

Neighbourhood Planning support: Northenden

Background

Northenden Civic Society has been leading on the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Northenden ward in the Manchester City Council area. According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Manchester is the fourth most deprived area in England. There are no Front Runners in Manchester and Northenden will be the first community in the city to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Civic Society has a long history of trying to influence land use planning issues in the ward. They feel that by using the new community powers set out in the Localism Act they will have a greater say in the shaping of their neighbourhood. The applications to define the Neighbourhood Area and set up a Neighbourhood Forum were submitted in November 2012, and a decision on both applications is pending.

How did Planning Aid England help?

The group first approached Planning Aid England (PAE) in April 2012, and support has been provided since then, including:

- Presentation and question and answer session on Neighbourhood Planning at a special community meeting to discuss the potential of a Neighbourhood Plan for Northenden (May 2012). As a result of the session they made the decision to go ahead with a Neighbourhood Plan.
- On-going telephone and email support and advice around the process for producing a Neighbourhood Plan.
- Attendance by a Civic Society representative at an Are You Fit for Neighbourhood Planning training session.
- Support and advice on the applications to define the Neighbourhood Area and set up the Neighbourhood Forum, including advice on the constitution.

The group has worked very hard to get to the stage of being able to submit applications to define the Neighbourhood Area and set up a Neighbourhood Forum, encouraged by a strong belief that a Neighbourhood Plan will make a difference to their neighbourhood.



What difference did PAE's support make?

Graham Pheby M.Ed, Steering group leader for Northenden Civic Society's application to set up Northenden Neighbourhood Forum, reflected on the difference PAE's support had made:

"I cannot emphasise enough the quality of support we have had from Planning Aid England and am impressed by the quality of the volunteers they engage. If my experience is anything to go by, the major benefits of this legislation would remain beyond the reach of those communities most likely to benefit and most in need of empowerment. Our experience to date suggests that PAE support is crucial to the future of the implementation of aspects of the Localism Act which are of great benefit to communities and particularly for more deprived communities.

As a retired principal of international schools who was involved in recruiting many hundreds of international teachers over 22 years in six countries I can testify with confidence that the people I have met and engaged with from PAE are really knowledgeable, professional, efficient and extremely diligent in their support. We certainly would have dropped the ball in taking advantage of this wonderful piece of legislation in empowering communities without their help and advice."

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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

