

Colney Heath Neighbourhood Plan

Update to Colney Heath Parish Council December 2019

After meeting twice a month during the summer months the steering group is now meeting once a month and is making good progress in preparing the first draft.

The view of the Steering Group is that our neighbourhood plan should be completed after the St Albans District plan is finalised. Our neighbourhood plan would then take precedence over St Albans Local Plan as it's the later document.

The St Albans Local Plan is currently going through inspection by independent planning inspectors appointed by the Government. The Planning inspectors have already asked for clarification from St Albans DC on several points, the next stage is public hearings these are due to be held in January next year, this a normal part of the process.

If it appears that St Albans Local Plan is going to suffer a considerable delay the Steering Group will consult with the parish council on the best way forward which could result in the neighbourhood plan being completed before St Albans Local Plan.

The completed work on the first draft is a rather technical document aimed at a planning inspector showing how Colney Heath Neighbourhood Plan aligns with St Albans Local Plan which it must do in law.

The steering group has used this process to identify areas where additional policies are required to meet the needs of the parish.

The current work is drafting policies for two of the more challenging policy areas

- a) **Policies for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People**, this will include policies for new sites and the improvement of existing legal sites.
- b) **The methodology for assessing Green Belt sites for development**. The parish already has a number of sites proposed for development by landowners and developers, this is the most critical part of the neighbourhood plan so if the parish is required to find additional homes the methodology is already in place.

As the assessment process is one of the most difficult and has resulted in legal challenges elsewhere the work is being done with great care to avoid any bias, which could result in a legal challenge to our neighbourhood plan.

Currently the parish is not required to find any additional sites, but this could change if the St Albans Local Plan fails to meet its housing numbers. This could be if any of the strategic sites are undeliverable or there is a shortfall in windfall sites.

As these are two of the difficult and politically sensitive policy areas the parish council will be consulted once a draft is completed.

The steering group regularly considers the implications to the parish from

- 1) neighbouring councils emerging plans particularly, Welwyn Hatfield and Hertsmere;
- 2) associated issues affecting the Parish e.g. Ellenbrook, the Garden Village,
- 3) changes to national planning policy (NPPF) through regular update

Mike Rawlins
25 November 2019