

# Neighbourhood Planning support: Coton Park

## Background

Coton Park is a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Rugby, largely comprising a modern housing estate constructed over the last 10-15 years. Further residential development is earmarked on the adjoining land following allocations in the Local Plan. Coton Park is the only Front Runner in Coventry and Warwickshire.

Coton Park Residents Association was formed in May 2007 in direct response to a planning application that proposed the building of a large pet food factory on the adjoining Central Park industrial estate. The planning application was subsequently refused. The Residents Association subsequently extended its activities to address much wider community issues. This included the decision to prepare a neighbourhood plan. Amongst other things, this could assimilate past and proposed development.

## How did Planning Aid England help?

The group approached Mark Pawsey MP, who suggested they contact Planning Aid England (PAE). Bob Keith from PAE met regularly with Jill Simpson-Vince of the Residents Association, often joined by a representative from Rugby Borough Council and/or Mark Pawsey MP.

PAE's support included:

- Bespoke advice on the neighbourhood planning process, formation of the Neighbourhood Forum and the Neighbourhood Area application.
- Help with a launch event.
- An 'Are You Fit for Plan Preparation' event in Northampton.

PAE's aim was to help the group move forward by giving them information in bite size pieces. This helped them not to feel daunted and to build their self confidence and skills. Despite the support from PAE and the local planning authority, there was concern that the burden all fell on the shoulders of one person. However now that a Forum has been established and they have secured the support of a local hotel establishment (which has offered a free meeting room) they can engage other community members and make progress during 2013.



**What difference did PAE's support make?**

Jill Simpson-Vince, Chair of Coton Park Residents Association, explains: "Coton Park Residents Association achieved front runner status in March 2012. With a group of volunteers and also a local authority which did not have any other front runners, we were completely stuck as to how to progress. Our local MP, Mark Pawsey, suggested we contact Planning Aid England (PAE).

Since we started working with PAE in May 2012, we have progressed greatly. Coton Forward was created as the Neighbourhood Forum for the plan, and we are approaching the end of our consultation phase for both our Forum and Area.

I have no doubt that we would not have got this far without the support and advice from PAE. For both Coton Forward and Rugby Borough Council, we have had lots of valuable guidance and a useful sounding board in Bob Keith, with whom we look forward to continuing to work as our plan progresses."

And Mark Pawsey MP added: "As a Neighbourhood Planning Front Runner, Coton Park Residents Association in my constituency of Rugby is in the process of formulating its neighbourhood plan. In this development they have been assisted by Planning Aid England and in particular Mr Bob Keith. In this process I have met with Bob Keith on a number of occasions and have always found him and the Planning Aid England body to be very informative and highly effective. I know how valuable Mr Keith has been to the Coton Park Residents Association and I appreciate the contribution Planning Aid England has made, and continues to make, in helping Coton Park formulate their Neighbourhood Plan."

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**Planning Aid England provides free and independent advice on neighbourhood planning. Call: 0203 206 1880 or Email: [info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)**

