

The East Coker Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

Executive Portfolio Holder: Angie Singleton, Strategic Planning (Place Making)
Ward Member(s) Coker - Cathy Bakewell; Gina Seaton
Director: Netta Meadows; Director, Strategy and Commissioning
Service Manager: Jan Gamon; Lead Specialist – Strategic Planning
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Purpose of the Report

1. To note the progress that has been made on the preparation of the East Coker 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 September 2018.

Public Interest

- 3 The Neighbourhood Plan represents the views of East Coker Parish Council and other stakeholders on the preferred approach to future development in the Parish. This has been the subject of Independent Examination by a qualified person and if the Council agrees 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 surveys, public meetings and consultation events; and the Parish Council have a dedicated section on its website in association with this process. [Neighbourhood Plan | East Coker Parish Council](#)

Recommendations

- 5 That the District Executive
 - a. agrees to the Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications to the East Coker 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 East Coker to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
 - c. delegates responsibility to the Director for Strategy and Commissioning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning to make any final minor text amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, in agreement with East Coker Parish 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 East Coker Neighbourhood Area designation was approved by the District Council in September 2013. Since then, the Neighbourhood Plan for the area has been prepared and a 'Pre-Submission' Plan was consulted upon by the local Steering Group in January – March 2017 (Regulation 14). This was followed by formal submission of the Plan in March 2018 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 East Coker Neighbourhood Plan

8. The East Coker Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision for the Parish and the Plan's main objectives. The Plan summarises the consultation process and evidence base informing its preparation; and policies seeking to guide future development in the Parish relating to Housing, Employment and Business, Traffic Transport and Infrastructure, Community Services and facilities; and Built and Natural Environment. It also covers Implementation, Monitoring and Review.

9. The Neighbourhood Plan's objectives are set out follows~;

Housing Objective - To encourage the delivery of housing which meets local need, including affordable housing, and provide everyone in the community with the opportunity to live in an appropriate home.

Employment Objective - To support the retention, improvement and expansion of existing employment space and encourage a range of further businesses, including home-working.

Transport Objective - To work with the Highway Authority to ensure that transport and movement within the Parish is appropriate and safe and to retain, promote and improve the network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths.

Community Objective - To provide and support the retention of a range of service and community facilities supporting sustainable growth.

Recreation Objective - To protect open space, sport and recreation facilities to promote healthy lifestyles and the well-being of residents in the Parish.

Conservation Objective - To support the retention and enhancement of the existing Conservation Areas in East & North Coker.

Design Objective - To secure good design in new development, and to protect, enhance and invest in the natural and built environment through a range of local projects and improvements.

Landscape Objective - To secure the protection, enhancement and interpretation of the distinctive rural landscape, settlement pattern, historical assets, natural environment and biodiversity of the Parish.

Agricultural Objective - Protect high grade agricultural land in order to increase sustainability of food supplies

- 10 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.
- 11 On receipt of the Submission Documents, the District Council carried out the required public consultation for a period of six weeks under Regulation 16 in April/ May 2018; this included a notice in the press; and hard copies of the Submission documents were made available at the village café in East Coker. The District Council also wrote 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.
- 12 A total of 29 responses were received and the District Council also presented its own comments; these were all sent to the Examiner.
- 13 The Examiner's Report concludes that the correct procedure for the preparation and submission of the East Coker 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 summary of representations received are all available on the District Council's website [South Somerset District Council - East Coker Parish Neighbourhood Area Designation](#)
- 14 If the District Council accepts the Examiner's recommendations, the next stage would be to hold a local referendum in East Coker. The prescribed question that needs to be asked is:

"Do you want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for East Coker to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area".

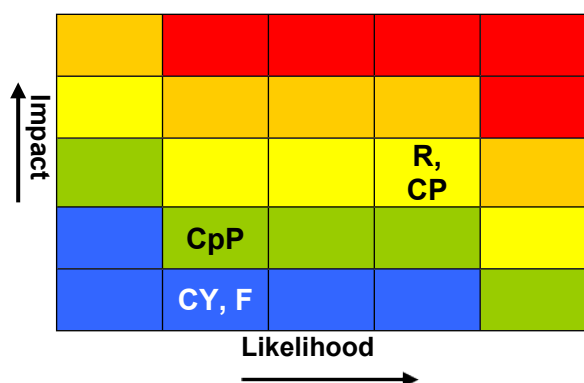
If more than 50% of those who vote say Yes, the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' (or adopted); and it becomes part of the statutory Development Plan for the District Council and needs to be taken account in the determination of planning applications.

Financial Implications

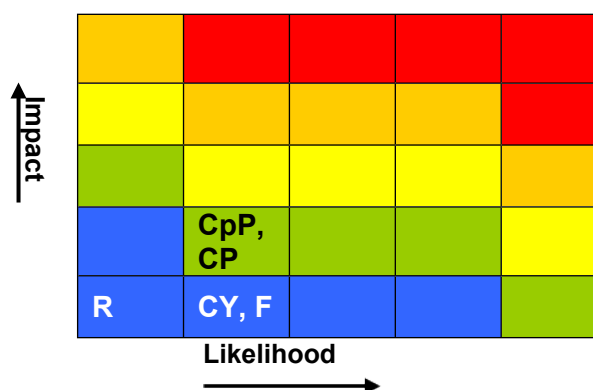
- 15 Under the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations, 15% of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts are generally passed directly to those parish and town councils (in England) where development has taken place. In England, communities that draw up a neighbourhood plan and secure the consent of local people in a referendum, will benefit from 25% of the levy revenues arising from the development that takes place in their area.
- 16 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

- 17 The East Coker 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

- 18 The East Coker Neighbourhood Plan does not directly address carbon emissions or climate change and no such issues arise.

Equality and Diversity Implications

- 19 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

- 20 No personal data handling is involved.

Background Papers

Appendix A – Examiner's Report

Appendix B – East Coker Neighbourhood Plan (including Proposed Modifications)

(produced as a separate supplement due to its size)