

Oakham Town Council
Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

Oakham Town Council decided at its meeting on 9th December 2015 to produce a Neighbourhood Plan following the enactment of the Localism Act 2011.

It also decided to establish a Steering Group to research, develop, make recommendations and oversee the process that seeks to address the future needs of the people of Oakham parish. The work will result in the preparation of a draft Plan to be put to a public referendum. The Steering Group will guide and agree the content of the Plan, all associated evidence and analysis up to Preferred Option Consultation Draft stage.

Oakham Town Council has advised Rutland County Council of the intent of the residents of Oakham, in consultation with other stakeholders, to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and the Town Council will be the Qualifying Body that formally submits the Neighbourhood Plan to Rutland County Council.

2. Membership of the Steering Group

The Steering Group will be community led. The membership will comprise of a nominal 15 members and include two elected Oakham Town councillors, a member of Oakham Town Partnership with the remainder drawn from a cross section of the community whom it is thought can bring value to the project. The Steering Group may co-opt further representation from any other person, organisation or body that is felt by the Group to bring additional benefit to the work. The budget for producing the Neighbourhood Plan will be held by Oakham Town Council. The Steering Group has no authority to spend and will therefore be required to apply to Oakham Town Council for that authority.

All members of the Steering Group must declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to the decisions or recommendations made by the Group. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership or interest in land or business or any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the Steering Group. The Steering Group must ensure that there is no discrimination in the plan making process and that it is an inclusive, open and a transparent process. Members of the Steering Group will work together for the benefit of their community, treat other members of the Group with respect and dignity and allow members of the Group to air their views without prejudice and interruption.

If a member of the Steering Group fails to attend three consecutive meetings without a notified reason, acceptable to the Group, the member will be deemed to have resigned unless otherwise agreed by the Group. This provision does not prevent any member from resigning from the Group by providing the Chairman with written notice of their resignation. The Steering Group may request the resignation of a member if the Group considers that the member is not supporting or contributing effectively towards the aims and intentions of the Group. If the member is a nominee of Oakham Town Council or Oakham Town Partnership the parent body will be requested to provide a substitute.

Any person wishing to become a member of the Steering Group will be invited to meet with the Chairman and at least one Oakham Town Councillor to discuss their relevant experience, reasons for applying and how the applicant feels they can benefit the aims and objectives of the Group. The Chairman and the Oakham Town Councillor will report back to the Steering Group with their recommendation. Changes in the composition of the Steering Group will be reported to Oakham Town Council as part of the regular reporting mechanism. The Steering Group may co-opt a relevant person or persons to undertake work in which they may have an expertise or experience. The co-option should last only as long as the expertise or experience is required.

3. Working Groups

The Steering Group may form working groups, as required, to undertake various aspects of the work involved in producing the Neighbourhood Plan. The working groups will be subservient to the Steering Group, act under its instruction and adhere to these Terms of Reference. It is recognised that the work of one group will/may impact on the work of others and therefore effective communications should be maintained between groups. It is expected that the working groups will comprise members of the Steering Group together with additional interested parties, selected under the same procedure as members of the Steering Group. It is essential that the number of members in a working group remains small to be effective.

4. Aims and Objectives

4.1. Aims

The aims of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are to:-

- Be responsible for compiling a draft Neighbourhood Plan together with any revisions as a result of the continuous consultation process.
- Report on a monthly basis to Oakham Town Council to include the continuing development of the Plan together with any updating of membership and planned expenditure.
- Not have the power to exercise, on behalf of the Town Council, any authority, nor to incur expenditure without prior authority of the Town Council.
- Ensure that meeting notes are taken to facilitate effective reporting back on progress to Oakham Town Council and the community at large.
- Task meetings are informal and can be held anywhere without public notice. The meeting notes and dates of meetings will be published on the website.
- Ensure that recommendations made as a result of Community Engagement will be reported back to the Town Council for decision making, such that the Draft Neighbourhood Plan when presented should have the full backing of the Town Council and not the Steering Group alone.
- Ensure the Final Plan meets the needs of the wider community through a process of on-going consultation.

4.2. Objectives

The objectives of Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are to:-

- Prepare a project plan and identify costs associated with the project
- Establish the future needs of the Plan Area, having regard for the wider social, economic and welfare considerations.
- Identify sites for development in line with the requirements laid down in the Local Plan, including sites that may be suitable for further development.
- Include in the Plan non-land orientated projects that are of importance to the community and identified through Community Engagement.
- Ensure the Neighbourhood Plan is supported by an effective on-going programme of communication and consultation with the community, Oakham Town Council, developers, adjoining parishes and other key third parties.
- Have regard to relevant national policies, be in general conformity with the strategic policies of Rutland County Council, European Union, national and associated legislation in the development of the Plan.
- Have concern for the sustainability of the proposals contained in the Plan.
- Support Oakham Town Council in taking the Plan through the examination, finding consensus through the referendum process and ultimately securing community endorsement of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Compile a comprehensive evidence base and portfolio to support the Neighbourhood Plan Policies through community engagement and research including communication with Town councillors and officers of Rutland County Council.

5. General

- The Steering Group shall elect a Chairman and Secretary from their number. When the Chairman or Secretary is not available members shall elect a Chairman or Secretary from amongst their number for that meeting only. If present at a meeting the Chairman must preside.
- A Working Group shall elect a Leader at the first meeting.
- A minimum of five members shall constitute a quorum at meetings of the Steering Group. Working Groups are not required to be quorate.
- Any decisions taken by the Steering Group will be carried by a straight majority vote. The Chairman having the casting vote in the event of a tie.

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed continuously throughout the period of the project and amended as required by the Steering Group before being forwarded to Oakham Town Council for ratification. 22 January 2016