



Importance of neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood Planning is a valuable tool to allow local people to have more control over the planning process. It gives communities statutory powers to identify priorities and policies that shape development in their area.

The East Herts District Plan requires that the Neighbourhood Plan for Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets provides for at least 94 new homes by 2033. Neighbourhood Planning gives the local community the opportunity to set out where this new housing should go and what it should look like. However, the Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets Neighbourhood Plan is about more than simply delivering housing. The plan's policies cover a range of issues that will positively shape how the village will develop, including:

- Policies on design and density of development
- Protection of key views and heritage assets
- Designation of new local green spaces
- Enhancement of the riverside
- Protection of important wildlife and habitats
- Supporting businesses and farm diversification
- Protection and enhancement of community facilities

Once adopted, neighbourhood plans influence planning decisions and have the same status as the District Plan in the planning application decision-making process.

What happens without a neighbourhood plan?

Policies must align with legal requirements and national planning policies as well as policies contained in the District Plan. Therefore, the Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets Neighbourhood Plan needs to deliver the housing required by Policy VILL1 of the District Plan. At examination, the Neighbourhood Plan Examiner will make sure it meets these requirements.

Policy VILL1 also sets out that where Parish Councils have not submitted a draft Neighbourhood Plan (by 31 March 2021), then the District Council will consider whether it is necessary to identify sites through a Site Allocations Development Plan.

In October 2023 East Herts Council agreed to review the District Plan and evidence base work is now underway. If the Neighbourhood Plan is not progressed, East Herts Council will now consider potential housing sites in Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets as part of the District Plan Review, rather than in a separate Site Allocations Document. This process will also be subject to public consultation and scrutiny, including examination by an Independent Examiner. The main difference

to the neighbourhood plan process, is that East Herts Council would assess and allocate developments sites, as opposed to the parish councils.

Not progressing the Neighbourhood Plan would also be a lost opportunity to bring forward local policies such as key views, the identification of local green spaces and enhancement of the riverside.