

Neighbourhood Planning

The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights for communities, which includes the provision of certain planning tools that can be used by community led groups, such as a Parish Council, to influence and guide future development and growth of their local area.



The Government says;

- **“Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.”**
- In practice this may not be straightforward, easy or cheap
- A NHP has to follow a regulatory process.
- We are told that a NHP can be as simple or as complex as the community group wish
- A plan once ‘made’ becomes part of the formal planning policy framework for Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

What a NHP should do

- set out a positive vision.
- include allocation of new sites for development.
- have statutory weight and status, as it becomes part of the districts 'development plan'
- not undermine the delivery of development.
- be used to advance non-planning projects.

- **What a NHP cant do**
- Stop growth ...
- promote less growth than the Local Plan or National Policy.
- Unless we identify specific sites for development it CANNOT override the districts lack of a 5yr land supply

Can we do it here?

- **As a Parish Council we would need to facilitate the production of a NHP – As councillors you DO NOT have to carry out the work.**
- **The Parish Council WILL need to consider whether as a community our village can actually establish a Neighbourhood Planning Group and produce a NHP.**
- **Do we have the resources?** The preparation of a neighbourhood development plan is time and resource intensive.
- **Can we carry out all the various stages needed to reach a “made” plan?**
- **Can we maintain the momentum right to the end?**
- **Will it be worth the hard work, commitment, cost?**



General and Specialist skills are needed

- leadership
- project management and organisational skills
- an ability to engage a diverse range of members of the public and to listen
- communication and negotiation
- analytical skills
- ability to work in a team.



Specialist skills required will depend on the nature of the area in question but could include;

- reading maps or plans and data analysis.
 - knowledge of specific topic areas, such as retail, heritage-led regeneration, housing, transport or other planning issues.
 - environmental assessment.
 - Organising and running community engagement. It is sometimes done badly and too late due to the lack of such skills.
-
- Neighbourhood Planning probably is not for people who find compromise, differing viewpoints or working in collaboration difficult.

The Main Stages

1. **Establish why NHP is needed & gain community support**
2. **Area Designation (Reg 5 Localism Act)**
3. **Build the evidence base & draft the NHP** - which must be based on robust information and analysis of the local area – publicity, development of local partnerships, community consultation and engagement. Review any existing evidence.
 - Carry out;
 - Community Engagement
 - Business surveys
 - Available sites survey
 - Housing need
 - Heritage audit
 - Open space survey
 - Transport survey
 - Schools capacity
 - Pedestrian flow
4. **Write the plan**

The Main Stages cont.

5. **Pre-submission Consultation (Reg 14)**
6. **Submission Consultation (Reg 15)**
7. **Independent Examination (Reg 17) and Plan Modification -**
MSDC must make any modifications that the examiner deems necessary – the local community may withdraw the plan if they do not agree with the modifications made by MSDC
8. **Local Referendum (50% + 1 vote) a simple 'Yes / No' vote**
9. **Formal Adoption (Reg 20) ... within 8 weeks, if referendum is successful, the District Council must 'make' (adopt) the Plan**

Meeting the Basic Conditions

To be successful at examination, a NHP must meet a number of tests, known as Basic Conditions which are specified in law;

- Have appropriate regard to National Policy (NPPF, NPPG)
- Contribute towards sustainable development
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Development Plan
- Be compatible with human rights requirements and EU obligations –
- Where NHPs are ‘made’, the town / parish council receive an uplift in CIL collected from development within the plan area – rising from 15% to 25%

Who does what

Establishing whether NHP is needed, initial community awareness	Parish Council
Area Designation	NHP Group
Evidence gathering -	NHP Group
Applying for grant funding	NHP Group
Drafting the NHP and policies	NHP Group (Task & Finish sub Groups)
Carrying out 'Pre-sub Consultation'	NHP Group
Prepare a 'Consultation Statement', 'Basic Conditions Statement', and any other supporting evidence	NHP Group
Provide advice & support	MSDC <i>'Critical Friend' role</i>
Carry out Statutory Procedures including Submission Consultation	MSDC
Check compliance with Basic Conditions	MSDC
Screening Assessments - Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) /	MSDC
Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)	
To pay for the Independent Examination & Referendum	MSDC

Grant Funding

- All groups are eligible to apply for total grant funding of up to **£9,000** over the three year programme from 2015-18.
This can be used to cover the basic costs of preparing a NHP which might include developing a website, putting together a project plan, undertaking a local survey, developing your evidence base, or hiring a planning expert – This funding is accessed via ‘My Community’ website
- Technical Support is available for groups facing more complex issues from [AECOM](#) (consultants) who offer independent advice on technical or process issues.
- **An additional grant package of £6,000 (bringing the grant ceiling amount available to £15,000)** is also available to groups that have complex issues but you **MUST** have site allocations to access this additional funding.



Other options -

Picking the right tool for the job

The range of community-led planning tools introduced by The Localism Act 2011 is wide. Neighbourhood Development Planning is only one way to influence and guide future development.

- **NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS** Give communities control over the nature and location of development in their area, which includes policies to help inform the determination of planning applications.
- **NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT ORDERS** These enable communities to allow identified types of development to come forward in certain locations, without having to apply for planning permission.
- **COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BUILD** The Community Right to Build allows communities to bring forward specific small-scale developments, without the need for planning permission much the same as a Development Order above.
- **COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS** Community Land Trusts are organisations set up and run by local people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets that are important to the community.

Alternatively ... Do Nothing

You may consider Babergh and Mid Suffolk's existing and emerging planning policies provide sufficient guidance for you and it is unnecessary to use any of the community-led planning tools outlined here.