

Report to the annual parish meeting 2023 on the Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan

The Abingdon-on-Thames Neighbourhood Plan is an important Town Council Initiative. It is a process that enables the people of Abingdon to set a future vision for the town, looking forwards over 10 to 15 years, identifying the things we want to keep and the things to change about our town.

When finalised and agreed at a referendum the Vale of White Horse District Council must take the Neighbourhood Plan into account as it considers planning applications.

A lay-led steering group (ATNP SG) was established in early 2021 and has consulted widely with fellow citizens as it has developed its proposals.

During 2022 the ATNP SG consulted on three additional themes:

- Access and movement
- Families and young people
- Business and employment

The proposals, along with the three themes consulted on last year, can be viewed on the [dedicated website](#). Comments received are being used to create a consolidated draft plan which will be known as the Pre-Submission Draft or 'Regulation 14' Draft.

This is the next important step and will give all interested parties the opportunity to comment and make suggestions for enhancements over a 6-week consultation period. It is hoped that the Pre-Submission Draft will be finalised mid-March for approval by the town council as being suitable for publication. This consultation process will be managed by the town council, with support from Feria Urbanism, the consultants commissioned by the council to support the ATNP SG.

Once comments received during the six weeks have been taken into account, via any revision to the draft plan, it will be submitted to the Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWH), for a further 6-week consultation before being subject to independent examination to ensure alignment with legislative requirements. Thereafter, subject to any modifications suggested by the independent examiner, the plan will go forward to a town referendum, taking the form of a binary yes/no vote.

Assuming the plan is approved at the referendum (please vote when the time comes) it will come into legal force, being part of the Local Development Framework and be a guiding document in the consideration of planning applications by the VoWH.

Prior to finalising the draft 'Reg 14' consultation a number of tasks must be completed, including the identification of the defining characteristics of various neighbourhoods to help inform the design policies in the plan. This work is being undertaken by a small group of Civic Society enthusiasts, to which many thanks are due. Completion of this task will require enlargement of this group of volunteers. If you can volunteer to support this initiative, which is largely a desk-based exercise and requires completion of a one-page template - particularly in areas in the south of the town - please do get in touch with me.

A further task that requires local input is the finalisation of the schedule of local green spaces to be protected. The draft list is still available on the project website but needs refinement. Again, please do get in touch if you can help in this process.

In parallel with the Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan the VoWH has commissioned a Central Abingdon Regeneration Framework (CARF) and recently released its final [report](#). This sets out options for how areas of the town centre could be redeveloped, including three key sites owned by the Vale: The Charter, Abbey House and The Upper Reaches. The ATNP SG has liaised extensively with the CARF team and may reflect some of its recommendations in the finalised ATNP.

Simon Hills
Chair
Abingdon on Thames Neighbourhood Steering Group