

## **Strategic Approach to site allocation**

### **What happens?**

The local authority identifies and allocates specific housing sites so that the minimum number of dwellings required in its Local Plan is delivered on those sites, ensuring that they have certainty that the overall number across its area will be delivered. Allocating sites does *not* mean that no other development will come forward on other sites.

### **Implications**

1. The local authority has to go through consultation and statutory requirements to get proposals adopted ('agreed'). Therefore, the neighbourhood plan process can be used to influence the location of the housing sites.
2. The necessary Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is done by the local authority.
3. The resources and expertise needed to make the allocations is already in place to ensure that the local authority's 'strategic' quantum of housing development is deliverable. There is no additional resource or time burden placed on the parish council or neighbourhood plan steering group.
4. The neighbourhood plan can still have policies which set the local 'ground rules' for things like the design, density and other standards for allocated housing and also 'criteria based' policies for helping to determine the suitability or not of planning application proposals for development if submitted on sites which have not been allocated.
5. Working with the local authority to allocate housing sites in the Local Plan or accompanying Development Plan Document (DPD) can save a neighbourhood plan steering group a lot of time and resource, particularly if the process of understanding development site opportunities and constraints is already underway.

## **Local Approach to site allocation**

### **What happens?**

The local community decides that it would like to allocate housing sites in its neighbourhood plan, rather than leave it to the local authority. The numbers cannot be lower than those identified in the Local Plan for the area, but the neighbourhood plan can increase them if supported by evidence.

### **Implications**

1. It is likely to take longer to do, if the plan includes housing allocations.
2. It will require additional focused consultation on housing sites to consider development options.
3. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will need to be done (or commissioned) by the neighbourhood plan steering group.
4. Undertaking an SEA is likely to require additional time, resource and / or expertise to ensure it is robust and capable of resisting challenge by developers or other stakeholders (see case study boxes over the page).
5. An SEA has to meet certain procedural requirements (e.g. local authority 'screening opinion', 'scoping' report, 6 week consultation with Government Agencies...).
6. Allocating sites can 'put you in the driving seat' when it comes to identifying preferred locations for housing, although the outcomes may not be any different to those reached if the local authority undertakes the allocations process.
7. The steering group needs to be prepared to 'take the rough with the smooth' when it comes to discussing views on housing with the community.

## **Criteria-Based Approach to site allocation**

### **What happens?**

Neither the local planning authority nor the neighbourhood plan allocates specific housing sites. Policies are set to protect areas of the parish and/or settlements which have particular social, environmental or economic value or importance to the community which can then be used to protect areas from inappropriate development. They will be used by those determining planning applications to assess the suitability of proposals and can help to guide development to appropriate locations if proposals come forward during the lifetime of the plan.

### **Implications**

1. You will need to have robust evidence to support any policies or designations you wish to have in the neighbourhood plan.
2. It should be quicker to produce your plan if you do not set development allocations but develop criteria based policies.
3. You can focus on as few or as many of the topics that are important to you and your community.
4. You have a local set of planning 'rules' to make sure that if development does take place in your parish, that it is in the places where you will find it more acceptable and will be of a type, scale and form that the community approves. You can use your policies to support your comments in response to planning applications.
5. An SEA is very unlikely to be required, but a SA should still be done to test the impact of your policies.
6. You can give your Village Design Statement real 'teeth' (or 'weight') by having a policy which requires it to be seriously taken into account

