

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan examination outcome and progression to referendum

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 12th October 2017

Executive Portfolio: Growth

Report by: Senior Planning Policy Officer

Wards affected: Godmanchester

Executive Summary:

Following the examination of the Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan this report proposes acting upon the Examiner's report to accept the modifications proposed and progress to referendum.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Agree that the District Council should act upon the Examiner's report and recommended modifications, and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks agreement to act upon the Examiner's report into the Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan leading to a referendum on whether or not it should be brought into force as part of the statutory development plan. It also sets out a timetable for this process.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the examination of a neighbourhood plan the Examiner sends their report to the local planning authority and the town/parish council preparing the neighbourhood plan. The examiner is required to set out one of three options:

- a) That the neighbourhood plan proceeds to referendum as submitted
- b) That the neighbourhood plan is modified by the local planning authority to meet the basic conditions and the modified version proceeds to referendum; or
- c) That the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to referendum as it fails to meet the basic conditions and/ or legislative requirements and cannot be modified to do so.

- 2.2 The local planning authority has limited options in how to respond to the examiner's recommendations:

1. Act upon the Examiner's report and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum, whether or not the Examiner recommends modifications are necessary to meet the basic conditions;
2. Propose to take a decision substantially different from the Examiner's recommendation which is wholly or partly as a result of new evidence or a different view taken by the local planning authority about a particular fact; or
3. Decide not to progress the neighbourhood plan in light of the Examiner's report - this is only permissible where c) above is the case.

- 2.3 The Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan was examined between 3 July and 30 August 2017. The Examiner recommended that with appropriate modifications the neighbourhood plan would meet the basic conditions against which it is required to be tested and so should progress to referendum.

- 2.4 The Examiner proposed a number of modifications to the proposed submission neighbourhood plan. These have been discussed with representatives of Godmanchester Town Council. The recommended modifications and the proposed timeline (see section 3 below) were discussed and approved by Godmanchester Town Council met on 22 September 2017.

- 2.5 The modified version of the Neighbourhood Plan, the examiner's report and draft Decision Statement setting out the modifications considered by the Examiner as necessary to enable the submission neighbourhood plan to meet the required basic conditions are all included as Appendices. Having regard to the options set out in paragraph 2.3:

- It is considered that the modifications will enable the Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan to meet the basic conditions required; and
- There is no new evidence or a different view taken by the local planning authority about a particular fact to indicate that option 2. in paragraph 2.3 should be followed.

3. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN

- 3.1 Following approval by Cabinet preparations will be made for a referendum to be held on the Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Regulations.
- 3.2 In addition to considering whether the neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions the Examiner is required to recommend on the area to be covered by the referendum. In this instance she recommended that the referendum area be the same as the Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan area, approved by the District Council.
- 3.3 There is a statutory requirement for 28 working days' notice to be given before the referendum is held. There is also a requirement that the referendum is held within 56 working days of the decision that the neighbourhood plan should proceed to referendum, unless there is an existing planned polling opportunity that the referendum could be combined with which the qualifying body (Godmanchester Town Council) have agreed. A potential date for the referendum has been discussed with Democratic Services. Holding the referendum on 7 December 2017 is proposed, which would meet both time requirements. This provisional date has been discussed with representatives of Godmanchester Town Council, and they have indicated that they support this date.
- 3.4 At the referendum residents will be able to vote on the question: 'Do you want Huntingdonshire District Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Godmanchester to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'
- 3.5 If a majority of residents vote 'yes', Full Council will be asked to 'make' the neighbourhood plan at its next available meeting, which, assuming that the referendum is held on 7 December, would be on 13 December 2017. This would require a late report. The plan will then become part of the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will follow.

5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 Progressing the Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan through to referendum links to the strategic objective 'To empower local communities'. It will help to achieve the action of working with parishes to complete neighbourhood and parish plans.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A Neighbourhood Plan must meet the basic conditions set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Examiner's report has confirmed that Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan, as proposed to be modified, meets all the basic conditions. Officers are satisfied that there are no conflicts with the basic conditions and legislative requirements.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Extra Burdens Grant of £20,000 can be claimed following the referendum, intended to meet the costs of the referendum and other resources involved in supporting the production of the neighbourhood plan.

8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 8.1 The recommended decision is necessary to enable the Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to referendum.

9. RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Agree that the District Council should act upon the Examiner's report and recommended modifications, and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum

10. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- 1) The modified version of the Neighbourhood Plan
- 2) The examiner's report
- 3) The draft Decision Statement setting out the modifications considered by the Examiner as necessary to enable the submission neighbourhood plan to meet the required basic conditions.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents>

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents>

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

The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended)
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2012/9780111525050/contents>

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