

TITLE	Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 25 January 2018
WARD	Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe
DIRECTOR	Interim Director of Environment, Josie Wragg Director of Corporate Services, Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Highways, Councillor David Lee

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The designation as a neighbourhood area will enable Ruscombe Parish Council to lead on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan that will help to influence development decisions across the parish.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Executive agree that Ruscombe Parish is designated as a Neighbourhood Area

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Ruscombe Parish Council wishes to prepare a neighbourhood plan. The neighbourhood plan would outline locally produced planning policies which would influence planning decisions alongside Wokingham Borough Council's planning policies.

Ruscombe Parish Council submitted an application to be designated a Neighbourhood Plan Area, the first step in the process. Consultation on the proposal was undertaken between Monday 11th December 2017 and Friday 12th January 2018 with a total of 8 responses received. None of the representations received objected to the designation or raise substantive issues. It is therefore recommended that Ruscombe Parish is designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Background

Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area and shape its development and growth. Through a Neighbourhood Plan, communities are able to write planning policies to influence where new homes, shops and offices should be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided. A draft Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Council's development plan (the Core Strategy 2010 and the Managing Development Delivery Document 2014). Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been through an independent examination and a successful referendum, it can be adopted by the Council and forms part of its development plan. The Neighbourhood Plan can then be used to make decisions on planning applications.

Where communities wish to take up the opportunities offered by Neighbourhood Plans, they must first apply to the local authority to be designated as a Neighbourhood Planning Area. In areas with parish or town councils the application can be made by

these organisations although in the preparation of the plan they are expected to work with the wider community.

Ruscombe Parish Council

Ruscombe Parish Council wish to prepare a neighbourhood plan covering the entirety of their administrative area and have submitted the necessary application to be designated as a neighbourhood plan area. In line with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (as amended 2015), Wokingham Borough Council published the application for a 5 week period between Monday 11th December 2017 and Friday 12th January 2018.

Representations received

A total of 8 representations were received. A table summarising the consultation responses can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

None of the representations received objected to the designation or raise substantive issues. A number directed Ruscombe Parish Council to guidance that will be helping in future stages of plan preparation.

Recommendation

It is considered that the application from Ruscombe Parish Council satisfies the requirements of the Localism Act (2011) and Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012 (as amended). The area proposed for designation, being the entire parish of Ruscombe, is considered to form a logical neighbourhood plan area. When considering the above and the nature of the representations received, it is recommended that the Neighbourhood Planning Area designation be approved.

If Wokingham Borough Council decides to designate the Neighbourhood Planning Area then WBC must publish on the website (as a minimum) the following:

- the name of the neighbourhood area;
- a map identifying the area; and
- the name of the relevant body (Ruscombe Parish Council) who applied for the designation

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Zero	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£5,000 grant from the DCLG once designation made (can be claimed in June 2018).	Yes	Revenue

Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Zero	Yes	Revenue
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Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

There is currently funding made available by DCLG to support the first 5 designated areas, at £5,000 per plan. Shinfield, Arborfield & Barkham and Remenham have already been designated and Ruscombe will be the fourth area to be designated if the recommendation is agreed.

In addition, the government currently provides a grant of £20,000 for each plan that reaches referendum stage. However, it is unclear whether this will be available in subsequent years. This is to cover officer time and the cost of running a referendum.

Whilst we are currently meeting the demands on officer time through existing resources, we will have to find the cost of any referendum, should this funding no longer be available.

The budget is based on what we know at this point of time. Further issues, including any arising from new legislation, could have financial implications.

Cross-Council Implications

Continued support of the Neighbourhood Development Plan that Ruscombe Parish Council are progressing.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/a

List of Background Papers

Ruscombe Parish Council application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Plan Area
 Ruscombe Parish Neighbourhood Plan Area Map
 Appendix 1: Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan Area designation – Table of consultation responses

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