

Neighbourhood Planning

A Presentation by David Kearsley, Strategic Planning Team Leader at Wigan Council – 18 March 2019

What Was a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan was a development tool that gave a community the opportunity to decide on the nature and volume of building development that would be allowed within its area and where a specific type of development would be permitted.

There was no legal requirement for a community to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, but all communities had a legal right to do so, if they wished.

What Were the Benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan?

The principal financial benefit of having a Neighbourhood Plan was that a community was entitled to receive 25% of the income from Community Infrastructure Levy for the area. These funds could only be spent within the Neighbourhood Plan area that they were associated with and their uses were restricted.

The other major benefit was that the local community could contribute to the determination of the nature and location of development within its area.

The Stages in Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan

Once adopted, the GMSF would supersede Wigan Council's Local Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan would control the use of land within Haigh Parish.

The first stage of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan consisted of identifying the boundaries of the area that the Plan would cover and designating a Neighbourhood Forum for the project. Where there was a Parish Council, the Parish Council was automatically the Neighbourhood Forum by law and the Parish was usually the area covered by the Plan.

The Parish Council needed to work with a community that was interested in developing a Plan and the LA had a duty to support the Parish Council. The LA designated the area for the Plan and decided whether the Plan was ready for a local referendum.

The LA's Planning Department helped with the writing of policies and advised on revisions. An organisation called Planning Aid could also do both of these things. Another organisation called Locality would also help with the process, if it was required. During its preparation the Plan had to go through two consultation stages.

Once prepared, the Plan was sent to the government's Planning Examiner, who might also suggest revisions. Once the examiner's report has been received, the LA would recommend whether it was ready for the next stage: the local referendum.

The first stage in the preparation of a Plan was to submit an application to the LA and to specify the area that the Plan would cover. The application was automatically accepted if the Parish boundary was used for the designated area. If a different area was suggested, it was assessed and the proposed area had to go out to consultation.

On adoption, the Neighbourhood Plan became part of the Local Plan.

Appendix A

What Were the Cost Implications?

A start up grant of £10,000 was available. The referendum was paid for by Wigan Council. The LA produced the advertising, allowed use of their website and covered the costs of the consultation stages.

The National Picture

Since the start of the initiative 923 Neighbourhood Plans had been submitted for examination and more than 600 had been adopted. A further 1,100 were currently in progress.

The Local Picture

Most of Haigh Parish is within the Green Belt. Some infill building was allowed, but the possibilities of large scale development were remote. The Parish had several conservation areas and wildlife corridors.