

Appendix 2: Briefing note on progress with Neighbourhood Plans.

Responsibility for Neighbourhood Plans has been transferred to Chris Berry, Consultant assisting Spatial Policy. Cheryl Parks is assisting with one day per week spent on support. Advice and specialist input is still being provided by Tony Fullwood Associates, notably regarding the Strategic Environmental Assessment requirements and compliance matters.

The furthest advanced plan is that of North Loose -their plan is currently at Regulation 16 consultation (the final stage before examination). Previously the plan had been through the regulatory stages and had reached examination, whereupon a procedural error was discovered relating to the length of the consultations carried out. To ensure compliance with regulations, MBC advised North Loose to re-run both its Reg. 14 and Reg. 16 consultations before returning to examination so as to ensure no opportunity for challenge at a later date. (The council's response to the current consultation is the subject of the main report.) Throughout the process, officers have been in regular discussion with the forum to ensure a smooth and practicable approach to the issue, and to expedite progress toward referendum whilst ensuring compliance with regulatory process.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, we are in receipt of an application for area designation from Bearsted Parish Council. There has been positive dialogue with the parish and advice has been offered by officers regarding the opportune timing of the consultation, and on how and where MBC can best assist in the processes of plan making.

A large number of other parishes are progressing plans, at varying stages of the regulations. Officers are making contact with those involved to ensure there is an awareness of personnel changes at MBC and to gain an understanding of aspirations and issues for each. The current position for each is summarised in the table attached. For all parishes / forums officers have been in regular contact and available for assistance. Meetings are offered as appropriate to discuss issues and progress, and ways forward for plans.

In terms of available support, we have been able to offer general and more specialised advice, assistance with printing of materials and in running the consultations. This will continue. More widely, consideration of the emerging plans has helped shaped revisions to the Local Plan which will be the subject of consultation at Reg. 18 and later at Reg. 19.