

# NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



## Progress Report

Following the village survey early in the year, the creation of working groups and the offer of a grant from Locality to engage a consultant, work on the Neighbourhood Plan is well underway.

The survey produced a very positive response. People who call the village home tend to stay in the village, some for over 50 years. However, this has resulted in an aging population and there is a desire to achieve a more balanced demographic. The overwhelming reason people like Riding Mill is the easy access to surrounding countryside, the green spaces, the rural atmosphere and the good transport links. Through the *Policies and Community Actions* within our Neighbourhood Plan, we want to preserve the character of the village, whilst addressing concerns that have been evident since the last Parish plan, prepared in 2002. Riding Mill has a strong sense of community and this will be at the heart of the vision of our plan. There was, and still is, a desire to provide some affordable housing, as well as making it easier for people to move to smaller houses within the village as long as the wonderful green spaces surrounding the village are protected. Much of this is safeguarded by green belt status. This has ensured that the village has

been protected from urban sprawl and has helped to maintain its identity and separation from other settlements, as well as providing an important habitat for wildlife.

To develop the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council has facilitated the establishment of six working groups and delegated authority to a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, which will guide and agree the content of the plan up to Consultation Draft stage. The six groups cover Built Environment, Natural Environment, Transport, Renewable Energy & Climate Change, Health & Wellbeing, and the Local Economy.

To give you some idea of the progress and ideas so far:

### **Built Environment:**

Through the government's support package, we have commissioned a housing needs assessment, undertaken by Aecom, which will build on the survey feedback. The results are expected shortly and will inform our policies. The Northumberland Local Plan identifies Riding Mill as a service village. Therefore, it is expected that we will provide some new housing at a level proportionate to the village. The Neighbourhood Plan will identify planning policies which will require that any new housing to be provided where there is a need, has minimal impact on the green belt, maintains our rural character, is sustainable, and in line with our design code. A list of heritage sites and possible small



*Residents value the good transport links*

## COMMUNITY EVENT

Residents' views are key to the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and we therefore want to obtain feedback to our proposals as we complete each stage.

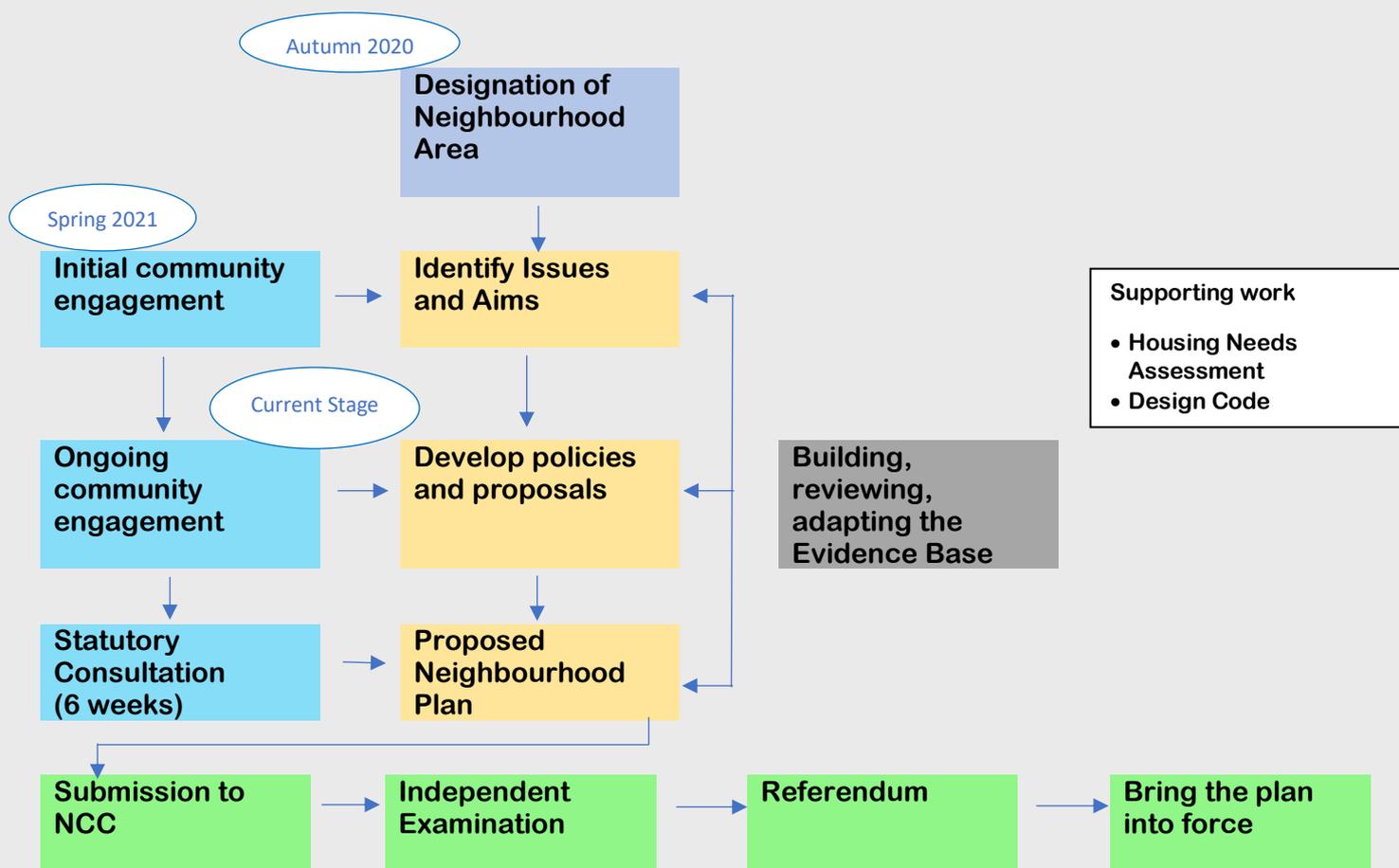
Our first community event will be held on

**SATURDAY 13<sup>TH</sup>  
NOVEMBER**

in the Millennium Hall from  
10 am - 3 pm

We hope that you will join us and share your thoughts.

## The Neighbourhood Plan Process



housing sites is being prepared and will be available shortly for comment and discussion.

### Natural Environment:

Tree coverage in the parish is estimated at 18 per cent. Whilst this compares well to Northumberland as a whole at 8 per cent, the European average is 37 per cent and the world average is 30 per cent. Our aim is to increase tree cover in new developments and on surrounding land. We want to create green areas around any new housing, with a minimum percentage of tree canopy cover as well as preserving natural woodland and meadows, creating new meadows where feasible and identifying green spaces to be protected that are not

already afforded such protection in the Local Plan.

### Health & Wellbeing:

Along with the Natural Environment group, we want to protect the rural character of the parish from the impact of any development and, wherever possible, enhance the landscape, the biodiversity, footpaths and bridleways. We support the County Council in trying to regain the riverside walk to Corbridge and hope to encourage the widening of the pedestrian route to Stocksfield. We want to encourage greater use of the Sports Club with a wider range of residents and will encourage its use by the school and scouts/cubs.

**Transport:** Through *community actions* identified in the plan, we will seek to reduce the negative impact of road traffic in the village. Traffic monitoring tapes were installed in the village earlier this year and have given us a good idea of the volumes of traffic passing through the village. Speed reduction measures are being discussed. Parking on streets is a particular concern in the village, to which we have not yet been able to find a resolution. Electric charging points will be considered. We will seek to ensure that the existing rights of way for walkers and cyclists are safe, maintained and restored as necessary.

**Local economy:** We recognise the growth in home working and wish to ensure that local services, including improved broadband connectivity, meet the requirements of those choosing to spend more time working from home. Developments which provide an additional room downstairs, and close to an entrance, will be welcomed. Developments which make it relatively easy to add craft workshops to residential accommodation will be welcomed provided that they meet the requirements set out above for the built environment. The village recognises the value of the shop and the pub and we will act to protect their

current use including nominating them as assets of community value.

**Renewable energy & Climate Change:** It is proposed that the village adopts an ambitious, but necessary, objective in relation to climate change and renewable energy – we have declared a climate emergency, but this has to be more than words. We aspire to become a 'zero carbon' village by 2035, using the following objectives: firstly, aiming to reduce carbon emissions through effective built environment design; secondly, and especially for existing properties, encouraging reductions in energy use through efficiency measures; thirdly, through greater use of energy from renewable sources (which may include some local generation); and, lastly, if necessary compensating for carbon emissions, for example, through planting more trees and hedges. It is thus proposed, if feasible, that new buildings, and extensions requiring planning permission, be designed to minimise the use of energy and clean



*We want to increase tree cover as well as preserving natural woodland and meadows, creating new meadows where feasible.*



*We would like to see the footpath to Stocksfield widened to create a safe route for both pedestrians and cyclists. Cyclists would be able to link to the Hadrian cycleway at Bywell.*

water in anticipation of future requirements for carbon neutral works and applications.

Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan will focus specifically on planning policies, each of the groups are also considering *community actions* – actions that can improve the facilities in the village. Previous ideas, that are now coming to fruition, include the pedestrian crossing that will shortly be installed on the main road outside The Wellington, improvements to the Mill Pond area, and heritage trail boards that will be installed soon.

*We intend to illustrate all of the Neighbourhood Plan proposals at an exhibition to be held on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November in the Millennium Hall. If you are unable to join us, please use the response form on the next page to return any comments you may have at this stage. Please leave the form in the box at the Parish Hall. Anyone still wishing to participate should make themselves known to the Parish Clerk.*

### **Explanation of terms:**

The **Housing Needs Assessment** provides vital evidence to help understand the expected demand for housing in the parish over the plan period. It considers the need for affordable housing, and how this should be split into the different tenures; the type and size of dwellings required to develop a housing stock that is aligned with community

needs; including the needs of specialist groups, e.g. housing for the elderly.

What is **Affordable Housing**? Affordable housing is for people who cannot afford to buy or rent a home on the open market. Why might we want affordable housing in our village? House prices have outgrown incomes in recent years. People on low incomes - often undertaking key roles in the community such as

teaching assistants, farm workers or shop and pub staff - cannot afford to set up home in the village. This means that young people in particular are moving away with negative impacts on both themselves and the community. Social and family networks can break down whilst local services such as schools, public transport, shops and pubs become less viable. Affordable housing helps to sustain communities by

offering local people the chance to stay living in the place where they have strong connections.

The **Design Code** provides clarity on what is expected for any new development in an area. It should demonstrate good quality design ensuring developments respond to and integrate with local surroundings and landscape context as well as the existing built environment.

