

The Ripon City Plan – The Process Moving Forwards

We've used this column over the last few months to sketch out the details of the emerging Ripon City Plan, a Neighbourhood Plan for our city. So, this month we thought we should outline our current progress with producing the Ripon City Plan and what needs to happen before it can be implemented.

Since the end of the consultation on the preliminary draft Ripon City Plan, there has been a lot of work going on behind the scenes for our small team. We've been doing all the work necessary to prepare our draft Ripon City Plan in readiness to carry out our pre-submission consultation.

Firstly and most important we've been working on the draft Ripon City Plan itself. This is the main document and includes our proposed policies and details of our suggested complementary projects. Underpinning this is our background and supplementary documents which includes our evidence base; the robust information and analysis on which our policies are based. This includes our analysis of the issues that you have highlighted and some documents which have been produced by Harrogate Borough Council for the new Local Plan, but which are really useful pieces of evidence for the Ripon City Plan, such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Retail Capacity Study.

In addition Neighbourhood Plans must not breach and must be compatible with EU and human rights obligations and therefore we have produced an interim Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA / SEA) for our proposed Ripon City Plan. This is another document we will publish as part of our pre-submission consultation.

Finally, when we have met all of our obligations and we are ready to submit our proposed Ripon City Plan to Harrogate Borough Council (as the local planning authority) we need to submit two further documents: a basic conditions statement and a consultation statement. So, over the last weeks and month we've been preparing these documents too.

The pre-submission consultation will take place early next year and will be your opportunity to tell us what you think of the draft Ripon City Plan and how we are proposing to take forward the ideas that you supported in the preliminary draft Ripon City Plan.

Although you'll be able to read everything that we have produced for submission of our proposed Neighbourhood Plan, we'll also provide you with a summary so that you know what the Ripon City Plan is seeking to achieve.

Following the pre-submission consultation, there will still be a number of stages for us to go through. We will firstly need to consider whether, as a result of the pre-submission consultation, any revisions need to be made to the Plan prior to submitting the proposed Ripon City Plan to the local planning authority.

On receiving our Plan and supporting documents, Harrogate Borough Council will be responsible for checking that we have followed the proper legal processes. They will also be responsible for publicising our proposed plan and invite anyone interested to comment on it.

Harrogate Borough Council will also need to appoint a person to carry out the independent examination of our draft Ripon City Plan. The appointment of this 'independent examiner' will be agreed with Ripon City Council, as lead-body for the preparation of the Plan. Harrogate Borough Council will be required to send to the independent examiner all of the submission information and also a copy of any comments received during their publicising of the plan. The independent examiner will need to take these comments into account.

The independent examiner will only consider whether our proposed Ripon City Plan meets the basic conditions set out by law (they are not permitted to explore other considerations). This means that the examiner will be considering whether the plan: has appropriate regard to national policy; contributes to the achievement of sustainable development; is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area; is compatible with human rights requirements, and; is compatible with EU obligations.

Following the examination, which we believe could be completed by the end of spring 2016, the examiner will recommend that the plan proceeds to the referendum stage, or may suggest modifications so that it meets the basic conditions so that it can proceed. It will then be the responsibility of Harrogate Borough Council to arrange for the referendum to take place. People on the electoral register will be entitled to vote in the referendum.

If more than 50% of those voting in the referendum vote 'yes', then Harrogate Borough Council will bring the plan into force. Once brought into legal force, the Ripon City Plan would form part of the statutory Development Plan. Consequently, decisions on whether or not to grant planning permission in Ripon will need to be made in accordance with the Ripon City Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

If you would like any further information about the Ripon City Plan, please contact the Ripon City Plan Team: cityplan@riponcity.gov.uk or call (01765) 604097.