

## **Constitution and Structure for the Odd Rode Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group**

The Localism Act specifies that only a 'Qualifying Body' is entitled to initiate and lead the production of a Neighbourhood Development Plan. Under Section 38A (12) of the Act, the Qualifying Body for the parish of Odd Rode is Odd Rode Parish Council.

### **Role of the Qualifying Body**

The Qualifying Body will take formal responsibility for: „

- submitting a proposal to Cheshire East Council to initiate the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan;
- submitting the draft Neighbourhood Plan to Cheshire East Council, together with a summary of the proposals; „
- agreeing with Cheshire East Council on the appointment of an Independent Examiner (who will check the Neighbourhood Plan and recommend if it should proceed to a referendum).

The Qualifying Body is also responsible for submitting any formal proposals to Cheshire East Council to make Neighbourhood Development Orders and/or Community Right to Build Orders

### **Role of the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group**

Under its umbrella, the Parish Council (as Qualifying Body) will establish a Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group that will be responsible for leading the process and developing the plan. Membership of the NPSG will feature current local Parish Councillors but it will also be essential to include representatives of the wider local community who can bring value to the project, as approved by the Parish Council. Selection of members should reflect different sectors of the community and the range of skills, knowledge and experience that will be required to develop the Neighbourhood Plan. Typical membership and representation might therefore include:

- Parish councillors, representing the council's different interests, e.g. planning, environment, leisure, transport, finance and resources etc. „
- Local residents „
- Representatives of local community organisations „
- Local business owners „
- Local landowners

The more representative the NPSG is of the local community, the better the plan is likely to be. However, it is important to recognise that too large a group may be difficult to manage effectively. An ideal size for the team is probably around 9 members. Additional members of the community with specific skills may be co-opted at a later date if they are likely to bring additional benefits to the project.

## **The Neighbourhood Planning Team Structure and the resources necessary to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.**

When thinking about preparing a Neighbourhood Plan we will need to think about whether our group has the people and skills necessary to prepare a plan. If we follow the steps set out in this guide and ask for assistance from Cheshire East Council it is not necessary for the group to have special professional skills in order to be able to prepare a neighbourhood plan. However in order to prepare a plan our Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group needs to be able to fulfil some key functions to ensure that the work is done and decisions are made and recorded:,,

- There needs to be someone responsible for coordinating and managing the process and who is willing to act as the main point of contact for the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group; ,,
- There needs to be someone who makes records of the meetings you have, decisions that are made and actions to be taken, often referred to as the secretary; ,,
- There needs to be someone who keeps a track of any money that you receive and spend to make sure that the finances are in order and give confidence that money is not being wasted or mis-spent.
- There needs to be a procedure for decision taking, in which the Parish Council has delegated the authority to make key day to day decisions (including incurring expenditure) in the neighbourhood planning process on their behalf. This may require delegation to The Clerk To The Council to authorise expenditure within an agreed budget.

There may also need to be a group of other people that we can call on to do the work involved in preparing the plan. These may be people from the Parish Council and/or volunteers from the wider community. It is essential to involve people from the wider community.

There are lots of ways that we could organise people to do the work. However it can work well if we create 'Task Groups' that are 'tasked' with looking at certain themes. It makes sense to have task groups that cover the three roles of planning which are: ,,

- an economic role – this means providing the land and infrastructure necessary to create jobs and contribute to a vibrant economy; ,,
- a social role – this means ensuring the housing, services and facilities are in place to meet the needs of the community; ,,
- an environmental role – this means protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment and ensuring that future generations can benefit from the same, or better, quality of environment as enjoyed by the current generation.

Each 'Task Group' might prepare information and develop recommendations of a particular theme, for example 'the environment', identifying issue such as how to protect the Green Belt for example. To bring together the recommendations of the Task Groups and start to develop policies we may want to form another working group or alternatively this could be done by the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group.

## Checklist of useful skills

Producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan can be a challenging prospect. The Plan can potentially cover a wide range of topics. It does not necessarily require expert or professional advice. Usually common sense gets to the right answers and the plan will be better if people in the community do as much of this work as possible.

There will be people in our community however that have skills and experience (see box below) that will be useful and it can be valuable to try to involve them. A limited amount of help and advice may be free of charge (e.g. from Cheshire East Council, Rural Community Councils or statutory bodies with a duty to provide some advice etc.) and if we have access to funding we may wish to buy-in expertise.

- Relevant skills and experience:
- Planning e.g. general familiarity with the planning system, development plan documents, writing policies etc.
- Community engagement and communication e.g. understanding community engagement processes and methods, leadership, motivation and communication skills
- Marketing, promotion and consultation e.g. designing leaflets, promotional material, questionnaires and surveys
- Funding and delivery e.g. sources of funding, grant/funding applications, fund-raising, delivery mechanisms
- Writing, editorial, graphic design e.g. report writing, editing/proofing, design of reports, maps, plans and other graphics
- Computers and Information Technology e.g. word-processing, desk-top publishing, knowledge of Geographic Information Systems, web-based information
- Expertise in specific topic areas, e.g.: „  
Population and social structure „  
Diversity and inclusion „  
Business and economic development „  
Housing needs „  
Land and property markets „  
Transport „  
Public services (health/care, education, crime, recycling etc.) „  
Community services „  
Landscape „  
Wildlife and biodiversity „  
Green infrastructure planning „  
Archaeology and local history „  
Architecture and urban design „  
Energy infrastructure „  
Communications infrastructure „  
Sustainability assessment „  
Equality impact assessment

# **Draft Odd Rode Parish Neighbourhood Plan Written Constitution**

## **Name and Area**

1. The name of the group shall be “Odd Rode Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group”, henceforth referred to as “the Steering Group” in this document.
2. The Neighbourhood Plan will cover the whole of the civil parish of Odd Rode.

## **Purpose**

3. The purpose of the Steering Group shall be to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the Odd Rode Parish area.
4. The Neighbourhood Plan will be produced with due consideration for the needs of all residents and businesses in the area, now and in the future.
5. The Neighbourhood Plan will seek to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area and those residing within it.
6. The Steering Group shall achieve the following goals in partnership with the Parish Council and Cheshire East Council:
  - i. Manage and co-ordinate the production of a Neighbourhood Plan that is representative of local views.
  - ii. Co-ordinate effective engagement with all members of the community on a number of aspects relating to the Neighbourhood Plan.
  - iii. Effectively communicate findings, ideas and approaches for the Neighbourhood Plan to the Parish Council and the wider community.
  - iv. Identify support, resources and funding needed for stages of the process.
  - v. Manage the decision making process in an open, transparent and accessible way.
  - vi. Identify areas, or specific sites, to accommodate the necessary development, in accordance with the Borough Local Plan.
  - vii. Promote growth that is suitable for the Odd Rode Parish area as part of maintaining a balanced and thriving community set in a Green Belt.
  - viii. Produce appropriate timescales and delivery mechanisms for the Neighbourhood Plan.
  - ix. Produce a Neighbourhood Plan that is consistent with national and Borough policies
  - x. To take the Neighbourhood Plan to adoption by the Borough Council.

## **Steering Group Membership**

7. The Steering Group shall consist of no less than 5 individuals who live, work or occupy land in Odd Rode Parish, no less than one individual representing the Parish Council, and no less than one individual representing the Borough Council. Profiles of the members of the Steering Group shall be made publicly available.
8. The Steering Group shall elect its own officers in accordance with the following:
  - a) Chair to be appointed by the Steering Group.
  - b) Vice-chair to be appointed by the Steering Group.
  - c) Secretary to be appointed by the Steering Group.
  - d) Treasurer to be appointed by Odd Rode Parish Council.

9. The Steering Group shall appoint Task Groups to operate on its behalf. Involvement in the Task Groups shall be open to all people who live, operate a business, or hold a specific interest in the Odd Rode Parish area, and will be expected to exercise balanced consideration for the needs of all aspects of the local community.

#### **Exclusion from the Steering Group and Task Groups**

10. Members may be excluded from the Steering Group or Topic Group for conduct and behaviour that is disruptive and does not promote the aims and objectives of the Steering Group or Task Group. Exclusion of members will be by a majority vote of the Steering Group.

#### **Affiliations, Interests and Contributions**

11. The Steering Group shall not be affiliated to any political party, but will welcome the involvement of ward councillors as community representatives.
12. All members of the Steering Group must declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to a decision of the group. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership of land or a business, or any other matter that may be considered to be relevant. Such declarations shall be recorded and be publicly available.
13. Organisations and businesses may assist in the production of the Neighbourhood Plan and may contribute to the cost of producing it. Details of any donations or assistance must be made publicly available and must not influence the recommendations of the plan.

#### **Meetings**

14. The Steering Group shall aim to meet once per calendar month, or as may be required, with a minimum of three clear working days notice given prior to a meeting taking place. Agenda items should be agreed with the chairperson at least five clear working days and will be circulated at least three clear working days prior to the meeting.
15. A nominated individual, shall maintain minutes of each meeting to be made reasonably available to the members of the Steering Group within seven days of the meeting and to members of the public within fourteen days of the meeting.
16. Any matters of disagreement at a meeting may be decided upon by majority of votes. A minimum of five voting members of The Steering Group will represent a quorum enabling the aims and objectives of the Group to be considered. Voting will be by way of a simple majority and the quorum excludes those without a vote or who abstain. Votes are only available for members of The Steering Group who have signed up to this constitution.
17. The public and press shall be admitted to all meetings of the Steering Group but at any such meeting the public and press can be instructed to withdraw from the meeting if a majority of the Steering Group present vote that it is advisable in the public interest that they do so in view of the sensitive or confidential nature of the matter about to be discussed.
18. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting the Chairman may after a warning order that the person concerned withdraw from the meeting and may adjourn the meeting until this has happened.
19. The Tasks Groups shall meet as and when necessary for their task area. At least 3 clear working days notice shall be provided for each Task Group meeting and discussion topics circulated with notice.

20. Discussion topics and agendas for any meetings that the public may attend should be made publicly available at least 3 clear days prior to the meeting.

### **Constitutional Amendments**

21. Should any amendments be required to the constitution, this shall require a majority vote within the Steering Group and adoption by Odd Rode Parish Council.

### **Freedom of Information**

22. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000), as an extension of a local authority, the Steering Group will make available to the public, minutes of meetings, policies and procedures, its organisational structure and information on budget, expenditure and allowances.

### **Data Protection**

23. In accordance with the Data Protection Act (1988), the Steering Group will assess whether the release of any personal information about individuals would be fair, or whether it is exempt from the requirements of the Freedom of Information requirements.

### **Roles & responsibilities of the Steering Group**

24. To achieve the aims set out above the Steering Group will:

- 1) Develop a timetable and strategy for undertaking the development of the Plan.
- 2) Promote the process of preparing the Plan to encourage participation and the submission of views and ideas.
- 3) Organise Steering Group meetings.
- 4) Establish, monitor and co-ordinate the Task Groups to contribute to all aspects of the development of the Plan.
- 5) Ensure the furtherance of the Plan by working to make the fullest and widest consultation with the community and, in so doing, contribute to the transparency and openness of the process.
- 6) Analyse the views, ideas and proposals received during the process and use them to develop a community led Plan.
- 7) Assess existing evidence about the needs and aspirations of the Parish of Odd Rode.
- 8) Gather additional evidence to assess the needs and aspirations of the Parish of Odd Rode.
- 9) Use new and existing evidence to support the content of the Plan.
- 10) Produce a Plan consistent with the Cheshire East Local Plan (when produced ), National Planning Policy Framework and planning law.
- 11) Draft and finalise the Plan.
- 12) Keep the Parish Council fully informed of progress.
- 13) Support the Parish Council during the referendum process.
- 14) Review and coordinate engagement with, or consultation of, the community of Odd Rode, land owners, or other critical external parties
- 15) Research and undertake applications for funding and support that may be made available to Neighbourhood Plan groups.

### **Chairperson of Steering Group**

25. The role of the Chairperson is as follows:

- To take forward the development of the Plan.

- To co-ordinate and conduct meetings of the Steering Group.
- To work with the Task Groups, when appropriate, on aspects of the evidence gathering, analysis and subsequent drafting of the Plan.
- Maintaining relationships with other sources, for example Cheshire East Council and keep Task Group leads updated.
- To ensure that the agreed timetable for the development of the Plan is maintained or revised as necessary.
- Develop community engagement, including web sites, surveys and public contact events in line with the Task Groups and over all objectives of the plan
- Along with the Vice Chair, act as a central point for the co-ordination and development of the plan.

### **Relationship with Odd Rode Parish Council**

26. In respect of the Odd Rode Neighbourhood Plan the Odd Rode Parish Council, as the responsible body under the Localism Act, has agreed that it will:

- Support the preparation of the Odd Rode Neighbourhood Plan providing sufficient assistance and financial resources to ensure that the plan is prepared expeditiously providing that overall expenditure falls within the budget allocated by the Council and complies with the Parish Council's Financial Regulations.
- Support the Steering Group to ensure that the Plan conforms to national and local policy, and is sound and robust enough to withstand independent examination. Outside professional expertise and aid may be sought to ensure that this objective is met.
- Facilitate, if required, contact with the relevant statutory bodies or parties who must be consulted during the plan making process. 1 <http://mycommunityrights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Neighbourhood-Planning-Roadmap1.pdf> 2 A map with details of the parish boundaries can be located at the Parish Council Offices and will also be found with the letter of application by the Parish Council to Cheshire East Council to designate the Parish of Odd Rode a 'Neighbourhood Area' for the purpose of producing a Neighbourhood Plan.
- Carry out all statutory duties contained within the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulation 2012 and engage with Cheshire East Council during the referendum process of the plan for which the principle authority is responsible.
- Following the preparation of the draft plan submit the plan to the Local Planning Authority for inspection and independent examination. In addition to the support indicated above, the Parish Council will provide:
  - A Link Councillor – to represent the Parish Council.
  - Rooms in which to meet free of charge, subject to them being available.
  - Use of the photocopier – a note of the copies made will be taken and a cost put to that.
  - A Clerk for the Steering Group Meeting, should there be no-one else available.
  - An opportunity to publish minutes and information relating to the Neighbourhood Plan on a website.
  - Storage of notes and minutes from the Steering Group and the Task Groups in hard copy and electronic form so that they can be accessed by the public and form a full record. The Council agrees that the role of the Link Councillor is to observe and act as a conduit for ensuring that information passes to and from both groups.

**Members of The Steering Group**

All members who join the Steering Group must sign the Constitution and agree to be bound by its terms.