

Neighbourhood Planning support

1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1. New Forest District Council supports the concept of Neighbourhood Planning and the potential it offers to communities to help shape the places where they live. In deciding whether or how to progress a Neighbourhood Plan, communities will need to consider how they would carry out the work required to deliver an effective and evidence-based Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2. There are a range of national and other published sources of information and advice on Neighbourhood Planning, and that advice is not repeated here (see appendix one for some useful links). The aim of this note is to define the nature, scope and limitations of support that will be provided by New Forest District Council Planning Services to Town and Parish councils for the purposes of the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 1.3. The note is also applicable to Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders.
- 1.4. Planning Services will coordinate the involvement of other parts of the Council as and when required, including involvement of Electoral Services at referendum stage.
- 1.5. The District Council is responsible for:
 - a. fulfilling certain statutory requirements at the beginning and end of the process (see section 3)
 - b. the provision of proportionate advice and assistance (see section 4)
- 1.6. This note outlines:
 - a. how the District Council will undertake its statutory duties
 - b. the level and extent of the technical advice and assistance that the District Council will provide

2. Context: Neighbourhood Planning and the District Local Plan

- 2.1. The primary focus and first priority of the District Council is the preparation and adoption of the Local Plan. The ability of the District Council to offer support and advice for Neighbourhood Planning will vary depending on the stage of the Local Plan and the workload of the Local Plan team.
- 2.2. The Local Plan Part One will cover strategic matters including strategic housing allocations, and may propose strategic housing allocations in designated Neighbourhood Areas. We aim to submit the Local Plan Part One for independent

examination by the end of 2017, and subject to the examination adopt it by the end of 2018¹.

- 2.3. Other sites and policies will be progressed through the Local Plan Part Two, scheduled to commence in 2018. The content and coverage of the Local Plan Part Two for designated Neighbourhood Areas would take into account the aims and scope of Neighbourhood Plans and their progress.

3. The statutory obligations of the District Council

- 3.1. The District Council will fulfil its statutory Neighbourhood Planning obligations as required by the prevailing regulations², which include

- i As soon as possible after receiving the Neighbourhood Area application, publicise and consult in accordance with the statutory timeframes (Regulation 6)
- ii To consider the consultation responses received, and (where appropriate) designate the Neighbourhood Area and publicise it on the NFDC website (Regulation 7)

- 3.2. Upon submission of a Plan Proposal by the Town/Parish Council to the District Council, the District Council will (liaising with the New Forest National Park Authority as appropriate):

- i Confirm to the Town or Parish Council whether or not the submission plan proposal complies with Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations
- ii Publicise and start consultation with the public on the submission plan proposal and other relevant documentation (Regulation 16)
- iii Contact the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (or equivalent) and appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced examiner
- iv Submit the draft Neighbourhood Plan, supporting documents and representation to the Independent Examiner (Regulation 17) in a timeframe commensurate with the volume of representations received (Regulation 17)
- v Arrange an Examination hearing venue and date in consultation with the Town or Parish Council, wherever possible in the local area
- vi Publish a 'Decision Statement' (Regulation 18/19) as soon as practicable following the receipt of the inspector's examination report
- vii Subject to the Examiner's recommendations, make arrangements for holding the referendum

¹ The Local Development Scheme v6 (April 2016) provides more information on the Local Plan timetable <http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/16541>

² Currently the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended by the Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

- viii Adopt the Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 19/20) at the first available meeting of the District Council following confirmation of majority support at referendum, and make it available through the District Council website.

4. District Council advice and assistance

- 4.1. This section relates to the preparation of a draft Neighbourhood Plan by the Town / Parish Council prior to submission of a plan proposal to the District Council.
- 4.2. For each Neighbourhood Area, the District Council will identify an officer from the Policy and Plans Team as the first point of contact.

Initial meeting

- 4.3. At the request of the Town or Parish council and following designation of the Neighbourhood Area the liaison officer will host or attend an initial exploratory meeting on the first mutually acceptable date.

Neighbourhood plan objectives, scope and working arrangements

- 4.4. Before the District Council can provide technical advice or assistance on the preparation or proposed content of the Neighbourhood Plan the Town / Parish Council will first need to decide upon and provide a concise statement that sets out
- the likely aims and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan eg what it is seeking to influence, change, manage, protect or deliver
 - whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan will identify or allocate housing development sites large enough to accommodate ten or more homes
 - what other policy areas or issues the Neighbourhood Plan will address
 - proposed working and decision making arrangements and how they may be resourced
 - an indicative timetable
- 4.5. The District Council accepts that the above matters may change over time.

Background Data and Evidence

- 4.6. Upon request the Council will make electronically available or provide access to the following, subject as applicable to licensing, Data Protection and commercial confidentiality
- Published reports and studies in the Local Plan evidence base
 - Mapping data (fees may be applicable)
 - Any other specific, relevant and proportionate requests for existing planning and environmental information for the Neighbourhood Area that is held by the District Council.
- 4.7. The District Council will not be able to
- Commission, tender for or carry out Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessments, Environmental Impact Assessments, Flood Risk Assessments, Housing Need surveys or other such assessments as may be necessary

- Commission, tender for or carry out research or forecasting for the Neighbourhood Area
- Search for, extract or interpret third party data for the Neighbourhood Area
- Prepare plans, maps or map-based analyses for the Neighbourhood Area.

Consultation and engagement

- 4.8. The Neighbourhood Plan process is intended to be local community led. It will be for the local Town or Parish Council to undertake their own Neighbourhood Plan public consultations and the District Council will generally not seek or expect to be involved other than as a consultee.
- 4.9. In addition to its statutory responsibilities the District Council will publicise the Neighbourhood Plan consultation on the District Council website with a link to the published draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy and plan writing

- 4.10. On request with advance notification and given sufficient time to respond the District Council will
- Comment on proposed policy approaches (including possible alternatives)
 - Provide initial advice on the application of sustainability appraisal to policy development
 - Review draft policies before they are finalised for consultation or publication and provide informal advice on their clarity, robustness and compatibility with the National Planning Framework and with the adopted and emerging District Local Plan.
- 4.11. The District Council will not be able to
- Write or edit Neighbourhood Plan policies, supporting text or supporting documents
 - Undertake desk top publishing, design, printing, copying or distribution of Neighbourhood Plans or supporting documents.

Site allocation in Neighbourhood Plans

- 4.12. Where the Town / Parish Council has committed allocating sites for development as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the District Council will on request and where resources are available to do so
- Share and explain the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Site Assessment methodology
 - Briefly review and comment on any local site selection or appraisal methodology
 - Briefly review and comment on the draft results of a Town or Parish site assessment
 - Provide initial advice on Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment including Habitats impact mitigation
 - Advise what supporting technical assessments would be appropriate for any development site(s) proposed eg ecological surveys, flooding assessments
 - Comment briefly on site technical studies.

- 4.13. Town and Parish Councils should encourage site promoters and land owners to seek pre-application advice from the District Council. Where appropriate some of the above matters may be provided in the form of pre-planning application advice.
- 4.14. The District Council will not be able to
- Undertake site selection assessments on behalf of a Town or Parish Council preparing a Neighbourhood Plan
 - Carry out site technical assessments or background studies for the Neighbourhood Plan
 - Undertake detailed site design or masterplanning work unless contracted to do so by the Town or Parish Council.

Attendance of further meetings

- 4.15. On invitation and subject to availability District Council officers may attend further meetings of the working group at critical decision points leading to consultation on or submission of the Neighbourhood Plan, or the identification of sites for development. An agenda and relevant papers will be required two weeks in advance.
- 4.16. District Council officers will not be able to attend routine steering or working group meetings or meetings at weekends or concluding after 8.30pm.

5. Funding

- 5.1. The Government provides some financial assistance³ to planning authorities to enable them to fulfil their statutory neighbourhood planning duties including holding the examination and arranging the local referendum. Most of this funding is released at the end of the process after the District Council has incurred the costs of the Neighbourhood Plan examination.
- 5.2. There is no obligation on the District Council to offer financial support for Neighbourhood Planning and we regret that we are unable to do so.
- 5.3. The Government also provides some financial support for communities who choose to prepare Neighbourhood Plans in the form of grants. Information on how groups can apply is available at <http://mycommunity.org.uk/programme/neighbourhood-planning/>.

³ Details here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/506423/160309_LA_Funding_neighbourhood_planning_16-17_-_Chief_Planner_letter.pdf

Appendix One: links to useful information

The following links provide various forms of information and advice on Neighbourhood Planning.

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>

Information and resources on Neighbourhood Planning from the Planning Advisory Service

<http://mycommunity.org.uk/programme/neighbourhood-planning/>

Advice and funding information portal currently run by Locality for DCLG

<http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/>

RTPI and Planning Aid portal and forum. The 'resources' section contains an extensive range of technical planning and project management advice.

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/>

Government Planning Practice Guidance for Neighbourhood Planning