

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN TEAM GUIDANCE

A successful Neighbourhood Plan Team should question, provide ideas and have a useful distance and perspective.

A general finding from the front runners' experience is the more diverse representatives on the Neighbourhood Plan Team, the greater the success of the Neighbourhood Plan process. It can also be a long process (approximately two years), so it is vital that the commitment and momentum of the Neighbourhood Plan Team members are maintained.

1. Group representatives

Members of a Neighbourhood Plan Team can include elected members and local people with particular knowledge of the issues likely to be raised such as representatives of community organisations, local landowners / developers (input during the process as opposed to formally being on the Neighbourhood Plan Team due to vested interests), and other stakeholders (amenity/environmental groups). It is advisable however, that it is not dominated by any particular group (including the town council).

It is essential that a diverse range of skills are involved so the group should avoid people with similar skills or backgrounds, and try to incorporate members from as wide a representation from the community as possible. Clearly defined roles should be set which will enable the group to make the best use of resources, for example; draw on those in the community who have relevant skills, knowledge and experience:

- A people person / public speaker would be good at getting community support, maintaining this communication and organising consultation events;
- Local planners, surveyors, environmental or legal professionals, IT specialists or graphic designers could all offer useful skills in producing the plan and assist with the running of the Neighbourhood Plan Team;
- Consider members who can access groups of volunteers to organise meetings, leaflet drops, collating material and putting the plan together.

Writing to everyone with a local interest inviting them to a Neighbourhood Plan Team event and asking them to state their level of interest in taking part in development of the plan and about any particular skills they have may assist with this process.

2. Key requirements

Members of the Neighbourhood Plan Team should:

- Take an active part in the meeting (not just sit there);
- Make positive proposals (when ideas are needed);
- Ask questions (if information is needed);
- Offer alternatives (researched and available alternatives to create agreement);
- Build on proposals (to cement group vision);
- Test ideas (not reject them out of hand);
- Explain opposition (not just flat rejection);
- Help others (to cement solidarity).

3. Primary Purpose

The Neighbourhood Plan Team will need to consider the overall aims of the Neighbourhood Plan, link these aims and objectives to the wider context, and project manage and monitor against an agreed timetable.

The Neighbourhood Plan Team should:

- Act as a focal point for people living or working in the Neighbourhood Area;
- Provide a forum for discussion and debate;

- Help to see more effective ways of getting things done;
- Motivate the whole community to be involved throughout the plan;
- Troubleshoot any conflicts raised;
- Assist the plan to achieve a high profile within the local area and wider community;
- Maintain the energy and enthusiasm to ensure that whatever needs to be done, will be accomplished;
- Set up sub-groups to focus on particular themes that arise through the consultation process;
- Identify ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many individuals, groups and organisations in the community as possible. Include Hard to Reach groups and younger people;
- Determine the types of survey and information gathering to be used;
- Coordinate the collation and analysis of the consultation feedback in accordance with the Data Protection Act;
- Obtain advice and information about relevant matters and policies;
- Prioritise actions, using the findings from the consultation process and information from other sources;
- Establish the necessary skills required to complete the Neighbourhood Development Plan;
- Undertake to produce the complementary material such as consultation reports and environmental assessments;
- Report back to and receive endorsement from the town council on progress, issues arising and outcomes throughout the process.

4. Meetings

Neighbourhood Plan Team meetings will take place every three weeks, normally to commence at 7pm on Tuesdays and lasting approximately two hours.

Team members should commit to attend at least two-thirds of team meetings.

Decisions made by the Neighbourhood Plan Team should normally be by consensus at Neighbourhood Plan Team meetings. Where a vote is required each member shall have one vote. A minimum of six members shall be present where matters are presented for decisions to be taken. A simple majority will be required to support any motion. The Chairman shall have one casting vote.

5. Conduct

Care is needed to avoid matters of vested interests such as individuals with substantial land interests that could otherwise disrupt the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan Team.

Therefore, at all times members of the Neighbourhood Plan Team should follow the desired attributes of objectivity and impartiality and ensure that the probity of the committee and the plan is open and transparent.

The Council will support the work of the Neighbourhood Plan Team and will make an officer available for meetings. Having clear terms of reference for the group can also help ensure everyone understands how the group operates and what its remit is.

The following are essential requirements of the terms of reference:

- All members of the NP Team must declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to any decisions or recommendations made by the group. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership of interest in land (directly or indirectly) or a business or indeed any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the group;

- In situations where interests and roles are in conflict they must be declared before the business is discussed and the Neighbourhood Plan Team member should leave the room for that item;
- Whilst members as individuals will be accountable to their parent organisations where relevant, the Neighbourhood Plan Team as a whole is accountable to the wider community for ensuring that the Plan reflects their collective expectations;
- Members should liaise with their parent organisation to bring appropriate ideas and concerns to the attention of the Neighbourhood Plan Team;
- Members should provide feedback from Neighbourhood Plan Team meetings to their parent organisation;
- Inform the Neighbourhood Plan Team when they are unable to deliver agreed actions;
- Ensure that there is no discrimination in the plan making process and that it is an inclusive open and transparent process to all groups in the local community and those wishing to undertake development or be involved in the process;
- Members of the Neighbourhood Plan Team will combine their expertise and work together for the benefit of their communities;
- Members will treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, or religion and belief;
- Members will actively promote equality of access and opportunity.

6. Decision Making

Saffron Walden Town Council is the qualifying body for the purposes of preparing the plan and will nominate councillors to the team. The Neighbourhood Plan Team has full delegated authority to manage the process of preparing the plan as set out in the objectives and within agreed budgets; up to and including the publication of the consultation draft plan. Any decisions on financial matters (aside from cases where funding for specific projects has been agreed and met by Locality) must be referred to the Neighbourhood Plan Task and Finish Group established by the Town Council.

Regular reports will be made to the Town Council to ensure effective progress. Saffron Walden Town Council will approve the final draft Neighbourhood Plan prior to submission to the local planning authority.