



Hull
City Council



Planning Better Neighbourhoods – Guide for Users

Introduction

This guide provides useful information in supporting the take-up of neighbourhood plans in your area. It has been put together with the involvement of local community and resident groups working alongside Planning Service officers. It covers detailed information about:

- How to approach neighbourhood planning
- What the potential benefits are
- Developing your thinking and focus on what to do
- How to access funding and support to achieve plan delivery
- Working to support wider imperatives for the city
- How to access funds in delivering real and lasting change
- Sharing experience with others

This guide follows from previous experience undertaken by the Council's Planning Service in conjunction with other services that informed renewal plans giving rise to major physical change like new housing. Although a plan will not fix everything it may help you and the local community better understand what planning can do to improve your neighbourhood.

Your neighbourhood

Your neighbourhood is or should be very special to you. But are there things that would make it a better place? How can you help resolve this and what can be done to improve matters? Neighbourhood Plans can help here along with the end result which is about realising lasting and beneficial change.

Your neighbourhood is quite specific and it can be a street or the local place where you live or work. The Government suggests putting a plan together based on natural boundaries such as roads or footpaths, to your neighbourhood, but it is for you to decide these. It could relate to local functions and where people live. The Council can help here in determining your approach, but it has to fit with the Council's Local Plan.

You have to apply to the City Council to designate your area given reasons for this along with stating who the members of a Forum (that must total 21 local resident or business or be Elected Members) who will steer the plan production.

How to approach your Neighbourhood Plan

Plans do not start with a blank sheet of paper. Neighbourhoods exist and include buildings, spaces, roads and people. But plans should look to the future and what you (as a community group) want to do about it? Do you want more development or better design? How do you achieve this? What intervention is needed to make your place better than it is?

You will need to think through the following in considering whether to start developing a plan:

1. What are the issues facing the neighbourhood?
2. What sort of action is possible to address these points?

3. Can land use planning help in resolving some of these matters, by allocating land for housing or other forms of development?
4. Can the plan be used to co-ordinate the role and funding of others to improve your place?

These are important points for the community or Forum representatives to address.

Consider what is best for you and talk to the City Council Planning Services (Delivery Team) to help you decide which approach is best for you.

There is a lot of guidance about writing a plan but in essence you will need to consider various elements and stages, to:

- review the challenges faced in your area (issues) and potential solutions (options);
- review action and policies that may affect local developers;
- consider the background evidence to support your approach;
- consider how you will engage others including the community in preparing the plan;
- prepare a draft plan and background report that contains underpinning information;
- complete a first draft plan with a vision, policies and proposals map;
- submit it to the Council for checks in relation to regulations and conformity with the Local Plan;
- take part in a public examination in demonstrating the role and purpose of the plan; and
- get the plan adopted after a referendum is held.

Importantly the plan is about having a common community based vision and forms of intervention needed to make your neighbourhood a better place.

Some of the benefits

The benefits of neighbourhood planning can be wide ranging but this partly stems from what you want to achieve. Parts of the city are already being planned using the neighbourhood model and you might like to talk to those involved in this process to get first-hand information. The benefits of preparing a plan are about:

- community derived solutions to neighbourhood problems and challenges;
- establishing a long term vision for your neighbourhood;
- helping determine your priorities for your neighbourhood;
- thinking about the long term future (not next week or month) but 10/15 years ahead
- reconciling your wishes with what is realistic;
- acting on issues that come to light and can be addressed straight away as a forum during the process of preparing a plan;
- getting local people interested and involved in caring for others and places – stimulating and cementing a sense of community spirit and pride;
- giving local influence over new development and investment in the area; and
- using the plan as basis for seeking funds to address the things that matter to you in an era of shrinking public resources.

Developing ‘strategic thinking’ or ‘do nothing’ options

Developing your plan requires thought. Plus you will have to write it, or get someone to write it for you, under the stewardship of your Neighbourhood Forum. Central to this thinking will be co-ordinating urban design ideas and deciding on the best use of land and buildings. You might want to think about the following in devising your plan:

- Can the neighbourhood be designed in a better way e.g. are the pedestrian links to local shopping centres or facilities good?
- How can developers be attracted to neighbourhoods suffering deprivation challenges?
- Can sites be made available for new housing or other facilities?
- What need is there for new community facilities?
- Are there quick easy fixes, moderate and/or more radical forms of intervention needed to address the challenges being faced in the neighbourhood?

Doing nothing may be an option the community want to pursue. There are positives in taking such an approach but in failing to plan your neighbourhood might well give rise to neighbourhoods getting worse. There are benefits to plan making. There may well be other ways to address what the community would like to achieve without having to prepare a plan. Take advice from Council planners about your approach and what you would like to achieve.

When writing your plan you should think about the long term future of the neighbourhood. Change that you envisage will not necessarily occur overnight, so influencing others in achieving your vision, should be a key element of plan making. Engage as early on as possible in plan making with others that can help realise your aspirations. Keep in mind the vision that you are working toward.

Support to achieve plan delivery

The policies and proposals you have written and plan for need to be realised. Your hard work in getting the plan through different stages will pay dividends if you have agreed those elements with people and/or organisations that are willing to undertake development or invest in your neighbourhood. This might be developers or the Homes and Communities Agency. It might be land owners or you might be able to use your own local assets. Bear in mind the size of your neighbourhood in terms of its influence on the housing industry, for example, and what can be done is limited to the boundary of your plan area. There are local house builders that might want to engage with you if there are viable options for new housing opportunities.

There is significant funding available for making neighbourhood plans. At the moment designated areas get a £8K grant and an additional £6K grant is available once the plan is under way. The Council also gets funds to help you through the public examination and referendum. You need to debate and commission others to write your plan and undertake the necessary steps needed to secure its agreement by the community. You might want the Council to help you write the plan.

There are other forms of funding available to neighbourhoods. A Neighbourhood Plan provides an excellent basis for procuring funds and other services applicable to your area. Funds available at the local level are set out in table 1 including details of contacts and purpose. These are specific to Hull.

Table 1 – Funding available at the local level

Funding source	Main purpose	What is available	Conditions	Key contacts
Lottery funding	To fund worthy community based projects	Up to £10,000 but also maximum of £75,000	Big Lottery Fund Big Assist Programme Reaching Communities Big Potential Heritage Lottery Fund	www.biglotteryfund.org.uk
Local Growth Funding	Economic based renewal projects enabling growth and development	Unlimited	Administered by the Local Enterprise Partnership with a focus on jobs creation/protection	
Sports England	Support for grass root sport projects			www.sportengland.org/funding
Local Levy funding	Local flood risk schemes/attenuation or SUDs	Up to £70K	Regional Flood and Coastal Committee	Hull City Council
Arts Council	Public funds for the arts			www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding
Locality	Neighbourhood planning grant support Our Urban Shop Community buildings pre-feasibility and support grants	Up to £14K per plan Worthy shop based grants Up to £10K for pre-feasibility and up to £40K for support grant	Over 2 years geared toward plan making and use of consultants Funds for assessing the scope of building schemes	www.mycommunityrights.org.uk
Groundwork	Tesco Local Community Grants	Worthy community projects		Groundwork Trust
Community Economic Development Foundation	Community economic development			Hull City Council
Local Credit Union	Support for community based services			Hull Credit Union
Woodland Trust	Planting schemes	Small grants for tree planting		Woodland Trust
DCLG	Pub Loan Fund	Funds to keep public houses open	Must demonstrate community ownership	
Council - Area Teams	Community Initiatives Budget	Any small fund for community based projects		Area Managers – Hull City Council
Council – Area Team	S106 planning obligations	Unlimited	New or improved urban greenspace for	Area Team Officers – Hull City

Wider city imperatives

What you do might well have a wider impact for the city. This might be because of the scale of development proposed or the nature of how development will affect people living or working outside the plan area. It could be that the plan area should form part of wider initiatives to renew the city. A dialogue is needed with the Council to determine a way forward.

Anything of strategic importance should be covered in the Council's Local Plan. This includes land allocations or designated areas where major development should occur. New land allocations for development will need consideration including transport links and amenity impacts. If they are landmark or gateway (like corner sites or publicly viewable or prominent) locations, design will be a major factor in determining whether planning permission is granted for the scheme. You might want to think about how your neighbourhood proposals fit to these much larger sites and imperatives.

When preparing your plan early dialogue with the Council is important, in helping to establish the nature of proposals and your intentions. This can help smooth the progression of the plan and also link to the Local Plan for the city. These documents provide the basis for co-ordinated action of benefit to local people living in a neighbourhood or it may have wider application of benefit to the city, such as being a major job creator or flood risk management.

The city of Hull is at risk of flooding from tidal, river, surface water and ground water flooding. Clearly the investment required to manage this risk is considerable. Communities have a big role to play in helping seek locations for retrofitting sustainable drainage, using existing green spaces within the city to reduce the impact of flooding and seeking multiple benefits through combining priorities for areas to create a sense of place and a better environment for people to live and work. An example of this is improving provision of the playing fields and amenity of green spaces by using some of the area as a formalised flood storage and habitat creation. This would provide a method of effectively draining part of the area to keep it drier whilst providing a way of managing flood risk.

How to access funds

Proposals in your plan will need to be realised either in terms of new or improvements to land or buildings or spaces between buildings. Proposals may well require the discussions with land owners to secure rights for development and/or planning permission. Grant funding might well be needed to pay for the works involved, especially if these are about environmental improvements. There may be other works that can be accessed that may well be dependent on Government sponsored funding. Table 1 provides an overview of currently available funds and contacts in each case although these change over time.

The Neighbourhood Plan provides a basis on which to bid for grants in a coherent way. You can show how you intend to align funds to improve your neighbourhood in an incremental way. The plan also has potential to determine where development should occur, the uses proposed and its design. You might need to discuss proposals with the land owner to check land or buildings involved are available for development, along with commissioning a developer to undertake the work. Local house builders may well be interested in small sites so you may have to engage with them as well. It

is important to be very sure that the land or buildings can be secured before serious time or financial resources are committed to developing a project.

Learning forum

Neighbourhood planning is in early stages of development in Hull as previous local regeneration has been led by the Council. Sharing local experiences with others has benefits. It helps thinking and understanding for those involved in making the plan. Community groups involved in preparing the plan are already talking to one another. To assist this dialogue the Council has offered to host a web based Forum for those involved in neighbourhood planning to post documents and ideas, or it provides links to locally derived web sites where information is stored. A discussion forum can also be made available. It will be up to you how best to position yourself in working beyond the boundary of your plan.

Contacts

Should you want further information or more details about what is involved in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, then please make contact with Planning Services shown below:

Email dev.control@hullcc.gov.uk or telephone 01482 300 300.

You might also want to discuss the potential of a plan for your neighbourhood with the City Council's Area Team. To contact the area team telephone 01482 300 300.