

STRATFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD DRAFT PLAN:

Have your say over future of your town

THE Neighbourhood Plan is a central part of the Localism Act which came into effect in April 2012, setting out a series of measures to shift power away from central government and towards local people.

Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan cannot disagree with the district council's local plan and national planning policy on strategic matters such as the number of houses to be built in the town, it can address important issues; it can set out clearly where new homes, shops and offices are to be built, how buildings should be designed, and which areas to protect or enhance.

Once passed by a referendum of the people who live and work in Stratford, Tiddington and Alveston, the district council must make the document part of its development plan until 2031.

The public consultations in 2013 identified a major concern among Stratford residents: that whilst growth and its impact on the town is inevitable, the essence of Stratford — an attractive market town with a rich heritage — should be retained.

Mark Haselden says that having a Neighbourhood Plan designed by the residents, people who know and care about the town, means that growth and change can be more sympathetically accommodated.

He said: "It's a challenge but it's a challenge that, with responsible planning, will make Stratford a place that we continue to love living in and working in; decisions that future generations will be proud we made."

This sustainable development forms the basis of the document. Its main strategies for planned change are:

Dealing with population growth: housing and employment

HOUSING:

Stratford District Council's allocation of new houses needed for the town cannot be changed, but we can influence where they will be built and their density, and ensure that the right mix of housing is built with an emphasis on quality and excellence in design.

WHERE:

The proposal is for maximum use of regenerated brownfield sites, and the reuse of empty homes and buildings should have planning priority for new housing — this involves relocation of some businesses to a new business park to free up existing industrial and canal side areas. All new housing should be as far from the rural fringe as possible with good pedestrian and safe cycle access for all age groups to the town centre and schools.

MIX:

The first priority is to build the necessary mix of housing where there is already a network of services.

Students, workers and young families need easy access to transport and schools. Older residents need adaptable housing and a small number of bungalows.

Living accommodation in Stratford town centre itself would be encouraged, including the conversion of first floor premises.

DESIGN:

Stratford is unique and has a strong sense of identity; the plan includes policies for protecting the local character of new buildings and promoting high standards of design, and supports the formation of a Design Review Panel to check large-scale developments and particularly sensitive small-scale development.

This will take into account design quality standards, crime prevention, sustainable drainage, recreation and conservation.

EMPLOYMENT:

Stratford currently enjoys relatively high levels of employment, and this must be maintained as the town continues to grow.

The focus of this Neighbourhood Development Plan is therefore on retaining existing employers in the town as well as attracting new ones.

Suitable alternative sites are recommended for businesses relocating from the canal area, and there are proposals for attracting additional high quality employers by providing land for business use with good access close to the A46 and Stratford Parkway station.

There is also support for promoting jobs within the town itself, which would reduce the necessity for commuting. These would be mainly in the culture, media and tourism industries and could include work/live units.

Supporting the whole community so that all members can fully enjoy the town

This covers a wealth of areas including infrastructure — transport, schools and health — community, leisure and well-being, and the natural environment — Stratford's green spaces.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Growth in the town's housing stock will require further investment in infrastructure in terms of schools (expanding existing schools for a growing population, as well as funding new schools), health services and transport links.

TRANSPORT:

Traffic congestion is a major problem for Stratford. The proposal is for a strategic transportation plan to examine the options for dealing with through traffic and with growth for proposed housing development.

Other, more immediate traffic management systems will better control the flow of traffic around town: lower speed limits, improve junctions, provision for bus layovers etc. together with proposals for Birmingham Road based on traffic calming measures including fewer traffic lights which will improve the ambience of this entrance to the town.

The strategic positioning of car parks will also reduce cross-town travel, as would providing access from Shipston Road to the Recreation Ground car park, and better promoting the existing park and ride facilities for longer term parking.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT:

Better traffic management must also include improvements to existing rail facilities, links with enhanced bus and coach facilities and further development of park and ride.

PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS:

Facilities must include increased space for walking and cycling in the town centre, with dedicated pedestrian and cycle paths connected to key destinations and funded by new development. There is, need, too, for a replacement bridge at Lucy's Mill.

COMMUNITY, LEISURE AND WELLBEING:

The recent expansion in housing has not been matched by the provision of leisure facilities and open spaces; Stratford-upon-Avon has an abundance of theatres, restaurants and cafés but the local community believes there is a lack of facilities for young people, families and older age groups. Open spaces, sport and recreation

It's been two years since Stratford-upon-Avon residents were asked to review the proposals for the Draft Neighbourhood Plan, the plan that will give local people much more control in the shaping of Stratford's future.

The results of that consultation has been incorporated into the draft plan which is now available for residents to give final feedback on before being passed to the district council.

all underpin people's quality of life, so it is essential that this Neighbourhood Development Plan ensures that we protect and increase our facilities as Stratford continues to grow.

The plan contains a range of policies to improve community wellbeing: better leisure facilities for different age groups, particularly for younger people, and the expansion or enhancement of the leisure centre.

Existing open spaces, green spaces and play areas will be protected, and the provision of new spaces will be provided with new large-scale development.

New development would also need to meet the increased demands on health care for the area and prioritise walking and cycling opportunities.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT:

Availability of green space was ranked one of the most important things residents like about Stratford; the plan includes measures to safeguard and enhance the town's natural environment and reduce pollution:

- To designate Local Nature Reserves in Warwick Road Lands and Bridgetown Woodland and Meadow.

- Further policies cover biodiversity in the River Avon corridor including restrictions on development in the flood plain.

- The preparation of a Neighbourhood Area Biodiversity Action Plan is recommended.

- To prepare a list of pockets of existing green space to be designated as 'local green space' giving them statutory protection. This list includes Rowley Fields, the River Corridor, Welcombe Hills and Shoterly Fields.

- Allotments will be protected and any proposed development on allotments must make alternative provision. New houses will have minimum garden sizes to allow growing space, and there will be a requirement for trees and hedges in new developments.

- A 'green necklace' is proposed around Stratford, incorporating footpaths and cycle routes. To achieve this all major developments on the edge of town must demonstrate how green open spaces connect to future adjacent development. Community woodland will also be promoted.

- Small-scale renewable and low carbon energy schemes are to be encouraged provided they are not detrimental to the landscape or conflict with other policies in this Plan.

Town Centre: Keeping the customers satisfied

Stratford is an extremely popular destination with an enviable commercial mix of rich history, beautiful setting and modern amenities, and works well for both tourists and residents.

It has enjoyed a prosperous and successful past but there are signs that modern shopping trends, such as internet shopping, the loss of large high street traders to out of town developments, are beginning to have an effect on Stratford's economic health.

Creating an even better place to visit

and shop is crucial for maintaining the foothold through the town; the Neighbourhood Development Plan has a series of proposals to enhance the visitor/shopper experience in order to strengthen Stratford's current economic vitality:

- The creation of a Town Centre Strategic Partnership to provide focused management and promotion of town centre improvements.

- The redevelopment of Town Square should be combined with an upgrading and promotion of Rother Market area to make an attractive thoroughfare from High Street.

- Better ambience and access for all key entrances to the town: a step-by-step plan to create an Environmental Improvement Area, which would include the Rother Triangle, Greenhill Street and an area flanked by Birmingham Road, Arden Street and Windsor Street, and improvements to the route from the town centre to the Maybird Centre.

- Improving pedestrian access and movement within the town centre, with proposals to broaden footways and improve the ambience in Bridge Street and to extend the Henley Street pedestrian/vehicle sharing arrangements into High Street.

- Improving car parking facilities — making them more convenient for shoppers, as well as helping to reduce congestion.

HERITAGE, CULTURE AND TOURISM:

Stratford is a world famous cultural destination; visitors come to enjoy its heritage, its river, the amenities of the town and the wider Shakespeare experience.

There is no evidence that points to a need for large-scale development of visitor facilities, but there is a continuing need for reasonable growth and modernisation for the town to remain competitive and to enhance the visitor experience.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan identifies the area around the Birthplace in Henley Street, between Meer Street and Windsor Street, as an ideal site to evolve into an attractive Cultural Quarter with museum and educational/exhibition facilities. To support the Cultural Quarter, the Environmental Improvement Area bounded by Birmingham Road, Arden Street and Windsor Street would be ideal for hotel, higher education and office use.

The main route through the town — High Street, Chapel Street and Church Street to Holy Trinity Church — is one of the most important historic walks in the country, containing all of Stratford's Grade I and most of the Grade II-listed buildings in the town.

A scheme has already been developed to encourage the harmonious refurbishment of shop fronts along this Historic Spine to complement its finest buildings.

The NDP proposes to extend this scheme to the whole of the town centre and proposes controls over signage elsewhere.

It also includes proposals for preserving listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks, gardens and sites of special scientific interest.



'Stratford is a place we love living and working in'

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Does a Neighbourhood Plan have any clout?

THE residents of Thame in South Oxfordshire certainly think so. Theirs was one of the first Neighbourhood Plans to be legally adopted.

Bob Austin, chairman of the East Thame Residents' Association, one of the associations involved in developing the plan, said: "Residents had been fighting South Oxfordshire District Council's plan to build 775 new homes on one large site, but our protests had fallen on deaf ears. Then the Localism Act gifted us with the opportunity of forming a Neighbourhood Plan."

"It was difficult to begin with, nobody wanted development near their part of town, but with compromise and common sense we found a solution: we identified five sites where we could spread the new housing in smaller clusters dotted around the town, in areas where the infrastructure could be supported locally; we all agreed to take some of the load."

The plan was supported by 76 per cent

of voters at a Referendum in 2013 and was officially adopted by the district council. Bob added: "The Neighbourhood Plan has been an essential tool for our town ever since; a protection against future demands and protecting the character of Thame as a market town. And the surprising thing is, it's brought the community together to get the best for Thame. It's made a big difference."

Mark Haselden, chairman of the Stratford group, says it's vitally important that Stratford has its own Neighbourhood Plan.

He said: "Without it, the town will be in danger from inappropriate development. We think this updated version now covers our community's major concerns, bringing local residents one step closer to having a legal say in the town's future."

"The lengthy, careful process is an important one as a Neighbourhood Plan can make a real difference."

He added: "There is still some uncer-



tainty surrounding the District Council's strategic direction and this may impact on a few policies in our plan.

"However, we now need to make sure the Neighbourhood Plan reflects the wishes of local people and it's vital that everyone is involved in forming its policies."

Once the updated Draft Neighbourhood Plan has been checked by the com-

munity and amended, the document will be inspected by an independent examiner. If the plan is approved, a referendum will be held; all those who live or work in Stratford will be invited to vote for or against the Neighbourhood Plan.

If the plan is supported by more than 50 per cent of the voters in the referendum, the local planning authority must bring it into force.

"See, do, and play this half term"

Shakespeare's Family Homes

There's plenty to enjoy at Shakespeare's family homes, farm and gardens this Spring. Get creative with daily activities from 23 - 31 May.

• Shakespeare's Birthplace
• Mary Arden's Farm

• Anne Hathaway's Cottage & Gardens

• Hall's Croft
• Herford House

Don't miss... Our Family Activity Tent at Anne Hathaway's Cottage. Enjoy games, nature quests and a crafts

