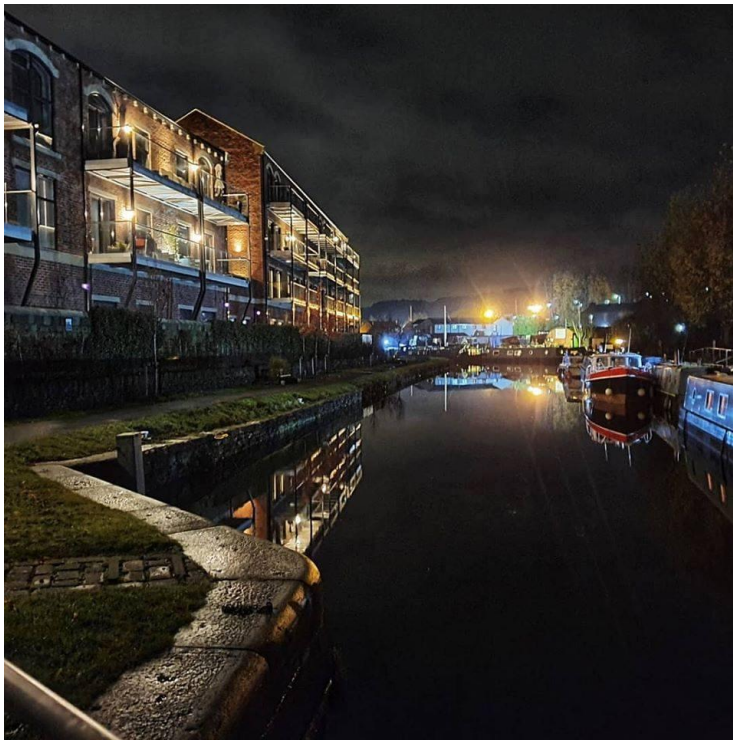


Your place, your plan



**Mirfield Neighbourhood
Plan**

‘Who is this leaflet for?’

It’s for anyone who wants to get involved in the new planning system. You might be part of a community group, a business, a local councillor or an individual. Most important, do you live in and care about Tadcaster?

‘Why care about planning?’

If you care about where you live, you should care about planning.

Planning is simply about where stuff goes. It’s about stopping the wrong things being built in the wrong places and making sure the right things are built in the right places.

Houses, shops, markets, parks, community centres, energy plants – they all need planning to get them off the ground.

Planning has been with us for generations, but even though it is important it can seem, well, a little dull. But the Government has just shaken up the planning system and wants to hand more power to local people through new ‘Neighbourhood Plans’.

Planning is about to get interesting.



If you want a say in your community’s future, you need to get to grips with what planning can do for you and your neighbourhood.

This leaflet aims to get rid of some of the myths about planning... And to give you the confidence to get started.

Does planning have to be off-putting?’

All the jargon around planning can be a real turn-off. It can make you feel like you’re working with flat-pack furniture instructions... in Icelandic. **Don’t let it put you off. You don’t need to learn a new language.**

At its heart, planning is about colouring in maps to create a picture of your future – but these maps have real legal force.



‘How much legal power does planning have?’

Your local councillors approve or reject planning applications at a planning committee. Councillors are local people, just like you. They are elected to represent you and your neighbourhood.

But they must base their decision on the bigger picture within your Local Plan – otherwise they are acting illegally. Planning lays down a strong vision for what your town or village will look like for many decades to come.

‘Why can’t I just wait until I hear about a planning application?’

Because when a notice appears on a lamp-post it may already be too late for you to have a big influence.

The real power behind planning is the Local Plan – and local people now have much stronger rights to help create that Plan. If you get the right plan for your area, you can help to steer development to where it is needed and stop bad planning applications being made in the first place.

‘So what’s different about Neighbourhood Plans?’

There has always been informal community planning – you may have been involved in making a Parish Plan, for example.

But it’s all been a bit patchy. Good local councils have helped people to draw up Local Plans. Others have created their Local Plans with very little input from local people, and their Plans are not always easy to understand. Now people can draw up Neighbourhood Plans for their local area, and these Plans will be part of the Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans will have a proper legal status.

‘So I’m half-interested. Go ahead, inspire me...’

Let’s say you want more green open space or space for local food production. Maybe you want to tackle a local flooding problem. A Neighbourhood Plan can help to bring the right people together to get the things you want, like space for new allotments.

Maybe you want safer routes for kids and need a way of planning some new cycle routes. Maybe your community wants to reap the benefits of local renewable energy production – if so, community planning can help work out the best place to locate your new community business.



Maybe you want it all... in which case community planning can help to get your vision organised to make the most of what you have. You’ll still have to get the money to make it happen, but you’re more likely to get it if you have a vision which makes sense and which your community supports.

‘So can we put anything in a Neighbourhood Plan?’

Almost anything that uses land and needs planning permission can go into a Neighbourhood Plan.

There are a few exceptions that the Government has a separate system for – mainly major national projects. Your Neighbourhood Plan also has to be broadly in line with your council’s other priorities.

In law, planning has to make sure that we don’t stop our children from having good health and a decent quality of life in the future. In planning-speak this is called sustainable development.

So Neighbourhood Plans are about everyone’s lives now and in the future, and not just those who can make money out of land.

‘What does a Neighbourhood Plan looklike?’

There’s no mystery – they are simply a few pieces of paper containing maps and lists. They include practical things that will make a difference to people’s lives in the future, like:

- new pedestrian walkways;
- affordable housing for young people;
- a new shopping area;
- the site of a new school;
- a new park or play area;
- where new allotments go;
- wildlife and landscape areas.



‘So how do I get involved?’

There are two ways – and you can do both or just one.

The *first* way is more traditional – to work with your local council on their Local Plan (called a Local Development Framework, or LDF, in planning-speak). You have a legal right to do this.

- *The ‘pros’*: The Local Plan deals with all the planning issues across a whole council area rather than just a small patch of it. So it’s where the big decisions are made every three years or so on housing, roads and waste, for example.
- *The ‘cons’*: It can be a formal process. You will have to read the council’s draft Plan. Every Local Plan has a public inquiry. If you disagree with the council’s Plan or want to add your own ideas, you will need to make your points ‘in writing’, and you have a right to appear at the public inquiry held to discuss the Plan.

The *second* way is what this leaflet is all about – neighbourhood planning. The Government’s Localism Act created new powers for local people to create their own Neighbourhood Plans. These Plans, once agreed by the community at a referendum, become part of your council’s Local Plan and will have legal force.

‘Who’s in charge of getting local people to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan?’

In Mirfield, it’s your Town Council: they act as your local representatives and are responsible for preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.

Do you know how to contact them? The clerk is Lisa Staggs and you can reach her at mirfieldtowncouncil@gmail.com

Tips for drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan

Talk to your council

They have a duty to help local people draw up a Neighbourhood Plan and advise you on any legal or environmental issues. That's what they are there for. And they may have some money to help you cover costs too.

Include everyone

For every local person who will happily give you their opinion (whether you asked for it or not) there are a hundred who won't. Special efforts may be needed to get the views of young people, ethnic minorities or the elderly.

Be open and honest

Tell people how *important* the Plan is, but also tell them what it *can't* do. Make sure anyone involved in the Plan is upfront if they might benefit from it personally.

Work in partnership

Draw up a list of groups and people you need to work with you. Think about including local councillors, schools, community groups, business leaders, and the local media.

Use your local knowledge and common sense

The whole point of Neighbourhood Plans is that they are put together by people who know a place well and care about it. So if you're looking at a site for a new GP surgery *you'll* know whether it's near a bus route, for example. It can be that simple.



Look to the future

The best places to live are those where decades ago people planned for the future. Imagine how people in your area might live fifty years from now, and what they would like you to preserve.

Consider climate change

How can your Plan help to prevent climate change? For example, can it include renewable energy? And think about what to do about the *effects* of climate change too – such as how more parks or gardens could help to reduce the risk of flooding.

Be positive

At some point Victor Meldrew or one of his grumpy chums might appear. Community action can attract negativity from residents, councils or property developers. Challenge them to get involved and come up with a better idea.

Be realistic

Your Neighbourhood Plan needs to be drawn up using your council's Local Plan as a guide. Again, your local councillor and planner can help you with this.

Forget the jargon

There's no need to swallow a planning manual. Your Neighbourhood Plan simply needs to be easy to read and have clear objectives.

Have fun

If you can keep everyone enthusiastic, you'll end up with a Plan that everyone can understand and be proud of.



mirfield
town council