

## **Draft Process and Procedures Guidance Note:**

### **Neighbourhood Planning across the Blackdown Hills AONB (East Devon) Parishes**

Broadhembury  
Cotleigh  
Chardstock  
Dunkeswell  
Luppitt  
Membury  
Monkton  
Stockland  
Upottery  
Yarcombe

Prepared by:  
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Paul Weston, Community and Regeneration Consultant

13<sup>th</sup> May, 2014



## **Introduction**

This guidance note is intended to set out the process and procedures that consultants think should be followed in order to help co-ordinate the development of the neighbourhood plans across the 10 Blackdown Hills parishes in East Devon who have signed-up to developing aligned neighbourhood plans.

It gives brief advice and commentary on the following:

- [The Parish Council Role](#);
- [Plan Management and Delivery \(the Steering Group\)](#);
- [The Role of Working Groups](#);
- [The Structure of Groups](#);
- [Governance and terms of reference](#);
- [Co-ordination](#);
- [‘Day-to-Day’ Contact](#);
- [Contact Details](#);
- [Project Plan](#);
- [Briefing Slides](#);
- [Launch Events](#);
- [Written Evidence Base](#);
- [The Community Survey](#);
- [Consultation and Engagement Plan](#);
- [Time Period for Neighbourhood Plan](#);
- [Invoicing and Contracts](#);
- [Immediate Next Steps](#); and,
- [Further Questions](#).

### **Immediate Next Steps – A Checklist**

The next steps (key actions) for parishes / steering groups are summarised at the end of this note but for ease of reference are also summarised here.

#### *Awareness*

- *Continue to familiarise yourself with the neighbourhood plan process and requirements.*
- *Continue to raise awareness of the neighbourhood plan with the community through Annual Parish Meetings, Parish Council meetings, your website pages, social media, talking to local groups and organisations and so on.*

#### *Launch event*

- *Advertise the launch event widely within the parish at traditional locations, through newsletters if timing allows and via your website and social media.*
- *Try to get as many of the people who are ‘staffing’ your launch event as possible to the briefing on 29<sup>th</sup> May in Dunkeswell.*
- *Provide your draft of key issues and facts about the parish to Tracey Bell as soon as possible*

*giving enough time for consideration by the consultants and printing / laminating by the AONB.*

#### *Steering Group*

- *Form your Steering Group if you have not done so already.*
- *Consider the terms of reference attached, amend as appropriate and seek formal sign-off of those terms of reference at the next available Parish Council meeting.*
- *Recruit volunteers from the community to join the group.*
- *Notify the consultants of the date of your next Steering Group meeting for discussion of matters in the note as necessary and to review the project plan.*

#### *Co-ordination Group project planning meetings*

- *Establish who from each Steering Group will act as the liaison for this group and arrange a date and venue to meet with the others within your area (i.e. western, central and eastern).*
- *Agree who from each Steering Group will attend. We suggest 2 people from each Steering Group will be sufficient.*
- *Form a contract management sub- group of 3 persons (this does not have to meet), one from each co-ordination group, to liaise with consultants on contractual matters on an ad hoc basis and to arrange dates for the meetings in line with the timing indicated on the project plan.*

#### *Project Plan*

- *Consider the project plan at your next Steering Group meeting and discuss with consultants any amendments necessary to key milestones to match your group's likely pace.*

#### *Survey*

- *Through discussion with Tracey Bell, consider how you will deliver and collect the survey.*
- *Be ready to receive a draft survey to comment on within the next few weeks.*

### **The Parish Council Role**

The Parish Council is a 'qualifying body' under the Localism legislation and the only body that can prepare a neighbourhood plan for any or all of its parish area. The Parish Council would be best served by establishing a neighbourhood planning team - a Steering Group to co-ordinate the work of preparing a draft plan; and a set of volunteers that have the time, enthusiasm and dedication to undertake the many tasks that are required as part of the neighbourhood planning process.

*We would advise that:*

- *the Parish Council delegate responsibility for preparing the neighbourhood plan to a wider group, but retains responsibility for taking the key decisions and managing the finances associated with the plan's preparation*
- *agrees a timetable and delivery structure for the neighbourhood plan*

### **Plan Management and Delivery**

A **Steering Group** should be appointed and mandated by the Parish Council to prepare the draft plan on its behalf. Although the Steering Group should feature representation from parish councillors, it is

also important that wider representation is sought from the community as the goal of the process is to create a neighbourhood plan that reflects the vision and aspirations of the entire community. The more representative the Steering Group is, the better the plan is likely to be.

Additional representation on the Steering Group could be sought from:

- residents
- representatives of community organisations
- business owners
- landowners

It will be important for the Parish Council to consider the full range of skills, knowledge and experience that will be required on a Steering Group. However, it is important to remember that too large a group may make effective decision-making more difficult.

How the Steering Group members are selected may influence the support the neighbourhood planning process receives from the community. A selection process that is fair, open and inclusive is likely to ensure a greater degree of community support. If the Parish Council is holding a neighbourhood planning event then this could be an ideal opportunity to recruit volunteers as members of the neighbourhood planning team and to identify Steering Group members in particular.

Once the Steering Group is in place, it will be important to appoint a Chair and Secretary and, so as to spread the load and share responsibilities, allocate leadership of the various key tasks or topics to members of the Steering Group. A **skills audit** may help this process and also identify possible training needs.

*We would advise that:*

- *a steering group of 6-10 local people is likely to be adequate, with no more than half being serving parish councillors*
- *steering group meetings should take place once a month to review progress, discuss issues and plan the month ahead. Setting meeting dates for a few months in advance can be helpful. Please notify the consultants of your meeting dates when set.*

At least one of the consultants will attend an initial steering group meeting at the group's request at the beginning of the process. We are prepared to attend others if necessary but the available resource provided by the grants will go further if our attendance at formal meetings is limited. With this in mind, our regular attendance at meetings will be restricted to the 'Co-ordination Group' joint planning meetings as explained below.

### **The Role of Working Groups**

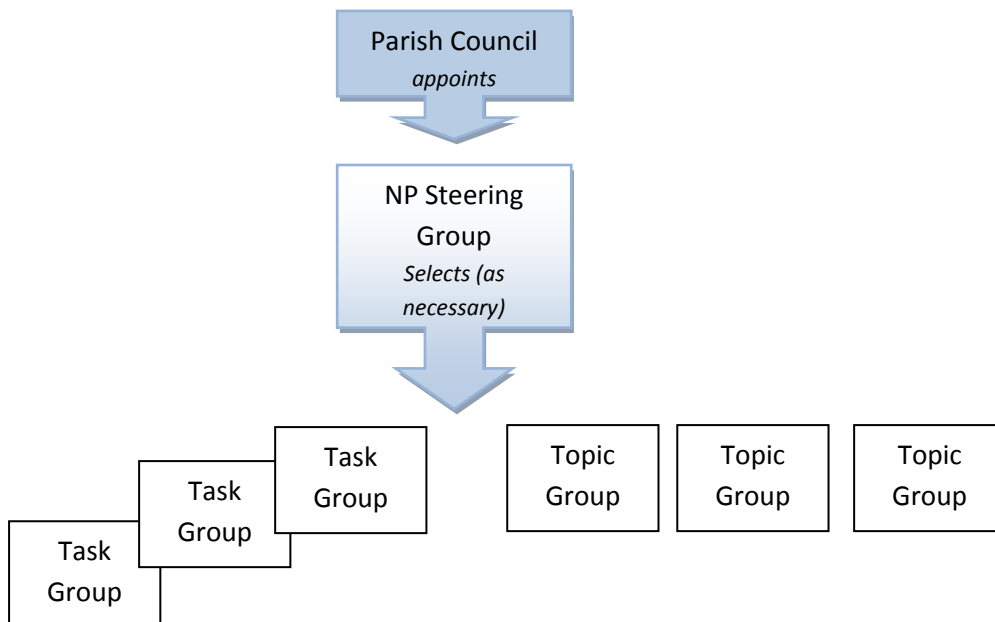
There are many people in our communities that do not want to sit in a formal management/steering meeting but would still be willing to lend a hand in preparing a neighbourhood plan for their area. The working-group model of plan delivery has proven successful in many places. As required a **task group** or a **topic group** could be established by the Steering Group and led by a member of the Steering

Group. Other members of these groups could be recruited from the pool of volunteers with the requisite interest, skills or experience to help with the task. Examples of task groups are: survey team, research team and publicity team. Examples of topic groups are land supply, housing need and community facilities.

*We would advise that:*

- *allocating leadership and other duties needs to be thought through carefully so as not to overburden people*
- *at the same time, do not set up working groups for the sake of it, but ensure that they are set up to focus on specific tasks and only if required*

### The Structure of Groups



### Governance and Terms of Reference

It will be important to establish what the formal links are between the neighbourhood planning team and the main body of the Parish Council, as the overall project will still need to be under the 'umbrella' of the Parish Council and the important decisions taken by the Parish Council.

In this regard, and to help focus the work of the team members, it would be helpful to establish **terms of reference** for the Steering Group. There are many examples around and a template is attached which groups could use and / or amend as necessary. Experience suggests that a relatively simple version can suffice and will not put people off joining the group.

*We would advise that:*

- *the Parish Council consider adapting the template we have prepared*
- *the terms of reference along with the names of the members of the Steering Group is made public (website and parish noticeboard)*

### **Co-ordination**

The Parish Council has agreed to work closely with other parish councils in the Blackdown Hills AONB to achieve consistency of policy and approach. To that end joint planning meetings should take place on a regular basis by establishing a 'Co-ordination Group'. Your consultants are prepared to attend every joint planning meeting<sup>1</sup>.

*We would advise that:*

- *three 'co-ordination' groups should be formed as follows:*
  - *western, central and eastern*

<b>Western</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Eastern</b>
Broadhembury Dunkeswell Luppitt	Upottery Stockland Cotleigh Monkton	Chardstock Membury Yarcombe

- *meetings should take place at least on a quarterly basis (timings are suggested in the attached project plan)*
- *each Steering Group / parish appoints 2 people to attend the co-ordination group meetings*
- *a contract management sub- group of 3 persons, one from each co-ordination group, is established to liaise with consultants on contractual matters on an ad hoc basis and to arrange dates for the meetings in line with the timing indicated on the project plan*

### **'Day-to-Day' Contact**

It will be important that Parishes and steering groups have someone they can contact to ask questions about day-to-day issues.

*We would advise that:*

- *the following Parishes use the named consultant as the 'link' person:*

<b>Stuart Todd</b>	<b>Paul Weston</b>
Membury Chardstock Stockland Cotleigh Yarcombe	Broadhembury Dunkeswell Luppitt Upottery Monkton

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<sup>1</sup> It is proposed that Paul Weston attends the western group, Stuart Todd attends the eastern group and either Paul Weston or Stuart Todd attends the central group.

## **Contact details**

Stuart Todd, [stuart@stuarttoddassociates.co.uk](mailto:stuart@stuarttoddassociates.co.uk), tel. 07964 944920

Paul Weston, [paulw@fortbaxter.fslife.co.uk](mailto:paulw@fortbaxter.fslife.co.uk), tel. 07788 944986 / 01392 468758

## **Project Plan**

We have prepared a project plan specifically for the group of ten parishes in the Blackdown Hills to guide the development of individual neighbourhood plans, and to help synchronise local effort and the support input of your planning consultants, Stuart Todd Associates and Paul Weston. The project plan is provided as a separate file. It serves to help ensure that the grant funding awarded by the Government to the parishes is expended by the deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. It comprises: a detailed project plan with responsibilities identified; a summary version; and a reminder of the make-up of the Co-ordination Groups identified above. However, it is generic to the group of parishes and should be revised by steering groups to suit each parish.

*We would advise that:*

- *The project plan (provided as a separate file) is used as the basis for moving forward on an aligned and coordinated basis across all 10 Parishes.*
- *Each steering group considers the implications of the overall project plan at its next meeting (at which the consultants will be present) and the adjustments required to the timetable to suit the desired pace, meeting timetable and resources available to your steering group. The consultants will then amend the plan accordingly to suit each parish.*
- *The project plan is kept under review. It will need to be reviewed periodically as will separate project plans for Parishes.*

## **Briefing Slides**

A set of briefing slides and speaker notes have been prepared for steering group members to use at Parish Council meetings, Annual Parish Meetings or other local meetings should they wish. These are provided as separate files to this note. Should speakers have questions about the content please do not hesitate to get in touch with either Stuart Todd or Paul Weston.

*We would advise that:*

- *Those speaking at APM or Parish Council meetings about the neighbourhood plan process study the slides and accompanying notes and if there are any questions to get in touch with Stuart Todd or Paul Weston.*

## **Launch Events**

Launch events are being co-ordinated by Tracey Bell with most being held during May and June. Each Parish will have access to a set of display boards which set out things such as:

- what is the neighbourhood plan;
- what the current policy context is (e.g. the AONB policies, Parish Plans and in some cases a Village Design Statement);



- who you are working with;
- a map of the Parish; and,
- a number of boards on which each Parish has the opportunity to set out what it considers are the key issues at present and some key facts about the area.

EDDC is producing maps for display. The BH AONB is printing and laminating display material. You will need to ensure that you get material in draft to Tracey Bell as soon as possible (a week to ten days before your event at the latest).

Stuart Todd and Lisa Turner from the BH AONB will brief Steering Group members and others who have volunteered to staff the events. This briefing will take place in Dunkeswell at 7.30pm on 29<sup>th</sup> May immediately after the first Dunkeswell launch event which finishes at 7pm. The display boards will be at the briefing to view.

It will be important to capture peoples' views at the events and to encourage people to write down comments, draw on maps, stick-up post-its on a comments wall and fill in brief 'postcard' answers to some 'entry level' questions. Tracey Bell is co-ordinating a set of key questions which can be printed off for the event.

It will also be important to record proceedings (e.g. pictures) and ensure that responses and comments left are set out in a composite report prepared by the Steering Group which summarises responses by topic or issue if possible.

*We would advise that:*

- *Clerks arrange the dates for their events with Tracey Bell if they have not done so already.*
- *You organise enough volunteers to staff the events at all times and that those volunteers familiarise themselves with neighbourhood planning<sup>2</sup> and the content of the boards.*
- *Material about the key issues and facts about the Parish are drafted and categorised under themes such as environment and landscape, transport and accessibility, heritage and the built environment, leisure and recreation, housing, employment and economy, etc. and that the material is forwarded to Tracey Bell in the first instance. The consultants will check the material prior to printing on the boards.*
- *Those who will be 'staffing' events attend the briefing session in Dunkeswell on 29<sup>th</sup> May (further details available from Tracey Bell).*
- *Each Steering Group puts together a report documenting the feedback given at events.*

### **Written Evidence Base**

Consultants, supported by Lisa Turner at the AONB, will soon be starting to compile the written evidence base to inform the developing neighbourhood plans. This will comprise of an assessment of recent and relevant policies, plans, strategies and data. We will need to contact clerks / steering groups in due course to help fill gaps in knowledge and to advise us of the locally available evidence material that you hold and are aware of.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see the 'Roadmap' Guide here <http://locality.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-roadmap-guide/>

## **The Community Survey**

Community Council for Devon (CCD) will be contracted by each Parish to undertake the community survey. The questions will be developed by the consultants in conjunction with CCD and the AONB and drafts available for review by steering groups prior to publishing. It is intended that the survey will be distributed by steering groups during June for return during July. Distribution and collection will be the responsibility of Steering Groups. Printing of surveys will be co-ordinated by Tracey Bell.

*We would advise that:*

- *Through discussion with Tracey Bell, establish how the surveys will be delivered during June and how they will be collected (e.g. post, drop-off points such as village halls, Parish offices, post offices and newsagents, pubs, schools, door-to-door collection, etc.).*

## **Consultation and Engagement Plan**

It is important to set out how you are going to consult people, where, when and on what and who you will consult. The consultants will provide a template consultation and engagement plan for Steering Groups to complete and publish in due course.

## **Time Period for Neighbourhood Plan**

It is practical to set the time period that the neighbourhood plan will cover in alignment with that of the District Council's Local Plan. In East Devon, this probably means to 2031 (given the advice received from the Examination Inspector to EDDC).

## **Invoicing and Contracts**

We propose to issue two or three invoices to each Parish Council during the work to cover the total fees of £5,600 (excluding VAT) per parish. These are likely to be in May, August and November, but we will confirm the exact timing and invoice amounts by 20<sup>th</sup> May.

Each Parish Council will be sent a contract to sign. Two copies should be signed, with one returned to Stuart Todd Associates.

Neither invoices nor contracts will be issued until the Parish Council has received formal notification of an award of grant.

## **Immediate Next Steps – A Checklist**

In summary, the next steps for parishes and steering groups are as follows:

### *Awareness*

- *Continue to familiarise yourself with the neighbourhood plan process and requirements.*
- *Continue to raise awareness of the neighbourhood plan with the community through Annual Parish Meetings, Parish Council meetings, your website pages, social media, talking to local groups and organisations and so on.*

#### *Launch event*

- *Advertise the launch event widely within the parish at traditional locations, through newsletters if timing allows and via your website and social media.*
- *Try to get as many of the people who are 'staffing' your launch event as possible to the briefing on 29<sup>th</sup> May in Dunkeswell.*
- *Provide your draft of key issues and facts about the parish to Tracey Bell as soon as possible giving enough time for consideration by the consultants and printing / laminating by the AONB.*

#### *Steering Group*

- *Form your Steering Group if you have not done so already.*
- *Consider the terms of reference attached, amend as appropriate and seek formal sign-off of those terms of reference at the next available Parish Council meeting.*
- *Recruit volunteers from the community to join the group.*
- *Notify the consultants of the date of your next Steering Group meeting for discussion of matters in the note as necessary and to review the project plan.*

#### *Co-ordination Group project planning meetings*

- *Establish who from each Steering Group will act as the liaison for this group and arrange a date and venue to meet with the others within your area (i.e. western, central and eastern).*
- *Agree who from each Steering Group will attend. We suggest 2 people from each Steering Group will be sufficient.*
- *Form a contract management sub- group of 3 persons (this does not have to meet), one from each co-ordination group, to liaise with consultants on contractual matters on an ad hoc basis and to arrange dates for the meetings in line with the timing indicated on the project plan.*

#### *Project Plan*

- *Consider the project plan at your next Steering Group meeting and discuss with consultants any amendments necessary to key milestones to match your group's likely pace.*

#### *Survey*

- *Through discussion with Tracey Bell, consider how you will deliver and collect the survey.*
- *Be ready to receive a draft survey to comment on within the next few weeks.*

#### **Further questions**

If you have any questions which arise in addition to or as a result of points covered in this note, please let Stuart Todd or Paul Weston know and we can circulate the answers to all clerks.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Example of and Template for Terms of Reference for Steering Groups to Adapt Accordingly**

## **Terms of Reference for the [Any parish] Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group**

### **Background**

The [Any parish] Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group has been formed by [Any Parish] Council (the Parish Council) to manage the process for and prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the civil parish of [Any parish]. While the Parish Council is the 'responsible (qualifying) body' for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the plan is a document produced and owned by the community as a whole.

### **Responsibilities**

The Steering Group is an advisory body and as such will make recommendations to the Parish Council. The group will undertake the following, subject to the approval of the Parish Council:

- ▶ Prepare and implement a programme for producing the Neighbourhood Plan;
- ▶ Work with officers from [Anyplace District / Unitary] Council to ensure that the Plan conforms to national and local policies;
- ▶ Ensure that all members of the community and other relevant bodies are fully involved in the process through community consultation and that all relevant information is published on the [Parish Council's / Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group's] website;
- ▶ Obtain evidence required to support the policies to be developed for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan;
- ▶ Prepare a Sustainability Appraisal and / or Strategic Environmental Assessment and /or Habitats Regulation Assessment if appropriate;
- ▶ Prepare a draft Neighbourhood Plan with any revisions following public consultation.

The Steering Group shall not incur expenditure without prior authority or approved delegation as appropriate from the Parish Council.

### **Membership**

The Steering Group will consist of members of the Parish Council together with a number of co-opted members from the community. [Also insert details of numbers.]

A member of the [Parish Council / community] will act as Coordinator for the process. S/he will act as the Chair of the Steering Group and coordinate the work of the various working groups.

Parish Councillors must observe the [Code of Conduct adopted by the Parish Council] when they are acting as members of the Steering Group.

Members of the Steering Group must be willing to work together for the benefit of their community. They must treat other members with respect and dignity and be prepared to consider views that are different from their own.

The list of members at [insert date] are as follows.

- [insert named members if you wish and who members represent if any particular group or whether just community representative etc.]
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The Steering Group has appointed the following members to the following roles [add / delete as appropriate]:

Chairperson [name and organisation/group/Parish Council as appropriate]  
Vice Chairperson  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Communications  
Project Planning

The Steering Group wants to encourage involvement by members of the community and so membership will be flexible, allowing additional members to be involved as numbers and practical management of the meetings permit.

The Steering Group may invite other individuals to join working groups or teams to undertake various tasks or projects forming part of the Neighbourhood Plan process. The working groups or teams will report to the Steering Group.

### **Meetings**

The Steering Group will arrange its own meeting schedule.

Full Steering Group meetings will be informal in nature and will be open to members of the public if they wish to attend.

The Steering Group may invite individuals or organisations to attend meetings to give advice on any relevant topic.

[Minutes / notes] of meetings will be recorded and published on the [Parish Council's / Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group's] website.

Working group meetings will arrange their own meeting schedules and will keep notes of meetings.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Steering Group members should declare an interest where decisions or recommendations could result in potential advantage or disadvantage, whether financial or otherwise, to them, their family or close associates.

In the interests of transparency and probity, the [Chair of the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group or Secretary of Group or Parish Clerk] will keep a record of declarations of interest which will also be made a public record on the [Parish Council's / Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group] website.

### **Reviewing the Terms of Reference**

The Parish Council will be responsible for agreeing the terms of reference and any relevant amendments to them. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed periodically to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

[Date]

[Version]