LEICESTERSHIRE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING NETWORK

Policy Writing

This document provides some tips to assist you when drafting policies for your neighbourhood plan.

It is important to keep your policies clear, concise, simple, and written in a way that is fit for purpose. Remember the purpose of your policies is to achieve the goals set out in your plan. Your local Development Management Officers will be the ones trying to implement your policies, where possible see if they will look over your draft policies and provide advice.

Policy Types

Allocate – identify land for development and detail development type(s)
Protect – identify important sites or areas for protection, heritage, environment, buildings etc
Specify – state requirements relating to an allocation, access, green space, assessments required etc
Enhance – seek to enrich existing environment, landscape, assets etc
Criteria – complex policies can be broken done into a list of criteria, make sure these are in priority order, consider whether the policy would be better expressed as individual policies.
Generic – where it is not possible to be specific i.e. future development, policies would relate to design, access, etc

Policy Principles

Added value - check that policy does not replicate anything that is already in other plans such as the Local Plan, Strategic Growth Plan or national guidance. Place the key elements in a logical order, keep the title simple, keep in mind the vision you are trying to achieve.

Check that each policy is backed up with a strong evidence base. Make sure that all your land use and development aspirations are covered by policy.

Policies should be specific to your plan, your plan has your own data, consultations, and evidence base, use of other policies from elsewhere may not adequately reflect this.

Use specific terms – remember what is 'large' to you may not be to someone else so avoid words such as large, small, big, nicer, better, good quality, etc

Keep sentences short, essential and to the point. Avoid the use of jargon and double negatives, which could lead to misinterpretation and confusion. Use clear terminology i.e. 'shall' means compliance, whereas 'should' or 'may' implies that it is optional. Make sure that your language is consistent, again this will avoid misinterpretation, i.e. LCC, the council, county council.

Positive Policy

Remember Neighbourhood Plans are not there to stop development, they provide a way for communities to shape development to meet local need and aspirations. Try to use positive language i.e. 'acceptable where' this criteria is met. Try to keep all text positive, focus on what is acceptable rather than what isn't.

The Future

Once your plan is 'made' regularly monitor the effectiveness of its policies and how it changes over time. Your policies and evidence-base may need updating so that policies can still be implemented to achieve the vision of your plan. There is no point having policies in place that are unable to be implemented effectively in practice.

Evaluate planning applications in the area during the lifetime of the plan. Identify applications that you feel should have been prevented by the plan. Why did a particular policy fail? Liaise with Development Management Officers to see where the policy could be adjusted, improved or re-worded to ensure that it can be successfully implemented in the future.