

Dec 14th 2012, by Town Clerk

Wivenhoe Town Council produced its Wivenhoe Town Plan in 2008. The plan was based on the results of a range of consultation activities in the community over the preceding two and a half years.

Specifically on Housing and Planning, the major issues affecting residents were:

- Limit further residential development and ensure the highest possible proportion of affordable and sheltered housing in any development that does take place.
- Maintain Coastal protection Belt status and protect the Green Break between Wivenhoe, the University of Essex and Colchester Town.
- Explore how residents' views can better be taken into account.

Since the publication of the Town Plan, the Government has introduced the Localism Act 2011. The Act has introduced the concept of neighbourhood planning.

Coupled with this is the need to refresh and update the Town Plan. In consequence, Wivenhoe Town Council has recently looked again at the Town Plan and wishes to pursue the advantages of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Briefly, a Neighbourhood Plan is a new type of Community Led Plan. Communities now have a right to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, setting out policies on the development and use of land in a parish or neighbourhood area. Once a plan is made, it will become part of the local authority (CBC) development plan, a statutory plan against which planning applications will be judged. A Neighbourhood Plan might also result in a Neighbourhood Development Order which will grant planning permission for specific development proposals. For Neighbourhood Plans to be adopted, they will need to conform to planning policies and guidelines at the local, national and European level.

They will also need to demonstrate support from the local community through a referendum.

Developing a Neighbourhood Plan can help communities to play a greater role in determining the future for their area. It gives communities an opportunity to shape what the planned growth will look like and where additional growth might go.

Clearly, the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan will need to involve the community at large and will be a valuable undertaking for the future. The process will most likely take a couple of years and will need input from interested people, groups and societies.

As a first step the Council will need to: a) prepare a list of local contacts; b) get the community on board; and c) establish a Steering Group. Any body with an interest in establishing a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is invited to register their interest with the Town Clerk.