



**DCLG Neighbourhood Planning  
and Local Planning Service Redesign  
and Capacity Building fund:  
Report on Peterborough City Council's  
funding award**

**June 2016**

## Contents

1.0	Introduction .....	1
2.0	Neighbourhood Plan Support.....	1
3.0	Local Plan Support.....	10
4.0	Conclusions .....	15

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2016 the Department for Communities and Local Government awarded Peterborough City Council £30,000 from its 'Neighbourhood Planning and Local Planning Service Redesign and Capacity Building' fund.
- 1.2 Peterborough City Council (PCC) was awarded funding to '*continue to directly support more districts, parishes and other local authorities with their plan making, both local and neighbourhood plans, via a trading arm*'.
- 1.3 This report sets out how we at PCC have used the funding to support the delivery of Local and Neighbourhood Plans both within our local authority area and elsewhere.

## 2.0 Neighbourhood Plan Support

- 2.1 PCC's Strategic Planning Team has delivered neighbourhood planning support to several parish councils within the Peterborough area. In addition, under service level agreements we have also directly supported parish and town councils within East Cambridgeshire and Fenland, and provided support to North Kesteven and West Lindsey District Councils in relation to various neighbourhood plans.
- 2.2 Specifically, support has been delivered to the following:

### **Peterborough area**

- Ailsworth Parish Council
- Castor Parish Council
- Glinton Parish Council
- Peakirk Parish Council

Support also delivered prior to February 2016 to:

- Bretton Parish Council (whom subsequently decided not to proceed with their neighbourhood plan)
- Deeping Gate Parish Council (whom subsequently decided not to proceed with their neighbourhood plan)
- Northborough Parish Council
- All Parish Councils in district through Parish Conference (December 2013)

### **Fenland District**

- Doddington Parish Council
- March Town Council
- Parson Drove Parish Council

Whittlesey Town Council

Support also delivered prior to February 2016 to:  
Tydd St Giles Parish Council (whom subsequently decided not to proceed with their neighbourhood plan)

**East Cambridgeshire District**

Bottisham Parish Council  
Sutton Parish Council  
Witchford Parish Council  
All Parish Councils in district through Parish Conference (see details of February 2016 parish conference in Table 1)

Support also delivered prior to February 2016:  
Neighbourhood Planning Protocol published January 2015

**West Lindsey District**

No support delivered since February 2016, but support delivered prior to February 2016 to West Lindsey District Council in relation to:

Caistor Neighbourhood Plan  
Cherry Willingham Neighbourhood Plan  
Fiskerton Neighbourhood Plan  
Nettleham Neighbourhood Plan  
Welton Neighbourhood Plan

**North Kesteven District**

Support delivered to North Kesteven District Council in relation to:

Bassingham Neighbourhood Plan  
Billinghay Neighbourhood Plan  
Bracebridge Heath Neighbourhood Plan  
Dunston Neighbourhood Plan  
Nocton and Potterhanworth Neighbourhood Plan

Support also delivered prior to February 2016 in relation to:

Thorpe on the Hill Neighbourhood Plan  
Welbourn Neighbourhood Plan

2.3 The type of support provided since February 2016 is detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Neighbourhood Planning Support Delivered

Parish Council/s and Local Authority Area	Support given	Outcomes
<p><b>Peterborough area:</b> Ailsworth Parish Council; Castor Parish Council; Glington Parish Council; Peakirk Parish Council</p>	<p>PCC has provided ongoing, on-demand, support to parish council working groups preparing neighbourhood development plans within the Peterborough area.</p> <p>Our ‘on-demand’ approach to delivering neighbourhood planning support means that staff resources can be effectively directed to groups as and when they need support. Furthermore this approach recognises that each group has differing needs, due to the skills and knowledge of the group and the direction that they wish to take their neighbourhood plan in, thus a responsive approach allows us to tailor our support and assistance to the specific needs of that neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>Specific support that we have delivered since February 2016 has included:</p> <p><b>Peakirk:</b> Detailed informal review of emerging draft policies, provision of comprehensive policy-by-policy feedback and advice on Strategic</p>	<p>Interest in neighbourhood planning in Peterborough has been relatively limited compared to some areas of the country, though the groups that are pursuing it are working diligently with their local communities to prepare neighbourhood plans that fulfill their aspirations.</p> <p>Our on-demand approach to neighbourhood planning support reflects Government’s intention that the preparation of neighbourhood plans is led by the communities themselves, rather than the Local Planning Authority. We are able to tailor our support to the specific aspects that each individual neighbourhood planning group needs assistance with, for example, some groups have requested extensive feedback on emerging policy ideas and wording, while others sought greater assistance in relation to the evidence base and presentation of their neighbourhood plans.</p> <p>By encouraging neighbourhood planning groups to seek informal feedback on emerging</p>

	<p>Environmental Assessment ahead of formal Regulation 14 consultation.</p> <p><b>Ailsworth and Castor</b> (separate but complementary neighbourhood plans): Provided advice on conducting informal consultations by questionnaire; project timescales; undertaking the Regulation 14 consultation; the content of the consultation statement; the need to ensure that the neighbourhood plans for Ailsworth and Castor are separate, but how they can be prepared to complement each other; and the relationship between the neighbourhood plans and the emerging Peterborough Local Plan.</p> <p><b>Glington:</b> Responded to queries and provided advice on landscape character assessment; sustainability appraisal; consultation strategies; and the need to deliver realistic, deliverable policies and how careful policy wording is necessary to avoid unintended consequences.</p>	<p>policy wording, we aim to ensure that neighbourhood plans are fit for purpose, unambiguous and so unlikely to have unintended consequences, and have the greatest chance of proceeding to referendum: the parish councils are recognising the advantages of this and are seeking informal feedback prior to undertaking Regulation 14 consultation.</p> <p>Through our neighborhood planning support, we have been able to actively encourage parish councils to feed their comments (and where appropriate their findings from community engagement) into the Local Plan process so as to inform the emerging Local Plan for Peterborough.</p>
<p><b>Fenland District</b> Doddington Parish Council; March Town Council; Parson Drove Parish Council; Whittlesey Town Council</p>	<p>Through its service level agreement with Fenland District Council (FDC), PCC provides support to parish councils actively preparing (or considering preparing) neighbourhood development plans.</p> <p>As for Peterborough, a responsive ‘on-</p>	<p>March Town Council declined our advice to seek informal feedback on their draft plan prior to formal Regulation 14 consultation: the result of this has been discontent with the formal objections raised by Fenland District Council at the Regulation 14 stage.</p>

	<p>demand' approach has been taken to delivering neighbourhood planning support in Fenland.</p> <p>The work delivered post February 2016 has included:</p> <p><b>Doddington:</b> Designation of Doddington neighbourhood area and advice on the initial steps for the working group following designation.</p> <p><b>Parson Drove:</b> General advice provided as the parish council continue their community engagement.</p> <p><b>March:</b> Attended meeting with neighbourhood planning group and their consultant to discuss concerns raised by ourselves (on behalf of Fenland District Council) in relation to various policy aspects during Regulation 14 consultation. Reiterated our concerns and gave further justification where necessary, and provided advice on a suitable way forward.</p>	<p>This has highlighted the need to further actively encourage neighbourhood planning groups to seek informal feedback on emerging policies prior to proceeding to the Regulation 14 stage. In the future, we will stress the benefits of seeking informal feedback: opportunity to work with the local authority to ensure that the policy wording meets the basic conditions, will deliver the intended outcomes, and will not result in any unintended consequences; opportunity to strengthen policy wording to make it easy for decision makers to understand and thus implement consistently; no surprise formal objections made in the public domain.</p>
<p><b>East Cambridgeshire District</b> Bottisham Parish Council; Sutton Parish Council; Witchford Parish Council;</p>	<p>Through its service level agreement with East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC), PCC provides support, on-request, to parish councils actively preparing (or considering preparing) neighbourhood development plans within East Cambridgeshire district.</p>	<p>PCC provides support to East Cambridgeshire's neighbourhood planning groups on request, tailored to meet the specific needs of the group.</p> <p>Take-up of neighbourhood planning has been</p>

<p>Parish Conference</p>	<p><b>Bottisham:</b>  In December 2015, Bottisham Parish Council submitted an application to designate Bottisham Parish as a Neighbourhood Area. PCC (acting on behalf of ECDC) published the Bottisham application from 11 January to 08 February 2016. The application and the opportunity to comment were advertised on the District Council’s website, at the District Council’s Office and Bottisham Community Library. A poster was placed on Bottisham’s parish noticeboard. In addition, details were sent to statutory bodies, including neighbouring authorities, parish councils and service providers, and individuals and organisations who had expressed an interest in either Bottisham and/or neighbourhood planning.</p> <p>PCC prepared a report recommending the Council approve, without amendment, the application to designate the whole of Bottisham parish as a Neighbourhood Area. ECDC approved the application on 12 February 2016.</p> <p><b>Parish Conference:</b>  On 18 February 2016, PCC held a Parish Council Conference, principally to engage Parish Council’s in the emerging Local Plan-</p>	<p>relatively low. However the groups involved are actively engaging their local communities in the process.</p> <p>The Parish Council conference (February 16) was particularly informative for both parish councillors and PCC officers. Many Parish Councils had a good understanding of the neighbourhood planning process. However many were concerned by the large amount of work involved, and saw apathy amongst parishioners as a potential barrier to preparing a plan. Many Parish Councillors recognised the importance of working closely with PCC to ensure the emerging Local Plan reflects their communities’ aspirations.</p> <p>The designation of Bottisham Neighbourhood Area marks a key milestone in the preparation of a plan for this area.</p> <p>The meetings held with Sutton Parish Council and Witchford Parish Council indicate the steady progress these groups are making toward draft neighbourhood plans.</p>
--------------------------	--	---



	<p>making process. The conference included a workshop session to explore the formal stages of the neighbourhood plan-making process and also to consider how neighbourhood plans could relate to the emerging Local Plan. The conference was open to all Parish Council's in East Cambridgeshire and most parishes were represented at the event.</p> <p><b>Witchford:</b> A meeting between PCC and Witchford Parish Council was held in March 2016. PCC provided professional advice on identifying and agreeing the boundary of a Neighbourhood Area, and the importance of early engagement in the neighbourhood-plan making process.</p> <p><b>Sutton:</b> Also in March 2016, PCC held a meeting with Sutton Parish Council. PCC provided professional advice on developing a draft Neighbourhood Plan, following a period of early-engagement with the local community.</p> <p><b>Current work:</b> PCC is currently exploring demand for a 'network' or 'forum' to support parish councils involved in neighbourhood planning in East Cambridgeshire.</p>	
<b>North Kesteven District</b>	The type of neighbourhood planning support	This alternative type of neighbourhood

<p>Bassingham Parish Council;          Billingham Parish Council;          Bracebridge Heath Parish Council;          Dunston Parish Council;          Nocton and Potterhanworth Parish Council</p>	<p>that PCC has delivered in the districts of North Kesteven and West Lindsey has differed to the support delivered to Fenland and East Cambridgeshire in that support has primarily been provided to the neighbourhood planning liaison officers at each of the authorities, who have used our advice at their discretion when liaising with the neighbourhood planning groups, rather than PCC officers liaising directly with the neighbourhood planning groups.</p> <p>The reason for this alternative approach is that it is what the local authorities requested, given that the majority of the neighbourhood plans that they sought our advice on were quite far in the neighbourhood planning process.</p> <p>Support provide since February 2016 has been:</p> <p><b>Bassingham:</b>          Provided comments on a draft version of the neighbourhood plan. Also provided assistance with what should go in a consultation statement and a basic conditions statement, and how each of these should be presented.</p> <p><b>Billingham:</b>          Provided comments on early draft of the plan, and undertook Strategic Environmental</p>	<p>planning support poses numerous advantages, particularly for the commissioning local authority with whom we have a service level agreement. Namely, the local authority can use our advice at their discretion, as they feel appropriate, in light of the greater local knowledge that they possess, and secondly they maintain their role as ‘front of house’. A third advantage is that PCC’s comments on draft and emerging plans come from ‘fresh eyes’: thus we are able to offer subjective comments based solely on the content of the plan, aside from knowledge of wider non-planning issues in the parish.</p>
---	--	---

	<p>Assessment screening in June.</p> <p><b>Bracebridge Heath:</b> Provided comments on an early draft plan.</p> <p><b>Dunston:</b> Completed Strategic Environmental Assessment screening and provided comments on an early draft plan and on the pre-submission Regulation 14 plan. Also assisted with preparations for undertaking the Regulation 16 Publication consultation, and subsequently provided comments on the plan at this stage.</p> <p><b>Nocton and Potterhanworth:</b> Provided comments on an early draft of the neighbourhood plan. Provided further detailed assistance with dealing with complicated matters relating to a derelict listed manor and associated enabling development.</p>	
--	--	--

## 3.0 Local Plan Support

- 3.1 Since the funding award in February 2016, PCC's Strategic Planning Team has continued to progress its own Local Plan as well as to lead on the preparation of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan under service level agreements.
- 3.2 In addition to this, Peterborough City Council has continued to provide planning policy support to Fenland District Council following the adoption of their Local Plan in May 2014, which PCC helped to deliver.
- 3.3 Table 2 below details the Local Plan services that we have delivered since February 2016.

Table 2: Local Plan Services Delivered

Local Authority	Services delivered	Outcomes
Peterborough City Council	<p>Peterborough City Council commenced work on its own new Local Plan in Autumn 2015.</p> <p>Prior to February 2016, we prepared the Preliminary Draft Local Plan and consulted on this January to February 2016.</p> <p>Following the consultation, all representations received have been processed, and a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability report has been published, detailing all potential sites put forward during this consultation stage. Work is now underway preparing the 'Further Draft' Local Plan, following review and consideration of all representations received, and evaluation of all potential sites submitted.</p> <p>The Further Draft Local Plan will be put to public consultation late summer 2016: adoption of the Local Plan is anticipated for February 2018.</p>	<p>Progression of the Peterborough Local Plan has not been hindered by the delivery of services to other Local Authorities because of the size and experience of the team.</p>
Central Lincolnshire (City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey District Councils, and Lincolnshire County	<p>PCC was appointed by North Kesteven District Council (on behalf of all the Central Lincolnshire authorities) in May 2014 to deliver Planning Policy work under a service level agreement. The appointment followed the withdrawal of the proposed Central Lincolnshire Core Strategy.</p> <p>Upon appointment, a team from PCC's Strategic Planning Team was selected to work alongside a small policy team that was retained from the planning policy teams of the</p>	<p>Following the withdrawal of the Central Lincolnshire Core Strategy, the appointment of PCC to deliver Planning Policy services has ensured that the new Local Plan for Central Lincolnshire has progressed well against an ambitious timetable. This is a great achievement, and especially important given the dated existing Local Plans and</p>

<p>Council)</p>	<p>constituent authorities. This ‘Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Team’ is led by a Local Plan Manager, whom is the head of the PCC Strategic Planning Team.</p> <p>Since 2014, the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Team has progressed work on a new Local Plan which will replace the existing Local Plans for the constituent authorities.</p> <p>Prior to February 2016, the team completed consultations on the Preliminary Draft Local Plan (October 2014) and the Further Draft Local Plan (October 2015), and prepared various supporting evidence documents.</p> <p>Since February 2016, specific areas of work undertaken by the PCC Strategic Planning Team have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of and consultation on the Regulation 19 ‘Proposed Submission’ Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.</li> <li>• Processing of all representations received during the Proposed Submission consultation.</li> <li>• Preparation of various evidence documents, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Statement of Compliance with Duty to Co-operate</li> <li>○ Habitats Regulations Assessment Methodology and Screening Report</li> <li>○ Integrated Impact Assessment (including Sustainability Assessment)</li> <li>○ Five Year Land Supply Report</li> <li>○ Settlement Hierarchy and Growth Distribution Study</li> <li>○ Site Allocations Sequential Test</li> <li>○ Evidence Reports for individual policies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>development pressures facing the area.</p> <p>PCC’s Strategic Planning Team have been able to use the skills, knowledge and experience gained through the preparation and adoption of its own Development Plan Documents and the Fenland Local Plan in 2014 in the production of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. Particular benefits of this for the Central Lincolnshire Authorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent Local Plan experience, meaning familiarity with the Regulations;</li> <li>• An established team, so efficient and effective working practices;</li> <li>• Experience delivering Local Plan services to another local authority, so appreciation and experience of working under alternative governance arrangements.</li> </ul>
-----------------	--	--

	<p>The PCC Strategic Planning Team, as part of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Team, submitted the proposed Local Plan to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 29 June 2016 for independent examination.</p> <p>The Local Plan Manager will lead the Hearing Sessions on behalf of the Central Lincolnshire Authorities.</p>	
<p>East Cambridgeshire District Council</p>	<p>The PCC Strategic Planning Team was appointed to deliver Local Plan support in November 2014, when East Cambridgeshire was finalising work on the Local Plan to replace the Core Strategy.</p> <p>Following successful adoption of the Local Plan in April 2015, East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) took the decision to start work on a new Local Plan. The Local Plan Manager appointed to lead on this is the head of the PCC Strategic Planning Team, whom appointed a team from PCC to work alongside the small team at ECDC.</p> <p>Since February 2016 PCC has, on behalf of ECDC, prepared the Preliminary Draft of the new Local Plan, and consulted on this version from February to March.</p> <p>Following the consultation, all representations and site suggestions received have been processed and considered. A report on the Key Issues Raised and a Suggested Local Green Spaces Report have been published. Work has commenced on the 'Further Draft' Local Plan, which is scheduled for consultation August – October 2016. Adoption</p>	<p>The appointment of PCC to deliver planning policy support in the latter stages of work on the first Local Plan led to PCC services being retained (and expanded) to commence work on the replacement Local Plan.</p> <p>Familiarity of the geographical area, current policy, and development pressures gained during the initial appointment, along with obtained knowledge of the working practices at ECDC, meant a smooth start to work on the new Local Plan.</p>

	<p>of the Local Plan is anticipated February 2018.</p> <p>PCC has also commissioned a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment on behalf of ECDC, and represented the authority on the Steering Group.</p>	
Fenland District Council	<p>The head of the PCC Strategic Planning Team led the preparation of the new Fenland Local Plan, which was adopted in May 2014.</p> <p>Following adoption of the Local Plan, PCC were retained to deliver ongoing planning policy support, including leading on delivering neighbourhood planning services.</p> <p>The neighbourhood planning services are summarised in Table 1 above. The planning policy services delivered to date have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing advice in relation to the affordable housing threshold in light of government announcements;</li> <li>• Providing general strategic advice on government announcements and the Housing and Planning Bill;</li> <li>• Assisting with developing the Garden Village concept for Wisbech;</li> <li>• Monitoring of Local Plans and Community Infrastructure Levies in adjoining authorities and commenting where necessary.</li> </ul>	<p>Good working relationships were established between PCC and Fenland District Council (FDC) during our appointment to deliver the Local Plan. The retention of PCC to deliver ongoing planning policy support on a reduced agreement has meant that the benefits of this working relationship could be continued to meet FDC's reduced needs.</p> <p>PCC's extensive knowledge of the Fenland Local Plan, working arrangements and colleagues, makes us well placed to provide advice and deliver specific aspects of work as necessary.</p>



## 4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 Peterborough City Council has used the £30,000 award from the DCLG to continue to support other Local Authorities in their Local Plan making (namely Central Lincolnshire, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland) and to deliver neighbourhood planning support to parishes within these areas, as well as in Peterborough.
- 4.2 Delivery of such services provides notable advantages for our 'customers'. In terms of Local Plan support, the primary advantage is that the authorities do not have to recruit officers (and bear the associated costs), rather they can appoint a ready-made team of planners. Furthermore, PCC's Strategic Planning Team has gained extensive experience working on various Local Plans, thus making them highly familiar with the regulations and the challenges of different governance structures and working practices across different authorities, and consequently efficient and effective in their work.
- 4.3 The advantages of authorities appointing PCC to deliver their neighbourhood planning service, or provide neighbourhood planning support, are again that the authority does not have to recruit to the role, and that PCC has delivered support in relation to various neighbourhood plans to date and thus has wide knowledge of the challenges facing neighbourhood planning groups and the typical desires that they have for their plans.
- 4.4 Moving forward, we are looking to continue to expand our services to other councils, and are about to recruit an additional full time senior planner to enable this to happen.
- 4.5 We are also taking on a recent graduate on a work experience basis. She is particularly interested in a career in neighbourhood planning, and we believe we are in an excellent position to help boost her experience and skills in order for her to progress that career.