

Parish backs housing deal

Hurdle cleared as Odiham councillors approve Neighbourhood Plan with nine sites

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PARISH councillors have finally approved Odiham's Neighbourhood Plan.

The document, which sets out the vision for development over the next 17 years, was approved at an extraordinary meeting of Odiham Parish Council on Tuesday last week.

It now goes to Hart District Council for checking and will then go to an independent examiner before going back to the community for a full consultation.

Odiham Parish Council chairman Jon Hale said it was an 'honour and

pleasure' to present the Neighbourhood Plan, which covers Odiham, North Warnborough and RAF Odiham.

"It has taken two years to get to this point and hundreds of hours of work by our steering group of councillors and community volunteers," he added.

"The plan stems from the government's determination to provide the opportunity for local communities to become closely involved in the decisions which affect them.

"In the formal process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan that must be followed, the parish council has to bring it to the attention of the people who live, work or

carry on business within the parish, as well as any qualifying body that might be affected by it."

Cllr Hale said the final version of the plan will, following consideration by an independent examiner appointed by Hart, be subject to a local parish 'referendum'.

"If more than 50% of those voting in the referendum support the proposed plan, it will become adopted and a statutory document to be incorporated into the Hart district planning frameworks," he said.

"It will then be used by Hart to help determine future planning applications made up until 2032.

"However, if more than 50% voting in the referendum do not support the plan, Hart will conduct its own site allocation review to identify potential sites for development within our parish, as part of developing the overall Hart Local Plan."

Nine possible sites for housing have been included in the plan. Around 60 homes, or 30 homes plus a care home, could be built adjacent to Crownfields in Odiham.

Other sites earmarked for development are at 4 Western Lane, Odiham (20 homes), Hook Road, North Warnborough (15), Albion Yard and Roughts Cottage,

North Warnborough (both 12), Longwood, Odiham (10), Crumplins Yard, Odiham (eight), and land at The Swan Inn, North Warnborough (four).

Land at Dunleys Hill in North Warnborough has also been earmarked for homes, subject to agreeing an acceptable minimum to allow for the remainder to be designated as a public open space or Local Green Space.

Cllr Hale added: "Personally, I can think of no better place to live than within our parish.

"Odiham and North Warnborough are not only beautiful villages with a

wonderful community, but also both have a unique heritage and important place in history.

"Support for this plan will help to safeguard what we all love about where we live and ensure that any development and change in the years ahead will be worthwhile and help make a positive difference to the lives of local people and the future of our community."

Cllr Hale thanked members of the steering group who have worked tirelessly to produce the plan and every resident who provided comments.

To view the plan, see www.onwardplan.com/.

Anger at councillors' 17% rise

SENIOR Hart councillors have defended a decision to award themselves an inflation-busting 17.4% rise in their basic allowance.

Full council voted in the rise, proposed by an independent remuneration panel, last Thursday, July 28.

The three-member panel recommended increasing the basic allowance, which was last reviewed in 2011/12, from £3,885 to £4,561 for all 33 councillors.

After the meeting, council leader Stephen Parker said: "Councillors receive financial support in recognition of

the time, work and costs involved in representing the people of Hart. Allowances help ensure that people from all walks of life are able to take part in local politics.

"Providing financial support ensures that local democracy does not become the preserve of the privileged few who can afford to give their time for free."

But Fleet resident Christopher Riley, who listened to the debate, said he found the whole episode 'most disturbing'.

He said he could not accept a 17.4% increased could

be justified at a time when inflation is running at 0.5% per annum; the council has already identified in its medium-term outlook a funding deficit of £1.2million in the 2017/18 financial year; it is considering stopping the Council Tax Support scheme to save an estimated £40,000 per annum; and many of its staff have been granted rises of the order of 1% per annum over the last years of austerity.

Mr Riley pointed out that if each council sets its own allowances, it will not be long before the district that will be

at the bottom of the table (currently East Hampshire), will re-set its allowances to be higher than Hart.

"This reminds me of the game that the young traders play in the City of London, where they force their employers to keep leapfrogging their salaries until they are paid astronomical sums," he added.

"You may wish to seek the views of your district councillors on the appropriateness of this increase, and remind them that it's the council taxpayers' money that they are voting into their pockets."