

Adele Waddington
Parish Clerk & RFO
Trawden Forest Parish Council

BY EMAIL

Date 25 February 2025
Our Ref 5025_007

Dear Adele,

TRAWDEN FOREST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW: OUTLINE PROPOSAL

Thank you for your time earlier to discuss the project with me. As promised, I set out below an outline proposal for the Parish Council to consider.

Background to ONH Planning for Good

Firstly, I will briefly introduce my consultancy. We have helped over 200 communities of all shapes and sizes across 63 different planning authority areas to produce neighbourhood plans since 2012. Of those we have helped end to end through the process, including some 30 reviews of made plans, more than 120 have successfully passed their examinations and referendums. No other planning consultancy has anywhere near this breadth of experience.

We work almost exclusively for town and parish councils, including advising on major planning applications and appeals and on making representations on emerging Local Plans. We also advise on how land and property assets owned by the council may have greater community value and development potential.

Our team of seven includes three former town clerks, each of whom has either a professional planning qualification or extensive practical experience, and all successfully led their respective neighbourhood plan projects before joining us. Not only are we therefore able to cover planning matters, but we also understand the operational and political challenges that these projects present to local councils.

Please have a look at the project examples on our website and let me know if you would like any client references.

Scope of Work

When you first got in touch in 2023 you asked about adding a design code and environmental policies to your new plan and my proposal still stands.

Design Code

For the design code we would help you to reflect and supplement the made TFNP policies on areas of townscape character, heritage assets, parking and open spaces in the Code, but also Pendle's adopted 'Design Principles' and 'Conservation Area Design & Development Guidance' documents and new Borough Design Code.

Although a technical exercise we encourage communities to participate in identifying and valuing design characteristics of their place – building forms, materials, spaces, views etc – with guided walkabouts of the main settlement areas and their settings. The existing design evidence (in Policy 7 of your plan) and the Conservation Area Appraisal provide a useful starting point but we expect more can be done to give that work greater clarity and weight in determining future planning applications. We would aim to engage with officers at Pendle BC if they are able and willing.

In addition, we would encourage you to use the online drafting, engagement and presentation method that I demonstrated on our call (i.e. [the Sandleheath Neighbourhood Plan](#)). We have found it a far more engaging and effective way of encouraging participation from client teams and the local community and of making the information accessible. Of course, it can be exported for offline publication purposes where necessary.

Environmental Policies

For the environmental policies we would discuss our case studies of environmental policies successfully produced for other NPs, including green infrastructure/local nature recovery networks (LNRN), biodiversity net gain (BNG)/offsetting, zero carbon building (PassivHaus) standards and renewable energy generation, leading to the drafting of one or more new policies with their supporting text, essential evidence base and associated mapping.

We have built an especially strong portfolio of examples of leading edge policy development that we can share with you. This is a fast-evolving area of policy innovation, driven by communities' increasing interest in using their plans to contribute to tackling climate change and by national policy initiatives like Biodiversity Net Gain. You can see a recent example from another parish like yours ([Ecchinswell in Hampshire](#) made in May 2024) in its Policy ESBG12 and supporting maps.

We would have a session with your team for which we would produce some mapping in advance. We would help the team agree what it wanted to do and we would work with them to supplement and finalise the maps and gather any other evidence. We normally try to liaise with the county wildlife trust and other similar stakeholders to supplement and validate the mapped data. Again, Pendle BC officers may want to participate.

We would finish by producing one or more draft policies etc for discussion with the team and then modifying them as necessary for the consultation version, and again for submission based on comments received.

This type of policy work would also benefit from the online method described above, as you saw at Sandleheath, so the Code and new Plan are seen as a whole.

Other Plan Review Matters

We also discussed the bigger picture of national planning policy changes and the approach being taken by Pendle BC to its new Local Plan, especially on its housing supply strategy and submission timing. It is likely you may need to do more than add the design code and new environmental policies, by considering making new or replacement housing allocations to give your new plan a longer shelf life and greater weight in decision making.

If the Parish Council wishes we would be happy to agree another scope of work to assist you in bringing forward other policy proposals. In such cases, clients normally ask for our help in carrying out the site assessment work and translating that into site allocation policies, leaving other technical work (for example the strategic environmental assessment) to the (free) technical support offered through the Government's Neighbourhood Plan Support Programme (see below).

Once that is done we then help analyse responses to the statutory consultation plan and produce the final paperwork for submission. In most cases we are retained to advise clients through the examination and referendum stages. Again, we now normally use the online method to produce all the necessary documentation.

Fees

As proposed before, the design code will require 12 days and the environmental policies 3 days. Included in those days are two days for a visit and in-person team meeting. All other meetings and liaison will be online/email/phone, which is how almost all our projects operate, no matter how close or far away they are from our base. We will also require an expense budget of £500 to cover travel and mapping licence expenses.

However, for 2025/26 we are having to increase our fees to cover higher business operating costs (including National Insurance and energy bills). But we appreciate that local councils' budgets are tight so we have kept the increase to a minimum. The cost is therefore now £11,250 + VAT plus the expenses noted above.

If you are also interested in our online method then this will cost £495 + VAT per annum for a three year contract (which includes us building and hosting the website on your behalf with a service level agreement). This will cover the full plan preparation period and at least a year after it is made to allow for integration with Pendle BC's systems. You may choose to extend the contract period thereafter.

If you consider that you may need help with the other plan review matters then as a guide, most projects require another 30 or so days and therefore an additional fee of approx. £20,000. However, we are confident that the new Support Programme will be available from 1 July 2025 (if not earlier) until 2027 or 2028 and will contribute approx. £20,000 of grant support. More will be known on this very shortly.

As the grant may not be available until late summer – and will not pay for work already invoiced – you will need to meet part of the project cost from your own budget until then, if you wish to start in the spring. Once the programme timetable is confirmed I would be happy to take the risk of waiting for you to secure your grant before raising later invoices to ensure you are able to maximise its use.

Once the Parish Council has had time to consider this outline proposal in respect of its preferred approach and available budget I would be happy to discuss how you could make the most of our help and to make sure our scope fits with your budget.

We would certainly relish the opportunity to work with you, Philippa and the team in a beautiful part of the country so hope this outline proposal meets your expectations.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Homer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Neil Homer MBA MRTPI
Managing Director
07833 462991