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Information on Parish Plans, Neighbourhood Planning and links to further information for Ruishton, Thornfalcon & Henlade Parish Council to inform their debate on which route to take to influence development.

1. The Joint Parish of Ruishton, Thornfalcon & Henlade and the Core Strategy

Ruishton and Henlade are villages with settlement boundaries. As such they have no allocations but it is acknowledged that there is scope for small scale development within their development boundaries (Policy SP1). The development boundary of settlements is being reviewed as part of the Site Allocation Development Plan.

Thornfalcon is a settlement without a development boundary and as such is classed as Open Countryside. Policy DM2 defines what uses will be permitted in these locations. They include: Community Uses, Class B Business Use; Holiday & Tourism, Agriculture; forestry and buildings related such uses, Replacement Dwellings, Affordable Housing. All are subject to essential criteria (Policy DM2).

In the case of all three settlements any sites fulfilling affordable housing exceptions criteria can be accommodated outside of development boundaries.

New development must promote sustainable development that creates socially cohesive and inclusive communities; reduce inequalities, promote well-being (Policy CP5). Development should contribute to reducing the need to travel, improve access to jobs; services and facilities, and mitigate and adapt to climate change (Policy CP6).

The principle of a broad location for future strategic employment has been set in the Core Strategy (Policy SS8). The Council is investigating site options including an area near Junction 25 which falls within the joint Parish of Ruishton, Thornfalcon & Henlade and its neighbouring Parish of Stoke St Mary.

3. Neighbourhood Plans or Parish Plans, which is the right tool?

Neighbourhood Plans, Parish/Town/Village Plans, Design Statements, involvement in shaping Local Planning Policy (Core Strategy, Site Allocations Plan, Local Plan) or direct engagement with developers, are all tools which communities can use to influence development and some can be used to shape the social and economic wishes of your community but it is important to establish which is the right.

What resources (people, financial) are available?

A Neighbourhood Plan requires a significant amount of time (average 2 years) and expertise (technical and administrative). There are legal requirements and processes, technical documents (i.e. Sustainability Appraisal, Ecological Assessments, Flood Risk Assessment, etc). DCLG have estimated that each Neighbourhood Plan could cost the community between £17,000 and £200,000 depending on the scope and complexity of the Plan.

A Parish/Town Plan could take the same amount of time but cost are lower at between £2,500 and £10,000 (Maidstone Borough Council assessment of parish

Plans in 2006). There are no legal requirements or processes for the plan to go through, although there are recommended procedures.

There is no financial support from TDBC for either Neighbourhood or Parish Plans at present. Central Government currently has two funding streams open; a grant or direct support scheme. This is being delivered through Locality and details of the scheme can be found at: <http://mycommunityrights.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning/>

If the Parish chose to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan the Borough Council is required to pay for Statutory Consultation at pre examination, Examination and Referendum, but the rest of the costs are borne by those undertaking the Neighbourhood Plan, in this case the Parish Council.

What does the local planning policy say?

TDBC has an adopted Core Strategy; which is a statutory planning policy and is used to determine planning applications. The Core Strategy sets out the principles for development including which communities will have development and approximately how much. TDBC is now well advanced with the Site Allocations Document, which allocates land for the development and provides detailed development management policies used in the assessment of planning applications. Whilst these documents do not allocate land in your Parish, the Council is looking for a strategic employment site for which land near Junction 25 which partially falls in your Parish is being investigated.

It is important to note that under the Regulations and Act a Neighbourhood Plan can not contradict statutory Planning Policy, National or Local.

What does your community want to achieve?

Allocate land for housing, employment, facilities? Allocate additional development to the Local Planning Policy? Tackle the amount of Vehicle Traffic or Cycle Lanes? Influence the health of your community (green space, exercise)? Influence access to service and facilities (shops, allotments, buses)? Strengthen the sense of Community (events, clubs, support)? Secure a children's play area? Reduce amount of waste created by businesses and residents, tackle littering? Promote and develop tourism? Support local businesses?

A Neighbourhood Plan must be predominantly land use based, i.e. your plan can have an objective to encourage more participation in sport but it must be linked to delivery of a land use based action, such as protection of existing playing field or provision of changing facilities for the playing field. A Neighbourhood Plan can not contradict Local Planning Policy but it can recommend more development or provide a further level of detail to it such as the design and look of a development. The Council has been asked to consider a couple of sites within your Parish to allocate for employment. Whilst at present TDBC has not made any decisions regarding an allocation, the timetable for publication of a Preferred Options document is autumn 2013.

A Parish Plan can cover a broader range of issues (social, economic, as well as land use planning if appropriate), i.e. our plan can have an objective to encourage more participation in sport and that could be delivered by providing support to the local team, Fostering Community Spirit could be delivered through setting up monthly community events, Promoting/supporting local farmers or locally grown produce could be delivered by the Community shop sourcing produce from the Blackdown

Hills and being a delivery/collection point for veg & meet boxes, Affordable Housing can be delivered though undertaking a Needs Assessment and working directly with an affordable housing provider.

4. Which ever route you take you need:

A Plan Steering Group

It's important that you try to secure a broad membership for the Steering Group. Who has a range of connections within your community? Who has a broad range of contacts in your community? Who has specific skills which can help us with your Plan? It's also important that you document who is on the steering group and why. It establishes transparency and will help prove evidence that the steering group is representative of the community.

Initial Scoping of Qualitative and Quantitative Information

To determine the vision, objectives and policies of your Plan you need to establish the issues which the Plan will cover. This comes from quantitative and qualitative information about the community.

It's important that when you are accumulating initial data about your communities you look at both at the quantitative (statistical; i.e. household profiles, landscape designation, employment in the area, Indices of Multiple Deprivation, demographics, services, community facilitates) as well as the qualitative (broad range of residents, businesses, communities' groups' views) information about your Neighbourhood. The quantitative will supplement and enhance the qualitative information that you obtain from your community; to prove a comprehensive profile of your Neighbourhood Area.

Quantitative

Somerset Intelligence Network web site holds a range of statistical data and intelligence from a range of organisations. There will be a significant amount of data at a Ward and Parish Level in the Neighbourhood Profile sections - <http://www.sine.org.uk/>

Census 2011 data is being released in four stages over 2012 - <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html>

TDBC has a range of documents and data from Flood Risk and Habitat Assessments to Playing Pitch Quality Audits and Landscape Character Assessments as well as numbers of people on the electoral role. Extracts from these can be provided; due to the variety of data please e-mail to discuss what information you may require so we can be clear what TDBC have and how long it will take to extract and send the data.

Qualitative

How you establish the qualitative information is up to you, there are a variety of ways to gather qualitative information. Wiveliscombe spent 6 months drafting a paper questionnaire which went out to all people on the electoral register and businesses in their Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Questionnaire will contained c.25 questions and covered a range of topics including Affordable Housing, Employment, Community Services and Facilitates, Youth and Open Market Housing. Wiveliscombe Primary and Secondary School set a question each for the survey. Wellington used the Town Council Web site, their Twitter and Facebook accounts to establish what residents and businesses think are the issues for their area. Other options included a) consultation day event; a day in a village hall with maps, post it notes and questions

centred on land-use planning. b) Drop in session to find out about Neighbourhood Planning and get residents views on issues. However you scope qualitative information it is important that you make clear what a Neighbourhood Plan can and can not do (i.e. Neighbourhood Plan must be primarily land use, social issues (unless linked to land use i.e. increased participation in sport – deliver changing pavilion and protect village recreation ground from development) are for a Parish Plan). If you have an existing Parish Plan, this may be a good starting point to extract topics for discussion and establish if issues are still relevant to the community.

If you chose to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan there are a number of regulatory procedures which must be followed. Please contact me so that I can advise you on what those will be and what work you will need to do for each of them.

5. Web links to useful publications and organisations:

Government Initiatives, Regulatory matters and/or Best Practice

New web link for Neighbourhood Planning on Gov.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>

Useful links to good best practice across the country are in the Planning Advisory Service website: <http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pagelId=1562794>

Matters covered include; Guidance for Qualifying Bodies, Community Led Planning – alternatives to NPlans, Building Working Relationships, Early Engagement, Different Approaches to NPlanning, Councillor involvement and Community Impact.

Government Grants for Neighbourhood Planning - Details on application process are available on the My Community Rights web site:

<http://mycommunityrights.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning/>

CPRE Guide to Neighbourhood Planning -

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/features/item/2350-planning-help-supporting-communities-and-neighbourhoods-in-planning>

Locality Road Map for Neighbourhood Planning -

<http://locality.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-roadmap-guide/>

RTPI Planning Aid - <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid/>

Planning Advisory Service – www.pas.gov.uk and Neighbourhood Planning

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pagelId=1175309>

Localism Act and regulations -

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted> and

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/introductionneighbourplanning> and <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents/made>

Parish Plan Guidance: Community First -

<http://www.communityfirst.org.uk/index.php/community-development/community-first-parish-plan-help>

The Countryside Agency Guidance on Parish Plans -

<http://www.cprelancashire.org.uk/uploads/reports/Parish%20Plans%20-%20Guidance%20for%20town%20and%20parish%20councils.pdf>

Community Council Guide for Parish Plans -
<http://www.essexrcc.org.uk/Docs/Community%20Led%20planning/Parish%20Plans%20%28essex%20rural%291%20%283%29.pdf>

CPRE Plan Template for Parish Plans -
<http://www.parishplanning.co.uk/casample.pdf>

Community Council for Village Design Statements -
<http://www.essexrcc.org.uk/Docs/Community%20Led%20planning/VDS%20Info%20Pack.pdf>

I hope the above proves useful to the joint Ruishton, Thornfalcon & Henlade Parish Council. If you wish to discuss any of the above or would like me to clarify anything please don't hesitate to contact me.

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