

## **Leicestershire Neighbourhood Planning Networking Event, Key Points**

**Tuesday 30 June 2015**

### **DCLG update (see presentation)**

Now 6.1 million people living in an area covered by a neighbourhood plan. The Queen's speech in May 2015 referred to the Housing Bill which is likely to include elements to simplify and speed up the neighbourhood planning system. New £22.5m contract for 2015 to 2018; all groups eligible for up to £8,000, priority areas eligible for extra £6,000 plus direct support.

### **Your Locale (see presentation)**

Gary Kirk gave a presentation from an independent Examiner's perspective.

### **Planit-X (see presentation)**

Colin Wilkinson delivered a presentation on neighbourhood planning and housing Part 2.

During the evening the following questions were posed by attendees, and all at the event had the opportunity to respond:

**Question** Can nationally significant projects such as HS2 be specified within a neighbourhood plan?

**Answer** No, a neighbourhood plan cannot influence national policies.

**Question** A query regarding infrastructure and waste management; there is now a tendency for new developments to remain non-adopted and responsible for its own sewerage disposal and the group are finding there is now a two tier system with issues such as the management for the treatment of effluent. How is this taken into account when preparing a neighbourhood plan?

**Answer** Neighbourhood plans are required to meet "Basic Conditions" and have regard for national policies and conform to the strategic policies of the Local Plan/Core Strategy. Infrastructure requirements can be prioritised through the neighbourhood plan, suggest discussion with the relevant Local Planning Authority (LPA).

**Question** Can neighbourhood plans designate land outside of their Parish?

**Answer** Yes, they can include land outside of Parishes, including Parish meeting areas and other Parishes.

**Question** How do multi parish neighbourhood plans work regarding the referendum?

**Answer** The referendum is held across the whole area.

**Question** With regards to working with landowners, what evidence is needed for the firm identification of who owns the land?

**Answer** A Land Registry search is always the best start, as well as investigating local knowledge.

**Question** What kind of issue are addressed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

**Answer** The need for development versus the benefit of development and the impact on the environment through European Habitat Legislation. There really is a judgement call on this balance and the impact any new development will have on local biodiversity.

**Question** Regarding the diagram in the presentation, are technical assessments undertaken independently of community feedback and do they have access to this information?

**Answer** Yes, technical information is available to consultees and they usually rank sites for designations. However, even though community consultation is a part of the evidence provided, do not rely entirely on this when allocating sites.

**Question** What is geodiversity?

**Answer** Features such as gravel workings, land forms, fossils etc.

**Question** Would a Neighbourhood Plan stop a development? Does it make a difference?

**Answer** A Neighbourhood Plan which revolves around a single issue to prevent something from happening in the local area will come across problems. It is a 20 year plan, so therefore needs to incorporate many other issues in order for it to have a successful impact – ie jobs, protection of green space etc.

**Question** You mentioned “Efficient Use of Land” – what do you mean by that?

**Answer** Making use of land which has been previously been used before, ie brownfield sites. It remains an important criterion. For Neighbourhood Plans that want lower density housing, i.e. bungalows with large gardens, you will need to allocate more land to this type of allocation.

**Question** There is £8,000 financial support available for Neighbourhood Plans, what are the costs involved?

**Answer** Consulting can be expensive but there is money available to cover costs and it shouldn't be seen as prohibitive. As well as the £8,000, there is also funding via 'Awards for All' for grants of up to £10,000, meaning there is £18,000 available. Costs can be determined by size of PC and the scope of the plan. Consultants can either provide a backseat role of attending and reporting to steering groups or have more overall control of the process. It is common to interview three consultants and chose the one which fits your specifications best.

**Question** What have you used consultants for?

**Answer** Everything! Writing policies, consulting with the public mainly, but neighbourhood planning group often lead on networking meetings with local residents. You need to have a qualified planner as part of the process. Ashby used consultant for planning and policies but led with everything else. Depends on where you have a skills gap as you can pick and choose what is required.

They can be reassuring and useful in helping you with the process. They can hold your hand and allow you to avoid mistakes.

**Question** We have specialist people in our group, how do we make the Neighbourhood Plan ours?

**Answer** – The Neighbourhood Plan has to be evidence based from surveys undertaken. This relies on fact and not opinion – for example, one NP found that a high percentage of people in the local area had a spare bedroom and want to downsize. This is factual evidence regarding need in the community. If groups would benefit from project management training, LCC can assist and will provide details at the next meeting in order to provide a framework to move forward.

**Question** Does LCC have an approved consultants list?

**Answer** Not currently, speak to consultants and investigate how you would use their expertise and skills to see what suits you best.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 24 November 2015, Leicestershire County Council, start time to be confirmed. Please contact Nik Green, Communities and Places Officer to book a place.

[Nik.Green@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Nik.Green@leics.gov.uk)

**Sharon Wiggins Policy and Partnerships Manager/ Communities and Places Manager 0116 305 8234**

**Joanne Staines Communities and Places Officer 0116 305 7986**