

Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note 3

Getting started

April 2013



Neighbourhood Development Plans can be developed by the parish council and the community. With this in mind, it will be important to fully engage your community from the start.

A series of guidance notes are available to assist the preparation your Neighbourhood Development Plan

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If your community is interested in producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan, there are some initial steps you should consider to make your plan successful and assist the process through to the examination and referendum.

- Get your community involved
- Designate your Neighbourhood Area
- Establish your project group
- Produce a project plan
- Develop a consultation and communication plan
- Involve your ward member

Get your community involved

It is essential that the content of your Neighbourhood Development Plan represents the views of the wider community, not just the parish council or project group. If you involve the wide community in all stages of your Neighbourhood Development Plan, it will be more likely to reflect their aspirations and priorities and gain their support at the referendum.

Neighbourhood planning is not compulsory; the decision to take up the opportunity to shape planning policy will be up to each community. Your community should be involved in the decision to progress with a Neighbourhood Development Plan and be kept informed once the decision has been made to progress.

The wider community includes residents, community groups, businesses and landowners. Nobody within the community should feel excluded. This will involve engaging people with differing views and perspectives.

Producing a plan will require a range of skills. Once the decision has been made to progress a plan recruiting volunteers to assist with the various stages will be important. An assessment of the skills which are readily available within the community – **a skills audit**, is both a great way to involve people and make the task of producing the plan simpler. If your community has any planners, surveyors, environmental or legal professionals, public speakers, IT specialists or graphic designers these could offer useful skills in producing your plan.

It is also important to remember that a group of volunteers to organise meetings, leaflet drops, collating material and put the plan together will be equally valuable to progressing your plan.

Designate your Neighbourhood Area

The image shows a form titled 'Application to designate a Neighbourhood Area' from Herefordshire Council. It includes fields for Parish Name, Parish Council, and Neighbourhood Area details. There are also checkboxes for 'I am a member of the Parish Council' and 'I am a member of the Neighbourhood Area'. The form is divided into two columns, A and B, for Parish Name and Neighbourhood Area details respectively.

To enact your parish's neighbourhood planning powers, you will need to designate your Neighbourhood Area

A Neighbourhood Area will define the area covered by the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan. You are encouraged to define your Neighbourhood Area in line with the

parish boundary. Alternatively neighbouring parishes can agree to prepare a joint plan. It should be noted that Neighbourhood Areas/Plans cannot overlap and there can only be one plan per Neighbourhood Area.

Whilst considering whether to progress with a Neighbourhood Development Plan, you should give thought and have discussions with your adjoining parishes as to whether you would benefit from producing a joint plan. If there are similar or cross boundary issues, then there are a number of benefits to producing one plan between you.

Once you have decided the extent of the area you wish to cover, you will need to apply to Herefordshire Council to designate a Neighbourhood Area. A formal 6 week consultation period will follow and Herefordshire Council will give consideration to any representations received. A decision regarding the designation will be made approximately 2 weeks following the end of consultation period.

An application form and accompanying guidance is available on Herefordshire Council's [Neighbourhood Planning](#) webpages to assist you in applying to designate your Neighbourhood Area.

Getting started

Establish your project team

The parish/town council is the 'relevant body' and therefore responsible for producing Neighbourhood Development Plans for their area. However, a parish can enlist the help of others by forming a project group to assist them develop their plan.

The project group should be representative of the Neighbourhood Area. For example, if your Neighbourhood Development Plan will cover more than one parish then this should be reflected in the membership of the project group. If a parish decide to form a project group then the group should include both parish councillors and members of the community.

The selection process will be important and should be seen as open, fair and inclusive in order to ensure a greater degree of community support. All decisions taken by the group should also be transparent and communication links with the full parish council strong as they will remain the responsible body.

Producing a simple 'terms of reference' for the group would be helpful. This should set out the purpose and remit of the group and the reporting and decision making procedure.

Producing a project plan

The thought of producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan may appear to be a daunting task at the start, but this can be made easier with project planning and management. This will consist of a schedule of what you consider is necessary to achieve a final plan. For example;

- What activities will need to be carried out at each stage of developing the plan – research, meetings, consultations, surveys, events, analysis?
- What resources will be needed – people, materials, funding?
- How much time should be set aside to accomplish each stage?

It is estimated that the average time to produce a plan will be at least 18 months to 2 years. Certain stages of the process require 6 week consultation periods and the additional time to

consider and reflect on any representations received. These will need to be accounted for within your programming. Producing a programme will help you focus and monitor progress on the plan for each stage effectively. The programme will also assist Herefordshire Council to plan effectively for your independent examination and referendum.

Consultation and communication

Consultation and communication with the wider community will be vital to the success of your plan, particularly as only plans with a positive referendum result can be adopted. People are more likely to support a plan they feel involved in and have had an opportunity to participate in throughout.

Therefore, thought should be given to the various ways of communicating with your whole community. This includes traditionally 'hard to reach' sectors of the community such as young people, ethnic groups, Gypsies and Travellers, people in a dispersed rural area, the business sector and those with physical and learning difficulties.

This could involve producing material in another language and using a wider range of techniques than the parish have traditionally used such as social media.

Herefordshire Council's [Statement of Community Involvement](#) contains useful information to assist the development on your consultation plans.

Once your draft plan has been prepared, there will need to be a formal round of public consultation. The Neighbourhood Planning team will be able to assist you with these and separate guidance has been produced entitled 'Statutory consultees' to highlight the appropriate bodies to consult.

Separate guidance material is available highlighting some 'Best practice community engagement techniques' and 'web enabling your plan' for getting people involved.

Getting started

Involving your ward member

Your ward member should be involved in the initial decision making to progress neighbourhood planning within your area. This includes help defining Neighbourhood Area boundaries, building community consensus and identifying issues.

They will have a vital role of supporting, mediating, explaining options, finding solutions and explaining the feasibility of your proposals within the wider countywide planning policy context.

Getting started

Neighbourhood Planning guidance notes available:

Deciding to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan

1. Which is the right tool for your parish
2. What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan
3. Getting started
4. A guide to procedures
5. Funding

Plan Production

6. Developing a Vision and Objectives
7. Generating options
8. Writing planning policies
9. Habitats Regulations Assessment
- 9a. Strategic Environmental Assessment
10. Evidence base and information requirements
11. Implementation and Monitoring
12. Best practice community engagement techniques
13. Statutory consultees
14. Writing a consultation statement
15. Planning and other legislation
16. Web enabling your plan
17. Using OS based mapping
18. Glossary of planning terms

Topics

19. Water issues in Herefordshire
20. Guide to settlement boundaries
21. Guide to site assessment and choosing allocation sites
22. Affordable housing
23. Conservation issues
24. Recreational areas
25. Renewable energy
26. Transport issues
27. Community Infrastructure Levy

Additional Guidance

28. Setting up a steering group
29. Creating a questionnaire
30. Community facilities