

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REGULATION 14: CONSULTATION - FAQs

WHAT IS THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

The Neighbourhood Plan is a document which will help determine planning applications across South Woodham Ferrers. It is the first document of its kind to have been prepared for South Woodham Ferrers. It has been drawn up over the past three years by local people and is a result of extensive consultation and engagement. The Neighbourhood Plan has not been prepared by Chelmsford City Council, but will be used by them to help determine future planning applications in the area.

WHY HAS A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN BEEN PREPARED?

The purpose of the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan is to help improve the quality of life and environment for the community as a whole, and to identify how future change might bring benefits for the town, through delivery of new infrastructure and greenery for example. The Neighbourhood Plan is set in the context of the new Local Plan prepared by Chelmsford City Council. The Local Plan has set housing targets for new development in the town, and allocated land for development to the north of Burnham Road, which developers are now looking to bring forward and will consult upon separately. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to influence the form and quality of the new development. Importantly, because the Neighbourhood Plan has been produced with extensive input from the local community, it reflects local issues, concerns and aspirations. It has very real potential to influence change for the better – and more so than any other documents prepared before.

CAN'T THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN BE USED TO STOP DEVELOPMENT?

No. Government policy does not allow this, it has to plan for the amount of new development set by Chelmsford City Council. But, the Neighbourhood Plan can be used to make sure that future development in South Woodham Ferrers brings as many benefits as possible to the town.

WHAT DOES THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO?

It gives local residents a say in planning decisions and sets out policies which will be used by Chelmsford City Council to determine planning applications. It covers a large number of important local issues including housing, design, business, transport and green space. It also allows the local community to benefit from a larger percentage of payments via the Community Infrastructure Levy.

AREN'T THERE ALREADY POLICIES IN THE CHELMSFORD LOCAL PLAN FOR SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS?

Chelmsford City Council has been preparing a new Local Plan for the entire district. This identifies land for development to the north of Burnham Road, which will be subject to masterplanning by the developers. This Neighbourhood Plan provides scope to influence the shape of that, as well as establish policies for South Woodham Ferrers as a whole, providing more locally based policies than in the Chelmsford Local Plan.

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WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?

The Neighbourhood Plan has been drafted following consultation feedback on issues and emerging ideas. It is now being consulted upon by the Town Council before submitting to Chelmsford City Council to commence independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan.

WHAT ARE THE POLICIES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

The policies respond to key concerns raised during previous consultation events. In summary, the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan seek to:

- Establish design criteria that promote the highest quality of development in and around South Woodham Ferrers, as well as shaping the form of the new growth area.
- Make it easier, more attractive and convenient for all people of all ages to be able to move around the town, particularly by foot, by bike and by public transport.
- Enhance the quality of the public realm in the town centre, supported by a wider mix of activities, including new shops, restaurants and community activities, making for a lively and welcoming place.
- Enhance and protect the quality of public open green space in South Woodham Ferrers, and access to these, for the enjoyment of all, bringing new greenery into the town.
- Set priorities for spending any funds received from new development.

These themes and policies were developed and tested through earlier consultation events to make sure the Neighbourhood Plan reflects local opinion.

HOW WILL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS BE PAID FOR?

Developers of schemes over a certain size are required to pay a Community Infrastructure Levy to Chelmsford City Council. Currently, 15% of the monies received come back to South Woodham Ferrers Town Council. If and when our Neighbourhood Plan is made this increases to 25%. This will help pay for improvements to things such as important road junctions, green spaces and play facilities, walking and cycling routes, and improved community facilities. The Neighbourhood Plan includes a set of projects that we would like to see funded.

WHO HAS PREPARED THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Neighbourhood Plan has been led by the Town Council and has involved significant consultation with local residents and businesses over the last three years.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

All comments received will be reviewed and any changes made to the Neighbourhood Plan. It will then go to Chelmsford City Council who will formally consult on the Neighbourhood Plan and appoint an independent examiner to review it. If the examiner is happy that the Neighbourhood Plan has followed due process, a referendum will take place.

WHAT IS THE REFERENDUM?

Everyone who is eligible to vote in South Woodham Ferrers will have the chance to say whether they think the Neighbourhood Plan should be used to begin shaping future change and determining planning applications. If more than 50% of the votes cast agree with the Neighbourhood Plan then it will become part of formal planning policy for South Woodham Ferrers.