

Kirklees Council

**DCLG Neighbourhood Planning Local Plan Capacity Building
Feedback Report and Tool Kit**

June 2016

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2016, the Department for Communities and Local Government awarded Kirklees Council, £60,000 from its “Neighbourhood Planning and Local Planning Service Redesign and Capacity Building” fund.
- 1.2 The funding was awarded for a three part project:
 - a) **Creation of a neighbourhood planning skills hub** – Kirklees council had set up a [Comoodle](#) network for the purpose of sharing goods and services. The focus of the bid was to develop the Comoodle website to create a neighbourhood planning/local plan information sharing/ideas/skills platform. The platform would offer an opportunity to assist in transferring skills and establish contacts with other neighbourhood areas in Kirklees and West Yorkshire including private sector, public sector and individuals/groups. Funding was also awarded for marketing/publicity to make interested parties aware of the project and the benefits for progressing neighbourhood plans. Amount of funding awarded: £10,000.
 - b) **Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan Enabler** – Funding was awarded for the provision of staff resources to act as a link between Kirklees Council and the neighbourhood planning groups to enable the successful implementation of the skills hub and the alignment of plans. Amount of funding awarded: £35,000. This was based on a Full Time Equivalent of a Grade 7 planning officer for 2 year period (to reach adoption stages of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan).
 - c) **Implementation of a planning process system to align the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans** – to implement a service redesign to show how the above factors can come together to achieve an integrated Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan process. This included an independent (private sector) review of conformity between plans to ensure alignment (based on a retainer fee). Amount of funding awarded: £15,000.
- 1.3 The above projects were additional to the council’s existing neighbourhood plan commitments which include 72 hours of officer time per neighbourhood plan. The overall aim of the additional support was to provide a more bespoke officer role (Enabler) to assist the groups preparing neighbourhood plans, share skills/knowledge with the groups, and also promote capacity building within the neighbourhood forum.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to feedback on the project elements setting out the context of the bid, indicators for measuring success, an outline of what we did, outcomes, lessons learnt and the next steps in taking the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Planning forward.

2 Context

Kirklees Local Plan and emerging neighbourhood plans in the district

- 2.1 Kirklees is working on a new Local Plan for the district to cover the period 2013 – 2031. A draft Local Plan was consulted on in November – December 2015 and set out a long term strategy on managing development across the district including allocations for development, designations for the protection of parts of the district and a range of policies to achieve the strategy.
- 2.2 In addition, at the time of submitting the bid for funding, there were three neighbourhood planning bodies progressing neighbourhood plans all of which were at early stages of identifying resources and management of the neighbourhood plan, identifying issues, evidence gathering and early engagement.

The three neighbourhood areas included:

- a) Newsome – Huddersfield suburb with significant socio-economic, housing and environmental issues to be addressed. This plan was the most progressed and is being prepared by Newsome Ward Community Forum who now have a designated neighbourhood planning body status, an approved plan boundary and are now in an early engagement stage.
- b) Kirkheaton – small village, close to the urban fringe of Huddersfield. This plan is being prepared by Kirkheaton Future (a steering group of Kirkburton Parish Council which has delegated the preparation of this plan to the group under their overall legal responsibilities). This plan is at an early stage of preparation.
- c) Holme Valley – large semi-rural parish area with two main towns and partly within the Peak District National Park. This plan is being prepared by Holme Valley Parish Council and is likely to address town centre matters, rural economy/tourism issues as well as local design and development sites. This plan is at an early stage of preparation.

Reasons and Benefits for undertaking the project

- 2.3 The council and its neighbourhood planning partners were reaching a critical stage in ensuring that an emerging development plan and emerging, diverse, neighbourhood plans were developed in such a way as to ensure they were in general alignment. A key opportunity existed for jointly exploring the development of policy and allocation option, sharing skills, and sharing evidence bases in a timely and innovative way.
- 2.4 The intention of the proposal was to strengthen and improve working relationships and create contact points for the development of neighbourhood planning and its integration with the Local Plan across the district. Once established relationships are formed and the skills hub is operational it is hoped to broaden into wider networks in the West Yorkshire region. It will increase the level of support, the council is currently able to offer neighbourhood groups and will help in the creation of multi-disciplinary

and cross-service responses to local plan and neighbourhood planning issues and challenges.

- 2.5 The proposal sought to help address the lack of time and resources available from all parties to ensure success, which is a particular issue in a large unitary authority with parish/town council areas covering a very large and diverse geography. It also sought to address communication/information issues and help address any areas of apparent distrust.
- 2.6 The development of a shared skills network and the sharing of information, skills and knowledge on-line have the capacity to put local people and communities in touch with each other to share experiences and help bring forward their plans. This is within the umbrella of the council so it can retain a co-ordination and leadership role. Together with shared skill networks and the development of joint working practices in Kirklees' case there is a real opportunity to explore neighbourhood plans and local plans which cross administrative boundaries.

Core assumptions to be tested through the projects

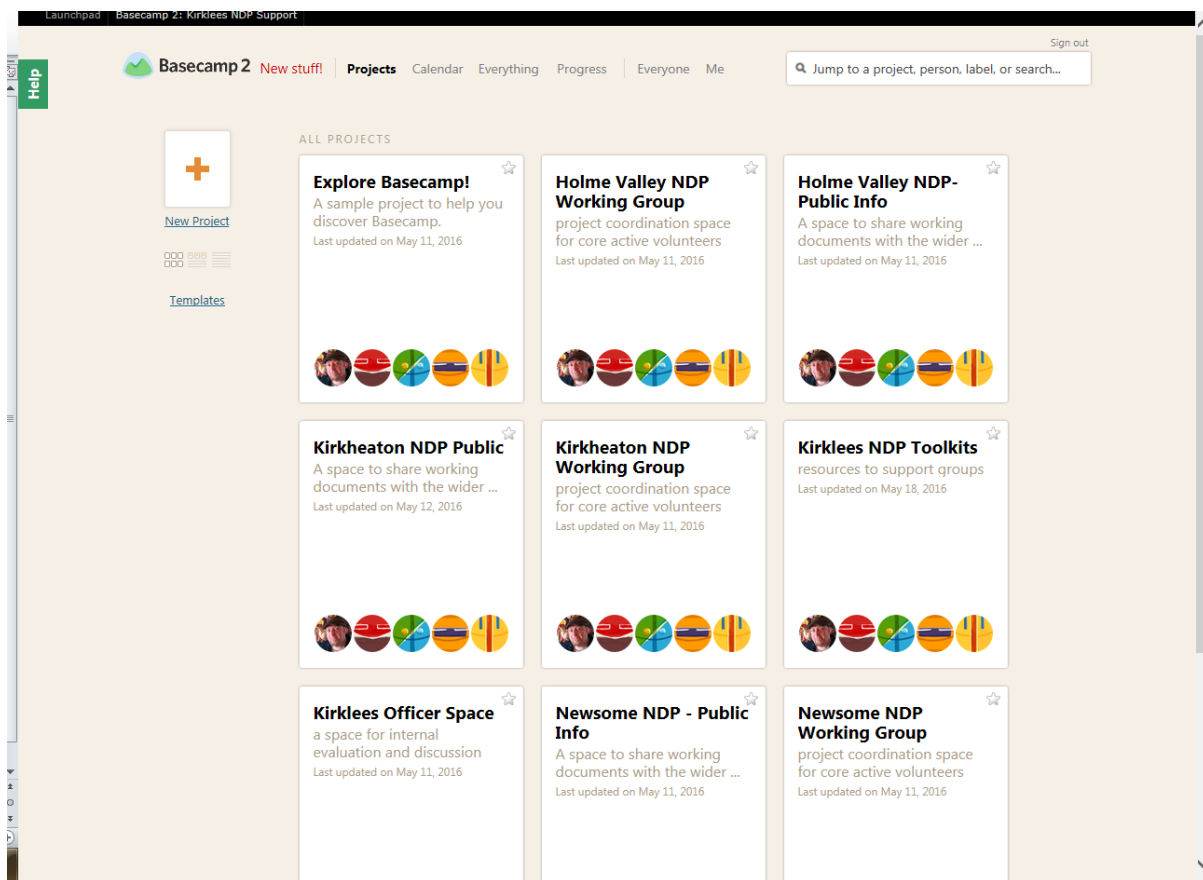
- 2.7 To assess the value of the project some core assumptions were devised:
 - a) Groups will continue to seek support for the neighbourhood planning process and that cross service support will continue to be required to support neighbourhood planning.
 - b) Groups that are further progressed can share lessons learnt and identify skills, resources and equipment/facilities required.
 - c) Are communities willing to share skills?
 - d) Skills are better co-ordinated.
 - e) Skills gaps are addressed.
 - f) Officer skills can be embedded within the community.
 - g) Activities are improved/better quality as a result of Comoodle and users are satisfied with the experience - the level of positive user feedback (quantitative) i.e. that by sharing/trading community skills, the Council can use its resources more effectively to support the delivery of plans.
 - h) That increased collaboration will improve efficiency and trust

3 Creating a Neighbourhood Planning Skills Hub

What we did and why

- 3.1 The Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan Enabler set up a meeting with the council's Comoodle Programme Leader and the Head of Policy and Strategy to learn more about the initiative and scope how it could be used to support neighbourhood planning.
- 3.2 Comoodle is about making the best use of stuff, spaces and skills by lending things to each other and by sharing what we know. The development of a skills hub to co-ordinate activities and provide an opportunity to trade skills with other neighbourhood planning groups linked with a wider system offered the opportunity to building on existing links and processes rather than reinvent or duplicate a system and therefore maximise funding and resources.
- 3.3 The approach was considered to fit with the Kirklees "new council" vision of a council which:
 - Supports communities to do more for themselves and each other;
 - Keeps vulnerable people safe and helps them to stay in control of their lives; and
 - Provides services – but focusses on the things that only the council can do.
- 3.4 Following the scoping meeting, it was decided to pilot the neighbourhood planning skills hub and the use of Comoodle with the three existing neighbourhood planning groups. Lessons learnt from the pilot could help to inform a roll out of the system to a wider audience.
- 3.5 Meetings were held with the three groups to discuss the main issues which affected them in getting started on neighbourhood plans. Common issues which emerged included:
 - While there was a vast amount of information available on-line both on the council's website and from other sources such as Localities, the groups wanted a one-stop shop for links to the most up to date information or examples of good practice;
 - A method for collecting information on skills in the community and what was required was needed in order to progress the neighbourhood plan, properly resource it and to produce the project plan.
- 3.6 In response to this, a decision was made to trial an on-line project management system called Basecamp. Basecamp is like an on-line filing cabinet. It allows everything to be organised in one place. This can include files for meetings, evidence, good practice, funding and outlines of tasks and deadlines. Each neighbourhood plan group was set up on Basecamp and allowed the neighbourhood planning groups and the council to share ideas and provide updates.

Basecamp2 – On-line Project Management Space



- 3.7 The Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan Enabler devised a skills audit (See Appendix 1). The skills audit was based on the Planning Aid resource “How to resource your neighbourhood plan” <https://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/how-to-resource-your-neighbourhood-plan/> and issues raised by the neighbourhood plan groups. The council’s skills audit was sent out to neighbourhood planning groups for completion. A link was set up from the main page of Comoodle to the neighbourhood planning skills page. The council’s communications officer was commissioned for web design, branding and marketing. An added benefit of the commission was that the communications officer was also a member of Newsome Ward Community Forum forming a link between the council and the community at an early stage to consider the usability of the system and scoping what was required.
- 3.8 Feedback was sought from the groups on the skills audit and the usability of Comoodle at the end of May 2016 so that the system could be reviewed and refinements made by June 2016. The Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan Enabler and the Comoodle Project Manager worked together to co-ordinate the development of the skills hub.

Outputs

- 2 members of the community offered support to neighbourhood planning groups
- The University of Huddersfield offered support
- 1 neighbourhood planning group requested support

Learning

- 3.9 While the groups liked the idea of basecamp and the development of a one-stop shop for sharing information, not all of their members were confident with IT. The Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan Enabler therefore, had to spend more time than anticipated supporting and encouraging the three groups to fill in the skills template and to use an on-line platform.

Next steps

- 3.10 Following evaluation of the pilot, the aims would be:
- To extend Basecamp to other community groups and interested parties;
 - To further promote the skills offer through Comoodle;
 - To consider extending the neighbourhood planning hub to identify “space” e.g. venues to hold consultation events and “stuff” requirements e.g. presentation equipment as part of the wider Comoodle model; and
 - To establish contacts with other neighbourhood areas in Kirklees, Leeds City Region and West Yorkshire;
 - To work further with the University as a resource to support neighbourhood plans.

4 Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan Enabler

What we did and why

- 4.1 The role of Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan Enabler was filled by two members of staff equating to 1 x FTE.
- 4.2 The role of the Local Plan/Neighbourhood Enabler is:
- To facilitate partnership working between the council and neighbourhood planning groups by strengthening linkages between these groups and the council. This role and the refinement to the planning process system proposed will allow greater certainty through improved communication and reduce the likelihood of incompatible objectives between the two processes.
 - To manage the development of the Comoodle to provide a web based platform to build a skills base around the district from public, private and voluntary sectors (see section 3).
 - To promote links beyond Kirklees where necessary for Neighbourhood Plan outside of the district (for example, the Holme Valley neighbourhood plan requires working with the neighbouring Peak District National Park Authority).
- 4.3 Common themes that emerged from early discussions with neighbourhood planning groups was the need for clarity over the roles/stages of both the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans, how best to integrate the two processes and best practice on how to establish working relationships between the groups and their steering groups and the council.
- 4.4 An initial meeting between the council and members of the Parish councils and their steering groups was set up to discuss:
- roles and responsibilities;
 - scope of the neighbourhood plan, making it representative, using existing evidence bases to support the neighbourhood plan rather than duplicating/repeating existing work. This included the use of the Kirklees Local Plan evidence base consisting of over 900 documents;
 - project management, timetable and resources including the production of a project plan and a service level agreement; and
 - signposting to information to getting started such as Locality toolkits and potential funding/grants.

Outputs

- The production of a model terms of reference to be used between the designated body and the steering group;
- The production of a model Signed Service level agreement (See Appendix 2);
- Established a single point of contact within the designated body, the steering group and the council to ensure a co-ordinated response and build levels of trust;

- Establish a skills template for skills audit and research into what skills existed within the neighbourhood plan groups, what they required and what they would be willing to share;
- Development and management of the skills hub with the Comoodle Project Manager;
- Attendance at the Leeds City Region Neighbourhood Planning Group to share good practice.

Learning

4.5 Areas of learning included:

- Ensuring a single point of contact at the council who then contacted other relevant colleagues for required information assisted in building trust and greater co-ordination of the project;
- The focus on getting the right skills in place and project management helped the neighbourhood plan groups get the wider community involved in their plans;
- The skills audit needed to be refreshed during different stages of the plans as the issues and options developed and the groups became clearer on the areas they wished to focus on.

Next steps

- 4.6 The Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan Enabler will continue to support skills sharing and improved communication for the remaining period of the project.

5 Implementation of a planning process system to align the local Plan and neighbourhood plans

What we did and why

- 5.1 The diagram outlined opposite sets out a service design to illustrate how the factors can come together to achieve an integrated Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan process.
- 5.2 The council considers that there is a tension between emerging Local Plans seeking to allocate land for significant growth and how this can ensure that local aspirations and objectives can also be achieved. Managing this relationship and testing the success of an independent scrutiny/conformity stage before neighbourhood plans reach their final stages could play a significant role in de-risking plans for all parties in an informal way and help find areas of common ground earlier in the process.

Next steps

- 5.3 To measure success we would integrate value for money (VFM) and quality indicators into the Planning Services Business Plan. This would also demonstrate corporate commitment and embed joint working into the key success indicators for the Planning Service.
- 5.4 The council will continue to work with the existing neighbourhood planning groups and seek to roll out the processes to other partners including:
 - Other Parish and Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums
 - Leeds City Region Neighbourhood Planning Groups
 - Neighbourhood Planning Champions
 - Other council services
 - Partners in Comoddle

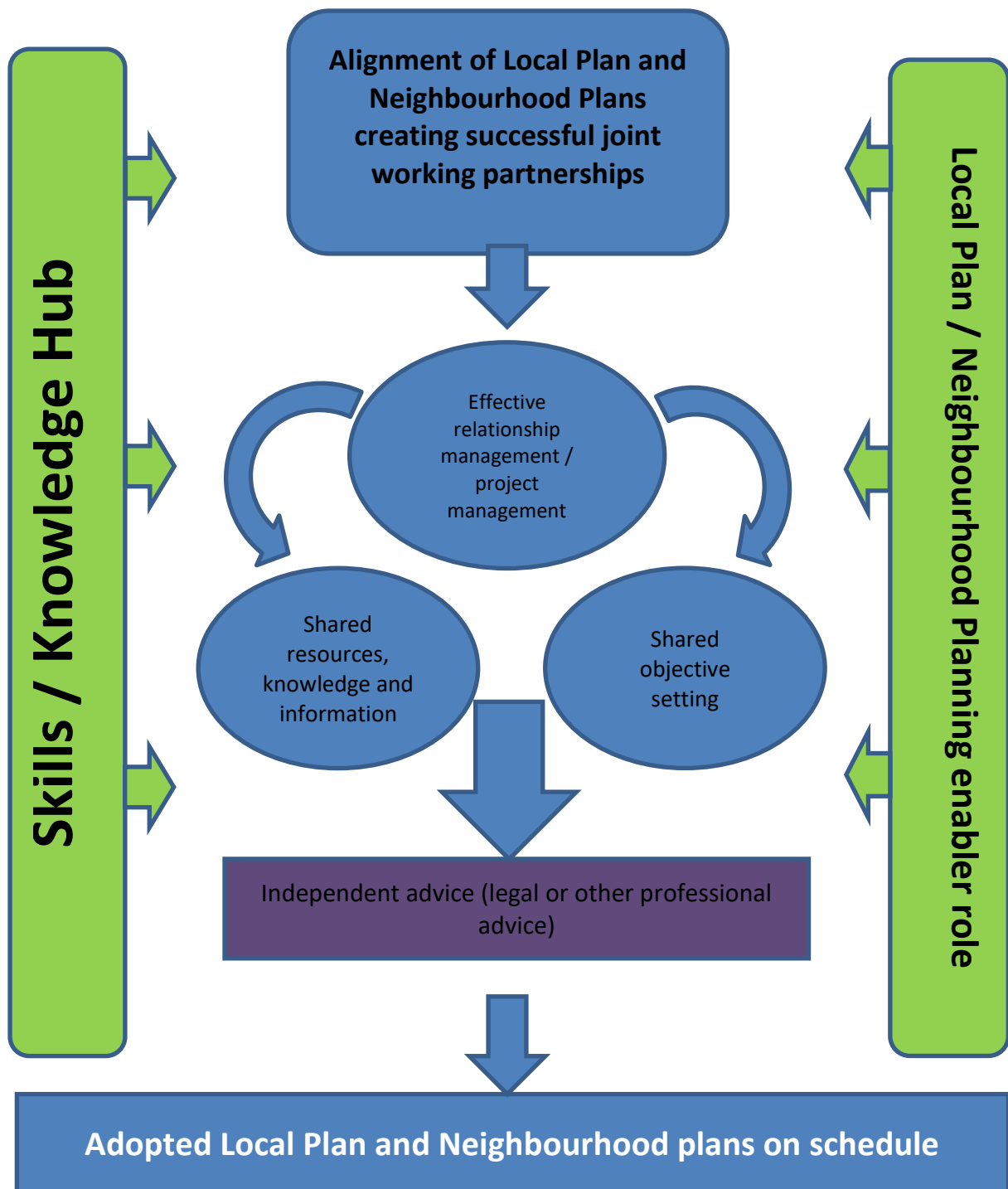
6 Contact for further information

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Implementation of a planning process system to align the local Plan and neighbourhood plans



Neighbourhood Planning Skills Audit

Neighbourhood Planning Group: *(Please insert name of group)*

Key stages to develop a neighbourhood plan and types of skills that may be required	Level of skills Extensive Moderate Little None	I/we have these skills or we know where to get them (please reference source)	Are you willing to share skills in exchange for other help?
EXAMPLE Website design and management	Extensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web design • Logo design 	Yes – Joe Bloggs – Contact details <i>(Note: this may be through the neighbourhood plan group or directly)</i>
Getting started			
Project management – overseeing the project plan and managing the process			
Leadership – e.g. lead a steering group or working group			
Recruiting and enthusing volunteers			
Administrative skills – e.g. audit trails, recording of evidence in a systematic way, documentation of meetings, gatherings and events			
Finance – e.g. bid making, managing budgets and/or			

Key stages to develop a neighbourhood plan and types of skills that may be required	Level of skills Extensive Moderate Little None	I/we have these skills or we know where to get them (please reference source)	Are you willing to share skills in exchange for other help?
fundraising			
Preparation of the neighbourhood development plan:			
Community engagement			
Written and verbal communication skills e.g. use of plain English			
Experience of chairing a meeting			
Experience of facilitating discussions and recording information			
Social media skills e.g. Twitter and Facebook to update people on progress.			
Organising events			
Marketing and publicity e.g. designing leaflets or producing articles for newsletters or publication			
Questionnaire design			
Design and use of on-line survey and discussion tools (e.g. SurveyMonkey, CommonPlace,			

Key stages to develop a neighbourhood plan and types of skills that may be required	Level of skills Extensive Moderate Little None	I/we have these skills or we know where to get them (please reference source)	Are you willing to share skills in exchange for other help?
Stickyworld and Vox-up)			
Website design and management			
Basic IT skills			
Evidence gathering			
Links with the local community organisations and individuals			
Links with local businesses			
Links with regional and national organisations e.g. Locality, Consultation Institute			
Experience in data protection			
Understanding of strategic planning process e.g. national planning policy framework, local plan			
Understanding of local housing issues			
Understanding of jobs/local employment issues			
Appraisals			
Ability to analyse data and review complex problems objectively			
Evaluation and monitoring of information and data			

Key stages to develop a neighbourhood plan and types of skills that may be required	Level of skills Extensive Moderate Little None	I/we have these skills or we know where to get them (please reference source)	Are you willing to share skills in exchange for other help?
Market research skills e.g. analysis of responses to consultations			
Knowledge/experience of sustainability appraisal/strategic environmental assessment			
Drafting the Plan			
Design skills e.g. logo design, visual aids and illustrations to represent ideas, policies and projects and make the plan look more attractive			
Photography e.g. to make the plan accessible, attractive and engaging			
Statistics and spatial data analysis skills to interrogate the evidence base			
Architectural, historic building and/or urban design skills to assist, for example with character assessments			
Town planning skills e.g. writing planning policies			

Key stages to develop a neighbourhood plan and types of skills that may be required	Level of skills Extensive Moderate Little None	I/we have these skills or we know where to get them (please reference source)	Are you willing to share skills in exchange for other help?
Additional specialist skills you consider useful to developing the neighbourhood plan			

Skills Gaps Analysis

Skills required	How are you planning to fill your skills gap? Action

I agree that this information can be shared with the Comoodle project group and published on the Comoodle website. Personal details will not be published.

Name:

Position:

Dated:

Neighbourhood Planning

Service Level Agreement

Parish/Town Councils and other Qualifying Bodies

Service Level Agreement between Kirklees Council and [Insert name of Designated Body] for the purpose of producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan

1. Purpose

The purpose of this agreement is to set out a framework for a working relationship between [Name of designated body] and Kirklees Council.

Under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 Kirklees Council is responsible for:

- a. fulfilling certain statutory requirements set out in clause 6 below; and
- b. the provision of advice and assistance.

This agreement confirms:

- a. how Kirklees Council will undertake its statutory duties;
- b. the level and extent of the technical advice and assistance that Kirklees Council will provide
- c. how ***[Insert name of designated body]*** will aim to progress the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

2. Memorandum of Agreement:

This Agreement is made the day of 2017

BETWEEN:-

Kirklees Council

Signed by

Director of Economy, Skills & the Environment
(Place)

and

[Insert Name of designated body]

Signed by

Chair on behalf of [name of designated body]

3. Date and duration of agreement

This agreement will commence on the date set out above.

This agreement will run for 12 months whereupon there will be a review by parties with respect to its continuation.

4. Working Relationships

The parties to this agreement seek:

- a. an open and constructive working relationship;
- b. to work closely together at all levels, both in policy, and in strategic issues of importance;
- c. to respect each other's' views, and where different, after discussion to ensure proper understanding of the reasons for such differences;
- d. to have a 'no surprises' policy, based on notifying each other well in advance, where possible, of significant announcements and developments in policy;
- e. to minimise duplication of activity wherever possible;
- f. to inform other stakeholders (anybody who has an interest or is affected by the neighbourhood plan) about our relationship so as to reduce uncertainty.

5. Communication

The parties agree that:

All communication will be between ***[Insert name of designated body]*** and Kirklees Council Planning Policy Group will be through a designated representative.

Roles and Responsibilities

The statutory obligations of Kirklees Council are set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ("the Regulations").

6. Kirklees Council will make the following provision service standard*:

Following completion of the initial statutory procedures set out in the Regulations in relation to designation of neighbourhood areas and neighbourhood forums, Kirklees Council will meet the following standards of service (the regulation numbers apply to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012):-

Confirm that the draft neighbourhood plan meets the criteria in the Localism Act (Regulation 15)	within 8 weeks following submission to the Council.
Publicise the submission plan and other relevant documentation (Regulation 16) -	within 6 weeks of receiving the submission documents which meet the criteria
Appoint a suitable examiner in agreement with the Newsome Ward Community Forum and submit the draft plan, supporting	within 8 weeks of close of pre-submission publicity period

documents to the Independent Examiner (Regulation 17)	
Forward on representations to the Independent Examiner (Regulation 17)	within 2 weeks of the close of the consultation period
Consideration of the recommendations in the Examiners' Report, that the draft plan meets the basic conditions and publication of a 'Decision Statement' (Regulation 18/19) –	within 5 weeks following the receipt of the inspectors report
Make arrangements including the setting of a date for the holding of the referendum	As soon as possible after the publication of the decision statement
Making of the plan (Regulation 19/20)	Within 8 weeks from the date of the referendum

* **Note: To be reviewed in light of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2016 and the Neighbourhood Planning Bill**

Kirklees Council will make the following provision for advice and assistance:

Topic	Advice & Support
Published advice	A dedicated neighbourhood planning web page on the Council's website with guidance notes
Professional advice	Provide a named officer as first point of contact for advice and technical support. In this case the support officer is Sarah Smith Contact details: Telephone 01484 221000 (automated switchboard, ask for Sarah Smith) Email sarah.smith@kirklees.gov.uk
Background Data and Evidence	The Support Officer will provide and/or direct to the appropriate source:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Plan Evidence Base and access to relevant base data • Links to relevant research data • OS base maps for the area • Maps showing constraints data • Up to date information on any grant funding available • Other appropriate data the council

	holds
Professional advice and assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide conformity advice with Kirklees Unitary Development Plan and Kirklees Publication Draft Local Plan • Up to date information on the Local Plan • Provide comments to emerging drafts • Digitising of final proposals maps
Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan	Provide advice and support in relation to:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conformity of the plan and whether in their view it meets the basic conditions • Suitability of the Consultation Statement • Suitability of any Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations Assessments undertaken • Conformity with other legislative requirements • OS mapping requirements

Note: Kirklees Council is bound by the Data Protection Act and other relevant legislation in terms of release of information. Provision of information with regard to the Publication Draft Local Plan is restricted to that which is in the public domain at any time, as any changes need to be agreed by Kirklees Council's Cabinet Committee.

Kirklees Council will not offer advice or assistance in the following areas:

- Writing and producing documents
- Undertaking survey work
- Attending every meeting
- Attending every consultation event
- Designated officer support at meetings/consultation events
- Direct financial support

7. [Name of designated body] (qualifying body) Responsibilities

- Establish a steering group to develop the Neighbourhood Development Plan with clear terms of reference.
- Undertake to work towards preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan with a defined project management approach, work programme and timetable to delivery.
- Convene as a group on a regular basis throughout the period of preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and its examination.
- Commit adequate resources to the task.

- e. Provide regular updates on progress against the project plan to the Council via the named officer.
- f. Provide to the Council the Draft Submission Plan in electronic format.
- g. Provide results of primary source data which would be helpful to the Council.

8. Dispute settlement

In the unlikely event of a dispute it is expected that this will be resolved at the working level at which it arises. If this is not possible then the relevant signatories to this agreement will discuss the matter and decide on the action to take.