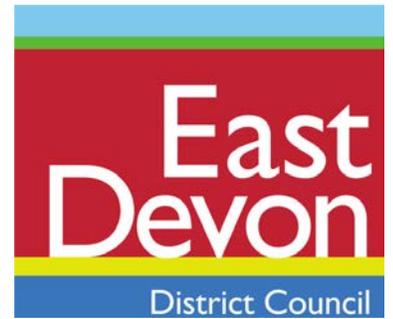


Neighbourhood Planning Guidance

Forming the steering group



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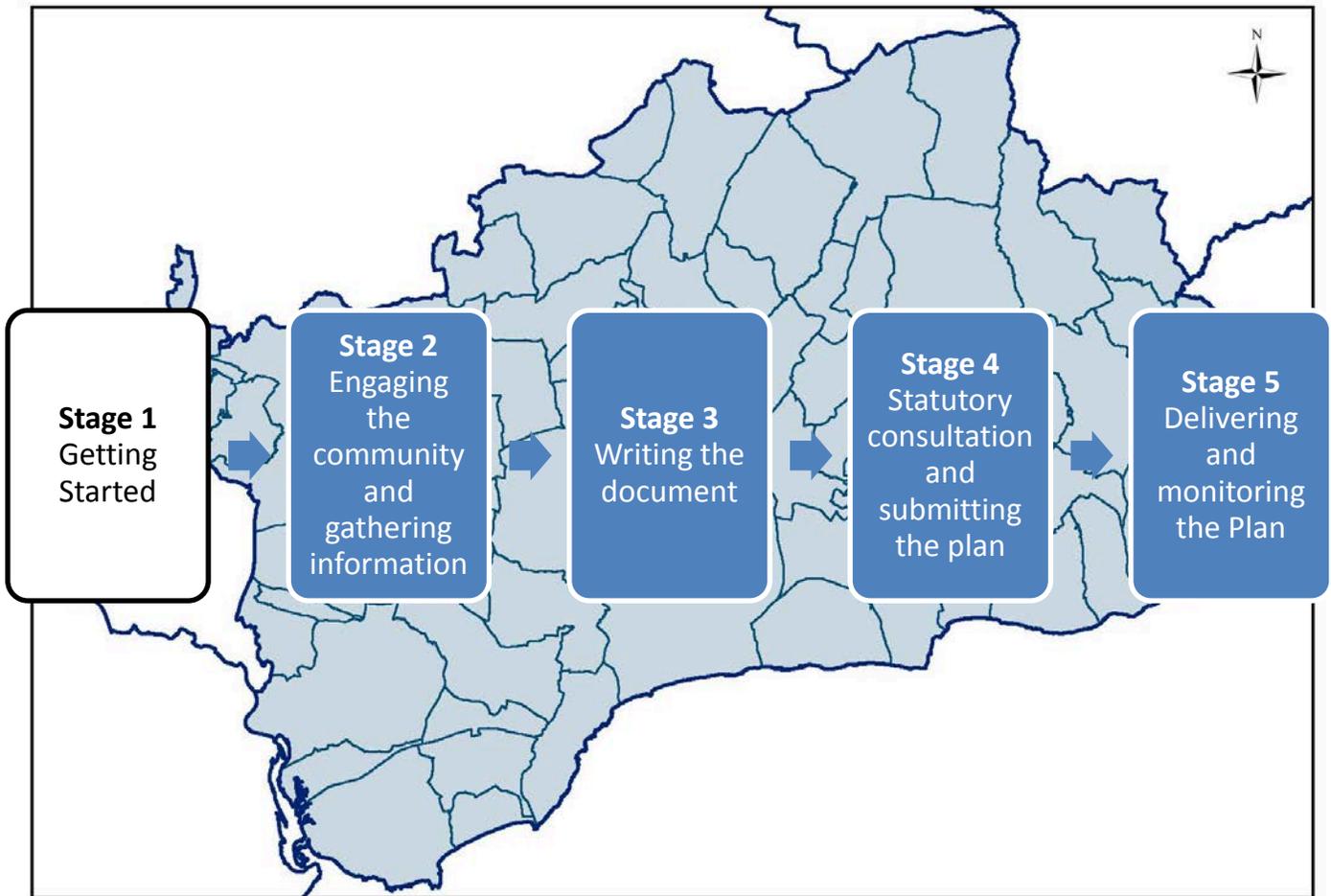


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Forming the steering group

Whilst the Town or Parish Council will remain the qualifying body and have the responsibility for carrying out any formal responsibilities related to the Neighbourhood Plan, it is a good idea for them to enlist volunteers from members from the local community that will act as the driving force behind it.

Why do we need a steering group?

A Neighbourhood Development Plan is a considerable undertaking that requires dedication, a variety of skills, but most importantly, time. Forming a steering group of volunteer will allow the Parish council to delegate the various tasks required in the plan production process will allow the Plan to be progressed whilst the Parish Council can continue to handle day-to-day parish matters.

In addition to this, a Neighbourhood Plan should be community led; therefore it is a good idea to ensure that the steering group is representative of various sections of the community. The better representative your steering group, the better your plan is likely to be. The best steering groups often comprise a mix of the following:

- Parish Councillors
- Local residents
- Business owners
- Local community groups

How should we form and organise the steering group?

As already stated, any steering group should be representative of the area your Neighbourhood area covers. For example, if your Neighbourhood area covers more than one parish or if your Parish has a number of settlements, all with varying characters then representatives should be sought from each area.

Whilst not essential to the development of a good plan, before you hire your steering group it is important to consider the kinds of skills and experience you are seeking. It is a given that there will be many members of your community that will have skills and experience that will be invaluable to the production of your plan, whether this be related or unrelated to planning.

It is a good idea to give group members clearly defined roles that are best related to their skills and experience. These will include some of the following:

- Chair- This is somebody responsible for the coordination of the group, running the steering groups meeting and will act as the point of contact.
- Secretary- Somebody who minutes all the meetings and takes a record of all the decisions made.

- Treasurer- Somebody who keep a record of any expenditure and manages any anticipated spend.
- Other members- A group of people who will be given the authority to make decisions regarding the Neighbourhood Plan. Once production of the plan gets underway, you may want to split this group down further into topic/task groups separated by various topics of the plan e.g. Environment, Housing, Transport, Economy etc.

With these roles in mind, skills that may be useful include the following:

- IT and computers- For setting up a web or social media site and conducting consultations online.
- Graphics design and layouts- Setting out consultation documents and layout of the plan.
- Project Management- drafting out the project plan and ensuring timelines are being met and progress made.
- Consultation and engagement- Conducting community consultation events and motivating people to participate.
- Town Planning- writing policies, advising on the planning process and what can be achieved.
- Accounting and finances- funding applications, keeping records of expenditure and expected expenditure
- Writing and editing- Drawing up the plan and other documents required throughout the process.
- Topic group related expertise:
 - Population and demographics,
 - Wildlife and biodiversity
 - Sustainability
 - Transport
 - Facilities
 - Architecture and Urban Design
 - Landscape
 - Economy and business
 - Public services

Common ways of soliciting interest is to advertise the Parish Council's intention to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, what this means for the Parish and then inviting members of the

community to join the steering group in order to drive it forward. This can be done via a Parish Council meeting, advertisements in the local newsletters and on your website

Top Tip!

Make any advertisement you do put out as enthusiastic as possible! Encourage individuals to be involved in the future of their Parish and try not to scare people off saying that you applicants will need to have a particular breadth of knowledge and expertise. Although this can certainly be useful and you can request information on this from any applicants, remember that the most important trait you should be looking for is enthusiasm and the willingness to dedicate time!

Size of the steering group is also a consideration. Having a group that is too small can limit the pool of ideas generated throughout the process, as well as increasing the workload for those involved. Conversely, one that is too big may find itself finding it difficult to focus. Most groups have found that a good size is around 7-10 people.

What tasks should a steering group undertake?

Early on, it is a good idea to put together a terms of reference or constitution, which will set out the purpose and remit of the group and detail the decision making procedures. This can then be agreed with the Parish Council. An example of the terms of reference can be found on the EDDC website by clicking <http://eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-and-community-plans/neighbourhood-plans/stage-1-getting-started/terms-of-reference/>

Another good early step is to put together a project plan, listing out all of the various stages and tasks of the plan and assigning actions to each as you proceed. An example of a project plan can be found <http://eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-and-community-plans/neighbourhood-plans/stage-1-getting-started/project-plan/>

Top Tips!

How you run the meetings is up to you, but here are some good points to remember:

- Have an agenda
- Makes sure that all members are clear what decisions are to be taken forward and what work is to be done prior to the next meeting.
- Always take notes of decisions made
- Try to ensure that discussions are on-topic and that decisions aren't being on the basis of personal opinion but reflect community aspirations and the evidence you have gathered.

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