

## **Briefing Note on Neighbourhood Planning**

This briefing note gives an introduction Neighbourhood Planning and key information has been supplied by the Communities and Local Government.

### **DCLG Update**

The Department for Communities and Local Government have a new team supporting the preparation of neighbourhood plans; this is the same team who developed the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. All of the regulations and legislation are now in place apart from the Business Regulations. The Business Regulations will come into play if a neighbourhood planning area is predominantly employment land, the neighbourhood will have to produce a Business Neighbourhood Plan, as this will allow both residents and businesses to vote and therefore requires two referendums.

The new Planning Minister Nick Boles in recent statements has shown a great deal of support and enthusiasm for neighbourhood planning stating that there are currently over 370 neighbourhoods who have applied to become neighbourhood planning designated areas, 196 of these applications have been designated and 174 are awaiting designation.

### **Neighbourhood Planning**

Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and to deliver the sustainable development that they need. Providing a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure they get the right type of development for their neighbourhood. The neighbourhood plan must be in accordance with both the local plan and the National Planning Policy Framework and plan positively to support these policy documents. Once a neighbourhood plan has been adopted by the Borough Council, the policies it contains will take precedent over existing non strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood.

It is important to note that a neighbourhood plan cannot contain policies in order to block development. The NPPF clearly states that neighbourhood plans should encourage sustainable development.

A neighbourhood plan outside the strategic elements will be able to shape and direct sustainable development in the neighbourhood plan area. The community is therefore taking responsibility for shaping their own future for example meeting local housing needs for future generations within their villages. A neighbourhood plan can focus on one issue or a range of different issues for example looking at design issues within conservation areas, or the allocation of land for development. There is also the opportunity to link the plan to non planning issues for example tackling anti-social behaviour.

Neighbourhood Plans need to be based on sound evidence, some of this evidence can be drawn from the Borough Council's evidence base for the Core Strategy. However further evidence may need to be collated for certain issues in order have much more detailed information at a neighbourhood level.

On average it is expected that neighbourhood plans will take approximately 18 months to 2 years to develop. They require a large amount of time and resources which is mainly on a voluntary basis by local people in order to develop the plan.

Overall communities do not have a free hand but those that are preparing neighbourhood plans will have a greater say over how and where development in their communities takes place.

### **Funding Available**

In terms of funding neighbourhood plans, the four organisations, Planning Aid, Princes Trust Foundation, CPRE and Locality have been allocated funding for the next two years in order to support local communities in the process of delivering neighbourhood plans.

Leicestershire County Council has re – launched the Big Society Grant Fund for 2012-2013. The Grant Fund is aimed at supporting organisation / projects to develop ideas and initiatives which will help deliver the big society. In relation to neighbourhood planning the grant will provide specialist support for the preparation of a community/ parish or neighbourhood plan and is limited to £10,000.

The government has announced that under the initiative, from 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2013 local planning authorities will be able to claim up to a maximum of £50,000 (up from £20,000) for neighbourhood planning area designations this financial year, up to a maximum of ten. This will then be expanded on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, allowing local planning authorities to be able to claim up to £100,000 for up to 20 designations in the financial year 2013 to 2014.

This funding is on top of additional funding, unveiled in August, which allows local planning authorities to claim up to £30,000 for each neighborhood plan which successfully passes examination.

### **Neighbourhood Planning – Support**

There is a wide variety of assistance available to aid understanding and support communities through the neighbourhood planning process; a number of sources of support are listed below.

#### **1. Prince's Trust**

The Trust offers a package of carefully targeted support focused on delivering neighbourhood plans. This may include support at various stages of neighbourhood plan development, related to:

- Outreach
- Exchange of ideas / experiences with other neighbourhoods addressing similar issues
- Facilitating / running collaborative planning and decision making events
- Drafting neighbourhood plans (including NDP, NDO, Planning Brief / SPD / masterplan options)
- Carrying out strategic environmental assessments where requested by local authorities
- Demonstrating compliance with NPPF and local plans / core strategies
- Consultations on final draft of neighbourhood plans
- Getting neighbourhood bodies and their local authorities to work together
- Linking developers / landowners with neighbourhood bodies
- Providing extra project management capacity.

Further Information: <http://www.princes-foundation.org/what-we-do/projects/engage/clg-planning-scheme/supporting-communities-and-neighbourhoods-planning>

## 2. Locality

The Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning Programme helps local groups develop neighbourhood plans and is led by Locality. It involves a wide range of expert planning professionals and community engagement practitioners, delivering bespoke support to create high quality neighbourhood plans.

They have produced a guide to help groups navigate the world of neighbourhood planning which is available to download now: - <http://locality.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-roadmap-guide/>

They have also produced a Quick Guide to Neighbourhood Plans which gives you an overview of the process:- <http://locality.org.uk/resources/quick-guide-neighbourhood-planning/>

An online space for people to exchange advice and ask questions about neighbourhood planning has been created. Visit <http://planning.communityknowledgehub.org.uk/>

Locality also offer a range of free resources, available for anyone to use:- <http://locality.org.uk/projects/building-community/resources/>

Further Information: <http://locality.org.uk/projects/building-community/>

## 3. CPRE

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) have been given funding from the Government to offer communities practical support with their neighbourhood plan.

As well as general advice, communities can also choose free support from one of two different packages: tailored neighbourhood support and neighbourhood planning workshops.

### **Tailored support**

Communities that have already started developing their Neighbourhood Plan can apply for free tailored support to help them through the key stages of the neighbourhood planning process:- <http://www.planninghelp.org.uk/what-we-are-doing/tailored-neighbourhood-planning-support>

### **Workshops**

Broader workshops are also on offer to help those communities who are at the outset of their Neighbourhood Plan process and want to know the basics to get them started:- <http://www.planninghelp.org.uk/what-we-are-doing/neighbourhood-planning-workshops>

Advice and guidance on the planning system can be obtained through the website, 'Planning Help', via a telephone hotline, through publications and e-learning modules:- <http://www.planninghelp.org.uk/what-we-are-doing/general-advice>

Further Information: <http://www.planninghelp.org.uk/what-we-are-doing/supporting-communities-and-neighbourhoods-in-planning>

## 4. Planning Aid

Planning Aid England has years of experience and provide direct support to groups through a network of volunteers who act as sounding boards or critical friends. They are working with a number of community groups who are actively participating in Neighbourhood Planning.

Work ranges from workshops explaining the concept of Neighbourhood Planning through to more bespoke training events such as how to write policy and undertake effective community engagement. They also provide direct support to many groups through a network of volunteers who act as sounding boards or critical friends.

There are a number of case studies of work along with some of Neighbourhood Planning related online resources <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/planning-explained/online-resources/>. There is also have a new Forum for Neighbourhood Planning, <http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/>, with news, events, resources and discussion forums for Front Runners and others involved in Neighbourhood Planning, and a free, monthly e-bulletin, Up Front.

Further Information: <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/neighbourhood-planning/>

## 5. Leicestershire County Council

Leicestershire County Council is working with the 8 local planning authorities of Leicester and Leicestershire to develop a toolkit and protocol to support communities developing Neighbourhood Plans. The document will include:

- An overview of Neighbourhood Plans; what they can and cannot do.
- Signposting and supporting groups to access the significant amount of information and guidance already available.
- A framework for developing a Neighbourhood Plan in Leicester and Leicestershire and the roles and responsibilities of all key partners.
- Minimum requirements before engaging in the process; for communities and local authorities.
- Details of other approaches that may be more suitable (parish plan, village design statement, single issue / project)
- “Community top tips” throughout the document to make the document relevant to our communities and Leicester and Leicestershire specific.

Further Information: <http://www.leics.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning>