

BECCELES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REFERENDUM

Thursday September 16th

WHAT IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ?

Neighbourhood Plans are produced under the Localism Act 2011. They enable local communities to produce their own Neighbourhood Plan to guide how their community grows and changes in the future.

WHAT IS THE BECCLES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ?

The Beccles Neighbourhood Plan has been shaped by a working group of Beccles residents and Beccles Town Council, helped by consultations with many people in the area, and by East Suffolk Council.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR ?

The Working Group started up about four years ago. The Plan has been through a number of stages of consultation over the years, most recently at the turn of 2020 – 2021. It has now been checked over by an independent Examiner, and agreed by Beccles Town Council, East Suffolk Council and the Broads Authority (part of the area lies within the Broads Authority Boundary).

WHY IS THERE A REFERENDUM ?

This give the local community a chance to have a final say on their Neighbourhood Plan. But it's mostly because the Regulations say you have to have one.

WHAT IS THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ABOUT ?

A number of “challenges” have been identified in the Plan, including a shortage of affordable and rented housing, while the town is also believed to be lacking local job opportunities, community facilities and visitor accommodation. The Plan states the vision of the town will include “By 2036, the Beccles Southern Relief Road will have been long completed. Heavy goods vehicles will not long come into the town centre other than for deliveries, and this, together with smart systems to reduce speeding as well as widened pavements will provide more space for pedestrians.”

“This will have improved the environment for shopping and leisure, particularly by improving pedestrian safety and also by reducing air pollution. Beccles Medical centre and other health services will have expanded to meeting increased demand for both physical and mental care. There will be new and enhanced community spaces for parents, children and teenagers, including the new skate park and inclusive play areas. The town will have a new leisure centre and/ or indoor swimming pool to encourage active lifestyles for residents and visitors and provide a range of activities to suit all ages.”

“Open spaces at Waveney Meadow, the Common and Beccles Quay will have been much improved to provide an enhanced attraction. The water quality of the River Waveney will have improved and flood risk will have been mitigated.”

The plan also highlights the Beccles and Worlingham Garden Neighbourhood, which is included in East Suffolk Council’s Waveney Local Plan, and could see around 1,250 new homes, a retirement community, a primary school, a country park, sports facilities, allotments and open spaces, and a community hub including a convenience store.

The Plan acknowledges the impact an influx of new residents could have on the town’s roads, and also proposes improving walking and cycling routes to encourage people not to travel by car, while localised plans could tackle issues at problem junctions around Beccles.

It will also see Beccles Town Council work alongside electric vehicle infrastructure providers to create a comprehensive network of public charging points at key destinations.

In the town centre, the Plan acknowledges the decline of traditional high street shops, and states uses for premises could include “retail and services, offices, hotels and leisure uses.” It says “A more flexible and proactive approach is required if the town centre is to retain its role as a hub of community activity. While traditional retail uses within the town centre will be supported and encouraged, the Neighbourhood Plan

seeks to provide a policy framework for allowing other types of use where vacancies are in evidence and have been for some time.”

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT ?

The question which you will be asked to answer in the referendum is:-

Do you want the Broads Authority and East Suffolk Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Beccles to help them decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

Please vote YES, so that we can now finalise the Beccles Neighbourhood Plan

If there is a majority in the favour, the Plan will then be ‘made’ and become a formal document. It will be the task of the Working Group, Beccles Town Council, East Suffolk Council and the Broads Authority to implement the Neighbourhood Plan. In a few years it may be updated.

You can read copies of the Beccles Neighbourhood Plan in the library, or online at

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans-in-the-area/beccles-neighbourhood-area/>

Produced by the Beccles Neighbourhood Plan Working Group