

Wolston Parish Council - Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Constitution and Terms of Reference

1. Objectives

The Objectives of the Wolston Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NDP-WG¹) are to:

- 1) oversee the preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Neighbourhood Plan, or NDP) for Wolston, support the Parish Council with the progress of the plan to successful Independent Examination, successful community referendum and adoption by Rugby Borough Council;
- 2) engage with the local community to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan is truly representative of the aspirations and ambitions of Wolston as a whole. The WG should seek to maximise support for the approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan by ensuring high levels of community engagement throughout the plan-making process;
- 3) undertake development of the Neighbourhood Plan in a democratic, transparent and fair fashion, encouraging widespread participation and giving equal consideration to opinions and ideas from all members of the community;
- 4) make provision for regular public meetings that seek to maximise public involvement and at which input of ideas and endorsement of proposals is sought from residents.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the NDP-WG shall be to:

- 1) actively and publicly support and promote the preparation of the Wolston Neighbourhood Plan;
- 2) undertake analysis and evidence gathering to support the plan production process throughout the duration of the project;
- 3) produce, monitor and update a project timetable;
- 4) produce a consultation and engagement strategy, showing how the public will be involved throughout the process;
- 5) ensure that all decisions made shall be fully evidenced and supported through consultation with the local community;
- 6) provide a copy of approved minutes and, where appropriate, a verbal report to each Parish Council meeting, identifying key elements of progress and any setbacks.
- 7) request Parish Council Approval² of any proposed financial commitment;
- 8) identify and develop sources of funding, and take responsibility for financial planning, budgeting and monitoring expenditure on the Neighbourhood Plan and report back to the Parish Council on these matters;
- 9) liaise with relevant consultees, authorities and organisations to make information gathering as effective and complete as possible. In particular gather data from as wide a range of sources as possible to ensure that the conclusions reached are fully evidenced and that the aspirations and issues of all residents and local businesses are understood and properly represented;
- 10) develop and agree a draft Pre-Submission Version of the Wolston Neighbourhood Development Plan and submit it to Wolston Parish Council for endorsement.

3. Structure

To enable the Objectives to be achieved the NDP-WG should adopt the following preferred structure:

¹ Within this document the reference NDP-WG is to the Wolston Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NDP-WG);

² Wolston PC Financial Procedures, (Rev 1, May 2017) Para 4.1;

- 1) Establish a Co-ordination Group, including at least one Parish Councillor, to provide input to the strategic management and co-ordination of the NDP-WG on behalf of Wolston PC and the residents of Wolston. The Co-ordination Group may at its own option be an 'open' (i.e. public) group or a 'closed' group (i.e. hold meetings which are not normally open to members of the public).
- 2) The purpose of the Co-ordination Group is to determine and implement policies and strategies to enable the Objectives to be achieved.
- 3) The Co-ordination Group shall elect a Chair and Vice Chair and, as a minimum, also allocate responsibilities for Secretary, Clerk, Finance and Technical aspects. Where practicable each member of the Co-ordination Group shall also have a specific role in the plan making process.
- 4) The Co-ordination Group may, when necessary and for a specific purpose and time period, co-opt additional members. However the Co-ordination Group shall not exceed ten members, including co-opted members. Co-opted members shall have voting rights;
- 5) The Co-ordination Group shall establish a Steering Group with provision for regular public meetings. Meetings of the Steering Group shall be open to all residents.
- 6) The purpose of the Steering Group should be a forum to:
 - a) enable the Neighbourhood Plan Co-ordination Group to update the community on progress with development of the Neighbourhood Plan;
 - b) invite ideas and proposals on any aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan from members of the public;
 - c) implement such ideas and proposals subject to Steering Group approval;
 - d) request Steering Group endorsement of any proposal of the Co-ordination Group.

4. Meetings

4.1 Meetings of the NDP-WG Co-ordination Group shall:

- 1) be quorate when four or more members are present, including co-opted members;
- 2) take place at least 8 times per year;
- 3) keep a record of meetings, covering progress made and decisions taken. Minutes shall be prepared in a style and detail consistent with that adopted by Wolston Parish Council, as set out in 'Local Council Administration'. Draft copies of the minutes, with a 'Draft' watermark, may be circulated to members of the Co-ordination Group for review and comment. Minutes of the previous meeting shall be an agenda item at each meeting and proposed for approval. Only minutes approved by the meeting and signed by the Chair shall be published;
- 4) at least 4 clear working days in advance of meetings, send to members, via email or other agreed communication method, a copy of the proposed agenda and at least 3 clear working days in advance of meetings send to members a copy of the final agenda;
- 7) make decisions by consensus. Where a proposal is made and a vote is required each member shall have one vote. A simple majority vote will be required to support any motion; the Chair shall have one casting vote, use of which is discretionary;
- 8) publish approved copies of the minutes on the Neighbourhood Plan section of the Wolston Village website.

4.2 Meetings of the NDP-WG Steering Group shall:

- 1) be quorate when at least two members of the Co-ordination Group, including co-opted members, and six or more members of the public are present;
- 2) take place at least 8 times per year;
- 3) keep a record of meetings via approved minutes and agenda/s, covering progress made and decisions taken. Minutes shall be prepared in a style and detail consistent with that adopted by Wolston Parish Council, as set out in 'Local Council Administration'. Draft copies of the minutes, with a 'Draft' watermark, may be circulated to members of the Steering Group for review and comment. Minutes of the previous meeting shall be an agenda item at each meeting of the

Steering Group, and proposed for approval. Only minutes approved by the meeting and signed by the Chair shall be published;

- 4) publish dates of future meetings, with a minimum of at least three clear working days' notice, on the Parish Council notice boards and on the Neighbourhood Plan section of the Wolston Village website;
- 5) at least 4 clear working days in advance of meetings, publish, via email, on the PC notice boards and on the Wolston Village website or other agreed communication method, a copy of the proposed agenda and at least 3 working clear days in advance of meetings send to members a copy of the final agenda;
- 6) make decisions by consensus. Where a proposal is made and a vote is required each member shall have one vote. A simple majority vote will be required to support any motion; the Chair shall have one casting vote, use of which is discretionary;
- 7) publish approved copies of the Minutes on the Parish Council notice boards and on the Neighbourhood Plan section of the Wolston Village website.

5. Decision Making

- 1) The NDP-WG shall deliver its plan making functions up to and including delivery to the Parish Council of the proposed draft Pre-Submission Version of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan;
- 2) The NDP-WG shall follow Parish Council protocols when making decisions, whether financial or otherwise. (Wolston PC Minute 2014-171b. See endnote);
- 3) All publications, consultation and community engagement exercises undertaken by the NDP-WG shall be on behalf of Wolston Parish Council, with appropriate recognition of the Parish Council's position given in all communications associated with the project;
- 4) The Parish Council shall review and consider for approval the draft Pre-Submission Version of the Wolston Neighbourhood Development Plan;
- 5) The plan-making process remains the ultimate responsibility of the Parish Council, as the qualifying designated body.

6. Internal Working Groups

- 1) The NDP-WG may establish its own internal Working Groups³ to aid them in any Neighbourhood Plan related work;
- 2) Each internal Working Group shall have a nominated lead person; the lead person or the nominated deputy will be expected to report to and attend meetings of the Steering Group.
- 3) Each internal Working Group shall develop its own Terms of Reference and work scope, work programme and budget, which shall be approved by the Steering Group. Internal Working Groups should seek approval from the Steering Group before undertaking work outside the agreed work scope.

7. Finance and administration

- 1) All grants and funding will be applied for in the name of, and held by, Wolston Parish Council, who shall ring-fence the funds within the overall Parish Council accounts for NDP-WG work;
- 2) The NDP-WG shall advise Wolston PC of future finance requirements and expected external financing in a manner and within a timeframe to inform the PC budgeting process;
- 3) Expenditure - commitment: The NDP-WG does not have any delegated authority for financial commitment. NDP-WG purchase requirements shall be agreed and minuted by the Co-ordination Group and passed to the PC Clerk to enable authorisation to be obtained in accordance with the Wolston PC Financial Procedures⁴. A justification for the purchase request

³ Within this document the reference to 'internal Working Group' is to a Working Group established by the NDP-WG Co-ordination Group with a defined Terms of Reference;

⁴ Wolston PC Financial Procedures, (Rev 1, May 2017) Para 4.1;

is to be provided and in all cases for proposed expenditure greater than £250, a minimum of two quotes is required against an agreed specification or Scope of Work. In cases where it is only possible to obtain a single quote a clear justification for this shall be supplied. All orders shall be placed by or on behalf of the Clerk to Wolston Parish Council;

- 4) Expenditure – approval for payment: All NDP-WG invoices shall be addressed to and received by the PC Clerk, who shall pass the original invoice to the person on the NDP Co-ordination Group responsible for finance for endorsement for 'Goods Received'. The endorsed invoice shall be returned to the PC Clerk, who will arrange for authorisation for payment and the invoice will be settled by the PC Clerk in the normal manner. The net value of the invoice shall be deducted from the NDP-WG budget.
- 5) Expenses: Where necessary personal expenditure up to a maximum of £50 may be expended and reclaimed as expenses; any need to incur personal expenditure above £25 shall be authorised in advance by email from the Co-ordination Group member responsible for finance and a printed copy of the approval email shall be attached and passed to the Co-ordination Group member responsible for finance, to whom requests for reimbursement shall be made. All expense claims shall comply with the relevant PC procedure.⁵ The completed expense claim shall be passed to the PC Clerk who will arrange for authorisation for payment and the claim will be settled by the PC Clerk and payment made by cheque. The PC Clerk will notify the finance person / claimant when the cheque is ready for collection from the PC office. Note that the Parish Council does not have a cash float and neither receives nor pays out any amounts as cash;
- 6) Insurance provided by the Parish Council shall cover the activities of, or undertaken by or on behalf of and with the approval of the NDP WG. The NDP-WG Co-ordination Group, in liaison with the Parish PC Clerk, is responsible for ensuring that the terms of the insurance are not breached.

8. Conduct

All members of the NDP-WG Co-ordination Group and leaders of internal Working Groups who have accepted delegated responsibility for a role or task shall abide by the principles and practice of the Parish Council Codes of Conduct, unless otherwise agreed in writing, which shall specifically include making a declaration of interest.

The NDP-WG shall:

- be clear and open when their individual roles or interests may be in conflict;
- treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief; and
- actively promote equality of access and opportunity.

9. Changes to the Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference and Constitution shall be reviewed on an annual basis, however, they may also be amended at any time with the agreement of at least (two-thirds) of the membership at the Co-ordination Group and with the approval of Wolston Parish Council.

10. Dissolution

- 1) The NDP-WG shall be dissolved once its objectives have been attained and/or when at least two-thirds of its members and the Parish Council consider its services are no longer required.
- 2) The NDP-WG Co-ordination Group shall then arrange for the disbursement of any remaining funds held in accordance with any conditions imposed by the grant funders and in the best interests of and with the prior approval of Wolston Parish Council.

⁵ Wolston PC Financial Procedures, (Rev 1, May 2017) Para 5.3;

Footnote:

Extract from Wolston PC Minutes 2014 – 171(b) Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group

“Councillors agreed that the NDP working group (which will consist of Councillors and residents) is an autonomous body, and will follow Parish Council protocols when making decisions.”