



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a 'Neighbourhood Plan'?

It is a written **planning** document bringing together the majority views expressed by us as a community. It details what the community would like to see happen in Ashington over the next 17 years (to 2031). Once completed, the wishes of the village that are in the Plan must be considered by authorities like Horsham District Council, West Sussex County Council, the NHS and the Government when they take decisions that affect us.

The Neighbourhood Plan IS NOT a means of addressing issues such as: potholes, parking, overgrowing vegetation, dogs barking & fouling, fly tipping, waste collection, littering. There are already established procedures for reporting these issues to the appropriate authority.

The Neighbourhood Plan IS a means of addressing: lack of affordable housing; housing mix; infrastructure improvements eg healthcare, retail, schools, community facilities; flooding/drainage; transport improvements eg roads, footpaths, bridleways, links to other settlements; derelict/underused sites.

Think 'Big, Long-Term and Community' not 'Small, Short-Term and personal'.

What's In a Plan?

Anything and everything that the community feels is important and relevant will be in the Plan. Examples of possible headings are Planning, Infrastructure, Economy, Business, Transport/Access, Community Facilities, Environment, Heritage, Local issues etc

Can I Really Influence the Plan and How?

There are several key steps in preparing the Plan, and you can have an input at each stage:

- community consultation events: the Parish Council will have open meetings to record and collect your views. They will provide information on topics they think are important to the plan. You can add more topics of your own and comment on those presented.
- this will help shape a questionnaire that is distributed to all homes, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders to try to gauge the level of support for the ideas coming from the meetings
- this will help us write up the Draft Neighbourhood Plan which will be put to a Referendum where you get a chance to vote on whether you support it or not (and only Plans that get majority support at the referendum stage are formally adopted)

Will the Plan Really Make Any Difference to What Happens in Ashington?

One thing is for sure, if you help do a Plan then your views are considered as a community and not as lone voices. It means that community views will be taken into account when authorities make decisions on things that affect all our lives; like Housing, Roads, Health Care, Education etc...

If we don't do a Plan we leave our future in the hands of others.

What Happens if I do Nothing?

- you miss out on the chance to have your say in what happens to Ashington over the next 17 years; if you don't speak up during the development of the Plan you can't complain later if you don't like what happens around you
- if you do not vote in the Referendum then the Plan will not be adopted and we will be at the mercy of decisions from higher up (HDC, WSCC etc)

Who's in charge of the Plan?

The Plan will be managed by a Steering Committee made up of volunteers from the Community alongside representatives from the Parish Council. The Steering Committee will establish Focus Groups to work on particular topics. Residents will be involved throughout the process.

What is the timetable?

It is intended that information will be gathered during Spring/Summer 2016 and a draft Plan prepared during 2016/7. An independent examination and local referendum will follow before the Plan can be formally adopted.

Surely the Government want more houses everywhere?

Horsham District has been set, by the Government, a target number of homes to be built by 2031. They have allocated 'strategic sites' for large developments at North Horsham and Southwater. Other towns/villages will have to accommodate some new housing but it must be appropriate to the size of the settlement ie large settlements get more new homes than small settlements. This is to ensure that the infrastructure is not overwhelmed. Settlements must review their infrastructure, assess their 'needs' and any new housing must be appropriate and sustainable – this is done via a Neighbourhood Plan.

So, how many new houses should Ashington have?

It's impossible to put a figure on this as it depends on many factors. New developments should be focussed on sites within the existing built-up area of the village, rather than greenfield land outside of the village. Brownfield sites should be developed, rather than greenfield land. Development outside of the built-up area may be possible but any site would have to be identified through the Neighbourhood Plan (or be selected by Horsham District Council as an allocated/strategic site). Any development outside of the built-up area, on greenfield land would have to address a specific 'need' as identified through the Neighbourhood Plan community consultation process.

Where does the money come from to provide infrastructure or satisfy community needs?

The Steering Committee will work with Developers to secure funding for infrastructure improvements and better community services and facilities but new houses will need to be built to fund these projects.

What about business needs, employment sites, green spaces etc?

The Neighbourhood Plan is not just about housing numbers and protecting our village from inappropriate development but will set out Business, Environmental, Community and other policies consistent with planned future developments.

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