



Planning Aid England
Engaging Communities in Planning

LPA support for Neighbourhood Planning and the experience of Planning Aid assistance

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Introduction

- Background, roles and experience
- South Lakeland District Council – supporting various parishes as an LPA Development Plans Officer
- Supported 4 Neighbourhood Plan preparation processes
- Assisted other parishes in deliberations over whether an NP was right for them
- Morecambe Town Council – supporting NP as a Planning Aid Volunteer
- Machizukuri in Japan



Before a Neighbourhood Area is designated:

- Protocol (later added to SCI when it became a requirement)
- Letting parishes know /groups know who to contact and things to consider in deciding whether a NP is for them
- Offering to go and speak with Parishes considering an NP
- Not putting them off but being honest and giving them the tools they need to decide
- Evidence – why a NP? Community buy-in? Basic conditions?
- Support throughout the process and several key tasks for LPA as well as ongoing support – plan ahead, inc. re. referendum – timeliness



Every NP
is
different!



Designating the Neighbourhood Area

Default is the parish in relevant areas, but can still get tricky....

- Streamline process for straightforward designations
- Need a good reason to use an area other than the Parish

Burneside

- Straddles National Park boundary
- Allocation on the edge of Kendal but within Burneside Parish

Heversham/Hincaster

- Two parishes, one of which has no Parish Council
- Responsibilities lie with Parish Council



*Designating in
parished areas is
usually
straightforward, but
not always!*



Early consultation and evidence

- Sets the scope for policy topics the Plan will cover and backs them up – what do they need, what's available?
- Earliest consultation/evidence should inform designation – ensure a record is kept
- Iterative process – community buy-in

Grange – good practice

Lower Allithwaite

- Specific evidence for sole or primary residence policy

Heversham & Hincaster

- Relaxing of locational policy
- Normally 6 or fewer and a cap of 30 on delivery within plan period



*Experience of
Local Plan
preparation comes
in useful to support
and advise
communities*



Supporting during drafting and their formal consultation

- Policy writing can be a big challenge - likely to have multiple iterations
- Their capacity and the quality and quantity of any other support they have – but know your limits!
- Basic Conditions and PAS checklist
- Genuine community buy-in and evidence of it
- Continuity and maintaining progress
- Ensure the Plan is ready
- Consulting the right people, including you!
- Streamline the reporting process right through to adoption/making the plan
- Implementation
- Use other Council departments



Understand the limits of the support you can offer



Submission & the LPA's consultation

Balancing timeliness with ensuring the Plan's fit for the job

- Submission documents – check – return if necessary
- Basic conditions
- Refer back to legislation and checklist
- Ensure consistency with their consultation e.g. who was consulted?
- Similar process as for Local Plan
- NPIERS – line up an examiner as early as possible
- Keep electoral services aware of progress
- It is *their* Plan – keep them updated - but it will also become part of the Development Plan



*NPIERS:
Neighbourhood
Planning
Independent
Examiner Referral
Service*



Examination, Referendum & Making the Plan

- The whole process, but this stage in particular gives you a new perspective on the Local Plans process that can help you and the NP group
- Choose an Examiner with some experience of examining similar communities' NPs
- Involve the group in the fact check
- Referendum largely up to electoral services
- Making the plan – adoption
- Don't forget about the NP group at this stage – keep them in the loop



Supporting communities through NP process provides a different perspective on the local plan process



Implementation

- Continue engagement with the NP group
- Giving the Plan appropriate weight – it is part of the Development Plan
- Mechanism for monitoring
- Early test cases e.g. Heversham and in Grange



Don't forget about the NP or lose the relationship with the NP group once the Plan's made



Morecambe has a lot going for it, but with no allocations in the Local Plan and being distinctly different from Lancaster in many ways, the Town Council felt it needed a helping hand and that a Neighbourhood Plan was the answer

Image: Lancaster City Council



Morecambe Town Council

- Request for support with early consultation
- Spell with no activity
- Further request – meetings with newly-formed steering group
- Project plan, advice for next steps
- More consultation
- Some interesting ideas
- Relationship with Local Plan



*Getting involved
with Morecambe
gave me
experience of
working with a
different type of
community*



Morecambe Town Council

- Issues with communication, resources, expectations
- Resource and capacity issues – external support?
- Not clear re support from the LPA
- Struggling to maintain momentum
- Resist urge/requests to go beyond role as volunteer
- Local Plan currently under Examination, Eden Project – overtaken by events??
- No recent update despite efforts.....



Communication and knowing the limits of your role are key when supporting a NP group as a Planning Aid Volunteer





Thank you!

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Neighbourhood Planning – Contact me through Julian
Friends of the Lake District work – lorayne-wall@fld.org.uk

Locality NP Roadmap, PAS checklist, CPRE Guides