

Woodhouse parish Neighbourhood Plan

A neighbourhood plan is being created for Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves, and a public meeting about the plan was held on 13th June in the village hall. The meeting was designed to:

1. raise awareness in the local community about the function of the plan
2. describe the stages involved in the creation of a plan
3. introduce key stakeholders and their roles in creating the plan
4. request volunteers to form a steering committee and encourage participation from the local community
5. set the next meeting.

Here are summary notes about those five objectives.

1. The function of the neighbourhood plan and why it is so important

The neighbourhood plan provides a fair and comprehensive opportunity for the community to participate in shaping the future of the local area. It aims to ensure that any future development is sensitive to, and meets the needs of, the community. It can help the local community choose where new houses or other development should be built; identify important local green spaces, heritage or environmental sites; plan for community facilities; and support infrastructure. It can inspire local people and businesses to consider other ways to improve their neighbourhood than through the development and use of land.

In combination with the Charnwood Local Plan, the neighbourhood plan provides a key instrument for the council to assess development applications. It has the same legal status as the local plan. In the absence of a neighbourhood plan, planning officers will refer primarily to the Charnwood Local Plan, which will not provide the same level of local detail and community representation as the neighbourhood plan.

2. Stages involved in the creation of a neighbourhood plan

The creation of a neighbourhood plan follows distinct statutory stages. An important requirement of these stages is that they must each contain demonstrable engagement with the community. The whole process is expected to take 18 months to two years to complete.

Stage 1: Area designation

Designates the area to be covered by the plan. The designated area is the Woodhouse Parish area, which can be found at:

www.woodhouseparishcouncil.org.uk/woodhouse-parish-neighbourhood-p1.html (*this stage has been completed*).

Stage 2: Issues and options identified (this stage is due to start)

Public consultation

Setting the vision for the area and objectives of the plan

Gathering of evidence

Stage 3: Draft plan development

Ongoing community consultation

Planning policies drafted

Sites allocated (if applicable)

Stage 4: Statutory consultation

Draft plan published

Comments and views invited

Six-week community consultation

Stage 5: Submit plan to Charnwood Borough Council

Screening and conformity checks

Further community consultation period

Stage 6: Independent examination

Viability and basic conditions checked

Community involvement assessed

Stage 7: Referendum

Community vote. If 50 percent of votes are 'Yes', the plan comes into force.

3. Key stakeholders and their roles

Paul Gilding, Planning Policy – Charnwood Borough Council

Paul gave an outline of the council's statutory involvement at every stage of the neighbourhood planning process (also detailed on the CBC website at www.localplan.charnwood.gov.uk/content/index.php?id=116). Paul also mentioned the Locality grant of up to £9,000, which is available to support communities that are undertaking neighbourhood plans.

Colin Wilkinson – Planit-X Town and Country Planning Services

Colin described his experience and expertise in the preparation of neighbourhood plans. His skill is in helping community groups write plans that will survive examination and will provide a robust tool for the assessment of planning applications.

John Preston – Rural Community Council

The Rural Community Council is a not-for-profit organisation working to support and represent rural communities across Leicestershire and Rutland. The RCC can provide support to community groups making neighbourhood plans. John and his colleague summarised the support they could provide the steering committee as well as outlining the stages of creating a neighbourhood plan. See www.ruralcc.org.uk/neighbourhoodplanning/

Jill Taylor and Tim Sault – Parish Council representatives

The Parish Council is officially responsible for leading the neighbourhood plan and is in the process of forming a steering committee. Parish Council representatives Jill Taylor and Tim Sault will report back on the progress and activities of the steering committee to the Parish Council. See: www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#who-leads-neighbourhood-planning-in-an-area

4. Establishment of the neighbourhood plan steering committee

The steering committee is a community group charged with involving the whole community of residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the neighbourhood planning process. A small group of people has volunteered to be part of the steering committee. Further participation either by joining the committee or acting within the community is welcomed and encouraged. Please note that any commitment doesn't have to be for the full duration of the project. Involvement is anticipated from different groups at different stages and all contributions will be appreciated.

5. Details of the next meeting

Village hall, Tuesday, 10th July, 7.00–8.30pm. An agenda will be circulated nearer the time. Everybody is welcome.

Merrin Jensen