

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Planning

Author: Ricardo Rios

Telephone: 01235 422600

Textphone: 18001 01235 422600

E-mail: Ricardo.Rios@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: Cholsey

Cabinet member responsible: Cllr. Felix Bloomfield

Tel: 01491 832690

E-mail: felix.bloomfield@southoxon.gov.uk

To: CABINET

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Making the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan

Recommendations:

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

1. To make the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan so that it continues to be part of the council's development plan.
2. to delegate to the Head of Planning, in agreement with the Qualifying Body, the correction of any spelling, grammatical, typographical or factual errors together with any improvements from a presentational perspective.

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Cabinet on progress of the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan and to present the relevant considerations in relation to whether this plan should be made (formally adopted).

Corporate Objectives

2. Strongly supporting the development of neighbourhood plans for our towns and villages.

Background

3. East Hagbourne Parish Council successfully applied for the entire parish area to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012).
4. The preparation of the plan was led by the parish council ('the qualifying body') and a group of volunteers from the local community.
5. Following the formal submission of the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Plan) to the council, the council publicised the Plan and invited comments from the public and stakeholders.
6. The council appointed Mr. Andrew Ashcroft to examine the Plan. Examiners are tasked with reviewing whether a neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions required by legislation and whether it should proceed to referendum. The examiner's report concluded that the Plan meets the basic conditions, and that subject to the modifications proposed in the report, the Plan should proceed to referendum.
7. The modifications proposed by the examiner are largely minor in nature; re-wording and restructuring for clarity and to ensure the basic conditions are met. More significant modifications recommended by the examiner include:
 - (a) The deletion of Policy VC1b and supporting text as there isn't sufficient justification for the application of a specific policy beyond the range of national and local policies that are available to safeguard the matters identified within the proposed local gap.
 - (b) Modifications to Policy VC5 to distinguish between Designated Heritage Assets and Non-Designated Heritage Assets within the policy. This is to ensure the policy has regard to advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.
 - (c) Modifications to Policy CF2 to identify the key East Hagbourne community facilities in the policy.
8. Having considered the examiner's recommendations and reasons for them the Cabinet Member for Planning decided on 24 January 2019:
 1. To accept all modifications recommended by the Examiner;
 2. to determine that the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan, as modified, meets the basic conditions, is compatible with the Convention rights, complies with the definition of a neighbourhood development plan (NDP) and the provisions that can be made by a NDP; and
 3. to take all appropriate actions to progress the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan to referendum.
9. The modifications to the plan were made and the referendum version of the Plan was published on 31 January 2019 alongside the decision statements required under Regulation 18(2)(a) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012).

Options

10. The council's options are limited by statute. Paragraph 38A (4)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that the council must make a neighbourhood plan if more than half of those voting at the referendum have voted in favour of the plan being used to help decide planning applications in the plan area.
11. The only circumstance where the district council should not make this decision is where the making of the plan would breach, or would otherwise be incompatible with, any EU obligation or any of the Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998).
12. Section 3 of the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, which came into force on 19 July 2017, amends section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to ensure that neighbourhood plans have full legal effect once they have passed their local referenda. In the very limited circumstances that the council might decide not to make the neighbourhood development plan, it will cease to be part of the development plan for the area.
13. The council's decision on 24 January 2018 (referred to in paragraphs 8), published in the decision statement issued on 31 January 2019 (referred to in paragraph 9), confirmed that the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, would not breach, and be otherwise incompatible with EU obligations or human rights legislation.
14. Therefore, if the majority of those voting have voted in favour of the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan being used to help decide planning applications in the plan area, to not make the plan would be in breach of these statutory provisions.

Referendum

15. A referendum relating to the adoption of the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan was held on Thursday 14 March 2019.
16. The question which was asked in the Referendum was: *"Do you want South Oxfordshire District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for East Hagbourne to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?"*
17. The result was as follows:
 - a. Yes = 360 votes (93.5%)
 - b. No = 25 (6.5%)
 - c. Turnout = 41.3%
18. The majority of local electors voted in favour of the plan; therefore, the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan has become part of the council's development plan.
19. As the plan was approved at the local referendum and the council is satisfied it would not breach and be otherwise incompatible with EU obligations or human rights legislation, the council is required make the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan so that it continues to be part of the council's development plan.

Financial Implications

20. The Government makes funding available to local authorities to help them meet the cost of their responsibilities around neighbourhood planning. A total of £20,000 can be claimed for each neighbourhood planning area. The council becomes eligible to apply to receive this single payment once a date is set for the referendum, after a successful examination. The Government grant funds the process of progressing neighbourhood plans through the formal stages, including the referendum. Any costs incurred in the formal stages in excess of £20,000 is borne by the council. Staffing costs associated with supporting community groups and progressing neighbourhood plans through the formal stages are funded by the council.

Legal Implications

21. The decision to make the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan is a legal requirement in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The only circumstance where the district council should not make this decision is where the making of the plan would breach, or would otherwise be incompatible with, any EU obligation or any of the Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998). There is a requirement that the district council will publish a formal decision statement as required under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

22. It is not considered that the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan would breach, or would otherwise be incompatible with, any such obligation or rights. Therefore, the council should now proceed to make the plan.

Risks

23. The council is required to comply with the statutory requirements (to consider whether the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan should be made following successful local referendum), which this recommendation seeks to achieve. In view of the considerations referred to elsewhere in this report, as the majority of those voting have voted in favour of the plan at its local referendum, a decision not to make the plan would place the council at risk of a legal challenge.

Conclusion

24. On 24 January 2019, the council decided:

1. To accept all modifications recommended by the Examiner;
2. to determine that the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan, as modified, meets the basic conditions, is compatible with the Convention rights, complies with the definition of a neighbourhood development plan (NDP) and the provisions that can be made by a NDP; and
3. to take all appropriate actions to progress the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan to referendum.

25. The local referendum was held on 14 March 2019 to meet the requirements of The Localism Act 2011 and The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.

26. As the majority of those voting have voted in favour of the Plan being used to help decide planning applications in the plan area, it is recommended that the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan is made.

Background Papers

None