

Neighbourhood Planning in Knowsley

Initial Guidance for Interested Parties

Updated March 2019



National Government Guidance

The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides detailed advice in respect of Neighbourhood Plans and it clearly sets out the requirements of the relevant legislation and regulations. This includes both the Localism Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act") and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ("the 2012 Regulations"), as amended. The PPG can be viewed [here](#). Knowsley Council would strongly recommend that interested parties review this material.

Getting started

Before work on a Neighbourhood Plan can begin, the body responsible for preparing the Plan, and the area to be covered by the Plan, must be approved by Knowsley Council. The process for this depends on whether the Plan is intended to cover an area which is "parished" (i.e. covered in whole or part by a Parish or Town Council).

In a Parished Area

In a parished area, only the local Parish or Town Council can undertake to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, but they may at their own discretion set up a steering group of community representatives to assist with the process.

There is a strong presumption that the extent of the land to be covered by a Neighbourhood Plan - known as the Neighbourhood Area - will be the same as the parish boundary, although it is possible to choose a smaller and more focused area, such as a town or local centre.

Once this area has been identified, it will need to be submitted to Knowsley Council for designation as a Neighbourhood Area. The Council will be obliged upon receipt of a valid application to designate any Neighbourhood Area that consists of the whole of the boundary of the Parish or Town Council. In all other cases, we are obliged to publicise and invite comments on the area application for a minimum period of 6 weeks, and the statutory time limit for making a decision on whether or not to designate the Neighbourhood Area would be 13 weeks in most circumstances. This time limit would begin the day after the application is first publicised.

In a Non-Parished Area

Community groups intending to produce Neighbourhood Plans in non-parished areas must apply to Knowsley Council to become a Neighbourhood Forum.

The 2011 Act states that, to be considered acceptable, a Neighbourhood Forum must:

- Be established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of an area;
- Include a minimum of 21 individual members, each of whom lives in the Neighbourhood Area concerned, work there, or is an Elected Member; and
- Have a written constitution.

Applications to become a Neighbourhood Forum must therefore demonstrate that these conditions have been met; otherwise the Council will be unable to approve them.

For prospective Neighbourhood Forums, work on a Neighbourhood Plan can only commence formally when a Neighbourhood Area has been designated by Knowsley Council.

Community groups can either apply for the Neighbourhood Area first, then the Neighbourhood Forum. Alternatively, community groups could apply for both the Neighbourhood Area and the Neighbourhood Forum at the same time and the Council would recommend that this approach be taken.

An application by a prospective Neighbourhood Forum for a Neighbourhood Area to be designated will be publicised on Knowsley Council's website for a minimum period of 6 weeks, including details of how to make representations on the proposal and the date by which representations must be received. The statutory time limit for making a decision on whether or not to designate the Neighbourhood Area would be 13 weeks, beginning the day after the application is first publicised.

The Council will be obliged to publicise and invite comments on an application to designate a Neighbourhood Forum for a minimum period of 6 weeks. It will then consider and determine the application no later than 13 weeks beginning the day after an application is first publicised.

Key considerations for Neighbourhood Plans

There are several issues that qualifying community bodies seeking to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan (whether this is a Town or Parish Council or a prospective Neighbourhood Forum) will need to consider from the outset. These are discussed in the "Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap: A Step-by-Step Guide 2018 edition" produced by Locality. This roadmap is available [here](#).

Firstly, it is Government's intention that Neighbourhood Plans will support (and therefore not contradict policies contained within) the Local Plans prepared by Councils. This inevitably places restrictions on what can be achieved because all plans must be in 'general conformity' with planning policies and guidance at local, national and European levels and they should meet the five basic conditions prescribed by the 2012 Regulations. Plans will need to demonstrate involvement of the local community throughout. Plans will eventually be tested by an Independent Examination. This will be undertaken by a chartered Town Planner, selected by the Council and approved by the body preparing the Neighbourhood Plan. Their adoption by Knowsley Council will be subject to a

Referendum upon completion. The Referendum can only take place once the Plan has been approved at Examination. In summary, Neighbourhood Plans can:

- Decide where and what type of development should happen within your neighbourhood;
- Decide what the development should look like; and
- Promote development for your community in line with the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy (2016).

Secondly, the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan will be a significant undertaking in terms of time and energy, over a period of months or years, and the role of Knowsley Council will be limited to:

- Assessing applications for, and designating, Neighbourhood Areas and Neighbourhood Forums;
- Organising examinations and referenda on Neighbourhood Plans; and
- Providing guidance and technical assistance to groups involved in neighbourhood planning.

Next steps and support

If having reviewed the above, interested parties wish to proceed with the application for a Neighbourhood Area or Neighbourhood Forum, please contact the Local Plan team to obtain the relevant application forms.

The limits of the technical advice and support to be provided by the Council are set out in the Charter of Service Provision available [here](#).

Whilst there is no direct financial support on offer from Knowsley Council, there are Neighbourhood Planning Grants available to assist with the cost of producing a Plan. The existing funding programme runs to March 2022. Further information can be found [here](#). Every Parish or Town Council or designated Neighbourhood Forum in Knowsley would be eligible to apply for a basic grant of up to £9,000 under the current programme, following the designation of a Neighbourhood Area.

Technical support or a further grant of up to £8,000 may be available to groups who meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Groups who allocate sites for housing.
- Groups who include design codes in their plan.
- A designated business Neighbourhood Plan.
- A cluster of three or more parishes producing a single Neighbourhood Plan.
- A Neighbourhood Area with a population of more than 25,000.

N.B. All grant funding needs to be spent within 12 months or by the end of the financial year, whichever comes first.

If you require any further information or advice on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact the Council's Local Plan team on localplan@knowsley.gov.uk or 0151 443 2326.