

GODALMING TOWN COUNCIL



PRESS RELEASE

FARNCOMBE & GODALMING RESIDENTS URGED TO HAVE THEIR SAY

Residents of Farncombe & Godalming are being asked to look out for distinctive envelope dropping through their letterbox on or around 18 September 2015. The envelope contains a questionnaire, which asks for views on a variety of issues covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. Residents are urged to fill in the survey with as much detail as possible and return it in the reply-paid envelope provided by 16 October 2015. The survey will also be available on-line from the Godalming Town Council website – www.godalming-tc.gov.uk.

The Neighbourhood Plan for Godalming & Farncombe was launched with a public meeting early in 2014 and since that time close to 70 volunteers have been working and gathering evidence on the key themes of Housing, Transport, Environment, Economy, Community Infrastructure and Heritage & Design. The Questionnaire is a key part of the evidence gathering process because it gives an opportunity to test ideas and take views from all 9,500 households. Each member of a household aged over 14 years may return a copy of the questionnaire and additional copies may be downloaded from the Town Council's website – or the survey can be completed online also from the website.

Speaking recently the Mayor of Godalming, Councillor Anne Bott said "This survey represents an unprecedented opportunity for the town's residents to have their say on the future of our community. I urge everyone to look out for their copy of the questionnaire when it drops onto their doormats. Do not ignore it, please fill it in and send it back to us; we really want to hear everyone's views."

Ends...

For more information on this release please contact Louise Goodfellow, Town Clerk
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Notes to Editors:

1. Neighbourhood planning is an important part of the Government's localism agenda and the powers and regulations relating to neighbourhood planning were enacted in the Localism Act 2011 and came into effect in April 2012.

The process for developing a neighbourhood plan is a lengthy one. The key stages are:

Stage 1: Defining the Neighbourhood

In areas with a parish or town council, the parish or town council will take the lead on neighbourhood planning and the first action required is to apply to the local planning authority for designation of the neighbourhood area. Godalming Town Council applied to Waverley Borough Council for the designation of the whole of the Town Council's administrative area in March 2013 and the area was designated on 16 July 2013.

Stage 2: Preparing the Plan

A neighbourhood plan must follow some basic ground rules:

- it must generally be in line with local and national planning policies
- it must be in line with other laws
- if the local planning authority says that an area needs to grow, then communities cannot use neighbourhood planning to block the building of new homes and businesses; they can, however, use neighbourhood planning to influence the type, design, location and mix of new development
- neighbourhood plans must contribute to achieving sustainable development

With a neighbourhood plan, communities are able to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. They will be able to say, for example, where new homes and offices should be built, and what they should look like. The neighbourhood plan will set a vision for the future. It can be detailed, or general, depending on what local people want.

Stage 3: Independent Check

Once a neighbourhood plan or order has been prepared, an independent examiner will check that it meets the right basic standards.

If the plan or order doesn't meet the right standards, the examiner will recommend changes. The local planning authority will then need to consider the examiner's views and decide whether to make those changes.

If the examiner recommends significant changes, then the parish or town council may decide to consult the local community again before proceeding.

Stage 4: Community Referendum

The local planning authority will be responsible for organising a referendum on a neighbourhood plan that meets the basic standards. This ensures that the community has the final say on whether a neighbourhood plan or order comes into force.

People living in the neighbourhood who are registered to vote in local elections will be entitled to vote in the referendum.

If more than 50% of people voting in the referendum support the neighbourhood plan then the local planning authority must bring it into force.

Stage 5: Legal Force

Once a neighbourhood plan is in force following a successful referendum, it carries real legal weight. Decision makers are obliged to consider proposals for development in the neighbourhood against the neighbourhood plan.