

Neighbourhood Planning in Epping Forest District

This brief guidance note provides information to Town & Parish Council's in the District that will help to get you started with a Neighbourhood Plan. Below, you will find:

- An update on neighbourhood planning activity both nationally and locally within our District;
- Sources of information and funding that are available to those progressing neighbourhood planning; and
- The key stages involved in producing a neighbourhood plan or order.

i) What is Neighbourhood Planning?

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. It is not within the remit of Neighbourhood Plans to alter Green Belt boundaries, this function falls within the role of the District Local Plan.

ii) Neighbourhood Planning in England and the District

As of October 2016, over 2,000 communities have commenced the neighbourhood planning process. Following independent examination of the draft plans, there have been 238 successful Neighbourhood Plan referendums, with an average “yes” vote of 88%.

There are currently nine designated neighbourhood plan areas across the District:

- Buckhurst Hill
- Epping
- Loughton
- North Weald Bassett
- Waltham Abbey
- Chigwell
- Epping Upland
- Moreton, Bobbingworth & the Lavers
- Theydon Bois

More information is available on the Council's website:

<http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/index.php/contact-us/consultation/planning-our-future/neighbourhood-planning>

iii) Sources of Information Support and Funding

Strong and effective partnership working between the local planning authority and the community is at the heart of successful neighbourhood planning. Accordingly, whilst the Government has not prescribed how local planning authorities should meet their “duty to support” requirement, many local authorities have tailored their support to take account of local circumstances having regard to the complexity of the neighbourhood plan or order being prepared and the skills and resources of both the local planning authority and local groups.



Detailed information and guidance on neighbourhood planning related activity is provided through the links given in the list at the end of this letter. Here at Epping Forest District Council, for those Parish and Town Councils who do wish to progress neighbourhood planning we can provide help and information through:

- Setting up a neighbourhood planning web page on the EFDC website, providing updates on the progress of designated neighbourhood planning areas and the production of any subsequent draft plans or orders;
- Signposting to useful information/ sources of funding provided by other organisations;
- Sharing information on planning issues; including information and published evidence relating to the Council's emerging District-wide Local Plan;
- Providing advice on key assessments such as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and other supporting evidence;
- Advising on national and local plan policies which any Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order produced would need to have regard to; and
- Working with parish / town Councils through the process, for providing advice in the drafting of a project plan in understanding the milestones and work involved. The Planning Advisory Service has developed a template which could be used.

Support is also available from the Rural Community Council of Essex:

https://www.essexrcc.org.uk/Our_work_with_Communities/Community_Led_Planning/Community_Rights/Community_Right_to_create_a_Neighbourhood_Development_Plan_or_Order.aspx

Financial Support for Parish and Town Councils

DCLG has announced a new programme for supporting neighbourhood planning that started in April 2015 and the new planning grants and support are now open to applications on the my community website <http://mycommunity.org.uk/>. This comprises £22.5 million available over the 3 year period to 2018. Two different types of support are available to help with the preparation of a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order: technical support or a neighbourhood planning grant.

All groups demonstrating a need for grant support will be eligible to apply for up to £9,000.

For more information and to apply for a grant, groups should visit:

http://mycommunity.org.uk/programme/neighbourhood-planning/?_a=funding

iv) Key stages in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan

More detailed guidance is given in the links listed but in summary there are essentially five key stages of the neighbourhood planning process – they are as follows:

Stage 1: Defining the neighbourhood

In **areas such as ours with parish and town councils**, these councils take the lead on neighbourhood planning, drawing upon their well-established long experience of working with and representing local communities.

Any town or parish councils interested in pursuing neighbourhood planning need to apply to Epping Forest District Council. In parished areas the regulations now require that the full parish area is designated a neighbourhood area. This is a change from the previous



regulations, in which Local Authorities were required to have regard to a number of matters before designating an area, and could designate an area different to that which had been requested.

EFDC is not now required to consult on applications for neighbourhood areas where this applies to a whole parish, and will therefore simply update the Council's website as appropriate.

Once the area has been designated, the town or parish council can then get going and start planning for its neighbourhood.

Stage 2: Preparing the Plan

Through the production of a **neighbourhood plan**, communities are able to establish bespoke planning policies to guide the development and use of land in their neighbourhood. The neighbourhood plan will set a vision for the future and can be detailed, or general, depending on what local people want. Plans are able, for example, to include policies influencing the design and appearance of any new homes and offices built in the area.

With a **neighbourhood development order**, the community can grant planning permission for new buildings they want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood development orders will allow new homes and offices to be built without the developers having to apply for separate planning permission.

Local people can choose to draw up either a plan, or a development order, or both. It is entirely up to them. However, both must follow some ground rules:

- They must meet the neighbourhood planning "basic conditions" if they are to proceed, i.e. meet local and national planning policies.
- If the local planning authority says that an area needs to grow, then communities cannot use neighbourhood planning to block the building of new homes and businesses. They can, however, use neighbourhood planning to influence the type, design, location and mix of new development.

Stage 3: Examination

Once a neighbourhood plan or order has been prepared, an independent examiner will check that it meets the right basic standards or conditions. The examiner's task is to consider the draft plan or order and produce a report that includes recommendations on how to proceed.

If the plan or order fails to meet the basic conditions, the examiner will recommend changes. Epping Forest District Council will then need to consider the examiner's views and decide whether to make those changes.

If the examiner recommends significant changes, then the parish or town council may need to consult the local community again before proceeding.



Stage 4: Referendum

Towards the end of the process, and following receipt of a favourable examiner's report, Epping Forest District Council will organise a referendum on any plan or order that meets the basic conditions. This ensures that the community has the final say on whether a neighbourhood plan or order comes into force.

People living in the neighbourhood who are registered to vote in local elections are entitled to vote in the referendum.

In some special cases - where, for example, the proposals put forward in a plan for one neighbourhood area have significant implications for other people nearby - people from other neighbourhoods may also be allowed to vote.

If more than 50 per cent of people voting in the referendum support the plan or order, then the local planning authority must bring it into force.

Stage 5: "Making" the Neighbourhood Plan or NDO

Once a **neighbourhood plan** is brought into force, it's referred to as being "made" and, forming part of the development plan for the area, carries significant weight. Where relevant, decision-makers will be obliged to take what the plan says into account when they consider proposals for development in the neighbourhood.

A **neighbourhood development order** will grant planning permission for development that complies with the order. Where people have made clear that they want development of a particular type, it will be easier for that development to go ahead.



Should you need further information on neighbourhood planning please find below a list of website links that you may find useful.

Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) – guidance note

https://www.essexrcc.org.uk/our_work_with_communities/Community_Led_Planning/Information_packs/Neighbourhood_Planning_Guide.aspx

DCLG – Neighbourhood planning bulletins (updated regularly by DCLG).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/notes-on-neighbourhood-planning>

DCLG – FAQs on funding (October 2014)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neighbourhood-planning-funding-frequently-asked-questions>

DCLG – Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

RTPI– Tools for neighbourhood planning

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

Planning Aid – Information on the services that Planning Aid is providing in relation to neighbourhood planning. <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/>

Planning Aid – specific support leaflet by Planning Aid

http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1640960/np_support_leaflet.pdf

Planning Resource - Neighbourhood planning tracker map

<http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1212813/map-neighbourhood-plan-applications>

Localism Network- Advice to communities, local authorities, councillors, developers and businesses on the different choices for planning for localism including neighbourhood planning.

http://www.localismnetwork.org.uk/Localismnetwork.org.uk/Localism_Network_files/CPRE%201hyperlinked.pdf

Our Neighbourhood Planning – Discussion forum and the latest news and resources on neighbourhood planning. <http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/>

Locality, My Community website – information about funding and support available to groups <http://mycommunity.org.uk>

Neighbourhood planning Linked in group <http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Neighbourhood-Planning-3741603/about>

