EDITORs Notes

FROM LEFT: Julia Child, development liaison leader of Kettering Borough Council; Sue Bowen, Mary Hunt and Pat Swanson of Broughton neighbourhood plan’s steering group.

A village community group used a pioneering process to grant permission on a key site, says Colin Marrs.

PROJECT Broughton Neighbourhood Development Order, Northamptonshire

ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED
Broughton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, Kettering Borough Council.

In September, residents in the Northamptonshire villages of Broughton voted in favour of a new neighbourhood plan. In a separate ballot on the same day, they approved — by 685 votes to 42 — a neighbourhood development order (NDO) granting outline planning permission for up to seven homes on a site currently used as a BT telephone exchange. This is set to be only the third NDO to come into force in England and the first that grants planning permission for new homes on a specific site.

The power to create an NDO was introduced in the 2012 Localism Act, allowing town and parish councils to use such orders to grant planning permission for certain developments or certain classes of use. As such, they differ from local development orders, where the local authority proposes and prepares the order.

The idea of drawing up an NDO for the site came originally from the Broughton neighbourhood plan steering group, which reported to Broughton Parish Council. “When we discovered this power was available to us, it seemed to be the perfect fit for the village,” says parish councillor and steering group member Hilary Bell. “The exchange is a space former school building in the middle of a conservation area and it’s starkly out of keeping with the setting. We wanted to ensure that we had some control over what replaced it if it comes to the market in future.”

The steering group and parish council listed with planning authority Kettering Borough Council throughout the process of developing the order. “Our role wasn’t necessarily to interrupt the work of the steering group, but was one of a ‘critical friend,’” says Simon Richardson, the borough’s planning policy development manager. “We offered advice on elements of the detail within the neighbourhood plan and the NDO. And then we sought to produce input on technical and legal requirements throughout the process.

The steering group faced one major challenge — being a placeholder of a new process meant that there was a lack of good practice from elsewhere on which it could draw. There’s a lot of guidance and information out there about the plans, but virtually nothing on NDOs,” says Bull. “We had to build the order on what we felt was required and use our common sense.”

Halfway through the process, to make sure that it was on the right lines, the steering group commissioned a voluntary “health check” from an independent body – a consultancy independent planning and land use consultants. The consultancy was asked to give its feedback on how the plan was developing. “It gave us an opportunity to reframe the plan in certain areas – mostly on tightening the wording of the conditions attached to the permission – and it gave us confidence that we were on the right lines in other areas,” says Bull.

The NDO, which was “made” by Kettering on 17 October, grants outline consent for a minimum of five and a maximum of seven small homes, to be provided either as starter homes for first-time buyers or as accommodation for older people who are downsizing. It contains conditions on roof heights, access

KEY LESSONS

- Make sure that a neighbourhood development order (NDO) is absolutely necessary to address your site. Broughton Parish Council steering group member Hilary Bell says the process of drawing up the order added up to 30 per cent more work to the job of putting together the neighbourhood plan. “It is a lot of work if you don’t need one,” she warns.

- Make sure that you are clear about the process. As the referendum grew near, those involved in promoting the plan had to provide extra information on the difference between the neighbourhood plan and the NDO, says Kettering Borough Council’s planning policy development manager Simon Richardson.

- Be brave – the process provides benefits for the community. While a lot of people were fearful about doing something new, Richardson says the community and the council had the tools to produce the NDO and it helped to engage local people in planning issues.
Government require for local industrial strategies

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has published the government's national Industrial Strategy on 1 December, which requires business-led local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and mayoral combined authorities to produce local industrial strategies.

The 2017 National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies should have regard to local industrial strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration. This prospectus sets out the requirements that local industrial strategies must meet.

Key points: The prospectus states that government agreement of local industrial strategies must be consistent with this document.

Strategies should "set out clearly defined priorities for how cities, towns and rural areas will maximise their contribution to UK productivity", it says. "They will better coordinate economic policy at the local level and ensure greater collaboration across boundaries."

Strategies 'will be long-term, based on clear evidence and aligned to the national industrial strategy'.

Strategies "should address local strengths and weaknesses, as well as market opportunities and failures", the prospectus says. "Barriers to growth also vary across the country and within localities – so the appropriate mix of policies to boost productivity will vary too," it adds.

Such responses "might include ambitions to drive housing growth, make use of land supply, improve local skills or strengthen communities". The document goes on to say that strategies should also "set out the spatial impacts of national and local policy across our cities, towns and rural areas".

The prospectus says strategies must "set out a robust and open evidence base" and "map out specific opportunities and challenges". It says they "may involve", in some cases, an emphasis on land supply or "working with relevant local authorities in the delivery of housing where it is a barrier to growth should be addressed". It also says there should "be a strong focus on attracting business".

The prospectus was published to help local authorities write strategies and is intended to be used with the government's Industrial Strategy

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