

# HIGH EASTER PARISH COUNCIL

During recent discussions at Parish Council meetings on proposed residential developments, some residents have suggested the parish produces a community led plan to help guide where new housing development might take place in the parish and what form this takes.

The Parish Council agreed to consider this and is asking for all resident's views via this information sheet.

Please take time to read and consider the information below before responding to the following questions by 30 November. To respond please access the form available on the Parish Council section of the village website, , <https://e-voice.org.uk/higheaster/parish-council/> responses will automatically be sent to the Parish Clerk email address. Or please post your response to Peartree Cottage, Slough Road, High Easter CM1 4RD. When replying by post please state your name and address<sup>1</sup>, responses will be looked at per resident and not per household.

The Parish Council will consider the responses at its meeting on 7 December 2020 and if there is sufficient support will look to arrange a meeting for those interested so that they can understand more about the process.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- 1. Having read the information, do you support High Easter producing a neighbourhood plan?**
- 2. Are you prepared to commit the time and/or your skills to join a working group responsible for producing the plan, or do you require more information before committing?**
- 3. Are you of the view a village design statement or parish plan will be more relevant for High Easter?**
- 4. Any other comments.**

## WHAT IS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING?

Neighbourhood planning is one type of community led plan and if formally adopted carries more weight in the decision-making process than a parish plan or a village design statement. It is a process designed to enable local communities to influence development and planning within the area in which they live and work.

*"Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area."* (Extract from National Planning Policy Guidance)

A neighbourhood plan does not mean no development and it cannot prevent development, but it can help to ensure that new development is sympathetic to the surrounding area and meets the needs of the local community. It cannot promote less development (but can promote more) than is in the District Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.

The process for producing a neighbourhood plan is set out in legislation and includes an independent examination by an inspector and a final referendum of the electorate in the parish.

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<sup>1</sup> High Easter Parish Council Data Privacy Policy is available on the village website

## **IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN RIGHT FOR HIGH EASTER?**

This depends on what the parish and its residents want to achieve. Once approved the neighbourhood plan would be used to help determine if planning applications for development in the parish are approved or refused. If there are sites in the parish the community wish to put forward for development and/or protect; if there are parish projects involving the use of land which the community wish to formally promote; if there are special considerations that should be taken into account in determining planning applications, then a neighbourhood plan may be the best way of achieving these aims.

There are other documents the parish could prepare. If residents think it is more important to set out detailed guidance of how new development should relate to the distinctive design, character, and layout features of High Easter then a village design statement may be more appropriate. If resident's concerns are mainly non-planning related issues, then a parish plan might be more suitable. Both the village design statement and parish plans have the status of supplementary planning documents and may be taken into account as a 'material consideration' when determining planning applications, they do not have the same weight as a neighbourhood plan.

## **WHO CAN PREPARE A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?**

A neighbourhood plan must be initiated and prepared by a 'qualifying body'. Where there is a parish or town council for the whole or any part of the area to be covered by a neighbourhood plan then they will be the 'qualifying body'.

Preparing a neighbourhood plan takes considerable time, (average 3 to 5 years) and effort. Due to the time commitment and work involved it will be necessary to establish a working group made up of volunteers from across the community as well as Parish Councillors. This will allow the Parish Council to delegate the day to day tasks of organising consultation events, information gathering, editing drafts, and producing the final plan. As a member of the working group you would be required to attend regular meetings and contribute to the workload.

The working group would be answerable to the Parish Council because it is the Parish Council that is the body with the formal power and responsibility for the neighbourhood plan, for example reports and meeting minutes would be made public. If there are no, or too few volunteers this is not a project the Parish Council could progress alone.

There are costs involved and at a minimum it will be necessary to engage consultants, produce documentation and hold public meetings. There are some grants available to help with this, however beyond grant funding, monies will need to come from Parish Council funds via precept.

## **UTTLESFORD, RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX, AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS**

The Uttlesford website, <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplans> has further information on neighbourhood plans including a document on neighbourhood plan protocol which will be useful to read in considering your responses. There are links to parishes who are working on neighbourhood plans and those that have been approved, this will give you an idea of the content and commitment involved.

The Rural Community Council of Essex has a useful guide to neighbourhood planning at this link, <https://www.essexrcc.org.uk/Docs/Community%20Led%20planning/RCCE%20neighbourhood%20planning%20guidance.pdf>

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this information sheet. Should you have any questions or require additional information please contact the Clerk, [parishclerkallisonward@gmail.com](mailto:parishclerkallisonward@gmail.com) who will ensure these are forwarded to the Parish Council for response.

**ROBERT LODGE**

**Chairman High Easter Parish Council**