

Thurlestone Parish Neighbourhood Plan

The concept of Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 which swept away the regional planning apparatus and strategies and "sought to set out a series of measures with the potential to achieve a substantial shift in power away from central government and towards local people"

The next year the Government introduced the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which replaced the huge body of national planning policies, which has accumulated, with a comparatively short and simple statement of government planning policy. Local planning authorities (in our case the South Hams District Council) were required to produce policies for their local areas to reflect this new national policy which included a "presumption in favour of sustainable development." In accordance with this directive the South Hams District Council are in the process of producing a new District Plan to replace the present District Plan which expires in 2016. This new District Plan is called "Our Plan" to indicate that, as a result of extensive consultation, it is intended to represent the views and aspirations of all of the people in the district.

Our parish now has the right, in common with all towns and parishes, under this legislation to produce its own Neighbourhood Plan which, provided it fits in with the emerging policies of the new District Plan and the NPPF and is adopted by a majority of the parish in a formal Referendum, will be adopted as planning policy and will be implemented by the planning officers when considering applications in the parish. Neighbourhood Plans cannot prevent development which would be permitted under National or District Policies but can influence where that development should take place.

A committee with a nucleus of parish councillors under the chairmanship of Tony Goddard has since November 2014 year started to work towards developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Thurlestone, building on the Parish Plan which was produced under the chairmanship of Kit Marshall in 2010 and mirroring the elements of the District Plan. The application to designate the Thurlestone parish area as a Neighbourhood Plan Area was approved on the 24th April. The committee is now considering the policies of the new District Plan as they emerge from the Strategic Planning Department and familiarising themselves with the policies of the NPPF.

It is absolutely essential that the community engages with the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

For that purpose the committee will be arranging public meetings, the first in the Parish Hall on the evening of Tuesday 29th September, which it is hoped will be very well attended. That meeting will not merely explain the importance of the Plan but how it is hoped the parish will contribute to the formulation of the policies in the Plan. In particular it will introduce the Survey that is to be circulated both by way of hard copy and on the new parish website that is currently being developed but will not go "live" until later in the year. That Survey will pose a number of questions designed to canvass the views of the parish as to how the parish should develop in the future.

The present committee consists of only 10 people and could benefit from additional members. It is also important that it represents all elements and ages in the parish. The present committee mainly represents the older generation who, being mainly retired, have the time to devote to the project. The committee is however very anxious to increase its representation from the younger working generation and very much hope that either at the meeting or preferably before it some of the younger generation will feel able to volunteer to join the committee.

Tony Goddard, Chairman Neighbourhood Plan Committee.