

Planning Aid in Action: Hoylake Village Life Front Runner

Background

Hoylake is a town in Wirral, which is a target borough (in the 20% IMD) for Planning Aid in the North West. Hoylake Village Life (HVL) is a third wave Neighbourhood Planning Front Runner. It is a Community Interest Company, which was set up in the autumn of 2009, with the intention of reversing the decline of the retail offering in the town.

Hoylake Village Life has identified 10 key issues for the development of Hoylake:

- Town centre development
- Renewal and redevelopment of housing stock
- Regenerate industrial estate, including reviewing energy supply
- Stronger visitor economy
- Balancing diversity
- Encouraging a well-managed night-time economy
- Improving access across the railway
- Ensuring community engagement

The Community Planning Outreach Co-ordinator met with four representatives from HVL in late November 2011. HVL already has high social capital. Active members include a planner, people with community development and engagement experience, an ex-Councillor and an ITC specialist. Planning Aid England are also in contact with Wirral Borough Council, who are aware of our support. Additionally, we have put Wirral Voluntary Action in touch with HVL to provide further support.

So far, we have identified 4 volunteers who are interested in supporting HVL. The volunteers have a range of skills including community engagement, development plans experience, access and heritage.

Planning Aid's support included:-

Following discussions, a number of key areas were identified where Planning Aid could offer further support:

- Community engagement: although the group is experienced in community engagement and has lots of creative ideas, they were keen to ensure some independent support and advice around community engagement
- Information/data gathering: the group has access to significant amounts of information already but they are looking for more support in this area, again with a degree of independence.
- Specialist support: HVL are developing an ambitious Neighbourhood Plan and are keen to bring in specialist advice and support where possible

Following the initial meeting the Community Planning Outreach Co-ordinator has been liaising with HVL to draw up a support package for the group. Plans include:

- Independent development and facilitation of a community open day to be held February/March 2012.
- Identification of volunteers to provide additional support for HVL. Two Planning Aid volunteers attending, providing support to participants at the event, and facilitating workshop groups.

What was the outcome of the project?

The project is still on-going and the final support package has yet to be agreed.