

TITLE	St Nicholas Hurst Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 29 th March 2018
WARD	Hurst;
DIRECTOR	Director of Corporate Services - Graham Ebers Interim Director of Environment - Josie Wragg
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning- David Lee

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The designation as a neighbourhood area will enable St Nicholas Hurst 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 St Nicholas Hurst Parish is designated as a Neighbourhood Area.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

St Nicholas Hurst 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.

St Nicholas Hurst 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 Wednesday 14 February 2018 and Friday 16 March 2018 with 10 responses received. The responses did not give rise to any substantive issues regarding the appropriateness of the designation. It is therefore recommended that St Nicholas Hurst 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 is then used to make decisions on planning applications within that Neighbourhood Area.

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.

St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council

St Nicholas Hurst 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 4 week period between 14 February 2018 and 16 March 2018.

Representations received

A total of 10 representations were received. A table summarising the consultation responses can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

None of the representations received raise substantive issues which would suggest that St Nicholas Hurst Parish should not be designed as a neighbourhood plan area. A number directed St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council to guidance that will be helpful for future stages of plan preparation and a couple suggested support for certain types of development within the plan area, which will be considered in future stages of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Recommendation

It is considered that the application from St Nicholas Hurst 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 St Nicholas Hurst, 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 (St Nicholas Hurst 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 MHCLG once designation made (can be claimed in June 2018).	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Zero	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

There is currently funding made available by MHCLG (formerly DCLG) to support the first 5 designated areas within a Borough, at £5,000 per plan. Shinfield; Arborfield & Barkham; Remenham; and Ruscombe have already been designated. St Nicholas Hurst will be the fifth area, and therefore last for which funding is available, to be designated.

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 grant is to cover officer time and the cost of running a referendum which we believe will be fully covered by the £20,000 grant.

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 St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council are progressing.

List of Background Papers
Appendix 1 – Table of consultation responses for St Nicholas Hurst Neighbourhood Area St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Plan Area St Nicholas Hurst Parish Neighbourhood Plan Area Map

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