

People living in Huntingdon are set to go to the polls over a proposed neighbourhood plan which will give them more of a say on development in their area.

A referendum on the plan is likely to take place on September 19 and if, as is expected, residents approve it, Huntingdonshire District Council will rubber-stamp the decision on October 9.

Cllr Tom Sanderson, who chaired the town council-based group which drew up the plan, said: "It will put the community in the driving seat a bit more.

"I hope we get a good turn out for the referendum."

The plan, which looks into areas including development and green spaces, has been submitted to an independent examiner and, after modifications, can now go to the vote. It will be used to influence future planning applications.

Voters will be asked a single question: "Do you want Huntingdonshire District Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Huntingdon to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?"

Cllr Sanderson said: "I think it will be a big boost for Huntingdon. It will give at least some input into the planning challenges we have got."

He said the plan would also bring a bigger share of the building levy imposed on developers, with money going into a pot for community projects.

Cllr Sanderson said it had been "useful" for the sub-committee, involving town councillors and residents, to work with the district council in drawing up the plan and that the inspector had been "very pleased" with it.

The district council expects to cover the extra costs of holding a referendum from a £20,000 Government fund.

The plan area ranges from Hinchingsbrooke in the west, to Godmanchester, which has its own plan, in the south, to the St Ives junction in the east and Sapley in the north.

It has four main objectives: to promote the town's potential for investment and the opportunities it brings, to make sure the whole community is provided for, to protect and enhance where possible distinctive local features, and to ensure the community has a transport infrastructure which is fit for purpose.

In his report, the examiner, Andrew Freeman, said: "It is evident that a considerable amount of time and effort has been devoted to the development and production of the plan and I congratulate all those who have been involved."

"The plan should be a useful tool for future planning and change in Huntingdon over the coming years."

12 July 2019