

The Shaftesbury Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

The Neighbourhood Plan allows communities to reach a broad consensus on the objectives, key issues and desired outcomes for the town and surrounding areas. It is a statutory document where any planning application for build within Shaftesbury and Melbury Abbas and Cann, must conform to the policies stated within our Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, it is a document which contains Planning Policies defined at the community level.

The Neighbourhood Plan however must conform the overall Local Plan written by North Dorset District Council (NDDC) and National Planning Policies. This NDDC Local Plan has now been formally adopted and it defines where the land has been allocated within Shaftesbury and its surrounding area for additional housing.

Who writes the Neighbourhood Plan?

To develop a Neighbourhood Plan is requires a lot of work. In Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann the bulk of the background work has been achieved with Volunteers and we will next hand over our findings to a Planning Consultant to produce the first Draft Neighbourhood Plan. There is budget allocated in the Shaftesbury Town Council Precept to assist the group with obtaining consultancy assistance.

The Neighbourhood Plan will comprise of:-

- Planning Policies – down at the community level
- Land usage definition
- Proposed projects for Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann

Why do a Neighbourhood Plan?

Greater control on planning decisions down at the community level, really to 'plug in' the gaps found in the Local Plan written by North Dorset District Council and to increase the amount of developer's money for the Town.

As the North Dorset District Council Local Plan has been adopted, all new developments will pay Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is a flat rate charge developers must pay the councils and the CIL charging schedule has been drawn up by the local planning authority.

If communities do not have an 'adopted' Neighbourhood Plan the amount received by a local Town Council is 15% of the CIL charge; if a community does have an 'adopted' Neighbourhood Plan, the rate of CIL received by the council goes up to 25%.

Where are we now?

In Jan-15 we distributed the Neighbourhood Plan survey to all of the homes and businesses in Shaftesbury. We received back over 1000 responses. Some of the responses were extensive, it has consequently taken a year to have all of the responses loaded into a database and to be analyzed.

The results from the survey represent the opinions of over 20% of Shaftesbury and Melbury, Abbas and Cann residents. Most of the responses were from households rather than individuals. We can be confident the sample size gives a good representation the opinions of the local population. The results from this survey will be used in our base evidence for developing the plan.

Some of the key messages that came out from the analysis of the results of the survey are:-

- Safety for pedestrians, cyclists is key concern
- Open spaces within Shaftesbury and Surrounds should be protected
- wildlife, fauna and flora are important to us
- We are proud of the Shaftesbury historical background and want it preserved.
- There is concern with the traffic management system of the Shaftesbury High St
- More Leisure activity, play area and recreation facilities are needed in Shaftesbury.

What Next?

Based on the NHP survey results, the Neighbourhood Plan have written Objectives and draft Planning Policies for each Theme within the Plan. The Themes are:-

- Environment and Open Spaces
- Historic Environment
- Community and Leisure
- Housing & Development Design
- Rural Settlements
- Transport

The collated information from the team will then be handed over to a consultant with all of the survey results. The consultant will then help us produce a first draft Neighbourhood Plan for us to put forward to the public later this year.

A consultation period of 6 weeks will commence where the Neighbourhood Plan is issued for public scrutiny and questioning. The results and feedback from the public are put back into the Neighbourhood Plan by the consultant and our plan will go before an independent examiner and then be subject to a referendum in our parish where, under the regulations of the Localism Act 2011, over 50% of those voting must be in favour of the plan.

If the public vote is successful, the Neighbourhood Plan is adopted and becomes a statutory planning document for Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas & Cann.

Dr Richard Tippins
Chairman Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee