

# Policy Writing Workshop

urban imprint

# 10 key things to remember...

- These ten points outline our considerations for policy writing
- Based on our experience and the way that examiners have approached reviewing Neighbourhood Plans
- These points need to be kept in mind when thinking about the content and scope of the policies that we should prepare
- Our ultimate advice is keep policies simple – they are more effective that way.

# 1. The Role of Planning

- Traditional role of planning
  - Public Health
  - Amenity
  - Social Justice
- Sustainable Development
  - Economic
  - Social
  - Environmental
- National Growth Agenda

## 2. Land –Use Planning

- Manage development that requires planning permission
  - Change of use
  - Operational development
- We must relate policies to land use
  - Location
  - Approach
- Setting a decision-making framework
- Cannot include aspirations within policies

# 3. The Basic Conditions

- These are the 'tests' the examiner will consider
- We must take care to ensure we address them all with each policy
  - Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan.
  - The making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
  - The making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area).
  - The making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.
  - Prescribed conditions are met in relation to the plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the neighbourhood plan.

# 4. The Policy Hierarchy

- Charnwood Local Plan 2011 – 2028
  - Saved Policies of the *old* Local Plan 2004
- National Planning Policy and Guidance
  - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
  - National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
- Not repeating policies written elsewhere – bad practice
- Finding a link to strategic policies and NPPF / NPPG paragraphs
- Being clear about your links to these policies

# 5. Evidence-led Policy Making

- What evidence backs up your policy?
  - Reports by others
  - Data you have collected yourself
  - Population structure, travel to work data, current housing mix, affordability statements
- Has the policy emerged from what the community have said in their consultation feedback?
  - Clear link between consultation feedback and policy framework
- Demonstrate evidence of testing and amendment
  - What are your options and how have you amended the policies through consultation

# 6. Striking a Balance

- Desires balanced against the hard evidence
  - Is there a conflict between the key studies and reports?
  - Is there conflict between the communities feedback?
- How much weight does the community view have?
- Is it a real planning issue, and aspiration or simply a 'moan'?
- Avoid policies that read like a shopping list
- Deliverability and Viability – often missed in NDPs
  - Manage but do not stifle development

# 7. Don't be Seduced

- By developer promises (They want to build!)
  - Community benefits
- By short term gains
  - Think about the long term (but don't forget 'quick wins')
  - Think about strategic options
- By the least controversial option
  - Is the correct option?
  - Is it the most sustainable option?
  - The 'safe' option may not meet your overarching goals or aspirations.

# 8. Detail versus Flexibility

- Long term nature of planning policy is important
- Consider changes of circumstances or lifestyles
- What about something that was never thought of...
- Legal Challenge?
  
- Retaining the ability to manage development even when change occurs
  
- The role of Monitoring and Review
  - Circumstances that would require a review
  - Who, what, where, why and how?

# 9. Limitations and Barriers

- You cannot commit others to do something or act in a certain manner
- You must try to prepare positive policies
  - ‘Applications should seek to deliver’ rather than ‘Applications which do not deliver’
- Certain things are not within your remit to address
  - Greenbelt boundaries
  - Education and Healthcare Strategies
  - Delivery of Highways and Transport Infrastructure
  - Flood Risk Management
  - Can we make recommendations instead?

# 10. Have a Go...

- *‘Shoot for the stars and at least get the moon!’*
- We can explore the possibilities and examine the evidence
  - Urban Imprint (and the LPA) can consider how we might tackle these elements and prepare a policy
- Consider looking at a planning problem from a different angle, or taking a different approach may be required
- Test with the LPA and use other mechanisms such as ‘health-checks’
  
- Don’t be afraid of trying...
- But it does not always work – be realistic.