

ADOPTION OF THE FORDHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Committee: Full Council

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[T165]

1.0 **ISSUE**

1.1 Following the successful referendum on 8 November 2018, the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan needs to be formally 'made' by East Cambridgeshire District Council and thereby form part of the Development Plan (alongside the Local Plan) for East Cambridgeshire. Please note that the word 'made' is the word used in legislation when referring to Neighbourhood Plans, and means to all intents and purposes 'adopted'.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 That the Council:

- (A) congratulates Fordham Parish Council on its preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and a successful referendum outcome, becoming the first parish council to do so in East Cambridgeshire; and
- (B) formally makes the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan (as attached at Appendix 1) part of the Development Plan for East Cambridgeshire with immediate effect.

3.0 **BACKGROUND/OPTIONS**

3.1 At the Parish Council's request, the Fordham Neighbourhood Area was designated by East Cambridgeshire District Council in December 2017. This paved the way for a Neighbourhood Plan to be prepared.

3.2 Following preliminary consultation and evidence gathering, the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to the Council by Fordham Parish Council in May 2018. As required by legislation, the District Council then published the Plan, for the purpose of final consultation, in May and June 2018. Following the publication period, the District Council submitted the Plan for independent examination. The examination was held in July and August 2018 and was carried out through written representations. No public hearing session was required.

3.3 The examiner's report concluded that, subject to recommended modifications being followed (which were relatively minor in nature), the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan makes appropriate provision for sustainable development; has appropriate regard to national policy; is in general

conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area; and is compatible with EU obligations, including human rights requirements.

3.4 In September 2018, the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan was modified as per the examiner's recommendations. The District Council reviewed the modified plan, and was satisfied the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan meets the 'basic conditions' and other legal requirements, as detailed in the required Decision Statement (published 10 September 2018). Following publication of the Decision Statement, the Council proceeded to arrange a referendum.

3.5 The referendum was held on Thursday 8th November 2018, with voters in Fordham asked the following question (the question wording being set by legislation):

Do you want East Cambridgeshire District Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Fordham to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'

3.6 Of the 501 votes cast, 435 were in favour and 64 were against. Two ballot papers were rejected.

3.7 With 86.83% of votes in favour, the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan received the majority support it needed. Following the referendum result, the Neighbourhood Planning Act (2017) automatically gives the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan the same legal status as a plan which has been made (or 'adopted') by the applicable District Council. Accordingly, since the referendum result, the Council has treated the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan as part of the Development Plan for the purposes of decision-making.

3.8 However, despite this automatic post-referendum legal position, East Cambridgeshire District Council is required to formally 'make' the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan part of the Development Plan for the district. There is no known legal basis for Full Council to 'reject' (or in any way amend) the plan.

4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The Fordham Neighbourhood Plan received majority support at a duly made referendum held on 08 November 2018. The District Council is therefore required to 'make' the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan part of the Development Plan for East Cambridgeshire, as per the will of the majority of voters in Fordham. In doing so, legally it has the same status as the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this decision. Costs incurred to date by the District Council (for example, officer support and referendum costs) have been broadly covered by the fixed £25,000 grant payable to East

Cambridgeshire District Council by Government (a grant payable for each Neighbourhood Plan which reaches the referendum stage).

5.2 Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

6.0 APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix 1: Fordham Neighbourhood Plan

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Decision Statement	Room 12, The Grange, Ely	Edward Dade Strategic Planning Officer (01353) 616458 E-mail: edward.dade@eastcambs.gov.uk