

Northhill Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Steering Group Terms of Reference

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Northhill Parish Council has agreed to put together a Neighbourhood Plan and has agreed with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) that the neighbourhood area should be the land within the parish boundary.
- 1.2 Neighbourhood Planning, introduced through the Localism Act 2012, gives the community the opportunity to decide what it wants in the future for the betterment of the Parish, covering Housing, Environment, Community and Recreational Facilities, Economic Expansion and Infrastructure Requirements.

2 Steering Group

- 2.1 A Steering Group has been formed to research, develop and make recommendations with a view to establishing a Neighbourhood Plan addressing the future needs of Northhill Parish.
- 2.2 The membership of the Steering Group will be from current Parish Councillors and local members of the community who can bring value to the project. Guidance will be given to the group through representatives from CBC and BRCC. The Steering Group may co-opt further representation from any other person or organisation that is likely to bring additional benefit to the project. Details of any assistance offered by such parties must be declared publicly and should not be seen to compromise the integrity of the direction of the project.
- 2.3 Decisions made by the Steering Group should normally be by consensus at Steering Group meetings. Where a vote is required each member shall have one vote. A simple majority will be required to pass any motion. The Chair shall have one casting vote. If a member so requires, the secretary shall record the names of any members who voted on any question. Such a request must be made before moving on to the next item of business.
- 2.4 Members of the Steering Group will work together for the benefit of their communities. They will treat each other with respect and dignity, allowing members to air their views without prejudice or interruption.

3 Declaration of Interest

- 3.1 Steering Group members should declare an interest where their role on the Steering Group or decisions or recommendations made by the group, could result in potential advantage or disadvantage, whether financial or otherwise, to them, their family or close associates.
- 3.2 "Interest" may include membership of an organisation, ownership or interest in land or business or indeed any other matter likely to be relevant to the work of the Steering Group.
- 3.3 To ensure transparency and probity, each member of the Steering Group will complete a form declaring any potential conflicts of interest. The Secretary of the Steering Group will keep a record of these declarations.

4 Conflicts of interest

- 4.1 In situations where interests and roles may be in conflict with the decisions to be made by the Steering Group, each member must declare any potential conflict of interest before each business meeting commences. The Steering Group will reach a decision about whether such a conflict exists and the appropriate action to be taken. The person(s) concerned will be asked to leave the room while discussion is in progress.

- 4.2 Where a decision is made that a conflict of interest exists and may be perceived as prejudicial to the working of the group, the member concerned will be required to do one or more of the following:
- not to take part in any discussions, votes or decision-making
 - leave the group for parts of the meeting where the conflict of interest may influence views expressed
 - forego membership of the group.

5 Objectives of the Steering Group

- 5.1 In undertaking its role, the main objective of the Steering Group will be to be responsible for drawing up a draft Neighbourhood Plan and any revisions as a result of the consultation process.
- i The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will report back to Northill Parish Council
 - ii The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group shall not have the power to exercise, on behalf of the Parish Council any authority, nor to incur expenditure without prior authority from the Parish Council.
 - lii The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group task meetings are informal and can be held anywhere without public notice. Dates will be publicised.
 - Iv The date and venue of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meetings will be displayed on the Parish Council website ahead of schedule.
 - v Notes should be taken to facilitate reporting back to the Parish Council at each full Council Meeting.
 - vi Recommendations made as a result of community engagement shall be referred back to the Parish Council for decision making, such that the draft Neighbourhood Plan when presented should have the full backing of Parish Council and not the Steering group alone.
 - vii The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will work with the Parish Council such that the final Plan meets the needs of the community as seen from the ongoing consultation process.
- 5.2 In achieving this remit further operational objectives will be to:
- i suggest a timetable for the project and identify costs associated with delivering the project,
 - ii establish the future housing and business needs of the area, having regard for the wider social, economic and welfare considerations of the area e.g. health, education,
 - iii develop policies to inform the future development and use of land in the area , including infrastructure policies compatible with development,
 - iv identify sites for development in line with the requirements laid down in the Local Plan including sites that may be suitable for further development,
 - v take note and include in the Plan projects that are of importance to the community and identified through community engagement,
 - vi ensure the Neighbourhood Plan is supported by an effective ongoing programme of communication and consultation with the community (including community groups, businesses, landowners, the Parish Council and other relevant organisations) and CBC, adjoining parishes and other key third parties,
 - vii have regard to relevant national policies and be in general conformity with the strategic policies of CBC and EU and Human Rights legislation when developing the plan ,
 - viii conduct a sustainability assessment to support the Neighbourhood Plan if required including Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and Habitat Regulation Assessments (HEA) ,
 - ix support the Parish Council in submitting the Plan for independent examination,
 - x support the Parish Council in seeking consensus through the referendum process and ultimately securing community endorsement of the Neighbourhood Plan .

xi assemble a comprehensive evidence base to support Neighbourhood Plan policies through community engagement and research including communication with Parish Councillors and CBC officers.

6 Distribution of Terms of Reference

A copy of the Terms of Reference shall be given to each member of the Steering Group .The Secretary shall ask each member to sign a declaration of receipt of the document (or any supplementary version).