

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REFERENDUM

Early next year, you'll get a chance to vote on the Broomfield Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) has been in the making since 2016. Soon (probably in February), the years of blood sweat and tears will be over. A polling card will land on your doormat telling you when and where you can vote - just like for an election. But instead of choosing an MP or local councillor, it will ask you to say 'yes' or 'no' to a question:



Do you want Chelmsford City Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Broomfield to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

So, what is a neighbourhood plan? And what's been going on in Broomfield?

What is a neighbourhood plan?

It's a plan by the local community for its own future. Government guidance says:

'Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to shape the development and growth of their local area. They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided'.

Without a NP, planning is decided at a Chelmsford district level or higher up. The Parish Council wanted our local Broomfield community to have a bigger say.

Consultation

Since 2016, there has been masses of consultation – open days, questionnaires, surveys, research, etc – to help decide what the Plan should say. You may remember coming to the Open Days or filling in comment forms 2 years ago, as part of our formal Parish Council consultation. The City Council also did another formal consultation earlier this year. In summary, this is **what you told us**:

You like or love:

- The countryside around Broomfield
- In particular, the tranquillity, openness, opportunity for recreation, natural break between settlements, wildlife and views
- Living in a village close to Chelmsford but feels separate, with its own sense of identity
- Broomfield's historic buildings and sense of heritage
- The existing community facilities, though nearly half of you would like to see more – particularly a GP surgery.



But you **don't like or hate**:

- The level of traffic and its impact on village life
- The lack of affordable housing
- 'Modernist' building styles, blocks of flats etc.



So, the Neighbourhood Plan is based on these views. It contains **planning policies**, which if agreed will be legally binding. Chelmsford planners will use them to decide if planning applications in Broomfield should be approved and, if so, under what conditions. It also contains **community actions and aspirations**. These are not part of the legally binding plan, but the Parish Council will seek to achieve them as opportunities and resources allow. Both the policies and the community actions are the result of what residents have said they want to see.

Conserving the Landscape around Broomfield

Because the countryside is clearly so important to residents, Broomfield's Neighbourhood Plan is deliberately a 'landscape-led plan'. It pays a lot of detailed attention to identifying what is so special about our countryside and to conserving and enhancing it. If the NP is voted down at the referendum, this focus would be lost. The Chelmsford Local Plan would continue to cover Broomfield and it also seeks to protect the countryside from inappropriate development. But as it covers the whole of Chelmsford District, it has to be more general and doesn't have the specific Broomfield focus which underpins our NP.

If passed at the Referendum, the Neighbourhood Plan will:

Protect the Best:

- The Settlement Gap between Broomfield village and the Chelmsford urban area, keeping the village separate and distinct
- Valued Landscapes, landscape character and important views
- Special pieces of land in and around the village. 15 places are to be protected as 'Local Green Spaces', which means they will be treated like Green Belt and are very unlikely to be developed. They range in size from the small green at Scot's Green up to the fields between Church Green and the Primary School.
- High quality agricultural land (most of the farmland around Broomfield)
- Street scene, with new guidelines and policy to ensure that new buildings blend in well with existing settings and styles

- Three historic parts of the village, which will become Special Character Areas
- Existing woodland, hedgerows and public rights of way.

Improve the Rest. The Plan proposes:

- New green spaces with public access: 1½ hectares south of Broomfield Place and 4 hectares east of Saxon Way (with access to the Anglo-Saxon Burial site)



- New cycle paths and footpaths to the east and the west of the village, so that you can cycle safely into the City Centre
- Traffic reduction measures along Main Road and on smaller roads

- New community facilities as needed, including if possible a GP surgery
- New hedgerows and woodland belts, especially around the City Council's big new development north of the Hospital
- A strategy to boost use of sustainable green energy
- A Community Land Trust to provide some **genuinely** affordable housing for **existing** Broomfield residents, in perpetuity. A small site is allocated for this and a GP surgery (if we can get agreement from the NHS).

Passing ‘the Examination’

Before they can be voted on, neighbourhood plans have to be ‘examined’ by an independent planning inspector to make sure they are in line with national policy and the City’s Local Plan. Fortunately, all the policies in the Broomfield’s NP got through – the only modifications required were about the wording of some policies to make them more clear and easier to apply.

To find out more:

Website: Go to www.broomfieldnp.org.uk . You can read the Plan and a lot more supporting information.

Open Day: We are planning to hold one or more Open Days in January. There will be displays showing the key features of the Plan; and people to ask if you have questions. Watch out for the dates.

Once the referendum is called, there should be **printed copies** of the Plan at Broomfield Library and the Parish Council Office in the Village Hall.

Questions: You can email any questions to planning@broomfield-pc.gov.uk or leave a note for us at the Parish Office. We’ll be glad to come back to you and clarify any puzzling bits.

Whatever your views, please remember to turn out and vote. The City Council will publish the date of the referendum in due course. Finally, thank you to all the residents and stakeholders who have filled in questionnaires, attended information events and read lots of ‘stuff’ over the last 8 years. We hope you like the final product!

Cllr John Blake
Chair of the Neighbourhood Steering Group

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