

Neighbourhood Planning ===== In recent weeks I have been advising the Parish Councils at Quinton and Long Marston to consider at their next Parish Council Meeting the sharing of experience and resources to deliver a joint Neighbourhood Plan for the area, because I believe we have a lot in common, especially the former Army Camp, where we have seen in recent times the approval of what most of us would consider inappropriate development with planning permission being granted to St Modwen's for 500 houses (A New Village ?) and Long Marston Airfield both of which sit between and impact on both our communities for different reasons, so it makes sense to work together to deliver a robust plan for the future and hopefully control inappropriate development, but also give support to development which will benefit all, especially appropriate and affordable accommodation for our elderly and younger residents who want to remain in the village.

In Principle a neighbourhood plan could be delivered across a multiple of villages or just one. It's your choice.

Here's what has been said in the new Localism Act, which received Royal Assent on November 15 2011. The Bill introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development by coming together to prepare neighbourhood plans. Neighbourhood planning can be taken forward by two types of body - town and parish councils or 'neighbourhood forums'.

Neighbourhood forums are community groups that are designated to take forward neighbourhood planning in areas without parishes.

It is the role of the local planning authority to agree who should be the neighbourhood forum for the neighbourhood area.

The criteria for establishing neighbourhood forums are being kept as simple as possible to encourage new and existing residents' organisations, voluntary and community groups to put themselves forward.

Neighbourhood forums and parish councils can use new neighbourhood planning powers to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. These are described legally as 'neighbourhood development plans.'

In an important change to the planning system communities can use neighbourhood planning to permit the development they want to see - in full or in outline – without the need for planning applications. These are called 'neighbourhood development orders.'

Local councils will continue to produce development plans that will set the strategic context within which neighbourhood development plans will sit.

Neighbourhood development plans or orders do not take effect unless there is a majority of support in a referendum of the neighbourhood, so everyone is important in this process. They also have to meet a number of conditions before they can be put to a community referendum and legally come into force. These conditions are to ensure plans are legally compliant and take account of wider policy considerations (e.g. national policy).

Conditions are:

They must have regard to national planning policy

They must be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area. District Council Planning Policy.

They must be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.

An independent qualified person then checks that a neighbourhood development plan or order appropriately meets the conditions before it can be voted on in a local referendum. This is to make sure that referendums only take place when proposals are workable and of a decent quality.

Proposed neighbourhood development plans or orders need to gain the approval of a majority of voters of the neighbourhood to come into force.

If proposals pass the referendum, the local planning authority Stratford on Avon District Council is under a legal duty to bring them into force, but will play a supporting role offering advice and guidance, and will be particularly involved in the statutory stages, outlined in the Draft Neighbourhood Regulations, so that the Plan can form part of the Stratford on Avon District's statutory development plan.

Community Right to Build The Localism Act also allows for community organisations to bring forward a 'community right to build order' which is a type of neighbourhood development order. This allows certain community organisations to bring forward smaller-scale development on a specific site, without the need for planning permission. This gives communities the freedom to develop, for instance, small-scale housing and other facilities that they want. Any benefit from this development stays within the community to be used for the community's benefit, for example, to maintain affordable housing stock or to provide and maintain local facilities such as playgrounds and village halls.

Community right to build orders are subject to a limited number of exclusions, such as proposals needing to fall below certain thresholds so that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required. Proposals are subject to testing by an independent person and a community referendum.

Community Infrastructure Levy The Community Infrastructure Levy allows local authorities to set charges which developers must pay when bringing forward new development in order to contribute to new or enhanced services and infrastructure.

The Localism Act includes provisions to make regulations which will require a meaningful proportion of these funds to be passed to neighbourhoods where the development has taken place.

New Homes Bonus scheme The New Homes Bonus Scheme provides cash for areas that allow new homes to be built in their area. Government funding has been set aside for councils that welcome new housing development, which they can spend to benefit their local community. Under the scheme the Government matches the council tax raised from new homes for the first six years through the New Homes Bonus. Councils and communities work together to decide how to spend the extra funding - whether council tax discounts for local residents, boosting frontline services like rubbish collection or providing local facilities like swimming pools and leisure centres.

I look forward to receiving your comments and views by text or email in support of a joint Neighbourhood Plan or going it alone. Your views are important. I suggest you watch the Government video to find out what neighbourhood planning could mean for you from key figures in the local government, voluntary and charity sectors.

You can also view the full text of the Localism Act and explanatory notes. <http://services.parliament.uk/Acts/2010-11/localism.html>

A plain English guide to the Act is also available.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishupdate>

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