

## **First steps in producing a neighbourhood plan: guide to applying for a neighbourhood area or neighbourhood forum**

1. If you are interested in starting work on a neighbourhood plan, the first tasks are to identify the area that you would like the neighbourhood plan to cover (known as the 'neighbourhood area') and to form a neighbourhood forum to lead and coordinate the production of the neighbourhood plan. Both the neighbourhood area and the neighbourhood forum will need to be approved by the city council before work can start on the neighbourhood plan, and there are some legal requirements that must be met in applying to the borough council for a neighbourhood area or forum to be approved.
2. Normal practice is to apply for the neighbourhood area first, then the neighbourhood forum, although it is possible to apply for both at the same time. In applying for a neighbourhood area, you will need to demonstrate that your community group is eligible to be designated as a neighbourhood forum. This means that your community group must have at least 21 members that reflect the diversity, character and inclusivity of the area, each of whom should live in the neighbourhood area, work there, or be an elected member.
3. This note explains what you will need to consider in deciding your neighbourhood area boundary and forming a neighbourhood forum, and sets out the information that you will be required to submit to the city council for the approval of your neighbourhood area and forum.

### **Establishing a neighbourhood area boundary**

4. In deciding what the boundary of your neighbourhood area should be, you should have regard to the following:
  - Neighbourhood areas may not overlap.
  - There can be only one neighbourhood plan for each neighbourhood area.
  - A neighbourhood area can be large or small, for example a town centre, housing estate, employment area, park or combination of these things.
  - A neighbourhood area could be based on an administrative boundary such as an electoral ward.
  - A neighbourhood area boundary should be clearly defined by physical characteristics, such as roads, canals or railways or by the boundaries of a housing estate or employment area.
5. It is recommended that you contact the borough council to discuss the proposed boundary before submitting a formal neighbourhood area application, so that any potential problems can be identified.
6. Once you have decided on the neighbourhood area, you will need to apply to the borough council for approval, by submitting the following information:
  - A map identifying the area to which the neighbourhood area application relates.

- A statement explaining why the area is appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area. This could include a description of how the area was chosen, explaining any methodology used to decide this and any consultation/discussions undertaken.
  - A statement explaining that the body making the area is or is capable of being designated as a neighbourhood forum.
7. The borough council may be able to provide maps that are readily available to assist you in deciding the neighbourhood area boundary.
  8. If the neighbourhood area that you are proposing includes land in Tameside and another adjoining local authority area, you will need to apply to both local authorities for approval.
  9. The borough council may amend the boundary of a designated neighbourhood area in response to a new application for a neighbourhood area.

### **Forming a neighbourhood forum**

10. Once the neighbourhood area has been approved, if you have not already done so, it will be necessary to formally establish a neighbourhood forum to lead and coordinate the plan making process, and like the proposed neighbourhood area, this must be submitted to the city council for approval. In forming a neighbourhood forum, it is important to consider the following:
  - The neighbourhood forum should reflect the diversity, character and inclusivity of the area, and include a minimum of 21 individuals each of whom lives in the neighbourhood area, works there, or is an elected member.
  - The membership of the neighbourhood forum should be drawn from different places in the neighbourhood area and from different sections of the community in that area.
  - The neighbourhood forum should be as diverse as possible, for example it could include elderly and young people, different ethnic groups and small business owners. It is important to emphasise that however diverse the make up of the neighbourhood forum, you will need to consider the wide range of views of the local community in producing a neighbourhood plan.
  - There can only be one neighbourhood forum for each neighbourhood area.
11. As with the neighbourhood area, you will need to apply to the borough council for approval of a neighbourhood forum by submitting the following information:
  - The name of the proposed neighbourhood forum.
  - A written constitution for the neighbourhood forum.
  - The name of the neighbourhood area to which the neighbourhood forum relates and a map identifying that area.
  - Contact details of at least one member of the neighbourhood forum (this will be made public).

- A statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood forum meets the legal requirements. This should explain how the forum was put together and should include the following information:
- The purpose of the neighbourhood forum. Neighbourhood forums should be established to promote or improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area.
- Details of the people on the forum. This should include any conflicts of interest they may have and it could also describe their areas of interest/expertise. The neighbourhood forum must have an open membership policy and include a minimum of 21 individuals who either live in the neighbourhood area, work there or are councillors.
- An explanation of how the people on the forum reflect the diversity, character and inclusivity of the area.

### **Designating a neighbourhood area or forum**

12. On receiving an application for a neighbourhood area or forum, the borough council will verify that sufficient information has been submitted and is then required to publicise this, and invite comments on the application over a 6-week period. The Strategic Planning and Capital Panel of the borough council will then consider the application and any comments received and issue a decision on whether to designate a neighbourhood area or forum as soon as possible after this period (within 13 weeks of the date the application was first publicised) and will publish its decision, so as to bring it to the attention of the people who live, work or carry out business in the area to which the application relates.
13. A neighbourhood forum designation lasts for five years, unless it is withdrawn by the city council earlier than this if it is considered that the designation criteria (e.g. membership) are no longer being met.