

## **Item 10: Parish Plan (For information)**

When the parish community plan was conceived, drafted and published in 2023, a conscious decision was taken not to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) under the Localism Act 2011. (See attached).

The format of the Coddendam plan was based on Mid-Suffolk District Council's proposal at the time for a parish plan. Over a year on, the format and the underlying plan have held good and as a community we have pushed forward with delivering against it.

However, in part because of feedback from communities like Coddendam which view an NDP as not for them and to put a simpler format on a more formal footing, the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 has introduced the concept of a Neighbourhood Priority Statement (NPS). MSDC was one of the six district councils to pilot NPS. We were aware of this, but only after the Coddendam plan was well advanced. Notwithstanding MSDC has viewed the Coddendam plan and its initial response is that it meets all the conditions of an NPS. This is in the absence of seeing sight of the secondary legislation from the Department of Levelling-up, Housing and Communities.

We have asked three questions of MSDC:

1. What does Coddendam have to do to transition its existing plan to an NPS – which MSDC will likely call a People and Places Plan?
2. What additional benefits accrue to Coddendam from making the change? The high-level answer is that MSDC will need to take the plan into account in its planning and when allocating grants etc.
3. Does an NPS have to be owned by the parish council? The initial answer given was 'no', but this needs to be confirmed.

MSDC has agreed to provide a definitive answer to each question, which will be reported to council with a recommendation at a later meeting.

Cllr Mills

## Neighbourhood (Development) Plans

1. Neighbourhood Plans is short form in the Act for Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP). They are a product of the Localism Act 2011. The relevant section of the Act is unchanged since enactment, as far as I can see.
2. Page 12 of the Plain English Guide to the Act issued by Communities and Local Government sets out the background to and summarises Neighbourhood Planning. It states that “Neighbourhood Planning will allow communities, both residents, employees and business, to come together through local parish council or neighbourhood forum and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like”. Provided due process is followed and the community votes in favour of the plan in a referendum, then the local authority will bring it into force. Funding and advice will be provided.
3. As MSDC has set out, there are alternatives to an NDP, including Parish or Community Plans, where an NDP is regarded as inappropriate. Choosing an alternative does not preclude it being turned into an NDP later if circumstances change.
4. Research was undertaken of NDPs when deciding on the format of the Coddendam Plan, with that for Walsham-Le-Willows being the main one of reference, as it was the most recent in Suffolk at the time. There are currently 16 NDPs on the MSDC website, all of which are, unsurprisingly driven by housing development, with many for communities alongside the A14, where the bulk of MSDC’s housebuilding is taking place.
5. With no pressure from MSDC or from the community at large, through Survey responses (response rate was almost double that at Walsham at just over 50%), for ‘development’ in Coddendam Parish, an NDP offered no benefits over a Community Plan. Coddendam is not designated a Neighbourhood Planning Area.
6. Progressing areas of importance to residents could be achieved, including access to grants, without the need of a NDP. Renewable Energy, for example is open to grant funding using a vehicle such as a Community Benefit Society and the support of SCC/MSDC, a path we are now going down, having been selected as one of the Suffolk projects. Help with ‘traffic’, on the other hand is unlikely to benefit from any NDP financial assistance unless it is linked to ‘development’. It’s quite possible we will receive some funding for traffic measures notwithstanding the lack of an NDP, given the long-standing issues in Coddendam, provided the community can settle of a practical and cost-effective scheme. This is ‘work-in-progress.’ (Questionnaire drafted. Awaiting Rob’s return and the re-establishment of the Roads Working Group. Lots of interaction with SCC and the Police).
7. As the Localism Act had been in place since 2011, in the absence of being able to have proper dialogue, given the ill feeling between many Coddendam residents and some former councillors, by dint of the lack of evidence that previous Councils hadn’t sought to produce a NDP, we assumed that they had drawn the same conclusions as we had.
8. The discord between community and the Parish Council had a distant secondary bearing on the decision of NDP vs Community Plan. NDPs are Town/Parish Council led, albeit that they draw in the wider community. Conditions weren’t right for the Council to lead on anything. At that stage, better we were involved (and rebuilt relationships) and indeed we ended up doing much of the heavy lifting, but it was clear to the community it was being done with them, not to them.
9. Much of the community Plan and the work to develop it can be used to convert it to an NDP, if that is something that the Council and the community desire.
10. Whilst drafting the Plan, Babergh and MSDC made us aware of a new plan type, the People and Places Plan that it was trialling alongside six other councils for the Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). We were at final draft stage by then. Rather than await the outcome of a national pilot and the drafting of formal guidelines/amendment to the Localism Act, we proceeded with what we had. Again, a conversion would likely be straightforward. However, it maybe sometime before this becomes an option.