

Hailsham Town Council
Neighbourhood Planning Committee
DRAFT Terms of Reference 2023-2024

1. Introduction

Hailsham Town Council (HTC) took the decision in July 2015 to produce a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) following the Government's publication in 2011 of the Localism Act.

In order to produce the plan the Town Council established a Neighbourhood Planning Committee (NPC) to oversee a process resulting in the preparation of a Plan that was put to a public referendum and agreed.

The committee will then need to ensure processes are in place to address the implementation of the plan to ensure its policies are adhered to.

The committee will need to consider any necessary review and amendments to the plan when and if the Planning Authority publishes a revised Local Plan, as required by legislation.

In doing so it is deemed appropriate that the Committee are provided with and accept the following terms of reference;

The Neighbourhood Development Plan will seek to:

Identify all the important aspects of life in the Parish/Town for which plans for the future are needed, with particular regard to land use; and

Bring forward proposals which will enhance the quality of life in the Parish/Town in the years to come

Provide a framework for future land usage within the parish.

2. Membership of the Neighbourhood Planning Committee (NPC)

The NPC will be formed from up to seven Town Councillors, unless council resolves otherwise, (and previously up to five members of the public who are appointed as lay (non-voting) members)

The NPC may from time to time form Working Groups or sub-committees to undertake various aspects of the work involved in producing the Neighbourhood Development Plan and may seek help from other members of the public or other organisations in order to do this.

The NPC may also co-opt further representation from any other person or organisation that is likely to bring additional benefit or specialisation to the project

The NPC should be supported by officers of Wealden District Council, who as The Local Planning Authority are obliged to provide assistance under the statutory provisions of the Localism Act 2011

The NPC shall exist until the Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed and approved by the independent examiner or such a time as the Town Council resolves to dissolve the NPC.

The NPC shall pass the draft neighbourhood plan to Hailsham Town Council for approval prior to independent examination (completed).

The committee has delegated authority to implement its agreed plans, subject to forward approval by the Town Council. Therefore the Neighbourhood Planning Process shall form a standing item on all ordinarily scheduled Town Council meetings and approval to implement future aspects of the plans will be granted or may be challenged.

All delegated authorities shall be subject to any Standing Orders in place requiring council to make final decisions if so requested

The NPC will have access to funds as resolved by the town council as available for the process and any other funds held by the Town Council from external sources provided for the Neighbourhood Planning Process.

The NPC will invite representation from neighbouring parishes and relevant district and county councils to attend and participate in its meeting as appropriate.

The Council has previously agreed that it will seek to work with Hellingly Parish Council on the Neighbourhood Planning process. Hellingly Parish Council has declined the offer to work on a joint plan with HTC, but has previously asked that a member of its equivalent group attend the HTC NPC meetings and vice versa.

3. Roles and Responsibilities of the NPC

The Committee will;

Elect a Chair (and Vice-Chair if deemed necessary), from amongst its council members, and re-appoint at the first meeting of each municipal year (unless council appoints these roles at its Annual Meeting)

If the Chairman is not present, the Vice Chairman shall preside at the meeting. If neither is present, members shall elect a Chairman for the meeting from amongst their number of council members.

Promote the process of preparing, or reviewing and monitoring the Neighbourhood Plan and be encouraged to participate and provide their views and opinions on the specific topics which are covered during the preparation, monitoring or review of the Plan.

Arrange meetings and appoint sub-groups to gather views and consult on emerging policies which are considered appropriate for incorporation in the Draft Plan or the review of it.

Assess existing evidence about the needs and aspirations of the neighbourhood area.

Liaise with relevant organisations and stakeholders to secure their input in the process

Analyse the results of questionnaires or other evidence received during the planning process and use them to prepare a robust draft Plan

Inform the Town Council of progress on a regular basis in order that NPC or Working Group Minutes can be noted

Support WDC and HTC during the referendum process.

Where appropriate keep proper records of all expenditure, time keeping or other costs of external parties engaged to assist in the preparation of the plan.

Produce a Project Plan and a Project Programme for delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan, or the review and amendment, and monitor the results of their work.

The NPC may also request assistance/advice from any other person or organisation that is likely to bring additional benefit of specialisation to the project.

The Town Council will;

Support the NPC throughout the process providing sufficient assistance and financial resources to ensure the plan is prepared expeditiously providing that overall expenditure falls within the grants received and funds allocated by the Town Council

Appoint professional planning expertise and provide any relevant aid during the development or review of the Plan as deemed necessary. Drafting of the Plan will require professional assistance to ensure conformity to national and local policy and that the Plan will be sound and robust enough to withstand independent examination.

Work with the NPC and the Hailsham Area Action Plan Steering Group or any similar committee to establish that the future infrastructural needs of the area are provided alongside any housing or other development occurring within the Parish/Town.

Work with the NPC to develop policies to guide the future development and use of land in the area.

Support the NPC in developing assessments requested by the Local Planning Authority prior to the Plan being submitted.

Support the NPC in efforts of engagement and consultation with the local communities throughout the plan making process

Create and maintain a link to the Town Council web site for recording details of the NPC activities

Facilitate any required contact with the relevant statutory bodies or parties who must be consulted during the plan making process.

Carry out all statutory duties contained in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) regulations 2012 (and any subsequently made) and engage with Wealden District Council during the referendum process of the plan for which the principal authority are responsible.

Following the preparation of the draft Plan and with the agreement from the Group, submit the plan to the Local Planning Authority for inspection and independent examination

Appoint or re-appoint the membership of the NPC at its annual council meeting in May each year. Review these terms of reference at each Annual Council meeting in May and may resolve to amend these terms of reference at any point by resolution.

All Members of the Committee will;

Declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to any decisions or recommendations made by the group. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership of interest in land (directly or indirectly) or a business or indeed any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the Steering Group.

Ensure that there is no discrimination in the plan making process and that it is a wholly inclusive,

open and transparent process to all groups in both the neighbourhood area and to those wishing to undertake development or be involved in the plan making process

Work together for the benefit of the communities established within the Parish/Town.

Treat other Members of the Committee with respect and dignity, allowing Members to express their views without prejudice and interruption.

Half the appointed councillor membership, or the closest majority to that number, are required to be in attendance for a meeting to be quorate.

If inquorate meetings may proceed but any decisions taken may be advisory only and require future ratification by the NPC when a quorum can gather.

Any decisions taken by the NPC, other than those delegated to appointed officers, will be carried forward if the majority (more than 50% of members in attendance and voting) are in favour. The Chair will have the casting vote in instances where there is no majority, or the Vice-Chair in the absence of the Chair.

In accordance with the Town Council's Standing orders, voting (Town Council) members may be substituted by previously appointed substitute members, to attend in their place by notifying the committee or Town Clerk by 12.00 noon on the day of a meeting.

4. Procedure of Meetings

The NPC will meet on a regular basis, at least every four to six weeks, or more or less frequently if deemed necessary.

Meetings will ordinarily be at 7.00pm at the Town Council offices unless resolved otherwise by the Committee.

All NPC meetings shall be open and may be attended by residents or those who work in the area identified for the plan to observe proceedings or participate in the proceedings at the discretion of the committee chair.

The NPC shall keep Minutes of meetings which will be open to public scrutiny. These will be publicised on the NPC or Town Council web site

Notices, Agenda, Minutes and associated papers shall normally be despatched to NPC members by email unless otherwise specified or agreed.

Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with set procedure to be determined and agreed by the NPC.

The NPC will regularly update and report its progress to the Clerk of the Town Council and the Responsible Financial Officer for the council, ensuring that they are aware of the on-going budgetary implications and requirements associated with the project.

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed throughout the project and amended as required. Any changes to NPC Terms of Reference shall require approval of the Town Council.