3rd in order to give the working group a clear direction as to how we to proceed.

CB 26/07/17