

# An Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning

## What is it?

Neighbourhood planning is a new way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work.

They will be able to:

- choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built
- have their say on what those new buildings should look like
- grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.

## How will it work?

There will be five key stages to neighbourhood planning.

### **Stage 1: Defining the neighbourhood**

First, local people will need to decide how they want to work together. **In areas with a parish council**, the parish council will take the lead on neighbourhood planning.

Parish councils and community groups will then need to apply to the local planning authority (Wigan Council). It's their job to keep an overview of all the different requests to do neighbourhood planning in their area. They will check that the suggested boundaries for different neighbourhoods make sense and fit together.

The parish council/community group can then get going and start planning for their neighbourhood.

### **Stage 2: Preparing the plan**

Next, local people will begin collecting their ideas together and drawing up their plans. With a neighbourhood plan, communities will be able to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. They will be able to say, for example, where new homes and offices should be built, and what they should look like. The neighbourhood plan will set a vision for the future. It can be detailed, or general, depending on what local people want.

With a neighbourhood development order, the community can grant planning permission for new buildings they want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood development orders will allow new homes and offices to be built without the developers having to apply for separate planning permission.

Local people can choose to draw up either a plan, or a development order, or both. It is entirely up to them. Both must follow some ground rules: **They must generally be in line with local and national planning policies. They must be in line with other laws**

**If the local planning authority says that an area needs to grow, then communities cannot use neighbourhood planning to block the building of new homes and businesses.** They can, however, use neighbourhood planning to influence the type, design, location and mix of new development.

### **Stage 3: Independent check**

Once a neighbourhood plan or order has been prepared, an independent examiner will check that it meets the right basic standards. If the plan or order doesn't meet the right standards, the examiner will recommend changes. The planning authority will then need to consider the examiner's views and decide whether to make those changes.

If the examiner recommends significant changes, then the parish council may decide to consult the local community again before proceeding.

### **Stage 4: Community referendum**

Wigan Council will organise a referendum on any plan or order that meets the basic standards. This ensures that the community has the final say on whether a neighbourhood plan or order comes into force.

People living in the neighbourhood who are registered to vote in local elections will be entitled to vote in the referendum. In some special cases - where, for example, the proposals put forward in a plan for one neighbourhood have significant implications for other people nearby - people from other neighbourhoods may be allowed to vote too.

If more than 50 per cent of people voting in the referendum support the plan or order, then the local planning authority must bring it into force.

### **Stage 5: Legal force**

Once a neighbourhood plan is in force, it carries real legal weight. Decision-makers will be obliged, by law, to take what it says into account when they consider proposals for development in the neighbourhood.

A neighbourhood order will grant planning permission for development that complies with the order. Where people have made clear that they want development of a particular type, it will be easier for that development to go ahead.

### **Funding and support**

There will be several sources of advice and support for communities who are interested in doing neighbourhood planning:

- The local planning authority will be obliged by law to help people draw up their neighbourhood plans.
- Developers, parish councils, landowners and local businesses may all be interested in sponsoring and taking a leading role in neighbourhood planning.
- The Government has committed to providing £50m until March 2015 to support local councils in making neighbourhood planning a success.
- The Government have already provided £3m to four community support organisations, who already support communities in planning for their neighbourhood.