

Puncknowle & Swyre Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan

Options Paper: The withdrawal of Locality funding

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Document Purpose

This document outlines the status of Puncknowle & Swyre’s Neighbourhood Plan, and the steps needed for completion following the withdrawal of MHCLG funding in the June 2025 Government Spending Review.¹

Section One – Summary and Funding Options

1. Summary

- 1.1 There is no change to the Localism Act. Neighbourhood Plans can still be produced if they can be funded either through alternative grants or Parish Council precept/CIL income. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has stated that it is a matter for each group to decide whether they wish to proceed, but they will carry out their responsibilities detailed in the legislation (independent examination, consultation, referendum and making the plan).
- 1.2 MHCLG are in the process of putting the Planning & Infrastructure Bill through parliament. The bill sets the framework for speeding up planning applications to enable a government manifesto commitment to build 1.5 million houses and fast track major (green energy) infrastructure projects².
- 1.3 The withdrawal of Neighbourhood Plan funding ostensibly reduces the viability of new projects and curtails plans already in process, thereby moving planning control back to Local Government and UK Government without explicitly stating this as an outcome. MHCLG seem to be ‘of the view that NP were not used for development but to limit or protect against development, which in many ways is true but not entirely.’³
- 1.4 It is difficult to determine clear options for continuing without understanding cost tolerance from future precept income or reserves, if any. It is also important to appreciate how these costs might then balance against the benefits of having the plan and the community support to back its completion. Some other Neighbourhood Plan groups impacted by the decision are still in the process of assessing how they can progress, whilst others are proceeding with precept and CIL funding.⁴
- 1.5 Without a plan, a community risks unwanted development or missing out on desired projects. Any future development will be assessed without clear guidelines, especially as Dorset Council’s housing target doubles, increasing pressure for new homes. Smaller developments may be mandated in rural areas making control over design, sustainability, environment, heritage and retaining local character more difficult.
- 1.6 Conservation areas, National Landscape, and Heritage Coastline may restrict large developments. Unlike Burton Bradstock, this parish lacks a defined development

¹ This document is not definitive – it is a developing situation and is likely to change.

² [Guide to the Planning & Infrastructure Bill](#)

³ Source: from Dorset Community Action via a briefing with MHCLG

⁴ Source: consultants managing other Neighbourhood Plans

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boundary⁵, limiting control over small housing projects. Whilst there is a demand for housing, the community has stated a clear preference for affordable housing rather than an increase in open market housing. More broadly they wish to see local character retained and the environment (and views) protected.

- 1.7 The Parish Council considered other options when reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan but determined that alternatives such as a Parish Plan and Village Design Statement do not offer the same degree of assurance. These alternatives would not affect planning decisions or provide additional protection and would require funding.
- 1.8 At a high level the project cost prior to the withdrawal of funding included, £4,658 remaining from the initial £10,000 and a further £3,400 of additional funding giving a total of £8,058 to complete the project. The estimated delivery date for concluding a completed draft was March 2026, with much of the work undertaken by the consultant. This explains the higher cost over a six-month period compared with the 18 months prior to this when £5,342 was spent.
- 1.9 Existing technical packages will remain funded through March 2026. The Design Guide will continue to be developed by AECOM. It is currently under review and will serve as the primary supporting document for future planning applications (LPA). The legislative framework requires that the Design Guide be incorporated within a neighbourhood plan; it cannot exist independently.
- 1.10 By breaking down tasks, consulting with the LPA, and assigning consultant roles to volunteers, estimated delivery costs have dropped to £2,000 (25% of the estimate). The LPA will review the draft plan and policies, and background evidence has been completed for the draft. Although the approach has changed, the March 2026 deadline still stands.

2. Neighbourhood Plan Funding - Options

Option	Risk	
1. Fully Funded	- The Parish Council would meet the cost of producing the plan. - Appropriate governance arrangements to reflect the funding arrangements. - Accept the plan may require additional funding through the process but will give the community confidence.	- Risk of escalating costs - Legislation may change.
2. Phased Funding	The Parish Council agree the continuation of the plan in phases, with agreed check points to ensure the funding targets are met and planning is progressing in line with an agreed programme.	- Uncertainty – viability of the project under threat which may negatively impact progress. - Legislation may change.

⁵ Local Planning Authorities can include settlement boundaries in their policies. Smaller Villages tend not to have settlement boundaries (Puncknowle, Swyre and West Bexington). A defined settlement boundary is an area where development can take place under the right circumstances. No defined boundary means development can take place under the right circumstances, anywhere in the parish. One advantage of a Neighbourhood Plan is that areas for development can be identified.

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	• The option to stop if the plan is delayed, volunteering support diminishes, or the costs increase above the set tolerance level. • Enables the plan to continue whilst the implications of withdrawal of funding are assessed. • Appropriate governance arrangements to reflect the funding arrangements.	
3. External Funding ⁶	• The Parish Council agrees to support the continuation of the plan if funding is met through external sources, or proportion thereof. • Appropriate governance arrangements to reflect the funding sources.	• Unable to raise sufficient funds, or lack of available funding opportunities. • Slows down progress of the plan Funding uncertainty slows down the progress of the plan. • Ethical issues – should the PC be sourcing external funding for a community project that includes land use and development?
4. No Funding	• Cease all work on the plan, gather the work completed to date and archive on the web page or other resource. • Advise the community that the Parish Council is unable to support the completion of the plan.	• Risk of development not meeting the community need. • Community work and funding to date not concluded and therefore of much reduced value. • Open to criticism if development takes place. • Compromised Design Guide/Codes being produced by AECOM - no legislative framework to support it.
5. Parish Plan	• Take the existing materials to build a Parish Plan (without development section). • Rely on the development protections in place (conservation areas, National Landscape no identified development boundary). • Minimal cost if supported by volunteers.	• No protection against unwanted development. • No obligation to adopt the recommendations. • Compromised Design Guide/Codes. • Unlikely to get support from existing volunteer pool.

Section Two – Source Material

1. Background

- 1.1 The 2010 Localism Act established Neighbourhood Plans, which allow communities to participate in decisions regarding local development, regeneration, and conservation.

⁶ This could be incorporated into Option 1, or Option 2 as a proportion of the cost, but the impact on the timeline needs to be considered.

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These plans address building locations, design, and integration, and can incorporate policies related to green spaces, renewable energy, and heritage preservation. All policies are required to be consistent with the Local Authority's Plan.

- 1.2 The legislation underpinning these initiatives (Localism Act) was intended to ensure they are community-driven and facilitate development that addresses local needs. Government funding positioned the project beyond the direct jurisdiction of Town or Parish Councils, or any other governing body except the Local Planning Authority (LPA), thereby reinforcing its community-led nature.
- 1.3 Upon adoption, Neighbourhood Plans are integrated into the statutory planning framework and carry legal weight in planning decisions, making them an effective mechanism for identifying necessary developments communities need and to challenging proposals that do not align with community interests.
- 1.4 Locality was contracted by the UK Government to manage the provision of advice support, and funding for communities interested in developing Neighbourhood Plans. Funding was capped at £10,000 per project, with additional funds available for technical support such as design guides and site assessments.
- 1.5 Although a total project budget was specified, funds were accessed based on defined spending requirements within particular periods and required supporting invoices or quotations. Any unused funds at the end of the financial year were returned to Locality.
- 1.6 The primary allocation of the grant was in support of consultancy services to ensure the alignment of Neighbourhood Plans to the local and national planning policy.
- 1.7 In June 2025 Locality announced that MHCLG were unable to proceed with commissioning new neighbourhood planning support services for the period beyond March 2025, due to the outcomes of the recent spending review. As a result:
 - No new applications for grants or technical support will be accepted.
 - Existing technical support packages will be completed by March 2025, with flexibility to extend delivery until March 2026 depending on individual timetables.
 - Support for the Champions Network and learning opportunities would cease with immediate effect.
- 1.8 The Localism Act is still in place and the Parish Council can, with community support, complete the plan if they are able to follow the agreed process and meet the legal requirements.⁷
- 1.9 Dorset Council has confirmed that under the Localism Act they are obligated to fund the external examination, public consultation,⁸ referendum and HRA⁹ for neighbourhood plans.

⁷ Dorset Council

⁸ Wider stakeholder consultation – not the local consultation.

⁹ Habitats Regulations Assessments

2 What does this mean for Puncknowle & Swyre's Plan?

- 2.1 Neighbourhood planning was introduced at the Parish Assembly in May 2022. On 13th May the following year, a presentation was made to the community, after which the Parish Council resolved to proceed with Neighbourhood Planning.
- 2.2 The Parish Council oversees plan development, is provided with monthly progress updates, manages Locality funding, and represents the plan at key community events.
- 2.3 Withdrawing UK Government funding mainly restricts community groups' access to consultancy services, as other costs make up only a small part of the grant.
- 2.4 Neighbourhood Planning continues to be an effective tool for Town and Parish Councils and will help to meet the new requirements for planning decisions.¹⁰
- 2.5 The Parish Council needs to weigh the following factors:
 - what stage the plan has reached and what needs to be done to complete it;
 - the level of community support for completing the plan;
 - what impact the plan will retain through its life cycle;
 - whether there are other ways of achieving the same outcome: and,
 - the short-term cost of completing the plan.

3 How much has been done?

- 3.1 A plan is built through the following:
 - community feedback session on topics linked to development;
 - taking the feedback and testing it against Dorset Councils Local Plan and Policy (reflecting the NPPF¹¹);
 - feeding back the outcomes and validating them through a survey;
 - establishing the evidence that reflects the community aspirations aligned to the Local Plan;
 - drafting the Plan (the plan remains a draft until the LPA complete the external examination);
 - drafting a 'meeting the basic condition statement' – declaring the plan is compliant with current legislation and aligned to the local plan; and,
 - undertaking a public consultation on the plan before it is submitted to Dorset Council.
- 3.2 The Neighbourhood plan for Puncknowle and Swyre is at the drafting stage, having already completed:
 - community engagement has been active since the project was started;
 - feedback has been gathered (community sessions, focus groups, surveys);
 - evidence across the key components of the plan have been assessed and documented;

¹⁰ The Planning and Infrastructure Bill contains details about the new planning decision making process.

¹¹ National Planning Policy Framework

- policy has been drafted in preparation for the first iteration of the plan.

4. What needs to be done?

4.1 The following table the key tasks needed to complete the plan, who might be able to carry out the work (indicative timetable is given in the appendix).

Title	Detail
Drafting the Plan	Whilst it had been decided the consultant would draft the plan, it can be undertaken by the people who compiled the topic papers. Dorset Council have offered to review the plan and policy once drafted but may require some consultant support on technical issues. It should be appreciated that the plan will remain a draft until the completion of Dorset Councils public consultation, prior to the referendum.
Call for Sites/Site Assessment	A 'call for sites' is a simple survey to all landowners through a leaflet drop. Any land identified will require a site (viability) assessment, should we choose to undertake one. The LPA have confirmed that this work, previously undertaken by AECOM (via Locality technical packages). We are currently in discussion with someone who has offered to do the work for free should we need it, but have yet to confirm. It is worth noting that the plan does not need to identify land for development. Dorset Council have stated, 'there is no requirement for a neighbourhood plan to include site allocations, therefore site identification and assessment are not essential.' However, identifying land does lock in preferred locations for development and should be included if possible.
Design Guide/Codes	The Design Guide will define and explain the 'local character' in a format that is useful to the LPA and developers, to ensure that they build in a manner that reflects the individual characteristics of the villages. AECOM are already producing the Design Guide through a technical package issued by Locality. AECOM are paid directly by UK Government who have, through MHCLG stated that technical packages will continue till March 2026. Work on the Design guide is continuing and will result in a final copy before the end of the year.
Meeting the Basic Conditions	This is a prepared statement that explains how the draft plan meets the legal requirements and other essential criteria for it to be adopted. Dorset Council have offered to supply templates and examples. Ideally this statement would be compiled through the establishment of the draft plan.
Public Consultation	The public consultation gives the community an opportunity to review the plan before it is issued to Dorset Council and is likely to involve an exhibition in the village hall – copies of the plan, maps and illustrations. The scope and scale of the consultation can be managed in a variety of ways, online access to the plan will be more cost effective than issuing a summary of the plan to all households.

5. Is there community support for the project?

- 5.1 Community engagement is key to neighbourhood planning, as a neighbourhood plan should be community-led, researched, written and voted on by the people who live in the neighbourhood area.
- 5.2 Evidence of the level of support for the neighbourhood plan may be indicated the combining the average number of people who attend events and request updates. As many as 20% of the population actively involved with the project. Through leaflet drops and word of mouth general awareness of project is assumed to be high.
- 5.3 Engagement with these projects tends to peak at the beginning and the end of the process. It is also dependent upon the activities, the Housing Needs Survey had responses from 134 households.
- 5.4 More widely there are over a 100 people who take an interest in the development of the plan, some attend events and actively participate. All receive a monthly update via email detailing how the plan has progressed.
- 5.5 It is not uncommon for a neighbourhood plan to be brought together by a small group who generate most of the content, with a wider group who support on an ad hoc basis. It is also worth noting that it gets harder to join the smaller group as the project advances.
- 5.6 Neighbourhood plan referendums in England typically have a turnout of 30-40%, though rates vary. For instance, Puddletown had 33.5% turnout with 341 "yes" and 45 "no" votes, while Chesil Bank recorded just 19.8% turnout (224 out of 1129 voters).
- 5.7 All community engagement for the plan has been recorded and will be included in the Consultation Statement to detail how the community was consulted and that their feedback has been collected.
- 5.8 Could there be better involvement? Always, but clearly support for the plan is dependent upon progress and much of the work has over the past 6 months has focused on the gathering of evidence. The next stages will require greater engagement through till the referendum.

6. Are there other options?

- 6.1 The decision to produce a Neighbourhood Plan was driven by the impact it could have on local development, reflect what the community wanted in their area and ensure planning decisions met community needs and increase CIL (from 15% to 25%)¹².
- 6.2 Neighbourhood Plans are legal documents that the LPA and developers must consult through the planning process.

¹² Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.3 The Design Guide only has weight if linked to a Neighbourhood Plan, as a stand-alone document it would become a Village Design Statement.
- 6.4 A Parish Plan can include practical actions which the community can work together with local agencies to bring about change. It can address social, economic and environmental issues. It cannot recommend sites for development and has no formal weight, although it can be considered in determining planning issues if it covers issues that are material to planning issues but not as a tool to refuse or agree applications.
- 6.5 A Village Design Statement contains a description and analysis of the distinctive aspects of a village and outlines design guidance for further development. It carries the same restrictions as a Parish Plan. It cannot influence whether an application is refused or agreed.
- 6.6 A Parish Plan or Village Design Statement cost less than a Neighbourhood Plan and is estimated to be in the region of £2,000.
- 6.7 The downside of the Parish Plan and Village Design Statement is that neither has any material influence over development. The community engagement to date has set a clear preference for affordable housing for local people (68% from the Housing Needs Survey), include environment, heritage, village character and their separation which couldn't be delivered through either a Parish Plan or Village Design Statement.
- 6.8 The discussions to date have focused on the benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan, rather than a Parish Plan or Village design Statement. Early community engagement did involve the other options, but the emphasis was on Neighbourhood Planning due to the high level of influence and increased CIL contributions.

7. What are the estimated costs for completing the plan?

- 7.1 In April 2025 an update on spending to date and the long-term funding to complete the plan was issued¹³. It stated that £5,342 of the available £10,000 fund had been spent, that the remaining amount of £4,658 would be spent in the budget year 2025/26. That a further £3,400¹⁴ would be required from additional funding, a total of £8,058.

Grant	23/24	24/25	25/26	Comment
Basic Grant, Tranche 1	£871			Basic Grants 1-3 total £10,000
Basic Grant, Tranche 2		£4,471		
Basic Grant, Tranche 3			£4,658	
Additional Grant			£3,400	
Total	£871	£4,471	£8,058	£13,400

- 7.2 75% of the £4,471 spent in 2024/25 represent consultant fees.
- 7.3 Project cost estimates increased because the consultant was expected to take over from volunteers in drafting the plan, finalising policies, and preparing required statements during the final stages.

¹³ Financial issues for the remainder of Neighbourhood Plan programme – 21st April 2025

¹⁴ Indicative.

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- 7.4 Section 4 listed remaining tasks, noted if they require volunteers, stakeholders, or funding, and identified cost items. The table below estimates costs not covered by volunteers or stakeholders:

Item	Detail	Cost
Consultant	HRA & SEA (Habitat Regulations Assessment & Strategic Environment Assessment) are both processes used in planning, but they serve different purposes. SEA assesses the environmental effects of plans and programmes, while HRA focuses specifically on the potential impacts of plans and projects on European sites designated for their conservation value. Whilst the LPA are responsible, they would normally ask for these to be covered by a technical package through Locality. The scope of these two tasks is still being assessed so it is difficult to get a clear understanding of whether professional support is needed at this stage, and who might be responsible for paying for it.	£700
	“Meeting the basic conditions” refers to the legal requirements that a neighbourhood plan must satisfy to be formally adopted and used to guide planning decisions. These conditions ensure the plan aligns with national and local planning policies, promotes sustainable development, and respects legal and human rights. Both this, and the Consultation statement have technical components that will need to be reviewed. Support has been offered by the LPA but there may need to be a professional assessment undertaken.	£350
Public Consultation	There are two consultations, the first one is for residents, neighbouring Parish’s and stakeholders. This is organised by the Parish Council and likely to involve an exhibition of the plan content, sharing copies of the plan with the aim of collecting feedback. Much of this can be via online resources, stakeholders can be sent a draft, and the community can access via the webpage. Those unable to access the plan electronically will need a paper copy, which can be held at the Village Hall. Supporting materials such as leaflets, posters and a small print run of the draft plan. More work needs to be done to fully understand the scope of the public	£550

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	consultation, but it is effectively a community engagement exercise to gather final comments. The second consultation is undertaken by the LPA and involves a wider assessment of the Plan.	
Routine Costs	Administration – printing and room hire (only for public meetings)	£400

7.5 These costs can only be indicative at this stage and representative of the approach to completing the plan at minimal cost.

7.6 If the Parish Council undertakes to support the completion of the plan through a combination of precept, reserves or other routes to grant funding, governance arrangements will need to be amended to reflect the transfer of funding.

8. Governance

8.1 If the plan progresses, there should be a change to the current governance arrangements detailed in the Terms of Reference (04/10/2022) under whatever funding arrangement is agreed.

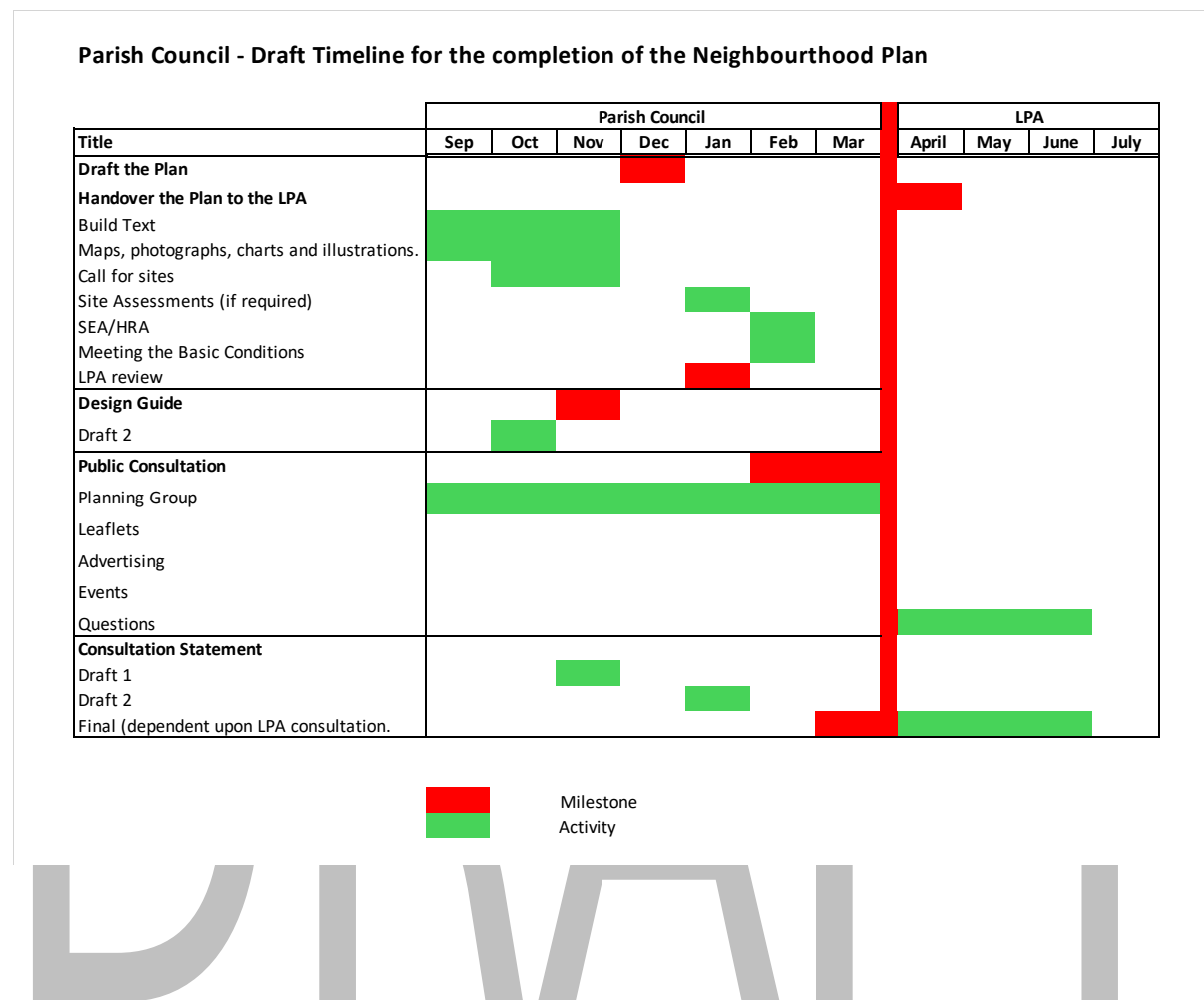
8.2 Government funding under the devolved arrangement would require revision, with the Parish Council leading both financial oversight and plan implementation.

8.3 The structure of any new arrangement will be determined by the Parish Council. The volunteers involved should operate under a revised framework to account for this change. It is proposed to shift from the current Steering Group model to a Parish Council subcommittee, with a designated 'lead' instead of a Chair.

8.4 The subcommittee will serve throughout the project. The plan should be completed by March 2026 and handed over to the LPA for their tasks (external examination, public consultation, referendum and making the Plan), each of which last at least six weeks. The subcommittee may not meet regularly but could be asked to answer questions or make amendments as needed.

END

Appendix A: Draft Timeline for the Neighbourhood Planning Group



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Appendix B: Neighbourhood Plan Spending Summary

Year	23/24		24/25		25/26 (to date)		Total	Total Locality	Total	25	/26 (Proposed)	Total (25/26)	GRAND TOTAL
Source	PC	Locality	PC	Locality	PC	Locality	PC	Locality		PC (8)	Locality		
Budget (2)		1032	1000	5342	670								
Breakdown													
Consultancy													
DinT (3)		700	504.52	3330.94			504.52	4030.94	4535.46			0	4535.46
AECOM (4)				2000		2000	0	4000	4000		2000	2000	6000
Other							0	0	0	1050		1050	1050
Hall Hire (5-7)	261	75	108	333	60		429	408	837	90		90	927
Printing		96.21	61.88	98.37			61.88	194.58	256.46	500		500	756.46
Posters/Publicity				260.5			0	260.5	260.5	360		360	620.5
Parish Online				48			0	48	48			0	48
Website Dev				400			0	400	400			0	400
												0	0
Total	261	871.21	674.4	6470.81	60	2000	995.4	9342.02	10337.42	2000	2000	4000	14337.42
Year Total	1132.21		7145.21		2060		10337.42			4000		14337.42	

Notes

- Figures in italics indicative.
- Locality budgets include only grant components and exclude AECOM funding. PC budgets allocated from reserves, 24/25 (agreed 21 Nov 23) and 25/26 (agreed 4 Feb 25).
- DinT may undertake some of projected consultancy in 25/26.
- Costs of AECOM Design Guide work estimated.
- Hall hire for 23/24 (£261) includes all VH bookings since June 22.
- Large number of NP meetings held in venues other than Hall, attracting no cost.
- Hall hire (25/26) incurred April to June but not yet invoiced; subsequent meetings held in other venues at no cost.
- Basis of 25/26 costs for PC:

Consultancy costs based on two days @£350 for HRA and SEA and one day @£350 to check on meeting basic requirements.

Hall hire assumes 3 X 5 hour public meetings to promote Plan with residents and stakeholders (but no other VH bookings).

Printing costs assume printing 20 copies of draft 80-page plan for consultation at £170; 350 copies of 8 page A4 booklet summarising draft Plan at £250; 350 copies of 4 page A5 leaflet promoting public session at £80.

Posters/publicity costs based on 12 posters @£4 each to advertise engagement and draft plan, £60 for display materials, and £252 for maps and photos in publishing format.

NB PC Costs equate to those in Options paper as follows: Consultancy £700 + £350; Public Consultation Printing £300 + Posters/Publicity £250; Routine Costs Hall Hire £90, Printing £200 + Posters/Publicity £110.

Appendix C: Activities and Outcomes

Governance

The Steering Group was formed by several working groups. A dedicated programme to monitor activities was proposed, with activity initially tracked through 'actions' instead. Working Groups shared updates at monthly meetings, which were recorded in meeting minutes as evidence of progress. As the project became more complex and narrower, a programme replaced much of the working group activity. Steering Group Meeting summaries were reported at Monthly Parish Council Meetings.

Phase 1: Working Groups

Community Engagement: Collecting community input on development, environment, heritage, local business, flooding, transport, and utilities began early to guide all subsequent steps.

Finance: This group was responsible for defining the scope of expenditure, applying to Locality for grant funding, and managing and monitoring spending through the Parish Council, which acted as the recipient organisation for funds relating to the Plan. Additionally, this group conducted the consultant selection process. This working group was active for approximately a year. The tasks were subsequently managed through the Steering Group.

Evidence Working Group: The Neighbourhood Plan must be consistent with the Local Plan and its policies. For example, proposing a block of flats in a field within the National Landscape would not comply with several LPA policies. Community feedback should be considered alongside the Local Plan and relevant policy, and any inconsistencies should be communicated back to the community. This process also involves coordination with external agencies.

Certain tasks were completed directly by the Steering Group, such as developing the Vision and Objectives, while others, including the web page and Housing Needs Survey, were managed outside of the working groups. However, for organisational purposes, all activities have been categorised under working group activity.

Title	Timeline	Activity	Outcome
Community Engagement	2023 – end of the project.	Community engagement plays a central role in shaping Plan themes and outcomes. Regulation 14 requires a consultation statement before submission to the LPA, summarising how public input influences the neighbourhood development plan. The statement details who were consulted, methods used, main issues raised, and how these were addressed, ensuring transparency and accountability. The statement is produced towards the end of the process, as the opportunity for the community to ask	Regulation 14 Consultation Statement (pending).

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		questions runs through till the end of the public consultation phases. A record is kept of all formal interactions with the community in the ‘Community Engagement Tracker’ to aid the production of the Statement.	Puncknowle & Swyre Community Consultation Tracker (Word Doc)
Community Engagement: Collecting views and opinions.	2023 – end of the project.	The views of residents were gathered through a series of questionnaires, liaison with community groups, drop-in sessions, focus groups (heritage, environment, youth) and surveys (business and housing needs). All events were advertised – posters, leaflets etc. Surveys: Group; Community groups were given a short list of questions drawn from Locality guidance (September 2023) – ‘what do you like about where you live, what don’t you like etc.’ Drop-In Sessions: Events were held in each of the main villages over two sessions (November 2023). The event was structured around the same questions answered by community groups, with some extra questions raised through discussions. Business Survey: Posed a series of questions to local businesses (March/April 2024). Housing Needs Survey: Parish Council initiative via Dorset Council requested by the Steering Group to establish the need for housing in the parish.	Outcomes captured in the drop in report below. Report detailing the outcomes form the drop-in sessions and community group feedback. Submitted to the Parish Council before publication. Available on the 3 Villages web page. Report detailing the outcomes from the survey. Submitted to the Parish Council before publication. Available on the 3 Villages web page. Report detailing the outcomes is still with Dorset Council – there has been a presentation to the community (Jan 2025) and the Parish Council.

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		Presentations: Neighbourhood Planning: On 13th May 2023 a presentation to residents over three sessions in the village hall on Neighbourhood Planning. Residents were invited to make comments on housing, heritage, environment, and business presentation boards (using post it notes). Housing & Environment: April 2024 – this event displayed the outcome of aligning the identified community need for affordable housing with the Local Plan and Policy. It also set out environmental maps for the area, heritage sites, flooding and local views. There was also a questionnaire visitors were asked to complete. Focus Groups: Heritage: Community focus group on the identification of heritage assets, both listed and non-listed (that the community would like identified through the Neighbourhood Plan). Environment: Community focus group on the local environment. Hedgerows, footpaths etc. Youth Survey: A group of young people sharing their views developing ideas for a youth survey.	Evidence gathered from the display board post it notes. Outcomes shared in a leaflet to all households. Report detailing the outcomes from the event including results from the questionnaire. Submitted to the Parish Council before publication and available on the 3 Villages web page. Details captured and used in the heritage section of the Topic Paper (see evidence section). Details captured and used in the heritage section of the Topic Paper (see evidence section). Report produced and submitted to the Parish Council for review.
Community Engagement: Vision & Objectives	Ongoing	The project vision, aims and objectives set out what the project will achieve, reflect the ambitions of the community for development in their area. They were shared at the April 2024 event (Housing & Environment).	Vision & Objectives

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Community Engagement: Keeping people updated.	Ongoing	Created a Web Page Monthly email newsletter. Parish Assembly (2022/3/4/5) Parish Council Meetings Dedicated Facebook Page	See Community Engagement Tracker See Community Engagement Tracker See Community Engagement Tracker See Community Engagement Tracker See Community Engagement Tracker
Finance	Sept 2023 till June 2025	The finance working group estimates expenditure and drew down funding to undertake a defined scope of work in the funding period. The scope of spending was broadly defined as consultancy, administration, community engagement activity, web page.	Consultant Scope of Work Consultant Contract Web Page (3 Villages) – hosted by the Parish Council.¹⁵
Finance: Grant Funding		Locality facilitated access to funding for Neighbourhood Planning – routine and technical requirements were met via an application process. Spend was assessed through working groups submitting their estimated cost. Grants were awarded to the Parish Council who would manage payments. Underspend would be returned to Locality at the end of the financial year (March). New grant funding would be confirmed each year by central government – between May and June. The gap between funding would be supported by the Parish Council (3 months) for routine costs, but not consultancy.	Locality Expression of Interest Locality application (3) Finance Forecast (November 2024) Finance Forecast update (to project end) April 2025
Finance Consultant	Sept 2023	Process started to source a September 2024, consultant was appointed in January 2024 – they have supported community engagement, reviewed key documents, milestones, templates for evidence gathering and reviewed evidence and draft policy.	Proposal including approach and pricing. Invoice details work undertaken.

¹⁵ Web page has struggled to get adequate support – the update of documents onto the web page is expected to improve from September.

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Evidence	Feb 2024 – now part of the programme.	Gathering evidence is a crucial step in neighborhood planning. It involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to support the decisions and policies within the draft neighborhood plan. This evidence helps ensure the plan is grounded, reflects community needs, and is consistent with higher-level planning policies. The evidence working group started on 5 February 2024. It concerned itself with the local plan, policies and how the community feedback might be reviewed. This discussion produced a reference grid used to gather evidence.	Document: Themes Issues Tasks and Sources
Phase 2 Project Programme In Autumn 2025, a decision was made to consolidate all activities into a project programme format, designed to unify the various elements of the neighbourhood plan. The structure of the plan was developed collaboratively with the appointed consultant, ensuring comprehensive coverage of all necessary topics. To streamline efforts during this phase, both the finance and community engagement working groups ceased meeting, allowing emphasis to shift towards drafting the plan. Financial matters were managed through the grant application process in coordination with the Parish Council, which oversaw the distribution of required funding. Meanwhile, the evidence working group remained active throughout the evidence-gathering stage. Once the drafting of the neighbourhood plan commenced, this group was also scheduled to disband, having completed its essential role in collecting and organising supporting data.			
Title	Timescale	Activity	Outcome
Evidence Gathering	Nov 24 – Jan 25	The programme aligned the Plan structure headings, which became the headings for the evidence topic papers: • Environment and Biodiversity • Heritage • Business and Economy • Development • Community Assets	Eight draft topic papers produced by 31 st January 31st 2025 (200 pages).

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	Feb 25 – March 25	• Infrastructure - Flooding - Transport - Utilities Each section was assigned to an individual who completed the draft papers between November 2024 and end of January 2025. The content was established against Local Plan sections and policies, National Landscape and key stakeholders within Dorset and external ones relevant to each category. It isn't possible to detail all the components of each of these papers in this document. The consultant undertook discussions re each of the papers with the writers and supplied reference document support. The consultant reviewed the papers, made comments back to the authors and met with the Steering Group to discuss next steps, approach to policy and a community survey, which they felt unnecessary due to the level of engagement already undertaken. The approach to undertaking the plan was also discussed.	As above – this formed part of completing the (draft) papers.
Policy Development	March-May 2025	Policy Development is an outcome of each topic paper. Each policy from the papers were compiled into a review document. This process is ongoing and will inform a rewrite of the topic papers to ensure they reflect any changes to policy through the review process before being incorporated into the plan.	Draft Policies ¹⁶
Plan Development	Sept – Nov 2025	Prior to the withdrawal of funding, it had been decided that the consultant would pull together the draft Plan. The structure of the draft Plan has been agreed.	Draft Plan Structure.

¹⁶ Draft Policies are linked to the Topic Papers, once the policies have been reviewed topic papers will be updated.

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Design Guide/Code	Ongoing	Community feedback generally stated that residents wanted villages to retain their own character and those who attended April 2024 supported the idea of a Design Guide. Local character is difficult to define and put into a format that can instruct the LPA and developers on what defines the character of the villages, and how they need to build in a manner that reflects those characteristics. The first draft of the Design Guide has been completed and reviewed, although felt to have missed a few points. AECOM is reviewing V1 against draft policies.	Draft Design Guide V1. ¹⁷
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¹⁷ Available once reviewed by AECOM Oct/Nov 2025