2017

THE GOOD COUNCILLOR'S GUIDE TO NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

This guide is designed specifically to help parish and town councillors support their communities and council in deciding whether or not to produce a neighbourhood plan for their area and, if they decide to go ahead, to guide them through the process of producing the plan and thinking about how it will be delivered.

WELCOME

Tony Armstrong
Chief Executive, Locality

THIS GUIDE IS AIMED at parish and town councillors who are involved in or thinking about, producing a neighbourhood plan and for those who are just curious to find out more. Whilst other guides are predominantly concerned with the legislation and process, we have attempted, wherever possible, to include guidance on good practice for carrying out each part of the plan.

This guide draws upon the experience of Locality and its partners who are working with community groups preparing neighbourhood plans through the national support programme. We have worked with a wide range of organisations, parish councils in particular and neighbourhood forums in urban and rural areas.

Locality is the national network of ambitious and enterprising community-led organisations, working together to help neighbourhoods thrive. Our members work to improve their local neighbourhoods and communities and are very effective in delivering community facilities, regenerating buildings and creating new opportunities across the country.

When local communities are empowered to lead and influence decision-making, it makes a real difference in their area. People with passion and enthusiasm can use neighbourhood planning as a means to change their neighbourhoods for the better. Our hope is that this guide will help you in your endeavours as a local councillor to shape and enhance your local area, improve opportunities and quality of life for all and create more prosperous local economies. This community-led approach is fundamentally what Locality is about.

Sue Baxter
Chairman of the National Association of Local Councils

ON BEHALF OF the National Association of Local Councils it gives me great pleasure to introduce the National Improvement Strategy publication *The Good Councillor's guide to neighbourhood planning*.

This guide is aimed at parish and town councillors who are interested in finding out more about their role in relation to neighbourhood planning or perhaps belong to a council who are embarking on producing a neighbourhood plan for their area.

Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Communities can shape development in their areas through the production of neighbourhood development plans and other initiatives detailed in this guide.

Given these rights have a huge bearing on how a council engages with its community to undertake the process it is vital that local councillors understand the key principles of neighbourhood planning in order to support their communities appropriately.

For these reasons Locality and NALC have worked together to produce this guide in order local councillors are equipped with the basic information to get them started. However it does not stop here and there will be a need for councillors to find out more as the process unfolds. To assist we have provided a range or links and signposts as to where additional information can be accessed. I wish you every success and I am confident that this guide will help you to develop your role as a good councillor.

INTRODUCTION

Neighbourhood planning was introduced in 2011. Local communities, via neighbourhood forums in unparished areas and town/parish councils where they exist, can produce neighbourhood plans for their area, putting in place a vision and policies for its future development. This presents real opportunities, but can seem a little daunting.

This guide is designed specifically to help parish and town councillors support their communities and council in deciding whether or not to produce a neighbourhood plan for their area and, if they decide to go ahead, to guide them through the process of producing the plan and thinking about how it will be delivered. The 'roadmap' in section one not only gives guidance on the requirements of the legislation, but also on best practice and how to avoid pitfalls. In particular, it emphasises the need for a robust evidence base and effective community engagement as an essential part of producing a realistic plan seen to be owned by its local community.

The first part of the roadmap describes what neighbourhood planning is about and discusses some of the opportunities and challenges. It contains advice to help communities decide whether a neighbourhood plan is right for them or whether a different type of planning tool, such as a village design statement, might be more appropriate. The second part of the roadmap provides guidance on producing a neighbourhood plan, from getting a neighbourhood area designated to the public referendum and 'making' of the plan.

Section two of the guide has been designed to highlight the specific points in the neighbourhood planning process that councillors can become involved with and offers further guidance on a number of areas critical to a plan's success.

NALC and Locality are extremely grateful to all those who contributed to the writing of this guide. Particular thanks go to **Ron Simpson BEM of Uppingham Town Council**. A Neighbourhood Planning Champion, Ron has over 50 years' local governance experience as both an officer and as a councillor. As a Director of Community Partnership Uppingham First, he was lead author on the acclaimed Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan, a government front runner.

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NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING ROADMAP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

The following guidance gives an overview of the process of writing a neighbourhood plan. For more detailed information about the process of neighbourhood planning please see the Locality neighbourhood planning roadmap **at** mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-plan-roadmap-guide**.**

The three main stages of producing a neighbourhood plan are outlined below, however the reality of neighbourhood planning is often more complex, with different stages running in parallel.

STAGE ONE – GETTING ESTABLISHED

MAKING THE DECISION TO PREPARE A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Neighbourhood planning enables communities to take the lead in producing part of the statutory development plan for the area. Crucially, unlike a parish plan, these neighbourhood plans are a statutory document and must be used to determine planning applications in a neighbourhood area.

It can represent a serious commitment and any town or parish council considering preparing a neighbourhood plan will need to carefully weigh the advantages and opportunities of writing a neighbourhood plan against

the time and cost implications and other considerations to help make an informed decision.

Opportunities may include:

- The plan's statutory status and greater influence over planning decisions
- More say on detailed matters than the local plan
- Community leadership
- Dialogue with a range of organisations
- Specifying sites to be developed or where growth will be concentrated
- Support for community projects and self-build initiatives
- Receipt of 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies.

The parish council should consider the **adequacy of existing policy**. If existing policy is robust and relevant to the neighbourhood area in question then there may be no need for a neighbourhood plan, or a simpler and more selective neighbourhood plan could be produced.

Alternatives to a neighbourhood plan can also be taken into account. There are more informal plans such as community or parish plans but these do not have statutory status.

Another alternative is to produce an Area Action Plan in partnership with the local authority.

Consultation fatigue – There may be a reluctance to produce a neighbourhood plan if there have been recent programmes of community engagement for other types of plans such as parish or community plans. However, if such consultation has been done well, and there is plenty of information and views were formally recorded, it could inform the neighbourhood plan, so it would not be necessary to start again.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCESS

1. GETTING STARTED

Clarify why a plan is needed
Publicise the intention to produce a plan
Identify and contact key local partners
Dialogue with the local planing authority
Produce a project plan with costings

2. NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

Determine the neighbourhood area
Submit area proposal
Local Planning Authority consults*
Local Planning Authority approve the proposal

3. NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Put together a prospective neighbourhood forum
Submit a forum proposal
Local Planning Authority consults*
Local Planning Authority determine the area.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & INVOLVEMENT

Publicity
Engage local partners
Initial community engagement (broad issues)
Provide feedback
Ongoing community engagement (aims, content, detail.)

* Minimum time: six weeks

5. BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

Renew existing evidence
Identify gaps in evidence
Complete new evidence
Analysis of evidence

6. THEMES, AIMS VISION, OPTIONS

Identify key issues and themes
Prioritise key issues and themes
Develop key aims
Look at options

7. WRITING THE PLAN

Policies, proposals, site allocation
Consider sustainability, diversity, equality & delivery

8. CONSULTATION

Consultation on plan*
Amend the plan

9. SUBMISSION

Submit to Local Planning Authority
Local Planning Authority publicises

10. INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION

Local Planning Authority appoints examiner
Examination takes place
Examiner's report

THE PLAN IS MADE

In all cases we would recommend you speak to your local planning authority in the first instance to discuss alternatives.

SETTING UP A STEERING GROUP AND DESIGNATING THE AREA

The town or parish council is the qualifying body for leading a neighbourhood plan. However it is very important that the process is open to the wider community and allows them to play an active role in preparing a neighbourhood plan. This helps to ensure that the neighbourhood plan is community-led and engages with a wide range of interests and should ensure a successful 'yes' vote at referendum. Often a town or parish council may choose to establish a separate working group or steering committee to undertake the majority of the work on the neighbourhood plan. This will be done under **section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972** legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/102.

Members of these steering groups would have voting rights under **section 13(3), (4)(e) or (4)(h) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989** legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/42/section/13.

The terms of reference for a steering group or other body should be published and the minutes of meetings made available to the public.

It should be noted that although the steering group may undertake work on the neighbourhood plan, the town and parish council is the body ultimately accountable for the formal stages of the neighbourhood plan.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

The first formal step of the neighbourhood planning process is to designate the neighbourhood area. For town and parish councils there is an assumption that the neighbourhood area will be the same as the parish boundary. However, they may choose a smaller and more focused area, such as a town or local centre. Also, adjacent parish/town councils may agree to work in partnership to produce a joint neighbourhood plan. Once the area has been identified, it will need to be submitted to the local planning authority for designation.

It should be noted, there can be only one neighbourhood area for each neighbourhood plan and only one neighbourhood plan for each neighbourhood area.

DUTY TO SUPPORT

Once the neighbourhood area is designated by the local planning authority, that authority is legally required to produce advice and assistance to those bodies producing a neighbourhood plan in its area. This 'duty to support' is not defined but could include things like:

- Making existing data and maps available for the evidence base
- Identifying key local strategic policies from the Local Plan
- Advising on relevant national policies/guidance
- Sharing information on key contacts, stakeholders and best practice plan-making activity
- Making available venues and helping to arrange community engagement activities
- Checking the plan prior to formal submission
- Providing technical support, such as assistance in laying out and illustrating a plan and writing plan policies
- Setting up a neighbourhood planning web page on the local authority's website.

STAGE TWO – PREPARING THE PLAN

BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

The National Planning Policy Framework requires neighbourhood plans to be evidence based. Planning policies need to be based on clear rational and proper understanding of the place they relate to, if they are to be relevant, realistic and to address local issues effectively. The evidence base needs to be proportionate to the size of the neighbourhood area and scope and detail of the neighbourhood plan. You can find out further information about this at mycommunity.org.uk.

There are two main stages of building the evidence base. The first of these is to review existing evidence. The second is to identify and develop any further evidence required, either because there is no existing evidence or because there needs to be a clearer focus on the particular neighbourhood.

REVIEW EXISTING EVIDENCE

This may include things such as:

- The evidence underpinning the local plan
- Socio-economic data for the parish or ward
- Technical reports
- Mapping of local areas
- Community plans or parish plans for the area.

It may also be necessary to develop new evidence (or update existing evidence) at the neighbourhood level.

In addition there should be a dialogue with the local planning authority, which will be able to provide supporting evidence or signpost to other organisations that can help.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Effective community engagement is essential right from the beginning of the process. Good community engagement will create a well-informed plan and a sense of ownership from the wider community. A failure to do so may increase the risk of an adverse outcome at the formal consultation, publicity and referendum stages. You can read further information about this at mycommunity.org.uk.

Community engagement should be an on-going process of consultation rather than a stop-start series of exercises.

Examples of possible kinds of neighbourhood-level evidence are:

ECONOMIC

- » Business surveys
- » Vacancy/floor space surveys
- » Available sites surveys
- » Land values

ENVIRONMENT

- » Heritage audit
- » Review of local lists
- » Urban design analysis
- » Open space analysis

SOCIAL/COMMUNITY

- » Householder surveys
- » Housing conditions and occupancy survey
- » Audit of community facilities
- » Housing needs assessments

INFRASTRUCTURE

- » Transport linkages
- » Schools capacity
- » Transport capacity
- » Traffic/pedestrian surveys

Important first steps are to make sure that the proposal to produce a neighbourhood plan is known about by as many people as possible and to identify potential local partners who can support the plan making process and help to get local people involved.

PUBLICISING THE PROPOSED NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Methods of publicising the intention to produce a plan include:

- Press releases to local papers and radio
- Council newspaper and website
- Local authority newsletter
- Social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- Posters in local shops and public buildings
- 'Piggy backing' at key local social or cultural events.

IDENTIFYING KEY LOCAL PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Local partners and stakeholders should be identified based on their knowledge, expertise, networks and ability to engage with wider groups of people, including minority groups.

They could include:

- Local shopkeepers and business owners
- Community groups, residents associations
- Landowners and developers
- Not for profit organisations representing minority groups – elderly, disabled, young people, low income
- Community activists
- Health, education, transport and social care organisations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

It is useful to prepare a community engagement programme at the beginning of the neighbourhood planning process. The community engagement strategy needs to be designed for the specific community in question. For example, an area with a population of 100 will need a very different approach from one with 50,000. The former could involve direct conversations with all residents. The latter would need to rely more on mass communications, such as web-based engagement.

HARD-TO-REACH GROUPS

It is desirable to target the widest range of people, including both genders and minority or hard to reach groups like: young and elderly, single parents, lesbian and gay, ethnic groups, disabled groups, low income, disadvantaged groups. It is necessary to approach different minority groups to discuss the most effective way of engaging.

WRITING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

There is no standard template for writing a neighbourhood plan. The plan needs to function as a practical tool for development management. You can find out more information about this at mycommunity.org.uk

The following may be useful in informing the process of writing the plan.

- Identify issues and themes
- Identify key issues for the neighbourhood plan by:
  - » Analysis of the evidence base
  - » Analysis of responses through community engagement
  - » Discussions with local partners and stakeholders
  - » Assessing existing local policies.

IDENTIFY STRATEGIC LOCAL POLICIES

The local planning authority should be able to identify key strategic local policies, with which the neighbourhood plan will need to be in general conformity.

The local planning authority should also identify key policies in the National Planning Policy Framework to take into account.

DEVELOP THE VISION AND AIMS

You may wish to write a concise and clear vision based on the above analysis, setting out how the area should be at the end of the neighbourhood plan period.

Develop overall aims for the plan, taking into account the key themes and issues identified by the evidence base and community consultation.

DEVELOP PLANNING POLICIES

- Identify the main subject areas for planning policy
- Ensure policies are clear, concise and provide an effective basis for decision making
- If applicable, produce a site allocations plan identifying key sites and allocations for housing, employment and community facilities
- Check the policies against the National Planning Policy Framework and strategic policies in the local plan
- Have the policy checked by a planning/legal expert for clarity and robustness.

You can read more information about writing planning policies at mycommunity.org.uk.

PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION (REGULATION 14)

The neighbourhood planning regulations (regulation 14) require the draft plan proposal to be the subject of a six-week consultation before it is submitted to the local authority for independent examination.

This should include consulting with

- Key consultees (e.g. Natural England, the Environment Agency, Historic England)
- The local planning authority
- Neighbouring districts, town or parish councils
- Significant land owners
- Local community organisations.

The plan will need to be publicised and made available for anyone who wishes to make representations. This should include making available hard copies and making the document available through a website.

MODIFICATIONS

Any comments received by the end of the consultation period should be considered by the parish or town council. A decision will need to be made over whether or not to amend the neighbourhood plan. These decisions and the reasoning behind them should be recorded and incorporated in the consultation statement

STAGE THREE – BRINGING THE PLAN INTO FORCE

SUBMITTING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The independent examination and referendum are the last stages in making a plan. Achieving a positive outcome will depend to a large extent on how well earlier stages have been carried out, especially community engagement and involvement.

The submission to the local planning authority from the parish or town council must include the following:

- A map which identifies the area to which the plan relates
- Consultation statement
- The proposed neighbourhood plan
- Statement on meeting legal requirements (a statement on how the plan meets the basic conditions).

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION

The independent examination will look at whether the plan meets the basic conditions.

The examination will usually be undertaken by written representations, but may involve a public hearing. The parish or town council will need to agree to the appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced person. The local authority pays for the examination.

GAINING SUPPORT IN THE REFERENDUM

If the neighbourhood plan is found to be satisfactory by the examiner then the local authority will arrange for the referendum to take place. This will be organised by the elections unit. The town or parish council may encourage voting and disseminate information on the proposed neighbourhood plan, within reasonable expense limits. Town and parish councils can only use public money to produce factual material about the neighbourhood plan, not to promote a 'yes' vote. However members of the town or parish council and others may act independently using independent funds to campaign for a 'yes' vote.

DELIVERY

Once a neighbourhood plan is brought into legal force, it forms part of the statutory development plan for that area. Consequently, decisions on whether or not to grant planning permission will need to be made in accordance with the neighbourhood plan (as part of the statutory development plan), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Having a neighbourhood plan in place is just the start of the story – just as important is seeing those ambitions materialise as real changes on the ground. You might want to think about putting in place a delivery strategy to realise these ambitions.

FUNDED PROJECTS

Whilst some or many of the aspirations of a neighbourhood plan may be delivered through private or public sector development, other aspirations may only be achieved if the town or parish council delivers its own projects.

It may be possible to apply for loans or grant funding for local projects. Funding sources could include:

Government national programmes – Government programmes are constantly changing, with new funding streams replacing older ones.

Lottery funds – These can sometimes offer grants for projects that deliver their aims. They include the Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery and Arts Council and Sport England.

Private funding – In some instances, it may be possible to obtain funding from private donors, local companies and local institutions or they may be prepared to deliver projects directly.

THE ROLE OF THE PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILLOR

Neighbourhood planning provides an outstanding opportunity to demonstrate the economic and social value of elected parish and town councillors. The process of engaging the local community in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan or development order offers the chance to exercise leadership, community engagement and two way communication. It can also raise a councillor's profile and electoral prospects while enhancing the reputation of their council.

SUPPORTING AND LEADING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCESS

A decision by a parish or town council to support the development of a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order presents a wide range of opportunities for both council and councillor. In the build up to that decision, a councillor may well have acted as a community advocate for the preparation of a plan. The work necessary to research and compile persuasive evidence to inform the council decision will support the efforts of the parish clerk and place the councillor in a knowledgeable position to make a major contribution to the debate. Once a course of action is determined by the council, a councillor can act as a community champion and council advocate for the project.

COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP

As a member of the community with an electoral mandate, a councillor can act as an authoritative channel of communication, reporting opinion and progress back to council and community as required. They can also help enable and facilitate joint dialogue with plan stakeholders including local businesses, developers and landowners. Some parish councillors act as the leader or chair of the steering group or committee preparing the plan or order. In these circumstances, it will be important to ensure the plan retains community ownership and is not seen as simply belonging to the council. Where a steering group is led by someone who is not an elected member, there is an important diplomatic role for participating councillors to help build harmony and shared understanding between the council and any community groups involved.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Substantial community involvement and consultation is a key requirement of any successful neighbourhood plan. Given their already significant council role in ensuring citizen participation and engagement in the work of the council, local councillors are often best placed to help ensure that all those who wish to engage with the development of the plan are able to do so. One effective approach may be to make contact with key organisations and encourage them to actively participate in the preparation and delivery of the plan. Once a draft plan is in place, both council and councillors have a duty to actively circulate the draft plan to all interested parties, encouraging feedback wherever possible.

TRANSPARENCY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Evidence from task groups around the country suggests that working together to achieve the successful production of a neighbourhood plan can strengthen community relations and enhance the reputation of both council and councillor. Transparency is a key requirement of the process and will not only help build relationships

but also help ensure statutory public consultation requirements are met. Declarations of councillor interests should be clearly recorded at every relevant plan meeting. Such declarations should be in harmony with the council's public register of councillor interests. Minutes of all meetings should be published online and key decisions and actions recorded. An effective public audit trail of a councillor's contribution to the preparation of a plan will build confidence in his or her input and help protect the councillor in the event of any dispute.

INSURANCE AND LIABILITY

Insurance companies are now taking an active interest in the potential liabilities of neighbourhood plan preparation. Before engaging in neighbourhood plan activity a councillor should make sure they have public liability protection. If participating as a councillor nominated by the council, ensure a public minute records the fact and obtain written confirmation from the parish/town clerk that sufficient public liability insurance is in place. If participating as an individual member or official of a community group or society, equivalent insurance cover is recommended. A councillor may also wish to check that any equipment and facilities used by them in the preparation of a plan have adequate insurance cover.

BUDGETS AND GRANTS

Councillors involved in the preparation of a plan or order may well qualify for reimbursement of any expenses incurred if the plan steering group has a budget and access to finance for such work. If operating as a delegate from the council then parish council procedures should apply. If operating as a community or business representative, care should be taken to ensure transparency and a written public record of any claim.

MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING (TO INCLUDE A TEMPLATE)

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is designed to clarify expectations and the working relationships between key parties involved in the preparation of neighbourhood development plan or order. It aims to put working relationships on the best possible footing from the start. An MOU is both a practical and an aspirational document that sets out how key parties will work together where a neighbourhood, town or parish makes a commitment to prepare a neighbourhood plan for its area.

COMMISSIONING CONSULTANTS

You will need to know what you want your neighbourhood plan to achieve before you begin commissioning consultants. This will identify the skills you may need to commission to support the plan making process. The parish and town council will need to understand the range of skills needed to deliver your neighbourhood plan early on.

However, outside expertise does not replace the judgement of the client or the role of the parish/ town council to provide leadership for the production of the plan. Knowing when to draw on the skills of others and what skills you need at the outset of the plan making process will help you to achieve a plan that reflects your neighbourhood, stands up to scrutiny and meets the future needs of your community. There is guidance available from Locality at mycommunity.org.uk which sets out how you can go about commissioning consultants at the different stages of your plan from getting started to researching and writing policies. From different types of consultants and how they can help, how to commission them, how to write a brief and what happens after the consultant is appointed.

MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

While the primary responsibility for implementing and monitoring the delivery of a 'made' neighbourhood plan will lie with the principal authority and parish or town council, once again there is an important role for the engaged local councillor. Councillors who have been involved in the detailed preparation of the plan are best placed to ensure that community aspirations and objectives do not get lost once the plan becomes statutory supplementary planning guidance. Regular monitoring by parish councillors and community champions of the local planning authority's decisions on planning applications relevant to the plan will help identify any divergence and inform future neighbourhood plan updates.

Councillors should ensure that delivery of the local neighbourhood plan is referenced at least annually, perhaps in the parish or town council's annual report. Evolving best practice suggests neighbourhood plans should be updated, at the latest, every five years.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1
UPPINGHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Uppingham is a small market town in Rutland. The town has a heritage high street of mainly independent retailers and a small industrial estate. Uppingham neighbourhood plan built on two plans already existing in the area, the Parish Plan and 'Uppingham 2025, 36 ideas for the future'. The Uppingham Neighbourhood plan (UNP) was prepared by a business led task group which became a sub-committee of the town council. It went to referendum in July 2014 with a 92% yes vote. Now that the neighbourhood plan is made the town council have also formed a Neighbourhood Plan Committee that will look at updating the plan.

The plan addressed

- protection for heritage and curtilage of town
- balanced development with new green space
- 6.46 hectares for new homes on greenfield sites and four hectares reserved of greenfield for future homes
- housing densities
- space for a community hub incorporating a library, new sports pitches and three additional hectares of employment land.
- links to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for upgrading an existing industrial estate
- new footpaths and cycle ways including signage and access for the disadvantaged and disabled

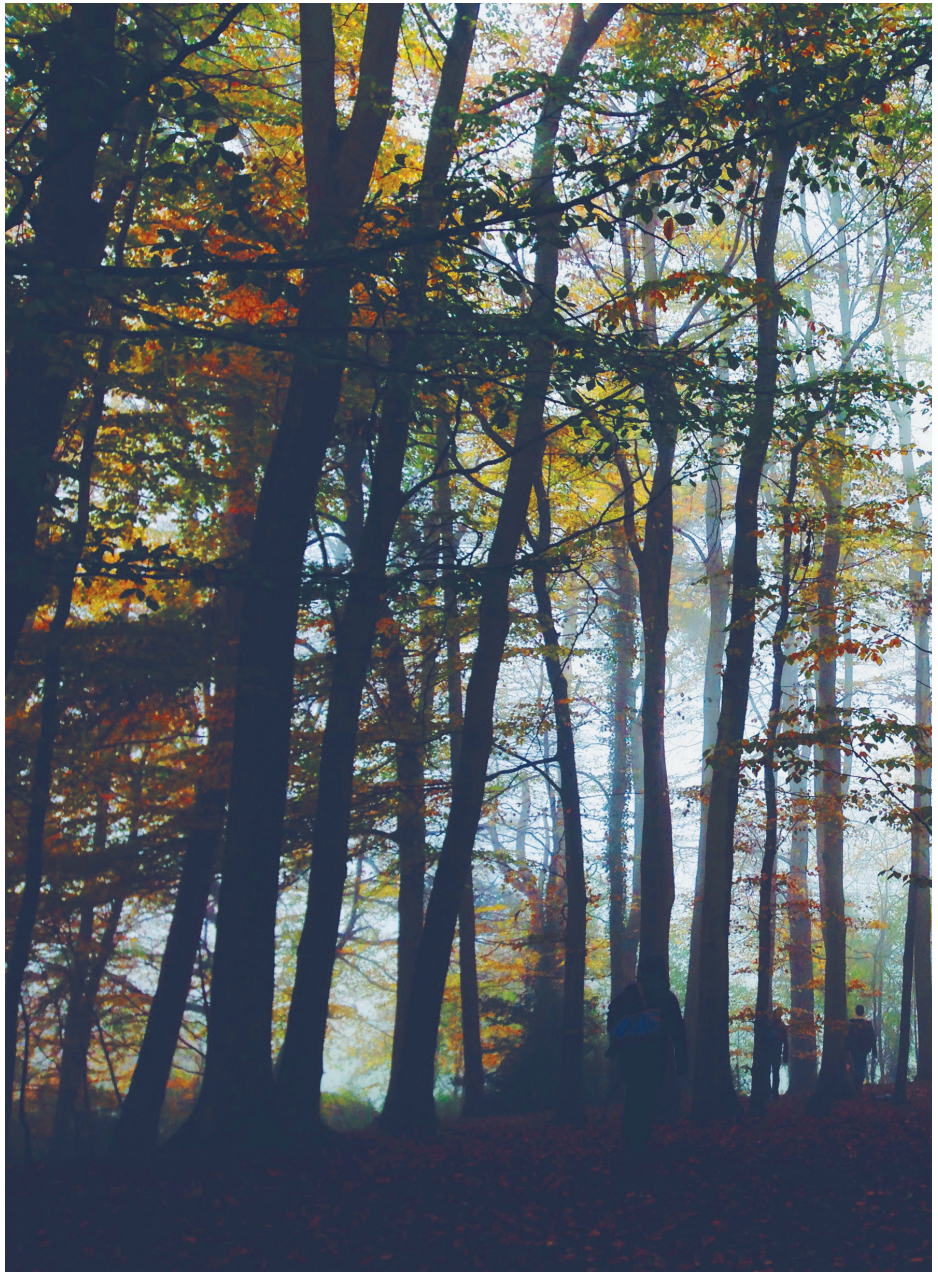
- the town's priorities for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

The table below outlines the key challenges and outcomes from the neighbourhood planning process that the group experienced.

Neighbourhood planning legislation has allowed Uppingham to take a lead in determining its own future and strengthened working relationships in the town council and with the Local Planning Authority.

Uppingham has published all its documentation, the final version of its plan and a databook of supporting evidence at uppinghamneighbourhoodplan.info.

Challenge	Outcome
Concern about cost	The plan cost less than £10k with grants available to cover much of this.
Lack of relevant skills in the local community	Community has been upskilled through the process
Difficulty in working with developers	Relationships have been built and there is now regular liaison.
Concern whether businesses engage	They were very proactive and actually took the lead in the process.
A wide number of sites to choose from for development	Statistical analysis and community interim voting helped the community choose.
Choices potentially dividing the community?	The process has actually brought people together.
The potential contribution of CIL	It has become a major enabler.
Concern that the local school might not participate	Collaboration has been outstanding.



CASE STUDY 2

WOODCOTE PARISH COUNCIL

Woodcote is an Oxfordshire village in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), halfway between Reading and Wallingford.

Like many villages in England, Woodcote's population is ageing, housing is heavily biased towards large detached properties and high house prices mean younger people couldn't afford to live in the area.

Residents saw a neighbourhood plan as the best way of protecting the AONB and ensuring that the new development was shaped by the community rather than dictated by developers.

The process began in September 2011 with an extraordinary parish meeting attended by over 250 residents.

The plan successfully passed examination in December 2013 and referendum in April 2014. The Neighbourhood Plan has achieved:

- Housing distributed around the village in several small sites which aids community integration – large developments tend to stay communities within communities for many years
- The use of two brownfield sites thus protecting the AONB
  - » One of the brownfield sites was a derelict bus depot upon which 14 new homes are now nearing completion. Previously new homes could not be built on this site because the Local Authority wanted to use it for commercial development – despite there being no demand for such units locally. The removal of this eyesore was applauded by community, the Planning Committee and the developers — a real win–win — see report from Henley Standard below.

  - The use of a second brownfield site will not only produce some 20 new homes but also enable the parish council to protect an underlying sensitive aquifer that feeds the Woodcote ponds.
- New, smaller homes, designed to be more accessible to young people and young families and to stay accessible to that group
- A higher proportion of part-rent – part-buy than allowed under the local plan
- Green space benefits, such as the gift of woodland attached to the bus depot site to the parish, as amenity space.
- Those needing housing with a strong local connection preferred access to some of the affordable homes and all of the open-market homes.

TOP TIPS FROM WOODCOTE

Have a plan for producing the plan – be clear on what must be provided to the examiner.

Form an advisory group – who can share the load and speed up the production of the plan by dividing into sub-groups and working on planning tasks in parallel.

Engage the community from the start and get good community data – consultation events, workshops, meetings with village groups, a dedicated website — woodcotendp.org.uk, email updates, articles in the local and village press, and meetings with developers all give authority to the plan. The examiner praised the group in his report for their *"exceptional amount of care and engagement with the whole community."*

Learn from others – look at the 'worked examples' of plans of similar communities and their associated examiner's report. All the plans that have gone through examination and referendum can be found here — mycommunity.org.uk/take-action/neighbourhood-planning

Make allies – work with the local authority, and organisations such as NALC and Locality who are there to help.

Study the Local Plan – it provides both an example of policy writing and your plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of your local plan.

Get stuck in and learn as you go along – don't expect to have all the answers at the outset and problems become less complex once you start working on them.

GRANTS AND SUPPORT

SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Grants and support are available to help you through the neighbourhood planning process or to prepare a neighbourhood development order.

All parish and town councils are eligible to apply for total grant funding of up to £9,000 over the three year programme from 2015–18. Groups facing a range of complex issues are able to apply for further support from the programme. This support comes in two forms:

Technical support provided by AECOM – there are a range of technical support packages that groups are able to apply for as and when they become needed.

Groups are eligible to apply for further grant of up to £6,000 giving a total grant ceiling of £15,000 in the period 2015–18.

What you can use your grant for:

- Developing a website
- Training sessions for members of the steering group
- Help with putting together a project plan
- Undertaking a household survey
- Help with developing an evidence base
- Engaging a planning expert.

Technical support is a range of support 'packages' delivered by our partners AECOM to help groups complete work on specific technical studies such as

housing needs assessment, strategic environmental assessment or viability.

Technical support is only available for those groups facing more complex issues. To be eligible for technical support groups must meet one of the following criteria:

- They work as a cluster of parishes (three or more parishes working on one plan)
- They are in high growth area (with 500+ additional homes allocated)
- The neighbourhood area shows a high level of deprivation
- The neighbourhood area has a population of over 25,000 people
- Neighbourhood areas have a highly diverse community
- Neighbourhood areas have a highly transient community
- Groups are preparing a neighbourhood development order.

You can read further information about grants and technical support and apply for them here.

USEFUL LINKS

POLICY AND ADVICE

National Planning Policy Framework
planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy

National Planning Practice Guidance
planningguidance.communities.gov.uk

My Community
mycommunity.org.uk

ORGANISATIONS

Locality locality.org.uk

National Association of Local Councils nalc.gov.uk

Urban Vision Enterprise CIC uvns.org

Civic Voice civicvoice.org.uk

Community Matters communitymatters.org.uk

The Planning Portal planningportal.gov.uk

RTPI/Planning Aid rtpi.org.uk/planningaid

Institute of Historic Building Conservation ihbc.org.uk

Design Council CABE
designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/cabe

Historic England historicengland.org.uk

Natural England naturalengland.org.uk

National Planning Forum natplanforum.org.uk

Historic Towns Forum historictownsforum.org.uk

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England cpre.org.uk

National Council of Voluntary Organisations
ncvo-vol.org.uk

The Environment Agency environment-agency.gov.uk

Planning Advisory Service pas.gov.uk

The Prince's Foundation for Building Community
princes-foundation.org

Action with Communities in Rural England acre.org.uk

KEY RESOURCES

COMMISSIONING CONSULTANTS

This guide describes the process of commissioning consultants to support the town/ parish council or neighbourhood forum, (the commissioning client) in the production of the neighbourhood plan.
mycommunity.org.uk/resources/commissioning-consultants

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT AT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN LEVEL

This guide is aimed at neighbourhood planners. It explains how neighbourhood planners, including parish and town councils and neighbourhood forums, can produce Housing Needs Assessments (HNAs) for their neighbourhood area, why they may need to do so, and the resources necessary to undertake this work.
mycommunity.org.uk/resources/housing-needs-assessment-at-neighbourhood-plan-level

DESIGN IN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

This guide describes the role of good design within a neighbourhood plan, setting out some tools and activities for assessing the qualities and character of a place and guiding the development of design policies within the neighbourhood plan.
mycommunity.org.uk/resources/housing-needs-assessment-at-neighbourhood-plan-level

VIABILITY TOOLKIT FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

This toolkit will help neighbourhood groups preparing neighbourhood plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) who are engaging with viability issues.
mycommunity.org.uk/resources/viability-toolkit-for-neighbourhood-planning

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

In this guide you'll find advice on, helping people to imagine the future, engaging with different groups, organising events, engagement events, making the most

of your community's physical assets and hidden talents, and some examples of projects that have pioneered this approach. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-community-consultation

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING: PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING

The guide is targeted at people and organisations that are currently preparing neighbourhood plans, or have recently made a neighbourhood plan and are looking at ways to deliver its aims. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-planning-community-led-housing

SITE ASSESSMENT FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

This guide is aimed at neighbourhood planning groups who are intending to allocate sites for development within the neighbourhood plan. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/site-assessment-for-neighbourhood-plans

SCREENING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS FOR STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

This guide sets out how neighbourhood groups, including parish and town councils and neighbourhood forums, can conclude whether an SEA is required for their neighbourhood plan and the next steps it should take having made this determination. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/screening-neighbourhood-plans-for-strategic-environmental-assessment

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS: GENERAL CONFORMITY WITH STRATEGIC LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

This guidance note deals with the need for neighbourhood plans to be in general conformity with strategic local planning policies. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-plans-general-conformity-with-strategic-local-planning-policy

ESTABLISHING A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING FORUM

This resource is designed to help groups or individuals who want to establish a neighbourhood forum and to develop a suitable constitution. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/establishing-a-neighbourhood-planning-forum

RESOURCES

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ROADMAP GUIDE

This guide is for all those involved in, or thinking about, producing a neighbourhood plan, and for those who are just curious to find out more. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-plan-roadmap-guide

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROJECT PLANNER

The Project Planner will assist you to set key dates on the neighbourhood planning journey. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-plan-project-planner

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING GRANT & TECHNICAL SUPPORT GUIDANCE NOTES

These are the guidance notes to apply for neighbourhood planning grants and technical support. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-grant-technical-support-guidance-notes

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

THE POWER OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Taking real world examples from neighbourhood plans across the country, *The Power of Neighbourhood Planning* answers key questions around the scope of neighbourhood planning. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/the-power-of-neighbourhood-planning

WRITING PLANNING POLICIES

Planning jargon can seem like a foreign language so this guide shows how to write planning policies which will address the issues that matter to your neighbourhood. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/writing-planning-policies

QUICK GUIDE TO NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

This guide gives a concise summary of the process for producing a neighbourhood plan under good practice. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/quick-guide-to-neighbourhood-planning

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

This guide shows how to keep your neighbourhood plan simple. mycommunity.org.uk/resources/keeping-it-simple

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING GLOSSARY

mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-glossary

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‡ Lines are open Monday – Friday, 9am to 5pm. Calls may be recorded.

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The National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
109 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LD
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