

## **BLABY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

### **General Information Statement about the Planning System, Neighbourhood Plans and the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan Referendum**



This statement has been produced to ensure that voters, in the Referendum on the **Blaby Neighbourhood Plan [Thursday 1 February 2017]**, have sufficient knowledge to make an informed decision on the referendum question. It sets out a brief summary of the Town and Country Planning System and the role of Neighbourhood Plans.

## **The Town and Country Planning System**

Planning involves making decisions about the future of our cities, towns and countryside and considering the sustainable needs of future communities. Most new buildings, major changes to existing buildings or major changes to the local environment need some form of planning consent. Without a planning system everyone could construct buildings or use land in any way they wanted, no matter what effect this would have on other people who live and work in, or visit, the area.

Blaby District Council, as the local planning authority, is responsible for making decisions on whether applications for planning permission are appropriate. The starting point for decision making is the development plan unless material considerations, such as national planning policy and guidance, indicate otherwise.

## **National Planning Policy and Guidance**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012. The framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England to assist local planning authorities in drawing up local plans and on making decisions on planning applications. This includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The full Planning Practice Guidance was launched in March 2014. It is a web based resource which contains planning guidance to support the delivery of the aims and objectives of the NPPF.

More information regarding national planning policy and guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

## **The Development Plan**

Development Plans are made up of planning policy documents which help to guide development within a local planning authority area. They set out detailed planning policies, which planning officers use to make their decisions on planning applications.

Local planning authorities, such as Blaby District Council, must prepare a local plan for their area which sets out the opportunities for development and clear policies on what will or will not be permitted, and where.

In February 2013, Blaby District Council adopted the Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy) Development Plan Document as the first part of its Local Plan for the District. The Local Plan (Core Strategy) sets out the overarching strategy and policies for the District up to 2029.

The second part of the Local Plan for Blaby District will be the Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan Document. This identifies specific land-use development allocations and policy designations. It also sets out a detailed series of development

management policies against which planning applications will be assessed. This document is expected to be adopted by the District Council towards the end of 2018.

More information regarding the Blaby District Local Plan is available at: <http://www.blaby.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-plans-policies/environment-and-planning/local-plan/>

## **Neighbourhood Planning**

Neighbourhood Planning was introduced under the 2011 Localism Act to give members of the community a more hands on role in the planning of their neighbourhoods. It introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development in their local area by coming together to prepare neighbourhood plans.

Neighbourhood plans enable communities to develop a shared vision for their area and deliver the sustainable development they need through planning policies relating to the development and use of land.

Neighbourhood plans can be prepared by Parish Councils or neighbourhood forums (in areas not covered by a Parish). The scope/range of planning related topics which the neighbourhood plan covers can be decided by the local community. The plan must however, meet the following 'Basic Conditions':

- have regard to national planning policy and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area (i.e. the local plan); and
- be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.

Once drafted, a neighbourhood plan is required to undergo an independent examination. The appointed examiner will check that the neighbourhood development plan meets the basic conditions. The examiner will produce a report stating whether any modifications should be made to the plan and whether it should proceed to referendum stage. This is to make sure that referendums only take place when neighbourhood plans are clear, deliverable and sustainable.

The Council then decides, having regard to the basic conditions and relevant legislation, whether to accept the recommendations of the examiner and proceed to referendum. In the case of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan, all residents registered to vote within the plan area over 18 years of age on 1 February and able to vote in local council elections will be eligible to vote in the referendum which will ask the following question:

*“Do you want Blaby District Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Blaby to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?”*

The plan will require at least 50% of the vote in the referendum voting in favour to take the plan forward. The local planning authority must 'make' (adopt) the plan as soon as reasonably practicable after the Referendum is held, if the vote is in favour of the plan.

Once made the neighbourhood plan forms part of the statutory development plan, it will be used in determining decisions on planning applications.

More information regarding neighbourhood planning is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>

### **Blaby Neighbourhood Plan**

The Blaby Neighbourhood Plan addresses the need for sustainable development within the parish of Blaby until 2029. It has been produced by the 'Your Blaby Steering Group', consisting of a mix of parish councillors and interested local residents, in consultation with the local community. It has been led and coordinated by Blaby Parish Council, with support from Blaby District Council.

The main issues addressed by the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan are the location of future development and identification of reserve housing sites should the need for further housing arise, the protection of the most valuable green spaces in the District, protection of Blaby's heritage, development in Blaby Town Centre and design principles.

The proposed version of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan underwent a period of statutory public consultation between 27 April and 8 June 2017. The plan was then subject to an Independent Examination. As part of this process the appointed Independent Examiner, Janet Cheesley, decided that a Public Hearing into the Neighbourhood Plan was not required.

Blaby District Council received the Examiner's Report into the Neighbourhood Plan in November 2017. In her report, the Examiner concludes that the Plan, subject to modifications, meets the Basic Conditions and should proceed to a Referendum based on the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan Area (i.e. the parish).

At its meeting on 12 December 2017, Blaby District Council approved the Examiner's recommended modifications to the Plan and approved that the amended Plan should proceed to Referendum.

The Examiner's Report on the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan is available at: <http://www.blaby.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-plans-policies/environment-and-planning/neighbourhood-planning/>

The Referendum on the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan will be held on 1 February 2017.