

Three Rivers District Council

Policy and Resources Committee Report

Date: 9th June 2024

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PART I

**Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan Consultation
(DoF)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 Abbots Langley Parish Council have formally submitted their draft Neighbourhood Plan to Three Rivers District Council. It is now a statutory requirement for Three Rivers to consult on the draft Neighbourhood Plan and this report seeks agreement from the Policy and Resources Committee to go out for consultation (Regulation 16 Consultation).

2 Details

- 2.1 Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011. New powers allowed qualifying bodies (Parish or Town Councils) to produce Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP). NDPs allow communities to set planning policies for their area.
- 2.2 Once adopted, NDPs become part of the development plan for the District and they must be considered when planning decisions are made, along with the Local Plan and national planning policy.
- 2.3 NDPs must be examined by a suitably qualified independent person, appointed by the Council and agreed by the qualifying body (Parish/Town Council). Neighbourhood plans must also pass a referendum of local voters by a simple majority. If a plan passes referendum, the Council must 'make' (adopt) it, unless it breaches EU obligations or human rights legislation.
- 2.4 The Abbots Langley NDP (the Plan) has been produced by Abbots Langley Parish Council (the Parish) in conjunction with the local community. The Plan does not seek to allocate sites for housing but provides policies which are to be considered in the determination of planning applications for development within the Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- 2.5 The Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan Area was designated on 18 November 2014.
- 2.6 The Council has a duty to provide technical advice and support to communities producing a Neighbourhood Plan. Officers have assisted the Parish by providing technical advice, feedback on draft versions of the Plan and supporting documents.
- 2.7 In May 2025, Abbots Langley Parish Council formally submitted the Draft Abbots Langley NDP and supporting documents to the District Council. Where a qualifying body submits a plan proposal to the local planning authority, it must include:
- A map or statement which identifies the area to which the proposed neighbourhood development plan relates;

- A consultation statement;
 - The proposed neighbourhood development plan;
 - A statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood development plan meets the 'basic conditions' as set out in the legislation; and
 - Information to enable appropriate environmental assessments if required.
- 2.8 Officers have considered the submitted documents and are satisfied that the above legal requirements have been met. The Council is now required to undertake a statutory six-week consultation on the draft Abbots Langley NDP.
- 2.9 The consultation will be hosted on the Council's 'Have Your Say' consultation platform. It will be publicised in the Watford Observer, on the Council's website and social media platforms. Should the Community Council wish to further publicise the consultation they are welcome to.
- 2.10 Following this consultation, the Council will appoint an independent examiner who will consider the representations received.
- 2.11 The examiner will check whether the NDP:
- Has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body
 - Has been prepared for an area that has been properly designated for such plan preparation
 - Meets the requirements to:
 - specify the period to which it has effect
 - not include provision about excluded development
 - not relate to more than one neighbourhood area
 - That its policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area
- 2.12 The Examiner also has to consider whether a neighbourhood plan meets the "Basic Conditions". In order to do this, the Plan must:
- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State
 - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
 - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.
- 2.13 Following examination Officers will consider the examiner's proposed modifications and then bring a final draft of the Abbots Langley NDP to be agreed at Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council.
- 2.14 Following Full Council the Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan will go out to referendum, and if successful will be adopted by the Council as part of its development plan for the area.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement that the Council consult on the draft Neighbourhood Plan and as such there are no alternative options.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health implications

None specific.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The consultation on the Abbots Langley NDP will be covered by existing Planning Policy service budgets.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The report and recommendations outline the current legal position with regard to proceeding to the next stage in the process. The Council's discretion with regards to proceeding to consultation or otherwise is strictly limited by statute and in this case the requirements for proceeding to consultation are considered to have been met.

7 Customer Services Centre Implications

- 7.1 The Customer Services Centre will be briefed on whom to contact regarding the consultation.

8 Communications and Website Implications

- 8.1 Consultation documents will be added to the website and the consultation will be publicised through the Council's social media accounts.

9 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 9.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 9.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Planning Policy and Conservation service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact)
Failing to consult would leave the Council vulnerable to legal challenge	Legal costs and reputational costs		Tolerate	6

9.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ----- Likelihood ----- Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
	Impact Low -----> Unacceptable			

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)
 3 (Critical)
 2 (Significant)
 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
 3 (Likely (21-79%))
 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
 1 (Remote (≤5%))

In the officers' opinion, of the new risks above, were they to come about, the following would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore strategic risks. The management of strategic risks are reviewed by the Policy and Resources Committee.

10 Recommendation

- 10.1 That the Policy & Resources Committee note the report and agree the Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Development Plan for consultation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan Submission Version

Appendix 2: Appendices A, B, C, F and G

Appendix 3: Appendix D - Abbots Langley Housing Needs Assessment

Appendix 4: Appendix E - Abbots Langley Design Guidance and Codes

Appendix 5: Appendix H - Abbots Langley Village Centre Masterplan

Appendix 6: Appendix I - Bedmond Vision and Aspirations

Appendix 7: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report

Appendix 8: Consultation Statement

Appendix 9: Basic Conditions Statement

Appendix 10: Map of Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Area

