

## Notes from the Loddon and Chedgrave Neighbourhood Plan Meeting

Held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020, 7.00pm remotely by GoTo Meeting

Present: CPC: Jacqueline Bircham, Bob Demain, Colin Gould, David Johnson, Richard Seel,  
LPC: Jane Hale, Kay Mason-Billig, Dave Tarry, Sophie Waggett

Apologies: Joanne Sinfield

In attendance: CPC: Hayley Goldson, LPC: Emily Curtis, Georgina Hirst,  
South Norfolk Council: Richard Squires, Senior Community Planning Officer

Richard Squires gave a detailed and informative presentation explaining the background and process of Neighbourhood Plans (NPs). Richard and his colleague Vicky West support community planning across South Norfolk and Broadland.

### Neighbourhood Planning Presentation

NPs were implemented in 2012, from the Localism Act 2011. A NP has more weight in the planning process than Parish Plans; once a NP has gone through the referendum process and is 'made' it has statutory standing within the Local Planning Authority (LPA) Policy documents.

NPs require a qualifying body, which can be a Parish Council. It must meet basic conditions <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#basic-conditions-for-neighbourhood-plan-to-referendum>

#### **What are the basic conditions that a draft NP or Order must meet if it is to proceed to referendum?**

Only a draft NP or Order that meets each of a set of basic conditions can be put to a referendum and be made. The basic conditions are set out in [paragraph 8\(2\) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#) as applied to NPs by section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The basic conditions are:

- a. having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the order (or NP). [Read more details.](#)
- b. having special regard to the desirability of preserving any listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses, it is appropriate to make the order. This applies only to Orders. [Read more details.](#)
- c. having special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of any conservation area, it is appropriate to make the order. This applies only to Orders. [Read more details.](#)
- d. the making of the order (or NP) contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. [Read more details.](#)
- e. the making of the order (or NP) is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area). [Read more details.](#)
- f. the making of the order (or NP) does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations. [Read more details.](#)
- g. prescribed conditions are met in relation to the Order (or plan) and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the order (or NP). [Read more details.](#)

NPs generally have a 15-20 year life span and can be aligned with the life span of Local Plans; the Greater Norwich Local Plan runs to 2038 <https://www.gnlp.org.uk/>

NP Policies have statutory weight and can be either:

- Generic policies for the whole neighbourhood area – these can cover local design and character including aspects such as the built environment, layout, streetscape, heritage, landscape character and important views and vistas. They can also cover issues such as climate change, employment, and community facilities.
- Site specific policies – these can identify additional development sites for e.g., affordable housing or can protect local green spaces.

All policies must be evidenced within an evidence base which is developed as the first main part of the NP work and will be considered by the Independent Examiner. The evidence base will include:

- community consultations,
- desk based research and
- stakeholder discussions, with e.g., planners at SNC and the Broads Authority, NCC Highways, Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

In addition to producing a NP, other community aspirations and projects may be identified during community consultations and whilst these may not relate directly to planning issues and therefore not be suitable for inclusion in the NP, they can be compiled into a Community Action Plan. This provides a place to retain, develop and monitor progress of projects such as environment, infrastructure, highways speed restrictions etc.

A completed NP means the parish will receive 25% of CIL monies rather than 15%. CIL monies can be used to deliver the Community Action Plan projects.

Nationally, NPs are seen as a successful part of the Localism Act 2011 with the 1,000<sup>th</sup> Plan Referendum carried out in 2020. Only 3 NPs have failed to date. Community Referendums average yes votes of 70%, with an average turnout of 33%. There are fewer examples of joint working on NPs such as proposed by Loddon and Chedgrave, however there are some spread across the country.

### **Neighbourhood Plan process key points**

1. Form a NP Steering Group with wide community representation, including representatives from local community groups, businesses etc.
2. The first statutory stage – define the Neighbourhood Area – usually follows parish boundaries but does not have to – notify SNC of Neighbourhood area.
3. Evidence gathering – consultation, desk-based research, stakeholder discussions.
4. Produce a draft NP.
5. Hold a 6 week formal consultation on the draft NP.
6. Consider amendments to the draft NP in response to consultation responses.
7. Submit the NP to the Local Planning Authority. Within joint SNC / Broads Authority areas there is an arrangement that SNC will lead and correspond with the BA. The NP group does not have to correspond with the BA at this stage, SNC will undertake the necessary communication.
8. Formal consultation by SNC.
9. Independent Examination – the independent examiner will decide if the NP is:
  - Fine, or

- Fine with modifications, or
- Will fail.

10. The NP Steering Group and Parish Council/s decide whether to make the modifications recommended by the independent examiner or not.

11. Hold a Referendum – 50% in agreement with the NP is required, there is no threshold for turnout.

12. SNC formally 'makes' the NP – it is adopted into the Local Plan documents.

SNC will organise and pay for the formal consultation (8) and the independent examination (9).

The process generally takes 18-24 months for points 1 – 7 and a further approximately 6 months for the remaining steps.

## **Funding**

Funding a NP: an average project costs ~£20k, with many groups choosing to appoint an external consultant to act as a project manager.

Grants of up to £10k are available from the NP support organisation, Locality, currently until 2022. Locality grants need to be spent within the financial year they are granted, although some groups split their application of £10k across two years. AECOM offer free technical support to NP groups e.g., to produce design codes.

South Norfolk Council have limited funding to support NPs, this year's allocation is fully spent. An expression of interest can be submitted for 2021-22. The Local Planning Authority i.e., South Norfolk Council has a duty to support NPs and provide this with officer support and in kind services such as mapping. Officer support includes attending meetings, providing toolkits, networking meetings for NP groups within South Norfolk and Broadland and providing a resource base blog for Neighbourhood Planning

<https://southnorfolkandbroadlandclp.wordpress.com/broadland-south-norfolk-clp-programme/>

This site has lots of useful local information and links to many relevant resources.

## **Question and answers**

What takes precedence in the NP? Is the overall theme planning?

Development and use of land in the NP area. Other community issues will be raised through consultation, possibly separate the issues for attention elsewhere e.g., a community action plan.

What takes precedence – the SN and Broadland development plans?

The Greater Norwich Local Plan is at the formal submission consultation – local sites have been identified. It can depend on the progress and timescale of various plans.

There are existing design character and guides – why not use existing SNC policy?

The desk based evidence gathering would look at these policies and any Conservation Area Appraisal. A NP policy can go into more detail relevant to the NP area. A NP can undertake a character assessment of the area to identify aspects / zones of character / uniqueness – future

development would have to conform to those standards. The NP will go through SNC Cabinet and Council so will be compatible and of equal weight to the SNC Local Plan.

How can the NP address local green space policies?

The NP can produce policies that apply to any land in the area, especially that which is demonstrably special due to environment, heritage etc.

How tightly defined is the shape of a NP?

The initial stage of evidence gathering, and a rolling programme of community consultation and engagement will inform the first part of the NP - a vision of the development of the community i.e., what people want the area to be like. A vision statement can be diffuse, then in the next stage drill down into thematic issues e.g., natural environment, built environment, employment, housing; these will define the objectives which are the next stage of the plan.

Part of the NP area will fall within the Broads Authority planning area, what happens if a scheme is against Broads Authority policy?

SNC will be the main LPA for dealing with the NP. It is important in the early stages of the NP to engage with all stakeholders, including the Broads Authority. Also, NCC Highways, Norfolk Wildlife Trust etc.

SNC have mediated meetings with NP groups, SNC and Broads Authority planners.

What is the possibility of not getting funding?

Very slim, RS can provide support with grant applications. SNC can provide funding also.

What are the additional factors to consider with joint working?

Not many local examples, Diss and District NP and Long Stratton and Tharston NP, none in Broadland. Key points to consider – Terms of Reference for Steering Group; representatives from each Parish Council, key decisions agreed by each Parish Council e.g., Decision to consult on objectives, decision to consult on formal plans. Consider how finances will be managed – suggest a budget and ring-fenced fund for the NP. When registering the NP area and formal intent to do a NP and work together, the letter must only come from one PC on behalf of both PCs – show PCs are working together, benefits of joint working, map of joint area.

How long does a NP last?

The SN Local Plan – the Joint Core Strategy is 2014-2026 but is reviewed every five years. The GNLP is reviewing now to take account of new housing development.

Suggest having an end date in 15-20 years, this can tie in with LPA documents. It is good practice to review the NP every five years. There is a process for modifying NPs, this depends on the scale of change required. It is also helpful to have informal, ongoing monitoring – perhaps have a standing agenda item on the PC agenda to monitor how SN planners are using the NP and to look at community action plans and CIL expenditure.

How specific can a NP be about development, particularly re: parking allocation in developments which is against LPA policies?

There may be other considerations – density, financial viability, design that also have to be considered.

### **White Paper – Planning Reform**

In 2019 Central Government consulted on a proposed major reform of the planning system. There was not huge detail about how NPs will fit in with the proposed new system. The consultation outlined a three zone system – growth, renewal and protected e.g., green space.

Design and character i.e., design codes seem prominent, in this NPs could have a greater role with a local design code and future proof the NP. RS suggests registering intent with Locality to include a design code – this will free up the opportunity to get support for the design code from AECOM.

Reforms from the White Paper may still be a few years away, however, suggest having a strong eye for design and character in the NP bearing in mind the future Central Government direction of travel.

Once reforms are passed as legislation the LPAs e.g., SNC, will have 30 months to re-do their plans. Where there is a conflict between the Local Plan and the NP, the most recently adopted plan takes precedence.

### **Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

- Consider having working groups to focus on particular areas and feed into the Steering Group.
- Identify local stakeholders to involve.
- Prepare a project plan – consider costs, timetable.
- NPs can bring in a consultant at any stage, right from the beginning to act as a project manager, or to focus on the evidence gathering and NP production. It is not necessary to have a consultant to establish a steering group, produce a project plan and submit funding applications. A consultant's brief should include an outline budget and outcomes.
- An ideal steering group could be 12 people.
- Possibly 4 representatives from each PC are too many, perhaps 2 would be better.
- Consider Covid-19 restrictions and other methods needed to undertake consultations.
- Suggested initial coloured flyer in Contact and Chet News re the NP.

Richard Squires was thanked for his informative presentation and helpful advice.