

# IN PRACTICE

Policy briefings and practical advice

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HOW WE DID IT ---

## Approving homes via neighbourhood order



From left: Neesham Julia Bullock, development team leader of Kettering Borough Council; Bull plus Roy Bunter, Mary Rust and Pat Scauna of Broughton neighbourhood plan's steering group

A village community group used a pioneering process to grant permission on a key site, says Colin Marrs

**PROJECT** Broughton Neighbourhood Development Order, Northamptonshire

**ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED** Broughton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, Kettering Borough Council

In September, residents in the Northamptonshire village of Broughton voted in favour of a new neighbourhood plan. In a separate ballot on the same day, they approved – by 615 votes to 41 – a neighbourhood development order (NDO) granting outline planning permission for up to seven homes on a site currently used as a BT telephone exchange. This is set to be

only the third NDO to come into force in England and the first that grants planning permission for new homes on a specific site.

The power to create an NDO was introduced in the 2011 Localism Act, allowing town and parish councils to use such orders to grant planning permission for certain developments or certain classes of use. As such, they differ from local development orders, where the local authority proposes and prepares the order.

The idea of drawing up an NDO for the site came originally from the Broughton neighbourhood plan steering group, which reported to Broughton Parish Council. "When we discovered this power was available to us, it seemed to be the perfect fit for the village," says parish councillor and steering group member Hilary Bull. "The exchange is a 1960s former school building in the middle of a conservation area and is starkly out of keeping with the setting. We wanted to ensure

that we had some control over what replaced it if it comes to the market in future."

The steering group and parish council liaised with planning authority Kettering Borough Council throughout the process of developing the order. "Our role wasn't necessarily to interrupt the work of the steering group, but was one of a 'critical friend,'" says Simon Richardson, the borough's planning policy development manager. "We offered advice on elements of the detail within the neighbourhood plan and NDO. And then we sought to provide input on technical and legal requirements throughout the process."

The steering group faced one major challenge – being a pioneer of a new process meant that there was a lack of good practice from elsewhere on which it could draw. "There is a lot of guidance and information on the internet about neighbourhood plans, but virtually nothing on NDOs," says Bull. "We

had to build the order on what we felt was required and use our common sense."

Halfway through the process, to make sure that it was on the right lines, the steering group commissioned a voluntary "health check" from an independent body – consultancy Independent Plans and Examinations. The consultancy was asked to give its feedback on how the plan was developing. "It gave us an opportunity to reinforce the plan in certain areas – mostly on tightening the wording of the conditions attached to the permission – and it gave us confidence that we were on the right lines in other areas," says Bull.

The NDO, which was "made" by Kettering on 17 October, grants outline consent for a minimum of five and a maximum of seven small homes, to be provided either as starter homes for first-time buyers or as accommodation for older people who are downsizing. It contains conditions on roof heights, access

### KEY LESSONS

Make sure that a neighbourhood development order (NDO) is absolutely necessary to achieve your aims. Broughton Parish Council steering group member Hilary Bull says the process of drawing up the order added up to 20 per cent more work to the job of putting together the neighbourhood plan. "It is a lot of work if you don't need one," she warns.

Make sure that you are clear about the process. As the referendum grew near, those involved in promoting the plan had to provide extra information on the difference between the neighbourhood plan and the NDO, says Kettering Borough Council's planning policy development manager Simon Richardson.

Be brave – the process provides benefits for the community. While a lot of people were fearful about doing something new, Richardson says the community and the council had the tools to produce the NDO and it helped to engage local people in planning issues.

POLICY SUMMARY

# Government requirements for local industrial strategies



BT Exchange: often for homes

and landscaping issues, bin storage and design matters such as requiring materials that reflect the area's heritage. It also requires the provision of adaptable housing layouts such as wider doorways to cater for people with disabilities.

The work to draw up the order involved consultation with key stakeholders including environmental health and highways officers, who helped guide the more technical aspects of the order and its conditions. Site owner BT was kept informed about the process as it developed. "We had quite a few conversations with them and we didn't encounter any obstruction," says Bull. "They understood what we were doing."

In addition, a series of meetings were held with residents, who welcomed the idea of new homes, according to Bull. "The community was supportive," she says. "However, the consultation got more complicated as time went on. There were more questions as we approached the referendum." Richardson says this was mainly due to confusion among villagers about the difference between the NDO and the neighbourhood plan, requiring more explanation in the later stages.

In May, independent examiner Ann Skippers approved the order, recommending a condition to limit its lifespan to six years, or four years from the date of approval of a reserved matters application.

The process of drawing up an NDO in conjunction with the community has huge potential to benefit the planning process, according to Andy Needham, assistant development officer at Kettering. "Often, people only raise issues about the principle of development on a site at the planning application stage, which can sometimes be too late in the process," he says. It is far preferable for them to be involved at an earlier stage, he adds, and an NDO helps to achieve that.

**POLICY** Local Industrial Strategies - Policy Prospectus

**ISSUED BY** Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

**ISSUE DATE** 1 October 2018

**Background** The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) published the government's national industrial strategy last December, which requires business-led local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and mayoral combined authorities to produce local industrial strategies. The 2018 National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies should have "regard to local industrial strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration". This prospectus sets out the requirements that local industrial strategies must meet.

**Key points** The prospectus states that "government agreement of local industrial strategies must be consistent with this document". Strategies should "set out clearly defined priorities for how cities, towns and rural areas will maximise their contribution to UK productivity", it says. "They will better coordinate economic policy at the local level and ensure greater collaboration across boundaries." Strategies "will be long-term, based on clear evidence and aligned to the national industrial strategy".

Strategies "should address local strengths and weaknesses, as well as market opportunities and failures", the prospectus says. "Barriers to growth also vary across the country - and within localities - so the appropriate mix of policies to boost productivity will vary too," it adds. Such responses "might include ambitions to drive housing growth,



Business parks strategy aims for growth

make use of land supply, improve local skills or strengthen communities". The document goes on to say that strategies should also "set out the spatial impacts of national and local policy across our cities, towns and rural areas".

The prospectus says strategies must "set out a robust and open evidence base" and "map out specific opportunities and challenges". They later "may involve", in some areas, an emphasis on land supply or "working with relevant local authorities in the delivery of housing where it is a barrier to

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## OTHER NEW DOCUMENTS

**H2N Phase 2b working draft Environmental Statement**  
 Issued by: High Speed Two (H2N).  
 Issue date: 11 October 2018

Environn Affairs. k

**Removing the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap: letter from the communities secretary**  
 Issued by: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.  
 Issue date: 18 October 2018

UK plan nitrogen an overv issued by Environn and Depa date: 5 O

**Consultation on Draft Noise Action Plans, October 2018**  
 Issued by: Department for

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