

# Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service

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PHASE 1: JANUARY 2017

Planit-X Town and Country Planning Services  
INFO@PLANIT-X.CO.UK  
01664 568819



# Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service: Phase 1

## Executive Summary

East Northamptonshire Council has been awarded £25,000 to investigate the potential for setting up a Neighbourhood Planning consultancy service through the Department of Communities and Local Government's 'Neighbourhood Planning and Local Planning Service Redesign and Capacity Building Pilot Programme'.

Neighbourhood planning allows qualifying bodies to formulate Neighbourhood Development Plans, which can guide and shape development in an area. Local planning authorities have a statutory role to play in supporting neighbourhood planning for which they can claim £20,000 per area. Qualifying bodies, such as parish councils, writing a neighbourhood plan are eligible to apply for up to £9,000 in grant, while bodies facing more complex issues can apply for a further £6,000.

In East Northamptonshire Council, members of the Planning Policy and Conservation team deliver the neighbourhood planning service in accordance with a Neighbourhood Planning Protocol. Of the 50 parishes in the district, 14 are actively involved in neighbourhood planning. These include Higham Ferrers which was 'made' on 11 April 2016. The Council will receive £30,000 DCLG grant for its part in the preparation of the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan.

Based on this experience and other evidence, estimates suggest that the cost to the Council of supporting the existing neighbourhood planning programme will be exceeded by DCLG grant support by over £75,000. However, 300 days additional staff time is required to support this programme. Without additional resources to meet these statutory requirements other areas of service delivery will suffer. Unless this is resolved, the Council is not well-placed to offer a neighbourhood planning consultancy service to others.

It is recommended that a two-year, full-time Neighbourhood Plan Officer post be created at a cost to the Council of £40,698 pa. This cost is expected to be recovered by DCLG neighbourhood plan funding. The post will create some 146 days' spare capacity. Following questionnaire surveys of local planning authorities and qualifying bodies together with a neighbourhood planning workshop, this spare capacity provides the Council with opportunities to undertake the following income generating activities:

1. Attracting additional DCLG grant by increasing the uptake of neighbourhood planning in East Northamptonshire, particularly in small parishes;
2. Providing neighbourhood plan support services to other local planning authorities- particularly the Borough Council of Wellingborough; and
3. Developing a Neighbourhood Planning Masterclass and Mentoring programme.



# Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service: Phase 1

## Background

- 1.1 In November 2015, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched its 'Neighbourhood Planning and Local Planning Service Redesign and Capacity Building Pilot Programme' to provide an opportunity for local authorities to bid for funding for projects that supported Neighbourhood Planning. East Northamptonshire Council subsequently submitted a successful bid and was awarded £25,000 to investigate the potential for setting up a Neighbourhood Planning consultancy service. The idea of the consultancy service had initially been developed following a series of Commercial Awareness Workshops held with East Northamptonshire Council officers during 2015.
- 1.2 Phase 1 of the initiative has focussed on the preparation of a business case for the consultancy service. This work has been supported by Northamptonshire Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), who has been working with local communities to initiate neighbourhood plans, and Planit-X Town and Country Planning Services who provide planning consultancy support to over 20 neighbourhood plan groups- mainly in the Leicestershire area.
- 1.3 This report provides a business case to enable the Council to properly assess the risks and opportunities associated with setting up a Neighbourhood Planning consultancy service. It addresses the financial implications and longer term options for delivering a self-financing service.

## Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced the neighbourhood planning regime. The Act allows qualifying bodies to formulate Neighbourhood Development Plans, which can guide and shape development in a particular area. These plans must have regard to national policies and conform to local strategic policies.
- 2.2 The legislation enables three types of organisation, known as qualifying bodies, to lead on neighbourhood planning functions. These are:
  - a parish or town council
  - a neighbourhood forum
  - an existing community organisation
- 2.3 In an area which contains all or part of the administrative area of a parish council, the parish council is responsible for neighbourhood planning. A neighbourhood forum is an organisation or group empowered to lead the neighbourhood planning process in an area where there is no parish council.

- 2.4 Draft plans must pass an independent check. Neighbourhood plans must meet 'basic conditions', and certain other legal matters, which are quite different to the rigour of meeting local plan soundness requirements. If they pass this check, they must then be put to a local referendum. If the majority of those who vote are in favour the local planning authority will adopt the plan.
- 2.5 The local planning authority has a statutory role to play in supporting neighbourhood planning:
- To take decisions at key stages in the neighbourhood planning process and take decisions as soon as possible, and within statutory time periods where these apply;
  - To provide advice or assistance to a qualifying body (parish council, neighbourhood forum or community organisation) that is producing a neighbourhood plan or Order as required by paragraph 3 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 2.6 For example, it will organise the independent examination of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and it will be the local planning authority which will pay for and run the neighbourhood planning referendum.
- 2.7 Government funding has been made available for local authorities and for qualifying bodies to help with neighbourhood planning. In addition to this, in areas where there is a neighbourhood development plan in place, the neighbourhood will be able to receive 25% of the revenues from the Community Infrastructure Levy arising from the development that they have chosen to accept.
- 2.8 Government research from 2015 (using a small sample of neighbourhood plans), suggested that in areas with a neighbourhood plan in place, there was a 10% increase in housing allocations (over that provided by the local plan).
- 2.9 Across England many different communities have already embraced neighbourhood planning. Over six-million people live in a neighbourhood plan area and 72% of local planning authorities contain at least one designated neighbourhood area. Over 200 neighbourhood plan referendums have been held – all of which have been successful.
- 2.10 With more communities preparing neighbourhood plans there is an increasing demand on local planning authorities to meet their statutory duties and for neighbourhood planning support services. This Business Case considers the demand from both local planning authorities and qualifying bodies for consultancy support.

- 2.11 The Government's commitment to Neighbourhood Planning is reiterated through the new Neighbourhood Planning Bill (September 2016). The Government is currently consulting on proposals to ensure Neighbourhood Plans that have reached an advanced stage (e.g. submission) are given appropriate weighting in decision making. It will also introduce procedures for reviewing/ modifying Neighbourhood Plans.

## Funding

### For Local Planning Authorities

- 3.1 Under the new burdens doctrine, Government money is available to ensure local planning authorities receive sufficient funding to enable them to meet the legislative duties in relation to neighbourhood planning. Specifically, it covers the neighbourhood planning duties introduced in the Localism Act 2011 which are to provide advice or assistance; to hold an examination; and to make the necessary arrangements for the referendum.
- 3.2 From April 2016, local planning authorities can claim:
- For all areas: £20,000 once they have set a date for a referendum following a successful examination.
- 3.3 Additional funding is available in certain areas:
- Area designation: £5,000 for the first five neighbourhood areas designated. The limit of five areas applies to the total number of areas designated in the local planning authority (i.e. it includes areas designated in previous years). It should be noted that East Northamptonshire has already exceeded the five areas limit.
  - Forum designation: £5,000 for the first five neighbourhood forums they designate. The limit of five forums applies to the total number of areas designated in the authority's area (i.e. it includes forums designated in previous years).
  - Business areas: £10,000 once they have set a date for a referendum following a successful examination.

### For Qualifying Bodies

- 3.4 DCLG has made funding available to provide support and grants via Locality's My Community website. All groups writing a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order will be eligible to apply for up to £9,000 in grant over the three-year programme from 2015-18. This risk is however considered to be low, given the Government's ongoing commitment to Neighbourhood Planning demonstrated by the new Neighbourhood Planning Bill (September 2016).
- 3.5 Groups facing more complex issues can apply for specific packages of technical support where needed, and may also be eligible for further £6,000 in grant. Groups with complex issues include:

- Neighbourhood forums (where there is no Parish or Town Council)
- Clusters of parishes
- High growth areas
- Deprived areas
- Business led neighbourhood plans
- Populations of over 25,000<sup>1</sup>
- Groups preparing a neighbourhood development order.

3.6 Groups can apply for costs associated with developing the Neighbourhood Plan which may include, but are not limited to:

- Developing a website
- Training sessions for members of the steering group
- Help with putting together a project plan
- Public indemnity insurance (for a neighbourhood forum and this is not already in place)
- Help with developing the evidence base and analysing it to identify issues and aims for your plan
- Undertaking a housing survey
- Engaging a facilitator to help with capacity building, for community consultation or workshops
- Engaging a planning expert to help draft policies
- Support for making site allocations
- Contribution to required specialist studies, such as housing needs assessments
- Contribution to undertaking a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) if the local planning authority has identified that one is needed
- Support with undertaking the six-week pre-submission consultation
- Support with collecting and analysing responses from the six-week pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation and deciding how to modify the neighbourhood plan
- Help with understanding whether your plan is ready for examination (meeting the basic conditions and other legal requirements)
- Provide training in the legal requirements which will be tested at the examination stage
- Venue hire
- Publicity materials
- Printing
- Costs associated with planning and undertaking public engagement and consulting on the plan.

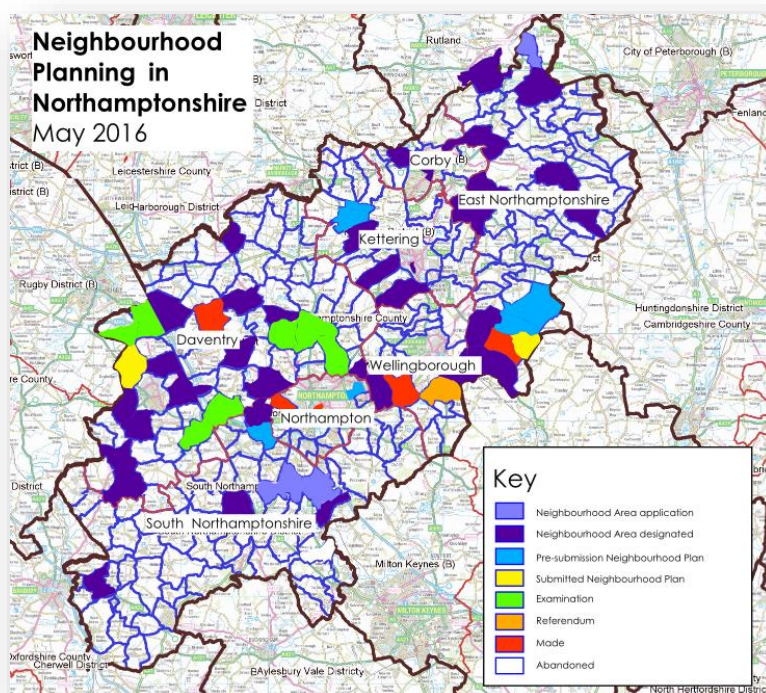
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<sup>1</sup> In the case of East Northamptonshire, Rushden is the only Town/ Parish that would fall into this category

- 3.7 The Neighbourhood Planning Grant Guidance Notes strongly advise groups that are intending to use the grant to engage professionals to ensure that they are appropriately qualified for the work they are delivering. This would generally mean a qualified planner, preferably a chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (MRTPI), to provide advice on planning legislation, policy and issues. The maximum day rate is £500 per day excluding VAT and reasonable expenses.
- 3.8 While further funding is available from other sources, these tend to be more discretionary. For example, the National Lottery 'Awards for All England' offers grants of between £300 and £10,000 for grassroots and community activity that aims to improve life for local people and neighbourhoods. A scoring system is used to distribute funding.

## Neighbourhood Planning in Northamptonshire

- 4.1 At May 2016, around 60 communities in Northamptonshire had taken the first statutory steps (an application for Neighbourhood Area Designation) to preparing a neighbourhood plan (see Appendix 1). Within the county, activity is greatest in Daventry, where 23 neighbourhood plans are at various stages of preparation.
- 4.2 In Northamptonshire, as at May 2016 five neighbourhood plans have been 'made' - West Haddon (Daventry), Higham Ferrers (East Northamptonshire), Duston, Springboroughs (both Northampton) and Earls Barton (Wellingborough). The average time taken for each of the plans to complete the process (from application for neighbourhood area designation) is three years.



- 4.3 Neighbourhood planning is not a legal requirement but a right which a community can choose to use. Communities may decide that they could achieve the outcomes they want to see through other planning routes, such as incorporating their proposals for the neighbourhood into the Local Plan. In Northamptonshire, there are some 210 parishes where Neighbourhood Areas have not been designated. In areas where there are no parish councils- mainly urban areas- the number of neighbourhood forums that have the potential to lead the neighbourhood planning process is uncertain.

## Neighbourhood Planning in East Northamptonshire

- 5.1 Sustainable development is a key corporate priority for East Northamptonshire Council. Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans are identified as key activities in support of this objective.
- 5.2 In East Northamptonshire Council, responsibility for managing local plans and neighbourhood planning lies with the Planning Policy and Conservation team. The Planning Policy and Conservation team contains the equivalent of approximately 6.5 full time staff (1 manager and 5.5 officer positions), delivering the following services:
- Preparation of the Local Plan Part 2 (site specific policies), supplementary planning documents and delivering the requirements of the Neighbourhood Planning Protocol – Two full-time Planning Policy officer posts, plus one 4-days per week officer post;
  - Masterplanning and design, focusing upon Rushden East sustainable urban extension – One 4-days per week officer post;
  - Historic conservation expertise: listed buildings and conservation area reviews – One full-time officer post;
  - Natural conservation expertise: protected trees and landscaping – One full-time officer post.
- 5.3 There is no dedicated Neighbourhood Planning Officer and little capacity to support neighbourhood planning in the district. Currently, Planning Policy officers deliver the neighbourhood planning service in accordance with a Neighbourhood Planning Protocol<sup>2</sup> as an integral part of their roles, alongside the preparation of development plan documents (Local Plan Part 2) and supplementary planning documents. The protocol outlines the service that East Northamptonshire Council can offer to fulfil its statutory duties and support and guide Neighbourhood Plans coming forward.
- 5.4 Of the 50 parishes in East Northamptonshire, 14 are actively involved in neighbourhood planning. These include Higham Ferrers which was 'made' on 11 April 2016.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5708/neighbourhood\\_planning\\_protocol.pdf](http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5708/neighbourhood_planning_protocol.pdf)

- 5.5 Since February 2012 (as at August 2016) the Council has been eligible for £130,000 of DCLG funding in connection with the neighbourhood plan programme in the district (excluding the Neighbourhood Planning and Local Planning Service Redesign and Capacity Building Pilot Programme grant). Details are set out in the table below. Of this, some funding is still yet to be claimed by the Council, while further funding is likely to become available imminently; e.g. when the Chelveston cum Caldecott Neighbourhood Plan examination is complete (autumn 2016).

Neighbourhood Area	Frontrunner payments	NA Designation (Reg 7): £5,000 per area designated prior to 1 April 2016	NP Submission (Reg 15): £5,000 per submission draft Plan	NP Examiners Report/ Referendum payment: £20,000 available upon receipt of Examiner's Report	Notes
Barnwell	n/a	£5,000			
Brigstock	n/a	£5,000			
Barrowden and Wakerley	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Funding to Rutland CC, as the relevant local authority for Barrowden PC (Qualifying Body)
Chelveston cum Caldecott	n/a	£5,000	£5,000		Submission money not yet claimed.
Collyweston	n/a	n/a			
Deene and Deenethorpe	n/a	£5,000			
Glaphorn	n/a	n/a			
Higham Ferrers	n/a	£5,000	£5,000	£20,000	Referendum money not yet claimed
Irthlingborough	n/a	£5,000			NA designation money not claimed
King's Cliffe	n/a	£5,000			
Oundle	£20,000	£5,000			Frontrunner funding claimed February 2012
Raunds	£20,000	£5,000			Frontrunner funding claimed February 2012
Rushden	n/a	£5,000			
Stanwick	n/a	£5,000	£5,000		
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>£40,000</b>	<b>£55,000*</b>	<b>£15,000**</b>	<b>£20,000***</b>	<b>£130,000</b>

\*Payments for 9 NA designations received to date = £45k out of £55k available

\*\*No NP submission payments claimed to date

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## Higham Ferrers

5.6 From the application for neighbourhood area designation, the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan took 3.3 years to complete. The examination into the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan cost £6,083.25 (excluding VAT). The cost of arranging the referendum is unknown, but based on fees and charges for counting officers at £1.80/head (Localism Act: Neighbourhood Plans and Community Right to Build- Impact Assessment) this will have been around £11,200. In addition, there were some costs relating to the serving of public notices and planning staff time. For undertaking its legislative duties in relation to the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan, East Northamptonshire Council will receive a total of £30,000 from the DCLG.

## Indicative costs

5.7 Based on the experience of supporting the preparation of the Highams Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan and other evidence a schedule of indicative costs and staff time has been prepared (Appendix 2). The single largest variable cost is the referendum which will depend upon the size of the electorate in the neighbourhood area.

5.8 Using this schedule and the size of the electorate (based on May 2015 electoral register) a cost estimate for each of the remaining 12 (excludes Barrowden and Wakerley joint neighbourhood plan that is also in Rutland) neighbourhood plans that are being prepared has been calculated (Appendix 3). This suggests that the cost to the Council of supporting the existing neighbourhood planning programme (notices, examiner, referendum) will be exceeded by DCLG grant support by over £75,000.

5.9 The schedule also suggests that 300days staff time will required to support neighbourhood planning to the standards required by ENC's Neighbourhood Planning Protocol.

5.10 The Council's costs of supporting neighbourhood planning in larger neighbourhood areas are unlikely to be met by DCLG funding. The Council's costs for supporting the Rushden Neighbourhood Plan will be particularly large. Conversely, in smaller areas DCLG grant will exceed the Council's costs.

5.11 There are 36 parishes that have not yet commenced the formal stages of neighbourhood planning. Except for Thrapston, the electorate in each of these parishes is less than 2,000. DCLG funding for neighbourhood planning is likely to exceed the Council's costs in these places, even allowing for staff costs.

## Consultancy Services

6.1 The project has focussed on selling neighbourhood planning consultancy services to two broad customer groups:

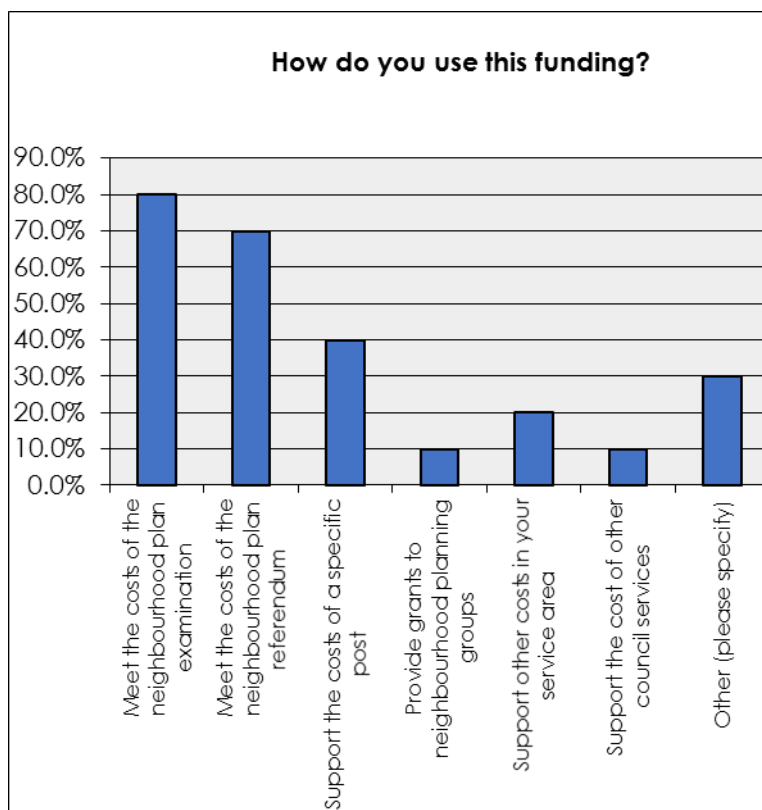
- Local Planning Authorities: by helping them meet their legislative duties in relation to neighbourhood planning;
  - Qualifying bodies: by helping them prepare neighbourhood plans.
- 6.2 To test the demand for a consultancy service a 'menu' of potential services has been created (Appendix 4). The menu includes advice and assistance to qualifying bodies having regard to the range of activities that are likely to receive grant funding (paragraph 3.6).
- 6.3 To understand the likely demand for these consultancy services the following surveys were undertaken:
- Questionnaire survey of local planning authorities in Northamptonshire and adjoining east Northamptonshire;
  - Questionnaire survey of communities currently preparing neighbourhood plans in Northamptonshire;
  - Questionnaire survey of the parish councils in Northamptonshire (plus parish meetings) that have not yet started the statutory process of preparing a neighbourhood plan;
  - A number of parish councils were invited to participate in a workshop session to gain a greater understanding of the consultancy services that they were likely to require.
- 6.4 The outcomes of this work are explored in more detail below.

## Local Planning Authorities

- 6.5 In May/June 2016, all of Northamptonshire's district planning authorities, together with Bedford Borough, Huntingdonshire, Rutland County and South Kesteven District councils, were invited to complete an online questionnaire survey. The survey aimed to establish the type of advice and support that local planning authorities provided to qualifying bodies and their capacity to cope with growing demand. Ten authorities completed the survey, including all of the Northamptonshire councils.
- 6.6 Local planning authorities receive funding to enable them to meet their legislative duties in relation to neighbourhood planning. Most (80%) of the authorities who responded to the survey use this funding to meet the costs of the neighbourhood plan examination, 70% use it to cover the costs of the referendum.

6.7 Four authorities- Bedford, South Northamptonshire, South Kesteven and Wellingborough - use the DCLG grant to cover the costs of a specific post.

6.8 All the authorities will attend neighbourhood plan group meetings but not on a frequent basis. 60% said that most of these meetings take place in the evening. 70% do not provide accommodation for meetings.



6.9 The local planning authorities surveyed provide a wide range of advice and guidance to neighbourhood planning groups free of charge. Most provide toolkits for neighbourhood plan groups to use.

6.10 Four authorities will loan exhibition boards to groups. Eight will prepare maps and plans for groups to use, but two will charge for this. Five authorities will print leaflets, questionnaires etc. for neighbourhood plan groups- all but one charge for this service.

6.11 Against a 'menu' of neighbourhood plan services, local plan authorities expected the qualifying body to take the lead role. There were a few exceptions:

- Housing supply study- 60% said that the local planning authority should take the lead;
- Transport/highways- 50% said that the County Council should take the lead. The other half said that the qualifying body should be responsible;
- Identification of designated heritage assets- 50% said that the local planning authority should take the lead;
- Infrastructure Capacity- 50% said that the County Council should take the lead.



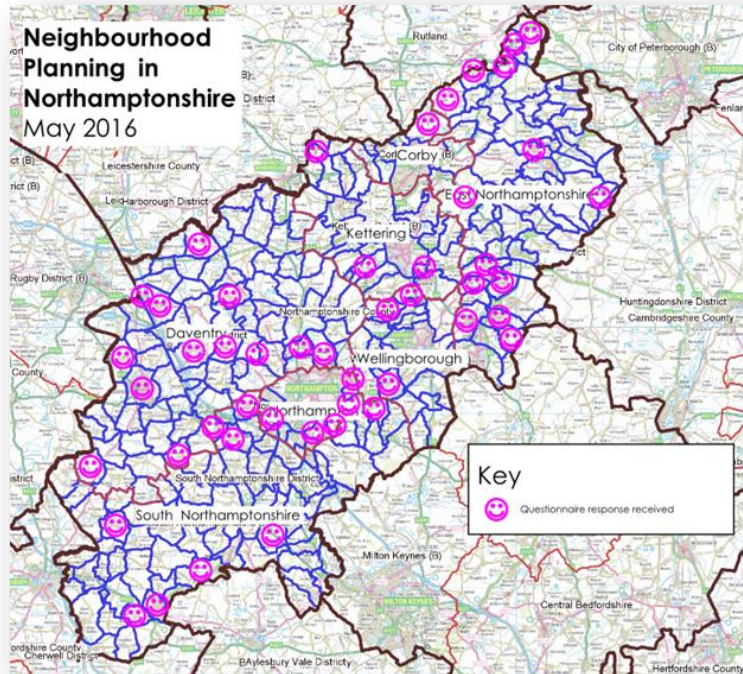
- 6.12 Eight of the ten authorities said that they had sufficient capacity to cope with the existing demands from neighbourhood plan groups. The exceptions were East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough councils. The situation at Wellingborough would have been resolved had the council been able to fill the recently advertised post.
- 6.13 The authorities were asked 'how likely is it that your council would use a neighbourhood plan consultancy service to undertake a basic conditions check?' on a scale of one to five (where one was 'very unlikely' and five was 'very likely'). The weighted average score from the ten authorities was 2.1. Similarly, they were asked 'how likely is it that your council would use a neighbourhood plan consultancy service to provide advice and assistance to neighbourhood plan groups?'. The weighted average score from the ten authorities was 2.4.

How likely is it that your council would use a neighbourhood plan consultancy service to...							
Answer Options	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very likely	Rating Average	Response Count
Undertake basic conditions check?	4	2	3	1	0	2.10	10
Provide advice and assistance to neighbourhood plan groups?	3	2	4	0	1	2.40	10

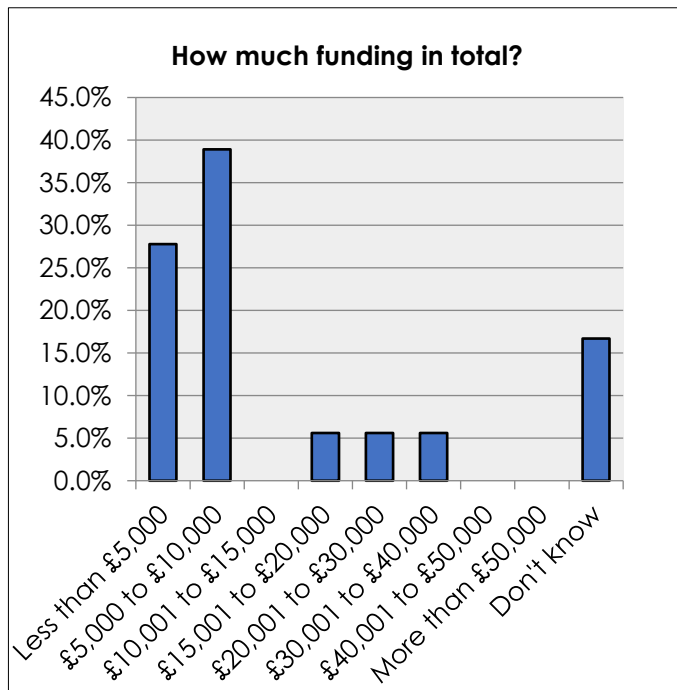


## Existing Neighbourhood Plan Groups

6.14 In May/June 2016, all 60 of the communities currently preparing neighbourhood plans in the county (plus those where plans had already been 'made' or abandoned) were invited to complete an online questionnaire survey. The survey aimed to establish the type of advice and support that was required to help groups prepare neighbourhood plans, the level of spending and information about the consultancy support that was already available to qualifying bodies. The survey was completed by 18 qualifying bodies.

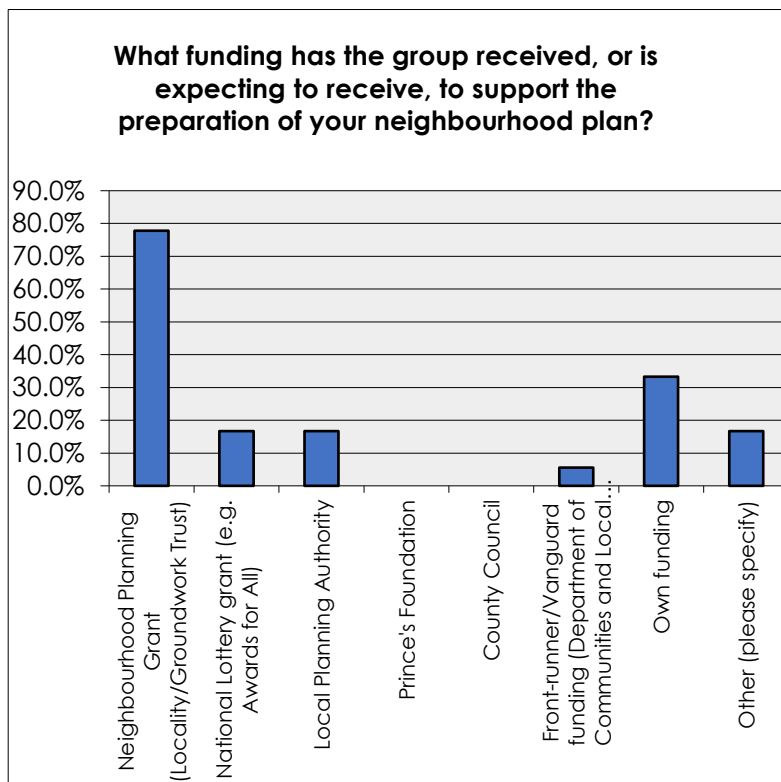


6.15 Of those qualifying bodies who are already preparing neighbourhood plans and who responded to our questionnaire survey, 89% were parish councils. There was only one community organisation preparing a neighbourhood plan and one multi-parish neighbourhood area. 44% of respondents were from groups working in Daventry district and 39% from East Northamptonshire.



6.16 Two-thirds of respondents were expecting to require less than £10,000 funding to support plan preparation. 78% will be using Neighbourhood Planning grants.

6.17 Of the 18 qualifying bodies who responded, 10 had already appointed a planning consultant to help them prepare their neighbourhood plan. There are six consultancies already active in the Northamptonshire market. Of the eight groups that had not appointed a consultant to help them, only Barrowden and Wakerley Neighbourhood Planning Group was considering employing professional support.



6.18 It is worth noting that Daventry District Council has currently recently appointed Troy Navigus Partnership to advise neighbourhood groups in respect of neighbourhood planning services. Troy Navigus Partnership is responsible for providing this service directly to those groups commissioning the service. The single supplier framework agreement is for a period of three years (to 2019) with an option to extend for a further year.

6.19 Questionnaire respondents were seeking a wide range of support, but 80% needed policy writing support and 70% needed help with plan writing. When appointing a consultant there was a range of criteria that was important. Cost, experience, local knowledge, communication skills and professional accreditation were the main considerations.

6.20 In terms of local planning authority support, six groups (three from Daventry and one each from Northampton, South Northamptonshire and Wellingborough districts) thought that their local planning authority has sufficient resources to cope and four did not (two from Daventry and two from East Northamptonshire districts). Seven groups did not know.

## Potential Neighbourhood Plan Groups

- 6.21 In May/June 2016, all of the parish councils (plus parish meetings) that have not yet started the statutory process of preparing a neighbourhood plan were invited to complete an online questionnaire survey. The survey aimed to establish how many are likely to prepare neighbourhood plans and their need for consultancy support. Of the 210 communities invited to complete the survey, 32 responses were received.
- 6.22 94% of these respondents were parish councils. 31% were based in South Northamptonshire, 22% in East Northamptonshire and 19% from Daventry district.
- 6.23 A quarter of respondents were intending to prepare a neighbourhood plan, but a half were not. The remaining quarter did not know or were undecided.
- 6.24 Of the eight groups intending to prepare a neighbourhood plan, two had already started, two were intending to start in the next six months and three in the next year. Only four groups envisaged that they would need professional support to prepare their neighbourhood plan. None of these had started the appointment process.

## Workshop

- 6.25 As part of the questionnaire survey, respondents were invited to participate in a workshop session organised by Northamptonshire ACRE. The purpose of the workshop was to gain a greater understanding of the consultancy services that qualifying bodies were likely to require. The workshop was held on Wednesday 29 June at The Hunsbury Hill Centre, Northampton. 18 attended from 12 parish councils.
- 6.26 The workshop identified a number of areas where neighbourhood planning support was required:
- Plain English templates for key activities e.g. terms of reference, project planning.
  - Help with grant applications.
  - On-going support to neighbourhood plan groups e.g. a helpline.
  - A detailed project plan.
  - Advice on governance arrangements.
  - How to structure a neighbourhood plan.
  - Appointment of consultants.
  - Questionnaire survey design.
  - To meet regularly with other groups going through the process.
  - Neighbourhood plan advocacy. It seems there is still a need to put forward a clear, precise business case as to why a parish should consider preparing a neighbourhood plan.

- 6.27 Discussion focussed on the idea of a Neighbourhood Planning Masterclass and Mentoring programme as a way of delivering support to parish councils. There was considerable support for such a programme from workshop members.

## Service Delivery Options

### Option 1: Do nothing

- 7.1 In this option, the neighbourhood planning programme will be managed by the Planning Policy and Conservation team in accordance with the Council's Neighbourhood Planning Protocol with no additional resources.

#### Advantages

- 7.2 The anticipated excess DCLG grant support of £105,000 (£30,000 for Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan and £75,000 for remainder of existing programme) could be used to support the general fund.

#### Disadvantages

- 7.3 The requirements of Neighbourhood Planning already place significant resource pressures upon Planning Services. With no additional resources to meet the Council's statutory requirements associated with neighbourhood planning other areas of service delivery could suffer, particularly the preparation of Local Plan Part 2 and Rushden East Masterplanning. The potential consequences of plan making delays are:
- Less certainty for residents and businesses, and more planning appeals;
  - Effective Neighbourhood Plans provide an additional mechanism by which additional local growth may be delivered. Not proactively promoting Neighbourhood Planning could delay or reduce house building with consequences for meeting local housing needs and future New Homes Bonus allocations. For every new house built, the Council receives around £1,140 paid each year for 6 years i.e. £6,840 in total, so the "do nothing" option could be regarded as a failure to maximise potential income from this source.
  - Delivery of corporate priorities is delayed.

### Option 2: Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service

- 7.4 In this option, East Northamptonshire Council would create a two-year, full-time Neighbourhood Planning Officer post.
- 7.5 A Grade 7 salary with a starting point of £30,547 would be competitive (see Appendix 5). With on-costs of 26.3% (e.g. National Insurance, pension charges) the annual cost is £38,581. However new starters do not always start at the lowest point in the grade, so we have assumed a salary of £32,223, with on-costs making an annual cost of £40,698. Over two years, the cost would be £81,396.

- 7.6 This cost could be met by DCLG grant income of some £105,000. For undertaking its legislative duties in relation to the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan, East Northamptonshire Council is awaiting a further £25,000 following the successful “making” of that Plan from the DCLG. The cost to the Council of supporting the remaining neighbourhood planning programme (notices, examiner, referendum) will be exceeded by DCLG grant support by over £75,000.
- 7.7 A full-time post would provide the equivalent of 223 working days (365 days minus 104 days for weekends, 8 bank holidays and 30 days' annual leave and sick). Over two years, the number of available working days exceeds the level of support required for the existing neighbourhood planning programme (300 days) by 146 days.

## Advantages

- 7.8 Spare capacity would be used to generate fee income by:
- Extending the programme of providing support, encouragement and/or resources to neighbourhood planning in East Northamptonshire to the remaining 36 parish councils. Except for Thrapston, these areas have small populations and DCLG funding is expected to exceed the Council's costs in supporting neighbourhood plans in these remaining parishes;
  - Providing neighbourhood plan support services to other local planning authorities- particularly the Borough Council of Wellingborough. The Borough Council has been unable to fill a vacant, part-time, temporary Neighbourhood Planning Officer post and thus has expressed an interest in sharing a full-time post with East Northamptonshire Council;
  - Developing a Northamptonshire-wide Neighbourhood Planning Masterclass and Mentoring programme. Qualifying bodies have a range of neighbourhood planning service requirements which are not currently being met. There are no neighbourhood planning networking events in Northamptonshire where groups can share experiences and ideas. Estimated event costs are set out in Appendix 6. Typically, conference places can be purchased individually or using a multi-buy/season ticket option. Day conference events for parish councils are typically £40-£65 (source: Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils), whereas conferences for professional planners are priced at £115-£449. Qualifying bodies would be eligible for grants to cover attendance. A programme of 3 or 4 events a year is anticipated.
- 7.9 A better supported neighbourhood plan programme would offer the following benefits:
- Corporate priorities will be met;
  - Neighbourhood plans are potentially quicker and easier to prepare than the local plan, so they provide an opportunity to speed up the process of comprehensive plan coverage in the District. Neighbourhood plans could

be encouraged to define village boundaries and Local Green Spaces. These designations are more suited to neighbourhood planning where they can be prepared more efficiently, with more community engagement and without incurring costly time at a Local Plan Part 2 examination. It is worth noting that on 26 July 2016, an appeal was allowed and planning permission granted for the erection of five dwellings at Southwick Road, Glapthorn (Ref 15/02079/FUL) largely because the appeal inspector considered the settlement boundary defined by the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan to be out of date as it predates the National Planning Policy Framework. This appeal decision highlights the importance of having up-to-date plans in place;

- In areas with a neighbourhood plan in place, Government research suggests that there has been a 10% increase in housing allocations (over that provided by the local plan). For every new house built, the Council receives New Homes Bonus of around £1,140 paid each year for 6 years i.e. £6,840 in total.

## Disadvantages

7.10 This cost of the post is expected to be met by DCLG grant income. However, there are risks associated with future DCLG grant support because of:

- Cuts in grant; and
- Insufficient neighbourhood plan progress being made by qualifying bodies to trigger a grant claim. Local planning authorities can only claim grant once they have set a date for a referendum following a successful examination.

## Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Services to Qualifying Bodies

7.11 For the time being, we have discounted the possibility of providing neighbourhood planning consultancy services to qualifying bodies for the following reasons:

- The demand for consultancy services from those places that have already started the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan is very low as most have already made appointments;
- In the remaining parishes, interest in neighbourhood planning appears to be limited;
- There are already six planning consultancies that are actively supporting qualifying bodies to prepare neighbourhood plans in Northamptonshire. In a mature market, a new provider with a limited track record in preparing neighbourhood plans might struggle to compete;
- In Daventry district, there will be a single supplier framework agreement with an established provider for a period of up to four years. While Daventry's parish councils have the option of making their own

- arrangements, an East Northamptonshire-based consultancy service would not be Daventry District Council's preferred supplier;
- Providing consultancy services to qualifying bodies based in East Northamptonshire would be particularly challenging. The Council would need to ensure that its statutory role in supporting neighbourhood planning was not compromised. There are also potential conflicts of interest were the qualifying body's approach to planning decisions to differ to the District Council's. Generating fee income will also be difficult as East Northamptonshire's parish council's will expect services to be free, especially as the distinction between fee earning and the non-fee earning statutory activities is vague. East Northamptonshire Council's Neighbourhood Planning Protocol already includes an extensive range of services to support neighbourhood planning that the Council already provides free of charge;
  - There are geographical constraints to the provision of consultancy services as the further away the neighbourhood area is, the higher the travel time and cost;
  - The Neighbourhood Planning Grant programme beyond 2017/18 is uncertain; although the September 2016 Neighbourhood Planning Bill reiterates the Government's commitment to Neighbourhood Planning.

## Conclusions

- 8.1 The project has enabled the Council to undertake an in-depth examination of the demands for and costs of a council-led neighbourhood plan consultancy service. There is a considerable demand for neighbourhood planning in East Northamptonshire with at least 14 parishes actively involved. However, with little capacity to meet its neighbourhood planning duties in this priority area, the Council is not well placed to meet these demands and this would need to be addressed in the first instance.
- 8.2 The annual cost of providing a Neighbourhood Planning Officer post would be £40,698- £81,396 for two years (including on-costs). As a result of DCLG 'new burdens doctrine' funding, up to £40,000 funding is already potentially available to support the creation of a post (from the Higham Ferrers and Chelveston cum Caldecott referenda). Approximately a further £11,000 is still available from the DCLG's 'Neighbourhood Planning and Local Planning Service Redesign and Capacity Building Pilot Programme'.

8.3 While the costs of the post are likely to be exceeded by grant income, the post will have some 146 days spare capacity over the two-year period which can be used to generate additional fee income. Discussions have already been held with the Borough Council of Wellingborough who has expressed an interest in contributing to the costs of the post. It is also possible to extend the neighbourhood plan programme to the remaining 36 East Northamptonshire parishes that are not yet engaged in the process (with a potential DCLG grant income of £20,000 for each) and/or develop a fee-earning county-wide Neighbourhood Planning Masterclass and Mentoring programme.

## Risk Management

- 9.1 Risk management is not about eliminating risk, as this would limit the ability of the Council to develop and deliver its objectives. The purpose is to recognise the issues which could adversely affect the achievement of the objectives and develop actions and controls to reduce those risks.
- 9.2 The impact and likelihood of risks associated with the creation of a Neighbourhood Planning Officer has been scored using the matrices set out below.

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Very High</b>				
	<b>High</b>				
	<b>Medium</b>		<b>C</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>		
		<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Very High</b>
		<b>Likelihood</b>			



Risk Reference	Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
A	Financial: Cuts in grant	Low (less than £100,000)	<p>Low:</p> <p>Significant amount of funding already in place;</p> <p>The arrangements for funding local planning authorities were reviewed within the last year;</p> <p>Neighbourhood planning is a vital part of the Government's planning reforms;</p> <p>The 'new burdens doctrine' still applies.</p>	<p>One of the principal responsibilities of the new post holder will be to encourage qualifying bodies to make good progress with neighbourhood plan preparation.</p> <p>Fee earning opportunities have been identified.</p>
B	Financial: Insufficient neighbourhood plan progress being made by qualifying bodies to trigger a grant claim	Low (less than £100,000)	<p>Medium:</p> <p>Significant amount of funding already in place;</p> <p>The neighbourhood plan programme is largely beyond the control of the Council;</p> <p>Good progress is already being made in most of the designated neighbourhood areas;</p> <p>Grants to qualifying bodies depend upon neighbourhood plan progress.</p>	<p>One of the principal responsibilities of the new post holder will be to encourage qualifying bodies to make good progress with neighbourhood plan preparation.</p> <p>Fee earning opportunities have been identified.</p>



<b>Risk Reference</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
<b>C</b>	Failure to appoint to post	Medium: Difficulties in meeting legislative duties in relation to neighbourhood planning.	Medium: The Borough Council of Wellingborough has failed on a couple of occasions to appoint to a similar post.	Competitive salary Consider permanent post

## Recommendations

- A. The Council should create a 2yr, full-time Neighbourhood Planning Officer post. Spare capacity can be used to generate additional income to the Council by:
  - A.1 Attracting additional DCLG grant by increasing the uptake of neighbourhood planning in East Northamptonshire, particularly in small parishes;
  - A.2 Providing neighbourhood plan support services to other local planning authorities- particularly the Borough Council of Wellingborough; and
  - A.3 Developing a Neighbourhood Planning Masterclass and Mentoring programme.



# Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service: Phase 1

## Appendix 1: Neighbourhood Planning in Northamptonshire (June 2016)

### Neighbourhood Areas

#### Corby

Cottingham (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Central Corby (Neighbourhood Area approved)

#### Daventry

Badby (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Barby and Onley (Examination)  
Braunston (Neighbourhood Plan submitted)  
Brixworth (Examination)  
Charwelton (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Creaton (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Crick (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
East Haddon (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Flore (Examination)  
Guilsworth (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Harlestone (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Kilsby (Examination complete)  
Moulton (Examination complete)  
Norton (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Overstone (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Spratton (Examination complete)  
Staverton (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Weedon Bec (Examination)  
Welford (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Welton (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
West Haddon (Made)  
Woodford cum Membris (Neighbourhood Area approved)

#### East Northamptonshire

Barnwell (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Brigstock (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Barrowden and Wakerley (multi-parish Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Chelveston cum Caldecott (Neighbourhood Plan submitted)  
Collyweston (Neighbourhood Area applied for)  
Deene and Deenethorpe (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Glaphorne (Neighbourhood Area application)  
Higham Ferrers (Made)  
Irthlingborough (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
King's Cliffe (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Oundle (Neighbourhood Area approved)  
Raunds (Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan)  
Rushden (Neighbourhood Area approved)



# Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service: Phase 1

Stanwick (Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan)

## Kettering

Desborough Town (Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan)

Great Cransley (Neighbourhood Area approved)

Mawsley (Neighbourhood Area approved)

Pytchley (Neighbourhood Area approved)

Rothwell Town (Neighbourhood Area approved)

South West Kettering (Headlands Community) (Neighbourhood Area approved)

## Northampton

Blackthorn, Goldings, Lings & Lumbertubs (Pre-Submission)

Duston (Made)

Spring Boroughs (Made)

## South Northamptonshire

Ashton (Neighbourhood Area approved)

Greens Norton (Neighbourhood Area approved)

Harpole (Neighbourhood Area approved)

Kislingbury (Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan)

Middleton Cheney (Neighbourhood Area approved)

Road (Neighbourhood Area applied for)

Blisworth (Neighbourhood Area applied for)

Yardley Gobion (Ceased)

## Wellingborough

Earls Barton (Made)

Ecton (Neighbourhood Area approved)

Irchester (Neighbourhood Area approved)

Wollaston (Referendum)



# Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service: Phase 1

## Appendix 2: Indicative costs of Neighbourhood Planning (East Northamptonshire Council costs only)

Duty/Stage	Estimated costs / time
Advertisement of applications for neighbourhood area/forums & Designation of Neighbourhood Forums	£1,000-2,000 5days staff time
Support for preparation of Plan	15-20days staff time
Validation of Neighbourhood Plans	5-10days staff time
Examination by an Independent Inspector	£5,000-8,000
Referenda	£1.80/head £100-£40,000
Adoption of Neighbourhood Plans	5days staff time
Final publication of document and any necessary amendments to Proposals Map	5-10days staff time (including GIS)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,100-£50,000 20-50days</b>

### Source:

DCLG's Impact Assessment – Neighbourhood Plans and Community Right to Build  
2015 electoral register for East Northamptonshire  
Neighbourhood Planning Indicative Costs, Leeds City Council

### Note:

The methodology for estimating indicative costs was tested using the Earls Barton Neighbourhood Plan in Wellingborough district. Based on an electorate of 4,123 the cost estimate was £14,222 compared to an actual cost of £15,005.



## Appendix 3: Indicative costs of existing neighbourhood planning programme (East Northamptonshire Council costs only)

Neighbourhood Area	Electorate (2015)	Estimated Cost (notices, examiner, referendum) (£)	DCLG grant (£)	Grant surplus / deficit (£)	Estimated Staff Time (days)
Barnwell	338	6,766	20,000	13,234	20
Brigstock	1,078	8,223	20,000	11,777	21
Chelveston cum Caldecott	466	7,018	20,000	12,982	21
Collyweston	432	6,951	20,000	13,049	21
Deene and Deenethorpe	40	6,179	20,000	13,821	20
Glaphorne	223	6,539	20,000	13,461	20
Irthlingborough	6,695	19,288	20,000	712	29
King's Cliffe	1,179	8,422	20,000	11,578	22
Oundle	4,176	14,326	20,000	5,674	25
Raunds	6,619	19,138	20,000	862	29
Rushden	22,967	51,341	20,000	-31,341	50
Stanwick	1,521	9,096	20,000	10,904	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>45,734</b>	<b>163,287</b>	<b>240,000</b>	<b>76,713</b>	<b>300</b>



## Appendix 4: Menu of Services

### Getting Started

- Neighbourhood Plan Group meetings
  - Guidance on governance
  - Attendance (start-up, monthly, occasional)
- Grant funding
  - Signposting
  - Preparation of grant applications
- Programme
  - Initial programme
  - Project management
- Website management
- Local Plan conformity advice and guidance
- National Planning Policy Framework advice and guidance

### Community Engagement

- Introductory leaflet
  - Design
  - Printing
  - Distribution
- Launch event
  - Advice and guidance
  - Attendance
  - Design display
  - Provide materials
- Stakeholder event
  - Identify key stakeholders
  - Advice and guidance
  - Attendance
  - Provide materials
- Questionnaire
  - Design
  - Web
  - Printing
  - Distribution
  - Analysis
- Identify consultees
- Prepare representations form
- Review representations on draft plan

### Building the evidence base

- Signposting to existing evidence
- Preparation of parish profile
- Housing
  - Needs assessment
  - Supply information



- Site profiles
- Site selection criteria
- Site selection assessment
- Liaise with developers/landowners

## Local Green Spaces

- Supply toolkit
- Undertake assessment
- Review community assessment

## Heritage

- Identify designated heritage assets
- Identify and appraise local heritage assets

## Design

- Update Village Design Statement
- Prepare Village Design Statement

## Ecology

Infrastructure capacity (drainage, schools, healthcare, highways)

## Toolkits

## Writing the plan

Vision and objective exercise

Mapping

Policy writing

Plan writing

Production

- Design

- Prepare plan summary

- Printing

- Distribution

## Submission

Preparation of Consultation Statement

Preparation of Basic Conditions Statement

Equality Impact Assessment

SEA screening plus Habitats Assessment

Full Strategic Environmental Assessment plus Habitats Assessment



# Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service: Phase 1

## Appendix 5: Neighbourhood Planning Officers' Pay

Job role	Local Planning Authority	Salary from	Salary to	Additional notes re salary
Neighbourhood Planning Officer	South Downs	£28,000	£35,000	Maternity cover 9 months
Neighbourhood Planning Officer (2-year contract)	Sevenoaks	£26,013	£34,430	Plus, an essential car user allowance
Planning Officer (Neighbourhood Plans) Fixed term 12 month initially with possible extension, full time	Rutland	£20,253	£29,558	
Neighbourhood Planning Officer	Herefordshire	£23,166	£27,394	
Neighbourhood Engagement and Delivery Officer	Manchester	£20,456	£23,166	Bar at £22,434 per annum
Neighbourhood Planning Officer (15 hours) 18 month Fixed Term Contract	Wellingborough	£23,698	£28,746	Recently advertised post not filled

## Appendix 6: Typical Event Costs

Item	Note	Cost for a one-day event
Travel and Accommodation	Costs associated with speakers and officials needed to run the event.	£90-£245
Salaries	Cost of salaries directly attributable to the event e.g. event manager, event staff	£140-£210
Speakers	For most conferences, most speakers only get the conference fee waived. For smaller, conferences, guest speakers are typically not paid, but their travel and accommodation expenses are often covered. For larger conferences and corporate events, guest speakers often receive a speaking fee and the amount varies from event to event, and from speaker to speaker.	£200
Stationery	Special event stationery may be printed	£20-£50
Venue Hire	A critically important aspect of the budget. Information about the probable cost of the venue needs to be obtained as early as possible. Beware that there some hidden costs such as security and supervision costs, and heating and lighting costs.	£120-£250
Refreshments		£100-£200
Insurance	Additional insurance can be taken out to cover risks of injury and/or financial losses associated with events.	
Printing	Event programmes, posters, fliers and other promotional documents may need to be printed.	£10-£50
Promotion	Expenditure on promotion may be considerable where a significant proportion of the event revenue is likely to be earned through spectators. Promotion covers items such as advertising, giveaways, costs associated with promotional events and sponsors' signage.	£100
Equipment Hire	Includes equipment directly used by participants in the event and any equipment used by the event management staff including sound systems, computers etc.	£0
<b>Total</b>		<b>£780-£1,305</b>



East  
Northamptonshire  
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# Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service: Phase 1

No of attendees	Cost per attendee
10	£78.00-£130.50
15	£52.00-£87.00
20	£39.00-£65.25
25	£31.20-£52.20
30	£26.00-£43.50