

Commissioning consultants

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Introduction

A neighbourhood plan is a framework that guides future changes in an area. It gives local communities direct power to create a shared vision for their neighbourhood¹. The process of creating a neighbourhood plan does not, however, sit in isolation - it must comply with European and national legislation and conform to Local Authority strategic planning policy for an area². Consultation and a clear evidence base supporting the vision and policies are essential parts of the neighbourhood planning process. While the process of producing the neighbourhood plan is led by local communities, the management of the process (controlling what needs to be done and by when), gathering evidence, writing policies and engagement with the wider community, may require you to commission the skills of independent experts or professionals.

This briefing note describes the process of commissioning consultants to support the town / parish council or neighbourhood forum, (the commissioning client) in the production of the neighbourhood plan. It describes different types of consultants and how they can help, how to commission them, how to write a brief and what happens after the consultant is appointed.

You will need to know what you want your neighbourhood plan to achieve before you begin commissioning consultants.

This will inform the skills you may need to commission to support the plan-making process. As the commissioning client, you will need to understand the range of skills needed to deliver your neighbourhood plan early on. However; outside expertise does not replace the judgment of the client or the role of the parish/town council or neighbourhood forum to provide leadership for the production of the plan. Knowing when to draw on the skills of others and what skills you need at the outset of the plan-making process, will help you to achieve a plan that reflects your

¹ Planning Practice Guidance; [What is neighbourhood planning?](#)

² [Neighbourhood plans roadmap guide](#), P6), Planning and Environment Consultancy AECOM; Dave Chetwyn 2013

neighbourhood, stands up to scrutiny and meets the future needs of your community. The following section sets out how you can involve a consultant at the different stages of your plan from getting started to researching and writing policies.

Locality has partnered with AECOM, a Planning and Environment Consultancy, and the RTPI's Planning Aid, who may be your first port of call for technical support. These organisations can help groups to identify their needs early on, as well as the opportunities for growth and regeneration in their communities. [See here for further information.](#)

Different consultants and how they can help

Your local authority has a duty to provide support and advice on areas such as affordable housing and on relevant local and national policies that you may need to refer to in your plan, however, you may also need independent advice to help you run the neighbourhood planning process efficiently.

Support within your community

A diverse range of skills is required to prepare a neighbourhood plan. Before commissioning consultants, you may be able to draw on support within your local community for areas of work such as project management, seeking views on your proposals from local groups, advertising consultation events, preparing visual material for public exhibitions, preparing questionnaires, documenting local character and history - visually and in writing.

Checklist

1. Consider the skills and expertise you can draw on within your local community against the following stages of preparing a neighbourhood plan:
 - Gathering baseline information about your neighbourhood and the surrounding area, for example, defining heritage assets - historic buildings and landmarks, landscape features, local character
 - Defining the vision for your neighbourhood using written and visual material such as photographs and diagrams to describe what your neighbourhood could be like in the future
 - Identifying local groups and businesses you will need to consult
 - Engaging and consulting those living and working in the neighbourhood area, by using tools such as questionnaires or social media
 - Talking to local landowners and developers to help identify potential sites for future development
 - Advertising public events
 - Exhibiting material at public events.

2. Carry out a skills audit.
3. Identify the areas of work that you need to commission from external consultants.

Project management support

Do you have the skills within your team to manage the plan-making process and to manage costs and time? If not, you may need to appoint a project manager or a planner familiar with the neighbourhood plan-making process who can help you to identify tasks, the expertise needed to complete them and help to prepare a project programme. In addition, the project manager can advise on budgets, preparing briefs and consultant fees.

Links and further reading

See the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) [online directory of planning consultants](#). You can also speak to other local neighbourhood planning groups for their experience of commissioning consultants.

Community engagement expertise

Presenting complex information to a large audience can be intimidating and gathering views from members of your local community may be difficult if you are a small group with limited resources. Raising awareness, engaging a wider range of people and documenting their views requires skill. Consider appointing a specialist in community engagement and consultation early on, before the plan making process has begun.

Links and further reading

The [Community planning toolkit](#) by Community Places is a useful online guide for communities designing their own engagement process.

Contact the Professional bodies to find a consultant:

- [Royal Town Planning Institute \(RTPI\) online directory of planning consultants](#)
- [Urban Design Group \(UDG\) registered practitioners](#)

Evidence gathering, data analysis and other technical specialists

Building a strong evidence base for your proposals that is related to the neighbourhood and surrounding areas is vital to the success of your plan. Identify areas where you will need professional support in gathering evidence and analysing the data as well as technical pieces of work that need to be produced. For example:

Identifying and assessing development and land assembly options

Your local authority may already have carried out a housing and economic land availability assessment that prescribes available land in your neighbourhood. However, you may have identified other sites that you wish to be assessed. You will need the expertise of an individual or organisation that is able to make an assessment of the pros and cons of different development scenarios for a site, or number of sites and can make initial cost appraisals of the options. The options should be broadly described and costed, show diagrams, be compatible with your vision, demonstrate you have considered planning permission issues and any other risks and opportunities.

Experts in this area are surveyors and town planners. You may be eligible to [apply to Locality for this technical support](#) or contact the professional bodies: [Royal Institute Chartered Surveyors \(RICS\) find a member](#) and [RTPI online directory of planning consultants](#) to find suitable consultants.

Drafting policies, preparing plans and visualisations for your draft neighbourhood plan

The document should be visual as well as written. Plans, and, depending on the nature of the plan, visualisations of future proposals and diagrams, should explain your proposals and be easily understood by a wide audience, articulating

your vision into written policy statements and drawings that show where changes may happen and what they might look like.

Experts in this area are town planners, architects and urban designers. Contact the professional bodies: [RTPI online directory of planning consultants](#), [Royal Institute of British Architects \(RIBA\) find an architect](#) and [Urban Design Group \(UDG\) registered practitioners](#)

Preparing technical information to support your plan proposals such as a flood risk assessment, contaminated land report, ecological report, noise report, demonstrating the plan's contribution to sustainable development

Your local authority will be able to advise you on what additional technical information is required to support your neighbourhood plan. Assessing the impacts of your proposals on the surrounding environment may require expertise from a number of specialists including ecologists, archaeologists, acousticians, transport engineers etc.

See the professional bodies: [Landscape Institute \(LI\) registered practices](#), [Royal Institute Chartered Surveyors \(RICS\) find a member](#), [RTPI online directory of planning consultants](#), [Chartered Institute for Archaeologists \(CIfA\) registered organisations](#), [Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers \(CIBSE\) find a specialist](#), [The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management \(CIEEM\) members directory](#).

Why use a consultant?

Using consultants with the right experience and knowledge can ensure your neighbourhood plan has sufficient evidence to support your proposals through examination. It also provides greater certainty that the proposals and policies are achievable over the lifespan of the plan.

Experienced consultants will be able to draft clear and concise land use planning policies that impact and guide development. Your project will benefit from their knowledge of lessons learnt from other planning documents and similar approaches, to ensure your neighbourhood plan is of a high quality, robust and fit for purpose.

How to commission consultants

When commissioning the right consultant for your project you should look at a number of qualifying criteria. Competitive selection allows you to review a range of available services and for you to select the consultant best suited to your project and organisation.

For all consultant support, except the most minimal input (see [podcast](#)), it is good practice to adopt a competitive selection process. This does not need to be a complex or drawn-out process, but selecting your preferred consultant from a minimum of three, allows you to compare their skills and experience, their track record in working on similar projects, to assess whether they are the best qualified for the task and have demonstrated they understand and can meet the requirements of your project brief. Availability of the consultant to carry out the work to your timescales and commitment of resources to prepare the work is an important consideration. Competitive selection also allows you to compare costs; however; you should never select a consultant solely based on cost. A low fee does not mean that consultant has the right technical know-how for your project. Some consultants may be able to offer some or all of their time for free (pro-bono) but their skills should still be reviewed to ensure the consultant meets the needs of your project.

The best way to find consultants to invite to participate in your selection process is through recommendation by others. Approach neighbouring communities who have prepared, or are in the process of preparing neighbourhood plans. Talk to your local authority who will have experience of commissioning consultants to produce technical studies to support their strategic plans. Finally, you can approach professional bodies such as the [RTPI](#), who can advise on what particular type of specialism may be most appropriate for your project.

Your expectations from the consultant and your selection criteria should be described in a project brief (see ‘Preparing a brief for commissioning consultants’ below).

The most appropriate model for selecting consultants for the neighbourhood planning process is using a single stage selection process. This model is used when all the information to prepare a realistic price is available to the consultant when the project brief is issued. A single stage process can be quick and keeps costs to a minimum. It relies on the client understanding the budget and requirements for the piece of work being commissioned.

The main steps in a single stage process are:

- A pre-selected number of consultants are invited to respond to the project brief by submitting relevant information and costs
- Information is prepared and submitted by the consultant. An interview may be an important part of the selection process
- Submitted information from consultants is assessed and compared against pre-agreed criteria
- The consultant who best meets the selection criteria is selected and appointed.

Preparing a brief for commissioning consultants

A clear and succinct project brief is your main tool for managing a project’s outputs and directing the people who are undertaking the work. The brief describes your needs and expectations, the work that is to be carried out by the consultant, your budget, timetable and deadlines. We have provided a template brief to help you with this process at the end of this document.

The brief does not need to be a long document but it should contain sufficient information for the consultant to understand enough about the work you are

expecting them to prepare and how it fits into the neighbourhood planning process, in order to assess the skills and resources they need to allocate to the project and to prepare a fee quotation.

A brief has two main functions:

- It is the basis for a contractual agreement between the client and the consultant. It sets out the outputs that the consultant must produce, against which the consultant can provide a cost.
- It is the means by which expectations for the project are recorded - the outcomes. These describe what everyone wants to happen as a result of the project.

Before writing the brief it is good practice to look at other similar examples of project briefs - particularly where they have had a good response from consultants. You can find some example briefs at the end of this guidance. It is likely that you will be commissioning several small pieces of work rather than appointing several consultants under a single brief. Make your brief specific to the requirements of that piece of work and the expertise you are seeking to appoint. A brief for someone with expertise in community consultation will set out very different requirements than a brief commissioning policy writing expertise.

Your brief has to emphasise what is important: it cannot simply be a long list of requirements, nor is it good practice to ask for an unreasonable amount of work for the budget available. It needs to demonstrate that you know the value of what you are asking for. You will need to adjust the scope of work to fit your budget before finalising the brief so that what you are expecting to be delivered is clearly set out. If you don't include a budget in the brief, but leave the cost for the consultants to determine, you could risk costs coming in much higher than expected and run the risk of producing significantly varied quotes which are difficult to compare. For larger pieces of work, set a contingency sum to allow for refinements of the scope during the plan-making process.

Several [case studies](#) on the neighbourhoodplanning.org website summarise what neighbourhood planning groups may have spent on producing their neighbourhood plan. Listed below are some consultancy costs for different commissions that may also be a useful guide:

- **Tattenhall** spent £6,000 on consultant costs to write policies and prepare submission reports.
- **Woodcote** spent £4,250 on a Basic Conditions report.
- **Exeter St James** spent £6,500 on a consultant to help draft the neighbourhood plan and carry out a sustainability appraisal.
- **Broughton Astley** spent £5,000 on project planning advice and graphic design.

Consultant's day rates vary depending on the area of specialism and experience. Locality set a limit of £550 a day for consultancy paid for from the Neighbourhood planning support grants.

The brief should highlight aspirations for quality, and a commitment to well-designed, sustainable places. Ensure these statements are specific to your neighbourhood and wider area and not just generic statements.

Finally, whilst the brief will have fixed elements such as timescales and budget, some of the information may change as the project progresses. If new information arises during a project, it could affect the scope of work and this is likely to increase costs. The brief should not be seen as a fixed tool but something that reflects changes to a project and is updated once the consultant is appointed. Ensure objectives and outcomes are refined to reflect an updated view of everyone's expectations for the project.

A step-by-step guide to running a competitive selection process

1. Identify costs of producing your neighbourhood plan, including consultant costs.
 2. Identify funding sources, including grants (see Locality's grants and technical support guidance notes).
 3. Prepare a project brief (see 'Preparing a brief for commissioning consultants' above).
 4. Talk to your local authority, professional bodies and other local or regional organisations who can help you to draw up a list of relevant consultants.
 5. Call the consultants to ask if they would be interested in preparing a quote for your project - you don't want to waste their time or yours, find out if they are interested in your project and have the resource and time.
 6. Issue your brief to at least three consultants setting a clear deadline for submission of their quotation and other selection material (such as CVs and examples of past projects).
 7. For larger commissions or where consultants must engage members of the community, invite your shortlisted consultants to be interviewed as part of the selection process. If interviews are important, this information should be included in your project brief.
-
8. Interviews should be conducted by at least two members of the commissioning group - this should not be an interrogation process but an opportunity to clarify aspects of the submission against the project objectives set out in your brief. Possible questions could cover:
 - Further information about relevant experience
 - How the consultant will respond to the scope of work
 - How the consultant will resource the project
 - What best practice examples or approaches the consultant will use
 - *For community engagement commissions:* how will the consultant manage expectations of the community?

9. The decision about which consultant to select should be made by all those attending the interviews and be endorsed by the client group (the parish/town council or the neighbourhood forum), not by an individual.
10. Contact the successful consultant and issue an appointment letter or contract (see 'Appointing and managing consultants' below).
11. It is good practice to also contact the unsuccessful consultants - you may use them in the future and feedback on why they were unsuccessful is often welcomed.

Appointing and managing consultants

The simplest form of appointment is by letter. This will set out the terms by which the consultant is appointed (drawing from the project brief), the amount that is to be paid and the payment terms. To ensure you have control over the final quality of information that is produced, final payment should be on completion and handover of the work.

Consultants will often issue their own standard letters of appointment to clients, which are appropriate for small commissions. For larger commissions, consultants may require you to sign a more formal appointment using standard clauses set out by their relevant professional body.

Links and further reading

[Examples of standard forms of appointment](#)

Your task has not ended once the consultant is appointed, you now need to ensure the work is carried out to the quality, budget and timetable set out in your brief. Clear communication between client and consultant is essential to achieving good results:

- Ensure your group's management structure is clear - identify who is making decisions, who is managing the work and the role of any steering or working groups. The consultant will need a main point of contact (this will have been

included in your project brief) and you should know who is the main point of contact in the consultant team.

- After the consultant has been appointed, set up a project inception meeting to agree when the work will begin, agree any changes to the programme and to give the consultant an opportunity to clarify any further details before they begin work. Confirm dates for future progress meetings and if appropriate key milestones and the payment schedule.
- Issue all relevant information for the consultant to undertake their work - don't bombard them with unnecessary information but issue them with a list of relevant contacts and documents.
- Agree when you expect the consultant to issue draft outputs. Ensure these are circulated to the group and that comments are collated and returned within agreed timescales.
- Monitor progress of the project throughout and ensure the final outputs meet the requirements that have been signed off before the final payment.

Template for writing a consultant brief

This template is designed to help you create your own brief then hiring a consultant. Use the text boxes to fill in the relevant information for your neighbourhood plan and area

Anywhere neighbourhood plan

1. Introduction and context

- Information on the qualifying body, include some general background to the neighbourhood plan
- Links to relevant national and local policy such as the NPPF or local plan
- The social and economic context, the things the neighbourhood plan is seeking to change or protect
- Summary of any background work so far and other related studies and commissions that may be underway
- Purpose of this particular commission and the type of consultant expertise you are seeking to appoint.

2. Vision, aims and objectives

- Overarching drivers for the neighbourhood plan and the main aim for the document such as allocating sites for development or addressing affordable housing need
- Overarching outcomes that the neighbourhood plan will offer to the local community
- Specific and measurable results relating to the piece of work being commissioned from the consultant and what should be achieved from this piece of work.

3. Scope of work

- The main elements of the commission that are required to ensure that key areas of work are covered robustly
- The main tasks expected from each stage and the skills that will be required for them
- How this commission fits into the whole neighbourhood planning process Key milestones and client sign-off procedures.

4. Community and stakeholder involvement

- Who the stakeholders are, with reference to a stakeholder map, if available
- Requirements for community involvement - what, when and how
- What involvement different people have had up to this point
- How consultation outputs will be used.

5. Budget

- What amount, stated as a fixed price or maximum figure, is available to the commission
- How the price should be expressed: day rates, inclusion of VAT and expenses, what constitutes allowable expenses.

6. Programme and timetable

- Start and completion dates
- Draft project programme
- Provisional dates for key events and deadlines.

7. Management arrangements

- A named contact person to receive bids
- Any formal steering group or working groups, who will be on them and how often they will meet
- Who signs off key documents and milestones?

8. Expectations for reporting

- Interim and final outputs expected from the commission
- Any requirements in terms of format
- Clarity on who will have copyright of the outputs.

9. Formal requirements of the commissioning process

- How the submissions will be assessed, for example, track record, understanding of technical issues, value for money, and so on
- Whether appointment will be by written submission only (for small commissions) or, by interview. If you do require consultants to be interviewed as part of the selection process, include a date for interviews in the brief
- The closing date for submission of quotations and supporting information
- The required format (by email or hard copy A3 or A4 documents), number of pages (try to keep to a minimum) and number of copies needed
- Submission details - a return address and contact name, phone number and email.

The following submission requirement can be adapted and included in your consultant brief:

- You must submit an electronic copy of the following documents (max 8 sides A4):
 - A short explanation of your approach to delivering the scope of work making reference to the relevant experience of your team
 - an example: how you have engaged residents and businesses as part of a community consultation exercise*
 - A high level project plan**
 - Three examples of similar projects undertaken elsewhere, with project budget, client name, email address and contact number for references.
 - CVs of key team members including a summary of skills and experience.
 - The fee proposal broken down into days and rates

- Conflicts of interest - consultants bidding for this project will need to state no conflict of interest exists or declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest
- Appropriate levels of professional indemnity insurance and public liability insurance (if appropriate)

*This requirement should be adapted to reflect the expertise being commissioned

** For longer term or complex projects

Template for scoring and selecting a consultant

This template is designed to help you decide which consultant is most suitable to carry out the work you have commissioned.

The scoring sheet can be printed off and used by the selection panel to document comments and scores for each consultant.

Sample selection criteria

The following sample criteria can be adapted to select a consultant, with the highest scoring bidder being selected:

The percentages suggested are an example, feel free to pick your own.

- Approach (30%)
- Skills and experience: technical and professional capability of the consultant [including the ability to communicate clearly*] and relevant track record (40%)
- Price (30%)

**Can be used if an interview is an important part of selection process*

Sample scoring guidance

The scoring principles below can be used to score each consultant:

Score thresholds

0 - 4: Poor

5 - 6: Average

7 - 8: Good

9 - 10: Excellent

Poor: The response is significantly below what would be expected because of one or all of the following:

- The response indicates a significant lack of understanding relating to the requirements
- Experience and skills do not demonstrate competence
- The response is light with little evidence.

Average: The response meets elements of the requirement but gives concern in a number of significant areas. There are reservations because of one or all of the following:

- Some areas of concern that require attention
- Basic understanding of the requirements
- Basic experience
- Minimal competence demonstrated.

Good: The response broadly meets what is expected for the criteria. There are no significant areas of concern, although there may be limited minor issues that could have had further exploration or clarity. The response therefore shows: □ Good understanding of the requirements

- Relevant experience and skills
- Sufficient competence demonstrated.

Criteria	Evidence	Comments	Score out of 10	Weighting	Final score
Approach	<p>Has the consultant understood the project and the key issues?</p> <p>Has the consultant understood the requirements and has demonstrated a clear approach to the scope of services?</p> <p>Has the consultant clearly described their approach?</p> <p>Does the submitted statement clearly convey the consultant's technical capability?</p>			30%	
Skills and experience: technical professional of the consultant and relevant track record	<p>Check for range of expertise in the CVs against requirements in brief.</p> <p>Check the CVs for the relevant qualifications.</p>			40%	
	<p>Is the information clear and concise (on paper and in interview as appropriate)?</p> <p>Are the example projects described clearly relevant or showcase equivalent challenges, to this project?</p> <p>Does the approach demonstrate an understanding of the neighbourhood planning process?</p> <p>If interviewed, was the consultant able to answer questions clearly and succinctly, demonstrating appropriate level of expertise?</p>				
Cost				30%	

Excellent: The response exceeds what is expected for the criteria and leaves no doubt as to the capability and commitment to deliver what is required. The response therefore shows:

- Very good understanding of the requirements
- Excellent experience, skills and achievements demonstrated through relevant evidence
- Highly competent.
- Response identifies factors that will offer potential added value

Template scoring sheets

Score thresholds

0 - 4: Poor

5 - 6: Average

7 - 8: Good

9 - 10: Excellent

Example consultant brief

Evidence for sites

Technical evidence gathering on potential development sites in the Anon Neighbourhood Plan area.

Introduction

The Neighbourhood Plan project steering group appointed by Anon Forum is looking to appoint suitably qualified consultants to help in the preparation of technical evidence to inform the development of the Anon Neighbourhood Development Plan (herein known as the Neighbourhood Plan). ATC and the project steering group have already undertaken early community engagement and are developing an understanding of the shared community priorities for the future of Anon.

A consultant, suitably experienced in spatial planning, planning policy preparation and preferably site promotion, with a good working knowledge of neighbourhood planning, is required to collect technical evidence on the potential development sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area. This includes the sites included in the

draft site allocations work prepared by X Borough Council, at the very least the category 1 to 3 sites of the XX Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as well as any other potential development sites identified by the Neighbourhood Plan steering group.

It should be noted that a final document will be expected to be submitted to the Forum by mid-December without slippage. A generous budget has been identified to cover what may prove to be an intensive project with a short turnaround.

This brief sets out the requirements of this work and how this will fit into the ongoing strategy and methodology / programme developed by the Forum. It also sets out the background to the project and the area.

Any instruction at this stage may also lead to instructions to undertake further work at a later date during the neighbourhood plan period.

Overview

Anon Forum has been working on the delivery of a neighbourhood plan for Anon since September 2014. The Local Planning Authority, X Borough Council (XBC) designated the area on 16 October 2014 in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

The Neighbourhood Plan is currently being delivered by a designated Forum made up of representatives from local organisations and businesses and local residents.

Since designation the following work has been undertaken:

- Early community engagement with the community on key issues and concerns
- Establishment and designation of the Forum to bring the Neighbourhood Plan forward
- Training on the necessary steps required to deliver the Neighbourhood Plan
- Development of a detailed project plan
- Some early work on developing a vision and spatial objectives to underpin the neighbourhood plan.

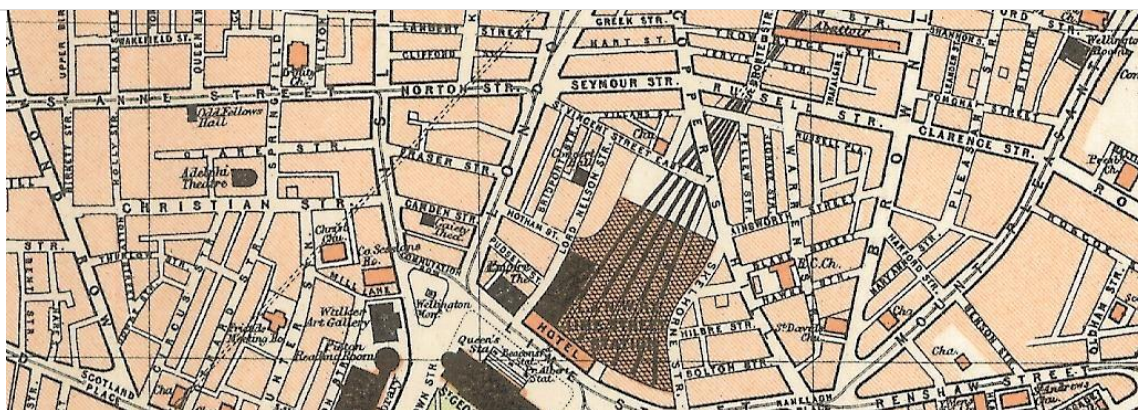
An overall vision for the Neighbourhood Plan is at the early stages of development and will be subject to further community engagement work in the latter half of 2014.

The neighbourhood forum seek assistance in the collation of technical evidence on potential development sites in the Anon Neighbourhood Plan area. The following sites should be included:

- All sites which fall within the KBC emerging site allocation document
- All category 1 to 3 sites in the SHLAA, details of which can be found at www.XX. This link points to the SHLAA as updated in 2011. The 2009 SHLAA was used as the main source of housing sites in the Site Specific Proposals LDD Options Paper www.XX. The Site Specific Proposals Options Paper can be found here www.XX.
- Any other sites identified as a result of the work of the NP Forum (which may include discounted SHLAA which may require undertaking a call for sites by the qualifying body).

About Anon

Anon neighbourhood area is located in the city of XX, county of XX, in the region of XX.



Map of Anon with inset map showing position of the area in XX city and England

Anon developed because of the spinning and weaving industries and had a large silk manufacturing base in the early 19th century which switched to footwear when the silk industry declined in England.

Anon has only one remaining footwear manufacturer, however there are many other manufacturing companies, including Xx, one of the largest XX in the UK, and XX, a leading company in XX. In the distribution industry, the UK's largest XX is also located in the city. Anon area currently has a population of around 20,000. The population is expanding at a fast rate as it is earmarked as a growth area for the region with planning permission for 1050 houses already for completion by 2031. This will lead to a total increase in population in the order of 4,000 and all in one area to the north of the railway line.

The area has its own fire station, a library, a dental practice, Anon Health Care Group surgery, veterinary practice, public houses and clubs both sporting and social, and four churches.

It has one primary and one infant/junior school, XX Primary School, Infants and Junior. Both schools have been extensively modernised and expanded in recent years and there is development currently underway at XX School which will double it in size. Secondary education is provided at xx College in XX, 3 miles away.

The River XX runs between Anon and neighbouring XX and the XX is an area of green infrastructure in the borough. There is also an area known as the xx which along with the nearby Wildlife Trust reserve is being purchased by xx to be kept as a greenspace. The Wildlife Trust also maintains xx which is situated behind the Leisure Centre on the northern outskirts of the town.

The area has very good traffic links, with the A42 two miles to the south, the A75 half a mile to the west and motorways within half an hour's drive. It has a frequent bus service to X and XX. The 2 nearest towns have railway stations on the route into London and XX, XX and XX.

Background to the Neighbourhood Plan

In September 2013, XXX decided to work with local organisations and members of the public to bring forward a

Neighbourhood Plan for the area. A Working Party was set---up to get the process going. In March 2013, the first consultation event was held to enlist Forum members and people who would be interested in taking part in discussion groups.

The Working Party held further public events in May and June 2014 asking the area's residents what they felt was 'good, 'bad' and 'ugly' in Anon and also 'what needed to change'. These events were very useful and enabled the Forum members to start planning with the help of Planning Aid in a series of training sessions held throughout the summer.

The outcomes at a high---level were as follows:

- 'Bad': 'the state of the roads' and 'derelict sites around the area'
- 'Ugly': 'the old Co---op Dairy site' and the 'XX Factory Site'
- 'Good': 'the strong sense of community' and 'people are friendly'
- 'Need to Change': 'the look of the high street and parking issues' and 'the infrastructure not keeping pace with the growth of the area'.0

The Forum met officially for the first time in September 2014, discussing the first draft of the detailed project plan and allocating roles for the members.

Requirements of the consultant

Background

One of the key issues that the plan is seeking to action is the allocation of appropriate development sites in and around the area to accommodate the level of growth proposed for Anon within the emerging Local Plan (*note*: at this stage, the precise housing figure required for Anon is not yet in the public domain, pending the next round of consultation on the Local Plan in early 2015. At the same time, it is currently expected to be in the region of 700 homes). There has recently been an impasse between XX and XX as to whether the neighbourhood plan or XX's Site Allocations plan should be the most appropriate vehicle for the delivery of sites in

the area. This uncertainty is in part the result of the lack of a clear strategy at the Forum level as to exactly how the neighbourhood plan should approach the allocation issue. This has not been helped by a number of complicating factors, one of which is the relatively slow pace that the XX is moving forward providing an absence of clarity on exactly what housing figure the Forum should base their plan on.

The Local Authorities own allocations plan is emerging only very gradually, with the most up to date indication suggesting the submission document will only be made available in Spring 2015. Once again this is not helped by the XX timescales and there are already signs of further slippage in the delivery of the DPD.

In addition, there are two key sites in the area with local sensitivities central to the aspirations of the neighbourhood plan that the successful consultant should be aware of. Both have development potential but both will also require a level of additional work by the Forum to ensure they come forward in a way that benefits Anon:

1. The XX Leisure Centre Site (SHLAA Ref 3BH)

The site of a now vacant XX---owned leisure centre, it is the current intention of XX to allocate the land for more than 100 homes within its emerging Site Allocations DPD. It is the strong will of the community to restrict the level of development on this site to as low and as sensitive form of development as possible to protect the character of the adjacent XX Valley. To this extent, they are seeking to undertake a level of viability work to support a proposal on site comprising a much reduced housing figure. This work is ongoing.

2. The XX Factory Site (SHLAA Ref 6YH)

The site of a vacant factory, amongst other derelict structures, the Site comprises a plot of land in multiple ownership right at the heart of Anon. The site was subject of a XX---prepared planning brief for a mixed use development, prepared prior to the economic recession, that proposed a scheme that would have given a central core to Anon. Due to issues of viability the scheme never

came to fruition and it is now hoped that the neighbourhood plan can provide fresh impetus for the promotion and subsequent regeneration of the site.

It is likely that the neighbourhood plan will seek to allocate both of these sites in the final document. It is recommended that the successful consultant holds early discussions with the Forum in relation to these sites to identify the more detailed aspirations moving forward.

To date an extensive SHLAA has been prepared covering the area, including for XX city and wider level. It was first produced in 2009 although was most recently updated in May 2013 using a 2011 database. To this end, however, the most recent update to the SHLAA is now based on an almost 4 year old position. The site database will therefore need updating for any new permissions, refusals, constraints or material changes in circumstance in or around the land submitted for consideration.

3. What is required

In light of the current indecision around the correct platform for the allocation of sites in Anon, it has been decided by the Forum that the neighbourhood plan should seek to take the initiative and begin to develop a range of site options that are underpinned by up to date and robust evidence. Indeed, the suite of

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is unequivocal that neighbourhood plans have the power to allocate development sites, albeit a qualifying body should carry out an appraisal of options and an assessment of individual sites against clearly identified criteria when doing so.

In the context of this work it is important to remember that neighbourhood plans are not subject to the tests of soundness. Instead they are subject to the basic condition tests that do not require the most sustainable option to be selected but still require plans to demonstrably achieve sustainable development. To this extent, it is not expected that the final report will seek to recommended sites for allocation and instead will simply indicate the full list of site options in the town that are deemed to support the delivery of sustainable development.

To this end, the successful consultant will firstly be required to work/liaise with the steering group to identify the full list of sites that are realistically available to the town for the purposes of the plan and that should be subject of the study.

They should then recommend and then apply an appropriate locally specific site assessment process to provide an updated list of sites that are realistically deliverable over the period of the neighbourhood plan.

The final output should be the updated position of all of the available and deliverable sites in the area, setting out an understanding of any key constraints, necessary mitigation and the site's indicative yield.

Likely order of tasks

- Award of preferred tenderer status by XX
- Initial meeting with the Forum to agree the long list of sites that will be subject of review and to discuss way ahead
- Critique of existing SHLAA methodology to identify whether a more bespoke site assessment process should be identified and applied
- If so, demonstration of revised site assessment methodology to the NP Forum
- Site assessment work, including site visits (potentially accompanied by forum members, desktop assessment of relevant evidence, liaison with external bodies and use of sub---consultants to produce original analysis where necessary
- Production of final sites review report.

Information that should be referred to (as a minimum)

- The most recent SHLAA report (May 2013) including all appendices and site assessments relevant to Anon;
- Other relevant evidence developed in support of the emerging KBC Site Allocations DPD; and
- Draft XX Urban Structures Study 2013.

What the steering group will supply to the preferred consultant (as required)

- A single point of contact
- Any necessary information or data gathered to date around the sites in the area
- A physical base within the area when undertaking work on site
- Contact details for any key local stakeholders
- Additional capacity to help undertake any necessary background tasks relevant to the assignment, including help on the ground.

Indicative Timescales and Programme

The Forum aims to appoint a planning consultant by 24th October with interviews taking place from 21st ---23rd October. A draft of the report is required by 5th. December to allow for any revision work to be completed and resubmitted by 12th. December.

Tendering Requirements and Selection Process

1. The Forum will invite 5 consultants to submit proposals.
 2. Consultants need to submit proposals by 17th October 2014, which will include:
 - A document seeking out concisely what work will be undertaken and how
 - Any issues that are identified with the brief that may impact on the scope of work
-
- A draft programme to meet the above timescales
 - Their inclusive charges for completing the project
 - The proposed team and their CVs
 - Where it is proposed to subcontract any element of the work, details of the company concerned together with relevant staff
 - Information on similar work undertaken
 - Names of two referees
 - Confirmation that no conflict of interest would arise in the event of being appointed
-
- Proposals should be limited to five sides of A4 excluding appendices.

3. If necessary, the Forum may invite consultants for interview with the partner organisations.
4. Appointment of a consultant will be based on a price, understanding of the requirements, the quality and scope of the proposals and previous experience. The Forum is not bound to accept the lowest tender nor does it undertake to make an appointment from this exercise.
5. Any interviews will be scheduled for 21st---23rd. April 2015 with the selected Consultant being confirmed by 24th April 2015.
6. Before a contract is signed, the Consultant to be appointed will be expected to submit their Environmental & Ethical Policies and safe working practices which will be followed during the project.

Please submit Tender documents to:

By the 17th April 2015

Further Information included with this Brief

- Forum constitution
- Neighbourhood Plan area.

Example consultant brief

Evidence base, visioning workshop, identifying options

Task: Help with evidence base, community visioning exercise and options paper.

XX Neighbourhood Plan

Initial brief to consultants

Background

XX Parish Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan under the powers granted by the Localism Act 2011.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has recently completed a community awareness and engagement programme, and has begun to analyse the results of an extensive community questionnaire to identify the key themes and issues for the Neighbourhood Plan to consider.

Following this analysis the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group intend to proceed by holding a 'Visioning Workshop' involving a widely based invited audience of stakeholders, after which small 'theme teams' will prepare options for consideration at a follow-up 'Options Workshop'. From this the 'theme teams' will go on to develop detailed proposals that will form the 'strategic narrative' of the eventual neighbourhood plan.

As part of this process, support to develop the Plan's evidence base will be required.

The breadth of the issues that community engagement on the Plan has so far revealed, and the desire to take a strong spatial and design led approach, indicates that expert professional support is required. Furthermore it is considered that facilitation support by a facilitator with a planning or strategy development or similar background who can understand and clearly explain the connections

between themes would enable the Steering group to better achieve consensus within the team and make rapid progress.

The Council is therefore considering using consultants and agencies to assist with this work. Informal quotes are requested indicating suggested costs and briefly outlining how the work would be conducted.

Details

1. Collation and analysis of evidence base

Requirement: A report which:

- Identifies relevant current and emerging planning and other policy documents, including national, regional and local provisions
- Scans for elements of the documents which are relevant to XX
- Identifies and summarises the policy requirements within those documents for XX and the implications of them for the Neighbourhood Plan
- Identifies and reviews existing policies that would be ‘lost’ on the Adoption of the Cornwall Local Plan so as to identify what policies may need to be safeguarded through the NP
- Identifies what are considered to be Local Plan ‘strategic policies’ and those that are appropriate for local interpretation, commenting on which of those that might be sufficiently robust not to need local interpretation
- The Neighbourhood Plan Team will do most of the statistical research and analysis for itself, presenting the results in a final report, However a validation of the findings, commenting on the accuracy of the assessment and identifying any research gaps or sources of updated information, will be required
- All referenced and arranged in the themes we are using.

Output: A report summarising the analysis, supported by detailed appendices as appropriate. To be emailed in PDF and Word document file

format, and short presentation of key findings to Steering Group. **Budget:** £900

2. Visioning Workshop

Requirement: Preparation and delivery of a ‘Visioning Workshop’ based on the response to community engagement and the emerging evidence base, aimed at:

- Defining a draft ‘shared vision’ for XX’s future
- Defining a broad set of aims, objectives and outline strategy for achieving sustainable development in XX
- Agreement on the topics around which ‘theme teams’ will form, and the main elements of a work-brief for each team.

Output: Adequate preparation for the workshop, including the intellectual content, graphics, presentational material, etc.

- Delivery of the workshop
- Follow up report summarising the workshop product, to be emailed in PDF and Word document file format.
- Draft work-briefs for the ‘theme teams’.

Budget: £800

3. Options Preparation

Requirement: Preparation and delivery of professional and technical support to the ‘theme teams’ to aid their preparation of options for the delivery of the overall set of aims, objectives and outline strategy.

Output:

- Attendance at two meetings of selected ‘theme teams’
- Remote support for the selected theme teams **Budget:** £1400

4. Options Workshop

Requirement: Preparation and delivery of an ‘Options Workshop’ based on the work of the ‘theme teams’, aimed at:

- Generating quality feed-back from the ‘theme teams’ on their work to date

- Assisting the Steering group to select the appropriate options for further development
- Ensuring that the emerging options work together to form a coherent strategy under the shared vision for XX
- Identification of the main next-step elements to go into the work-brief for each team.

Output:

- Adequate preparation for the workshop, including the intellectual content, graphics, presentational material, etc.
- Delivery of the workshop
- Follow up report summarising the workshop product, to be emailed in .pdf and .doc file format.
- Revised draft work-briefs for the ‘theme teams’.

Budget: £800

Note: The Parish Council may wish to appoint one consultant/agency to cover all of this work, or appoint separate consultants for each element, in which case an additional requirement will be for the appointed consultants to co-operate on and co-ordinate their inputs.

5. Application

Respondents are requested to write or email to the Parish Council (address below) with brief proposals to carry out this work, including an informal quotation of the likely cost.

Timescale: Funding for aspects of this work is being sourced from Locality and must be completed by 31/12/15.

Selection: will be based on the following criteria.

- Cost - 30% - Please specify the number of days work and the cost per day.
- Quality - 70% please provide details of appropriate qualifications for the work. Please provide a CV of the people who will work on this contract, ideally with evidence of 2 examples of similar work.
- Scanned copies of relevant insurance documents should also be included.

Please send completed proposals by email to:

Further information and contact

Name, title, email, telephone, address.

My Community



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