

The Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

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Ward Member(s) Wincanton; Nick Colbert and Colin Winder
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Purpose of the Report

1. To note the progress that has been made on the preparation of the Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan; to agree the independent Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications; and to set out the process for 'making' the plan following a favourable local referendum to be organised by the District Council.

Forward Plan

- 2 This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of December 2017.

Public Interest

- 3 The Neighbourhood Plan represents the views of Wincanton Town Council and other stakeholders on the preferred approach to future development in the town. This has been the subject of Independent Examination by a qualified person and if the Council agree with the Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications, the Plan will then be subject to a referendum of all those in the community on the Electoral Register. The referendum will be on whether they agree with the modified Plan's content and if it should be used in the determination of planning applications.
- 4 The Neighbourhood Plan has been the subject of resident and business surveys, public meetings and consultation events; and the Town Council have a dedicated section on its website in association with this process.

Recommendations

- 5 That the District Executive
 - a. agrees to the Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications to the Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan.
 - b. agrees to the Council organising a referendum for local people on the Electoral Register as to whether they want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Wincanton to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
 - c. delegates responsibility to the Director for Service Delivery in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning to make any final minor text amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, in agreement with Wincanton Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Background

- 6 Neighbourhood planning aims to help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work. The plan can show how the community wants land to be used and developed in its area. If a plan is 'made' following a successful referendum, it becomes part of the development plan for that area. Planning applications are determined by local planning authorities in accordance with the adopted development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A development plan sets out the planning policies for the development and use of land.
- 7 The Wincanton Neighbourhood Area designation was approved by the District Council in March 2014. Since then, the Neighbourhood Plan for the area has been prepared and a 'Pre-Submission' Plan was consulted upon in November 2016 (Regulation 14). This was followed by formal submission of the Plan in April 2017 and the District Council carried out formal consultation in line with procedures set out in the relevant Regulations (Regulation 16). The Plan has now been the subject of independent examination and this report relates to the District Council's decision on the Examiner's recommendations and the next step of a local referendum.

The Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan

- 8 The Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision for the town and the Plan's main objectives; places the Plan in the context of national and local planning policies; and includes a short summary of the town's physical, demographic and historic context. The Plan summarises the consultation process and evidence base informing its preparation; and policies seeking to guide future development in the town relating to what are considered to be the most sustainable locations, securing housing suitable for Wincanton's population, employment, the town centre economy; and the local environment.
- 9 The main objectives within the Neighbourhood Plan are the following:
 - Identifying the most sustainable locations for development
 - Housing suitable for Wincanton's population
 - New employment space near the A303
 - Make the town centre more attractive to users
 - Protect open spaces & improve walking & cycling routes
- 10 Key issues identified during the consultation carried out by the Neighbourhood Planning Group under Regulation 14 were that;
 - businesses need better quality, larger footprint units that they can adapt as the business grows. These need good access to the A303, much better broadband and sufficient parking.
 - the types of houses being built do not suit residents' needs, in particular for the elderly and for young people
 - not enough jobs are being created for the increased population, so that Wincanton's working town character is under threat and services are under pressure
 - the physical environment of the town, especially the main approach into the town from the A303, was of poor quality, with messy industry and old commercial units providing a poor first impression
 - more could be done to support the town centre economy. Edge-of-town supermarkets and internet shopping have had an effect on the vitality of many town centres including Wincanton, but measures such as pedestrian improvements and traffic calming, redeveloping two key Listed buildings and widening the choice of shops were suggested.

- access around the town on foot and by cycle is difficult due to terrain, the one-way system and the historic pattern of development.
- 11 The Plan seeks to protect visually sensitive areas, key buildings and spaces, trees and hedgerows; and river and stream corridors. It states that development on the outskirts of the town should be softened by landscaping and that, where opportunities exist, heritage assets should be sensitively incorporated and a site's role in the history of the town explained.
 - 12 The Plan states that new housing should be predominately of relatively smaller units, include 'Starter Homes' for local people and custom and self-build homes; and that accessible and adaptable homes would be supported.
 - 13 New employment sites outside the town's development area may be supported as long as specified criteria are met; and parking at employment sites should meet adopted parking standards, but solutions that help alleviating existing difficulties regarding poor access and inadequate parking provision will also be encouraged.
 - 14 The Town Council, in collaboration with South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council as the Highways Authority, will as a priority seek to implement two modest public realm enhancements and an extended 20 mph zone in the town centre area, to improve shopper & visitor experience and the safety of pedestrians.
 - 15 The Plan designates four green spaces as 'Local Green Spaces' for special protection, but also refers to other green spaces which contribute to the character and appearance of the Wincanton Conservation Area; and other green areas and open spaces which are to be retained. The network of existing pedestrian and cycle routes through the town will be protected; and where development allows, opportunities are encouraged to connect to and improve the existing network.
 - 16 Alongside the Neighbourhood Plan itself, the Regulations require that a statement is submitted which states how the Plan meets the specified 'Basic Conditions', a Consultation Statement; and confirmation that the Plan meets the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations and other European legislation.
 - 17 On receipt of the Submission Documents, the Council carried out the required public consultation for a period of six weeks under Regulation 16; this included a notice in the press and at Wincanton Town Hall and writing to all authorities, utility providers, a wide range of stakeholders and other bodies considered to have an interest in the Plan, including those that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had consulted itself. The submission documentation was made available on the Council's website and hard copies were made available at Wincanton Town Hall.
 - 18 A total of seven responses were received and the District Council also presented its own comments; these were all sent to the Examiner.
 - 19 The Examiner's Report concludes that the correct procedure for the preparation and submission of the Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan was followed and that it meets the 'Basic Conditions', subject to several Proposed Modifications being made. The amended document in accordance with these proposed changes is appended to this report, together with the Examiner's Report. The original Submission Plan, supporting documents and representations received are all available on the District Council's website - [South Somerset District Council - Wincanton Neighbourhood Area Designation](#). Wincanton Town Council accepted the Examiner's Proposed Modifications at its meeting on 15th November 2017.
 - 20 If the District Council accepts the Examiner's recommendations, the next stage would be to hold a local referendum in Wincanton. The prescribed question that needs to be asked is

“Do you want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Wincanton to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area”.

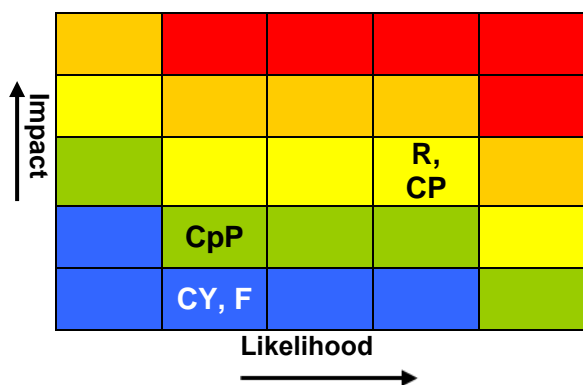
If more than 50% of those who vote say Yes, the Neighbourhood Plan is ‘made’ (or adopted); and it becomes part of the statutory Development Plan for the District Council and needs to be taken account in the determination of planning applications.

Financial Implications

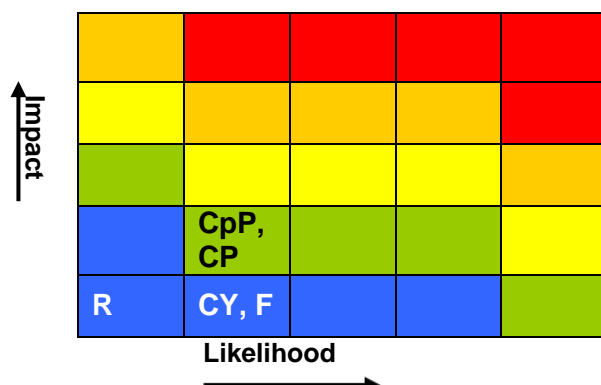
- 21 Under the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations, 15% of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts are generally passed directly to those parish and town councils (in England) where development has taken place. In England, communities that draw up a neighbourhood plan and secure the consent of local people in a referendum, will benefit from 25% of the levy revenues arising from the development that takes place in their area.
- 22 The District Council does not have the option to decline to hold the Referendum as this is required by legislation; and the associated costs will need to be absorbed into existing budgetary arrangements. However, the Council is able to claim a grant of up to £20,000 towards the costs of progressing the Neighbourhood Plan from the Department for Communities and Local Government once the date of the Referendum has been set.

Risk Matrix

Risk Profile before officer recommendations



Risk Profile after officer recommendations



Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R = Reputation	Red = High impact and high probability
CpP = Corporate Plan Priorities	Orange = Major impact and major probability
CP = Community Priorities	Yellow = Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY = Capacity	Green = Minor impact and minor probability
F = Financial	Blue = Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

Council Plan Implications

- 23 The Neighbourhood Plan accords with the Council’s aims to increase the focus on jobs and economic development, protect and enhance the quality of our environment; and to enable housing to meet all needs. The District Council’s values include supporting people and communities, enabling them to help themselves; and the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the local community who wish to have an influence on future development in the town. The

Council Plan states that it will focus on supporting communities to develop local, parish and neighbourhood plans.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

24 The Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan does not directly address carbon emissions or climate change and no such issues arise.

Equality and Diversity Implications

25 No significant changes to a Service, Policy or Strategy are proposed directly and it is therefore not necessary that an Equality Assessment is undertaken.

Privacy Impact Assessment

26 No personal data handling is involved.

Background Papers

Appendix A – Examiner’s Report

Appendix B – Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan (with Proposed Modifications)
