

## The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

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Ward Member(s)	Martock – Neil Bloomfield and Louise Clarke
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## Purpose of the Report

1. To agree the Independent Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications; and to set out the process for 'making' the Plan in the event that there is a favourable outcome to the 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 March 2021.

## Public Interest

3. The Neighbourhood Plan represents the views of Martock Parish Council and other stakeholders on the preferred approach to future development in the Parish. This Plan 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 be then subject to a referendum of all those in the community on the Electoral Register. The referendum will ask whether local residents agree with the modified Plan's content and if it should be used in the determination of planning applications. Regulations linked to the Coronavirus Act 2020 mean that no elections or referendums can take place until 6 May 2021. This includes neighbourhood planning referendums. These provisions will be kept under review by the Government and may be amended or revoked in response to changing circumstances.
4. The Neighbourhood Plan has been the subject of various events and meetings which have been used to engage with interested parties and public consultations. The Parish also have a website dedicated to local matters called Martock Online and this includes a section on the Neighbourhood Plan: <https://martockonline.co.uk/>

## Recommendations

5. That the District Executive:

- a. agrees the Examiner's report and accepts in full her recommendations for Proposed Modifications to the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan.
- b. agrees to officers organising a referendum later this year for local people on the Electoral Register. The aim of the referendum is to ascertain whether local residents want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Martock to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
- c. delegates responsibility to the Director for Strategy and Commissioning to make any final minor text amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, in agreement with the Martock Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

## Background

6. Neighbourhood planning helps local communities play a direct role in planning for the areas in which they live and work. The plan can show how the community wants land in its area to be used and developed. 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.
7. The Martock Neighbourhood Area designation was approved by the District Council in April 2016. Since then, the Neighbourhood Plan for the area was prepared and a 'Pre-Submission' Plan was consulted upon by the local Steering Group in July 2019 (Regulation 14). This initial consultation was followed by formal submission of the Plan in January 2020 and the District Council carried out formal consultation in line with procedures set out in the relevant Regulations (Regulation 16), and in accordance with Covid-19 regulations. 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. In the meantime, Planning Practice Guidance<sup>1</sup> states that neighbourhood plans awaiting referendums can be given significant weight in decision-making.

## The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan

8. The Martock Neighbourhood Plan sets out an overview of the parish today and the strategic context along with a vision, objectives and main aims for the Parish and stakeholders. The Plan also includes policies seeking to guide future development in the Parish relating to Natural Environment, Built Environment and Heritage, Housing, Local Economy, Transport and Travel and Community Wellbeing.
9. No sites are allocated for development in the Plan but the Settlement Area Boundary has been amended from that shown in the adopted Local Plan, March 2015.
10. The Neighbourhood Plan sets out the following main aims:

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<sup>1</sup> [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): planning update - GOV.UK](#)



Topic	Aims
Natural Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect and enhance our natural environment</li><li>• Improve flood resilience</li><li>• Support responsible change in the countryside</li></ul>
Built Environment and Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respect the heritage and character of the area</li><li>• Ensure new development has a positive impact</li><li>• Support wider use of renewable energy</li></ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure housing meets local needs</li><li>• Encourage innovative housing solutions</li></ul>
Local Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilitate the growth of local employment opportunities</li></ul>
Transport and Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce the impact of the motor vehicle</li><li>• Improve safety and accessibility</li></ul>
Community Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure community infrastructure meets local needs</li><li>• Encourage healthy leisure and recreation activities</li></ul>

11. On receipt of the Submission Documents, the District Council carried out the required public consultation for a period of seven weeks under Regulation 16 in August - October 2020; this included a notice in the press, and hard copies of the Submission documents were available on request via the Parish Council. 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 also made available on the Council's website.
12. A total of sixteen responses were received; South Somerset District Council also made 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 Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan was followed and that it meets the 'Basic Conditions', subject to the proposed modifications being made. The Examiner has proposed 22 modifications in all. The Examiner's Report (Appendix A) and amended document in accordance with these proposed changes (Appendix B) are appended to this report. The original Submission Plan, supporting documents and summary of representations received are all available on the District Council's website [here](#)
14. The Neighbourhood Plan Settlement Area Boundary includes the site MB2 – Land south of Coat Road which is identified for housing growth in the South Somerset Local Plan Review Preferred Options, 2019. The Examiner has recommended that Local Plan Review sites MB1 – Land north of Coat Road and MB3 – Land south of Hills Road are identified on Map 6 of the Neighbourhood Plan. These sites lie outside of



## South Somerset District Council

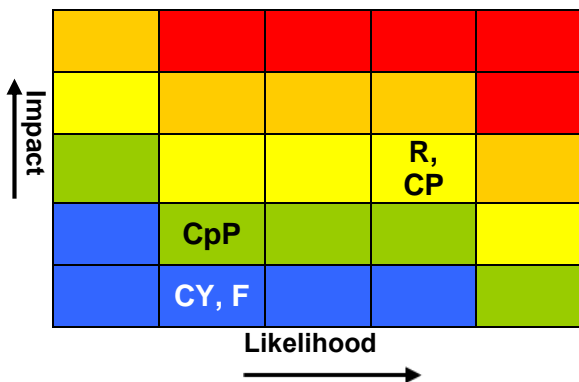
the Settlement Area Boundary. Modifications to the supporting text are proposed in order to recognise their status.

15. The Parish Council agreed to accept the Examiner's recommendations and Proposed Modifications at its meeting on 9 February 2021.
16. If the District Council accepts the Examiner's recommendations, the next stage would be to hold a local referendum in Martock. The prescribed question that needs to be asked is:  
  
*"Do you want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Martock to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area?"*
17. 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 of in the determination of planning applications. Despite the currently delay to the holding of the local referendum, the neighbourhood plan can be given significant weight in decision making in advance of the referendum.
18. 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.
19. 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, Planning Authorities have been advised that, in order to minimise the financial impact of any delays to neighbourhood planning referendums, the Government will allow local planning authorities in 2020/21 to submit claims for New Burdens grant, instead of when the date of the referendum is set, at an earlier point in the neighbourhood planning process. A claim can be made at the point when the local planning authority issues a decision statement (as set out under Regulation 25 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 detailing its intention to send the plan to referendum. The Council will therefore claim a grant of up to £20,000 towards the costs of progressing the Neighbourhood Plan from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) once the formal decision has been issued.

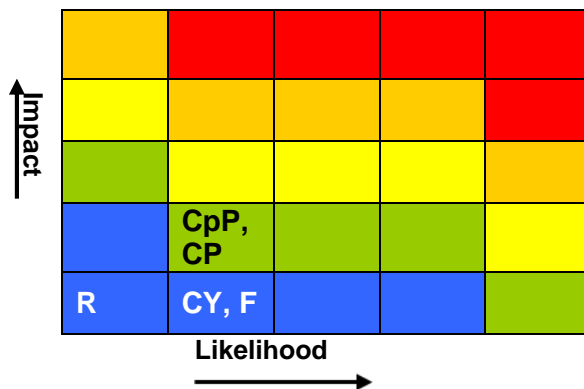
### Financial Implications

20. There are no additional financial implications as the £20,000 grant claimable from MHCLG will be sufficient to cover the costs of the referendum. It should be noted that if the referendum were not to progress the costs incurred to date will be funded from an existing Strategic Planning budget.

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**

21. The Martock 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 Parish. The Council Plan states that it will focus on supporting communities to develop and implement Neighbourhood Plans.

**Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

22. The Martock Neighbourhood Plan does not directly address carbon emissions or climate change but does include Policy Mart16 which seeks achieve high levels of sustainable development where appropriate.

**Equality and Diversity Implications**

23. No significant changes to a Service, Policy or Strategy are proposed, directly and, therefore, it is not necessary to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.

**Privacy Impact Assessment**

24. It is not necessary to process personal data so, therefore, a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is not needed.



**South Somerset**  
District Council

## **Background Papers**

Appendix A – Examiner's Report

Appendix B – Martock Neighbourhood Plan (amended)