

Item 12 – Colne Neighbourhood Plan Update

Briefing Note for Councillors and the Advisory Committee.

Subject: Neighbourhood Plan Review – Key Outcomes from Officer/Consultant Meeting

Purpose: To summarise discussions, emerging direction, and agreed next steps

1. Background

- The meeting took place against a backdrop of **major planning uncertainty**, including:
 - Pending adoption of the Pendle Local Plan.
 - Forthcoming **Local Government Reorganisation**, with Pendle Borough Council perceived to be abolished by 2028.
 - Further anticipated changes to the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**.
- The overarching aim is to ensure **Colne has a robust, up-to-date Neighbourhood Plan** that provides certainty and protection ahead of the transition to a new unitary authority.

2. Overall Direction of the Neighbourhood Plan Review

- The existing Neighbourhood Plan is considered **fundamentally sound**.
- The review will focus on **updating and strengthening policies**, not rewriting the Plan from scratch.
- Emphasis will be on making policies **clearer, more locally specific and more effective in decision-making**.

3. Key Areas of Change Identified

The following areas were agreed as priorities for update or enhancement:

- **Town Centre and High Street Regeneration**
 - Incorporation of the recently completed **Masterplan**, including Craddock Road and Newmarket Street.
 - Stronger regeneration focus to support investment and activity.
- **Regeneration of the South Valley**
 - Recognition that this area faces long-standing viability challenges.
 - Agreement that a **regeneration-led policy approach** is appropriate and defensible.
 - Delivery will not be relied upon to meet housing targets but supported as a long-term opportunity.
- **Land and Sites**
 - Pendle Council is disposing of multiple assets, some of which Colne Town Council may acquire.
 - There is **no requirement to allocate additional housing sites**, as Colne's housing target remains zero.
 - Any consideration of sites will be:
 - Transparent
 - Based on planning merit, not ownership
 - Carefully managed to avoid conflicts of interest
 - A clear distinction will be maintained between **planning policy** and **asset management / regeneration delivery**.
- **Design and Conservation**
 - Key design requirements to be written directly into Neighbourhood Plan policies (rather than relying on external documents).
 - Stronger policies on boundaries, parking, dormers and local character.

- Conservation area policies to include **locally specific statements of character and special interest**, aligned with updated character appraisals.
- **Additional Policy Topics**
 - Management of **HMOs**, subject to national and local policy constraints.
 - Embedding the forthcoming **Lancashire Nature Recovery Strategy**.
 - Addition of further **non-designated heritage assets**.

4. Process and Timescales

- A **site visit and policy review session** is provisionally scheduled for **January**.
- This will inform:
 - Refinement of policy direction
 - Decisions on how (and whether) sites are addressed in the Plan
- A detailed **project plan and timetable** will be prepared following this work.
- The intention is to complete the Neighbourhood Plan review **during 2026**, ahead of the new unitary authority.

5. Key Messages for Councillors

- The review is **evolutionary, not radical**.
- No increase in housing requirement is proposed.
- The Plan will place greater emphasis on **regeneration, design quality and local distinctiveness**.
- The objective is to **future-proof Colne**, ensuring strong local policies are in place before wider structural changes to local government.