

Parish Plans and the Planning System

A guidance note for local communities



A Parish Plan is a vision of how you would like your town or village to be. The purpose of this leaflet is to explain how the Forward Plans Group can assist local communities in preparing Parish Plans, what planning aspects could be included in a Parish Plan, and how the Council will take Parish Plans into account when making planning decisions.

About Parish Plans and the Planning System

The District Council is currently producing a Local Development Framework which will replace the Local Plan. Information set out in a Parish Plan may provide a valuable input into the preparation of the Local Development Framework. Parish Plans can provide a high level of local detail regarding issues such as local characteristics, needs, opportunities and concerns which can be material considerations when determining planning applications.

Can the Parish Plan be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document?

The reform of the planning system has led to the Government introducing a number of procedural changes which affect the way supplementary planning documents are prepared and adopted. Under the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' (SPG) is being replaced by 'Supplementary Planning Documents' (SPD). Whereas in the past, the Council was able to adopt a wide range of documents as SPG, subject to consistency with policies in the Local Plan, consultation and so on, the regulations applying to SPD are much more onerous. In addition to following guidance very similar to that applied to SPG, SPD must now also be:

- a) Subject to sustainability appraisal throughout their preparation;
- b) Subject to public consultation in accordance with an authority's 'Statement of Community Involvement';
- c) Identified in the 'Local Development Scheme', or work programme for the preparation of the 'Local Development Framework' (the successor to local plans); and
- d) Shown to be 'sound' (i.e. that it complies with procedural requirements, conforms with planning policy and Community Strategy for the area, and is coherent, consistent and effective).

National Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) states that Local Planning Authorities can only adopt SPD when it is directly related to adopted planning policies and when the technical regulations (set out above) have been complied with. We do not anticipate this being feasible with Parish Plans because they deal with wider issues than just planning, and therefore we will not normally be able to adopt Parish Plans as SPD. However, SPD status is not necessary for any planning elements of Parish Plans to be taken into account in the consideration of planning applications or drafting of development plan policy.

How will the Council take the Parish Plan into account when making planning decisions?

Whether SPD or not, planning elements of Parish Plans will be regarded as 'material considerations' to be taken into account, largely as at present. Generally speaking, documents prepared with the Council's input, and subject to public consultation, tend to have more weight as material considerations. Thus, if Plans are prepared largely in accordance with previous advice, they would effectively serve a similar function as when labelled 'SPG'. Also, when the Parish Council comments on applications, it can refer to the recommendations in the Parish Plan. It is important to remember however, that even when a Parish Plan is sent to the District Council in its final form, the Parish Council still needs to make comments at application stage.

What Planning Components should a Parish Plan contain?

The following aspects of your community may be explored in order to maximise the usefulness and relevance in terms of planning decisions:

Local distinctiveness During your appraisal of the Parish, you may wish to identify any characteristics that could serve as inspiration for future development. Your action plan could also include recommendations for producing a Village Design Statement, focusing on issues such as open and connecting spaces, building form, materials and details, streets and street furniture.

Play Facilities Suggestions relating to play facilities and other open space should be linked to the Aylesbury Vale District Audit and Needs Assessment. This audit was carried out in 2003/2004, in association with all Parish Councils and local sports clubs. It gives information relating to the current level of provision of all categories of sport and leisure facilities and future requirements. Work on the Parish Plan may provide a valuable updating service to the Audit. For more information, contact AVDC Leisure Services.

Transport Deficiencies in service could be identified, and the action plan could contain recommendations for improvement. It must be noted however, that improvements are a matter for the County Council to implement.

Affordable Housing A Parish Plan could consider the issue of local need for housing. The requirement for local needs affordable housing should be established through a local housing needs survey. A Parish Plan could suggest a site for an exception scheme, where it is supported by the results of such a needs survey. Further advice regarding exception schemes and surveys is available from Forward Plans – please contact us at as early a stage as possible.

What role does Forward Plans have in the process?

Forward Plans will provide guidance on the planning components of Parish Plans. We will comment on draft Parish Plans where the Parish Council wishes to submit them to us.

Forward Plans are not able to provide any funding for Parish Plans, but we are happy to advise and comment when required. Forward Plans is responsible for preparing the Local Development Framework (LDF). During preparation of the LDF, Forward Plans will have regard to the contents of any Parish Plan submitted to us. During preparation, Parish Councils should still respond to consultations regarding the LDF as appropriate.

Other departments in the District Council and the County Council may also provide useful information to you. Once the final version of the Parish Plan is sent to us, we will distribute it throughout Planning and ensure the relevant Officers are aware of contents of the Parish Plan. Therefore, a minimum of five copies is required. Our contact details are below.

To obtain a copy of this information sheet in large print,
please telephone 01296 585439

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