

Neighbourhood Plan – Consultancy Update

At our June meeting it was reported that Sue Cooper, a Chartered Town Planner, who had assisted in the development of the original Neighbourhood Plan, had voluntarily offered her expertise again. Sue is acting in a consultative capacity feeding professionally based information to aid the Parish Council. Any reports or advice that Sue has produced are for the Parish Council to reference, edit, use or discard as required and are not authorised Parish Council documents unless the Parish Council decides to designate them as such. Sue has kept Cllrs Carter and Wensley fully apprised of progress.

Sue's initial feedback was that there was no requirement to review the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) unless material policy changes had occurred which would conflict with the East Devon Local Plan (EDLP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or that new evidence had now made plan policies less robust. Sue confirmed that the NP policies were currently in conformity with the EDLP and that she would check conformity with the NPPF. Sue's reports as Appendix 1 and 4 cover the outcomes. Potential action plans for future work to reinforce the evidence base for any future Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix 2) and Community Actions in the Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix 3) are also included. A Summary and Introduction is included in the attachments.

Significant relevant developments have occurred over recent months:

1. EDDC has decided not to join with the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan group and so will now commence development of its own new Local Plan directly.
2. Some recent changes to the planning system to encourage housebuilding to replace unused commercial premises and to build extra storeys on existing dwellings under 'permitted development'. Sue reports that the latter would not apply to AONB areas such as East Budleigh.
3. The Government has recently published a planning white paper (Planning for the future) which is looking to completely overhaul the current planning system and produce development management policies centrally. Sue reports that "the paper suggests land will be zoned into 3 categories namely Growth, Renewal and Protection. An AONB would be in a Protection zone which the white paper suggests would have more stringent development controls. Given that East Devon has to accommodate massive growth (unless as the white paper suggests new housing targets set centrally will take into account constraints such as AONB), villages such as East Budleigh could still be under immense pressure from development (although we will have to wait and see what centrally produced development management policies say)".

Sue's conclusions following these developments are as follows:

"Any reviewed Neighbourhood Plan will have to reflect the requirements of the new planning framework when published. When the consultation on the white paper is completed in October it will lead to a changed planning system and a new National Planning Policy Framework will be published. Any reviewed Neighbourhood Plan will have to be in conformity with the new NPPF and centrally written development management policies. Local Plans it is suggested will set rules (core standards and requirements for development) and designate sites rather than general policies for development.

The future role for Neighbourhood Plans is now uncertain. The inference is there will no or little scope to include development management policies in a Neighbourhood Plan (although we will have to wait and see on this). The suggestion currently is that Neighbourhood Plans will instead set a vision and rules for development via reference to a locally produced design guidance and codes. These design codes will set the standards for building design which reflect local character and community preferences. This design vision also reflecting local environmental assets (such as local green spaces, locally important views, important trees, biodiversity etc.) within the overall vision for development.

In light of the new white paper I would suggest gathering background information before starting a formal review (i.e. some of the work outlined in Appendix 2 to my report). The information to be gathered could then assist in the development of design guidance/codes for the Parish. I would suggest only starting a formal consultation process with the community, landowners, and businesses once the Parish has formulated their vision based on the information gathering exercise and when the national and local planning policy framework is clearer. I have offered to start some of this background research/provide templates to assist the process (see Appendix 2)."

Sue is continuing with the background work suggested on the basis that any data / information / analyses will be helpful in whatever context we have to address the future changing requirements.

Sue has also summarised the Government's plans in a further attachment.

DRW 17/9/20