



Meeting	Full Council
Date	10 January 2024
Report Title	Neighbourhood Plan Update
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## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This Report seeks to update Councillors on the progress of the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan since the previous update report in September 2023.

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2.1 Councillors will recall the previous report, presented to Full Council on 27 September 2023, which updated Councillors on the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the carrying out of the Regulation 16 public consultation and the appointment of an Independent Examiner.

## **3.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE**

3.1 At the meeting of the Steering Group on 19 September 2023 draft individual responses to the majority of the 50 comments received from the Regulation 16 public consultation were agreed. These responses were forwarded on to the LPA to forward on to the Examiner.

3.2 The Examiner, Andrew Matheson, appointed by the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (NPIERS), began his Examination of the Neighbourhood Plan on 29 September 2023. His main duty is to check that the Plan meets the 'basic conditions'. He will produce a report for the LPA and the Town Council and will likely suggest some changes/amendments to the Plan in his 'Examiner's Report'.

3.3 On 10 October 2023 the Examiner wrote to the Town Council with some initial enquiries/observations on the Sustainability & Climate Change Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Draft responses were prepared and agreed by the Steering Group at their meeting of 24 October 2023. A response to the Examiner was sent on 25 October 2023. Also at this Steering Group meeting the impact of the Wiltshire Local Plan Review on Neighbourhood Plan policies were discussed, with a view to feeding into the Town Council's consultation response to the Local Plan Review.

3.4 On 8 November 2023 the Examiner wrote to the Town Council with some further enquiries/observations on all remaining Neighbourhood Plan policies, with a suggested deadline of the end of November to respond. A response was prepared, circulated to Steering Group Members, and sent to the Examiner on 29 November 2023.

- 3.5 The Examiner has confirmed that he is now likely to make his unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Area before raising any further queries, and will inform the Town Council when the visit has been made.
- 3.6 On receipt of the Examiner's Report, the LPA will consider it, and decide whether or not to progress the Plan to public referendum. If they progress the Plan to referendum it is likely that some changes will need to be made to the Plan in line with recommendations in the Examiner's Report. This will likely involve input from Ice House Design and Pear Mapping to make design/format changes and mapping changes respectively, to arrive at a Referendum Version of the Plan.
- 3.7 A project timeline is attached in **APPENDIX A** of this Report, with a couple of months delay to the timeline due to the Examination taking longer than originally envisaged, the Examiner noting "I'm afraid that the sheer volume of documentation for the Plan has required far more reading and assessing than I had originally imagined." Based on current timescales the Plan is therefore likely to be 'made' in March or April 2024.

#### **4.0 CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES**

- 4.1 The development of a Neighbourhood Plan will contribute to the following corporate priorities:
- Provide and develop facilities and services that are accessible, inclusive and promote health and well-being.
  - Play an active role in the future development of the town through collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and our community.
  - Help to create a future that is carbon neutral, environmentally sustainable and resilient to the impact of climate change.
  - Maintain and create opportunities to enhance our green spaces and provide a clean and safe environment.
  - Provide and develop facilities and services that promote Chippenham as an attractive and vibrant market town and celebrate its rich history, heritage, and culture.

#### **5.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Steering Group continues to be supported by the Head of Planning, Planning Consultant(s) (external support), Administrative Officers, the Council's Communications & Customer Services Manager and Corporate Management Team.

#### **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 For the financial year 2023/24, in addition to payroll costs, there is a Capital/EMF budget of £17,000 to cover design, consultant and professional fees, to be charged against Community Infrastructure Levy income, and an additional Income & Expenditure budget of £3,300 to cover other items such as website and print costs.
- 6.2 £15,152 has been spent to date on consultant fees for the production of a Viability Assessment, including a much smaller amount on planning consultant fees. £1014 has been spent on printing/production of Neighbourhood Plan hard copies, £768 on changes to the Neighbourhood Plan website and £720 on design and formatting the Plan.

## **7.0 CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The climate and ecological impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan are set out detail in the Environmental Report of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which accompanies the Plan. It was judged that the Neighbourhood Plan policies would result in '*minor positive effects*' in relation to air quality, biodiversity, climate change, land, soil and water resources.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 That Councillors note the contents of this Report, which is for information purposes only.