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26 September 2023

**TOTNES TAKES ONE STEP CLOSER TO AGREEING A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Totnes takes one step closer to agreeing a Neighbourhood Plan following the unanimous decision taken at the South Hams District Council Executive Committee meeting on 21 September 2023. Now a referendum, giving local people the chance to vote on whether or not to adopt the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan, will take place this autumn.

**Totnes Town Council Clerk, Catherine Marlton, explains:** “Neighbourhood Plans are a community right. The Plan for Totnes gives our community a much greater say in shaping the areas in which we live and work and in supporting new development proposals in the future. It highlights things like the need for an emphasis on providing social or affordable homes for local people in new developments as well as the importance of protecting the historic character of the town.

“If the referendum is successful (ie, adopting the plan receives the majority of the votes cast), the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan will become a ‘significant material consideration’ in the determination of planning applications. It’s a way for us to help protect what’s important in our town, including our town identity, the opportunity to be a model for sustainability and innovation and the aspiration that we are an even better place to live or do business.”

The Neighbourhood Plan has been put together by town councillors and a wide variety of public working groups and public consultation events to make sure it encompasses the aspirations and hopes of all the community. It aims to protect and nurture the town's precious heritage whilst adapting to the needs of a changing world, particularly recognising the ‘climate emergency’ and the way we act to protect Totnes for future generations. Its vision for Totnes is that:

1. As Totnes changes and develops over the coming decades its identity must not be lost;
2. It will continue to be a model of sustainability, innovation, inclusivity and creativity;
3. It will become an even better place for residents of all ages, visitors and businesses.

If agreed, the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the development plan and sit alongside the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan which has been prepared by the local planning authorities. If the Neighbourhood Plan is voted in, decisions on planning applications in the town will be made using both the Joint Local Plan and the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan, and any other material considerations. It means that planning decisions will be based on better informed and more detailed policies than if Totnes were only covered by the Joint Local Plan.

**Catherine Marlton added:** “If the Neighbourhood Plan is rejected at referendum, the views of the local community in Totnes that have been gathered through this process won’t be considered in future planning decisions. The specific needs and aspirations of our town that have been highlighted won’t be heard.”

It is likely the referendum will be held at the end of October or during November. This will be organised by South Hams District Council. The referendum needs to be held within 56 working days of a Decision Statement being published by the Council. Notice of the referendum would need to be advertised 28 days prior to the referendum being held.

If it is successful, the District Council is required to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan within a defined time period (8 weeks). Once ‘made’ (adopted) by the local planning authority, the Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the Development Plan for the plan area and will be used alongside the local plan to determine planning applications.

You can view the draft Totnes Neighbourhood Plan here: www.totnestowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/neighbourhood-plan/

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