Important points about neighbourhood planning

- **It is a new power available to local councils** introduced by the Localism Act 2011.
- **The power allows local councils to take the lead in creating a neighbourhood plan containing planning policies for their area.**
- **Neighbourhood plans shape development e.g. define the type and location of development** (e.g. house and building operations and changes of use). They cannot be used to prevent development.
- **Adopted neighbourhood plans becomes part of the statutory development plan.** Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the plan, unless material considerations dictate otherwise.
- **Neighbourhood plans are only adopted if a majority vote in favour at a referendum.** Emerging plans can be material considerations and hence may to be taken into account when determining applications.
- **The power allows local councils to create neighbourhood development orders which allow specific types of development in a specific area** to take place without the need for planning applications. Neighbourhood plans are a more common activity for local councils and are the focus of this document.
- The local planning authority has a duty to support those creating neighbourhood plans.

Deciding whether to proceed with a plan:
Early stage research and analysis
- **Resources** Some suggested resources and further information to research are provided below.
- **Process** Become familiar with the process of creating a plan, see below.
- **Examples** Look at some adopted plans for different sizes of community.
- **Existing framework** Look at the Local Plan developed by your local planning authority and consider whether it deals with your community's planning concerns satisfactorily.
- **Evidence** Extract and analyse any concerns from existing evidence of local concerns e.g. parish plans to help establish whether planning matters are an issue for local people.
- **Scope** List the reasons you would like a plan. This helps determine the likely scope, which could cover a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues (such as housing, employment, heritage and transport) or could focus on just one or two issues.
- **Timeframe** Consider what period the plan is likely to cover as this affects the nature of the plan.
- **Resources** Is the council willing to champion and progress a plan? Are there others outside of the council with time available and who are genuinely wiling to create a plan in the best interests of the community?
- **Expertise** Consider what expertise you could access pro bono or at a reasonable cost.
- **Funding** Consider how you will access funding? Donations, grants and fund-raising options?
- **Community engagement** Consider the extent to which you can involve and engage the community, given you have to gain a majority in a referendum. Have you a precedent of successful engagement?
- **Value** Conduct a cost-benefit analysis.
- **Inform and train** Ensure the council has an opportunity to fully understand what neighbourhood planning entails. Provide information and suggest training to help inform decision-making.

In practical terms what sort of outcomes do communities hope to achieve?
Plans must cover planning matters. Reasons given for starting plans vary for communities and include:
- **Local control** Gain control and shape their community before decisions are made by remote authorities.
- **Power** Create a community-led plan focussed on their community which has statutory weight.
- **Informed growth** Ensure that building takes place in the best location for the community.
- **Environment** Protect open spaces and the environment.
- **Quality** Improve the quality of new homes.
- **Traffic management** Improve traffic flow and road safety.

(Information provided by HAPTC)