



East  
Northamptonshire  
Council

# Neighbourhood Planning Protocol



2013

## **Purpose of this Protocol**

With the introduction of the Localism Act in 2011 came new powers for Town/Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Forums to produce Neighbourhood Plans or Neighbourhood Development Order for their local areas.

Neighbourhood Plans are normally led and financed by the Parish/Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum in the local area.

Under the Localism Act, the Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to provide advice and assistance to those communities choosing to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan.

This protocol outlines the service that East Northamptonshire Council can offer in order to fulfil the statutory duty and support and guide Neighbourhood Plans coming forward.

## General Support

East Northamptonshire Council will, at no cost:

- Maintain a Neighbourhood Planning webpage that provides information about the powers available under neighbourhood planning and the key development stages.
- Provide advice and information about the Neighbourhood Planning process and any funding, resources and skills available to support the process, including attending meetings if requested, subject to resources permitting.
- Offer advice on other options available to communities, such as Community Planning and Design Statements, to help communities decide which approach is right for their area and issues (Our approach is to recommend that a Community Plan is carried out first to ascertain what are the communities overall priorities and to help decide how these might be best met).
- Provide consultation advice, including questionnaire templates/ design and how to maximise responses from all groups in the community, loan of display boards, and where resources permit, attend consultation events/meetings, if requested.
- Provide mapping services for use at consultation events and workshops. (Parish/Town Councils will need to sign an Ordnance Survey agreement with the Council prior to this work).

East Northamptonshire Council can provide a range of paid for services including a design and print service and the use of our FREEPOST reply service. More information will be available on the Localism pages on our website.

## **Designating Neighbourhood Areas/Business Areas and Forums**

East Northamptonshire Council will:

- Meet local communities who contact us expressing an interest in neighbourhood planning, in order to provide initial advice and information and discuss options.
- Map neighbourhood area boundaries required for the designation of the Neighbourhood Plan Area or Business Area.
- Carry out the statutory consultation and approve the boundary of the area to be covered by the Neighbourhood Area or Business Area at Planning Policy Committee. Where the boundary is not considered 'coherent, consistent and appropriate in planning terms' East Northamptonshire Council will work with the Town/Parish Council to come to a suitable resolution.
- Publicise the application for a Neighbourhood Area or Business Area in such a manner that is considered likely to bring the application to the attention of people who work or carry on business in the area to which the application relates. This includes through East Northamptonshire Council and Town/Parish Council's web pages, local and/ or parish newspapers, local notice boards and libraries.
- All adopted Neighbourhood Plans, Business Areas or Neighbourhood Forums will be published on East Northamptonshire Council's website and in local and/ or parish newspapers as soon as practical after formal designation.

## Supporting Neighbourhood Plan Making

East Northamptonshire Council will:

- Provide advice on which issues would be considered as relevant planning matters and would be suitable for Neighbourhood Planning.
- Provide advice on any relevant European and National legislation and policies, as well as adopted and emerging Local Plan policies which the Neighbourhood Plan will need to be in general conformity with.
- Share existing information and evidence base work held by the Local Planning Authority, as appropriate and subject to any data protection or confidentiality issues.
- Help communities communicate with local partners and/or organisations where this is required.
- Provide constructive comments on the emerging plan and other supporting documents (e.g. basic condition statement) prior to formal submission.
- Carry out screening/ scoping to identify any need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal or Habitat Regulation Assessment (note: where consultants have been employed to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan they will be expected to undertake these).

East Northamptonshire Council will unfortunately **not** be able to:

- Distribute consultation questionnaires
- Provide project management services for the production of the Neighbourhood Plan although we can supply templates for project planning and appointment of consultants
- Draft the Neighbourhood Plan or any policies, although we can advise where similar plans or policies might have been prepared
- Advise on education or highways matters (you will need to contact Northamptonshire County Council)
- Actually undertake the Strategic Environmental Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal or Habitat Regulation Assessment, if these are required following screening/scoping

## **Independent Examination**

East Northamptonshire Council will:

- Validate a Neighbourhood Plan on receipt checking that all of the necessary supporting documents have been produced.
- Appoint and fund the Independent Examiner, who will check it meets the material considerations (who will need to be agreed on by the Town/Parish Council /Neighbourhood Forum).
- Provide an Examination venue, if a venue is required, and if no other suitable town/village venue can be provided.

## **Referendum**

East Northamptonshire Council will:

- Make available dates of existing Council elections.
- Fund and organise the public Referendum (it must be noted that two referendums will be required for Business Areas – one for residents and one for businesses).

## **Adoption**

If the Neighbourhood Plan receives support from more than 50% of those that vote in the public Referendum then East Northamptonshire Council will formally adopt the Neighbourhood Plan.

Once adopted the Plan will form part of East Northamptonshire Council's Local Plan and will be a material consideration in determining planning applications within the Neighbourhood or Business Area.