

# Neighbourhood Planning Grants: how are they used?

As part of the Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme, neighbourhood planning groups are all eligible for Basic Grant funding of £10,000, as well as an Additional Grant of £8,000 provided they meet certain criteria. As largely volunteer-led projects, neighbourhood plans rely on external funding. As locally specific projects, the ways in which these grants are used to progress a neighbourhood plan can vary a lot, depending on local context, community aspirations, capacity and skills.

The two case studies below will give you a few examples of the some of the ways in which neighbourhood planning groups have used their grant funding to progress the preparation of their neighbourhood plan.

## Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan

As representatives of a dense and diverse inner-city neighbourhood of East London, the Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Forum used some of their grant allowance to conduct extensive engagement work with the local community. This included producing and distributing leaflets early in the process, explaining what neighbourhood planning is and inviting local people to get involved. Funding was also used to translate this leaflet and associated posters into Bengali to help ensure everyone in the community had access to the information.

The distribution of physical resources facilitated in-person engagement opportunities, including with some community groups who had not previously been involved in such discussions. Informal gatherings with one-to-one conversations took place around local housing estates and during a community garden project, which helped connect with people who may not wish to come to more formal meetings.

Further early-engagement events were organised across eight sub-areas, which had been set out by the neighbourhood forum to make sure they collected input from people living across the whole neighbourhood area. Each event made use of specific maps on which participants could identify what they liked, didn't like and what could be changed in their area. The costs for publicity, room hire, logistics, activities and materials for these events were funded through the Neighbourhood Planning Support programme.

Grant funding was also spent on digital engagement, which included the development and hosting of a website, digital campaigns, and the use of a virtual engagement platform to record, capture and display community input online.

Alongside this, funding secured through the Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme was used to fund the services of expert planning consultants, which was invaluable to the development of the plan. This included support in identifying gaps in the evidence base and developing the plan and its policies.

A detailed housing needs assessment was also commissioned via the use of grant, which concluded that more than 75% of households in the area are unable to afford market housing of any kind. This evidence supported the development of a policy encouraging developers to work with community-led housing groups to provide affordable housing.

## **Chesil Bank Neighbourhood Plan**

Located in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) by the coast, the Chesil Bank neighbourhood plan area covers four separate villages, each with their unique characteristics and priorities.

To make sure these priorities could all be explored and brought together into a strong vision for the neighbourhood plan, the neighbourhood planning group chose to use some of their grant allowance to send out a series of separate surveys to local residents and businesses, using an online survey tool and a printed form to ensure accessibility. Each of these surveys focused on different topics, including housing, recreation and locally valued views and green spaces, small businesses, farming and agriculture. Although neighbourhood planning group was conscious of not overwhelming the community with too many engagement requests, the feedback was positive and this initiative helped gather valuable data on local priorities, issues and aspirations across the area.

Results from the surveys showed that the community did not necessarily object to more development as long as this could be done in a way that was sympathetic to the local views, green spaces and heritage assets they valued most. This was integrated

into the plan's vision and translated into several policies in the plan, including Local Green Space designations and a policy protecting the significant views identified by the local community from adverse impacts. Funding was also used to map these green spaces and key views.

As members of the neighbourhood planning group did not have the relevant expertise to undertake all the work needed to prepare the neighbourhood plan, a large share of their grant allowance was used to secure ongoing support from a local planning consultant throughout the plan preparation process. This included support in undertaking consultation activities, analysing evidence and feedback from the community and local stakeholders, and translating these into key themes and specific policies.

The local consultant also provided ongoing support to the neighbourhood planning group by liaising with the local authority, and worked alongside technical studies delivered through the technical support side of the Neighbourhood Planning Programme. For example, the neighbourhood planning group needed assistance to run a call for sites in preparation for site allocations for development in the plan.

## **Available guidance and how to apply**

These are just some examples of what these two neighbourhood planning groups chose to spend their grant allowance on to progress their neighbourhood plans to give you an idea of the types of activities that can be funded via the Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme run by Locality. To find out more about how to apply for grant funding for your neighbourhood plan, take a look at our dedicated website [here](#). Details on what this funding can be used for can be found [here](#).