

APPENDIX 1

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING – COMPATIBILITY ISSUES

1.1 The main issues, however, learnt particularly from the submission and approval process are as follows:-

1) Conformity with the Local Plan. Whether a Neighbourhood Plan conforms to the strategic objectives of the Local Plan.

2) Objectively assessed need. Justification of proposed housing numbers with reference to objectively assessed housing need. Local needs and the distribution of housing allocations.

3) Addressing the main local issues. The structure and thrust of the plan with reference to what are the main issues for a settlement. In the case of the West Horndon the local plan process has so far highlighted the issue of whether the village is capable of providing a sustainable location for a strategic housing site, and whether a large area of Green Belt land should be developed.

1.2 These issues are explored in more detail as follows:-

1) Conformity with the Local Plan.

1.2 An Inspector rejected a neighbourhood plan for Dawlish saying that there was “not yet a district-wide local plan in place, the plan could not be judged as having used objectively assessed evidence of housing need”. Secondly, the plan may not be "justified" given there was no clear audit trail for judgements made by the steering group responsible for preparing the plan. The plan had cost the Parish some £20,000 to produce.

1.3 In other cases however Parish councils have tried but often failed to defend against large scale housing application, citing the fact that they would undermine the Neighbourhood planning process.

1.4 This has been a contentious issue when parish councils have taken a protectionist approach in neighbourhood plans, preventing the delivery of the desired levels of investment and growth. This is likely to be exacerbated where neighbourhood plans are found to be sound despite their use of out-of-date development plans that are not based on recent evidence, and which do not fully reflect Government policy.

1.5 Government advice is that where a neighbourhood plan is brought forward before an up-to-date Local Plan is in place the qualifying body and the local planning authority should discuss and aim to agree the relationship between policies in:

- The emerging neighbourhood plan
- The emerging Local Plan
- The adopted development plan with appropriate regard to national policy and guidance.

1.6 The local context for West Horndon is that Brentwood Borough Council have published both preferred options and growth options documents, but there is still no Draft Local Plan in place. In the absence of such, and the consequent uncertainty over the scale and location strategic housing locations, West Horndon Parish Council has decided to take up the challenge of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish, with this document is an important piece of the evidence base underpinning.

2) Objectively assessed need.

1.7 West Horndon Parish Council fully accepts that Brentwood Borough Council's emerging Local Development Plan must meet objectively assessed housing need, and that depending on the spatial strategy adapted, it is very likely that somewhere in the Borough provision will have to be made for a large housing development. The actual scale of such need still however seems to be uncertain, with a significant difference in assessed need between documents so far produced. For the purposes of this document, the approach for West Horndon, at this stage is either to carry out their own objectively assessed need for the Borough and apportion a fair

number to the Parish, or to look at different growth options for the village and assess each in terms of sustainability objectives.

3) Addressing the main local issues.

1.8 One of the lessons from other neighbourhood plans, that have run through to being considered by the Planning Inspectorate, is that the nature of the neighbourhood planning process depends on the above two factors (namely, conformity with the relevant Local Plan and meeting objectively assessed housing need), and also on the individual scale, and character of the Neighbourhood Plan area. A glance at the West Horndon plan area shows a small rural settlement surrounded by Green Belt land. It also tells you that it is located between a railway line and a main road. Proximity to the road and rails line does not automatically however make it a sustainable location for strategic growth. This document starts the process towards establishing whether the Borough have rightly identified a sustainable location in their recent spatial strategy and growth options documents.

Brentwood Borough Council's Local Plan Process

1.9 Brentwood Borough Council's initial draft Local Plan ("LDP1", published summer 2013) plan has set out a long term vision for how the Borough should develop by 2030 and the Brentwood Borough Council's strategy and policies for achieving that vision.

1.10 In looking at the key characteristics of the Borough LDP1 notes that all of the Borough's countryside lies within Metropolitan Green Belt and that the Borough contains attractive countryside with a variety of landscapes and settlements ranging from the town of Brentwood, the historic village of Ingatestone, to small villages and hamlets.

1.11 The "Preferred Options" within LDP1 set out a strategic objective as follows:-

“SO1 Direct development growth to the existing urban areas of Brentwood, Shenfield and West Horndon in locations well served by existing and proposed local services and facilities.”

1.12 Another objective is stated as to:-

“SO7 Safeguard the Green Belt and protect and enhance valuable landscapes and the natural and historic environment.”

1.13 The spatial strategy reads:

“S1: Spatial Strategy

The Council’s preferred spatial strategy for the Borough aims to protect the Green Belt and local character and foster sustainable communities by focusing the majority of new development between 2015 and 2030 on land within accessible settlements.”

1.14 With regard to identifying sites it says that:-

“All development sites will be identified having regard to whether they:

- a. Are accessible to public transport, services and facilities
- b. Will have no significant impact on the Green Belt, visual amenity, heritage, transport and environmental quality including landscape, wildlife, flood-risk, air and water pollution
- c. Are likely to come forward over the plan period”

1.15 Referring to West Horndon it says:-

“Having good road and rail access, local shops, employment and community facilities, West Horndon offers potential for sustainable development over the long term. Developing here provides an opportunity to address conflicts arising from heavy freight passing through the village, strengthen the village centre, and improve service provision. Significant improvements to infrastructure and services would be required to support growth at West Horndon.”

1.16 The Borough did not take the preferred options within LDP1 forward. Instead they published a document entitled “Strategic Growth Options Consultation” in early 2015. Throughout the process so far West Horndon Parish Council has shown a keen interest, put forward detailed representations, and kept their residents informed.