

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 5 APRIL 2016

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

REQUEST FOR AREA DESIGNATION FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD  
PLANNING: WATTON-AT-STONE PARISH

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WARD(S) AFFECTED:      WATTON-AT-STONE

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- To enable the consideration of an application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR EXECUTIVE: That:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>the application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area, submitted by Watton-at-Stone Parish Council, be supported.</b>
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1.0 Background

1.1 Watton-at-Stone Parish Council (PC) submitted an application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area to the Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016. Agreement to the designation of a Neighbourhood Area is required by the Council as Local Planning Authority (LPA) before a Neighbourhood Plan can be formulated.

1.2 The application was made in the form of a letter from Watton-at-Stone PC with an attached plan setting the area to which the application relates. The letter and plan form **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** to this report.

2.0 Consultation

2.1 The Council has undertaken the appropriate consultation with regard to the application submission.

- 2.2 Comments have been received in response to the area designation application. There are no formal objections to the area designation however there are concerns in regard to the timing of producing a neighbourhood plan with an out-of-date Local Plan. These comments form **Essential Reference Paper 'C'** to this report.
- 2.3 The comments also include the key neighbourhood planning requirements for the parish and District Council, including:
- the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) neighbourhood planning requirements;
  - conformity with Local Plans; and
  - the Strategic Environment Assessment process.
- 3.0 Considerations
- 3.1 Two main areas of consideration to be taken into account when determining an application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area are set out in Schedule 9 of the Localism Act 2011. One of these is that the authority determining the application must have regard to the desirability of maintaining the existing boundaries of neighbourhood plan areas already designated.
- 3.2 No weight needs to be given to this consideration in this case as no other Neighbourhood Areas are currently designated in the Watton-at-Stone parish area.
- 3.3 The other area of consideration is the desirability of designating the whole of the area of a parish council as the Neighbourhood Area.
- 3.4 In this case, the area proposed covers the entire parish area, a known and existing boundary which does not conflict with neighbouring parish boundaries.
- 3.5 In response to the comments received during the consultation, these are not considered to impact upon the decision of the neighbourhood area application. Neighbourhood plans can be developed alongside the emerging District Plan and is not considered to be detrimental to the development of the neighbourhood plan.

3.6 The Council understands and encourages neighbourhood plans to be developed in a positive and proactive manner in order to support the strategic objectives of the emerging District Plan. It is the Council's role to advise and support neighbourhood plans as they progress. It is also recognised that it is within the Parish Council's interests to work with and alongside the emerging District Plan.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

4.1 Neighbourhood planning is now an integral part of the planning system with legislative backing through the Localism Act. The LPA is charged with determining applications for the designation of Neighbourhood Areas. In this case, designation of a parish area for neighbourhood planning purposes is supported.

#### 5.0 Implications/Consultations

5.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

#### Background Papers

None

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