

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Neighbourhood Planning

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing)
14th April 2015

Executive Portfolio: Planning and Housing Strategy (DD)

Report by: Head of Development (AM)

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Executive Summary:

This report updates the Panel on the current position with the preparation of neighbourhood development plans in Huntingdonshire.

Recommendation:

That the Panel notes this report.

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1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT / PURPOSE?

- 1.1 This report updates the Panel on the current position with the preparation of neighbourhood development plans in Huntingdonshire.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY / BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A number of neighbourhood development plans are under preparation within Huntingdonshire. Once approved, neighbourhood development plans become part of the 'development plan' for Huntingdonshire and, as such, hold significant weight in the planning process.
- 2.2 Neighbourhood planning was introduced in the Localism Act 2011 to give people new rights to shape the development of communities in which they live. A neighbourhood development plan can set out a vision and planning policies for the use of land within a parish or group of parishes. It offers communities the opportunity to set the priorities for planning in their area and can help to build relationships between the local community and service providers.
- 2.3 Areas with an adopted neighbourhood development plan will also be entitled to a larger share (25% compared to the normal 15%) of the community infrastructure levy receipts to put towards infrastructure projects in the area.

3. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS

- 3.1 The key stages in the process of preparing a neighbourhood development plan are as follows:
 1. **Designation of the neighbourhood area:** The neighbourhood area is, by default, the administrative boundary of the relevant town or parish council. However, it is possible for groups of local councils to prepare joint plans, or for neighbourhoods within a town or parish to form a neighbourhood forum as an independent entity to prepare a plan for a specific area. There can also be neighbourhood plans for business districts. The proposed neighbourhood area has to be subject to a period of open public consultation prior to either its approval or refusal by the local planning authority.
 2. **Preparing the plan:** This is the most time consuming element of the process, where the local community begins to gather evidence and start to write the plan. This stage usually involves extensive consultation and survey work with the local community, and discussion with the local planning authority and others including the normal range of statutory consultees.
 3. **Pre-submission consultation:** The promoters of the plan need to be publicise it through a full consultation process before submitting it to the local planning authority and, following the consultation, prepare a consultation statement that describes how the plan has been publicised.
 4. **Submitting the plan:** The promoters of the plan can make amendments to the pre-submission plan before submitting it to the local planning authority. When the local planning authority receives the finalised plan it

must publicise and consult on it again for a six week period. All comments made will be sent to the independent examiner.

5. **Basic conditions check:** The local planning authority is responsible for checking the plan in relation to the relevant regulations and statutes including national policy, its contribution to sustainable development, its conformity with the strategic policies of the local development plan, and compatibility with human rights and EU obligations (including Strategic Environmental Assessment when necessary).
 6. **Independent examination:** The local planning authority arranges and pays for the independent examination of the plan (it receives a grant to cover this cost). The examiner will test the plan against how it meets the basic conditions and relevant legal requirements.
 7. **Modifications:** The examiner may recommend a series of modifications that are required to bring the plan in line with the basic conditions and legal requirements. The local planning authority is responsible for making the modifications, and if the local community is unhappy with the proposed modifications it can withdraw the plan.
 8. **Referendum:** The local planning authority must organise and pay for (for which it receives a grant) a referendum on the plan to seek the views of the community it covers. If more than 50% of those voting in the referendum vote 'yes' the district council will then bring the plan into force.
 9. **Delivery:** Once the neighbourhood development plan is brought into force it will be used to determine planning applications and guide planning decisions in the neighbourhood area.
- 3.2 The district council has a duty to support town and parish councils in a range of technical aspects of preparing and processing neighbourhood development plans, for which it receives government funding. Neighbourhood development plans need to be prepared in conformity with the strategic policies of the local planning authority's development plan. However, the main principle is that the parish or town council is the promoter and owner of the plan and takes responsibility for co-ordinating its preparation from beginning to end.

4. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

- 4.1 The following parish and town council areas are in the process of preparing, or considering preparing, a neighbourhood development plan:
- **Brampton:** A neighbourhood area covering the whole of the parish was designated on 5th March 2014. However, the parish council has since indicated it will probably not proceed any further with producing a neighbourhood development plan.

- **Bluntisham, Needingworth and Earith:** These three parishes have indicated that they are considering a joint neighbourhood area and plan and has arranged to meet the Planning Services team to discuss this further.
- **Godmanchester:** A neighbourhood area covering the whole of the parish was designated on 11th March 2015.
- **Houghton and Wyton:** The parish council intends to submit the neighbourhood development plan to the council in mid April 2015.
- **Huntingdon:** A consultation on the designation of a neighbourhood area covering the whole of the town council's administrative area closes on Friday 10th April 2015.
- **St Neots:** This neighbourhood plan, covering the whole of the town council's administrative area, has been subject to independent examination. The Examiner's letter suggests modifications needed to make the plan acceptable and the Planning Services team is working with the town council towards the next stage of the process.

5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 Under the 'Working with our communities' theme, supporting community planning including working with parishes to complete parish plans was a key action for 2014/15. Setting out the Council's 'community planning' offer and supporting community planning including working with parishes to complete neighbourhood and parish plans is a key action for 2015/16.
- 5.2 The emerging Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 also includes a draft policy that seeks to assist neighbourhood and community planning.

6. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 6.1 This report is an update report and no decisions are required at this stage.

CONTACT OFFICER

Paul Bland, Planning Service Manager (Policy)
Tel No. 01480 388430