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1. What is the difference between neighbourhood plans and community led plans?

The term Community Planning now includes various types of Plan:

- Community Led Planning (also known as Parish Plan or Village Plan) is the broad community planning tool that has been used for many years.

- Neighbourhood Planning (and Neighbourhood Development Orders, Community Right to Build Orders) addresses spatial development issues and are part of statutory development framework. Neighbourhood Planning was introduced in the Localism Act November 2011.

Community led plans (CLP) can help a community assess current and future potential issues and think about all aspects of community life in an area and set out a plan of action. A CLP is evidence of a strong community that has given clear thought to its needs. It can include land use, planning issues/issues around development locally. Although it has no formal weight and cannot allocate development sites, a CLP could be a material consideration and could be taken into account in considering e.g. planning applications in the area and grant applications. It may sometimes be appropriate for communities to complete a CLP as a preliminary to preparing a neighbourhood plan.
Neighbourhood planning empowers communities to shape the development and growth of a local area through the production of a neighbourhood development plan, a neighbourhood development order or a Community Right to Build Order.

Neighbourhood Plans, once adopted, become part of the local statutory development plan and will form the basis for determining planning applications in that area as well as protecting green spaces.

A Neighbourhood Development Order enables the community to grant planning permission for the development it wishes to see.

A Community Right to Build Order gives permission for small-scale, site-specific developments by a community group.

The big difference is that Neighbourhood Planning concerns writing planning policies for the allocation of land, and a key benefit can be the community infrastructure that may be delivered through development. But there is also additional complexity and expense with Neighbourhood Planning due to the statutory requirements.

A Neighbourhood Plan becomes a part of the council’s statutory plan but it is fundamentally about the place where you live, as is a Community Led Plan.

How are they similar?

• Both help communities to take action for themselves so they can bring about local improvements.
• Both can be used by communities to alert policy makers to local issues and gain support for projects.
• Both can help communities consider the need for land use development such as new housing or infrastructure.

How are they different?

• A community led plan has no formal statutory weight and cannot be used to create planning policies or grant permission for development.
• Neighbourhood plans could focus on just one issue or action. Community Led Plans encourage people to think about the wellbeing and sustainability of their community as a whole.
• Due to the statutory weight afforded to a Neighbourhood Development Plan, their preparation can be more complex, time-consuming and costly than preparing a Community Led Plan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Neighbourhood Plan (NP)</th>
<th>Community Led Plan (CLP)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>A NP must contain policies on the development and use of land and can allocate land for development. The NP can contain as many or as few policies as you like and it can be focused around a particular issue; it doesn’t need to cover every aspect of planning if you don’t want it to.</td>
<td>A CLP includes an action plan of practical actions which a community can work together with local agencies to achieve and bring about real change. It may address a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues important to them, including land use, housing issues, community facilities, play areas, transport and services. Use of the nationally recognised nine-step CLP toolkit is encouraged, however a shorter CLP process can be just as effective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restrictions</td>
<td>A NP must be in conformity with strategic policies in the local plan and with national planning policy and guidance. A NP cannot therefore be used to stop development or to seek a lower level of development than that set out in the Local Plan or Core Strategy.</td>
<td>A CLP can include a comprehensive action plan that sits within a detailed historical village document or a simple community action project plan. Village halls, community shops, waste and recycling, rights of way, public open space, biodiversity, energy saving schemes, communication, community support, anti-social behaviour, dog fouling, broadband, education, transport. A CLP cannot allocate sites for development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Example Content</td>
<td>Location and type of housing, affordable housing, regeneration of derelict land, design, infrastructure, Local Green Space, land use (location of employment, location of retail), conservation, specifications for development and type of use.</td>
<td>CLPs can be produced at low cost and do not require much technical (planning) expertise. Typically a CLP can cost around £5000, depending on the complexity of the plan. Communities doing a CLP can currently apply for up to around £7500 through their parish council to the district’s CLP fund. The council offers a free limited questionnaire service per community, to design, input data and produce data tables for groups.</td>
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<td>Cost to prepare</td>
<td>An NP can cost anywhere between a few thousand pounds and tens of thousands depending on the complexity of the plan and whether you hire consultants to help you.</td>
<td>A dedicated district council officer will work closely with communities to provide advice, support and guidance. County Council and ORCC as well as town and parish councils provide support.</td>
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<td>Financial Support</td>
<td>Is based on complexity and scope of work. Currently, groups preparing NPs can apply for a grant from Locality for up to £8000 (<a href="http://www.mycommunityrights.org">www.mycommunityrights.org</a>) The councils also provide grants based on the settlement category in the Core Strategy Smaller villages - £5000 Larger villages - £10000 Town councils - £15000.</td>
<td>A CLP has no formal weight, although it can be taken into account in determining planning applications if it covers issues that are material planning considerations. CLP is useful in giving a community perspective on issues such as preferred sites, but it could not be used to justify refusing or granting planning permission.</td>
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<td>Direct Support</td>
<td>Each NP has support from a named planning officer providing assistance with statutory procedures, policy writing. Locality provides free advice service. Planning Aid England also offers free, general planning advice.</td>
<td>County Council and ORCC as well as town and parish councils provide support.</td>
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<td>Weight in determining planning applications</td>
<td>NPs are made part of the district’s development plan following examination and referendum, which gives it considerable weight in determining planning applications. The plan doesn’t carry much weight until it is submitted to the District Council.</td>
<td>A CLP has no formal weight, although it can be taken into account in determining planning applications if it covers issues that are material planning considerations. CLP is useful in giving a community perspective on issues such as preferred sites, but it could not be used to justify refusing or granting planning permission.</td>
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<td>Timescales in production</td>
<td>A NP will take around 2 years to complete depending on complexity.</td>
<td>The development of a CLP can take anything from 18 months to two years.</td>
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<td>Process for review</td>
<td>NPs may need to be reviewed in light of changes to national policy or local plan policies to remain up to date. Any out of date policies can no longer be taken into account in determining planning applications.</td>
<td>The community can choose when they review a CLP. It is recommended the action plan is reviewed yearly and a CLP ‘refresh’ is undertaken after a few years.</td>
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2. What are the benefits of a Community Led Plan or Neighbourhood Plan?

If Community Led Planning (CLP) is done well, it can have many benefits:

- High rates of community participation.
- New local projects and services taken on by the community
- New volunteers, new community groups and renewed interest in community wellbeing
- Deliberative decision-making, helping communities to resolve local issues
- Constructive dialogue with local authorities and other service providers. Informing and influencing policy makers and services such as housing, planning and environmental health,
- Providing evidence of community aspirations for grant funding applications
- Providing evidence of community views for planning policy and application consideration

"The benefits (of a community led plan) to our village have been immediate and on going...Things have happened more quickly and positively as the whole community has had a chance to be involved. Even where there are pockets of discontent, people’s views have been listened to and taken into account, this enabled people to see that a democratic decision has been made and not imposed... Our [community led] Plan has helped make the parishioners voice heard not only in our parish but in the outside world"

Brightwell cum Sotwell parish

Benefits of doing a Community-led Plan:

- Mandate for Parish Council – A parish plan can be adopted by the Parish Council as their plan of action over the next 5-10 years. The Parish Council will then be acting directly to implement the communities wishes
- Quality of Life – A plan is ultimately about improving the quality of life for everyone in the community. It’s a particular opportunity to hear about the needs of those who might be disadvantaged
- Participation in local democracy – A parish plan encourages everyone to have their say and to realise that they can help shape their communities future.
- Publicity – A parish plan can help put your village on the map. It can also help residents become more aware of the groups and activities within the village
- Action Groups – A Parish Plan gets new people involved, who might become parish councillors or other activists. It can help create stronger action groups, or give them a higher profile within the village.
- Influence Decision Makers – A chance to influence the district and County Councils and other authorities, by presenting the comprehensive views of the villagers and a clear plan of action for the future.
- Meeting Needs – Some people feel excluded from the community where they live. A parish plan can help those at the heart of the community to include and listen to those on the fringes. The plan should act to address the whole community’s needs.
• Improve Local Facilities – A parish plan is a chance to identify ways that the village facilities can be improved, or to identify new services that need to be provided.

• Evidence for Funders – if you want to apply for a grant for a local project, a parish plan can provide required evidence about the need and proof of local people’s wishes and involvement.

• New Skills – A Parish plan can give people the opportunity to develop new skills or become more confident about their contribution to the community. It should be a chance for people to learn from each other.

• Community Spirit – A parish plan should give lots of opportunity for people to get involved in activities and debate about where they live.

• Quality Parish Status – A parish plan could be evidence of a vibrant, active parish council, helping towards ‘quality parish’ status.

The benefits of Neighbourhood Planning are:

• Carries real legal weight: Forms part of the statutory planning documents (Local Development Framework). Planning applications are assessed against them; Appeals are determined against them.

• Gives more certainty to development that is supported by community:
  - Decide where and what type of development should happen in the neighbourhood;
  - Influence and/or identify where new homes, shops, offices and other development should be built;
  - Identify and protect important local green spaces;
  - Promote more development than is set out in the Local Plan;
  - Influence through design criteria what new buildings should look like
  - Influence through evidence of need or deficiency, what infrastructure should be provided
  - Influence planning decisions made by the District Council because the Council must take note of the policies in the neighbourhood plan.
  - Include local policies that give more detail than the Local Plan (provided they don’t conflict with its strategic priorities).

• Gain 25 percent of the revenues from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) arising from the development that takes place in your area.

• Develop a shared vision for your neighbourhood
  A neighbourhood plan can include policies on the development and use of land in a parish or neighbourhood area, however they cannot be used to propose a lower level of housing growth than that proposed within local authority planning policies. A neighbourhood plan must meet ‘basic conditions’, which are that the plan:
  • must have appropriate regard to national policy and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State
  • must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
  • must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area
  • must not breach, and be otherwise compatible with, EU and Human Rights obligations.
3. Should our community do a Community Led Plan or Neighbourhood Plan to influence future house building in our parish?

Embarking on neighbourhood planning is a significant commitment for a typical parish council, with a small budget, a part-time clerk and relying on the goodwill of volunteer Councillors. Done properly and in accordance with statutory regulations – as it must be – communities may find it takes them two years or so from start to an adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

The rewards, though, could be significant. Neighbourhood planning is not a free hand; it must be "in general conformity with strategic policies" in the Local Plan and, as such, cannot prevent development already in a Local Plan. But it can range widely, covering housing development location, the mix of housing, new business premises, design and landscaping issues, the protection of valued green space, allotments and heritage sites, sites for community buildings or services, cycleways, sites for community energy schemes and so on.

Those considering neighbourhood planning will want to be sure it is the right measure for them. Where they have local issues falling largely outside the realm of the planning system they are likely to be better off with a Community-Led Plan (CLP). There is nothing to stop them doing the two in parallel – identifying issues through community-led planning, then tackling those which are planning related in a Neighbourhood Plan.

Those whose concerns are limited to design issues may still prefer a simpler route to producing a Village Design Statement, especially if their local planning authority will accept it as supplementary planning guidance.

Others again may wish to focus their firepower on influencing what their local planning authority’s Local Plan says about their area, especially if that Local Plan is just being drafted.

Brian Wilson Associates July 2012

http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/analysis/rewarding-the-neighbourhood
4. Is a Neighbourhood Plan or a Community Plan the best approach?
It depends what you want to achieve. The diagram below is often used to explain this in general terms.

Extract from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils guidance

However a discussion with your District Council planning department is essential at an early stage to find out which of the planning tools available would best address your community’s specific situation and concerns, how your community plan fits with the Local Plan, what policies and protection are already in place, and how the timing of your Plan could inter-relate with the Local Plan.

5. What support is available for a Community Led Plan or Neighbourhood Plan?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Led Plan: support available</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• District Council officer advice, support, guidance and information</td>
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<tr>
<td>• District Council grants of around £500 to £750 administered by ORCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>• ORCC support: free support for all stages of the Plan, project planning; setting up steering group, launch event, helping to find data and information, advice on questionnaire design and planning, action planning, comments on draft Plan; advice on implementation. See our community led planning website or contact <a href="mailto:fiona.mullins@oxonrcc.org.uk">fiona.mullins@oxonrcc.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Oxfordshire County Council and your District Councils will review and provide comments on draft plans and identify agencies that may be able to help you in delivering some actions and will support the implementation of your actions and help overcome any obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• OCVA support: potential sources of funding for proposed projects in your plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• District Council assistance with free limited service for questionnaire design, data entry and data tables (South and Vale only)</td>
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</table>
- printing maps of your parish (South and Vale only)

### Neighbourhood Plan: support available

- District Council officer will provide advice, support, guidance and information at all stages (assistance and advice; information or evidence to help inform your Neighbourhood Plan; provides guidance notes and toolkits, checks your Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared correctly; arranges an ‘examination’; organises a local referendum; adopts your Neighbourhood Plan as part of the Development Plan)
- District Council grant funding (smaller village £5,000, large village £10,000 and town £15,000)
- Locality grant support up to £8,000 (www.mycommunityrights.org)
- Locality’s free advice service, free telephone advice on 0300 020 1864, Mon-Fri 9.30am – 12.30pm
- Planning Aid England offers free, general planning advice by phone and email, and online
- Neighbourhood Planning Community Knowledge Hub: resources for every aspect of the NP process
- NP champions: Cllr Rev Angie Paterson (SODC), Geoff Botting (Woodcote)
- Department for Communities & Local Government’s neighbourhood planning pages for policy and overview.

6. We intend to start with a Community Led Plan, generate interest, then possibly do a Neighbourhood Plan.

### Summary

Ultimately if you want a strong influence over local land use planning issues in your area only a Neighbourhood Plan will achieve that, but a Community Led Plan can be a step to achieving that.

**A Community Led Plan can add value to Neighbourhood Plans and is a good place to start:**

- It will help you to decide if a Neighbourhood Plan is needed.
- It will help you to get members of your community on side.

Many communities choose to produce a CLP first to find out about the issues the local community are passionate about. One of the actions arising from the CLP might well be to produce a Neighbourhood Plan to cover particular planning and land use issues. Often groups producing a Neighbourhood Plan send out a questionnaire to the community at the beginning of the process to gain feedback about what issues are important and if you have already done a CLP then you have a head-start.

Some costs for community engagement as part of the Neighbourhood Plan could be recovered through the support for CLPs.

You could also produce a CLP and a Neighbourhood Plan at the same time. Most Neighbourhood Plans include a section on community issues that were captured as part of the initial scoping process.

7. Extract from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils guidance
8. Can we ‘convert’ Community Led Plan into a Neighbourhood Plan?

As summarised in the previous section, a completed CLP can lead naturally into an NP. However, if a CLP is ‘converted’ into a NP, care must be taken from an early stage. This is to ensure that the plan can meet the regulatory “basic conditions”. Including a sustainability appraisal is recommended for a neighbourhood plan and without one, it may necessitate starting afresh to scope the issues, engage the community afresh on spatial issues such as sites for housing development, and to meet statutory requirements including consultation with national agencies such as the Environment Agency at scoping stage which the CLP process does not require.

9. What are the risks if we don’t develop a Neighbourhood Plan?

It depends on the situation, the quotes below illustrate the types of risks that Communities have felt that Neighbourhood Planning can address.

| “If we don’t produce a Neighbourhood Plan, the future of where we live will be decided from elsewhere.” | Looetown Council |
| “Without a Plan the future of our area would be determined by Mid Sussex's "one size fits all" District or Local Plan which cannot adapt to the special requirements of our parish. ...” | |
| Without a Plan every planning application in our area would only be assessed against the national and district policies (as now), taking no account of OUR local housing needs, parking and traffic issues, and all the other policies included in the Plan. | |
| There is currently a serious shortfall on the district's target for new homes so some sites that would have previously been refused as being outside a built-up area could have been permitted ... | |
| Other communities are working on their own Neighbourhood Plans and there is a possibility that developers could in future begin to take advantage of areas without one in force.” | West Hoathly parish council |

- What happens if we don’t have a Neighbourhood plan?

  Communities without a NP will be more vulnerable to aggressive planning applications for larger numbers of houses, or developments in areas were the community does wish to see development. There is no real advantage to waiting, for example if there is uncertainty over the emerging Local Plan.

- Are there any advantages in not having a Neighbourhood Plan?

  Preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan requires a huge amount of time and effort from the community, the parish council and others who volunteer to contribute to the plan preparation. Consultants might be needed to help with certain aspects. There are grant funds for NPs but parish council precept might also be needed to pay for NP preparation. Where the local plan has robust policies in place to protect an area it may not be necessary to prepare a plan. A neighbourhood plan will cost more than a community led plan. For smaller communities with no likelihood of development under the Local Plan, and where there is a robust Local Plan in place, it may not be necessary to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. If there is no Neighbourhood Plan, the District Council will allocate sites for development as usual and the Parish Council will be consulted on all proposed development.
10. Should a very small community do a CLP or NP?

The less resource intensive CLP is within reach of communities of over 150 people. CLP can be tailored to the capacity of the community to carry out the process. Smaller communities can club together to do a Plan jointly.

With Neighbourhood Plans requiring a formal examination and referendum, along with several stages of consultation, they are resource-intensive and expensive to produce, possibly making them less achievable for smaller communities. Whilst some help is available from District Councils and other sources, the process will depend heavily on volunteers. Anyone considering undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan will need to be clear that enough people, with the necessary skill, knowledge and experience, are available with enough time and commitment to see the process through. It is also necessary to ensure that enough money can be found to carry out certain stages in the process such as consultation and production of evidence studies, which may need to be undertaken by professionals.

11. What tips are there for getting started given that our village is pretty disillusioned about the planning process?

12. How to encourage community participation in a Community Led Plan or Neighbourhood Plan?

ORCC can advise on specific ideas for community engagement and getting started. See our Community Led Planning web page or contact Fiona.mullins@oxonrcc.org.uk. One approach is to do a very simple Love it Hate It exercise at a popular event such as the village fete or at a number of different events. This shows what people really care about and can form the basis for developing a Community Plan (CLP or NP) (District Councils and ORCC can offer advice and guidance to a community who is considering how to get started on a plan, and also which approach may be best for you. It may be advisable to do an initial scoping exercise to see what the most appropriate route might be before deciding on which a CLP, NP or both.

13. Where can we get advice on questionnaires?

ORCC can advise on best practice for questionnaires. Contact Fiona.mullins@oxonrcc.org.uk. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have a free SNAP questionnaire service which includes questionnaire design, data entry of completed questionnaires, and providing data tables for analysis.

14. How can we use a Neighbourhood Plan to protect against unreasonable development?

Neighbourhood Plan policies cannot block development that is already part of the Local Plan. What they can do is shape where that development will go and what it will look like.
15. What is the process for carrying out a Neighbourhood Plan?

There is advice on this from Locality or contact your District Council planning department

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparatory steps</th>
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<tr>
<td>Decide: is NP the right approach?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area designation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request Strategic Environmental Assessment screening opinion from Council (is it needed?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decide whether to do an Strategic Environmental Assessment or full Sustainability Appraisal (if needed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scoping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop and refine options and assess the effects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare SA / Environmental Report (if needed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare the pre-submission NP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare final NP documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Examination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Referendum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitor significant effects</td>
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16. Please articulate “why bother” with a Neighbourhood Plan so that we can have clarity in our parish council discussions.

- Why bother?
  - A Neighbourhood Plan gives you some say in wide range of issues related to the future development in your community (usually housing). The Neighbourhood Plan can be a vital document in influencing and managing the type and location of new building, can protect against inappropriate development by including policies maintaining the character of the village, and can be used to protect green spaces.
  - A Neighbourhood Plan can also set out the improvements needed to infrastructure and services. Where evidence of need or deficiency can be demonstrated this can be used by the District Council to secure monies through S106 or CIL.
  - A neighbourhood plan can reflect the needs of residents and aid discussions with developers on housing type and mix.
  - A neighbourhood plan can help ensure that recreational, social and educational needs of local people are considered in future developments.
  - The plan can specify areas of the parish for employment and commercial use, such as shops.

- Can a Neighbourhood Plan help to preserve the character of our village?
  Yes, a good Neighbourhood Plan, with wide-spread and strong community support demonstrated in a referendum, can determine which sites are developed, the size and style of houses (through design policies) and can also protect sensitive areas from development.

- Can a Neighbourhood Plan help with traffic and air quality issues?
  Although a Neighbourhood Plan is mainly about land use, a good plan will consider issues such as parking, air quality and traffic and look at how future development may impact on or improve this. Influence beyond land use is limited but can help inform discussions with the highway authority on traffic management measures.

- What’s in it for our community? Are there financial benefits?
When new houses are built developers have to provide money to support local services (e.g. schools, roads, sewers etc). If there is a Neighbourhood Plan in place then the community is likely to have the necessary evidence to secure the infrastructure needed. Also a neighbourhood plan area would receive 10% more of this money for use as they wish and the community (via its Parish Council) can say where this money should get used.

- How can the Neighbourhood Plan deal with future uncertainty over the Local Plan and housing numbers?

  The NP can include reserve sites to cover any increase in the number of houses allocated. There will need to be a review process to update the plan in the future.