

What is the background?

Freshford and Limpley Stoke Parish Councils have decided to develop a Neighbourhood Plan which will provide a legal basis for residents to determine the future for our community - where and how we want to develop, and where we don't. The process includes the development within our communities of the Draft Plan, which is then submitted first to B&NES and Wiltshire Councils and then to an Independent Inspector. After any amendments which may be required, the Plan is submitted to a referendum across the two villages. If it is approved by a majority of residents, the Neighbourhood Plan gains legal force and must be reflected in any future planning decisions that affect our community. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us to take control over development in our two villages and we urge all residents to participate in the discussions. If you don't make your voice heard, how will we know what you want to happen? Working Groups have been set up to consider various aspects of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. They are detailed on this web site. Please contact the Neighbourhood Plan Co-ordinator, Ingrid Maher-Roberts, at ingrid.freshfordpc@gmail.com with any more general comments or queries.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is a new way of helping local communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live and work. Introduced by the Localism Act 2011 it provides a legal framework through which a community can be directly involved in shaping its own future. Proposals to have a Neighbourhood Plan are first proposed by the community and at a later stage are voted on in a Referendum by adult residents of the NP area.

What can a Neighbourhood Plan contain?

A Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision, aims, policies and proposals for the future development of a neighbourhood. It is about the use, development, and protection of land and can deal with a range of social, economic and environmental issues.

Here are some examples:

- The development of housing and its design including affordable housing and housing for the elderly.
- The provision for local businesses to be set up and/or to expand their premises
- Improving road safety for all users and improving local transport services
- Developing health facilities, and community facilities such as the village halls

- The protection and creation of open spaces, sports pitches and playgrounds.
- The promotion of renewable energy projects

If adopted, the Neighbourhood Plan is part of the statutory development plan for the area. This means that the local authority and planning inspectors will have to take the Plan into account when making planning decisions. It is therefore much more powerful than a Parish Plan because it has legal force.

How is the 'neighbourhood' defined?

For the purposes of the Plan the 'neighbourhood' has been defined as the two parishes of Freshford and Limpley Stoke. This area spans the county boundary. Both local authorities – Bath & North East Somerset and Wiltshire Councils - feel that this offers an interesting and unique opportunity to pilot joint-working between authorities and communities and have been fully supportive of the process. Soon public notice will be given of this proposal and residents will have the right to make representations on it.

Why did Freshford and Limpley Stoke decide to work together?

Because the two parishes are in effect one community divided by a county border and it makes sense to work together for the sake of all residents. Over the last few years both Parish Councils have successfully developed Parish Plans and have worked to give effect to the wishes of residents as expressed in the Parish Plans. The two Councils also continue to work together to improve road safety both on local roads and on the A.36 trunk road and to find suitable land for affordable housing. Alongside many others in the community the Councils have given support to help bring forward development proposals and community-led projects including the Galleries Shop and Café, the establishment of the Freshford and Limpley Stoke Community Association FLISCA and the Pre-School.

How was the decision taken to consider developing a Neighbourhood Plan?

It was during early discussions in October 2011 about the redevelopment of the Freshford Memorial Hall that it was suggested that the PCs should explore with the Prince's Foundation the opportunities arising under the Localism Act for communities to have a greater say in their own future. This led to the Community Workshop held on 31st January 2012, attended by some 150 residents, which was summarized in the ESHA report. The high attendance and the ideas generated from residents clearly showed the potential support for a Neighbourhood Plan. In November 2011, B&NES and Wiltshire Councils had applied on behalf of the two Parish Councils for a Front Runner Grant from the Department for Communities and

Local Government to progress the Neighbourhood Plan. The two Parish Councils received confirmation of the Grant in March 2012.

Who is running the development of the Neighbourhood Plan?

The legal responsibility for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan rests with the two parish councils. There is a Management Council, which comprises three Limpley Stoke Parish Councillors – Simon Coombe, Peter Wyatt and Margaret Field – and three Freshford Parish Councillors – Nick Stevens, Roger Paine and Andrew Orme. The Management Council is supported by a Clerk and Co-ordinator Ingrid Maher Roberts. There are also quarterly meetings of a Steering Group which comprises the Management Committee plus senior planning Officers of B&NES and Wiltshire Councils.

Who develops the ideas and proposals that go into the Plan?

The process started with the Community Workshop held on 31st January 2012 which generated ideas from around 150 residents of the two Parishes. These ideas were summarised in the ESHA Report – see Key Documents on the website. The thinking is being taken forward by four Working Groups of residents which are meeting frequently over the summer. A public meeting was held on 26th June 2012 to encourage people to put themselves forward as members of one or other of the Working Groups. Details of the Working Groups, their Chairmen and members and summaries of their discussions are shown on this website.

Does the ESHA Report reflect the views of the Parish Councils?

No. ESHA were brought in by the Prince's Foundation to facilitate discussion and get the process going. The fact that 150 residents participated in the workshop demonstrates the value of this exercise. ESHA then listed the points made during the workshop, as an aide memoire for any future discussion. It was not ESHA's job to evaluate or filter the ideas and it is clear that, of the thoughts they recorded, many are not practicable while others do not reflect the interests and aspirations of residents. The four Working Groups are now taking forward the discussion to arrive at balanced, practical proposals that would be widely supported within the community.

If I'm not on a Working Group, can I still have a say?

We would be delighted if you would. If you have comments or ideas about a particular topic, simply contact the Chairman of the appropriate Working Group by

email or contact any member of the Group in person. They would be pleased to have your contribution.

How can I keep in the picture as the development of the Plan progresses?

As far as possible we will be updating the information shown on this site so keep checking back on a regular basis. If you haven't yet signed up for the Community Email Database, please do so as this is another method we will use to keep residents posted. Above all, if you have particular questions, please ask. Chairmen of the Working Groups will be pleased to respond to queries; there will be regular Neighbourhood Plan clinics in Limpley Stoke and Freshford Village Halls and we plan a mobile display which will visit locations throughout the villages.

What are the steps that have to be taken before the Plan can have effect?

Once the Plan has been prepared by the community then

- First it must be circulated for public consultation to such bodies as the Environment Agency and English Heritage
- Then it is submitted to the local authorities for a final check
- An independent examiner will scrutinise it to see that the Plan is in general conformity with the Local Plans of the two Authorities –B&NES and Wiltshire Councils.
- If all is well the community Referendum takes place and if supported (and see below)
- The Neighbourhood Plan is adopted by the two Authorities

This process is likely to take until the Spring of 2015.

What is it costing residents of Freshford and Limpley Stoke?

Nothing. The Community Workshop run by ESHA was supported by The Prince's Trust and the ongoing expenses of the project are being met out of the Front Runners Grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government.