

# Relationship between Neighbourhood Plans and the emerging Local Plan

Update July 2021

## Outcome of Report to [June Strategic Planning Committee](#) on the relationship between NPs and the emerging Local Plan:

Committee showed their strong support for neighbourhood planning and acknowledged the hard work put in my communities, and the need to engage with neighbourhood planning groups on the development of the new Local Plan. They supported the recommendations for us to undertake research into and report on NP content as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and the development of a Communications Plan for consulting and engaging with Neighbourhood Planning Groups. Work is now underway on both with the intention to report to the Committee in September. At present, the work on content of neighbourhood plans is involving the development of a database of all NP policies as the first phase. We are working on this in liaison with colleagues in Development Management, and we hope to be able to make it available publically as a resource for you to use too in due course. The communication plan work is being informed by the feedback we received from you to the webinar. Further thoughts are welcome.

## Emerging Local Plan Evidence on the Role & Function of Settlements and the Settlement Hierarchy:

A [draft background evidence report](#) on this topic was taken to [Strategic Planning Committee](#) last week (20<sup>th</sup> July). This presented a wealth of fascinating evidence to suggest where settlements sit in a hierarchy, including population, employment and availability of services and facilities. This is not a proposed strategy or policy approach at this stage, but a factual evidence paper to inform work going forward. The reports remains a draft and forms part of a wider stream of work in progress and still to come, which will to start to shape a preferred strategy for the future distribution of development.

There was an interesting discussion at Committee which can be viewed on our [You Tube Channel](#) and starts at approximately 1hour 35 minutes into the recording.

As the agreed next step, we are now consulting with Town/Parish Council's across the District to "fact check" the accuracy of the data we hold regarding existence of community services and facilities. We have requested information on anything which is incorrect **by 13<sup>th</sup> August**. This is the request issued, which includes a table of the community facilities and services we have on record:



Many of you will have received this direct in your capacity as Clerk. We would really value your input to this exercise.

Please note: All responses regarding the data should be made through the Town/Parish Council.

## On-going/Forthcoming Work on the Emerging Local Plan:

The Planning Policy Team are currently undertaking research and evidence gathering and identification of potential policy options for a wide range of topics, including housing, employment, heritage, flooding, landscape, biodiversity, sport & recreation, consultation strategy etc. The next Strategic Planning Committee meeting is on the 7 September. The agenda is still to be agreed but this will include further papers relating to emerging and future work to progress the local plan. These are likely to include a report on progress to date and what can reasonably be achieved by the end of this year, as well as topic papers, potentially on matters including biodiversity and landscape. All reports relating to the Local Plan work going forward will now include a heading for 'implications for neighbourhood plans' as standard which we hope you will find useful.

More information will be shared with you asap, and papers will be published [here](#). We will be in touch regarding other opportunities to engage in due course, beyond the present request relating to the verification of your local community facilities / services.

## National Planning Policy/Direction:

You may already be aware that last week the Government published its joint [response](#) to consultations on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the proposed National Model Design Code, and has issued final versions of both documents.

The updated version of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) replaces the 2019 version. This will be what the new Local Plan, and emerging/reviewed Neighbourhood

Plans, will now be considered against. Those with emerging plans should not be unduly alarmed as a vast majority of the text and policies remain as at the 2019 version, but there are some key changes.

With specific reference to neighbourhood plans, paragraph 70 has been updated to emphasise that NPs should now give *particular* consideration to the opportunities for allocated small and medium sized sites suitable for housing in their area [my emphasis - this previously only required 'consideration']. There is also a stronger emphasis throughout on improving biodiversity, and mitigating and adapting to climate change (both of which already feature strongly in many of our neighbourhood plans).

As expected, there is a significant emphasis on securing high quality ("beautiful") design, including through design guides, codes and masterplans. At paragraph 128/129, the NPPF sets out that all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and [National Model Design Code](#), and which reflect local character and design preferences, and that in terms of geography, these could be area-wide, neighbourhood or site-specific scale.

Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Plan groups are actively encouraged to engage in the effort to improve design quality "both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers." (paragraph 127). The accompanying Government press release stated an expectation that "Adopted neighbourhood plans will demonstrate clear local leadership in design quality, with the framework allowing groups seeking such plans to truly reflect the community's expectations on how new development will visually contribute to their area."

News from the RTPI's *The Planner* provides a short industry commentary and reaction:

- National Planning Policy Framework: [National policy reforms greeted by mixed response | The Planner](#)
- National Model Design Code: [National policy reforms greeted by mixed response | The Planner](#)

You will appreciate that this is all 'hot off the press' and we need to consider what these changes and requirements mean for the way ahead, for the Local Plan – and neighbourhood plans.

We will provide further guidance in the coming weeks and months, and on-going support via Angela King as our dedicated Neighbourhood Planning Officer.

As you will be aware, there are also further changes afoot, with the Planning Bill expected to be published in the autumn.