

**Committee:** Planning Policy Working Group

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 27 July 2015

**8**

**Title:** Neighbourhood Development Plans and the Local Plan

**Author:** Martin Paine, Planning Policy Team Leader

---

### Summary

1. The attached report proposes that the District Council should encourage Parish Councils to submit a Neighbourhood Area designation to the District Council by the end of 2015, should they intend to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan to become part of the Development Plan for the area, to guide future planning applications in a manner consistent with the emerging Local Plan.
2. It provides guidance relating to Neighbourhood Development Plans and their relationship with Local Plans, in order to assist Parish Councils in making this decision.

### Recommendations

That the report be supported as a basis for approaching Parish Councils regarding their intentions in respect of the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans aligned with the emerging Local Plan.

### Financial Implications

3. As set out in the report, some budget to provide expert consultancy advice is available to support Parish Councils preparing Neighbourhood Plans. Further details of funding for Neighbourhood Plans is included in the report.

### Background Papers

4. None

### Impact

Communication/Consultation	It is intended that the attached report should be emailed to Parish Clerks
Community Safety	None
Equalities	The Local Plan impacts on all sectors of the community.
Health and Safety	None

Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	Will be assessed as part of work on the Local Plan and, where relevant, Neighbourhood Plans.
Ward-specific impacts	All.
Workforce/Workplace	Planning Policy Team and potential resources required by Parish Councils preparing Neighbourhood Plans.

## Situation

5. This report follows on from early discussion of the Options stage methodology discussed by the Planning Policy Working Group on 13 July 2015.
6. Traditionally, Local Plans allocate development in villages. This can help to ensure development is spread around the district and ensure that new development helps to support essential rural services such as shops, pubs and village schools.
7. An alternative approach would be to leave development in the villages entirely to Parish Councils, who may or may not choose to allocate sites through Neighbourhood Development Plans. Neighbourhood Development Plans differ from Parish Plans in that following successful referendum, examination and adoption by the Local Planning Authority they attain the same weight in the consideration of planning applications as Local Plans.
8. However, some Parish Councils may feel that the resources and level of commitment required are significant and may therefore choose not to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan. This is a likely scenario and will result in a patchwork of plans across the District.
9. Such a scenario would make it difficult to demonstrate to a Local Plan inspector that the District Council had 'made every effort' to meet Objectively Assessed Needs for housing across the area. For this reason it is highly likely that the Local Plan will need to consider allocating some development sites in some villages as part of an overarching strategy for the District. In doing so the District Council will need to take account of input from Town and Parish Councils.
10. Neighbourhood Development Plans can provide a way for an enhanced level of community participation in the site allocation process, and are encouraged by the District Council. However, as set out in the NPPF and the PPG (see Section 1 and Appendix A to this report) it is important that such plans should be consistent with emerging Local Plans.

11. This consideration applies not only to small sites but also to the edges of towns, which may need to grow across administrative boundaries into a neighbouring Parish area. It also applies to any potential new settlements which may be located within one or more Parishes. Such developments could be critical to delivery of the development strategy for the Local Plan. As national policy and guidance makes clear, it is not the role of Neighbourhood Development Plans to obstruct development.
12. In order to facilitate the alignment of any potential Neighbourhood Development Plans with the Local Plan, any Parish Councils which have not yet done so are encouraged to submit any proposed Neighbourhood Plan areas to the District Council for consideration by the end of 2015. This should allow Parish Councils sufficient time to seek local views and make a decision through their Parish meetings, and to prepare applications to the District Council.
13. This would then allow time for significant progress on Neighbourhood Development Plans to be made by the time of examination of the Local Plan. This would demonstrate to a Local Plan inspector that a clear delivery mechanism for development in the villages is in place, enabling the District Council to comply with the requirements for a positively prepared and effective plan (NNPF Paragraph 182).

### **Parish Forum 28 September 2015**

14. A Parish Forum is to be held at the District Council offices at Saffron Walden on 28 September 2015 (at 7pm). The Forum will cover a range of different issues but it is proposed that the Forum should be used to give further consideration to ways in which the District Council can work together with Parish Councils in relation to the issues referred to in this report.

### **Risk Analysis**

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Without the proposed approach there is a risk that there could be inconsistency between Neighbourhood Development Plans and the Local Plan.	1. Can be addressed and managed through co-operative working with Parish Councils	3. Could result in the Local Plan being found unsound due to lack of a positively prepared and effective plan.	Communication with Parish Councils, including at the Parish Forum on 28 September.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.