

Neighbourhood Planning

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Guidance Notes for Grant and Technical Support

Neighbourhood planning Grant and Technical
Support Guidance Notes

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Effective: 4 April 2022.

Welcome

Since 2011 when the Localism Act introduced the power for communities to develop neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders (NDOs), the use of the legislation has become embedded and there are a growing number of places making their own neighbourhood plans and NDOs.

We are pleased to announce that DLUHC have extended the 4 year support programme (2018-22) for a fifth year into 2022/23.

The programme will continue to offer grants and Technical Support packages, however the additional support for groups exploring affordable homes for sale is no longer available as that pilot programme has completed its three year course.

This year we have made some changes to the application process. These are summarised briefly below however we advise that you read the full updated guidance on page 15 carefully to understand the changes.

- Once you have completed an Expression of Interest (EoI) you will now be automatically directed to the application form which you can begin completing immediately or resume at a later stage. You will no longer receive an application form link overnight.
- To resume your application form at a later stage, you will now need to save the form prior to closing it by providing an email address and password. You can log in with these details to access your saved form.
- The application form no longer automatically saves as you go. Every time you would like to leave the form to resume it later, you will need to save it again.
- You will now have 30 days to complete your application form rather than 15 days.

Before you press submit on your application please read our 'Important notes' section one final time and ensure these have all been considered and addressed where necessary.

Once submitted you will be sent a PDF copy of your application form, however we still recommend that you still use [the Word template](#) to record your answers as this will allow you to copy and paste in to any future applications.

Good luck with your application and your neighbourhood planning journey!

What support does the programme offer?

The programme provides grant and technical support to eligible groups.

Grant support

All groups undertaking a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order (NDO) are eligible to apply for up to £10,000 in basic grant. Grants can be used for a range of activities to support the plan or order-making process (see page 17 for further details of how you can spend your grant).

Additional Grant

If your group is facing more complex issues you may be eligible for an additional grant of £8,000 (in addition to the £10,000 Basic Grant). This additional grant is available to groups if any one of the following is met:

- Allocating sites for housing in your neighbourhood plan
- Proposing to include design codes in your neighbourhood plan
- All groups writing a Business led Neighbourhood Plan
- All groups preparing a plan for a cluster of three or more parish councils
- Neighbourhood plans for areas which have a population of over 25,000 people
- Designated neighbourhood forums
- Groups based in areas which have a high level of deprivation (where 30% or more of the neighbourhood area or population is in the 20% most deprived areas in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation).

If you meet the eligibility criteria above, you can apply for this additional £8,000 giving a maximum total amount of £18,000 to apply for from the programme.

Please provide details in your application so we can assess whether you meet the eligibility criteria for the additional funding. The decision to award the additional grant may be subject to approval by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

Affordable Housing for Sale grant

This element of the programme ran as a pilot from 2019-22 offering additional support to groups who were wishing to bring forward affordable housing for sale. This additional support is no longer available as that pilot programme has completed its three year course.

Grants – what you need to know

To access any grant support you will need to complete an Expression of Interest (EoI) which will help us to identify what support you are eligible for and which may be the most appropriate for your needs. Once completed, you will be automatically directed to the application form which you can begin completing immediately or save and resume at a later stage.

You can use the same application form to apply for all grant support, though please note we can only award a maximum of £10,000 at a time.

The grant ceiling applies to the whole period from April 2015 to March 2023. So, if you received a grant from the 2015-18 programme, the amount of this grant (net of any underspends returned) will be taken into account. For example, if you are eligible for the basic grant and have already received £2,000 in the 2015-18 programme and £3,000 in 2019-20 then you will be able to apply for up to £5,000 in 2022-23.

You can only apply for funds that will be spent before 31 March 2023 and any funds unspent at this time will need to be returned.

You will need to have submitted your end of grant monitoring on previous grant applications before you can apply to the current programme, and if there is any underspend this will need to be returned to Groundwork before a new grant can be approved. If you have any questions about this, please contact the grant administrator at neighbourhoodplanning@groundwork.org.uk.

If you are updating a neighbourhood plan that has already been 'made' by the Local Planning Authority, then you are eligible to apply for the grant allowances again. Any grant support or technical support received in making your previous plan is not taken in to account, with your full allowances 'reset'.

Each application should be for an amount of £1,000 - £10,000. The maximum value of grants that you can have in progress at any one time is £10,000.

We would encourage you to consider your needs during the period to 31 March 2023, so that you do not need to make multiple applications within the year.

Technical Support

Groups facing complex issues, such as allocating sites for development or including design codes in their neighbourhood plan, can apply for one of our packages of Technical Support. These are delivered by AECOM or our other delivery partners (such as NPIERS, Urban Vision Enterprise CIC. and Intelligent Plans and Examinations).

Technical support is awarded as a technical work package and is in addition to the grant. It has no relation to how much grant a group can have. It is delivered free of charge to groups who qualify by meeting the eligibility criteria, e.g. allocating sites for housing.

Technical Support cannot be used to fund consultants you have chosen to deliver support. If you are eligible for Technical Support, but wish to continue working with your own consultant, we recommend you review the packages of Technical Support available to you through the programme and talk to your consultant about how best they can also support you, potentially funded through grant. This way you will be able to receive the widest range of support from the programme.

Technical support is available to groups in any of the following circumstances:

- Allocating sites for housing in your neighbourhood plan
- Proposing to include design codes in your neighbourhood plan
- Preparing a Neighbourhood Development Order
- An undesignated Forum needing help to get designated (this unlocks the 'Setting up a Neighbourhood Planning Group (in unparished areas)' package of support only. To be eligible for the other packages of support your forum will need to be designated)
- Designated neighbourhood forums
- Groups based in areas which have a high level of deprivation (where 30% or more of the neighbourhood area or population is in the 20% most deprived areas in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation).

The programme also offers 'Forum Development' support specifically for groups who are setting up a neighbourhood planning group in an unparished area.

How will Technical Support Help?

Technical Support is designed to provide you with technical work packages that include information (evidence) and advice (professional judgement) which will help you to decide and articulate your policy priorities and to engage confidently with stakeholders such as developers, councils, local businesses and of course residents who will have a vote at the

end of it all. Using this information to produce your finished plan will help you to deliver a plan that can stand up to challenge and scrutiny.

Our consultants are all highly skilled and have wide experience in supporting the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders. They will work alongside you doing only what you cannot manage. From the outset they will agree a clearly defined brief with you for the work they will carry out. The support will be carried out over a set period of time and will often lead to a written report.

Technical Support is offered in a range of 'packages'. The support available reflects the most common needs of groups preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders.

If a Neighbourhood planning area meets one or more of the eligibility criteria above, subject to DLUHC sign off the following packages of support may be available:

Setting up a Neighbourhood Planning Group (in unparished areas only)

Provides practical help to a potential Neighbourhood Planning Forum over an extended period of time to build up its early knowledge, functionality, the broadest possible membership and best structure in order to apply for successful designation as a Qualifying Body (QB) for Neighbourhood Planning purposes.

Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)

This assessment provides vital evidence to help you understand the expected demand for housing in your neighbourhood over your plan period. The assessment will include consideration of the amount of affordable housing for sale needed over the plan period.

Site Options and Assessment

This technical support package will provide advice to groups who are intending to assess potential sites with a view to allocating land for development in their neighbourhood plan.

Site Viability

Many neighbourhood planning groups seek to bring forward development on specific sites. To ensure the proposals are both successful and deliverable, they must be viable. This package will help you understand the viability of your proposed development scheme.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Under this package, where a neighbourhood planning group has been told by a Local Planning Authority (LPA) that they need an EIA 'screening opinion', the group will receive clear advice on whether an EIA is required under the Town and Country Planning (EIA)

Regulations 2017, where a development is promoted through the NDO consenting route. In most cases, it is unlikely that an EIA will be required.

Evidence Base and Policy Development (EBPD)

Aims to help groups with their most ambitious and challenging policy aspirations and ensure the final policy wording is justified in terms of evidence, is capable of standing scrutiny at examination and proves effective when applied in the real world.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Where the LPA have confirmed a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for your Neighbourhood Area, this package will provide evidence to integrate environmental considerations into the plan-making process, through a formal SEA and associated environmental report (that reports the outcomes of the SEA process).

Master Planning

The master planning package provides a high-level spatial plan for part of your neighbourhood area, setting out how you would like to see development or regeneration come forward.

Design including Design Codes

In this package, professional urban designers will work alongside groups, harnessing their ideas and local knowledge, to produce bespoke urban design guides or codes for potential development or regeneration sites.

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

This support assists groups to navigate a key regulatory process by providing the local planning authority with the evidence they need to draw conclusions regarding effects on internationally important wildlife sites. It will also assist groups with removing any clashes with such sites (e.g. an adverse water quality effect on an international wildlife site from a proposed allocation in a draft neighbourhood plan) before they submit their plan to the LPA.

Plan Health Check Review

The health check will look into whether a draft plan meets the basic conditions and provides advice on any potential amendments required to ensure the conditions are met, prior to submission of the plan to the LPA.

If you are interested in applying for technical support, [view the full detail of the packages](#).

Facilitation for designated neighbourhood forums and/or groups in deprived areas

Designated neighbourhood forums and/or groups in deprived areas (i.e. areas that are amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England) often face unique challenges in neighbourhood planning. This package is designed to support these groups in a range of ways to make the neighbourhood planning journey as smooth and efficient as possible. This includes (but is not limited to): establishing good governance within the group; support with engaging and managing consultants; developing a diverse and varied group membership; building good financial management (including budget setting); helping stalled groups to move forward; and establishing a road map of tasks that are required to progress towards having a made neighbourhood plan.

This package is available only to designated neighbourhood forums and groups in deprived areas.

Who can complete the application?

Many areas of the country have a Town or Parish Council. Where these bodies exist, they are the Qualifying Body and must lead the Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order. They can set up a working group to take forward the plan, but the Town or Parish Council remains the responsible body and it must be a representative of the Town or Parish Council that applies for support.

In other parts of the country which are unparished, you will need to put in place a Neighbourhood Forum. Prospective and designated neighbourhood forums are eligible to apply to the programme, but there are limits on the initial support which will be provided prior to designation.

The named applicant should be a representative of the qualifying body leading the plan and must not be a consultant or other person who will be paid through an awarded grant. This person may be contacted by telephone as part of the assessment and needs to be available during normal working hours. You will also be asked to provide details of an alternative contact if the main applicant is unavailable.

Getting started if you are a prospective neighbourhood forum

At this stage in your journey, we will only offer a small grant of up to £2,500 for activities such as room hire or awareness raising communications to enable community engagement activities.

We also offer 'Forum Development' as a technical support package for groups at this stage.

Do you need a fundholder (accountable body)?

If you are a Neighbourhood Forum/prospective Neighbourhood Forum, which has not been incorporated and you are applying for a grant, it is important that you identify an eligible organisation as the 'accountable body' to hold the grant for you.

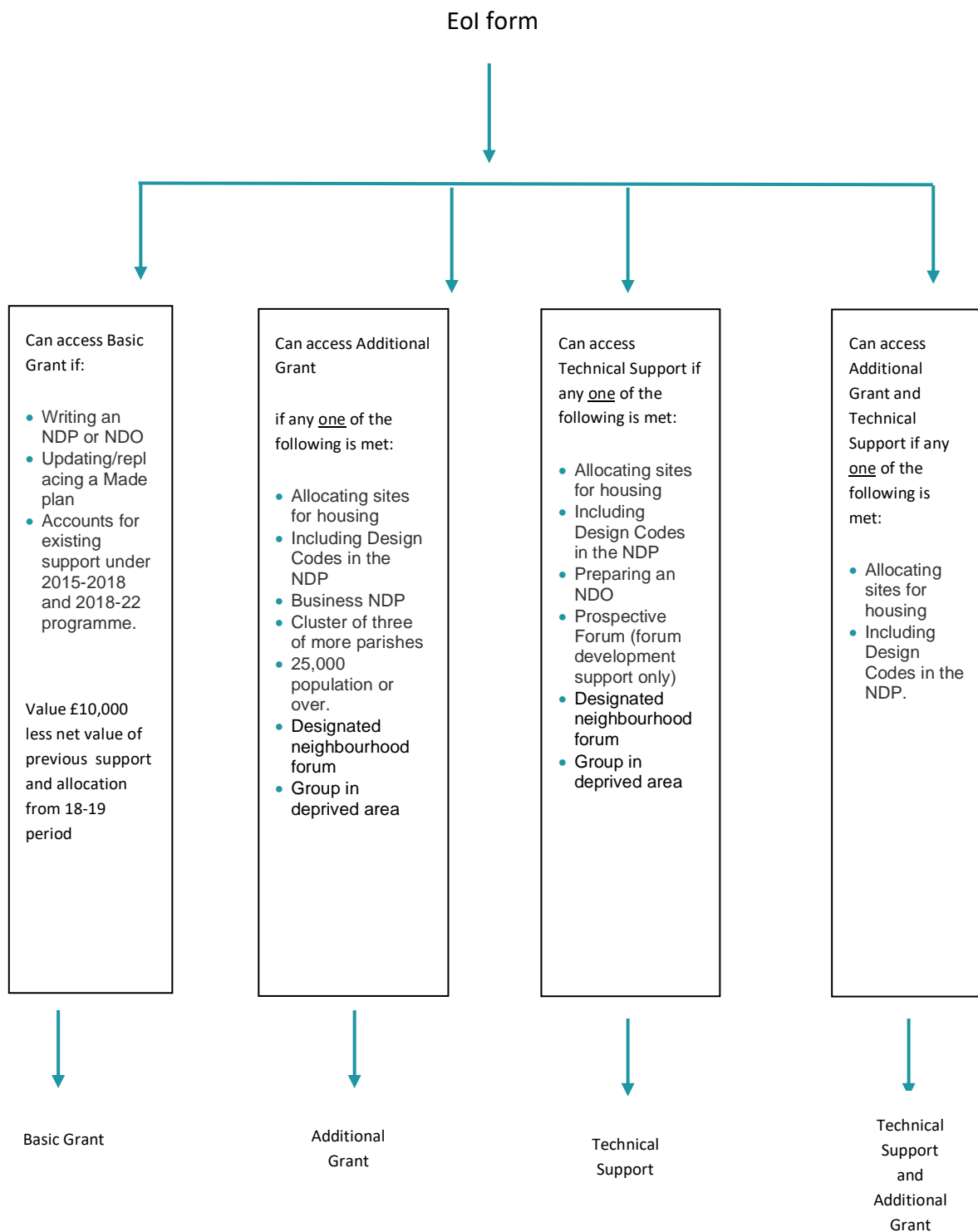
The accountable body will receive the funding from the Neighbourhood Planning programme into their bank account. They will hold and administer the grant funds on behalf of the unincorporated Neighbourhood Forum throughout the grant period and are legally responsible for the proper use and management of those funds.

For more information about this role and which types of organisations are eligible please read the [Accountable Body Guidance](#) notes.

We do not encourage neighbourhood forums to incorporate just to hold the grant. This will normally incur legal and financial costs such as audit fees.

We will ask for details of your fundholder as part of the application process.

How do I make an application?



Completing the Expression of Interest form

If you are eligible to apply, then the first stage of the process is to establish what type of support you qualify for. This is done through the [Expression of Interest](#) (Eoi) form. You will need to complete an Eoi each time you want to apply for a grant and/or technical support. Completing an Eoi will automatically direct you to the application form.

You can apply for both grant and technical support at once on the same application form.

You will be asked to provide basic information about the group and to answer some questions which help to identify what level of support you may be eligible for and your contact details.

A number of questions require a simple yes or no answer. Where questions require further investigation, the following should help you to complete the Expression of Interest.

- Is the emerging neighbourhood plan/NDO seeking to allocate homes in the neighbourhood area? You will be asked to explain the amount of housing (number of houses) you are seeking to allocate and the amount specified in the Local Plan.
- Are you part of a group of three or more parish councils working to prepare a single neighbourhood plan? If you are then you must give the names of all the parishes.
- Business Neighbourhood Plan: This is a specific designation of a neighbourhood area that is wholly or predominantly business in nature.
- Population of 25,000 or more: This figure should include local residents of all ages, not just those who are of voting age. If you are unsure of this figure, particularly if you are setting up a neighbourhood forum, please either speak to your local planning authority or, if you are still at a very early stage, provide us with a reasonable and rational estimate to the nearest thousand.
- Are you seeking to include 'Design codes' in your neighbourhood area? A design code is a type of detailed guidance that is particularly useful for helping in the design of development that comes forward. They are more detailed than general design guidance and you can find a definition in our [FAQs under 'What are design codes?'](#).
- Does your Neighbourhood Area have high levels of deprivation?

You are considered to have high levels of deprivation if 30% or more of your Neighbourhood Area is in the 20% or 10% most deprived areas in the country.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) which shows the levels of deprivation across England. Small geographical areas called Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are ranked and

scored across a whole range of indicators. These areas are roughly equal population sizes, although geographical sizes vary.

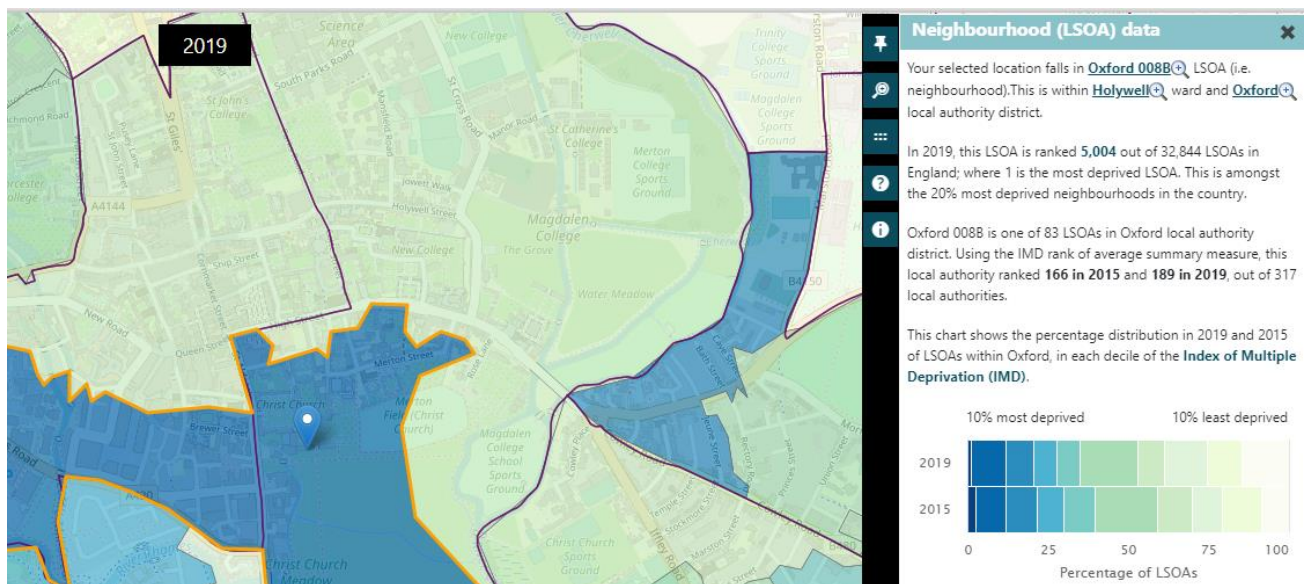
You can determine the level of deprivation in your Neighbourhood Area by finding your area on: [OpenDataCommunities.org Deprivation Explorer](https://OpenDataCommunities.org/DeprivationExplorer/), using the 2019 data.

To find where you live, enter your postcode into 'Select Location' box in the top right-hand corner by clicking the Pin icon. This will take you to your LSOA and give you the percentage band this falls in (as a decile) in terms of levels of deprivation.

It is likely that your neighbourhood area will be made up of a number of LSOAs.

To assess whether your Neighbourhood Area has high levels of deprivation, you will need to find the deprivation percentage band for each LSOA that falls in your area. You can do this by can entering in other postcodes from the Neighbourhood Area, or clicking on neighbouring LSOAs on the map.

If 30% or more of the land or population your Neighbourhood Area is in the 10% or 20% most deprived areas, the area has a high level of deprivation (regardless of the area's overall score) and you can answer 'yes' to this question on the form. If less than 30% of your Neighbourhood area is in the 10% or 20% most deprived areas you can answer 'no' to this question.



For example, this LSOA area in Oxford falls within the 20% most deprived in the country.

Made Neighbourhood Plans

A “Made” Neighbourhood Development Plan is one that has passed its referendum and has been brought into legal force by the Local Planning Authority. If you are applying for support to modify an existing plan, please select ‘yes’ and give the date when the plan was made.

If you are updating a neighbourhood plan that has already been ‘made’ by the Local Planning Authority, then you are eligible to apply for the full grant amount again. Any grant support or technical support received in making your previous plan is not taken in to account, with your allowances ‘reset’.

Completing your application form

Your answers on the Expression of Interest (EoI) will determine what support you are eligible for and will generate the relevant application form for you which you can use to apply for grant and/or technical support.

Once you have submitted the EoI, you will be automatically directed to your application form which you can begin completing immediately (note this is different to previous programme years and you will no longer be sent a link to your application form overnight).

You are able to resume your application form at a later stage if you wish. However, to do this you will now need to save the form prior to closing it by providing an email address and password. Please use the same email address that you provided in your EoI and make a note of the details you save with.

Once saved, you will be sent a link to the log in page where you can access your saved application form by using the email address and password you provided when you saved.

Please note, the application form no longer automatically saves as you go. Every time you would like to leave the form to resume it later, you will need to save it again.

If multiple people need to work on the application form they will be able to log in using your saved details. If this is the case, please ensure you choose a password that you are happy to share.

You will have 30 days to complete your application form rather than 15 days as in previous programme years. After 30 days have passed, your form will expire and you will need to complete a new Expression of Interest (EoI). This is an automated process that we cannot override so please ensure you complete it within this period or any information will be lost.

Once you submit your form, you will receive two emails. One with a PDF copy of your application and a second with your application reference details.

You can access a [copy of the blank application form in Word](#) which we recommend that you use to prepare and record your answers before you submit the form. You can also save your answers on this version and copy and paste these into any future grant applications. Please note this is not your actual application form and you cannot submit this.

Please provide as much, and as detailed information as possible. Those applications that do not provide us with enough information to make a decision on will be rejected. You will also need to explain why the grant is needed and how the proposed activities will help move the plan/ NDO forward. Please use these questions to explain how the activities you want to undertake will help you to develop your plans and what you want to achieve as a result.

Some of the questions on the application form are required fields and some are optional. The required fields are marked with a red asterisk * If you leave a required field blank, you will not be able to continue to the next section of the application form until you have completed it.

You will now be sent a PDF copy of your application form after you have submitted, however we recommend that you still use the word template to record your answers as this will allow you to keep a record of what you have submitted and to copy and paste into any future applications.

Applications for grant are assessed on how well they meet the fund criteria and it is important that you do not rush your application. Make sure that you focus on the content of what you write. Although each grant application will be looked at on a first come, first served basis, it is the quality of the application that will determine whether or not it will be recommended for funding.

What can I spend the grant on?

You can apply for costs associated with developing the Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order.

The list below outlines the various stages that you will go through in developing your plan or order and may help you to think what you will need funding for:

- Training sessions for members of the steering group
- Help with putting together a project plan
- Public indemnity insurance (if you are a neighbourhood forum and this is not already in place)
- Help with developing the evidence base and analysing it to identify issues and aims for your plan or order
- Undertaking a housing survey

- Engaging a facilitator to help with capacity building, for community consultation or workshops
- Developing a website – please include costings or quotations in respect of the amount applied for; we do not fund the management of social media, although we will award grant for set up and training if group members lack confidence in this area
- Costs associated with planning and undertaking public engagement and consulting on the plan or order
- Engaging a planning expert to help you draft policies
- Support for making site allocations
- Contribution to required specialist studies, such as housing needs assessments, ecology surveys, including Phase 1 habitat surveys, or transport if they will directly inform policies within your neighbourhood plan. Please make it clear in the application form how the proposed work feeds into your neighbourhood plan policies and /or supports site allocations or designations
- Contribution to undertaking a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) if your local planning authority has identified that one is needed. Please include details about the date and outcome of the screening advice. We will only pay for work which supports the screening process if you have written confirmation from your Local Planning Authority that they require you to arrange this
- Support with undertaking the six-week pre-submission consultation
- Support with collecting and analysing responses from the six-week pre-submission consultation and deciding how to modify the neighbourhood plan or order
- Help with understanding whether your plan or order is ready for examination (meeting the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements)
- Provide training in the legal requirements which will be tested at the examination stage
- Venue hire
- Publicity materials
- Printing
- Virtual meeting platforms (e.g. Zoom or Skype)
- Online survey tools (e.g. Survey Monkey)
- Improvement to website accessibility

What can't the grant money be spent on?

There are several items of expenditure which are not eligible for a grant under this programme. These are listed below:

- Any general administration costs, such as arranging and minuting steering group meetings
- Funding salaried posts or compensating for loss of earnings, this includes paying additional hours for an existing member of staff and / or employing someone on a casual or freelance basis at an agreed hourly rate. The only exception to this is where you are engaging a planning consultant, or someone to deliver specialist, technical support, on an hourly basis, although even in these circumstances you may prefer to get a fixed price quote for the work to be undertaken
- Paying for volunteer time, however reimbursement of reasonable out of pocket expenses is eligible
- Reimbursing expenditure which has already been incurred
- Funding for issues which are not within the remit of a neighbourhood plan – for example highways issues. Many transport matters cannot be dealt with through a neighbourhood plan. For example, work that aims to provide solutions to traffic management on existing roads (e.g. new traffic lights), or work associated with making a case to change speed limits
- Capital items - generally this means that a purchase results in owning a lasting asset such as computers, photocopiers or digital projectors
- Any other activity which is not directly associated with developing the Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order
- General contingency for unknown costs or cost overruns.

Under no circumstances can we fund activity that has happened in the past, or prior to the grant being awarded. We recommend that you only apply for funding for activities that start at least one month after the date of your application.

If you are eligible for technical support, please ensure you are not applying for grant for packages of work that can be delivered through technical support. This means you can save your grant to pay for other costs!

VAT

Parish and Town Councils are able to claim back VAT under [HRMC Notice 749](#) which applies to members of the government family. Therefore, if you are a Parish or Town Council, VAT should not be included in your application budget breakdown and removed from any quote or fees you include.

Activities which are funded by a grant are outside the scope of VAT and so the VAT cannot be recovered by groups who are not part of the government family, even if they are registered for VAT. Therefore, if you are a Neighbourhood Forum you can include VAT in your application budget breakdown as you will be unable to claim this back, and this cost will be included in your grant offer if the grant is approved for funding.

Please take this into account when costing your grant application and seek specialist VAT advice if needed.

Preparing a budget breakdown

You will need to provide detailed breakdowns of the estimated costs for the support you require. There are two elements: professional fees and other project costs. There is a drop down menu to help you select the type of cost you are applying for.

The activities you apply for should ideally be those which will start at least one month after you submit your application (to allow time for the assessment and grants offer and acceptance process to be completed).

For each budget line you will need to provide a short summary of the outputs you expect to achieve from the work and include any day rates.

Consultancy support and Professional fees

If you are using the grant to engage professionals, you need to explain in your application / the supporting quotation what you expect them to deliver as a result of their work and how this contributes to your neighbourhood plan/NDO. You are strongly advised to ensure that they are appropriately qualified for the work they are delivering. This would generally mean a qualified planner, preferably a chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (MRTPI), to provide advice on planning legislation, policy and issues. Similarly, there are other specialists who you might need to engage and who should be suitably qualified.

In addition to the total cost, please provide the day rate you will be paying. (Please do NOT provide an hourly rate) Please note that the maximum day rate is £550 per day excluding VAT and reasonable expenses.

Occasionally, you may be quoted a fixed price for a piece of work such as a technical survey or an assessment. If this is the case, please seek clarification from the consultant as to how they have arrived at this price, and explain in your application how you have checked that the cost is reasonable

If there are additional reasonable expenses they can be outlined in the 'other' section below.

Reasonable expenses need to meet the standards as laid out below:

- Travel: Standard class rail fare
- Mileage: 45 pence per mile car, 24 pence per mile motorcycle
- Overnight accommodation: £90 per night maximum (£120 per night maximum in Inner London);

You must include all the quotes from all the professionals/consultants you are thinking about using. Please compile these into one document to upload.

Quotes provided must be dated within a year, issued directly from the consultant and include a breakdown of the activities and costs that they will be delivering.

We need you to have a clear idea of the scope of work you are asking a professional to undertake. This will help you to make an accurate grant application. You will be able to confirm which consultant you are using following award of grant. Remember if you are eligible for technical support it makes sense to only apply for grant to pay for items not covered by technical support.

Please note we cannot fund salaried posts or compensate for loss of earnings. This includes paying additional hours for an existing member of staff or employing someone on a casual or freelance basis.

Example of completed budget section:

Budget Item: Professional Fees

Activity 1			
Type of Activity	Type of Activity Detail	Budget Breakdown	Cost (£0.00)
Consultants	Consultant to analyse evidence base	3 days at £500 a day	1500
Activity 2			
Consultants	Consultant to write planning policy	3 days at £500 a day	1500
Activity 3			
Facilitator costs	Facilitator for consultation events	3 days at £350 a day	1050
Activity 4			
Please select...			
Activity 5			
Please select...			

Budget Item: Project Costs

Activity 1			
Type of Activity	Type of Activity Detail	Budget Breakdown	Cost (£0.00)
Room hire	Hire of village hall for 2 consultation events	2 x £100 room hire costs	200
Activity 2			
Website developer	Setting up of website and hosting	£750 set up costs £250 hosting costs	1000
Activity 3			
Printing costs	Printing of consultation flyers	1000 flyers at 0.50p each	500
Activity 4			
Publicity costs	3 adverts in the local newspaper	3 x £60 1/2 page advert	180

If you are applying for professional fees or website costs, please attach a quote from the relevant expert.

Applying for a contribution to a larger budget

Groups can apply for a grant of up to £10,000 where it is a contribution to a larger overall budget. However, you will need to apply for specific items that you intend to spend the grant on and only include these in your application.

Please make sure that items included in the grant application do not exceed £10,000.

Why the grant is needed / how will it help move the plan/ NDO forward?

Please use these questions to explain how the activities you want to undertake will help you to develop your plan or order and what you want to achieve as a result. For example, community engagement activities will help to ensure that the views of the whole community are taken into account at an early stage. The results of the survey/open day etc. will be used to prioritise further work/develop the draft policies.

Please ensure you give detailed and thoughtful responses to these questions as they will be an important part of the grant assessment.

How are the Grant applications assessed?

Grant Applications

Applications for a grant from eligible applicants will be assessed based on the information provided in the application form and against the following criteria:

- Is all the proposed expenditure eligible? (we will reduce the total amount of grant awarded for any items of ineligible expenditure)
- Is there a clear need for the project spend?
- Is there evidence of how the outputs from the planned activities will help you progress towards a Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order for your area?
- Is the project realistic and achievable? Can the activities be delivered in the timetable given?
- Can the activities be delivered before 31 March?
- Are the project costs reasonable and do they add up?
- Does the project demonstrate value for money in terms of the relationship between costs and benefit?

Recommendations about who gets the grants are made by Locality's assessors based on how well the application criteria have been met. Each recommendation will be reviewed by a grants panel before approval or rejection for funding.

If you are applying for the additional grant of up to £8,000, then the grant may also be subject to approval by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Letting you know the outcome of your application

We will inform you by email whether you have been successful or not. We aim to assess applications which are for grant only within 15 working days, provided that you have included all of the relevant information in your application.

Where an application is also for technical support, we will normally make our decision following the outcome for the technical support application. Therefore, you should expect it to take approximately 30 working days for a decision to be made about both the grant and the technical support. If the decision is going to take longer than this, we will let you know.

What happens if you are successful in being offered a grant?

Once your grant application has been approved by Locality, Groundwork UK will become the day to day contact for your grant.

They will email you offering you a grant setting out the detailed terms and conditions and requesting copies of any further documentation required in order to pay out your grant. They will do this within 10 working days of the grant being recommended by Locality. They will also send you a separate email from their Programme Management System 'Gifts' to invite you to complete their due diligence process to accept the grant offer.

For the due diligence process, you will be asked to provide bank account details for your group/organisation (or for the Accountable Body who will hold the funds on your behalf), details of at least 2 independent authorised signatories on the account (including names, home addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses) and a bank statement dated within the last three months for the bank account where you wish the grant to be paid. You will also be asked to confirm that you have appropriate insurance in place for your project.

Once you have satisfactorily submitted all the information requested through 'Gifts', you will receive your grant payment within 10 working days, or if some information is missing or needs to be queried, you will be contacted by Groundwork UK. When planning the start date for your project, please allow at least 20 working days for Groundwork UK's process.

Successful applicants will be asked to provide a financial and activity monitoring report on completion of the planned activity. You will need to provide a report about what progress

you have made as a result of the funding and submit this along with invoices and receipts for any items of £1,000 or more. Any unspent funds will need to be returned to Groundwork. Full details of reporting requirements and how to pay back any unspent funding will be provided by Groundwork UK with the terms and conditions of the grant offer.

What do you need in order to receive funding?

If you are a Town/Parish council, or an incorporated Neighbourhood Forum with a bank account with two signatories, you can receive the funding directly into your account.

If you are a prospective/unincorporated* Neighbourhood Forum, or an incorporated neighbourhood forum without a bank account, you will need to have identified a fundholder as part of your application.

Please note that we do not encourage neighbourhood forums to incorporate just in order to hold the grant. This will normally incur legal and financial costs such as audit fees.

*a Neighbourhood Forum that does not have a separate legal status.

How are the Technical Support applications assessed?

Minimum information requirements for technical support requirements		
Support Package	Factual information necessary for package of support	Expression of Interest and application assessment review
Setting up a neighbourhood planning group in a unparished area (Forum Development)	QB is a prospective forum	You are setting up a neighbourhood planning group in an unparished area and have not yet applied for designation.
Housing needs assessment (HNA)	Indication that the QB is seeking to assess or allocate sites for housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site assessment indicated • QB clear in that they want the NDP to bring forward housing • LPA requesting HNA to reveal NDPs proportion of LA housing target
Site options and assessment	List of sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QB have a list of sites • QB have/are completing a call for sites • Clear allocation of housing from the Local Plan • QB clear in that they want the NDP to bring forward housing
Site viability	Evidence of the following, where required: site assessment, housing needs assessment, masterplanning, engagement with landowner.	
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	LPA requirements re EIA validation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence, for example an email, showing that the LPA have requested EIA • Reference in the application to environmental planning context
Evidence base and policy development (EBPD)	A completed draft neighbourhood plan before Regulation 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of time NDP has been in preparation • QB at Regulation 14 or beyond • Clear indication of number of themes and policies

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Screening Opinion from LPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening Opinion is in place • Draft plan in place or close
Neighbourhood Masterplanning	Evidence that there is a need for a whole scheme view and/or indication that the QB want to improve the public realm or help regenerate an area	Sites allocated within the emerging plan or commentary on the application form
Design including Design Codes	Indication that the QB is seeking to shape development according to the existing character of the area	Clear that the QB has a list of sites for assessment or allocation within the emerging plan and/or clear need for the protection of heritage with design codes
Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)	Has the LPA or Natural England stated that HRA is required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LPA or Natural England have stated that HRA is required • Screening Opinion is in place • The scale of development in the NDP greater than that allowed for in the Local Plan • The NDP allocating sites
Carrying out a plan Health Check prior to examination (HealthCheck)	Draft post Regulation 14 NDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full draft plan in place, clarity over Basic Conditions Statement and Consultation Statement • QB about to move to or is at Reg 14 or beyond • Length of time NDP has been in preparation as indicated by dates <p>Clear indication of number of themes and policies</p>
Facilitation for designated neighbourhood forums and/or groups in deprived areas	Confirmation that the neighbourhood forum has been designated by the LPA (if you are applying as a designated neighbourhood forum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are a designated neighbourhood forum (in areas without a parish/town council) • You are a group in a deprived area (you are amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England, in

	Confirmation that you are amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England (if you are applying as a group in a deprived area)	accordance with the Index of Multiple Deprivation)
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We scrutinise all applications based on eligibility, need and progress to date. All offers of Technical Support are made following review and approval from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

All groups eligible for Technical Support will be subject to screening and diagnostic assessments which confirms your eligibility, assesses the level of complexity of the context in which the neighbourhood plan/NDO is being prepared and identifies need against the menu of support packages.

As part of the screening assessment you can expect a telephone call to assess eligibility and verify facts. The Expression of Interest you have submitted will be checked against the application and the reason/s for eligibility are checked. This assessment also verifies dates and progress from other sources of information - for example the Local Planning Authority (LPA). We will also review any previous support to determine if the group has previously accessed or is already accessing support from the programme at this stage.

Provided that the screening assessment indicates an eligible group then a longer diagnostic phone call will be arranged. The diagnostic assessment will commence within a period of 10 working days of the completion of the screening assessment. The diagnostic considers the assessment of the area, the assessment of the complexity and the assessment of risk and determines the most appropriate Technical Support package to be offered. The diagnostic checks facts and discusses the likely package of support with the group.

You may want a number of people to take part in this phone call.

The minimum level of information checked at screening and diagnostic stages is below.

Post diagnostic, the proposed Technical Support package to be offered is submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for approval of the package of support. If DLUHC approve the Technical Support package offer the group will be notified by Locality in writing by e-mail.

Tips and hints and Troubleshooting for completing the on line application form

Preparing your answers before you start

Some of the questions on the application form are required fields and some are optional. If you leave a required field blank, you will not be able to continue to the next section of the application form until you have completed it. We provide you with text boxes to add any details that you think are relevant.

Please make sure you keep a note of any information you submit to us. You may wish to copy and paste your responses to our blank application Word document as a backup.

I've completed an Expression of Interest but haven't received an application form

From April 2022 we have made some changes to the way you access and save your application form.

Once you have completed and submitted your expression of interest (EOI) unlike previous programme years you will now be automatically directed to your application form. You will no longer receive a link to your application form overnight.

You can begin completing the form immediately or resume at a later stage if you wish. To do this you will now need to save the form prior to closing it by providing an email address and password.

Once saved, you will be sent a link to the log in page where you can access your saved application form by using the email address and password you provided when you saved.

How long have I got to complete my application?

You will have 30 days to complete your application form rather than 15 days as in previous programme years. After 30 days have passed, your form will expire and you will need to complete a new Expression of Interest (EOI). This is an automated process that we cannot override so please ensure you complete it within this period or any information will be lost.

Please note, you will now be automatically directed to the application form once you submitted your EOI. You can begin completing this immediately or resume at a later stage. If you do want to resume at a later stage you will now need to save your form by providing an email and password.

You can log in to access your application form via the link that was sent to you by email when you saved. Please submit this form within 30 days before the link expires.

What attachments will you need to provide?

You will need to provide the following as attachments to your grant application:

- Quotations on company headed paper from any planning consultants that you propose to pay for from the grant. Please make sure that this explains the scope of the work to be undertaken and the relevant day rate(s).
- Quotations for the costs of any website development

Where relevant you will need to provide the following as attachments to your Technical Support application:

- LPA SEA Screening Opinion
- LPA HRA Screening Opinion

If you do not have a SEA or HRA screening opinion from the LPA but have requested one, please attach the letter of request.

Contacting Locality

If you are still having difficulty understanding some of the questions being asked then please check the website as this provides FAQs as well as guidance and advice.

If you are having difficulty obtaining your application then please [get in touch](#). If you have any further questions please [submit your question via our web form](#) as we need to log all incoming enquiries centrally for monitoring and reporting purposes.

Important notes

Consent to use your data

When you submit an application you will be providing us with data, including your personal details and those of the alternative contact. Locality, Groundwork (as grant administrator), our delivery partners and the funders of the programme (DLUHC) will use this data to process your application. In addition you will be asked to provide your consent that we can use your data for the purposes of:

- any research or evaluation which might be commissioned in respect of neighbourhood planning
- providing mailings specific to neighbourhood planning and other activities which might be of interest to you

This agreement includes any data that you have submitted on previous applications to the 2013-15 and 2015-18 neighbourhood planning support programmes. Your data will be held

for the duration of the 2018-23 programme and for a further 7 years to enable us to satisfy financial reporting requirements.

Wherever your personal information may be held by us we will take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure the information you share with us is protected from unauthorised access or disclosure.

If you change your mind about your consent to use your data after the application is submitted or you would like to discuss how your information is stored and used by Locality and our partners please contact communications@locality.org.uk

Public Liability

Please consider carefully the activities you will be undertaking throughout your grant funded project, and whether any of the activities pose a risk to members of your organisation or the public. Remember risk can take many forms – injury, financial loss, reputational damage, etc. If you feel there is risk in any activities you will undertake, you will need to consider whether insurance is required, an insurance broker or financial adviser will be able to give guidance on this. You may wish to include the cost of this as part of your application.

Equalities duties

It is very important that qualifying groups ensure that people from all sections of their local community have had an opportunity to contribute to developing the neighbourhood plan/NDO. Qualifying groups should actively monitor this (for example by monitoring the profile of people who are responding to consultations) and take appropriate steps if such responses are not broadly representative of the profile of the local community. Engaging people from across the whole community is more likely to lead to the success of the plan. Advice on good practice for involving harder to reach groups is available from a range of sources including the [Neighbourhood Planning Roadmap Guide](#).

Locality is the national membership network supporting community organisations to be strong and successful.

Unlock the power in your community with us

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For formal Government guidance on Neighbourhood planning please visit gov.uk