

Date: 28/11/11

Our ref: KP/12

Your ref:

All EFDC Parish and Town Councils  
(By Email and Hard Copy).



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Dear

### **Neighbourhood Plans**

The Localism Act has introduced neighbourhood plans as the preferred approach to community planning. In Epping Forest District, neighbourhood plans would be prepared by town or parish councils.

Neighbourhood plans, village design statements and town parish plans will continue to co-exist, however only neighbourhood plans will legally have policy status. A village design statement when adopted would be planning guidance, showing how development should be approached on a parish level but would not go beyond this function. Within the parameters set by the district wide local plan, a neighbourhood plan must be used to positively encourage sustainable development. The plan would also directly outline where development would go, what type it would be, would designate village greens and key spaces to be protected and any plans for managing and potentially designating more sites. Neighbourhood plans would determine how development and regeneration will be delivered in an area, anything outside of which could be opposed on a planning policy basis.

Given their policy importance, neighbourhood plans will need to be based on sound evidence (growth needs, local landscape character, infrastructure requirements etc.). The evidence would steer the plan formulation and proactively guide appropriate development at a town/parish settlement level. As mentioned, neighbourhood plans will need to be in line with the local plan evidence and would be subject to consultations, an examination in public and a referendum.

Local authorities are likely to be required to publicise proposed neighbourhood plans, offer advice during the referendum period as well as provide evidence related information and materials i.e. maps and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) information as needed. Support does not include financial support at this stage. It will be down to the Local Authority to make the final decision on the adoption of a neighbourhood plan and publish the adopted document.

EFDC are working with the Rural Community Council Essex (RCCE) to produce county wide guidance, which we anticipate will be in place by January 2012. At this stage we would urge town and parish councils to have discussions with the RCCE, if your town/parish is interested in pursuing a neighbourhood plan. The RCCE can advise, for a small fee, on further funding as well as on the process of delivering neighbourhood plans. <http://www.essexrcc.org.uk/>. The Department for Communities and Local Government is consulting on the neighbourhood planning regulations. The closing date is on January 5<sup>th</sup> 2012 and details can be found at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningregulationsconsultation>

Yours

Forward Planning Team  
Epping Forest District Council