



Desborough Neighbourhood Plan Session

11 October 2025

Desborough United Reformed Church

Summary Notes

Attendance & Purpose

Initial count: 23 attendees (excluding councillors); increased to 29 at its peak, plus councillors.

Purpose: To update the public on progress, challenges, and next steps for the Neighbourhood Plan, particularly regarding funding, consultant support, and community involvement.

Format: A brief presentation (~10 minutes) followed by open discussion and Q&A.

Key Topics Discussed

1. Funding & Progress

- The plan's grant funding has ended, so further work would rely on precept funds.
- Attendees were informed of the need for a consultant to ensure compliance and viability, avoiding legal or technical errors.
- Indicative future costs were discussed, though a figure was not put forward without quotes being available.

2. Community Involvement

- The plan must be a community-led effort, not just a council project.
- Public support is essential for ideas, promotion, and engagement activities.

Attendees suggested:

- Promoting through schools and supermarket posters.
- Delivering leaflets to raise awareness.
- Using storytelling and local case studies to make the plan more relatable.
- A working group or volunteer subgroup could help drive publicity and engagement.

3. Policy & Purpose

- Questions were raised about whether the plan "carries any weight". It was clarified that it does, and it is referenced in local and national planning policy.
- The plan must align with national policy and complement the local plan's requirements.
- The Lawrence site was discussed briefly; clarification was provided that it is subject to a covenant and not the focus of this meeting.

4. Consultant Support

- A member of the public offered help to secure a consultant, which was warmly welcomed.
- Discussion acknowledged that consultant recruitment has been difficult, and the consultant may need to be convinced of the project's merit (as a valuable case for their CV).
- The group also discussed the potential role of AI tools to support communication and drafting but recognised that AI alone cannot replace expert consultancy due to reliability issues.

5. Communication & Engagement Challenges

- Some residents said they hadn't heard about the plan or the meeting.
- Suggestions included improved advertising, especially through schools and community hubs.
- There was general recognition that apathy and low awareness exist, which must be addressed through better marketing and education.

Outcome & Next Steps

Show of hands: 26 people participated; majority were in favour of continuing with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Attendees were invited to register interest via email to join or support the working group.

The next stage is to:

- Secure a consultant.
- Engage further with residents to identify top priorities.
- Develop a wish list, costed proposal, and timeline.
- Work towards a final referendum and full town vote for the final proposed plan.

Overall Sentiment

- The meeting was considered positive and constructive.
- There is renewed community interest and willingness to help move the plan forward.
- The focus now shifts to consultant engagement, improved communications, and stronger local collaboration.