

City of Wells Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2029

Regulation 14 Consultation Version

CONSULTATION

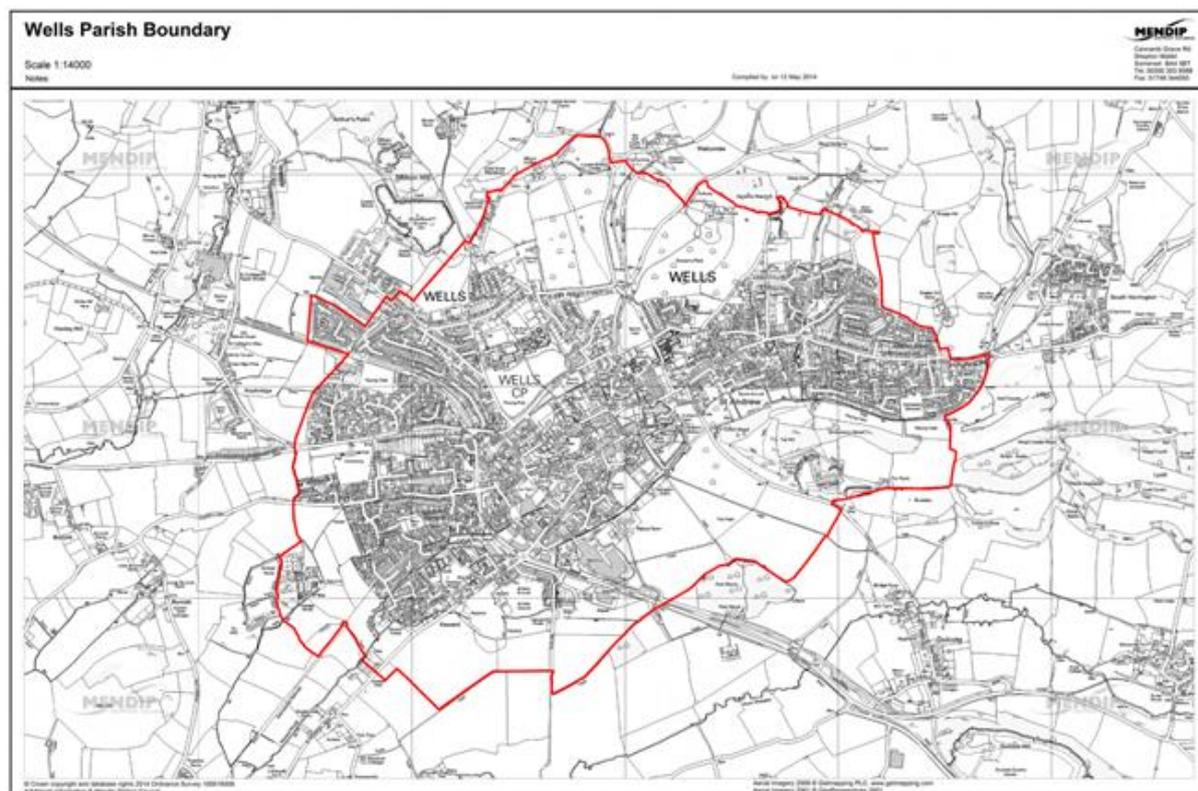
5th September 2022 - 21st October 2022



YOUR CITY, YOUR SAY. WE NEED YOUR VIEWS!

Introduction

This summary explains what the City of Wells Neighbourhood Plan is and summarises the Plan's areas of focus and the planning policies it contains. The full draft version of the Plan and all associated documents can be viewed online on the City Council website (<https://www.wells.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan>). The Plan covers the Parish of the City of Wells (outlined in red below).



Note: The map base produced by Ordnance Survey is the most up-to-date available at the time of publication of this Plan and so some recent development may not show on the map.

The Plan was originally consulted upon in 2014 and was broadly supported by the community. However, after that point the City Council disbanded the group of volunteers producing the Plan. Following election of a new City Council in May 2019, a decision was taken to revive the Neighbourhood Plan. A new Steering Group was established and this draft is the fruit of their labours, being updated and further supplemented by additional research.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan is a planning strategy produced for local areas. It is a Plan written by the community and for the community and is produced, typically, for Parish areas.

Once the Plan has gone through the required procedures and tests, it carries statutory “weight” in the planning system and has to be taken into account by Mendip District Council as Local Planning Authority (and the successor Unitary Council), alongside national planning policies, the “strategic planning policies”



contained in the Local Plan and “material considerations”, when considering planning applications. When finalised the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the “development plan” alongside the adopted Local Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan must only have policies which relate to land-use planning and development matters within the defined Plan area (the Parish). It should not repeat other planning policies (at the district or national level), and policies should add local detail not already provided by Local Plan policies. Those actions, programmes and projects which do not typically require planning permission or are not about the use of land or buildings will not have policy coverage, although they can be referenced in the Plan if they help to convey wider issues of importance.

The Plan must pass tests set by the Government, including “general conformity” (alignment) with national and district planning policies and undergoing thorough public consultation. The Plan and its policies have to follow specific legal requirements and meet various national tests and rules.

You can find out more about the process and these rules at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>.

What is the Plan's Vision?

We have developed a Vision for the Plan which sets out the “direction of travel” for the Plan and its content (shown in the box below).

Wells Vision

1. Wells will continue to be an attractive place to live, work and visit; sufficiently compact to retain its distinctive identity whilst accommodating the growth necessary to ensure its economic viability.
2. Wells will have accommodated its additional residents in housing that not only matches their material and economic needs, but which also contributes to the distinctive nature of its surroundings and incorporates high standards of design, energy efficiency and sustainability.
3. Parking will be made available where possible to meet the needs of residents and visitors while ensuring that the historic character of the city is not compromised.
4. The increase in population will sustain and develop the service and employment base in Wells, providing the necessary economic growth and reducing the need for in-commuting.
5. The additional population will have good access to health and education facilities.
6. The city centre will be thriving and vibrant, providing a range of retail and other services and facilities.
7. The character of the City's heritage and its landscape setting will be protected and enhanced.
8. The people of Wells will have good access to open spaces, play equipment and recreation facilities.
9. The visitor economy will have developed sustainably to be a strong sector, with employment opportunities and attracting sufficient investment to sustain the visitor attractions.
10. Wells will have achieved, or be close to achieving, carbon neutrality. Businesses and residents of Wells will have knowledge and understanding of the steps necessary to prevent catastrophic climate change and biodiversity loss.

What are the Plan's Main Themes?

The Plan sets out several themes, or topics, drawn from the key issues identified in previous consultations. These are:

- Heritage and the Built Environment
- Housing
- Moving Around
- Retail and Commercial Buildings
- Tourism
- Environment

For each topic, we developed Aims and Objectives to help identify and guide the issues on which we require planning policies. These are presented in detail in the full draft Plan.

What are the Plan's policies?

The Plan's policies are particularly important as they are the part of the Plan which carry statutory or legal "weight" in the planning system. We have not reproduced policy wording in full in this leaflet due to limitations on space and so we encourage you to take a look at the draft Plan itself to view them in full. However, we have summarised, in very broad terms, the "direction of travel" of each policy, so that you have a good idea of the focus of the topics and policies. As all policies carry the same "weight" in the planning system, they are not set out in any priority order.

A key theme running through the Plan is that our policies should seek to protect what we value and what is special, enhance existing provision of facilities and assets and provide support for additional facilities and development subject to being a response to demand and local needs, while ensuring that there is no adverse impact on the things that we value the most in our natural and built environments.

It should be noted that where our policies seek to protect areas of land, such as Local Green Space, these remain proposals at the current time and we have attempted to contact landowners about these areas prior to this consultation. We will continue to seek to engage with landowners during the development of the Plan.



Heritage and the Built Environment

- Policy HBE1: Heritage and the Built Environment This policy seeks to ensure that development respects and protects the heritage value of Wells. It introduces the Wells Design Guide as a core part of the Plan.
- Policy HBE2: Local Heritage Assets This policy requires planning proposals to take into account local heritage assets.

Housing

- Policy H1: Responding to Local Housing Demand and Needs This policy seeks to ensure that housing development which comes forward in the city does so in a way which responds positively to housing need in Wells.
- Policy H2: High Quality Housing Design This policy reiterates and signposts the importance of the Wells Design Guide when housing proposals come forward. It also draws out particularly criteria which housing proposals should meet in order to achieve “high quality design” in the Wells context.
- Policy H3: Housing Fit for the Future This policy encourages housing proposals to exceed carbon emission reduction and energy efficiency standards set out by the Government in Building Regulations.

Moving Around

- Policy MA1: Constraints and Opportunities on the Local Highway, Cycleway and Footpath Network This policy introduces and supports the Wells Transport Plan set out in the “Moving Around” section of the Plan.



Retail and Commercial Buildings

- RCB1: New Development within the Primary Frontages This policy supports proposals which change the primary retail frontages in the city centre where they demonstrate that they will enhance the city centre’s vibrancy, overall offer and historic value.

- Policy RCB2: Commercial Development and Responding to Climate Change
This policy encourages development proposals for commercial and business uses to exceed carbon emission reduction and energy efficiency standards set out by the Government in Building Regulations.



- Policy RCB3: Supporting the Local Economy through Provision of Small Employment Premises and Workspace Hubs This policy provides support for small and micro businesses given the important role that they play in helping to maintain and grow the local economy.

Tourism

- Policy TOU1: Tourism This policy supports proposals which enable a wider range of visitor attractions and accommodation to be delivered to support the local economy as long as they do not compromise what makes Wells special.



Environment

- Policy ENV1: Protecting the Character of the Landscape, Views and Setting
This policy seeks the protection of important views and vistas in Wells in the context of the landscape setting of the city.

- Policy ENV2: Nature Recovery Network (including protected areas of biodiversity, geodiversity and habitat) This policy sets out Wells' Nature Recovery Network, designed to support green and blue infrastructure areas and corridors used by wildlife, protect their habitats from further loss and sustain them into the future by growing the size and extent of biodiversity and habitats which are both local and strategic in nature.
- Policy ENV3: Local Green Space This policy designates local green spaces as areas which should be protected from loss and substantial change. These are mostly recreational and amenity areas important to local people, most of which are publicly accessible.



What community projects has the Plan identified?

We have identified several community projects which relate to various key issues identified during consultation. Some of these can only be delivered outside of the planning system or only in part. These actions and projects are likely to be explored and / or delivered by more than one responsible organisation, authority, agency or association and will require partner working. The City Council will help to facilitate the projects where appropriate where there is not already a lead organisation pursuing them or the lead organisation is not identified in the action or project. These projects have been summarised below. For further detail, please see the full version of the Plan.

Project 1 - The landscape setting of Wells must be maintained. The City Council will work with Mendip District Council (and their successor Unitary Authority after 1st April 2023) to complete a Settlement Setting Assessment.

Project 2 - Wells City Council will work with Wells Civic Society and Mendip District Council (and their successor Unitary Authority after 1st April 2023) to create and maintain a Non-designated Heritage Assets list.

Project 3 - The City Council will carry out an independent survey of local retailers, shoppers and pedestrians to help clarify traffic calming options in the High Street.

Project 4 - The City Council will work with Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council (and their successor Unitary Authority after 1st April 2023) to improve parking signage within Wells and seek appropriate solutions to the shortage of parking within the City.

Project 5 - The City Council will work with Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council (and their successor Unitary Authority after 1st April 2023) and relevant service providers to improve the provision of bus services to, from and within the City.

Project 6 - The City Council will work with: Visit Somerset, the Cathedral, the Bishop's Palace and the Chamber of Commerce to promote the visitor economy; event and festival organisers to help ensure their success; and, Mendip District Council (and the successor Unitary Authority after 1st April 2023) to refurbish the Coach Station as a more attractive interchange for visitors.

Project 7 - Because planning is spatial, the City Council will work with neighbouring parish councils to consider developments that may impact the environment beyond their respective boundaries.

Project 8 - The city council will develop projects to enhance biodiversity

How do I respond?

There is a comments form at the back of this leaflet. It is also available on the website (<https://www.wells.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan>). It will help us to analyse comments we receive if you can respond to particular policies or sections of the Plan.

Comments can be emailed to wellsnplan@gmail.com or posted to the City Council at: Secretary of Steering Group, City of Wells Neighbourhood Plan, c/o Wells Town Hall, Market Place, Wells, BA5 2RB.

The consultation is open from Monday the 5th of September to Friday the 21st of October.

Where do I find out more?

You can see a full version of the draft Plan, and supporting documents on the City Council website at <https://www.wells.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan>.

If you wish to see a paper copy of the Plan, you can access a copy of the Plan by contacting us via the email address, phone number or postal address below.

Post: Secretary of Steering Group, City of Wells Neighbourhood Plan,
c/o Wells Town Hall, Market Place, Wells, BA5 2RB.

E-mail: wellsnplan@gmail.com Telephone: 01749 673091

What's Next?

Following consultation, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and City Council will review all comments. The Plan will be **revised late this year - 2022**. We intend to then **submit the Plan to the Local Planning Authority** (currently Mendip District Council, but soon to be the new Somerset Unitary Authority). The Local Planning Authority then runs a final consultation, after which comments and the Plan itself are considered by an independent Examiner at a **Public Examination**. The Examiner will assess the Plan using planning tests set by the Government. If the Plan passes those tests, it will be finalised and be subject to a **local Referendum** when all eligible residents in the Plan area (Parish) will vote on whether to accept the Plan for use in the planning system, or not. If a majority support the Plan it becomes a legal planning document in the planning system, being **“made” (formally adopted)** by the LPA.

You are invited to put your questions and comments not only by email or by letter but also at any of the following meetings:

Monday 10th October at 7 pm at Wells Rugby Club or

Tuesday 11th October at 4 pm at Wells Golf Club or

Wednesday 12th October at 7 pm with Wells Civic Society at Wells Museum or

Monday 17th October at 2 pm at Wells Town Hall.

**City of Wells Neighbourhood Plan
Regulation 14 Public Consultation
Comments Form**

Please use this form to provide comments on the draft Plan and its associated documents. Please state to which page number, section or policy your comment refers, unless it is a general comment about the Plan as a whole.

You can post or drop-off your comments to: Neighbourhood Plan Consultation, Secretary of Steering Group, City of Wells Neighbourhood Plan, c/o Wells Town Hall, Market Place, Wells, BA5 2RB. You can also email your response to wellsnplan@gmail.com (please insert “Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Response” in the subject line).

The deadline for comments to be received is Friday 21st October. Thank you.

Name:

**Title / Organisation /
Business (if not an individual):**

Address:

Postcode:

(even if you do not give your full address, your postcode will be useful to help us with analysis)

Email address:

*Resp. no.
(office use only)*

You do not have to give your contact details, although it is helpful for us to understand where in the City of Wells you live in relation to some comments made and you may wish to provide your details to be contacted in the future about progress with the Plan. Individuals’ comments will be anonymised in the report of comments received, which will be made public following consultation. Organisations, agencies, private businesses and consultants etc. will normally be named, but if you are representing one of these, please indicate if you would prefer that your response is anonymised.

| Page no. / section / policy reference | Comments |
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