

Localism Project Plan

1. Project achievements, benefits and outcomes

The overarching aim of this project is to help the Parish and Town Councils in Harewood and Wetherby Wards take advantage of the emerging localism agenda through a range of soon-to-be established powers.

Specifically, it has been identified that there is a pressing need to help the Town and Parish Councils in the locality devise and implement their own Neighbourhood Plans and/or Neighbourhood Development Orders (subject to the government's Localism Bill gaining Royal Assent).

Neighbourhood Plans will allow local communities, via a Town/Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum, to set out a vision for an area and planning policies for the use and development of land. It will be about local rather than strategic issues. For example it could cover where new shops, offices or homes should go and what green spaces should be protected and include local design standards such as the type of materials, scale and character that must be used for any new property. The plan does need to be compatible with national policies and the policies in the authority's local plan. It should be focused on guiding development rather than stopping it. If adopted it will become a statutory plan and be used in making decisions on planning applications.

Neighbourhood development orders can grant planning permission for specified developments in a neighbourhood area, for example, certain types of household extensions, shop fronts, 'green energy' proposals. Where there is a neighbourhood development order in place there would be no need to apply to the council for planning permission for the development it covers.

Whilst the Town and Parish Councils should not be under any illusions that this action would completely repel all prospective developers (especially on allocated sites), a Neighbourhood Plan would allow local communities to genuinely help shape the areas where they live and work.

There are also the perceived financial benefits of producing a Neighbourhood Plan. By producing a Neighbourhood Plan, communities can effectively offer-up areas of land for potential development. As part of the government's drive to encourage new home building in the absence of the soon-to-be defunct Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), communities will be eligible for New Homes Bonus monies - where the government will match the council tax raised from new homes for the first six years - as well as monies from the recently revised Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). These monies could then be re-invested back into the local community in line with aspirations of the Parish Council and the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Specifically the Localism Officer will:

- identify funding sources for the Neighbourhood Plans
- set-up a Project Board to steer the project
- develop a methodology for producing the Neighbourhood Plans

- secure guidance and advice for the Town and Parish Councils to use whilst drafting up their Neighbourhood Plans
- engage with key government departments and other local authorities to find examples of best practice regarding Neighbourhood Plans
- ensure Parish Councils are aware of the objectives of Outer North East Area Committee Area Plan 2011 - 2012 when producing their Neighbourhood Plans, particularly in relation to the earmarking of potential New Homes Bonus and Community Infrastructure Levy monies
- identify a list of potential organisations to physically produce the plans
- keep key stakeholders and partners briefed on the progress of the project through a series of reports to the North East Outer Area Committee
- communicate with council's planning department to ensure that they are aware of the need to engage with the localism agenda
- establish a template for working to allow the areas remaining Town and Parish Councils to produce their own Neighbourhood Plans

The other key objective of this project is to provide a focus, through the Localism Officer, for fundraising activities across both Harewood and Wetherby Wards. There is an aspiration for an annual fundraising gain but an amount is not specified. Any funding secured would be used to support the work of the Town and Parish Councils and local community groups in the delivery of key projects and services.

Specifically the Localism Officer will:

- undertake a rolling research project to identify potential funding streams for use by the Parish Councils i.e. grants/sponsorship/donations/fundraising campaigns
- identify the funding priorities of each Parish Council
- aim to share best practice for fundraising with all Parish Councils

On a broader level the project will also see the Localism Officer acting as a key information hub for the wider localism agenda.

Specifically the Localism Officer will:

- ensure that the Town and Parish Councils are kept informed of developments with the localism agenda through regular e-briefings, seminars and training if necessary
- establish a profile in the locality to enable the Town and Parish Councils, other key stakeholders and the wider community to have an accessible point of contact for the localism agenda
- engage with key government departments and other local authorities to allow best practice to be shared
- help facilitate other key planks of the localism agenda, in conjunction with the Town and Parish Councils, such as Community Right to Challenge; Community Right to Buy; Community Right to Build; local referendums on a case-by-case basis

By the end of the contracted 12 month employment period it is hoped that:

- at least two Neighbourhood Plans can be in progress, with a view to completion
- an annual fundraising gain has been realised

- the Localism Officer has provided a central focus for the localism agenda for the Town and Parish Councils in Harewood and Wetherby Wards during the 12 month lifespan of the project
- a template for working has been established that will help Town and Parish Councils to produce their own Neighbourhood Plans.

2. Why is the project needed?

In March 2011, the Outer North East Area Committee considered its priorities for the 2011 – 2012 financial year and the best possible use of the Wellbeing funding available to the Ward Councillors. After analysis of the forthcoming government legislation relating to the localism agenda, the appointment of a Localism Officer was considered to be the most efficient way of supporting the Town and Parish Councils and Area Committee in the development of the locality and for attracting additional finances into the Outer North East Leeds.

In June 2011, a report was produced for the council's executive board that gave an update as to the robustness of the council's interim housing targets in light of a raft of unsuccessful housing appeals. The report also identified what the next steps should be in relation to developing a strategy for housing growth in the city.

The headline message of the June report was that housing growth needs to increase and as a result, all Phase 2 and 3 sites identified in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) will need to be developed as well as other greenfield sites (unallocated) and potentially some of the Protected Areas of Search (PAS) sites (although it is considered that this should only arise through the LDF process).

It is anticipated that this strategy could have significant ramifications for communities in both Harewood and Wetherby Wards. Due to their rural (as defined by METRO) setting and the subsequent appeal of these communities to property developers, there are concerns amongst the areas Town and Parish Councils that there will be a clamour to develop not only the already identified Phase 2 and 3 sites (there are four in Harewood Ward and two in Wetherby Ward) but also the PAS sites (there are four in both Harewood and Wetherby Ward) and as yet unidentified green field sites.

In a bid to ensure that the Town and Parish Councils in the Harewood and Wetherby Wards do not feel powerless against this perceived threat to their communities, Ward Members have strongly advocated that they each to draw-up a Neighbourhood Plan for their individual area(s).

In order to help facilitate these Neighbourhood Plans and other opportunities arising from the government's localism agenda, the post of Localism Officer was established.

Another facet of the localism project is that of fundraising. Due to a realignment of the funding criteria for Outer North East Area Committee and the reduction in Wellbeing monies available to Town and Parish Councils as well as community groups in both the Harewood and Wetherby Wards, Elected Members and the local Area Management Officer wanted to create a post that had the specific remit for identifying and securing funding for use in these areas.

3. How will the project be delivered?

In the first instance, the project to establish Neighbourhood Plans in the locality will be delivered via a process of partnership working, overseen by a Project Board. A Project Board is to be established with representatives from the Parish Councils, representatives from the East North East Area Management Team, including the Localism Officer and any co-opted members deemed appropriate. The Project Board will in turn report to the Outer North East Area Committee, via a series of reports from the Localism Officer, in line with agreed protocols.

There will be two initial Neighbourhood Plans; one in Harewood ward and one in Wetherby ward.

The fundraising aspect of the role will be delivered via a process of a rolling research project as well as by engaging with potential funders, both in the public and private sector including local businesses. The express aim is to try and gain access to previously untapped resources. A piece of work will also be undertaken to establish the current fundraising capabilities/arrangements of each Parish Council, with the view of sharing best practice.

4. What are the potential risks to delivering the project?

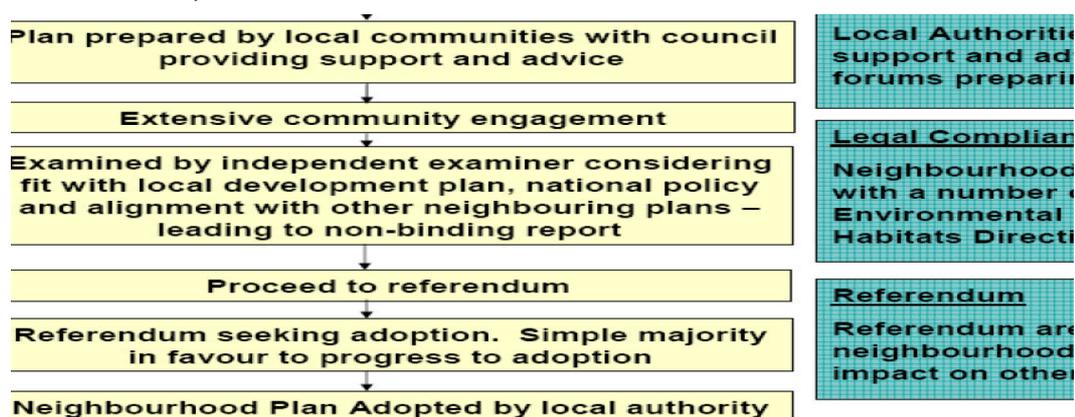
1. Lack of funding for the Neighbourhood Plans which are estimated to cost between £17,000 and £63,000 per plan (source: Department for Communities and Local Government - DCLG).
2. Insufficient engagement with the project from Leeds City Council's planning department.
3. A resistance to the idea of the Neighbourhood Plans from the Parish Councils.
4. A risk of alienating the other Town and Parish Councils in the area by identifying two Parish Councils to be the first to get support in producing their own Neighbourhood Plan.
5. Time constraints in terms of getting the two Neighbourhood Plans up and running in the 12 month time frame allocated to the post
6. Balancing the conflicting priorities for the role which could see the Localism Officer pulled in different directions as the localism agenda evolves.
7. Public apathy; in order to become officially adopted by Leeds City Council, Neighbourhood Plans need to be endorsed by over 50% of the electorate.
8. Failure to realise an annual fundraising gain.

5. How will these be managed?

1. The priority task within this project is identifying funding for the two Neighbourhood Plans. Put simply, without this funding the project will be unable to get off the ground. A host of potential funding avenues need to be urgently explored including any government pump-priming grants dedicated for this purpose. Leeds City Council did not apply to be part of the government's Neighbourhood Planning Vanguard scheme earlier this year, through which selected local authorities received a grant of up to £20,000 to meet the cost of the construction of Neighbourhood Plans. However, there is still time to apply for the final round of the DCLG's Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners scheme which has the same offer of available (final deadline

for applications is 17.00hrs on Friday 4 November 2011). It should also be noted that the estimated cost of a Neighbourhood Plan as outlined by the DCLG should be mitigated somewhat due to a dedicated officer/resource already being in place. It should further be noted that there is a significant amount of work already in circulation (Parish Plans, Village Design Statements and Conservation Area Reviews) which can help form the basis for the Neighbourhood Plans and that has already been formally adopted by Leeds City Council's planning department.

2. In order to achieve buy-in from the council's planning department senior representatives from the Strategy and Policy team need to be thoroughly appraised of the project in terms of its aims and objectives as well as the risks faced. A commitment to 'help when needed' from the planning department should also be secured going forward and representatives from the planning department should attend the Project Board meetings.
3. It is the duty of both the Localism Officer and the Ward Members to impress upon the Town and Parish Councils the importance of producing a Neighbourhood Plan. In light of recent events, including the high-profile planning appeal defeats at Grimes Dyke and Church Fields, this should not be difficult. However, the Localism Officer is to meet with all the Town and Parish Councils to give a presentation on the Localism Bill, including the perceived benefits of Neighbourhood Plans.
4. Ward Members have stressed that those Town and Parish Councils not identified as 'pilot' areas for a Neighbourhood Plan should be given specific support regarding increasing their fundraising capabilities and any other requests relating to the localism agenda. It should also be noted that it is a key aim of project for the Localism Officer to produce a toolkit for the remaining Town and Parish Councils to use when producing their own Neighbourhood Plans.
5. Similar in style and scope to a Neighbourhood Design Statement (NDS), a Neighbourhood Plan could potentially take as long as 12 months to produce from inception to completion. It is also important to factor-in the complex bureaucratic path this must follow to become adopted. See table below (source: DCLG).



With this in mind Ward Members will need to be aware that the 12 month timescale for delivery may prove challenging. The adoption of council's Core Strategy (anticipated to be June 2012 – source: Executive Board report 22nd June 2011) is also a key factor. Any Neighbourhood Plans produced ahead of its adoption run-the-risk of being rendered obsolete (Neighbourhood Plans

must be in “general conformity” with the strategic elements of the development plan – source: DCLG).

6. As the localism agenda evolves and once the Localism Bill itself becomes legislation there will be a whole range of powers devolved to Town and Parish Councils including, new planning powers; Community Right to Challenge; Community Right to Buy; Community Right to Build; local referendums. It is vital that the project scope remains within certain parameters and that the key objectives of the role do not become confused with a raft of medium-scale side projects.
7. Another significant risk facing this project is that upon identifying funding and physically producing the Neighbourhood Plans there is insufficient public engagement when the issue goes to referendum. This issue will need careful consideration by the Parish Councils at an early stage and a concerted media and communications campaign strategy will need to be drawn-up by the Parish Councils to ensure an appropriate turn-out. Whilst the Localism Officer can offer advise in this regard, this element of the project will be the specific responsibility of the Parish Councils.
8. As identified earlier, a rolling research project needs initiating with the express aim of identifying and engaging previously untapped sources of funding. If an annual fundraising gain is not realised, success could be measured in terms of the added value of having the Localism Officer in post.

6. List who will be involved in the project/activity? (Partners and stakeholders)

Partners	Stakeholders	
Leeds City Council Planning Department	Residents in Wetherby and Harewood Ward	Leeds Voice
Harewood and Wetherby Ward Members	Neighbourhood Policing Team	Children Leeds North East
East North East Area Management Team	Leeds City Council Youth services	WISE (Wetherby In Support of the Elderly)
Town and Parish Councils	Aire Valley Homes	Groundwork Leeds
External consultants (re production of the plan)	East North East Homes	Local media
Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	Leeds City Council Parks and Countryside Department	Local businesses
MP for Elmet and Rothwell	NHS Leeds	Property Developers
	Education Leeds	

7. What resources are required for the project and have they been identified?

Resource type	Amount	Resources identified
Funding for the two Neighbourhood Plans (including commissioning of external providers)	Initial estimates range between £10k - £60k	Research to be carried out into funding streams
Seminars/Events	£1,000	Budget attached to the post
Travel for Localism Officer	£1,000	Budget attached to the post

8. When will the project be delivered and what are the milestones?

The aim is to deliver the project within 12 months:

Milestone	Date
Initiate fundraising research project (including identifying potential funding for Neighbourhood Plans)	w/c 1 st August 2011
Project Plan signed off by Area Manager	w/c 15 th August 2011
Project Plan endorsed by Harewood and Wetherby Ward Members	18 th August 2011
Project Board membership to be confirmed	w/c 12 th September 2011
Outer North East Area Committee meeting – Report submitted	19 th September 2011
Project Board to meet to discuss the scope of the project (areas to be covered by the Neighbourhood Plans), agree Terms of Reference (TOR) and look at funding arrangements. Planning experts to attend to explain Neighbourhood Plans in detail	w/c 26 th September 2011
Wetherby and Harewood Town and Parish Council Forum meeting – Localism Officer to attend	20 th October 2011
Outer North East Area Committee meeting – Project review report	24 th October 2011
Localism Bill anticipated to gain Royal Assent i.e. become legislation	October/November 2011
Deadline for DCLG Frontrunners funding	Friday 4 th November 2011 @ 5pm
Project Board to meet to discuss progress	w/c 7 th November 2011
Core Strategy to be published for consultation	December 2011
Project Board to meet – Parish Councils to discuss progress of Neighbourhood Plans	w/c 9 th January 2012
Localism Officer to organise workshops for use by the Parish Councils to help with formation of the Neighbourhood Plans (DCLG providers)	January/February 2012
Project Board to meet – Parish Councils to discuss progress of Neighbourhood Plans	w/c 27 th February 2012
Core Strategy to be submitted to Development Plans Panel & Executive Board & Full Council	March 2012
Outer North East Area Committee – Project review report	19 th March 2012
Project Board to meet – Parish Councils	w/c 23 rd April 2012

to present copies of Neighbourhood Plans to go forward for public consultation	
Extensive consultation on the plans to be launched (including x2 launch events)	w/c 30 th April 2012, possibly to tie in with local authority elections
Core Strategy to go forward for examination	June 2012
Project Board to meet to discuss feedback from consultation (adjustments to be made)	w/c 4 th June 2011
Neighbourhood Plans to be examined by independent examiner	w/c 11 th June 2011
Subject to ratification – Referendum on Neighbourhood Plans to be held (Leeds City Council to facilitate)	w/c 25 th June 2011
Subject to receiving endorsement by 50% of the electorate both Neighbourhood Plans adopted by Leeds City Council as part of LDF	July 2012

9. What will the governance arrangements and accountability for the project be? (e.g. to Area Committee and frequency of reporting)

A Project Board is to be established with representatives from the Parish Councils, representatives from the East North East Area Management Team, including the Localism Officer and any co-opted members deemed appropriate.

It is proposed that this Project Board meet initially in late September and then on a six weekly/two monthly basis to provide steer for the project.

Under delegated powers agreed in the Project Board's Terms of Reference (TOR), sub groups involving the relevant Parish Councils (and any co-opted members deemed appropriate) are to be formed to work on the finer details of the Neighbourhood Plans. The sub groups will then report back to the Project Board on a six weekly/two monthly basis.

The Localism Officer will keep Ward Members informed of the progress of the project via a series of reports to the Outer North East Area Committee in line with agreed protocols.

10. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?		X
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?		X

Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?	X This will need to be more thoroughly assessed as the project develops	
Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?		X
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment • Advancing equality of opportunity • Fostering good relations 		X

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above you may need to carry out a full equality impact assessment (EIA).

If your proposal is agreed, to determine if you need to undertake a full EIA, you should complete an EIA screening of your proposals. This will help you to demonstrate how you have considered equality and diversity and how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration