

CAMBRIDGESHIRE ACRE CASE STUDY

Community-led (Parish) Planning

Community-led or parish planning builds upon the fact that people's interests lie very close to home, where they can share common experiences of their locality and understand the services and facilities on offer. They build a vision on how they would like their immediate neighbourhood to develop longer-term.

This case study sets out how Cambridgeshire ACRE helped the village of Witchford with their parish plan.

Witchford Parish Plan

"The objective of the Witchford Parish Plan is to identify the actions that will ensure the village develops in the way the community wishes. The process of creating the plan will give everyone a chance to say what they think about the social, economic and environmental issues affecting the community. To do this, we will need feedback from as many Witchfordians as possible. We aim to achieve this by means of a survey, delivered to every household in Witchford with the Witchfordian magazine in October 2007. Completed forms will be collected and the results analysed to produce a draft Parish Plan."



Witchford in East Cambridgeshire - Almost 1,000 households

Cambridgeshire ACRE's Community Development Worker has been a key player in the life of the Witchford Parish Plan. The worker attended the majority of the monthly Steering Group meetings held in 2007 and was particularly useful, according to the Chairman, *"in keeping us on the straight and narrow"*. A range of advice and guidance was offered, invariably in the form of presenting options for progressing the Parish Plan based on experiences of the process in other villages. This prevented the Witchford group from *"going round in circles"*.

The worker was also available outside of meetings as a sounding board for the Chairman and to answer queries around the process and of a more technical nature.

As the Chairman of the Witchford Steering Group said *“I don’t think it would have happened without Cambridgeshire ACRE’s support ... they have provided a constant thread for us.”*

The Steering Group of ten local people clearly provided the energy to undertake the Parish Plan. The Group was delighted with a survey response rate in excess of 500 from a village of around one thousand households. This local energy and commitment has really been released through the support and advice of the Community Development Worker. The Parish Plan process is, on the face of it, straightforward. However, every community brings a unique package of skills and capacity to the table.

A key message from the Witchford experience is that support and advice is required throughout the process, typically for a twelve month period but in their case up to eighteen months.

Case Study compiled from an in-depth, telephone interview with the Chair of the Parish Plan Steering Group and other evidence gathered from supporting documents and ‘Witchford Online’ the website of the village.