

**Report of Director of City Development**

**Report to: Inner West Area Committee**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

**Subject: Neighbourhood Planning**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): <b>All wards across Leeds</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. The Localism Act 2011 introduced neighbourhood planning which is a new power that local communities now have to prepare a statutory development plan for their neighbourhood.
2. A neighbourhood plan is a statutory plan that could determine where new development takes place, what it looks like and there is an opportunity to include other issues of community interest and concern
3. The Council has a 'duty to support' local communities preparing a neighbourhood plan, and the Council has embraced neighbourhood planning to help deliver both local and city-wide objectives.
4. There are no neighbourhood plans currently being prepared in the Inner West Area, but some interest has been expressed.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that Area Committee:

1. Note, consider and assess the opportunities and challenges for neighbourhood planning in Inner West
2. Note the interest expressed for a neighbourhood plan in New Wortley and agree to provide support if appropriate.

### 1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To raise awareness of neighbourhood planning and to agree how Area Committee can support neighbourhood planning in Inner West.

### 2 Background information

- 2.1 In non-parished areas such as inner west Leeds, the Localism Act 2011 allows local communities to prepare a statutory development plan for a defined area ('the neighbourhood area'). A neighbourhood plan can do the following:

- Agree where new development (housing, retail, employment) should take place (but must be in conformity with local and national planning policy)
- Agree what new development should look like (must be in general conformity with local planning policy, but there is significant scope for localised design policies)
- Determine other non-planning opportunities or aspirations (for example, bulk buying of food or local food growing)

- 2.2 The process of preparing a neighbourhood plan for a non-parished area can be split into 6 stages:

#### 1. Designation of Neighbourhood Area

The community will work with the Council to agree a suitable area for a neighbourhood plan. The Chair of Area Committee and local ward members will be consulted on the appropriateness of the boundary.

#### 2. Designation of Neighbourhood Forum

The Community will work with the Council to agree a neighbourhood forum to prepare a plan. This forum must be made up of at least 21 members who live, work and carry out business in the neighbourhood area. The Chair of Area Committee and local ward members will be consulted on the appropriateness of the boundary.

#### 3. Preparation of Neighbourhood Plan

The neighbourhood forum will prepare the plan and consult on it.

#### **4. Examination of Neighbourhood Plan**

The Council will organise and pay for an independent examination.

#### **5. Referendum**

The Council will organise and pay for a referendum.

#### **6. Delivery**

The Council and the neighbourhood forum will be responsible for delivering the plan, along with others as appropriate.

### **3 Main issues for Inner West**

#### **Opportunities and challenges**

- 3.1 Neighbourhood planning is an opportunity for local communities to be fully engaged in the future development of their communities. It is a 'bottom up' approach that provides an opportunity to assist the Council in improving equality, diversity, cohesion and integration in our communities.

#### **Level of awareness**

- 3.2 The level of awareness across the city is mixed but there have been 30+ expressions of interest and 15 designations made so far in Leeds. In Inner West there is a low level of awareness, although some in New Wortley have expressed interest in the past.

#### **Role of Elected Members and Area Committee**

- 3.3 Elected members are positively encouraged to become members of neighbourhood forums and although Area Committee has no formal role in neighbourhood planning they have an important role to play in advising, supporting, empowering and mediating as appropriate.

#### **The benefits of neighbourhood planning**

- 3.4 The preparation of neighbourhood plan can help communities play a greater role in shaping the future of their area and can bring residents, businesses, local groups, landowners, and developers together to agree a vision and how to deliver it.

#### **Funding and support**

- 3.5 The Council has a 'duty to support' local communities in preparing a neighbourhood plan and the Planning Service has been working closely with Area Support Teams on this in a joined-up and complimentary way.
- 3.6 Planning Aid England will also offer support to communities and will support New Wortley if requested. From March/April a new neighbourhood planning fund will be announced by the Government and will allow communities preparing a neighbourhood plan to bid for up to £7,000. The details of this have yet to be released.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 Community consultation and engagement is at the very heart of neighbourhood planning in a more 'bottom up' approach and gives local communities the opportunity shape the future of their community. that consultation and publicity must be undertaken

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 The Government has undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment of the Localism Act in relation to Neighbourhood Planning (2011). The neighbourhood planning process is an opportunity for a greater focus on equality, diversity, cohesion and engagement.

### **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

4.3.1 Neighbourhood Plans link well to all three of the Council's corporate priorities set out in the Vision for Leeds :

- Leeds will be fair, open and welcoming
- Leeds' economy will be prosperous and sustainable
- All Leeds' communities will be successful

4.3.2 It also meets the Council value of 'Working with Communities' and related priority of 'consultation' set out in the Council's Business Plan 2011 – 15.

### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 The cost of preparing a neighbourhood plan will need to be met by the neighbourhood forum but communities in most parts of Inner West will receive support from the Council, Planning Aid England and will be able to apply for £7,000 funding.

4.4.2 The Council's 'duty to support' covers statutory requirements and the examination and referendum. If a neighbourhood plan passes examination the Council will receive £25,000 towards the cost of the examination and referendum.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 The Council will be responsible for ensuring a neighbourhood plan has been produced in line with the relevant legislation and regulations and will organise an independent examination and referendum as appropriate.

4.5.2 The Council will assess the process undertaken and the content of each neighbourhood plan, Neighbourhood Development Order and Community Right to Build Order.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 There is a risk that the neighbourhood planning process is misunderstood, not considered relevant in some communities or seen as too time-consuming and costly.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Neighbourhood planning has been popular throughout the Leeds area, although there has been little interest in Inner West. This may be because local people are unaware of the opportunity (likely) or because there are few opportunities for neighbourhood planning activity (less likely). The support is available for Inner West communities to get involved and Area Committee have a critical role in raising awareness, supporting and empowering.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Note, consider and assess the opportunities and challenges for neighbourhood planning in Inner West
- 6.2 Note the interest expressed for a neighbourhood plan in New Wortley and agree to provide support if appropriate