

Subject: Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation

Lead Officer: Fiona Blundell
Contact on 01789 260333

**Lead Member/
Portfolio Holder:** Councillor C Saint

Summary

The report provides information on neighbourhood planning and its process. It summarises the consultation representations received in relation to the proposed Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan and recommends designating the Neighbourhood Plan Area as submitted by the Shipston-on-Stour Town Council. This will enable the formal preparation of the Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan.

Recommendation

That the Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan Area be designated as submitted in Appendix 1.

1. Background/Information

1.1 The District Council has carried out consultation on the area application submitted by Shipston-on-Stour Town Council for the formal designation of a Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan Area. The neighbourhood plan area comprises Shipston-on-Stour parish. A copy of the area application is attached to this report as **Appendix 1**.

2 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

2.1 Once adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory Local Plan for the area. Consequently, the Local Planning Authority is required to make decisions in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise; in the same manner by which it makes decisions in accordance with the Local Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan is therefore a significant planning document, which may be prepared by a Town or Parish Council, or combination of parishes, (or Neighbourhood Forum in non-parished areas) with the local communities. The Plan is able to set out policies on development and planning policies in response to local issues. A Neighbourhood Plan is required to be in general conformity with the Development Plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.2 There are a number of key procedural stages involved in the Neighbourhood Planning process. These include the following:

- Designation of a Neighbourhood Plan Area
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- Presubmission consultation and publicity of the Plan
- Submission of the Plan to the Local Planning Authority
- Consideration of the Plan by the Local Planning Authority relating to its conformity with the Development Plan
- Consideration of the Plan by an Independent Examiner
- Referendum of the local community
- Adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan if 'sound'.

3. Designation of a Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The designation of a Neighbourhood Plan Area is the first formal stage in the plan making process.
- 3.2 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 requires that an application for a neighbourhood plan designation includes the following information;
- a map which identifies the area to which the area application relates;
 - a statement explaining why this area is considered appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area, and;
 - a statement that the organisation or body making the area application is a relevant body for the purposes of Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as Amended).
- 3.3 The application contains a map which shows the proposed neighbourhood plan area. Shipston-on-Stour Town Council qualifies as a relevant body to submit an area application to the Local Planning Authority.
- 3.4 The area application also includes a statement to explain why the area is considered appropriate as a neighbourhood area. Shipston-on-Stour Town Council consider that 'it is appropriate and practical to develop a neighbourhood plan for the town council's entire administrative boundary area and without seeking to create a neighbourhood plan in conjunction with adjoining parishes' councils. It is recognised that there is a clear need to relate to adjoining and nearby parishes as Shipston is a service centre for quite a large surrounding rural area.'
- 3.5 Consultation has been carried out on the proposed area application in line with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The consultation period commenced on 10 January 2013 and finished on 22 February 2013.
- 3.6 The consultation was carried out by publishing a copy of the area application on the District Council's website. A public notice was placed in the Stratford Herald, Stratford Midweek, Cotswold Journal newspapers. It was also displayed on the Stratford Business Improvement District and the Stour United Businesses websites. In addition, an email notification was sent to all stakeholders and interested parties, in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. A copy of the area application and the public notice were also displayed in the Stratford-upon-Avon and Shipston-on-Stour libraries. Furthermore, laminated copies of the proposed area map and public notice were also sent out to the Town
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Council, for distribution in the town by the Shipston-on-Stour Neighbouring Plan Group. A press release was also sent to the radio stations Touch FM and Coventry and Warwickshire FM.

- 3.7 Ten consultation representations were received in response to the area application. Nine of the representations have expressed support for the Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Area. There was one objection to the proposed area, although no explanation was provided. The statutory consultees comprising Natural England, Environment Agency and English Heritage have raised no objections and provided some guidance. All responses have been forwarded to the Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.
- 3.8 When determining an area application, the Council is required to consider how desirable it is designate the whole of the parish area as a neighbourhood area; to maintain the existing boundaries of areas already designated as neighbourhood areas; and to consider whether it is appropriate to designate the area as a business area in accordance with Section 61G and H of the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) 1990.
- 3.9 To assess the appropriateness of any proposed neighbourhood area, the Local Planning Authority must ensure that neighbourhood areas are coherent, consistent and appropriate in planning terms. As well as considering consultation representations, other factors may be taken into account. These may include the following
- any natural or man-made features (such as rivers or mountains, roads, railway lines or canals);
 - catchment areas for current and planned infrastructure and services (e.g. schools);
 - development proposals and allocations and environmental designations.
- 3.10 Consideration should be given to whether there would be any overlapping of neighbourhood plan areas. The proposed area is comprises the existing parish boundary, so there would be no overlapping with an adjacent neighbourhood boundary.
- 3.11 Section 61H of the TCPA 1990 states that in deciding to designate a Neighbourhood Area, Local Authorities should consider that the area is wholly or predominantly business in nature. Given that the area comprises the existing Shipston-on-Stour parish, it would not be appropriate to designate it as a business area.
- 3.12 Government guidance from the Planning Advisory Service states that unless there are valid planning reasons, Local Planning Authorities should approve area applications.

4. Options available to the Cabinet

- 4.1 The following options are available in relation to the Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan:

Option 1

To approve the Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan area so that it may be designated as such, and enable the further development of the Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan.

Option 2

To refuse the Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan area designation and to publish a notice of its refusal on the District Council's website in line with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

5. Members' Comments

- 5.1 Cllr Chris Saint provided the following comment, 'I fully support this application that provides the opportunity for the local community to shape the way forward'. Cllr Richard Cheney has commented that 'As a member of the Shipston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee I fully support this application to designate the Parish of Shipston on Stour as a Neighbourhood Plan Area.'

6. Implications of the Proposal

6.1 *Legal/Human Rights Implications*

- 6.1.1 The Localism Act 2011 places a legal requirement on the District Council to assist and support local communities in the preparation of neighbourhood plans.
- 6.1.2 Neighbourhood Plans must however be compatible with EU obligations and Human Rights requirements, together with such plans, having regard to national planning policy and be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the area.
- 6.1.3 The District Council is under a duty to bring them into force, following examination of the Neighbourhood Plan by an independent qualified person, confirming that conditions in 6.1.2 have been met and thereafter such plans have been passed by a local referendum.

6.2 *Financial*

- 6.2.1 The Department of Communities and Local Government has provided funding to Local Authorities, to enable them to fulfil their statutory duty to 'assist and support' local communities in the preparation of neighbourhood plans.

6.3 *Environmental*

- 6.3.1 Neighbourhood Plans are not required to carry out the type of sustainability appraisal necessary for a development plan document as required by the Town and Country Planning Act 2004. There may be the need to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) depending on the content of the neighbourhood plan. Local Planning Authorities are advised to undertake an early SEA screening of the plan to determine whether it is required. However, it is not required for the consideration of an area application.

6.4 *Corporate Strategy*

- 6.4.1 The designation of a neighbourhood area is the first formal step in the production of a neighbourhood plan. As such, it will contribute towards Aim One 'Addressing local housing need' and Aim Three 'Improving access to services' of the Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Corporate Strategy'. Through the preparation of a neighbourhood plan for Shipston-on-Stour, its residents may have more influence over development and decisions that affects their area.

6.5 *Analysis of the effects on Equality*

6.5.1 No issues identified.

7. Risk Assessment

7.1 Government guidance produced by the Planning Advisory Service states that unless there are valid planning reasons, local authorities should approve area applications. If the Council decides to refuse the application, it must publish its decision and statement of reasons. Any decision to refuse the area application should be founded on robust reasoning or the Council would be subject to a legal challenge.

8. Conclusion

8.1 An area application has been submitted by Shipston-on-Stour Town Council for the designation of the parish of Shipston-on-Stour as a Neighbourhood Plan Area by the District Council. This is the first formal stage in the neighbourhood planning process and if adopted, it will enable the further development of the Shipston-on-Stour Neighbourhood Plan.

Paul Lankester
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



