

Braishfield Neighbourhood Plan Frequently asked questions (“FAQs”)

The following note seeks to provide answers to typical questions that arise out the Neighbourhood Plan process. We hope that you find it useful.

However, if you have any further queries, or questions, please feel free to contact us (np@Braishfield.org) and we will seek to provide a reply which will be included in an updated version of the following note.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan (“a Neighbourhood Plan” / “the Neighbourhood Plan”) is a planning document which is a material consideration in determining planning applications. As such, once adopted, it will sit below the Test Valley District Council (TVBC) Local Plan (‘LP’) and planning decisions made by TVBC will have to pay regard to it. The local community can rely on a Neighbourhood Plan when responding to planning applications and so it can help shape the future of Braishfield.

It has greater legal status than a Village Design Statement (“VDS”) and outlines policies for how and where any development can take place. When making planning decisions TVBC will have to pay regard to the Neighbourhood Plan. So it is an important document. However, it is important to note that the Neighbourhood Plan can only be used to set out planning policies and as such has to comply with current national policy and local plan policy.

The existing VDS (which can be viewed here [...]) will sit alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.

Neighbourhood planning was introduced in the Localism Act of 2011. It is a means by which local communities have statutory powers to shape how their communities develop.

Basically, a Neighbourhood Plan is:

- It is a document that sets out planning policies for the local area, in our case the Civil Parish of Braishfield;
- It is built on a base of evidence from local residents and the local authority;
- It is written by residents of the community who understand the local needs;
- Local planning authorities and planning inspectors considering planning applications must make their decisions in accordance with the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, unless material considerations require them to act

otherwise. Thus, it is a means of helping to ensure that the community gets the right types of development, in the right places, that they want.

However, it should be noted that the NP should complement the LP and provide additional policies to support the aims of the LP. At present the LP defines the settlement boundary of Braishfield which accepts that certain development within that area is acceptable in principle, but that the majority of development outside the settlement boundary is not acceptable. The NP will seek to complement the LP by reinforcing these policies where appropriate.

How will the Neighbourhood Plan be created?

1. The initial and most important step is to gather the opinions of residents on how they would like to see Braishfield develop. This step has now been undertaken – in the Residents Survey in July and August 2023 [which can be viewed here];
2. These opinions will be combined with other information, such as demographic data from the Test Valley Borough Council. The resulting data is referred to as the 'Evidence Base';
3. Policies will be created in line with the Evidence Base and published in a draft Neighbourhood Plan document on which the community will be consulted;
4. The final version of the Neighbourhood Plan will in due course be put to a referendum of local residents;
5. If agreed by a majority of local residents an independent Inspector, appointed by the Govt will review the NP and decide whether it can be adopted. However, the Inspector may reject the NP or suggest alterations;
6. The NP will then be adopted by TVBC and then used in the development control process.

Who is on the steering group and how were they appointed?

A steering group of volunteers has been formed and, along with professional advisors, will seek to create a Neighbourhood Plan. If anyone else would like to join the steering group, please contact np@Braishfield.org. They would be very welcome.

The Steering Group, of volunteers, was appointed by the Braishfield Parish Council.

Current members are:

- Mark Sennitt (chair)
- Mark Sands (secretary)
- Mike Allen
- Maggie Batchelor

- Brian Luff
- Peter Quarendon
- Mark Tydeman

As well as the members of the steering group, a wider group of residents have, in response to the survey, offered to volunteer to assist with aspects of the process and they will be involved as the need and opportunity arises. Anyone wishing to volunteer to assist the steering group should contact np@Braishfield.org.

What are the benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan?

Local planning authorities and planning inspectors considering planning applications must make their decisions in accordance with the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, unless material considerations require them to act otherwise. Thus, it is a means of ensuring the community gets the right types of development, in the right places, that they want. Developers considering sites in Braishfield should be aware of policy advice and will be likely to consult the Neighbourhood Plan before making any planning applications.

Who is promoting the Neighbourhood Plan?

In June 2022, the Braishfield Parish Council sent out a survey to local residents asking them to decide whether or not they should embark on creating a Neighbourhood Plan. Of those who voted there was a 4 to 1 majority in favour of creating one. As a result the Braishfield Parish Council appointed a steering group, of volunteers, to put together a Neighbourhood Plan, reporting to the Braishfield Parish Council.

What say do I have in the Neighbourhood Plan?

Local residents and businesses were asked to provide their input through a Survey which was carried out in the late Spring of 2023. The results of the Survey were presented to a public meeting in December 2023 and a summary is available at [.]. These results will form much of the Evidence Base for the Neighbourhood Plan itself. However, input continues to be welcomed from any interested party, either by joining the Steering Group or volunteering to assist with elements of the process to complete the Neighbourhood Plan (contact np@braishfield.org). Many of those who volunteered assistance when completing the Survey will be invited to help at the appropriate time.

The final version of the Neighbourhood Plan will be presented to local residents who will then be invited to vote at a formal referendum to either approve or reject the Neighbourhood Plan. No date has yet been set for the referendum to take place.

What stage is the Neighbourhood Plan at?

The Survey has been completed, the results of the Survey have been collated and presented to residents (and can be viewed here [...]) and the Steering Group are now drafting policies which will be incorporated into the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

A guide to the process of creating a Neighbourhood Plan can be viewed here [...]. At present the Steering Group are at Stage 2.

There is no set timetable for progressing through the next stages. Progress will depend on a number of factors, including the time taken to draft the policies and the Neighbourhood Plan, collate further information needed to draft the Neighbourhood Plan, obtain input from external parties and, in due course, consult interested parties and the community.

When will the Neighbourhood Plan be approved?

The local community will be invited to vote on whether to adopt the NP in a referendum. If a majority of residents are in support of the NP an independent Inspector will review the NP and decide if it is sound. However, the Inspector might make suggestions to alter the NP or change or delete some policies before doing so.

What impact will the approved Neighbourhood Plan have?

Local Planning Authorities and Planning Inspectors considering planning applications must make their decisions in accordance with the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, unless material considerations require them to act otherwise. Thus, it is a means of helping to ensure that the community gets the right types of development, in the right places, that they want.

What issues can the Neighbourhood Plan not address?

The Neighbourhood Plan can only be effective in helping determine the future development of Braishfield through its impact on planning decisions. It is a planning document and can only address planning matters within the context of National and Local planning policy. It cannot directly affect other matters of concern to residents, such as the state of the roads or internet connectivity. However, the process of creating the Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity to identify such matters and to direct the attention of the Parish Council so that it can use its money and influence to address them, where possible.

What is the Local Plan?

The Local Plan is a legal document that sets out planning policies for the whole of Test Valley to include Braishfield. It is a tool to control/encourage development and in essence it seeks to direct new development, where appropriate to the existing settlements. With reference to Braishfield, Policy COM3 of the LP seeks to direct new development to the existing settlement– which is set out in a plan. The areas outside settlement boundary are subject to countryside policy that significantly restricts the scope of new development.

Central to the LP is the issue of Housing Land Supply ('HLS'). TVBC has to demonstrate it has enough housing for the next five years – failure to do so means that developers could submit applications for housing outside the settlement boundary. Such applications have previously been approved in TVBC.

TVBC is currently consulting on its new LP. Residents of Braishfield, alongside other residents of TVBC, have the opportunity of commenting on the Local Plan. The draft LP can be found on the following links:

1. [Draft Local Plan](#)
2. [TVBC map South](#)
3. [Inset maps \(including Braishfield\)](#)

Reference is drawn to the following policies/notes:

Special Strategy Policy 1 (SS1) refers to Settlement Hierarchy and identifies Braishfield as a Tier 3 village which allows for limited development, as follows:

- Windfalls;
- Rural affordable housing sites;
- Replacement dwellings;
- Community-led development;
- Small business uses;
- Re-use of buildings;
- Renewable energy development.

This is similar to the current local plan, which was approved in January 2016.

The housing markets are split between TVBC North and TVBC South.

TVBC South (the Southern part of the TVBC region, in which Braishfield sits) is, in the draft Local Plan, targeted to provide some 237 houses p.a. Of these, 282 rural houses are to be provided within the plan period (of around ten years) and these will be provided within Tier 3 (i.e. to include Braishfield) and Tier 4 settlements.

No reference is made to a specific requirement within Braishfield but SS5 (Neighbourhood Development Plan Housing Requirements) identifies villages of a similar size to Braishfield as having to provide a minimum of 10 dwellings over a period of ten years.

Where new Neighbourhood Plans are created, they will be required by TVBC to provide for a minimum number of dwellings – presumably in the order of 10 dwellings over a ten-year period.

What was the survey undertaken of Braishfield residents?

The Steering Group considered what information would be required from Residents in order to draft a Neighbourhood Plan, to include a number of issues they would welcome the views of Residents on. The Steering Group drafted a survey which was approved by the Braishfield Parish Council. The Survey was delivered to all properties in Braishfield in July 2023, as well as being available on line and in the Village Pantry. The Survey was promoted in the Braishfield Village News, through the Braishfield Village Network and by placing posters on notice boards around Braishfield.

The responses were collated by the Steering Group and the results of the Survey were presented to a public meeting in December 2023 and a summary is available at [.]. These results will form much of the Evidence Base for the Neighbourhood Plan itself.

Why did the survey seek input on issues which cannot be influenced by the Neighbourhood Plan?

The Resident's survey is a useful tool in order to establish the views of local residents on a wide range of issues that can be fed back to the Parish Council. New housing in Braishfield is often subject to Community Infrastructure Levy, (but not for self-build housing) part of which can be spent by the Parish Council on local projects.

The process of creating the Neighbourhood Plan is therefore an opportunity to identify matters of concern to residents and to bring them to the attention of the Braishfield Parish Council so that it can use its money and influence to address them, where possible.

The Steering Group wanted to understand the issues facing residents in the broadest sense and not only as regards planning issues. Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is about planning issues, the future development of Braishfield will affect residents in a broader range of ways.

What is housing land supply and how does that impact local planning decisions and the Neighbourhood Plan?

Local Planning Authorities, to include TVBC, are all required to demonstrate that they have enough housing land supply for the next five years. If that is not met, then there is a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. This in effect allows developers to propose speculative developments, i.e. developments on land which has not yet been identified as suitable for development. These planning applications will then be more difficult for TVBC to resist.

However, if TVBC cannot demonstrate a sufficient land then a Neighbourhood Plan will have a greater opportunity of influencing the form of speculative developments.

At the present time TVBC say that it has a strong housing land supply position which is extremely helpful in resisting inappropriate development in the countryside. However, housebuilders may challenge this at any time through the planning appeal process. An application may be forthcoming in the near future by Hilliers on Jermyns Lane – if so it would be an indication of whether the developers believe that TVBC cannot demonstrate an effective HLS.

Are local businesses involved in the process?

The Steering Group consider it important to involve local businesses in the process as Braishfield is a working village, with business parks, farms and equestrian businesses, as well as two public houses and people who work from home. The Survey did not result in many responses from businesses and the Steering Group are considering ways to better engage local businesses in the process.

Does TVBC have to take account of the Neighbourhood Plan (when it is approved)?

An approved Neighbourhood Plan has statutory status and a material consideration in the decision making process for planning applications. TVBC will therefore be required to have regard to it when making decisions on planning applications. However, as with the Local Plan, TVBC may make decisions contrary to policy if circumstances dictate.

However, there is also the process for objecting to any planning decision through the Braishfield Parish Council and Councillors. The Neighbourhood Plan should reinforce the Local Plan.

The Survey mentioned six protected open spaces – what is the position for other open spaces?

The open spaces which have not been identified as protected spaces are still very unlikely to be approved for development as a) they fall outside the Settlement Boundary and b) there is (at present) sufficient housing supply elsewhere. The protected spaces have though been identified as being of particular need for protection from development.

However, should TVBC not be able to demonstrate an effective HLS then open spaces, particularly those near or adjacent to the existing settlement could be vulnerable to speculative applications that could erode these open spaces.

Where can new properties be built in Braishfield?

Maps which can be viewed here [...] set out what is referred to as the Settlement Boundary. The broad presumption is that proposed developments in line with the Neighbourhood Plan and within the Settlement Boundary will, in principle, be approved and all others will not be approved. However successful applications will also have to comply with other relevant policies.

What are the next steps?

A guide to the process of creating a Neighbourhood Plan can be viewed here [...]. At present the Steering Group are at Stage 2, and so is drafting policies on a variety of issues which will form much of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. When those policies and other content has been drafted a draft Neighbourhood Plan will be considered by the Parish Council before being subject to a whole community and key stakeholder consultation for six weeks.

There is no set timetable for progressing through the next stages. Progress will depend on a number of factors, including the time taken to draft the policies and the Neighbourhood Plan, collate further information needed to draft the Neighbourhood Plan, obtain input from external parties and, in due course, consult interested parties and the community.