

CHARTHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN STEERING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Purpose of the Steering Group

- 1.1. Chartham Parish Council (“the Parish Council”) is the qualifying body for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan (“the Plan”) for their civil parish area.
- 1.2. The Parish Council has agreed to establish separate project management arrangements to facilitate the delivery of this plan-making function.
- 1.3. The Steering Group sits as the Project Board for project management and decision-making purposes and will lead the preparation of the Plan. While the Parish Council will retain the approval of the Regulation 14 Plan and the submission Plan, together with the approved Preferred Options Consultation Draft Plan and the final Plan post examination amendments, it grants delegated authority to exercise other relevant plan-making functions to the Chartham Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group (“the Steering Group”).
- 1.4. The Steering Group will guide and agree the content of the Plan and all associated evidence and analysis up to the completion of the process.
- 1.5. The Parish Council reserves the right to remove the delegated authority from the Steering Group if they feel they are not carrying out the task delegated to them.
- 1.6. The Steering Group must conform to the framework set by national and local planning policy; and meet any European or national legal requirements (such as Habitat Regulations), show that it has engaged with the local community and taken account of their views.
- 1.7. The Steering Group will:
 - provide a locally-accountable and representative lead for plan-making;
 - agree a project timetable and endeavour to secure compliance;
 - agree project strategies for communication, consultation and engagement with Parishioners;
 - following analysis of community engagement recommend to the Parish Council the scope of the Plan, vision and objectives;
 - review available data and commission evidence where gaps identified;
 - agree all consultation documents and reports with the Parish Council prior to publication;
 - agree for ratification by the Parish Council a final submission version of the Plan; and
 - actively support and promote the preparation of the Plan throughout the duration of the project.

2. Steering Group Objective

- 2.1. The objective of the Steering Group is to produce a Plan for the Parish of Chartham that meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans, defines the spatial planning policy priorities identified by the community taking into account all representations made during the plan-making process and having regard to all relevant existing plans and evidence.
- 2.2. The Plan will include or be supported by an appropriate delivery plan setting out, where relevant, the means by which these policy priorities may be implemented.

3. Steering Group Membership

- 3.1. The Steering Group will comprise 6-10 members including Parish Councillors and a cross-section of volunteers from the community.
- 3.2. Membership is voluntary.
- 3.3. By joining the Steering Group, any person agrees to abide by these terms of reference.
- 3.4. Membership will be reviewed periodically by the Parish Council and which reserves the right to remove member or members of the steering group.
- 3.5. Members who move away from the locality of the Parish will be automatically removed from the Steering Group, whereas Parish Councillors who cease to be members of the Parish Council may continue so long as they remain in the locality.
- 3.6. A person shall cease to be a member of the Steering Group upon notifying the Steering Group in writing of their wish to resign. They are required to give a month’s notice of resignation to handover any ongoing activities.

4. Reporting and Communication

- 4.1. The Steering Group is established having delegated authority (as explained in 1.3) from the Parish Council to deliver its plan-making functions.

- 4.2. The Steering Group will report to each full Parish Council meeting setting out progress on its work.
- 4.3. The Submission Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan requires the approval of the Parish Council prior to its publication for consultation and independent examination.
- 4.4. The plan-making process remains in the control of the Parish Council as local authority and qualifying body.
- 4.5. All Steering Group publications, consultation and community engagement exercises will be undertaken by or on behalf of the Parish Council with appropriate recognition of the Parish Council's position given in all communications associated with the project.
- 4.6. A broad range of media is to be used for effective communication in order to reach all groups in the village, including but not limited to: Newsletters delivered to all premises, updates in the Parish Magazine, notices on village boards and social media, and the Parish Council website for full transparency.

5. Meetings

- 5.1. Steering Group meetings will take place regularly as required.
- 5.2. The Steering Group will not elect a Chair but have an acting chair and secretary at individual meetings. It is hoped that this will encourage group responsibility, spread the load and free members to make constructive criticism.
- 5.3. The Steering Group is quorate provided a minimum of four members are present, one of which is a Parish Councillor and one a community volunteer.
- 5.4. Decisions made by the Steering Group should normally be by consensus at Steering Group meetings. Where a vote is required each member shall have one vote. A simple majority will be required to support any motion. The Chair shall have one casting vote.
- 5.5. Steering Group meetings and activities shall follow good practice. Normally the Steering Group chair may seek, and shall follow, the guidance of the Parish Clerk in regard to any procedural matters.
- 5.6. Members of the public may attend upon request to the Parish Clerk, even at online meetings (up to the maximum meeting size allowed by the system used). Up to 5 members of the public may speak per meeting at an allocated time, for 5 minutes about a pre-identified subject for which a briefing document must have been given at least 2 working days prior to the meeting. Otherwise it is asked that members of the public don't speak unless invited to.

6. Task & Finish Groups

- 6.1. The Steering Group may establish Task & Finish Groups, made up of volunteers from the community to aid them in any Plan-related work.
- 6.2. Each Task & Finish Group will be led by a member of the Steering Group.
- 6.3. Task & Finish Groups will have their own terms of reference and will report back to the Steering Group.
- 6.4. Task & Finish Groups will carry out duties specified by the full Steering Group, which may include, but is not limited to: (1) Data gathering (2) Consultations (3) Making recommendations.
- 6.5. Members of the community will be encouraged to participate in the process at all stages.

7. Conduct

- 7.1. The Steering Group will follow the code of conduct set out by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life. The Steering Group as a whole is accountable to the wider community for ensuring that the Plan reflects their collective expectations. The Steering Group will achieve this through applying the following principles:
 - Work with mutual trust and respect, and combine their expertise;
 - Be clear when their individual roles or interests are in conflict;
 - Provide feedback from Steering Group meetings to the Parish Council;
 - Inform the Steering Group when they are unable to deliver agreed actions;
 - Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, or religion and belief; and
 - Actively promote equality of access and opportunity.

8. Finance

- 8.1. The Steering Group will submit a request for funds to the Parish Council to support production of the Plan.
- 8.2. The Steering Group shall not have its own bank account. The Parish Council Responsible Financial Officer shall be responsible for all budgetary matters, expenditure, monitoring and reporting.
- 8.3. Invoices will be made out in the name of the Parish Council.
- 8.4. The Steering Group will identify potential sources of funding and will draft applications for grants, funding and donations. Oversight will be ensured by the Chartham Parish Council Responsible Financial Officer submitting the applications. Funds gained in this manner will be held by the Parish Council, ring-fenced for Neighbourhood Plan work, and managed by the Responsible Financial Officer under the direction of the Steering Group.
- 8.5. The Steering Group will notify the Parish Council, advising them of any planned expenditure over £500 before it is incurred.
- 8.6. Steering Group members and volunteers from any Task & Finish Groups may claim back any previously-agreed expenditure incurred during any Plan-related work. This includes, but is not limited to, postage, stationery, telephone calls and travel costs.
- 8.7. Parish Council insurance will cover the previously-agreed activities of the Steering Group and volunteers, but Steering Group members, in liaison with the Clerk to the Council, need to ensure that terms of the insurance are not breached.

9. Declarations of Interest:

- 9.1. The Localism Act and the Parish Council's Code of Conduct will apply to all members of the Steering Group. All members of the Steering Group must declare any pecuniary interest that may be perceived as being relevant to a decision of the Steering 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 are to be recorded and publicly available. In the event of disagreement, the decision of the Chair shall be binding.
- 9.2. Every member of the Steering Group will be required to make it known if they have a personal or pecuniary interest on joining the Steering Group and during any subsequent discussions and any such notifications will be recorded.
- 9.3. A personal interest will be taken to be an interest over and above that of any local resident in a community that would generally be affected by the issue concerned.
- 9.4. To avoid members with specialist or other knowledge of an issue being prevented from contributing to a debate thereon, a declaration of an interest of any kind will not restrict the right of the declarer to speak.
- 9.5. Members declaring an interest will not take part in any formal voting on the matter in question.
- 9.6. Organisations and businesses may assist in the production of the Plan and may contribute to the cost of producing it subject to approval from the Parish Council. Details of any donations or assistance must be made publicly available and must not influence the recommendations of The Plan.

10. Freedom of Information and Access to Information

- 10.1. As an extension of the Parish Council, and in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000), the Steering Group will make available to the public: minutes of meetings, policies and procedures, details of its organisation and structure and information on budget, expenditure and allowances normally via the Parish Council website
- 10.2. Meetings will be informal, and the time and place will be publicised on the Parish Council calendar. Formal minutes will be kept.
- 10.3. For the purposes of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) the Parish Council is the Data Controller.

11. Changes to these Terms of Reference

- 11.1. Should any amendments be required to these Terms of Reference, the changes must be ratified by the Parish Council.

12. Dissolution of the Steering Group

- 12.1. The Steering Group shall continue to operate until the adoption or rejection of the Plan.
- 12.2. Upon dissolution of the Steering Group, any remaining resources will be passed to the Parish Council.