**Mansfield**

**Plan for Neighbourhoods**

**Guidance – Project Selection and Assessment Process**

1. **Purpose**
	1. This guidance has been agreed by the Mansfield Place Board, acting as the designated Neighbourhood Board for the PfN programme, and by Mansfield District Council (MDC) as the Accountable Body. It sets out how projects will be identified, assessed, and selected for funding under the Plan for Neighbourhoods in Mansfield.
	2. It sets out how the Neighbourhood Board and MDC together will identify, evaluate, and select projects for investment via the PfN programme, ensuring a robust and transparent process is followed. The guidance also describes how delivery of the Neighbourhood Board’s approved projects will be monitored and evaluated.
	3. The Neighbourhood Board is responsible for assessing all projects’ alignment with the PfN Regeneration Plan and the Make it in Mansfield (MiiM) strategy, while MDC ensures appropriate governance and financial controls are in place before funding is committed, notably through the initial 4 Year Investment Plan.
	4. It will be noted that “The Board” refers to the Mansfield Place Board and specifically its Core Board in its capacity as the Neighbourhood Board as defined under its Terms of Reference. This guidance reflects the approach developed by the Mansfield Place Board and MDC to ensure a clear, transparent, and strategic process for selecting projects under the Plan for Neighbourhoods (PfN). The Neighbourhood Board is a government-mandated body responsible for overseeing the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme locally. In Mansfield, this Board operates as the Core Board of the wider Place Board, ensuring local decision-making is aligned with broader strategic priorities.
2. **Strategic Context**
	1. The Plan for Neighbourhoods (PfN) is a 10-year, government-backed investment programme designed to support the regeneration of towns and neighbourhoods through long-term, community-led change. The programme’s three core objectives are to help create thriving places, build stronger communities, and enable local people to take back control over their area’s future.
	2. In Mansfield, PfN funding will support delivery of the MIIM strategy, which sets out a local vision for growth, opportunity, and inclusion. While the MIIM strategy covers the whole district, PfN investment will focus on the neighbourhoods eligible for funding.
	3. As a government initiative, the definition of the PfN area sets the eligible area for projects as the urban area of Mansfield, Forest Town and Mansfield Woodhouse together. Any projects coming forward must demonstrate how they benefit this area as defined in the attached map.
	4. **Appendix A** relates, but all projects brought forward for PfN funding must:
* Directly support at least one of the strategic commitments in the MIIM strategy an
* Align with the national PfN objectives and fall within one or more of the preapproved intervention types.
	1. Applications are welcome from:
* Community and voluntary organisations
* Local public sector bodies
* Education providers
* Businesses or business partnerships
* Cultural or heritage organisations
* Other place-based partnerships
	1. Joint bids and collaborative proposals are encouraged but a lead partner should be identified.All applicants must be eligible to receive public funding and should be able to demonstrate how their project will deliver meaningful benefits for local communities in the defined Mansfield PfN area.
1. **Project Selection Process Overview**
	1. The selection of projects for PfN funding in Mansfield will be managed jointly by the Mansfield Place Board (acting as the Neighbourhood Board) and MDC (as the Accountable Body.
	2. The Board is responsible for identifying and recommending projects that align with the MiiM strategy and the priorities of the local community. MDC will support this process by ensuring public funding is managed correctly and that due diligence checks are in place before any money is committed in line with the PfN guidance.
	3. All projects will go through a clear and fair process that includes the following stages:
* **Gateway Criteria** – **Gateway Checks** – As outlined in Section 5.2, these are initial “yes or no” questions confirming basic eligibility, such as location within the PfN area, clarity and completeness of the submission, eligibility for public funding, and clear alignment with at least one PfN intervention objective.
* **Project Assessment –** Proposals that pass the gateway stage will be scored using the four-part assessment model detailed in Section 6.1. This model assesses each project’s strategic fit with the *Make it in Mansfield* strategy, alignment with local engagement, deliverability and risk, and value for money.
* **Deliverability Criteria** – These evaluate whether a project has a robust business case, is affordable, represents value for money, has clear benefits, managed risks and has the support and resources it needs to succeed.

In addition, Mansfield District Council will undertake the following checks:

* A **Programme Check** to make sure the portfolio of projects meets overall PfN objectives.
* A **Compliance Check** to ensure projects meet technical and legal standards, including procurement, funding rules, and any subsidy control issues.
	1. This structured approach helps ensure that good ideas are supported, that public money is used responsibly, and that the programme can deliver lasting benefits across Mansfield. The starting point for all applicants is the submission of an Expression of Interest (EoI) available separately as part of this package and as detailed in the section below.
1. **Supporting Resources for Applicants**
	1. Before submitting an Expression of Interest (EoI), applicants should review the following documents to ensure their project aligns with local and national priorities:
* **Plan for Neighbourhoods (PfN) Pre-Approved Interventions:**
 [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-neighbourhoods-pre-approved-interventions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-neighbourhoods-prospectus-and-tools/plan-for-neighbourhoods-pre-approved-interventions) This list details project types and activities eligible for PfN funding.
* **Make it in Mansfield Strategic Commitments:**
 <https://www.mansfield.gov.uk/makeitinmansfield/> The local strategy sets out the priorities projects must support, noting that to support Expressions of Interest, Appendix B summarises these against the PfN objectives
* Applicants are encouraged to use these resources to check their project’s eligibility and alignment before submitting an EoI.

**Appendix B** sets out the flow chart for process of submission and assessment, noting the following 3 key stages as outlined earlier in para 3.4.

1. **Expression of Interest (EoI)**
	1. To begin the process, applicants will be asked to complete an Expression of Interest (EoI) form. This allows the Board to understand your project idea and check its fit with the programme.
	2. Once submitted, all EoIs will be reviewed to ensure they meet the following basic requirements, being “yes or no” Gateway Checks:
* Is the project located within / clearly impacting on the PfN priority area, being the Mansfield urban area including Forest Town and Mansfield Woodhouse
* Is the form complete and clear
* Is the applicant eligible to receive public funding
* Does the project align with one or more of the 3 PfN intervention objectives, being thriving places, stronger communities and taking back control and as referenced in more detail at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-neighbourhoods-prospectus-and-tools/plan-for-neighbourhoods-prospectus#fund-objectives>
1. **PfN Assessment and Recommendation**
	1. Projects that pass the Gateway Criteria and initial compliance checks (as outlined in Section 3.4) will be assessed using a four-part scoring model. This model reflects how well a project fits the goals of the Plan for Neighbourhoods (PfN), aligns with the *Make it in Mansfield* (MIIM) strategy, and contributes to a balanced, impactful programme. The four assessment categories are:

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| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Description** |
| **Strategic Fit** *(weighted 30%)* | How well the project aligns with the 25 commitments in the Make it in Mansfield strategy (as outlined in Appendix A). |
|  ***Alignment with******Community******Feedback and Engagement****(weighted 20%)* | How well the project reflects the priorities raised through recent engagement activity (e.g. survey results, workshops, youth voice) and explains how it will involve them in decision-making and/or enhance capacity |
| **Deliverability &****Risk***(weighted 30%)* | The ability to be delivered effectively, and identification and management of associated risks. |
| **Value for Money***(weighted 20%)* | How well the project leverages match funding, and the level of impact delivered relative to the investment requested. |

Each area will be scored on a scale from **0 to 4**, where 0 does not meet the criteria, through to 4 where it fully meets or exceeds expectations

* 1. Full scoring criteria are provided in **Appendix D** and will be used to assess project submissions.
	2. An Assessment Panel will review, score, and moderate all eligible project proposals to ensure consistency, fairness, and transparency in the decision-making process. The scoring will be based on the criteria set out in **Appendix D**.

The Panel will consist of seven (7) non-conflicted members, including:

* The Chair of the Mansfield Place Board (serving as Panel Chair)
* The Chairs of the four Place Board subgroups:
* Safe, Healthy, and Engaged Communities
* Town Centre
* Pride and Perspectives
* Growth and Opportunity

One representative from Mansfield District Council, acting as Deputy Chair

One independent member, appointed by the Board to support objectivity and ensure quorum for decisions

* 1. The Panel will be supported by the Place Board Project Manager and a Mansfield District Council officer as accountable body, both attending in a non-scoring, advisory capacity to ensure adherence to the agreed process.
	2. Once scoring is complete, all assessed project proposals will be submitted to the full Place Board (Neighbourhood Board) for final decision.
	3. The Board may also invite applicants to collaborate on overlapping ideas, or directly commission delivery partners where important gaps exist.
	4. A high assessment score does not guarantee selection. Final decisions will also consider how well each project complements other proposed interventions, avoids duplication, and contributes to a balanced and coherent programme of activity across the area.
1. **Deliverability - Business Case Development**
	1. Projects that are recommended for funding at this stage will be invited to develop a proportionate business case. This allows the Board and the Accountable Body to confirm that the project is ready for delivery and represents a responsible use of public funds.
	2. A business case template will be provided, and support will be available from the Place Board Project Manager, Mansfield District Council officers and technical support. The required level of detail will vary depending on the size and complexity of the project.
	3. Business cases will follow the Five Case Model, as outlined in **Appendix C** Business Case Framework. Further details will be provided to all projects reaching this stage. All submissions will undergo independent assessment and due diligence prior to final decisions by the Board and the Accountable Body.
2. **Funding and Delivery Responsibilities**
	1. Mansfield District Council is the Accountable Body for the PfN programme. It is responsible for managing public funds and ensuring that all supported projects comply with government guidance and financial standards.
	2. Once a project is approved, MDC as the Accountable Body will be responsible for managing due diligence and the process whereby project assessments are concluded, how awards to organisations and contractual and payment arrangements are made and how it will manage performance and obligations around the proper and regular management of the funding. It will also be responsible for liaising with project leads and reporting to MHCLG.
	3. Mansfield District Council will:
* Oversee the Memorandum of Understanding or equivalent agreement with government and the Board
* Ensure continued good governance and transparency in decision making
* Manage, monitor and evaluate the Programme
* Support partners in the development of full business cases with the Place Board Manager
* Manage contractual arrangements with project partners to ensure delivery
* Carry out the financial management of the projects
* Be responsible for the financial management of the overall programme
* Report to the Board and to Government
	1. After submission of the Investment Plan to government, Mansfield District Councill will develop the local assurance process and agree this with the Board, noting the recent engagement with and expectations of MHCLG from a Deep Drive Assurance process.
	2. Mansfield District Council will have back-to-back funding agreements with successful applicants which reflect the contractual arrangements with MHCLG and the government. The agreement will set out the grant purposes and eligible activities, total grant awarded, payment arrangements, match funding contractual outputs and outcomes, monitoring and evaluation requirements, publicity and branding requirements, clawback terms and project specific conditions. A template agreement will be made available as part of the offer, illustrating the expectations.
	3. The funding agreement must be returned and signed by both parties prior to any grant payments being made by the Council. Payments will typically be made quarterly in arrears, once evidence of defrayal has been provided.
	4. Mansfield District Council will undertake quarterly monitoring of projects. This will cover project activity, expenditure and achievement of outputs and outcomes and will feed into quarterly programme updates to the Board (and any government reporting expectations. All financial claims will be checked by the Council’s finance team with all payments requiring sign off by the Section 151 Officer.
1. **Support for Applicants**
	1. To ensure projects are well-developed and aligned with local and national expectations, support will be provided throughout the process. This includes:
* Clear templates and guidance materials for EoIs and business cases as separately available as part of the package of support.
* Access to pre-submission advice from the Board Project Manager and Mansfield District Council officers
* Clarification sessions, if required, to assist with understanding the scoring framework and expectations
* A shared resource hub containing all relevant documentation

This support is intended to build local capacity, particularly for smaller organisations or community-led proposals, and to encourage a wide range of high-quality project submissions.

1. **Transparency, Monitoring, and Governance**
	1. The project development and selection process will adhere to the following standards:
* Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest policy
* Nolan Principles of Public Life
* Cabinet Office Grant Functional Standards
* Local Assurance Framework – to be confirmed and adopted by the Board following submission of the Investment Plan in October 2025.
* All decisions will be recorded and published as appropriate. Mansfield District Council, as the Accountable Body, will ensure this is put into effect.

**Appendix A**

**Make it in Mansfield – Strategic Commitments**

This Appendix sets out the 25 strategic commitments agreed by the Mansfield Place Board as part of the Make it in Mansfield strategy. These commitments reflect the Place Board’s vision for long-term regeneration, community wellbeing, and inclusive economic growth.

While these commitments are district-wide, all projects brought forward for funding through the Plan for Neighbourhoods (PfN) must demonstrate how they contribute to at least one of these commitments.

The commitments were developed through extensive community engagement and are grouped under the three core PfN outcomes:

* 🔵 Stronger Communities
* 🟢 Thriving Places
* 🟡 Taking Back Control

They serve as the foundation for selecting and prioritizing investments that meet both PfN objectives and the needs of Mansfield’s communities, businesses and residents.

Applicants, stakeholders, and delivery partners should refer to these commitments when designing projects and completing an Expression of Interest. Clear alignment with these commitments will be a key part of the project assessment process.

**🔵 1. Stronger Communities**

* Focus: trust, safety, inclusion, civic life, culture
* Listen to our communities about what they need and want
* Tackle the things which prevent some people from accessing services
* Increase opportunities to volunteer and participate in community life
* Celebrate everything that is good about Mansfield, including our diversity and culture
* Ensure Mansfield is a welcoming place where people are safe and feel safe
* Work with individuals and neighbourhoods to understand the causes of anti-social behaviour, and find ways to address it
* Launch a district-wide campaign to improve Mansfield’s environment

**🟢 2. Thriving Places**

* Focus: public spaces, infrastructure, environment, wellbeing, town centre
* Evolve Mansfield town centre into a vibrant, flexible, safe space, in order to attract more people
* Develop plans to ensure all neighbourhoods have the support they need
* Promote Mansfield as a place to visit and stay, to explore our many local attractions
* Celebrate and promote our parks and green spaces, to help people get nearer to nature
* Build our programme of cultural and other events throughout the district
* Improve connections across the Mansfield district through digital networks
* Provide more opportunities to be active and encourage healthy lifestyle choices
* Make it easy for every resident to access health services when they need them

**🟡 3. Taking Back Control**

* Focus: Skills, jobs, business, opportunity, economic participation
* Engage local businesses to create pathways to higher-skilled jobs
* Promote local opportunities for individuals to progress their careers
* Help employers and education providers use local career opportunities to inspire learners of all ages
* Create more opportunities to gain new skills throughout working lives
* Work together to help those excluded from the workforce to find employment
* Identify and support businesses with strong potential for growth
* Tackle the things which prevent access to opportunities
* Increase opportunities by working with neighbouring areas
* Create a clear offer to attract outside businesses to “Make it in Mansfield”
* Ensure Mansfield’s place in a wider East Midlands investment strategy
* Develop a strategy to attract emerging industries, such as clean energy

**Appendix B - Project Development and Assessment Flowchart**



**Appendix C**

**Business Case Framework (Five Case Model)**

The business case provides detailed evidence supporting the approval and funding of a project. It will be proportionate to the project’s size and complexity and generally include the following components. Further details will follow to those projects reaching this stage.

**1. Strategic Case**

* Introduction and overview of the project
* Rationale and case for change (why the project is needed)
* Alignment with Make it in Mansfield strategy and PfN objectives
* Description of the proposed investment and expected benefits
* Stakeholder engagement and community support

**2. Economic Case**

* Consideration of alternative options
* Expected economic and social benefits
* Value for money assessment
* Forecasts of demand and outcomes

**3. Financial Case**

* Detailed project costs (capital and revenue)
* Funding sources and match funding details
* Cash flow and affordability analysis
* Longer-term financial sustainability

**4. Commercial Case**

* Procurement approach and delivery model
* Key contracts and partnerships
* Risk allocation and management strategies

**5. Management Case**

* Project governance and leadership structure
* Risk and issue management
* Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting plans
* Change control processes

All business cases will be reviewed by the Assessment Panel / Place Board and Mansfield District Council prior to final funding approval.

**Appendix D**

**Scoring Criteria**

Each category will be scored on a scale of 0 to 4. Below are the scoring definitions for each criterion:

**1. Strategic Fit (MIIM Commitments – 30%)**

Score Definition

1. Minimal and/or indirect impact on one or two MIIM commitments
2. Moderate impact on one or two commitments or minimal impact on three or more
3. Significant impact on one or two commitments or moderate impact on three or more
4. Significant impact on three or more commitments
5. Transformational impact across multiple MIIM commitments

**2. Alignment with Community Feedback and Proposed Engagement (20%)**

Score Definition

1. Minimal or indirect relevance to any community feedback received / no or very limited engagement proposals on the communities impacted
2. Moderate relevance to feedback from one or two sources
3. Moderate relevance to feedback from three or more sources or substantial relevance to one or two / moderate community engagement
4. Substantial relevance to feedback from three or more sources or transformational relevance
5. Significant and strategic response to community feedback from multiple sources / strong community engagement

**3. Deliverability & Risk (30%)**

This criterion combines two factors:

* Deliverability within timescales and with available resources
* Risk and mitigation

Score Definition

1. Unclear delivery model with high risk of failure
2. Low clarity on delivery, with significant risks or funding gaps
3. A reasonable delivery plan, with moderate risk and mitigation
4. Clear delivery plan and low to moderate risk with mitigation in place
5. Clear plan and high confidence in delivery, low risk, and led by a team with a strong track record

**4. Value for Money (20%)**

Score Definition

1. No match funding and minimal strategic or community impact relative to the cost
2. No match funding or limited impact relative to the cost
3. Less than 50% match funding and/or moderate strategic or community impact
4. Over 50% match funding or strong strategic and community impact
5. Over 50% match funding and high impact on both MIIM commitments and community priorities.