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NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Chris McEwan Economic & Regeneration

Responsible Director – Richard Alty, Director of Place

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

- To inform Cabinet about the general principles of neighbourhood planning under the Localism Act, explain the role and legal obligations on the Council, and seek Members' approval for delegated powers to be given to officers to allow the new arrangements to be administered.
- 2. The report also refers to the first Neighbourhood Planning Area designation application received by the Council and an explanation of the process.

Summary

- 3. The Localism Act 2011 gives neighbourhoods the opportunity to develop their own Neighbourhood Development Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders to shape development in their local area, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. This is a new and different approach which seeks to devolve a degree of planning control to local communities in certain circumstances. This report focuses on the production of Neighbourhood Plans.
- 4. The Council has a duty to support the process of Neighbourhood Planning. This includes a number of legal requirements, as set out in the Regulations, to publish and consult at various stages of the neighbourhood planning process. The Council must also fund the appointment of an independent Examiner and hold the referendum required. Details of the process are set out at **Appendix 2**.
- 5. On 9 January 2012, Sadberge Parish Council submitted an application for a Neighbourhood Area designation to Darlington Borough Council (see letter at **Appendix 3**). Having advertised the application, in line with the Regulations, the Council is currently seeking representations as part of a 6 week consultation.
- 6. Given the largely administrative role of the Council in the Neighbourhood Planning process, it is suggested that authority to make most decisions regarding the

statutory Neighbourhood Planning function is delegated to officers. The exceptions to these decisions include actions to take in response to an examiner's report, whether to modify neighbourhood development plans or orders, and ultimately the adoption of the Plan. It is suggested that these decisions are made by Cabinet.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that :-
 - (a) The following decisions in the Neighbourhood Planning process, as defined in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, be delegated to the Assistant Director for Policy and Regeneration:
 - (i) whether a body is a designated neighbourhood forum
 - (ii) whether to accept and designate a Neighbourhood Area;
 - (iii) whether an application for a neighbourhood development plan or order is valid and should be accepted;
 - (iv) whether to decline or accept a repeat proposal for a neighbourhood development plan or order;
 - (v) the appointment of an examiner for a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Order;
 - (vi) whether to make a neighbourhood development plan or order following a referendum, and

The following decisions be made by Cabinet:

- (vii) decisions as to what actions to take in response to an examiner's report,
- (viii) whether to modify neighbourhood development plans or orders.
- (ix) Adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan
- (b) The Council's Constitution be amended. The permissions amended to include at 10(c) a new sentence, 'Power to process and determine all decisions relating to neighbourhood planning under the Localism Act 2011.' The Scheme of Delegation to include a new delegation under the Corporate Director – Place to the Assistant Director – Policy & Regeneration with the responsibility for 'all aspects of the statutory function relating to Neighbourhood Planning'.

Reasons

8. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) to enable the Council to meet its duties under the Localism Act 2011, and Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 with respect to Neighbourhood Planning.
- (b) to cover all of the procedural steps which are required to allow the neighbourhood plan/order to progress to adoption by the Council.

Richard Alty Director of Place

Background Papers

Localism Act 2011 Neighbourhood Planning (England) Regulations 2012

Steve Petch Extension 2627

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder
Health and Well Being	No direct impacts of this report.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications in this
	report.
Diversity	There are no specific issues relating to diversity.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected
Groups Affected	All groups are affected
Budget and Policy Framework	The Council's Policy Framework includes the Local Development Plan (Local Plan). This report relates to the process for producing Neighbourhood Plans which ultimately could become part of the Development Plan for the Borough and would be part of the decision making process for planning applications in the designated area. The Neighbourhood Planning process places legal requirements on the Council to provide officer support and advice, for which resources have not been allocated. It may require the diversion of existing resources from currently planned work to facilitate the Neighbourhood Planning process. The Council will receive £30,000 per completed plan but this may not cover all costs. In addition, the later stages of the process include the appointment of an independent Examiner, and potentially the holding of a Referendum, before the Plan is adopted. These will need to be funded by the Council.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	
One Darlington: Perfectly	Neighbourhood Plans would form part of the Local
Placed	Plan, which is itself considered to be the spatial
E(C)	representation of OD:PP.
Efficiency	This is a new piece of legislation which the Council is
	legally obliged to support and process. This will
	inevitably result in an additional officer workload

which could impact on the delivery of other priorities,
namely the Local Plan. The level of impact will
depend on the number and type of Neighbourhood
Plans coming forward.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

- 9. The Localism Act 2011 (the Act) introduces neighbourhood planning as a new way for communities to decide the future of their own area. It is not compulsory for neighbourhoods to do a plan. It is for communities to decide if they wish to be involved in neighbourhood planning. The detailed responsibilities for neighbourhood planning are set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General Regulations) 2012 which came into force in April 2012.
- 10. There are three types of neighbourhood planning processes:
 - (a) Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) are plans which set out policies for the development and use of land in a particular Neighbourhood Area.
 - (b) Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDO) grant planning permission for a specific use or development within a specified area.
 - (c) Community Right to Build Orders (CRtB) are a sub-category of NDOs. They enable community organisations to bring forward small scale, site specific, community-led developments, without the need to apply for planning permission.
- 11. This report focuses on the production of Neighbourhood Plans as this is potentially the more resource intensive, however much of the following is applicable to Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders. NDOs and CRtBs are both matters for Planning Applications Committee and the delegated powers of that committee will be changed accordingly to enable it to consider such Orders.
- 12. As stated, the process of Neighbourhood Planning must be instigated and led by the community. The basic process is shown in the diagram in **Appendix 1.** The Regulations place various duties and responsibilities upon the Council. These are:
 - (a) to confirm the status of a proposed Neighbourhood Forum
 - (b) to confirm the geographical area of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan
 - (c) to provide expertise, advice and support to Neighbourhood Forums or Parish/Town councils
 - (d) to validate and check a plan prior to submission to the independent examination, and to check legal conditions have been met in producing the

Plan

- (e) to pay for and appoint an independent examiner with the consent of the Parish/Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum
- (f) to pay for and hold referendums
- (g) to legally adopt a Neighbourhood Plan as part of the Borough's 'Development Plan' when all requirements have been met
- 13. The Council has to be realistic as to what it can do if applications for Neighbourhood Plan applications are to be processed in a cost effective and speedy manner. Support and assistance must be proportionate to the nature of the plans being prepared, the stage reached in plan making and the impact on the wider community.
- 14. Neighbourhood Forums: In areas where there are Parish Councils the Parish Councils are the 'relevant body' for preparing plans. In non-parished areas community groups can form Neighbourhood Forums to prepare plans and any such body would need to apply to the Council to be designated as a Neighbourhood Forum. This is a route that would be open to either existing community groups or newly formed groups. The body will need to submit an application to the Council which must include:
 - (a) the name of the proposed forum;
 - (b) a copy of the written constitution;
 - (c) the name and a map of the neighbourhood area; and
 - (d) the contact details of at least one member to be made public and a statement which explains how the forum meets the conditions of the Act.
- 15. In determining the application the Council must ensure that the group meets the conditions of the Act and that there is only one Forum for each area. The Forum must meet the following conditions:
 - (a) be established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area;
 - (b) its membership is open to individuals who live or work in the area or are elected members of a County or District Council for the area;
 - (c) includes a minimum of 21 individuals each of whom live or work in the area or is an elected member; and
 - (d) have a written constitution.

- 16. Once granted, a designation will last for five years and will allow the Neighbourhood Forum to then proceed to making an application for designation as a Neighbourhood Area.
- 17. **Neighbourhood Areas:** A Neighbourhood Plan may extend from a small area centrally located within one ward or on the boundary of a number of wards, or could extend to several wards or parishes.
- 18. The Regulations require relevant bodies submitting an area application to include a map which shows the area to be designated; a statement explaining why the area is considered to be appropriate for designation and confirmation that the parish council/neighbourhood forum concerned is the relevant body for the purpose of neighbourhood planning for that area. On receipt of a neighbourhood area application, the local planning authority must publicise it for a period of not less than 6 weeks and invite representations. Having considered the application and any representations, the Council will decide whether or not to approve the designation.
- 19. If the Council approves the designation of the Neighbourhood Area, it will be published on the Council's website.
- 20. **Preparation of the Plan:** The next step for the Parish Council (or Neighbourhood Forum) would be to begin the formal preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 21. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods should plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies. In Darlington, the strategic policies are set out in the adopted Core Strategy. The intention of the legislation is to encourage communities to bring forward development over and above the Local Plan, that they believe is important.
- 22. Before submission to the Council, the Parish Council/Neighbourhood Forum must consult on the Plan with people who live, work or carry on business in the area, as well as any 'consultation bodies' set out in the regulations
- 23. Once submitted the local planning authority has to consider whether the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan meets certain basic requirements including general conformity with the development plan.
- 24. **The Examination:** The Council is responsible for organising and paying for the Examination. The Council must appoint an independent person to carry out the Examination with the agreement of the body preparing the plan. After the appointment the Council must send them copies of all the relevant documents and any representations received as part of the consultation. The person appointed to undertake the examination is responsible for how the examination will be carried out. It is expected that this will normally be through consideration of written responses, but the examiner could hold hearings if they felt this was necessary.

- The examiner will consider whether the plan meets the basic conditions set out in the Act and if this is the case recommend the plan proceeds to a referendum.
- 25. The Referendum: The referendum gives the Community the final say on whether a plan should come into force in their area. The Council must make all the necessary arrangements and pay for the referendum. If a majority (50% plus 1 of those voting) vote in favour of the plan then the Council must adopt the Plan.
- 26. **Adoption:** Once adopted by the local planning authority, the Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the authority's Development Plan and is a material consideration when considering development proposals. In terms of the planning policy hierarchy, a adopted Neighbourhood Plan, carries more weight than a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 27. Under the Localism Act and the 2012 Regulations, the majority of decisions to be made by the Council in respect of neighbourhood planning are administrative and need to be taken against set criteria where the element of discretion is limited. As such it is recommended that the majority of these decisions could be delegated to the Assistant Director for Policy and Regeneration. The exception to this approach is in respect of decisions as to what actions to take in response to an examiner's report, whether to modify neighbourhood development plans or orders, and ultimately the adoption of the Plan. It is suggested that these decisions are made by Cabinet.

Sadberge Parish Council Neighbourhood Area Application

- 28. The designation of a Neighbourhood Area is the first formal step for parish councils wishing to undertake neighbourhood planning for their area. On 9 January 2012, Sadberge Parish Council submitted an application for a Neighbourhood Area designation to Darlington Borough Council (see letter at Appendix 3).
- 29. The proposed Neighbourhood Area for Sadberge covers the whole area (see Map at **Appendix 4**) for which Sadberge Parish Council is the elected body and the relevant body for the purposes of neighbourhood planning under the Act and the 2012 Regulations.
- 30. The Council is carrying out a 6 week consultation process, ending on 29 March, which gives people the opportunity to comment on the proposed area.
- 31. At this stage, it is unclear what development Sadberge Parish Council wishes to promote over and above the Local Plan.
- 32. This first application has been brought to Cabinet as part of this report to raise awareness of the neighbourhood planning process. Subject to Cabinet's agreement to Recommendation a) above in respect of the delegation of decision making for neighbourhood planning functions, this, and subsequent neighbourhood area applications will be delegated to the Assistant Director for Policy and Regeneration, for designation.

Future developments

33. As this is a new legislative regime that has been introduced it is difficult to assess at this stage what the implications will be going forward and what the likely volume of applications to the Council is going to be. It is anticipated that the process of approving a Neighbourhood Plan from start to finish could take up to 2 years. Officers will keep the new arrangements under close review.

Resource Implications

- 34. Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan will have resource implications both for the group considering preparing a Plan and for the Council. Overall costs of preparing a plan will depend on factors such as the size of the area, the complexity of the issues, the level of expertise available to the group and the level of support available from the Council. Estimates nationally range from about £10,000 to £80,000.
- 35. For the Council, the decision-making processes set out in this report will involve staff time and costs in publicising proposals; considering comments received; and assessing submitted neighbourhood plans against strategic policies. The costs of arranging both the examination and the referendum also fall to the local planning authority. The costs will vary from plan to plan depending on the size of the area covered and the number and complexity of the issues included in it. There are currently no specific budgets identified towards the support for such plans.
- 36. Central government has agreed to make funds available to cover costs. For 2013/14, there will be a non-ring-fenced payment of up to £30,000 per scheme (plan), paid in three stages:
 - (a) The <u>first</u> payment of £5,000 will be made following designation of a neighbourhood area recognising the officer time supporting and advising the community in taking forward a neighbourhood plan. For authorities designating several neighbourhood areas, each local planning authority can claim up to a maximum of £100,000 for area designations, in 2013/14.
 - (b) The <u>second</u> payment of £5,000 will be made when the local planning authority publicises the neighbourhood plan prior to examination. This will contribute towards the costs of the examination as well as other staff costs incurred at this stage.
 - (c) The <u>third</u> payment of £20,000 will be made on successful completion of the neighbourhood planning examination. This is to cover costs for that examination and any other further steps that may be needed for the neighbourhood plan to come into legal force, including referendum. However, the payment is not dependent on pursuing the referendum route if both parties agree on a different approach at that point (for example, if both parties agree, the neighbourhood plan could be taken forward as part of the local plan or as a supplementary planning document).
- 37. These new duties have implications for staff resources as the council has a duty to support parish councils wishing to undertake neighbourhood planning. It is

expected that staff resources to support neighbourhood planning will mainly come from the existing staff within the Planning Policy Team. Whilst it is a statutory requirement that the Council supports local communities, it is essential that the time spent by officers is not deflected from the time needed to prepare the Darlington Local Plan. Therefore, the extent to which the Council can commit officer time and resources to development of Neighbourhood Plans will be limited.

38. The resource to support a Referendum will need to be absorbed by Democratic Services. The workload involved in administering a Referendum will impact on a number of Officers in the Unit and they may be competing priorities dependant on the time of year that the Referendum(s) is called. For information, work a couple of years ago on the cost of administering a Parish Election in Sadberge estimated a cost of £2,650 (excluding preparatory work).

Legal Implications

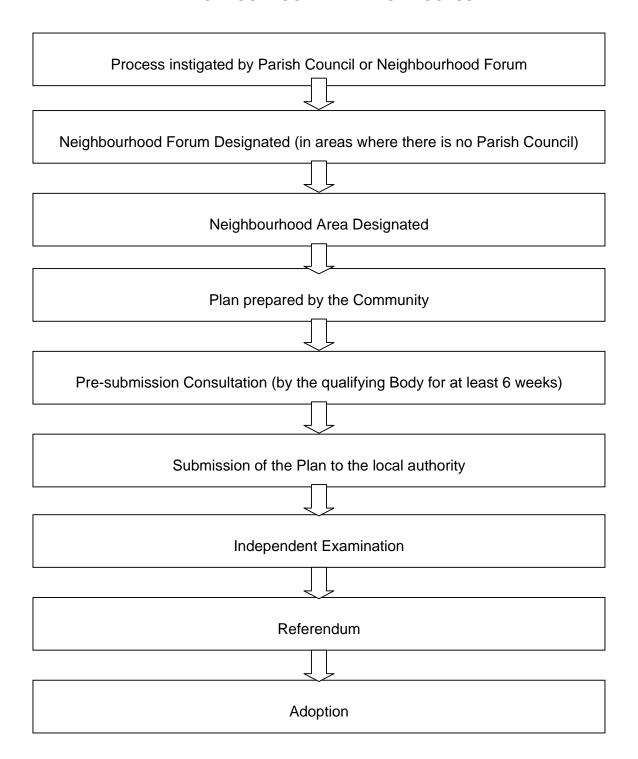
39. Neighbourhood planning is part of the Government's initiative to empower local communities to take forward planning proposals at a local level as outlined in Section 116 of the Localism Act, 2011. The Act and the subsequent 2012 Regulations confer specific functions on local planning authorities in relation to neighbourhood planning.

Equalities Considerations

Consultation

- 40. Consultation and involvement of stakeholders is an important part of the neighbourhood planning process and will ultimately be tested by a single issue referendum at the end of the process
- 41. The proposed Sadberge Neighbourhood Area application is currently the subject of consultation for 6 weeks and any representations will be considered as part of the decision-making process.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCESS



Legal Compliance Checklist: Meeting the requirements of the Legal Process for Neighbourhood Development Plans

- 42. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Council has a statutory duty to assist communities in the preparation of neighbourhood development plans and orders and to take plans through a process of examination and referendum. The Localism Act 2011 (Part 6 chapter 3) sets out the LPA responsibilities as:
 - (a) Agreeing and designating the area of the NDP
 - (b) Agreeing and designating a forum (where relevant)
 - (c) Preparation advise and support
 - (d) Submission
 - (e) Examination
 - (f) Referendum

Legal Compliance Checklist

- 43. The legal compliance checklist summarises the statutory duties placed on local planning authorities in the preparation and making of neighbourhood development plans. For a more detailed summary of the process, please see the detailed 'Guide for Councils: Meeting the requirements of the Legal Process for Neighbourhood Development Plans'.
- 44. The following provides a simple checklist to the tasks which need to be completed by the Council. Reference to regulations and schedules, unless otherwise stated, are to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

Task		Complete (✓)
1	Agreeing and designating the area of the NDP	
Α	 When an application is received, check that the application for designation of a neighbourhood area contains the information listed in Regulation 5 namely: 1. A map identifying the area 2. Statement explaining why it is considered an appropriate neighbourhood area 3. Statement that the organisation making the application is a relevant body. If it doesn't, return the application. 	
В	Check the relevant body hasn't already submitted an area application that has not yet been determined. If it has, consider whether you wish to decline the application.	
С	If the area application is promoted by a Parish Council, check that the area application either covers part or the entire parish, or, if the area application is promoted by a potential neighbourhood forum, that the area does not cover a parished area.	
D	The Council should publicise the application for area designation and invite	

	representations for a period of not less than 6 weeks. The information to be	
	publicised is:	
	A copy of the area application	
	Details of how to make representations	
	Details of the deadline for representations	
	(Regulation 6).	
	In determining the application the Council must consider:	
	1. how desirable it is to designate the whole of the parish area as a	
	neighbourhood area, and	
Е	2. how desirable it is to maintain the existing boundaries of areas already designated as neighbourhood areas (as areas designated as neighbourhood	
	areas must not overlap), as well as	
	3. whether they should designate the area as a business area.	
	in accordance with Section 61G and H of the TCPA 1990.	
	Check if it is necessary to modify an existing neighbourhood area, in	
F	accordance with Section 61G and 61H of the TCPA 1990. In making a	
「	modification the Council must consider whether they should designate the area	
	as a business area	
	If the Council approves the application it should publicise is decision and:	
	the name of the neighbourhood area	
G	2. a map identifying the area	
	the name of the parish council or neighbourhood forum who applied for the designation.	
	the designation (Regulation 7)	
	If the Council refuses the application then it must publicise	
١	the decision and statement of reasons (called a decision document)	
Н	2. the details of where and when the decision document can be inspected)	
	(Regulation 7).	
ı	The Council must publish a map setting out the current neighbourhood areas	
'	designated and indicate those which are business areas	
2	Agreeing and designating a neighbourhood forum (if relevant)	
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E	body meets the conditions set (see 2B above) and taken reasonable steps to secure membership from each of the three groups identified and whose purpose reflects the character of the area (Reg 7). The Council must designate only one organisation or body as a neighbourhood forum for a neighbourhood area and only where the area does not include a parish. When a decision has been made on designation, the Council should publicise the decision in accordance with Regulation 9. This should include 1. the name of the forum 2. a copy of the written constitution 3. the name of the area to which the designation relates 4. contact details of at least one member of the forum	
F	If the Council decides to refuse to designate the forum, issue a Refusal Statement setting out the reasons and publish details of where and when the statement can be inspected (Regulation 10) The Council can withdraw a neighbourhood forum designation when requested	
G	by that neighbourhood forum or if it considers the forum is no longer meeting the conditions of approval. If this happens the Council must publish a 'withdrawal statement' and details of where and when it can be inspected. (Regulation 12 and 1990 Act 61F (9)	
3	Preparation of the NDP	
Α	Provided assistance and support in the preparation of the NDP.	
4	Receipt and assessment of the draft NDP by the Council	
Α	Check if the draft NDP is a 'repeat' proposal. If so, the Council can decline to consider the plan 1990 Act Schedule 4B para 5 and regulation 18.	
В	 a map or statement identifying the area to which the plan relates, the consultation statement - which contains details of those consulted (how they were consulted, summarises the main issues and concerns raised and how these have been considered, and where relevant addressed in the proposed NDP) and check that have consulted with the bodies set out in Schedule 1, the proposed NDP, a statement explaining how the NDP meets the 'basic conditions' ie requirements of para 8 schedule 4B to the 1990 Act (see note 2 below), including an appraisal under the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC if the earlier SEA screening indicated a need for the appraisal and, The information that will enable the LPA to make an assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 where the plan proposal is likely to have significant effects on a European site or European offshore marine site, or information to enable the LPA to determine whether an assessment is required. 	
С	With regard to 4 in B above, check if the draft NDP satisfies the basic conditions (see below) and includes the requirements set out in Regulation 15 and Schedule 2, and Section 4B (6) and 8 of the TCPA 1990 1. Complies with national policy and guidance from SoS 2. Contributes to sustainable development 3. General conformity with the strategic policy of the development plan for the area or any part of that area 4. Doesn't breach or is otherwise compatible with EU obligations – this includes the SEA Directive of 2001/42/EC 5. The making of the NDP is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species regulations 2010(d) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) regulations 2007 9(e) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects)"	

		Т
D	Notify the parish council or neighbourhood forum whether or not the Council is satisfied that the proposal complies with the basic conditions for a neighbourhood plan. If it does not the Council must give reasons and issue a decision statement, in accordance with Regulation 19 and also Schedule 4B, paragraph 6 (4) (b) and para 8 of the TCPA 1990.	
Е	If it complies publicise the NDP in accordance with Regulation 16 for not less than 6 weeks and invite representations. This should include notification of the bodies referred to in the submitted consultation statement	
F	If satisfied that the plan meets the requirements of the 1990 Act, appoint a suitable examiner and agree the appointment with the parish council or designated neighbourhood forum submitting the plan.	
5	Examination	
А	Submit the draft NDP, supporting documents and any representations to the Examiner as soon as possible in accordance with Regulation 17 and Regulation 102A of the Conservation and Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.	
В	Coordinate the arrangements for the examination in consultation with the Examiner.	
С	When the Examiner's Report is received arrange for publication as soon as possible.	
D	Consider each of the Examiner's recommendation and decide what action to take in response. (E.g. make modifications, extend the area for the referendum, decide you are not satisfied with the plan).	
Е	Consider if the Council proposes to make a decision that differs from the Examiner's recommendations. If so, do it in accordance with Schedule 4B, paragraph 13 of the TCPA 1990.	
F	Publicise the Council's decision in a decision statement (reg 18/19) and send a copy to the parish council or neighbourhood forum and anyone who asked to be notified	
6	Referendum	
Α	Liaise with electoral services to coordinate the Referendum arrangements.	
В	Prepare an information statement (Reg 4 of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012 and a statement that sets out general information on town and country planning (and neighbourhood planning) and the referendum (in line with any guidance issued by the SoS)	
С	At least 28 days before the referendum, publish the information statement and specified documents on the Council website and make it available for inspection at the main offices of the Council and at least one other premises open to the public (Reg 4 of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012	
D	If the Referendum results in a 'yes' vote, the Council must publicise their decision on the NDP and reasons for the decision – called a 'decision statement 'and details of where and when it can be inspected (Reg 19).	
Е	If the Referendum results in a 'yes' vote, the Council must publish the NDP and reasons for the decision as soon as possible (Reg 20)	

Appendix 3 – Letter from Sadberge PC

Appendix 4 - Map of proposed designated area