

# Adderbury Annual Parish Meeting – Neighbourhood Plan presentation 12.4.22

Community First Oxfordshire is a local community development charity and our mission is supporting communities to find solutions to their planning, housing, social action, and service needs, and promoting positive change for all. We offer support with regard to placemaking and community development strategies, community transport, retail and buildings and supporting social action projects and volunteering. We also host a support service for community-led housing groups called Collaborative Housing.

CFO has much experience in supporting Neighbourhood Plans, and that support is at the heart of our town planning consultancy. We have helped some 30 NP groups and currently working in East Hanney, Milton-under-Wychwood, Brize Norton, and Shipton-on-Cherwell.

In terms of specific support for neighbourhood plan reviews, which Adderbury will be undertaking, we recently supported the Henley NP refresh and are currently working with Eynsham parish council on a similar task.

For those who might not be familiar, a NP is a statutory, legally binding planning document – the adopted 2018 Adderbury NP is a ‘child’, so to speak, of the Cherwell DC Local Plan 2031.

Crucially, NP policies cannot contradict policies set out in the district plan and only policies dealing with land use can be included in a NP. To be effective, these policies need to encompass change as well as protect.

In essence, a NP sets out the key challenges facing the community with regard to planning and development and offers a vision, objectives and policies to meeting them. Despite its limitations, a NP is the strongest tool the parish council has in the planning box to influence the future development of the community. It can help identify what is best, what is needed and deliver tangible changes.

## **The intent of the Adderbury Plan review:**

The new plan will replace the existing 2018 plan. So what you are essentially doing is establishing if the plan is still fit for purpose. Lots of elements and policies will likely still be completely relevant. However, you may wish to add certain elements.

It is important to establish and understand what has happened on the ground since the NP was adopted and whether it is felt to have been successful – this would test how much change has happened and how well the NP coped with it (for example, did Cherwell DC approve planning applications despite NP policies or because of them).

This would also provide clarity as to whether existing policies remain fit for purpose and whether, for

instance, policy wording needs to be tightened to avoid ambiguity. It may also determine whether there are policy gaps that need new policy to be written.

Another key issue to consider is that Cherwell DC is beginning to work on a new Local Plan – therefore, your review should dovetail with process. A discussion Cherwell to this point about your intent to review would certainly be worthwhile.

### **Looking at the review process in more detail**

The initial task is to take stock – so what’s changed locally, nationally, and even internationally since your plan was adopted. This would include:

- A check against the Local Plan and NPPF – are there any changes which means the NP has to be adapted to be in conformity
- A review of any local changes (e.g. new infrastructure, greater flood risk etc.)
- A review of potential content policy gaps in the existing plan. Commonly, today, these include biodiversity net gain, climate change and zero carbon, character and landscape, affordable housing and design codes etc.
- You might also want to review of Local Green Spaces, including the need for additional LGS protections.

It is also important, of course, to bring the wider community into the process. NP guidance makes very clear that they have to be guided by what the community wants. The key word when it comes to NPs is ‘reasonable’; so what is reasonably needed to take the temperature of local opinion.

The aim of consultation is to, firstly, reintroduce the NP and explain why the review process is being undertaken and why now. Second, to give people an overview of what a neighbourhood plan can and can’t do and, third, to get feedback - what do people think is missing from the current plan, what needs to be included, or even removed? What policies need to be strengthened. What’s important to people when they think about the future of the community, how can the plan better meet those future challenges.

The totality of this activity – a review of policy and policy gaps, and community feedback – would then lead the plan steering group to decisions about what needs to be included in the new draft, what policies need to be drafted.

Coming back to the dialogue with the Local Authority, it is important to liaise with the Cherwell about your emerging aims. That two-way dialogue could be very constructive. Once your revised plan has been drafted, you then present it for consultation in exactly the same way as with the original NP.

There are two statutory consultation period for every Neighbourhood Plan. Both have set timescales of 6-weeks.

The first is called regulation 14, or pre-submission consultation. This is where the Parish Council sends the Plan to local people and statutory consultees (district council, county council, environment agency, Historic England and Natural England) for their opinions.

The plan is then amended based on this feedback and the final version submitted to Cherwell DC. You also need to submit two other documents to Cherwell at this final stage: a Consultation Statement, which sets out how you have spoken to local people and demonstrates that the Plan is

underpinned by community opinion, and a Basic Conditions Statement, which sets out how the Plan is in conformity with Neighbourhood Plan legislation.

The district council then sends this final version out for what is called regulation 16 consultation. A Planning Examiner is then appointed to review the final plan, take into account feedback from consultees, make suggestions for policy amendments, and decide if the Plan can proceed to a local referendum.

The referendum is then arranged by Cherwell and local people on the electoral register are asked if they agree to the new Adderbury NP becoming part of the development plan for the district. It often takes a few months between examination being completed and a referendum being held.

**Tom McCulloch**

**April 2022**