

ABERFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

POLICY INTENTIONS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

MAY 2015

Background

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

Government legislation has been introduced recently with the aim of enabling communities to have a direct input into the town planning of their neighbourhoods by producing Neighbourhood Plans for inclusion in the Local Authority's Local Development Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan will be informed by local opinions on relevant planning matters, e.g.: protection, provision and location of services and facilities; housing allocations; social housing, design of development; the natural/rural environment, countryside and amenity space; protection and conservation of built heritage; and infrastructure improvements.

Where are we in the process?

The Parish Council established a Neighbourhood Plan Committee in March 2012 with the aim of producing a Neighbourhood Plan for Aberford. Initially the main emphasis of the Neighbourhood Plan was to look at housing, as several sites around the village had been put forward for consideration under the Leeds City Council Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment document. The Parish Council was keen to consult residents on their views on Housing development in Aberford and the new Neighbourhood Plans provided an officially recognised way of doing so.

In 2013 consultation of the parishioners commenced with a questionnaire and a consultation event and it became apparent that other planning matters were of concern to the village as well as Housing Allocations. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Document had progressed by this point and the greenbelt sites that had been put forward in Aberford were not allocated for housing in the current Leeds City Council plan. Aberford is classed as 'rural' by the Leeds plan and has no particular housing target allocated to it. The sites are all outside of the village's current development limits, in the greenbelt and as such their development would go against planning policy. Whilst these decisions by the Local Authority decreased the urgency of the Aberford Neighbourhood Plan, the consultation process indicated that many in the parish are still keen to influence other planning matters and to ensure that the village's opinions are clearly expressed in enforceable planning policy at the level of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Having analysed the initial consultation feedback and gathered a good deal of evidence concerning existing demographics, services and facilities, the Neighbourhood Plan group are now in a position to put forward this draft plan for discussion. Its aim is to draw out further comments and suggestions from the parish to ensure that we have fully considered and understood the breadth of opinions put forward in the initial consultations. These comments and suggestions will be incorporated into the Final Plan document which will contain all the supporting documentation.

What's next?

Following this consultation, the draft plan will be amended as appropriate with policies formalised and put forward for 6-week public consultation. After any further modification, the Final Plan will then be sent for independent inspection to ensure that it complies with our legal planning obligations and is not contrary to the Leeds Local Development Plan. Its adoption as Local Plan Policy will then be put to a referendum by the people of Aberford.

The Vision for Aberford

Our Vision is for Aberford and District to provide opportunity for all to live, work and play in an environment which is safe, healthy and attractive. Our parish can and should provide opportunities for local people to find housing, find employment and access opportunities for education, recreation and community activities, while maintaining the essential rural character of the parish and surrounding countryside.

Aberford & District Parish Council, 2011

Policy Intentions

Once adopted, the Aberford Neighbourhood Plan will become an official planning document similar to the Local Plan produced by Leeds City Council and planning applications will be determined by reference to the Plan. It is therefore essential that the Plan is written in the form of legally enforceable planning policies. The intention of the Plan is to have policies which reflect the issues identified in the consultation carried out in the village and these are outlined below.

1. Community Facilities

Public consultations have demonstrated a strong desire to protect Aberford's existing services and facilities and to support the provision of new facilities and services. The community clearly values and wishes to protect the transport network, village pub, village hall, the surgery, places of worship, the school, the village groups and sports clubs. The consultation gives a mandate for the plan to promote the provision of new services with an expressed need for more children and young people's facilities, improved health facilities, more local shops, and improved parking.

Aberford Village Hall has been identified as one of the key existing community facilities in the village. The hall is operated by a board of management trustees who are currently considering the future of the hall and are carrying out separate consultation on the matter.

Whilst small scale improvements will prolong the life of the hall in the short term, the Trustees' view is that the hall needs substantial investment to secure its long term future. The Trustees have therefore worked closely with the owner of the land behind the hall to submit a joint planning application to build additional housing for the village whilst also providing much needed off-road parking for the Village Hall, together with a substantial cash payment to enable a major refurbishment of the hall. This application was declined by Leeds City Council in December 2014 as the proposed housing is in the Green Belt.

The Trustees remain committed to consider any scheme that would provide a substantial contribution to the hall. Their strong preference is to retain the central, accessible location.

Whilst redevelopment of the hall is not a planning policy issue, the Neighbourhood Plan aims to support the Trustees in their efforts to continue to provide this valued community facility by the general policies proposed below and the listing of the village hall in the potential CIL objectives.

Policy C1

New development should not undermine existing services and facilities.

Policy C2

New development should enable the provision of new facilities and services where appropriate.

2. Housing

The public consultation showed that whilst it was generally accepted that some housing growth would be necessary in Aberford, resistance was expressed to the prospect of larger housing developments expanding the village into the greenbelt. Given the Local Authority's continued policies to prevent development in the greenbelt and its categorisation of Aberford as a village "outside of the settlement hierarchy" and as such not targeted for housing growth, it may be unnecessary for the Neighbourhood plan to try and set numerical limits to housing developments in the village over a particular period. The infill sites within the existing boundaries of the village could potentially provide the modest level of growth seen as acceptable under the consultation. The need to ensure that this growth is appropriately designed, located and that it meets local housing needs was clearly expressed in consultation suggesting the following two policies with specific guidance on design of developments covered under section 4 of this draft.

Policy H1

Proposals for new housing developments should retain and reinforce the existing form of the village set within the greenbelt.

Policy H2

All new developments must provide a mix of homes taking into account objectively identified housing needs. On schemes of more than six dwellings a mix of types, tenures and sizes to meet the demonstrated needs of current and future households in Aberford will be sought. Large areas of uniform type size and tenure will not be acceptable. The specific type/size/tenure of properties currently required in Aberford may be specified based on further consultation and subject to the availability of an up-to-date evidence base.

3. Environment

The Public Consultations present a forceful and unified appreciation of the “green spaces” that surround the village limits and flow into the heart of the settlement. The Neighbourhood Plan will put forward policies with the aim of protecting and enhancing these “green spaces”. Any development must respect the rural nature of the community and its setting by actively encouraging the incorporation of the natural environment in the development, such as the provision of footpaths and woodland. Valued assets, particular places, continuity of the “green infrastructure” and links out to the open countryside must be protected. The Plan should address the treatment of this natural environment spatially, giving full consideration to its effects on the village’s connections to the A1 motorway and the surrounding estate land. Protection of the greenbelt itself is enshrined within the National Planning Policy Framework as well as in Leeds Local Development Plan Core Strategies and, as such, there is no need for the Neighbourhood Plan to reiterate this.

Policy E1

Any new development should respect and enhance the local green spaces including the Drover’s verges, playing fields, Jubilee fields, the allotments, the land around the Beck, the buffer zone between the village and the motorway and the links to Becca Park and Parlington Estate. These areas will be protected as Local Green Spaces in accordance with NPPF paragraphs 76-78

Policy E2

Provision of new, meaningful green space should be linked to new developments where their scale permits. General policy for green space provision as set out in Leeds Core Strategies should be improved upon given the open rural nature of the village. New provision should be linked to the standards set out in Leeds Core Strategy and the specific deficiencies in Aberford as set out in the Council’s Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment.

4. Design

Consultation has informed the Plan's intention to produce policies which ensure that new development respects the current aesthetic and spatial qualities of the village and ensures that the character of the village is retained and, where possible, enhanced. The design of new development is already controlled by the general principals of Leeds Core Strategies. A large amount of work in this field has also been produced specifically for Aberford under the Village Design Statement which, whilst not an adopted Local Development Plan Document, is soon to be presented in a form that will be a material consideration in Leeds City Council's planning decisions. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to give more specific guidance than that in the Leeds Core Strategies and design guidance documents and to add weight to the issues identified in the Village Design Statement by making them legally enforceable policies.

Policy D1

New development, including additions and extensions to existing properties should:

- a. Recognise their streetscape and landscape setting and reflect the built form, proportions, features and materials of the original or surrounding buildings.
- b. Compliment and, where possible, enhance existing vistas, skylines and landmarks.
- c. Recognise and enhance local distinctiveness and character (as described in the AVDS character area analysis)

5. Heritage

The Public Consultation has shown that the parish values the heritage of Aberford and is keen to protect and enhance physical embodiments of that heritage. Aberford has a conservation area and numerous buildings and structures entered on the National Heritage List. Such designations offer adequate protection to those specific heritage assets but the Neighbourhood Plan could identify further local features with an important link to the history of Aberford and afford them protection or at least consideration.

Policy HE1

New development should not harm the following specific historical features of Aberford:

- a. The War Memorial
- b. Drovers Verges
- c. Pump Hill
- d. Hook Moor
- e. Cockbeck Ford
- f. Etc.

6. Transport

Public consultation has shown that the Great North Road can become very congested at peak times. Parking within the village centre, and its immediate surroundings is on the road and can be hazardous. The Neighbourhood Plan could have policies which help to mitigate these problems.

Policy T1

In order not to increase congestion, (major) new developments should aim to take traffic out of the village without the need to traverse the village centre

Policy T2

New housing developments must demonstrate provision of off-street parking in a minimum ratio as shown on the chart below.

Number of bedrooms	Number of parking spaces required
1 or 2	1
3 or 4	2
5 or more	3

Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a new levy which Leeds Council will charge on many new developments. The money raised will help to pay for the infrastructure needed across Leeds as a result of growth such as schools, greenspace, flood defences and transport improvements. Once we have a Neighbourhood Plan in place, Aberford Parish Council will receive 25% of all CIL receipts raised from development within the Parish Council area. Based on consultation responses to date we have identified various areas where the money could be used to benefit Aberford and address the desires of the members of the community. Further feedback is required to prioritise these potential targets for funding.

Possible Community Infrastructure Levy Priorities

Improvements to existing open space areas

Provision of new open space areas

Improvements to Public Rights of Way

Highways network improvements eg parking improvements

Improvements to public transport

Improvements to cycle routes

Pavement upgrades

Refurbishment/rebuilding of the village hall

Young Peoples Facilities

Health Facilities

Local Shops