

Harborough District Neighbourhood Plan Funding Guidance

Neighbourhood Planning Grant Fund

Introduction

Until June 2025, parish and town councils preparing a new neighbourhood plan, or reviewing an existing plan, could apply directly to the government for neighbourhood planning grants of up to £10,000. This funding was withdrawn following the Government Spending Review in June 2025.

Harborough District Council recognises the importance of local decision-making and the valuable role neighbourhood plans play in shaping communities and informing planning decisions. To support this work, the Council has introduced a new Neighbourhood Planning Grant Fund to assist communities in preparing and reviewing neighbourhood plans.

What Funding is Available?

Harborough District Council has established a grant fund of **£50,000** to support neighbourhood planning across the district.

Eligible parish councils, town councils and neighbourhood forums can apply for funding of **up to £10,000 per neighbourhood plan project**.

The funding can be used to support the preparation or review of a neighbourhood plan, including:

- Initial project preparation and evidence gathering.
- Community engagement and public consultation.
- Drafting and reviewing planning policies.
- Submission of the neighbourhood plan.
- Final consultation and independent examination stages.

Relationship with Previous Locality Funding

The Harborough District Council grant is intended to replace the government-funded support that was previously available through **Locality** and is **not additional funding** on top of any grants already received.

- Where Locality funding has already been received for the preparation of the current neighbourhood plan, Harborough District Council funding will only cover the remaining amount up to the overall maximum of **£10,000**.
- Where no Locality funding has been received, Harborough District Council may provide funding up to the full **£10,000** limit.

Funding for Neighbourhood Plan Reviews

Funding is also available for the review of adopted neighbourhood plans.

Regular reviews help ensure neighbourhood plans:

- Remain up to date with national planning policy.
- Align with the latest adopted Local Plan.
- Continue to reflect local priorities and community aspirations.

Neighbourhood plans should typically be reviewed every **five years**.

How to Apply

To apply for funding, parish councils, town councils and neighbourhood forums must:

1. Submit an Expression of Interest

An Expression of Interest (EOI) form must be completed and submitted to Harborough District Council.

This applies even where a parish or town council has previously indicated an intention to prepare or review a neighbourhood plan.

2. Provide a Project Plan

Applications must be supported by a project plan that details:

- The activities to be undertaken.
- Who will deliver the work.
- Estimated costs for each stage.
- Key project milestones.
- An indicative timetable for delivery.

How Grant Payments Will Be Made

Harborough District Council will hold the approved grant funding on behalf of each neighbourhood planning group.

Funding will be released as costs are incurred and evidenced.

To receive payment, applicants must submit:

- Official parish or town council invoices.
- Copies of supplier or consultant invoices.
- Evidence that the expenditure relates to activities identified within the approved project plan.

Once the required documentation has been received and verified, Harborough District Council will reimburse the eligible costs directly to the successful parish or town council's bank account. Note that it might not be possible to fund all applications.

Further Information

The total funding available through this programme is limited to **£50,000** and grants will be awarded subject to available budget and compliance with the eligibility requirements and application process outlined above.

What Can the Grant Be Spent On?

The examples below are intended as a guide and are not exhaustive. Grant funding can be used to support activities that directly contribute to the preparation or review of a neighbourhood plan, including:

- Developing or maintaining a project website.
- Training for neighbourhood plan steering group members.
- Appointing planning consultants or other suitably qualified specialists to provide professional advice, evidence gathering and policy drafting.
- Community engagement and consultation activities.
- Venue hire for public meetings and events.
- Publicity and communications materials.
- Printing and publication costs.
- Technical studies, surveys and supporting evidence where justified.

What Cannot the Grant Be Spent On?

Grant funding cannot be used for:

- Activities that have already been completed before the grant is awarded.
- Routine administrative costs, such as minute-taking or general office duties.
- Salaried staff costs, additional hours for existing employees, or employing individuals on a casual or freelance basis to undertake administrative functions.

- Capital purchases, such as computers, laptops, tablets, software licences or other equipment.

Note: Parish and town councils may be able to recover VAT under HMRC Notice 749. Applicants should seek their own financial advice where necessary.

How Applications Will Be Assessed

Applications from eligible parish councils, town councils and neighbourhood forums will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Whether all proposed expenditure is eligible for funding.
- Whether there is a clear and evidenced need for the proposed expenditure.
- Whether the proposed activities and outputs will help progress the preparation or review of a neighbourhood plan.
- Whether the project is realistic, achievable and capable of being delivered within the proposed timetable.
- Whether the costs are reasonable, accurately calculated and provide value for money.

Notification of the Outcome

Harborough District Council will notify applicants of the outcome of their application by email.

The Council aims to assess applications within **21 working days from the clause of the EOI window**, provided all required information has been supplied. Where additional information is required, applicants will be contacted and the assessment period may be extended.

If an application is successful:

- A formal grant offer will be issued.
- The recipient will be required to enter into a grant agreement with Harborough District Council before any funding can be released.

Applicants will be informed if further information is required before a decision can be made.

Appendix 1: Grant Application Guidance

Preparing Your Budget

Applications must include a clear breakdown of the costs for which funding is being requested. Costs should be divided into:

- **Professional fees** (consultants and specialist support)
- **Other project costs** (printing, venue hire, surveys, engagement activities, etc.)

Funding should generally be sought for activities due to begin at least **one month after submission** of the application to allow time for assessment, approval and acceptance of the grant.

For each cost item, applicants should provide:

- A brief description of the activity.
- The expected outputs or outcomes.
- The estimated cost.
- Any relevant day rates or fee structures.

Professional Fees

If grant funding is being used to appoint consultants or specialists, applications must explain:

- The work being commissioned.
- The key deliverables.
- How the work will support the preparation or review of the neighbourhood plan.

Consultants should be appropriately qualified for the work they are undertaking. For planning advice, a suitably experienced planning consultant, preferably a Chartered Town Planner (MRTPI), is recommended.

Applicants are encouraged to obtain quotations from more than one consultant to demonstrate value for money and competitive pricing.

Where a fixed-price quotation is provided, applicants should explain how they have satisfied themselves that the cost is reasonable.

Reasonable expenses may also be claimed, including:

- Standard class rail travel.
- Mileage at **45p per mile (car)** or **24p per mile (motorcycle)**.
- Overnight accommodation up to **£120 per night**.

All quotations:

- Must be dated within the last 12 months.
- Must be provided directly by the consultant or supplier.
- Should include a breakdown of activities, deliverables and costs.

Applicants may attach quotations, proposals or draft contracts to their Expression of Interest form. Following approval of funding, the appointed consultant must be confirmed with Harborough District Council.

Other Project Costs

Applications can also include other neighbourhood plan costs, such as printing, venue hire or community engagement activities.

Costs should be supported by quotations wherever possible. If a quotation cannot be obtained, applicants should provide a reasonable estimate and explain how it has been calculated.

Example: Printing Costs

- Printing cost: £0.05 per double-sided colour page.
- Document length: 100 pages.
- Number of copies required: 10.

Calculation:

$$£0.05 \times 100 \text{ pages} \times 10 \text{ copies} = £50$$

Providing clear calculations and justification will help ensure applications can be assessed efficiently.

Example of a Breakdown of Costs

Breakdown of consultancy support and professional fees

EXAMPLE BUDGET PLAN FOR A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

(Indicative 18-month project budget)

1. INTRODUCTION

Figures are estimates based on typical neighbourhood plan projects for a small rural parish.

2. SUMMARY BUDGET

Total estimated cost: £10,500 — £15,800

Potential grant funding from Harborough District Council usually between £5k and £10k

3. COST BREAKDOWN

A. Project Management & Administration (est)

- Printing, stationery, materials: £150 — £300

• Room hire (Village Hall, small meetings):	£200 — £350
• Website updates / hosting:	£100 — £200
Subtotal:	£450 — £850

B. Neighbourhood Plan Engagement (est)

• Launch event materials and refreshments:	£150 — £250
• Posters, leaflets, banners:	£300 — £500
• Survey design, printing, distribution:	£250 — £550
• Public consultation exhibitions (Reg 14):	£200 — £400
Subtotal:	£900 — £1,700

C. Technical Evidence (est)

• Housing needs assessment (if not using Locality technical support):	£1,200 — £2,000
• Design or heritage character assessment:	£800 — £1,500
• Environmental or green space assessment:	£600 — £1,200
Subtotal:	£2,600 — £4,700

D. Consultancy Support (Planning Consultant) (est)

• Project advice and meetings:	£1,000 — £1,800
• Drafting policy sections:	£1,200 — £2,000
• Preparing supporting docs (Basic Conditions Statement, Consultation Statement):	£1,400 — £2,100
Subtotal:	£3,600 — £5,900

E. Regulation 14 & 16 Preparation (est)

• Final document design and formatting:	£300 — £600
• Printing of final draft plan (Reg 14):	£350 — £650
Subtotal:	£650 — £1,250

F. Contingency (est)

• General contingency (10-15%):	£800 — £1,400
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4. PROJECT PHASING OF COSTS (indicative)

Months 1-3:

- Engagement materials, early events, surveys
- Estimated: £1,000 — £1,800

Months 4-9:

- Evidence gathering, assessments, consultancy input
- Estimated: £4,000 — £6,500

Months 10-14:

- Drafting policies and preparing consultation documents
- Estimated: £3,000 — £4,500

Months 15-18:

- Regulation 14 consultation, revisions, printing
- Estimated: £1,000 — £2,000

Appendix 2: Expression of Interest Form

1. Neighbourhood Planning group

2. Lead officer name

3. Lead officer email address

4. Is the neighbourhood plan area designated?

☐ Yes

5. What stage in the Neighbourhood Plan process are you currently at?

- ☐ Neighbourhood Area Designation
- ☐ Community engagement and evidence gathering
- ☐ Drafting the Plan
- ☐ Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) Consultation
- ☐ Submission to Harborough District Council (Regulation 15)
- ☐ Publication (Regulation 16) Consultation by Harborough District Council
- ☐ Independent Examination
- ☐ Referendum
- ☐ Other

6. Has your neighbourhood plan been 'made' previously?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. Are you currently reviewing your neighbourhood plan

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. Are you in the process of getting the area designated?

☐ Yes

a. When is this expected to be?

☐ No

a. When do you expect the neighbourhood area to be designated?

Note, funding is only available after formal designation of a neighbourhood area. If you require any information or support concernign Neighbourhood Planning, please email: neighbourhoodplans@harborough.gov.uk

9. Have you previously received funding from Locality for this neighbourhood plan ? (Please discount any previous funding if this is a Review)

☐ Yes

i. How much funding have you received and for what?

ii. How did you use the funding you received?

☐ No

10. Please can you provide a detailed breakdown of the estimated costs for the support you require. There are two elements: professional fees and other project costs.

The activities you apply for should ideally be those which will start at least one month after you submit your application (to allow time for the assessment and grants offer and acceptance process to be completed).

For each item you will need to provide a short summary of the outputs you expect to achieve from the work and include any day rates.

Consultancy support and professional fees

Other project costs

11. Do you have any other sources of funding? (e.g. PC funds or other grants, please provide amount and sources of funding)

☐ Yes

Amount and source

☐ No

12. You must include a Project Plan for your neighbourhood plan. MHCLG have provided a template plan ([Neighbourhood plan project planner](#)). You may use this template or another of your choice. Please forward the project plan and any other information to neighbourhoodplans@harborough.gov.uk with the subject; **NDP GRANTS**

Please confirm whether you will be able to provide a project plan

Thank you for your submission.

HDC will initially inform you by email as to whether you have been successful or if more information is needed to make a decision. The aim is to assess applications within 21 working days from closure of the EOI period, provided that all the relevant information has been included in the application. If the decision is going to take longer than this, we will let you know. If the grant offer is accepted then a formal notification will be provided and the recipient will be required to sign a legal agreement.

If there are any further queries relating to the grant process, please contact Matthew Bills in the Planning Policy Team at email: neighbourhoodplans@harborough.gov.uk or telephone on 07703211863.

Further information on the neighbourhood planning process can also be found on the Harborough District Council planning webpage here [[Neighbourhood Planning - Harborough District Council](#)].