Neighbourhood Planning for Smaller communities

# Rationale

Many smaller communities are interested in influencing development within their communities but may be daunted by the prospect of producing a long and detailed planning policy document. We have set out a straightforward and simplified approach for smaller communities where large scale development is unlikely.

The package consists of templates (for policy writing and for the final plan), an expedited project plan showing how the plan can be drafted and submitted to your Local Planning Authority within one year (excluding Regexamination and referendum). For many small communities, some of the more complex parts of neighbourhood planning (such as Landscape Character Assessment or detailed site allocation) may be unnecessary and this can save a lot of time and volunteer resource.

This approach is intended to provide a draft framework and guidance on the content that needs to be included. It demonstrates that a Plan with around 20 written pages (plus maps and other pictures and tables) can meet the needs of a small community without requiring significant resource or expertise and still reflect the aspirations of the community.

In recognition of the smaller pool of support and expertise that smaller communities may have to draw from, this template approach is designed to guide you through the NDP process. Your LPA may also be able to offer some additional support.

This approach has been designed to help groups or parishes with a strategic housing target of [less than 100] over the plan period but it may also prove to be a useful starting point for larger groups.

# Is a NDP the right approach for your community?

Even with this simplified approach for smaller communities, producing a Neighbourhood Plan is a significant piece of work. You should be very clear what it is that you want to achieve from the outset, there may be other, simpler and more cost effective ways that can achieve the same end.

All development must be sustainable, meaning that in a small rural plan area with limited facilities, anything other than very small scale development is unlikely to gain planning consent. If there is unlikely to be any significant development, be very clear about what the benefits to your community are of developing a neighbourhood plan before embarking on this work. Your LPA may be able to offer some advice here.

Neighbourhood Plans can only influence development; they cannot be used to prevent or restrict it but they can direct it to the locations that are most appropriate.

# What is a smaller community?

A smaller community is considered to be one that has a limited range of facilities and may support some growth but where a significant amount of growth is considered unlikely over the plan period.

The table below uses a methodology to assess the sustainability of an area by scoring the facilities that are available locally. It may help your group to assess the sustainability of your neighbourhood. Firstly, you need to identify what facilities are located within your community and then using the table below, score those facilities to give a total score; we would expect that any Plan areas with a combined score of 50 or less would constitute a smaller community. However, this is just a guideline and you may reach a different conclusion for your own community.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***First Score*** | ***Additional Facility Score*** | ***Facility Part Time/Combinations*** |
| Food Shop  | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Post Office  | 3 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Bank | 3 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Pre-school provision  | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Primary school | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Secondary school | 3 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Hospital | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Doctors surgery | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Chemist/pharmacy  | 3 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Library (permanent) | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Library (mobile) | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Pub/social  | 3 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Petrol station | 3 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Community hall | 3 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Place of worship | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Leisure centre | 3 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Formal sports area  | 3 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Children’s equipped play area | 3 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Travel to work bus/rail | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Other bus/rail service | 2 | 1 | 1 |

# The benefits to smaller communities of producing NDPs

Smaller communities are less likely to face large scale development, and there is already significant protection for rural communities enshrined in the National Planning Policy Framework. However, there are often other issues that villages may want to try and address.

Many small communities have identified a need for additional community facilities, such as a hall, or a need for more growth to maintain the viability of existing services such as schools, shops, post offices, or for more growth to rebalance the demographics and retain the vitality of a community.

Some plans have included specific policies to encourage specific types of growth, using allocated sites to deliver, for example affordable housing for local people or market housing to fund specific community objectives, or mixed use to preserve facilities and encourage employment opportunities. In many communities, the design of new development is important to ensure that it reflects the character of the existing settlement.

# Policies and Evidence

All policies must be backed up by evidence. This can be through the use of a robust consultation process to demonstrate community support, backed up by other qualitative and quantitative evidence. Once a need has been evidenced, it should be included as a policy in the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP); community feedback should then indicate that such a policy is widely supported in the draft plan consultation process.

# Case Studies

These are some examples of communities that have produced short, focussed plans:

St Eval, Cornwall (21 pages) <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/15703956/st-eval-neighbourhood-development-plan-may-2014-2.pdf>

Exminster, Devon (24 pages) <https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=41759&p=0>

Strumpshaw (31 pages) <http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/471680/1.-Strumpshaw-Neighbourhood-Plan-adopted-version.pdf>