

- A Neighbourhood Plan gives the local community the power to develop a shared vision for the future of their area.
- It is important to have a Neighbourhood Plan in place as this will protect the village from unwanted speculative housing development.
- In the event that Central Bedfordshire Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, relevant Local Plan policies which currently restrict development may be treated as out-of-date and the presumption in favour of sustainable development would be triggered.
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) directs that if there is an up to date Neighbourhood Plan in place which also contains policies and allocations to meet the area's identified housing requirement, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is effectively removed.
- In order to allocate sites to protect the village from speculative development, we must show that these will meet an identified housing need. As this need is not identified in the current Central Bedfordshire Local Plan, we need to establish the most up to date, accurate position through a Housing Needs Survey. Central Bedfordshire Council has advised that this is the most appropriate method and is fully supportive of this approach. The Housing Needs Survey will be undertaken by an independent body and will identify the number and type of housing required.
- Once we have established a housing need figure, we will ask for suitable sites to be suggested which could deliver this. The site selection process will be carried out in an open and transparent way, including consultation with the community.
- Each site put forward will be thoroughly appraised by our professional advisors to establish if it is suitable, available and achievable for development in principle and, if so, whether it would be appropriate to allocate in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- It is important to note that the Housing Needs Survey will not open up the door to development on Green Belt land. A Neighbourhood Plan cannot allocate land in the Green Belt, as this would be contrary to existing adopted strategic policy.
- The Government advises in the Planning Practice Guidance that 'Allocating sites and producing housing policies demonstrates that the Neighbourhood Plan is planning positively for new homes, and provides greater certainty for developers, infrastructure providers and the community. In turn this also contributes to the local authorities' housing land supply, ensuring that the right homes are delivered in the right places.'
- The Government is committed to seeing Neighbourhood Plans come forward given the benefits they provide to local communities. In proposed changes to the NPPF, the Government is seeking to boost the status of Neighbourhood Plans by strengthening their role in the protection of speculative housing proposals and to give them greater weight in decision making for longer.
- Having a Neighbourhood Plan in place in the short term also means that we can establish planning policies on matters which are important to the community to guide local planning decisions. This can include protection of valued green spaces and establishing design policies to ensure that any new development is high quality and respects the character of the village. We have recently secured funding for a Design Code to be produced to assist with this.

- The anticipated timescales mean that a targeted review of the Neighbourhood Plan could be undertaken if the Aspley Triangle land comes forward as a future allocation in the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan Review and related policies can be established to influence this future development for the benefit of the community.