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Hold ups continue with Neighbourhood Plan

THE Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for Ross-on-Wye is facing more delays as the Town Council has been asked to decide whether to continue with an approach based on site allocation or a criteria-based approach.

The Ross-on-Wye NDP steering group's latest report to the Town Council was discussed on Monday, January 8th. Mr Reynolds, the chair of the group, which is made up of a team of local volunteers and supported by the Town Council, said that information had been very slow to come from Herefordshire Council. He asked the Town Councillors to decide whether they should keep on with the allocated site approach, which would take longer and possibly incur more costs, or adopt a criteria based approach.

NDPs aims to give communities more power to shape the development and growth of their local area. They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built and have a say on what those new buildings should look like. Neighbourhood planning helps local people get the right types of development for their community aligning their desires with the needs and priori-

ties of the wider local area.

NDPs can either be criteria based, site based or a mixture. When sites are allocated for development this is almost like having outline planning permission for a site, it covers the number of houses which could be built on that specific area and is counted by the government as part of the five year housing supply.

A criteria based only plan will not have the same weight as a site allocation plan and developers would be able to apply for planning permission on random spaces.

In the report Mr Reynolds said: "Unfortunately, however, we have not had useful responses from Herefordshire Council to a number of our questions – meaning that there are too many unresolved issues for us to place proposals before the populace with any confidence. The costs to the Town Council of getting the information that should be forthcoming are probably not justifiable. Given that the gestation period of the plan is now getting unsustainable and the anticipated CIL returns to the Town Council remain uncertain, the NDP sub-committee have had to consider an alternative to

site allocation to take the plan forward."

Councillor Jane Roberts said: "When this process first started we were strongly encouraged by Herefordshire Council to embark on Neighbourhood Planning. But I am concerned about the likelihood of getting all the information we need."

The Mayor, Councillor Nigel Gibbs said that there seems to be two views at Herefordshire Council, those held by the education department and those held by planning which is causing a delay.

The report also referred to the 'replacement school proposals'.

Mr Reynolds told the *Ross Gazette* that the education department is very aware that Ashfield Park School is an 'old building' which needs attention. He said that the planners are more focused on achieving the five year supply of housing but the different departments need to work together as more houses will mean more children and possibly more school places.

Councillor Jenny Hyde suggested that the Councillors could talk to the Neighbourhood Planning team leader at Herefordshire Council, Samantha

Banks as she has been very helpful to other councils. The *Ross Gazette* has contacted Herefordshire Council but had not had a response as we went to press.

Councillor Julian Utting asked if it would be possible to have a time line, they could discuss it at a further meeting with Mr Reynolds and then set a date to make a decision. The Councillors agreed that they needed to discuss it again after a meeting with Mr Reynolds but did not set a date for a decision. Originally it had been hoped that Ross-on-Wye would have a plan by the start of this year, it is now looking increasingly unlikely that it will be ready at the start of next year.

Mr Reynolds told the *Ross Gazette*: "It is going frustratingly slowly, but it is just that creating a NDP for towns is much more complex than for villages. Once the draft Plan has been drawn up it will have to be submitted to Herefordshire Council. Then it will go out for Public Consultation, then time is allowed to resolve any issues before it is submitted again. Finally a Referendum would take place and at the moment it is thought that this could take place in late 2018/early 2019.