

Welcome

to the first edition of Neighbourhood Planning News

Those of you who have read the many media articles on planning and housing over the last few months will realise that there are changes ahead both for local planning and neighbourhood planning.

The recent **Housing and Planning Bill**, published on 13 October 2015 provides us with some detail about these changes, but we are waiting for the regulations to understand the full implications of these.

However, the Government has clearly indicated that there will be changes to help speed up the neighbourhood planning process. West Devon Borough Council welcomes this commitment and we will keep you informed about the details as they come forward.

This newsletter has been prepared to provide guidance to neighbourhood plan groups in to address some of the key issues these groups have raised with us. It contains information about:

- An update on neighbourhood planning in West Devon
- The relationship of neighbourhood plans with Our Plan
- Progressing your neighbourhood plan
- How the Councils will support neighbourhood planning

It does not offer guidance about how to prepare a neighbourhood plan. There is a wealth of knowledge and expertise in our communities and a huge amount of information in the public domain prepared by other organisations.

Our website at www.westdevon.gov.uk/wdneighbourhoodplans provides details about groups in our area and our protocol for supporting neighbourhood planning.

Separate newsletters will continue to provide updates about Our Plan and new government policy.

An update on Neighbourhood Planning in West Devon

Neighbourhood Planning has seen a positive response in West Devon with 9 communities now at various stages of preparing a neighbourhood plan for their area.

This reflects the growing uptake nationally with the Government keen to promote neighbourhood planning as a 'powerful tool' for local people to use to address future development needs, particularly for housing.



The relationship between neighbourhood planning and Our Plan



Neighbourhood planning has its origins in the Localism Act (2011), which introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to help shape development.

This sits alongside the duty of local planning authorities to prepare and keep up to date development plans for their area, which is set out in the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.

Put simply, Neighbourhood Plans allow local people to promote the right type of development for their community in the right location, providing it is in accordance with higher level plans and policies.

Once adopted, Neighbourhood Plans become part of the statutory planning for the area and so they must also meet the needs of the wider area. Therefore, they must be in 'general conformity' with the local development plan, national planning policy and guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and any relevant European and human rights obligations.

Currently, the development plan for West Devon is the West Devon Borough Council Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2006-2026. Neighbourhood plans must conform with the Core Strategy policies that are in line with the NPPF if groups wish to submit their plans for Examination ahead of Our Plan being adopted.

However, 'Our Plan' is moving forward and is a 'material consideration' that must be taken into account when preparing each neighbourhood plan.

West Devon Council sees Our Plan and neighbourhood planning together as a means of agreeing a shared understanding about how to support your community, including key issues around:

- Will our children afford their own homes?
- Can they find jobs locally?
- Will our local pubs and shops have the customers to survive?

There are many things for us to plan for, and it is important that we find a way to meet these demands in a way that maintains, and enhances, both the special quality of West Devon and our communities.

A neighbourhood plan must address the development and use of land and its policies must be clear and precise so that, when they become part of the development plan, they can be used consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. The neighbourhood plan's role is to add local detail to the development plan policies and to propose further development. (Neighbourhood plans cannot propose less growth than the development plan).

The West Devon Core Strategy provides a firm starting point for neighbourhood plans to be prepared – one that has been tested and supported on appeal on many occasions – and the continuing work on Our Plan will enable us to make sure that West Devon's planning and neighbourhood planning go forward hand in hand, sharing information and developing strong and robust policies and proposals.

Read the latest Our Plan e-newsletter on line at www.westdevon.gov.uk/ourplan to find out more about the progress of the plan.

How can we plan for housing and employment?

Neighbourhood plan groups have asked us about how they can plan for housing numbers while we continue to prepare Our Plan. The West Devon Core Strategy provides the absolute minimum that needs to be planned for in West Devon to 2026. When Our Plan was drafted early in 2015, it was clear that we needed to increase the supply of housing both to meet new government targets and to reflect population change in the area. We need to continue to update Our Plan to reflect new government policy guidance and revised information. We also need an up to date plan period for Our Plan to provide a 15 year plan from the point of adoption so Our Plan will need to include housing figures for a longer period, to at least 2032.

We also continue to work with our neighbouring authorities (our Duty to Co-operate partners) to ensure that we work together to co-ordinate supporting our communities across administrative boundaries in recognition that people do not live their daily lives within the confines of one authority and many travel across boundaries to work, access services and facilities and for leisure and recreational purposes.

Until these issues are resolved, we suggest that neighbourhood plan groups continue to work on the figures provided in Our Plan (Regulation 19 Publication Version February 2015 www.westdevon.gov.uk/ourplan) but take every opportunity to consider additional sites in their communities. These should be in sustainable locations in which housing and employment development could be accommodated.



Progressing your Neighbourhood Plan

Whilst the work on Our Plan progresses, there is still a huge amount you can be doing to prepare your Neighbourhood Plans. You do not need to stop and wait for Our Plan to be adopted. Work might include:

Confirm the purpose of your neighbourhood plan and ensure you have an agreed vision and objectives which reflect the community vision and can be taken forward in planning policies

Make sure your neighbourhood plan groups continue to have representatives from the town and parish councils (as the 'qualifying' body) and include representatives from different sections and organisations in the community. This should be embodied in your Terms of Reference.

Ensure your neighbourhood plan is supported by appropriate and proportionate evidence, since each policy must be based on evidence. This is absolutely critical to the success of your plan and should underpin all your policies.

Draft your policies. It's worth starting to have a go at writing these even before you have finalised other aspects of your plan. Remember, you do not need to replicate higher level policies, but to add locally distinctive policies applicable in your area.

Supporting the Town or Parish Council to prepare an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Plan and consider what policies you could include to support its delivery.

Prepare your Consultation Statement – you should be keeping a record of your consultation strategy, or approach, and events so that you have all the information ready to bring together when you submit your draft neighbourhood plan for consultation.

Make sure that you have identified sufficient land to meet the housing, employment and other land use needs identified in your plan. Check West Devon's latest Land Availability Assessment (www.westdevon.gov.uk/siteassessment) and let us know of any other sites which you think have been missed.

Ensure that you understand the infrastructure requirements to support the proposed new development.

Demonstrating that your plan constitutes sustainable development, ideally through a Sustainability Appraisal. You will also need to determine whether your plan requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and the Council will carry out a formal process to determine whether these assessments are required once you have draft policies prepared. This is really important so do this as soon as you have drafted your policies.

Continue to engage in the Our Plan process by taking part in our consultations.

Remember that you can apply for funding of up to £8,000 to support the progress of your Neighbourhood Plan. More information on how to apply from http://mycommunity.org.uk/programme/neighbourhood-planning/?_a=funding

Happy
to help

Design and print service

The Council is able to offer a design and print service to help you promote, engage and consult with your community.

The Design Team of West Devon Borough Council and South Hams District Council, are very experienced producing planning documents such as Our Plan. They have access to GIS data and are specialists in producing maps. Their service includes design, print, display, video, photography and in the near future website design.

The team are able to help in many ways, including -

- Logos and Branding to create impact and make you stand out
- Printed material - posters (A4 to A0 and bigger), flyers, booklets, postcards, surveys etc
- Design and print OS maps or decorative maps for publication and consultation events
- Design and publish your Neighbourhood Plan and proposal maps
- Display material - pull-up displays, traditional display boards, A frames and outdoor posters
- Display board hire
- Signs and banners for events
- Video and photography support for events

They have already assisted other Neighbourhood Plan Groups in West Devon and South Hams who are at different stages in the process.

For further information please contact the Design Team by email at design@swdevon.gov.uk or call 01803 861447



How the Council will support neighbourhood planning

Each neighbourhood plan group is currently supported by a Lead Officer and Members take an active role in the neighbourhood plan process.

The Council is currently reviewing its support and advice for neighbourhood planning as we move forward with Our Plan. Neighbourhood planning newsletters will increase our support and advice to you in the months ahead and we are looking at other ways to work with the West Devon neighbourhood groups in a coordinated way. We have recently updated our decision making process at the Council for the formal stages of neighbourhood plan making and will revise our protocol to reflect this, and any other changes as these come forward.

The Council recognises the very significant work that neighbourhood groups have already undertaken and we hope that further newsletters will provide some further guidance to support you. We welcome your suggestions about what you would wish us to cover.

The legal bit....

Neighbourhood Planning was first introduced in the **2011 Localism Act**.

There are regulations which set out key stages of the process which you need to be aware of. You can view them online [here](#).

The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** and **National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)** also provide more detail and guidance.

Other advice, guidance and case studies

There is a huge amount of guidance prepared by other organisations. We have highlighted some of them below ...

Locality

My Community this link will also provide you with information about the funding available to support Neighbourhood Planning Groups.

Forum for Neighbourhood Planning This website contains useful resources, case studies and examiners reports for neighbourhood plans around the country.

Coming soon ...

a neighbourhood planning event for all of the groups in West Devon. More details available in the New Year.



For more information

Follow us on Twitter and find us on Facebook to keep up to date with progress being made on Our Plan and to find out about events near you.



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www.westdevon.gov.uk/ourplan