

Neighbourhood Planning



Issue 1: September 2011

Welcome to the first newsletter focused on *neighbourhood planning* in Cheshire West and Chester. We intend to produce a series of newsletters on the topic to keep people up-to-date with what is happening:

- at a national level – how the legal and policy framework for neighbourhood planning is progressing; and
- at a local level – how we're preparing to support local communities, and the lessons we're learning through current pilot projects.

This first newsletter covers:

- a short explanation of what neighbourhood planning is;
- what we have learnt so far and what we will be doing to assist local communities in the near future;
- how Parish Plans and Village Design Statements fit alongside neighbourhood plans;
- a list of useful contacts and links to further information; and
- who to contact at Cheshire West and Chester for more information.

What is Neighbourhood Planning?

Neighbourhood Planning is a key measure proposed within the Localism Bill due to be enacted by the end of 2011. Neighbourhood plans enable communities to guide and promote new development. There are two neighbourhood planning tools that will be available to local communities:

- **Neighbourhood Development Plan** – sets out policies for development and use of land in a neighbourhood; or
- **Neighbourhood Development Order** – grants permission for a specific development on a site or type of development across a wider area.

Neighbourhood planning enables local communities to decide how their areas will look in the future, including: where new

development should take place, such as shops, offices and housing; what open space should be protected; the design quality of new development; and much more.

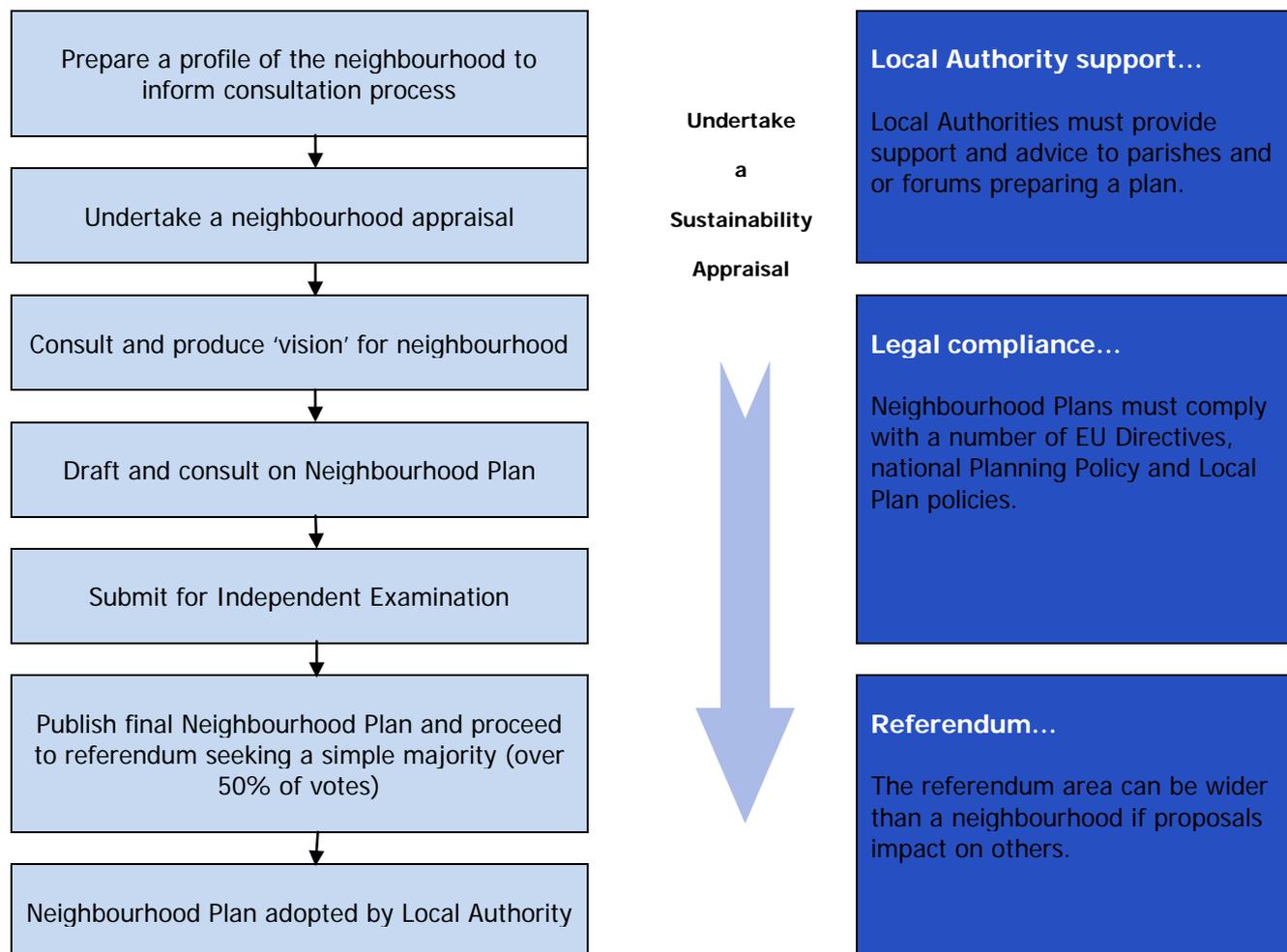
Importantly, along with the Council's Local Plan, Neighbourhood Development Plans will strongly influence future planning application decisions in that area.

Neighbourhood plans can be developed by 'qualifying' bodies either:

- Town / Parish Councils; or
- New Neighbourhood Forums (in unparished areas)

Parish councils can also work together to prepare a single Plan for more than one area.

How a Neighbourhood Plan is prepared ...



Parish Plans, Village Design Statements and Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs)...

Producing a Parish Plan or a Village Design Statement is a well established way for a parish council or local group to have a say in how their community is developed.

- **Parish Plans** set out, through local consultation, actions that will improve the area or address local issues. Although they are not adopted as planning policy, they set out locally-defined priorities, and provide a platform for community-led initiatives and projects. Parish Plans can also be used to influence decision-making by the borough council and other organisations. Many local communities have received advice and support from Cheshire Community Action in preparing these.
- **Village Design Statements** identify the important physical features of a village or town and provide guidance on how new development will be expected to maintain or enhance local design. They can be adopted as supplementary planning documents by the Council, becoming a 'material consideration' for planning officers when they are dealing with planning applications.

A **NDP** allows a local community to set local planning policies for its area and can become part of the statutory local development plan. As such it would be a primary consideration in planning decisions. It is up to local communities themselves which plan or plans they want to prepare. This should be guided by which issues the local community wants to address. NDPs, however, are not a means to simply stop development taking place.

Our experience so far...

The Neighbourhood Plan 'Front Runner' in **Tattenhall and District Parish** received approval from DCLG in March of this year along with £20,000 funding to support the development of a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Working Group, which consists of members of the Parish Council, members of the wider community and supported by the Borough Council, have developed a project plan with timetable and have already commenced engagement with the wider community, including through a launch event. Over the next 3 months the Working Group will undertake:

- a refresh of a 'physical appraisal' originally developed as part of an approved Village Design Statement;
- prepare a profile of the neighbourhood through collecting a wide range of data; and
- develop a 'vision' for the area and draft the plan's objectives through a series of workshops with the local organisations and residents.

We will be capturing and sharing our experiences with you as this project moves forward.

In August, a further 'Front Runner' application was successful for **Winsford Town Council** to take forward a Neighbourhood Development Plan. It is being supported by CW&C and the Weaver Valley Regeneration Board. A steering group of partners has been established to initially prepare a project plan and commission consultants to assist in its preparation. The Plan will cover a 15 year timeframe and establish a comprehensive regeneration strategy for the town to encourage further investment to create, amongst other things, jobs, homes and a vibrant and successful town centre.

What next...

The legal powers to adopt NDPs will be put in place through the Localism Bill which is due to receive Royal Assent by the end of 2011. In the meantime, Cheshire West and Chester Council will:

- ❖ develop a web resource on the Council's website for Town and Parish Councils, which will include links to information and good practice;
- ❖ continue to work closely with the Front Runners in Tattenhall and Winsford and pull together the learning from the experience and publish on the website;
- ❖ provide practical guidance based on experience from the Front Runner projects.

All Town and Parish Councils are being invited to a series of information sessions that will focus on neighbourhood planning. These will take place as part of the Neighbourhood Forums and are being delivered in October and November, at different venues across the Borough.

Useful resources

A plain English guide to the Localism Bill:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishguide>

ACRE Briefing: Neighbourhood Plans and the Localism Bill:

<http://www.acre.org.uk/Resources/ACRE/Documents/ACREbriefingNeighbourhoodPlansJune2011.pdf>

ACRE Localism Bill Commentary: Neighbourhood Planning:

<http://www.acre.org.uk/Resources/ACRE/Documents/ACRE%20commentary%20Neighbourhood%20Plans%20Feb%202011.pdf>

LinkedIn Discussion Paper '*What is a neighbourhood, when it isn't a parish*':

<http://www.colinbuchanan.com/uploads/cms/files/295cfff-43c0-4fff-9272-1632f04a550b.pdf>

Neighbourhood planning: Planning Advisory Service draft guide for ward councillors:

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/aio/1175305>

Planning Advisory Service Localism page:

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pageId=1089058>

Planning Portal Neighbourhood Planning page:

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/inyourarea/neighbourhood/>

Planning Officers Society, Future of Planning - Neighbourhood Planning:

<http://www.planningofficers.org.uk/downloads/pdf/Neighbourhood%20Planning%20-%2025oct10.pdf>

Royal Town Planning Institute: A quick guide to Neighbourhood Plans:

<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/download/11801/RTPI-Quick-Guide-Neighbourhood-Planning-01-05-11.pdf>

Town and Country Planning Association guide:

http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/your_place_your_plan_guide.pdf

Contact: For more information on Neighbourhood Planning in Cheshire West and Chester contact the Spatial Planning Team in Cheshire West and Chester Council:

Email: spatialplanning@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Telephone: 01244 973887

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille and Large Print or other formats. If you would like a copy in a different format, in another language or require a BSL interpreter, please email us at equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

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