Ryhall Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Terms of Reference

1. Background

Ryhall & Belmesthorpe Parish Council is the designated qualifying body responsible for preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the civil parish. To support this work, the Parish Council has established dedicated project management arrangements and delegated all relevant plan-making functions to the community-based Ryhall & Belmesthorpe Neighbourhood Steering Group (RBNSG).

The Steering Group acts as the Project Board, providing leadership, coordination, and decision-making throughout the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. Its role includes guiding the development of the Plan and its supporting evidence up to the Preferred Options Consultation Draft stage, ensuring alignment with the Rutland Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Neighbourhood Plan offers an opportunity for the community to shape future development, protect valued features of the parish, and influence land-use decisions as part of the statutory planning system.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the RBNSG is to design, manage, and oversee the Neighbourhood Plan process so that the Plan progresses successfully through Independent Examination and community referendum, and is ultimately adopted by Rutland County Council as part of the statutory development plan.

3. Principles

The RBNSG will operate according to the following principles:

- Conduct the plan-making process in a democratic, transparent, and fair manner, encouraging open discussion and the sharing of ideas.
- Ensure that parish residents have meaningful opportunities to contribute, particularly through consultation activities.
- Maintain a positive, constructive, and solutions-focused approach.
- Take a holistic view of the parish's future, aiming to enhance quality of life and strengthen community cohesion.

Members of the RBNSG agree to:

- Maintain openness and transparency, and welcome new members.
- Support an inclusive and accessible consultation process.
- Participate actively in meetings and activities.
- Ensure that evidence gathering is robust and comprehensive.
- Base decisions and actions on the outcomes of consultation and evidence.
- Ensure the Neighbourhood Plan has full regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and the strategic policies of the adopted Rutland Local Plan.

4. Tasks and Activities

The RBNSG will undertake the following tasks:

- Work closely with Ryhall Parish Council and Rutland County Council Planning Team, ensuring they are kept fully informed and that decisions requiring their approval are referred to them appropriately.
- Ensure all key decisions are jointly agreed by the RBNSG and Ryhall Parish Council.

- Prepare a project plan for the Neighbourhood Plan, including a clear timetable to guide activity and monitor progress.
- Publicise the intention to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan and keep the community informed throughout the process.
- Meet regularly to review progress, agree actions, and address emerging issues efficiently.
- Gather baseline information to inform the Plan.
- Identify the needs, aspirations, and long-term vision of residents.
- Establish sub-groups where necessary to undertake specific tasks, subject to agreement by the full RBNSG.
- Engage with residents, partners, and stakeholders throughout the development of the Plan.
- Conduct thorough and wide-ranging consultation to ensure that if the plan continues to a draft and final Plan this reflects community views.
- If initial consultation and soundings indicate a community wide desire to proceed to production of a NHP the steering group will Analyse evidence and consultation feedback to prepare the draft plan widely ahead of the referendum and final Neighbourhood Plan.
- Produce and circulate minutes of formal RBNSG meetings to Ryhall Parish Council, RBNSG members, and other relevant parties (e.g., Rutland County Council officers).
- Maintain regular communication with interested residents through agreed channels such as email updates, Parish Magazine, Parish Council website.
- Agree financial arrangements and budgets with Ryhall Parish Council.

5. Membership

- The RBNSG shall consist of no fewer than 3 members.
- Membership is voluntary.
- Ryhall Parish Council must have at least one representative.
- Members must reside in either Ryhall or Belmesthorpe.
- Individuals living outside the parishes may be invited to join if they run an established local business and have no conflict of interest.
- The RBNSG is quorate when at least 3 signed-up members are present.
- Officers or Councillors from Rutland County Council, and other agencies supporting the process, may attend and contribute but cannot vote.

6.. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Officer Roles

The RBNSG shall elect the following officers:

- Chair
- Treasurer/Secretary – Who is the Parish Council Clerk

If the Chair is absent, a temporary Chair shall be elected from among the members present.

6.2 Secretary Responsibilities

- Maintain records of formal meetings, including decisions and action points.
- Circulate minutes to RBNSG members and Parish Council in a timely manner.
- Make minutes and relevant documents publicly available.
- If the Secretary is absent, a member present shall be elected to record the meeting.

7. Meeting Arrangements

- The RBNSG and any sub-groups shall set their own schedule of formal and informal/working meetings, held as often as necessary.
- Members shall receive at least 72 hours' notice of meetings by email, including the agenda. Shorter notice may be given for urgent matters with majority agreement.
- Decisions requiring a vote shall be made by simple majority of members present. The Chair has a casting vote.
- The public may attend formal meetings to observe and may speak at the Chair's discretion.
- Agendas for formal meetings shall be posted on the Ryhall Parish Council website, normally at least 3 days in advance. Minutes shall also be posted promptly.
- Sub-group decisions shall be reported to the full RBNSG for ratification or information.
- Stakeholders or interested parties may be invited to attend specific meetings
- A list of RBNSG members and contact details shall be maintained on the Parish Council website.
- Any changes to membership shall be notified to Ryhall Parish Council.
- Meetings and activities shall follow good practice

8. Finance

- Expenditure shall be approved by majority decision of the RBNSG and a budget submitted to the Parish Council for approval.
- All financial decisions shall be recorded in the minutes and notified to Ryhall Parish Council, the Qualifying Body for the NHP.
- Ryhall Parish Council will hold all funds and settle all accounts due.
- The RBNSG will seek additional funding from appropriate sources.
- Financial updates shall be provided to Ryhall Parish Council.
- Any expenditure exceeding available funds must be approved by Ryhall Parish Council.

9. Conflicts of Interest

- All members must declare any pecuniary or relevant interest that could be perceived as influencing RBNSG decisions. Declarations shall be recorded and made publicly available.
- Declaring an interest does not prevent participation in developing the NHP, but ensures transparency and objectivity.
- Members must act in the interests of the whole community, even if representing a particular group.
- Members who declare an interest shall not participate in discussion or voting on the related matter. The Chair's decision on disputes is final.
- Organisations or businesses may contribute to the NHP process, including financially, but such contributions must be publicly declared and must not influence recommendations.

9.1 Nolan Principles of Public Life

Members shall uphold the following principles:

- Selflessness — Decisions made solely in the public interest.
- Integrity — Avoid obligations that could influence duties.
- Objectivity — Decisions based on merit.
- Accountability — Be answerable to the public for actions and decisions.
- Openness — Be transparent about decisions and restrict information only when necessary.
- Honesty — Declare private interests and resolve conflicts to protect the public interest.
- Leadership — Promote and exemplify these principles.

10. Amendments to the Terms of Reference

Amendments may be made at an RBNSG meeting and must be approved by a majority of members. Any changes shall be notified to Ryhall Parish Council.

11. Dissolution

- The RBNSG may be dissolved following a majority vote at an RBNSG meeting, after which a Special General Meeting shall be called for the sole purpose of dissolution.
- Upon dissolution, any remaining funds shall be returned to their original source.
- No individual member shall benefit from the dispersal of funds.