Neighbourhood Planning

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Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap

A Step-by-Step Guide

2018 edition

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Contents

Foreword

This is the latest edition of the Locality Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide. Past editions of the Roadmap Guide have been used by groups preparing neighbourhood plans and local authorities all around the country. This edition has been substantially reviewed and updated to make it easier to use and to incorporate recent changes in legislation and national policy.

The guide is for all those involved in, or thinking about, producing a neighbourhood plan and for those who are just curious to find out more. Whilst other guides are predominantly concerned with the legislation and process, we have included advice on good practice.

This guide draws upon the extensive experience of Locality and its partners on working with community groups preparing neighbourhood plans, through the successive national support programmes. We have worked with a wide range of organisations, town and parish councils and neighbourhood forums in urban and rural areas.

Locality is the national membership network for community organisations that bring local people together to meet local needs. The Locality network is for organisations that believe in the power of local communities to build a fairer society. Such community-led organisations not only contribute to producing neighbourhood plans, but can also be part of the means of delivering them and achieving their aims.

When local communities are empowered to lead and influence decision-making, it makes a real difference to their area. People with passion and enthusiasm can use neighbourhood planning as a means to changing their neighbourhoods for the better.

Our hope is that this guide will help you in your endeavours to shape and enhance your local area, improve opportunities and quality of life for all, provide the homes, employment growth and community facilities your community needs and create a more prosperous local economy. This community-led approach is fundamentally what Locality is about.

Tony Armstrong
Chief Executive, Locality

Introduction

Who is this guide for?

Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the Localism Act in 2011. There are two main parts to neighbourhood planning: neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders (including community right to build orders). The focus of this document is on neighbourhood plans.

The idea behind localism is that decision-making be passed to a more local level, from national or local government to local communities. Parish and town councils or neighbourhood forums (in unparished areas) can produce neighbourhood plans for their local areas, putting in place a strategy and policies for the future development of the area. This presents real opportunities, but can seem a little daunting.

This guide is designed to help local communities to decide whether or not to produce a neighbourhood plan for their area and, if they decide to go ahead, to guide them through the process of producing the plan.

The Roadmap gives advice on the requirements of legislation, but also on best practices and how to avoid pitfalls. In particular, it emphasises the need for meaningful local engagement and a robust evidence base as essential parts of producing a realistic and deliverable plan, which has a sense of community ownership.

How to use this guide

Part A provides a concise overview of neighbourhood planning.

Part B describes what neighbourhood planning is about and discusses some of the opportunities and challenges. It contains advice to help communities to decide whether a neighbourhood plan is right for them or whether a different type of planning tool or community activity might be more appropriate.

Part C provides advice on the process for producing a neighbourhood plan, from neighbourhood area designation to the public referendum. The document is divided into sections, to provide concise guidance on the different stages of the neighbourhood plan process.

The guide also contains advice on where further information and support can be obtained and a glossary of technical terms.

Throughout this guide, the term 'neighbourhood plan' refers to a 'Neighbourhood Development Plan', as introduced by the Localism Act 2011.

Part A
Neighbourhood planning – an overview

Elements of neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood plans

A neighbourhood plan puts in place planning policy for a neighbourhood area to guide future development. A neighbourhood plan is about the use and development of land and may contain a vision, aims, planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, or allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development. It may deal with a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues (such as housing, employment, design, heritage and transport) or it may focus on one or two issues only.

These may be issues that are relevant to the whole neighbourhood or just to part of the neighbourhood. It is for those producing the plan to decide on its scope and content as a planning document.

If successful at referendum, a neighbourhood plan will become part of the statutory development plan for the area. This statutory status gives neighbourhood plans far more weight than some other local documents, such as parish plans, community plans and village design statements.

A neighbourhood plan must meet certain specified 'basic conditions'. These ensure plans contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, have regard to national policy and guidance and are in general conformity with adopted strategic local planning policies. Despite the current negotiations on leaving the EU, the requirements to comply with EU obligations will continue to apply for the time being, but may be replaced with a requirement to meet UK law at some point in the future.

A neighbourhood plan should not promote less development than that identified in the local plan for the local area (such as new housing allocations). It can allow greater growth levels, providing it meets the basic conditions. It can specify policies and guidance on how new development should be designed, orientated and located. Neighbourhood plans can be a powerful tool in shaping the development of a neighbourhood. The timeframe for the neighbourhood plan will be for communities to decide, for example whether it is a 5, 10, 15 or 20-year plan.

A robust programme of community engagement and proportionate evidence base should help to make sure that a neighbourhood plan is based on a proper understanding of the area and of the views, aspirations, wants and needs of local people. Producing a clear project plan with key milestones could be very helpful in guiding the plan-making process.

Once a neighbourhood plan has been completed, it will have to be submitted to the local planning authority and then be subject to an independent examination. This will make sure that the proper legal process has been followed and that the plan meets the basic conditions described previously (also see later section on Meeting the basic conditions).

Neighbourhood plans are subject to an independent examination and any necessary modifications are then made to ensure they meet legal requirements. They are then subjected to a public referendum. It is necessary that more than 50% of those voting in the referendum vote "yes" in order to bring the plan into force.

Neighbourhood development orders

A neighbourhood development order is a means for parish/town councils or neighbourhood forums to grant planning permission for certain kinds of development within a specified area. For example, in historic areas, a neighbourhood development order could allow missing historical features such as front boundary walls to be reinstated or could allow things like improvements to shop fronts or extensions to houses or other buildings. It could also grant planning permission to change the upper floors of shops to flats. This could be for the whole of or just for a part of the neighbourhood area. A community right to build order is a special kind of neighbourhood development order, granting planning permission for small, community development schemes, such as housing or new community facilities. Local community organisations that meet certain requirements or parish/town councils are able to prepare community right to build orders.

Locality has produced separate guidance on the use of neighbourhood development orders (including community right to build orders).

Part B
Deciding whether to produce a neighbourhood plan

Making the decision

The need for balanced consideration

Producing a neighbourhood plan has advantages over other kinds of plan (such as parish or community plans) because it enables communities to take the lead in their own neighbourhoods in producing part of the statutory development plan for the area. Neighbourhood plans have real legal force.

Any group of people considering taking on a neighbourhood plan will need to weigh the opportunities against the resource implications and other considerations and come to a balanced view. This is particularly important in considering the scope of the neighbourhood plan - it is not a requirement for these plans to be mini local plans.

The following sections describe the opportunities and commitments associated with neighbourhood planning in order to help with making this decision.

Opportunities and advantages

A neighbourhood plan offers several advantages over relying solely on the local plan (produced by the local planning authority) or on more informal plans, like community plans or parish plans.

Community-led
Neighbourhood plans are led by authorised local community organisations, known as qualifying bodies (referred to as neighbourhood planning bodies in this guide), including parish or town councils (often through steering groups) or neighbourhood forums, rather than the local council's planning department. This means that community representatives lead the plan, often with support from their preferred consultants.

Neighbourhood forums or parish and town councils preparing neighbourhood plans have the opportunity to engage with the wider community right from the beginning of the plan-preparation process, to make sure it genuinely represents the range of wants and needs in the local area.

Influence
If successful at referendum, a neighbourhood plan comes into force as part of the statutory development plan for the area alongside the local plan. Local planning authorities and planning inspectors considering planning applications or appeals must make their decisions in accordance with the policies of the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Emerging neighbourhood plans may be a material consideration in planning decisions.

Relevance
Whilst the local plan covers the whole district, a neighbourhood plan is focused on the needs of the specific neighbourhood and allows the local community to specify what they expect from development. This could include things like urban design, affordable housing, and allocating sites/locations for commercial, housing and other development. This is about guiding and shaping development, not undermining the delivery of development in that area. The plan could also guide the provision of infrastructure, for example, setting out priorities for new development such as improving pedestrian links, upgrading paths and open space. This would inform subsequent negotiations between local authorities and developers.

Establishing a dialogue
Those producing neighbourhood plans have to speak to a range of organisations, authorities, partners and stakeholders. This establishes a range of dialogues, which may not otherwise take place, and may potentially influence the activities of other local organisations. The plan could include things like improvement of streets and public spaces or where community facilities should be located. This would provide the context for negotiations with local authority departments (e.g. highways) and could help to influence their future works or development.

Site allocations and Local Green Space designations

Depending on the level of detail in the local plan, the neighbourhood plan allows the community to develop criteria and methodology to choose sites to be allocated for different kinds of development. At the same time, there is the option to identify and designate green spaces valued by the community as Local Green Space, which should be protected from inappropriate development. So a neighbourhood plan provides the opportunity to decide where growth does and does not occur (see later section on Site allocations and designations).

Issues to consider

In considering the time and cost implications of producing a neighbourhood plan, there are certain factors to consider.

Scope of the plan

The scope and complexity of the plan will depend on various factors, including what is already covered in the local plan (sometimes called a core strategy), the nature of the neighbourhood area (for example economic condition and expected level of growth) and the community's preferred outcomes. A plan could be wide-ranging, or deal with one or two issues only. It could be detailed, or simply set general principle for development. The choice is down to the neighbourhood planning body producing the plan. This will clearly have significant implications in terms of time and cost.

The size of population (including the business community) in the neighbourhood area will similarly be a significant factor with time and cost implications. The lower the population and number of businesses, the lower the likely costs of community engagement.

The need to meet the 'basic conditions'

All neighbourhood plans must meet the 'basic conditions' set out in planning law. This will be tested through an independent examination. The basic conditions for neighbourhood plans are that they must:

- have regard to national policy;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area; and
- be compatible with EU obligations.

In addition, neighbourhood plans must comply with human rights legislation.

One of the requirements of national policy is that neighbourhood plan policies must be evidence based. Meeting the basic conditions is dealt with in more detail in Part C of this guide.

Adequacy of existing policy

The decision on whether to produce a neighbourhood plan, or to identify the scope and content of the plan, depends to a significant extent on the adequacy of existing local policies contained in the local plan. If existing policy is robust and relevant to the neighbourhood area in question, then there may be no need for a neighbourhood plan, or a simpler and more selective neighbourhood plan could be produced, otherwise the neighbourhood plan risks repeating already existing policy. A review of existing policy and discussion with the local planning authority should help to make this clear. Throughout the neighbourhood plan process, it is desirable to develop a good relationship and work in close liaison with the local planning authority.

Skills and qualities

Leading the production of a neighbourhood plan will require a range of skills, depending on the scope and complexity of the plan. These include both inter-personal skills and specialist skills. Consideration will need to be made of the skills available in the parish or town council or neighbourhood forum.

Neighbourhood planning involves leadership, project management, organisation, communication, negotiation, analysis and other skills. It also involves compromise, consideration of differing viewpoints and collaborative working. Listening is a key skill. A balanced team of people with different skills should be the aim.

Additional skills and capacity may be available through working with partners in the local area, including the local planning authority.

Specialist skills will depend on the nature of the area in question. Examples of specialist skills could include reading maps or plans and data analysis. It could also include knowledge of specific topic areas, such as urban design, retail, heritage-led regeneration, housing, transport or other planning issues. It could also include things like environmental assessment.

Organising and running community engagement also requires specialist skills. It is sometimes done badly and too late due to the lack of such skills. Community engagement is dealt with in more detail later in this guide. Specialist skills could either be provided by members of the community organisation producing the plan or could be provided by consultants or other external sources. Clearly there are cost implications of having to buy in skilled or specialist support.

Consultation fatigue

There may be a reluctance to produce a neighbourhood plan if there have been recent programmes of community engagement for other types of plan, such as parish or community plans. However, if such consultation has been done well, and there is plenty of information and views were formally recorded, it could inform the neighbourhood plan, so it would not be necessary to start again.

Alternatives to a neighbourhood plan

There are alternatives to producing a neighbourhood plan. These could include:

- influence an emerging local plan core strategy or supplementary planning documents prepared as part of the local plan, for example by making representations at consultation stages;
- influence or help to prepare design and development briefs for key sites (working closely with the local planning authority);
- comment on planning applications and/or get involved in pre-application discussions;
- focus time and money on delivering actions in existing plans (e.g. a parish plan);
- persuade the local authority to produce an area action plan or consider new designations, such as a conservation area or Article 4 Direction (it should be noted that neighbourhood plans cannot make such designations);
- develop a community project and raise funds for its delivery.

These actions could also be undertaken in parallel to preparing a neighbourhood plan.

There are also more informal plans such as parish plans or community plans. These would be a material consideration in planning decisions, but they do not have statutory status as part of the local development plan, so would carry far less weight.

There are both time and financial implications in producing a neighbourhood plan. These should be weighted against the alternative potential uses of that time and money. For example, an organisation that has just completed a parish plan may wish to focus on delivery of the plan rather than further investment in policy work. Of course, they could still produce a neighbourhood plan at a later date in order to put their ambitions on a statutory footing. Other options include:

- link with other parishes or adjacent areas to produce a joint neighbourhood plan (where you can share the resource requirements);
- delay producing a neighbourhood plan until resources can be found.

Estimating the commitment

Time and energy

For a parish or town council or neighbourhood forum preparing a neighbourhood plan, there are significant commitments in terms of time and energy, over a period of months or years. This will vary greatly between different plans and areas.

It is advisable to estimate the time needed for the different stages of the plan-making process, the tasks required and the necessary commitment from the different people involved (this may vary between people depending on availability and skills).

Part C of this guide describes these stages in some detail and should assist in estimating time requirements. The local authority may be able to help in making these estimations. They may also be able to offer officer or elected member time to help with the process. You could also speak to individuals or groups that have undertaken similar exercises to gain insight into the time implications.

There may be ways of saving time. For example, where there is a recent community plan or parish plan, it may not be necessary to start from scratch with the neighbourhood plan. The existing plan would

be part of the evidence base and quite a lot of material could be used in the new plan. Much would depend on how robust the existing plan was in terms of a strong evidence base and robust and effective community engagement.

Although it is impossible to generalise on the time it takes to prepare a neighbourhood plan, experience suggests that the average time may be around 18-24 months from the beginning of the process to the plan being made.

Financial resources

There will be costs associated with preparing a neighbourhood plan. Estimates vary widely; from less than ten thousand pounds to several times this amount for larger and more complex plans (such as a town centre and its environs). Some of the costs are the responsibility of the local planning authority, such as the costs of holding the independent examination and the public referendum. Funding for other costs will need to be found by the parish/town council or neighbourhood forum preparing the plan. It is advisable to prepare an estimated budget for the plan process. This could cover items like the costs of community engagement activities and professional consultancy costs if required (for example, to cover specialist advice, evidence development or policy writing). Of course, there may be unforeseen costs – for example, if the evidence base or outcome of community engagement identifies new issues. Some contingency is therefore necessary.

It is possible to manage costs. Some professional support may be available from the local council, support programmes or free support from local professionals (known as pro-bono support). Local organisations may make venues available for no charge for community engagement events. Much depends on the skills and time available within the community organisations producing the plan.

Possible sources of funding or professional support include specific neighbourhood planning programmes (such as those run by Locality - you can find more information at neighbourhoodplanning.org), local authority contributions, donations or income from fund-raising activities, or a precept in the case of parish or town councils. Some developers, local businesses or landowners may also express an interest in helping with costs, particularly where they have an interest in land within the declared boundary. This may

be helpful, but care is required to avoid the impression of inappropriate influence over the neighbourhood plan.

Project plan

It may be useful to create a simple project plan in the form of a table to help in assessing time and cost implications. This could break down the plan into different activities, such as:

- area designation (and forum designation, where applicable);
- liaising with the local planning authority;
- publicity, community and stakeholder engagement and consultation at various stages;
- building the evidence base;
- setting aims and writing the plan;
- site allocations and Local Green Space designations;
- pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14);
- other activities.

In working out resources including financial costs, each task will need to be considered. Think about breaking down the task of producing a neighbourhood plan into a series of smaller actions and then placing key milestones and costs against them. The following should be included:

- venues, refreshments, materials for community events;
- paid professional support (if needed);
- website, telephone and postage;
- printing;
- travel to meetings and events;
- other miscellaneous expenses.

Duty to provide support

There is a legal requirement for local authorities to provide support for those preparing neighbourhood plans. The local planning authority should take a proactive and positive approach, working collaboratively with a neighbourhood planning body particularly sharing evidence and seeking to resolve any issues to ensure the draft neighbourhood plan has the greatest chance of success at independent examination (see section on Duty to support which sets out the kinds of support that could be expected).

Financial support

Possible financial support;

- specific neighbourhood planning grants (such as those provided through the Locality neighbourhood planning support programme - visit: neighbourhoodplanning.org for more information);
- precept (for town/parish councils);
- local donations;
- developers and landowners;
- local businesses/chambers of commerce.

Professional and other support

Professional support may be available
from various sources:

- technical support through the Locality neighbourhood planning support programme (visit neighbourhoodplanning.org for more information);
- council officer time and other support by the local planning authority (which has a duty to support the preparation of the neighbourhood plan);
- pro-bono support from local firms (e.g. planning practices, legal firms);
- pro-bono planning support through national and regional organisations;
- local working or retired professionals;
- websites (e.g. Planning Portal);
- local branches of professional bodies;
- local organisations that may be able to help with printing, developing websites/publicity/communications;
- community members, which may become apparent through identifying the skills and knowledge available in the local community.

Making a decision

The production of a neighbourhood plan is undoubtedly a tremendous opportunity, but to embark on preparing a plan there needs to be a clear idea of the practical and financial implications. The advantages and opportunities previously mentioned should be weighed against the time and cost implications and other considerations to help make an informed decision.

Part C
Producing a neighbourhood plan

Neighbourhood plan process

There are three main stages to producing a neighbourhood plan. These are:

Stage 1 – Getting established

- **Designation of the neighbourhood area**
- **Designation of the neighbourhood forum (in unparished areas only)**
- **Building an evidence base**
- **Publicity and engagement**

The first step for parish/town councils or prospective neighbourhood forums wishing to prepare a neighbourhood plan is to submit their proposed neighbourhood area to the local planning authority for designation. Prospective neighbourhood forums will also need to be designated by the local planning authority. Preparing to write a neighbourhood plan includes publicity, development of local partnerships, community consultation and engagement and the building of an evidence base.

Stage 2 – Preparing the plan

- **Drafting the plan**
- **Meeting the basic conditions**
- **Pre-submission consultation**

Evidence and the outcomes of community engagement will inform the development of a vision and/or aims for the plan. These in turn will inform the formulation of policy and, where appropriate, site allocations. Community engagement and consultation will be necessary at all stages of the plan-making process. As the plan is developed, the need to meet the basic conditions must be considered. Once there is a draft plan, it must be subjected to pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14).

Stage 3 – Bringing the plan into force

- **Submission**
- **Publicity**
- **Independent examination**
- **Referendum**

The proposed neighbourhood plan will be submitted to the local planning authority, which will check that the necessary documents have been provided. Following a period of publicity, the local planning authority will arrange for an independent examination. It will also organise the public referendum, subject to the plan meeting the basic conditions at the examination stage.

It is very helpful to draw up an action plan or programme for preparing a neighbourhood plan (a project plan). This can identify key stages, actions and an indicative timetable. It can also identify available resources and likely costs. Things like developing the evidence base and undertaking community engagement will have to be designed around the available budget. The project plan could also allocate responsibilities for co-ordinating different aspects of the process. It may also be helpful to identify key risks to the project's timetable and proposals to mitigate those risks.

It may be useful to bring in consultants or other outside support to assist in things like drafting planning policies, analysis of evidence, or to check that the neighbourhood plan is likely to pass independent examination and be likely to be effective in use. Consultants can also help with technical reports or undertaking environmental assessments. To keep costs down the work required should be clearly defined and limited only to the tasks that can't be done without such support.

For clarity, the following section describes the neighbourhood planning process in defined stages, as a logical progression. The reality of neighbourhood planning is often more complex, with different stages running in parallel. Neighbourhood planning is a participatory and interactive activity, so flexibility is essential. Obviously, it is also essential to make sure that the statutory requirements for neighbourhood planning are properly addressed at the relevant stages. These are set out in the following sections of this guide.

Stage 1: Getting established

Overview

For neighbourhood planning bodies (parish or town councils or prospective neighbourhood forums), work on a neighbourhood plan can only commence formally when the neighbourhood area has been designated by the local authority (see later Neighbourhood area designation section). Of course there is a lot a community can do before this stage in considering the issues and aspirations their plan might cover. Once the neighbourhood area is designated, parish or town councils may formally commence work on the plan.

Where there is no parish or town council, a prospective neighbourhood forum of at least 21 people must be formed to lead and co-ordinate the plan-making process. Prospective neighbourhood forums will need to be designated by the local planning authority before commencing work. It is common to apply for the neighbourhood area first, then the neighbourhood forum. There is no legal reason why they should not apply for both at the same time. However, if the neighbourhood area is revised through the approval process, it may be necessary to review the membership and reach of the neighbourhood forum members and resubmit it for designation.

In determining the neighbourhood area, it will be helpful to discuss options with the local planning authority, which should be able to offer advice. It is also important to speak to other local groups and people living in the area (see later sections on Publicising the proposal to prepare a neighbourhood plan and key local partners).

Where there is a town or parish council, then that is the neighbourhood planning body for producing a neighbourhood plan. Although there is no need to put together a neighbourhood forum, parish or town councils may choose to put together a steering or working group(s) of community representatives to assist in the process. Parish councils may work in partnership with other parish councils to produce joint neighbourhood plans. It is a good idea to maintain a continuing dialogue with the local authority and to gain its views before submitting the neighbourhood area and/or neighbourhood forum applications for approval. The need for regular liaison applies throughout the neighbourhood planning process.

The foundations of a neighbourhood plan are a proportionate evidence base and effective community engagement from the earliest stages. Community engagement and evidence gathering activities will continue into the next stage of preparing the neighbourhood plan.

The following sections deal with:

- **Designation of the neighbourhood area**
- **Designation of the neighbourhood forum (in unparished areas only)**
- **Duty to provide support**
- **Building an evidence base**
- **Publicity and engagement**

Neighbourhood area designation

Neighbourhood areas overview

To formalise the proposal to prepare a neighbourhood plan, the neighbourhood area must first be submitted to the local planning authority for designation.

It should be noted, there can be only one neighbourhood area for each neighbourhood plan and only one neighbourhood plan for each neighbourhood area. There can be more than one neighbourhood development order in each neighbourhood area.

Neighbourhood areas cannot overlap. Where more than one prospective neighbourhood forum is looking at the same neighbourhood area, or areas that overlap, negotiations would need to take place, preferably before submitting either area for designation. Solutions could be to amend the neighbourhood area boundaries to create two separate and distinctive areas with no overlap, or for the prospective neighbourhood forums to merge into one forum and to propose a neighbourhood area that they can agree on.

Neighbourhood areas (town or parish councils)

For town or parish councils, there is a presumption that the neighbourhood area will be the same as the parish boundary. However, they may choose a smaller and more focused area, such as a town or local centre. Clear planning reasoning would be required to support this choice. Also, adjacent parish/town councils may agree to work in partnership to produce a joint neighbourhood plan.

Once the area has been identified and approved by the parish council, it will need to be submitted to the local planning authority for designation.

Neighbourhood areas (neighbourhood forums)

Deciding on the neighbourhood area boundary can be quite challenging in unparished areas. The local planning authority should be able to provide maps as a starting point. Careful thought needs to be given to the question of 'what is the local neighbourhood?' Neighbourhood areas may be large or small. For example, it could contain a town centre, local shops, housing estate, employment area, park or combination of these things.

Government guidance puts forward the following considerations when deciding on the neighbourhood area boundary:

- village or settlement boundaries, which could reflect areas of planned expansion;
- the catchment area for walking to local services such as shops, primary schools, doctors' surgery, parks or other facilities;
- the area where formal or informal networks of community based groups operate;
- the physical appearance or characteristics of the neighbourhood, for example buildings may be of a consistent scale or style;
- coherent estate, either for businesses or residents;
- whether the area is wholly or predominantly a business area;
- where infrastructure or physical features define a natural boundary, for example a major road or railway line or waterway;
- the natural setting or features in an area;
- size of the population (living and working in the area).

Some simple steps could be:

- define what neighbourhood means to the group producing the plan;
- discuss the area with the local planning authority;
- engage with local groups and people to gain their views on what is the local neighbourhood;
- identify the core area and any optional surrounding areas;
- speak to people in different parts of the area, especially where there is uncertainty whether to include them in the neighbourhood area;
- decide on a boundary, based on clear physical features, so that there is no uncertainty where the boundary lies.

A useful technique can be to identify a 'definite' core area and then to identify possible additional areas and consult on them informally. The area covered by one or more residents' associations or business organisations could also be used.

The neighbourhood area could also be based on an administrative boundary such as an electoral ward or postal district, though these may not coincide with what may be considered as a neighbourhood by local people.

The boundary should be one that is clearly defined by physical characteristics, such as roads, railways, or by the boundaries of a housing estate.

Once a proposed neighbourhood area has been approved by the prospective neighbourhood forum, it will need to be submitted to the local planning authority for designation.

Application for designation of the neighbourhood area

To apply for approval for a neighbourhood area, the parish or town council or prospective neighbourhood forum will need to submit details to the local planning authority. Such details include the following:

- a map identifying the proposed neighbourhood area;
- a statement explaining why the area is appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area;
- a statement explaining that the body making the area application (the parish or town council or prospective neighbourhood forum) is capable of being a qualifying body.

The statement explaining why the area is appropriate could include a description of how the area was chosen. There is no standard template for this; each area will be different, but it should mention any methodology, techniques, criteria, discussion or consultation and explain the thinking behind the area. You might include evidence demonstrating that you have asked residents towards the edge of your boundary that they identify with that particular neighbourhood (rather than one next to it). Even for parish councils applying for the entire neighbourhood area, it is necessary to explain what options were considered and why the whole area was chosen.

The statement explaining that the body making the application is a qualifying body is fairly simple in the case of town or parish councils. For a prospective neighbourhood forum, it will need to demonstrate that it is capable of being designated as a neighbourhood forum.

Where a neighbourhood area includes land in more than one local authority area, the neighbourhood area and neighbourhood forum applications will have to be submitted to each one of the local authorities for approval and each will have to decide on the area to be designated.

In writing the supporting statements for both the neighbourhood area and neighbourhood forum (where applicable), it is better to use clear, concise and unambiguous English and to avoid jargon. Very long or complicated statements should be avoided.

Designation
On receiving the application for a neighbourhood area, the local authority will publicise it, to give an opportunity for local people to make representations. An exception to this is applications submitted by parish councils for designation of the whole of its area as a neighbourhood area. The local planning authority has to designate the neighbourhood area in such circumstances, so there are no publicity requirements.

The local authority should issue a decision on whether to designate a neighbourhood area as soon as possible after the consultation period ends. There are time limits on the time in which a local authority must make a decision on the neighbourhood area. From the day after the application is publicised, decisions are required to be made within 13 weeks (or 20 weeks for

neighbourhood areas falling within the area of two or more local authorities).

It is a good idea to ask the local authority the date on which it expects to make a decision. The local authority must give clear reasons for its decision and publicise it, once it is made. The local planning authority will designate the neighbourhood area applied for, or designate it in a modified form where there are planning reasons for doing so. The local planning authority is required to publicise a map of neighbourhood areas that it has designated, which can be helpful to groups when they are looking at defining a neighbourhood area themselves.

Business areas
Where a proposed neighbourhood area is one that is wholly or predominantly business in nature, the local authority may decide to designate it as a business area. This has the effect of allowing business people to vote in an additional referendum on whether to bring the neighbourhood plan into force. While such areas, by their nature, may choose to prepare a plan with a greater business focus, the additional referendum is the only procedural difference between a designated business area, and other neighbourhood planning areas.

Even in normal neighbourhood areas, it is important to engage with and involve the business community.

Neighbourhood forums

Neighbourhood forums overview
Where there is no town or parish council, a neighbourhood forum would need to be formed and designated in order to undertake neighbourhood planning.

It is not possible to form neighbourhood forums in areas that have parish councils.

Legal requirements
To meet legal requirements, a neighbourhood forum must have:

- an express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of an area that consists of or includes the neighbourhood area concerned;
- a purpose that reflects the character of the area in general terms;

- a membership open to people living and working in the area, and elected members for the area (reasonable steps must be taken to secure at least one of each);
- a minimum of 21 members from the above groups;
- a membership drawn from different places in the area and different sections of the community.

Neighbourhood forums must have a written constitution (see Producing a constitution section later in this guide).

Good practice

It is good practice to try to make sure the membership of the neighbourhood forum reflects the character and diversity of the local population, with people from different places in the area and different sections of the community. For example, it could include elderly and young people, different ethnic groups, residents of different economic means and small business owners.

This could include:

- intrinsic characteristics: for example young, elderly, men, women, LGBT+, disabled, ethnic groups;
- socio-economic characteristics: for example tenants, owner-occupiers, low income, small business owners, larger firms, creative industries, not-for-profit sector, public sector, private sector, non-car owners, parents, single people, unemployed, students;
- interests/knowledge/expertise: for example housing, employment, transport (including public transport), urban design, retail, built heritage, natural environment, sports and recreation, education/skills, culture, city or town centres, night economy (e.g. food, drink, entertainment), communications, health, knowledge economy, crime and anti-social behaviour, play, waste and recycling.

This list is an example only and the forum does not need to be made up of people from all of these groups.
It should be emphasised that however diverse the make-up of the neighbourhood forum, it needs to consider the wider diversity of views of the local population. That is why effective community engagement throughout the process is important (see later section on Publicity and engagement).

Putting together a neighbourhood forum is a challenging process. Often it is led by community organisations or local community activists, who take the first steps to get people involved. Different activities can include:

- publicising the proposal to put together a neighbourhood forum and prepare a neighbourhood plan, using local media, social media, or existing circulation lists;
- holding local events to explain neighbourhood planning and invite people to become involved;
- identifying key local stakeholders and inviting them to become involved;
- identifying potential partner organisations and inviting them to become involved, including organisations with local memberships or mailing lists;
- liaising with the local planning authority.

Neighbourhood forums are legal bodies, responsible for leading and coordinating the neighbourhood plan. They are about leadership, coordination, governance, communication and balanced decision-making. Some people will be naturally suited to and interested in forum membership. Others may prefer to become involved in working or steering groups (for example those with an interest in specific issues).

Producing a constitution

It is a good idea to keep the written constitution as concise, clear and simple as possible. As a guide, it should include:

- the name of the neighbourhood forum;
- the purpose of the neighbourhood forum (this needs to include 'promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of an area that consists of or includes the neighbourhood area concerned');
- working arrangements, including sub-groups, partners and their roles;
- pattern of meetings and details of how decisions will be made;
- details of governance, including official positions (such as chair, secretary, treasurer);
- arrangements for operation and financial management;
- details of how declared interests and potential conflicts of interest will be recorded and managed;
- membership joining procedures for new members;
- duration of the forum (5 years from being approved, as set out in legislation).

Legal structure

Neighbourhood forums can be set up as unincorporated associations. This would be the natural status of the forum, unless it chooses a different legal structure. When selecting a structure for a neighbourhood forum, it must consider whether an incorporated or unincorporated structure best meets its needs.

There are limitations to unincorporated organisations. They cannot hold property, employ staff or enter into contracts as an organisation. Also, they cannot access funding directly from the neighbourhood planning programme or other sources. Such funding would need to be held on their behalf by an appropriate body. The liability of their members is not limited so members could be liable to pay the debts of the organisation, if it closed owing money.

If the neighbourhood forum wishes to apply for grant funding in its own right, then a more formal structure would be required, for example a limited company or community interest company. However, it should be noted that such status could bring additional costs, such as accountants fees.

A more formal legal structure could be useful in the longer term if the forum intends to continue operating after the making of the neighbourhood plan, for example by morphing into a community delivery body, such as a community development trust. Incorporated status would also allow the organisation to employ staff, and own or rent property. Incorporated organisations carry limited liability so, providing that the organisation is managed effectively, this would protect members and directors against being personally liable. This can be an important factor in getting people involved. Another option would be to set up a separate background incorporated body to support the neighbourhood forum and handle grant funding. This may make sense if the intention is for the body to operate in the longer term.

Application for designation of a neighbourhood forum

A prospective neighbourhood forum must apply to the local planning authority to become designated. The application must include:

- the name of the proposed neighbourhood forum;
- the written constitution for the proposed neighbourhood forum;
- the name of the neighbourhood area to which the forum relates and a map identifying that area;
- contact details for at least one member of the proposed neighbourhood forum (this will be made public);
- a statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood forum meets the legal requirements.

The statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood forum meets the legal requirements should explain how the forum was put together and include details of the people on the forum, including addresses and whether they live or work in the area or are elected members for the area.

Neighbourhood forum designation

On receiving the application for a neighbourhood forum, the local authority will publicise it for a 6 week period. This provides an opportunity for people in the area to make representations.

The local authority should issue a decision on whether to designate the neighbourhood forum as soon as possible after the consultation period ends. In making the decision, the local authority will consider whether the prospective neighbourhood forum meets legal requirements.

Neighbourhood forums can only be designated where a neighbourhood area has been designated (either previously or in parallel).

A local planning authority must make a decision on an application to designate a neighbourhood forum within 13 weeks (or 20 weeks, where the application must be submitted to more than one local planning authority).

Duty to support

The local planning authority is legally required to provide advice and assistance to those bodies producing a neighbourhood plan in its area. In addition recent changes to law will require local authorities to set in a statement of community involvement how they intend to provide support for neighbourhood planning bodies. Planning practice guidance recognises that the evidence base behind an emerging local plan may also be evidence for neighbourhood plans. So access to such evidence should be provided as part of the duty to provide support.

Local authorities must set out which adopted local policies are considered to be strategic. This is necessary for considering general conformity with strategic local policy (see later section on Meeting the basic conditions).

Local authorities also help with mapping, for example showing the neighbourhood area and as a basis for making site allocations or Local Green Space designations.

Local authorities should screen the emerging neighbourhood plan for strategic environmental assessment (SEA) or habitat regulations assessment (HRA).

There is a requirement for local planning authorities to notify parish councils or neighbourhood forums of planning applications in their neighbourhood areas.

Other support could include:

- making available data or relevant technical reports for the evidence base;
- arranging meetings, as appropriate, with the neighbourhood planning group;
- highlighting national policies which will need to be considered;
- providing advice on the legal requirements for neighbourhood planning under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act);
- providing advice on general planning matters;
- sharing information on key contacts and stakeholders;
- making available venues and helping to arrange community engagement activities, to avoid consultation overload and maximise efficiencies of resources;
- checking the plan prior to formal submission (for example by development management and policy teams);
- participation in meetings of the neighbourhood planning body or its working groups;
- providing advice on who needs to be consulted, especially in order to help the draft proposals meet the basic conditions (such as compatibility with EU obligations);
- providing support, such as assistance in laying out and illustrating a plan;
- providing members for steering/working groups.

The duty to support does not require the giving of financial assistance to parish councils or designated neighbourhood forums, but this should not stop those local planning authorities that wish to do so from offering such assistance.

Building the evidence base

The need for evidence
Planning practice guidance sets out that proportionate, robust evidence should support the choices made and the approach taken. Planning policies need to be based on clear planning rationale and proper understanding of the place they relate to, if they are to be relevant, realistic and to address local issues effectively. The data and analysis about a place is called the evidence base. This can include social, economic and environmental data.

Whilst evidence gathering should commence from an early stage, it is likely to continue until late stages of drafting the plan, as policies and content of the plan are developed. At the early stage, evidence gathering will be more generalised, to 'paint' a picture of the social, economic and environmental characteristics of the area. As work on the plan progresses, more specific or detailed evidence may be required to support specific policies. Policies need to be based on evidence, but also to take account of effective community engagement (see later Publicity and engagement section). This ensures that they reflect the needs of the local area, economy and community.

The evidence base needs to be proportionate to the size of the neighbourhood area and scope and detail of the neighbourhood plan. Other factors such as the status of the current and emerging local plan policies will influence the depth and breadth of evidence needed. The neighbourhood plan will have statutory status and be used to decide planning applications, so the evidence base needs to reflect this. It is easy to become overwhelmed by the amount of material that is necessary, so careful selection is needed.

A good approach is to consider the evidence base in stages. At the beginning of the process, general evidence may be compiled to provide an overview of the neighbourhood area. This would include information on things like population, environment, employment, transport links and strategic context. As key themes for the neighbourhood plan emerge, more specific subject-based evidence may be compiled as a basis for formulating specific policies.

The range of evidence required
A neighbourhood plan is about the use and development of land, and appropriate evidence on

local social, economic and environmental conditions and related issues is required.

A good starting point is to look at the socio-economic profile of the local population. Population trends, local employment, industries and social trends should be identified. Predominant land uses in the neighbourhood area may be identified. Other evidence may relate to things like housing, transport, natural environments, built heritage, retail centres, urban design, community facilities and any other subjects relevant to the planning and development of the area.

The local planning authority should provide a housing requirement figure for a designated neighbourhood area, either in its strategic plan or if requested to do so, taking into account factors such as the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood area and the most recently available planning strategy for the local authority area.

There are two main stages to building the evidence base. The first of these is to review existing evidence. The second is to identify and develop any further evidence required, either because there is no existing evidence or because there needs to be a clearer focus on the particular neighbourhood.

It is important to remember that the neighbourhood needs to be considered in its wider context. The future prosperity and development of the neighbourhood will depend to a large extent on what happens in the wider area (beyond the neighbourhood area). There needs to be an understanding of that wider context for a neighbourhood plan to be realistic and deliverable. Therefore, evidence is required on the neighbourhood area and the surrounding context (though the neighbourhood plan and its policies can only apply to the neighbourhood area in question).

For example, it makes a huge difference if the neighbourhood area is set within an area of potential growth and where pressure for development is high or where it is in an area undergoing long-term economic decline. It could be that in some neighbourhoods 'locals' are being priced out of the market or conversely in low-demand areas there may be problems of poverty and social exclusion, which need to be tackled. The local plan in particular should be useful for providing a wider and more strategic context.

Existing evidence

The local planning authority should take a proactive and positive approach on sharing evidence underpinning the local plan or emerging local plan and also other data and technical reports.

The local plan contains the local authority's main strategic planning policies for its area. There may also be more detailed development management policies. There may be a site allocations plan making strategic allocations for different kinds of development, like new housing and industry. Local plans may also contain a range of other supplementary documents dealing with different issues (for example, a document making strategic site allocations).

There will be quite a lot of evidence supporting the local plan. This includes the sustainability appraisal for the plan. The emerging neighbourhood plan should take this into account. The local plan's evidence base will include assessment of available sites for housing or employment and of the housing market. There may also be reports or analysis on retail centres and their capacity for growth, on local employment, and on the capacity of the area for other kinds of development. There may also be analysis of census data, land viability information, records of environmental designations, flood risk assessments, transport studies and other relevant evidence.

Other local documents may include parish plans, community plans, transport plans, conservation area appraisals, masterplans, and regeneration strategies.

A summary of common sources of local evidence is:

- the local plan, and the evidence underpinning that plan or any emerging local plan;
- Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMA), Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessments (SHELAA), Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA);
- other local authority plans and strategies, such as economic development strategies;
- any opinion-based research conducted by the local authority;
- socio-economic data for district/ward (census and other data);

- technical reports, such as transport studies and public transport data;
- conservation area appraisals, buildings-at-risk surveys and landscape character studies;
- statutory lists (listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, registered parks and gardens);
- details of other environmental protection designations, such as tree preservation orders and sites of special scientific interest and areas of outstanding natural beauty;
- plans or data from other public bodies or statutory undertakers, such as health or education providers;
- existing plans for an area, such as a community plan, parish plan or village design statement;
- local libraries, archives, websites.

Types of evidence

It is necessary to understand the neighbourhood area and the wider surrounding area (the social, economic and physical context). This may look daunting, but selection is required, depending on the characteristics of the area in question. For most kinds of evidence the local planning authority is the first port of call. The following list is not comprehensive, but gives some indication of common kinds of evidence.

Demographic profile of the local population. Income levels, age profile, employment-type, socio-economic groups, unemployment levels, life expectancy, infant mortality rates, ethnicity and other characteristics. Sources include: local census, local plan, local authority statistics.

Local employment and industries. Major local industries and trends (growing and declining sectors), how much employment is local and how much involves commuting, how good transport links are to employment areas, whether local skills match employment opportunities, rate of business start-ups, availability of enterprise units, business parks and industrial estates, employment land supply. Sources include: local plan, local authority statistics, local trade organisations, business surveys, local enterprise partnerships, Homes and Communities Agency.

Land use and planning. Major land owners where applicable (e.g. ownership of shopping centres, key sites), existing planning permission, land uses, ground conditions, derelict and contaminated land, topography. Also, planning policy and other designations such as business improvement districts, retail areas, cultural quarters, green belts, heritage or landscape designations. Also land values and house prices (these will be important when considering viability). Sources include: local plan, local estate agents, local enterprise partnerships, Homes and Communities Agency.

Housing. Current number of dwellings, types of accommodation (size and property types), breakdown of tenure (local authority/social housing, private rented, owner-occupied), household size, vacancy rates, proportion of unfit stock, rate of new build, age of stock (pre-1914, inter-war, post war, modern). Sources include: local plan, Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment, local housing department, householder surveys, local housing associations or trusts, Homes and Communities Agency.

Transport. Capacity of transport network, public transport systems and hubs, facilities and safety for pedestrians and cyclists, car parking, proximity of major transport routes (e.g. motorways, railway stations, A roads). Sources include: local plan, local highways authority, transport plans and strategies, local public transport providers.

Natural environment and special landscape designations. Landscape designations, such as sites of special scientific interest, areas of outstanding natural beauty, nature reserves, tree preservation orders. Also, quality of agricultural land. In addition, key natural features such as woods, rivers and other water features. Sources include: local plan, Natural England.

Historic environment. Heritage designations such as listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments, local lists, historic parks and gardens. Other historic features, such as canals. Characterisation documents such as landscape character appraisals, and conservation area appraisals. Buildings at risk surveys and other condition surveys. Sources include: local plan, local historic environment record, local conservation team, Historic England.

City, town and local centres. Amount of retail floorspace, vacancy rates, nature of retail provision,

night-time economy (e.g. pubs, restaurants, performance venues), catchment area, rental values, trends (growth or decline), proximity to other centres. Sources include: local plan, retail studies, local trade organisations, business surveys.

Urban design. Key urban and green spaces, connections (e.g. paths, roads, links), significant landmarks, views, scale, urban form (e.g. layout, scale, enclosure), and character. Sources include: local plan, local authority design team, local civic societies. It should be noted that the term 'urban design' does not imply that it relates to urban areas only. It is an established term that applies to the design of both urban and rural areas.

Community infrastructure. Community assets of an area, including community centres, key local shops (e.g. chemist, post office, newsagents), libraries, youth centres, parks, play areas, nurseries/crèches, pubs, health centres and surgeries. Sources include: local plan, local community organisations, public health and education providers.

Some of the above matters may involve quite detailed technical evidence to support actual policies, for example on housing mix, flooding or air quality.

New or more localised evidence
Existing evidence on many subjects may be sufficient to inform and justify the policies of the neighbourhood plan. However, much evidence tends to focus on ward, district or wider areas. Also, there may be gaps in existing evidence or it might be out-of-date. It may therefore be necessary to produce new evidence at neighbourhood level.

Neighbourhood-level evidence could include things like a survey of vacant shop units, local businesses, audits of local community facilities, vehicle counts, or urban design analysis. It could also include housing needs assessment specific to the neighbourhood plan area, e.g. to identify housing mix requirements.

This will vary for different neighbourhood areas according to the adequacy of existing evidence and the nature of the area in question. Examples of possible kinds of neighbourhood-level evidence are:

Economic: Business surveys, vacancy/floorspace survey, available sites survey, land and property values.

Social/community: Householder surveys, housing condition and/or occupancy survey, audit of community facilities, 'Building for Life 12' assessment of housing, housing needs assessment (neighbourhood).

Environmental: Heritage assessments, review of local lists, urban design analysis, green space surveys, habitat surveys.

Infrastructure: Transport services, schools and medical provision, transport capacity analysis, traffic/pedestrian flow surveys.

Getting help
The local authority has a duty to support those producing neighbourhood plans and should be able to provide access to any evidence and data that it has prepared. The local authority should also be able to provide you with contact details for other public agencies that may be able to help, such as transport bodies or the environment agency (for example for flooding issues).

Other organisations that may be able to provide support include local civic societies, community development trusts, chambers of trade or commerce, architecture and urban design centres, local enterprise partnerships (LEPS), business improvement districts (BIDs), universities and other public or community bodies. Local libraries, archives and the Internet can also be a useful source of information.

Many national and local organisations have useful material on their websites (see later section on Sources of information and support).

There may also be sources of funding or professional help for neighbourhood planning and your local authority should be able to provide details of these. This could include support from national neighbourhood planning support programmes, such as those run by Locality (visit neighbourhoodplanning.org for more information).

Background document
It is not necessary to include the evidence base and outcomes of community engagement in the plan itself. To do so would result in a very thick and unwieldy document. Instead, it is suggested that a background document be created, which lists the sources of evidence, contains any new evidence and summarises the outcomes of the community engagement

programme at different stages in the plan process. These should be available through the group's neighbourhood plan website.

Any methodology or criteria used in decision-making should also be made available, such as the criteria used to select sites for housing, employment or other kinds of development or designation of Local Green Space.

The main advantage of producing a background document is that it would allow the neighbourhood plan to focus on the policies, with a summary of evidence, rather than being weighed down by large amounts of technical data.

The neighbourhood plan may include an overview and summary of evidence and community engagement and explain how they have informed the vision, aims, and policies in the plan. This demonstrates that the plan is based on a solid understanding of the area and reflects the views of the wider community.

Publicity and engagement

Publicising the proposal to prepare a neighbourhood plan

In order to make the process as open and transparent as possible and to ensure wide community involvement, it is advisable to begin with publicity and awarenes-raising activities, to let people know that a neighbourhood plan is proposed. The aim should be to make sure that everyone knows about the plan and has an opportunity to participate.

The local planning authority should be able to provide support, especially through its own newsletters, publications or by placing notices in libraries and other public buildings. Also, local radio stations and newspapers could be approached. Depending on the size of the proposed neighbourhood area, it may be possible to post leaflets through letterboxes. Notices and/or leaflets could be prepared to place in local public buildings and shops. Social media (such as Twitter and Facebook), and presence at local events (such as markets and festivals) can also be used. There may also be opportunities for publicity through other local organisations and their networks.

It is important to create and maintain a neighbourhood plan website where more information can be obtained and where interested parties can follow the progress

of the plan. This should include contact details, including an email address.

As with evidence gathering, publicity and community engagement should commence from the earliest stage, but will continue throughout the process, including pre-submission consultation on the draft plan.

Key stakeholders and local partners

In addition to publicising the proposal to produce a neighbourhood plan, it is useful to identify and approach key local stakeholders and any potential partners. These are local organisations, groups and individuals that have a particular interest in the area.

There are various reasons why partnership working is useful. Some partners may agree to become part of the neighbourhood forum, where one is proposed, or neighbourhood plan working or steering groups. Some may work closely to support the preparation of the plan. They would be able to provide information and advice, contributing to the evidence base, and may even help in writing parts of the plan. Also, some local groups may have wider memberships or networks, so can help in publicising the plan and in getting local people involved, especially minority and hard-to-engage groups. Thus, they can make life much easier for the parish or town council or neighbourhood forum and contribute significantly to the production of the plan.

Local stakeholders and/or partners could include:

- local councillors;
- local shopkeepers and small businesses;
- major employers and business organisations, including chambers of trade or commerce;
- community groups such as residents' associations, local civic or amenity societies, local history groups or sports clubs;
- landowners of key sites or organisations with significant property holdings and developers with site options;
- local trusts and project groups, such as community development trusts, land trusts or building preservation trusts;
- not-for-profit organisations representing minority groups (e.g. elderly, disabled, young people, low-income, LGBT+ groups, faith groups and ethnic groups);
- educational establishments such as schools, colleges and universities;
- community facilitators or activists;
- local institutions such as arts centres, performance

venues, architecture or built environment centres;
- health and social care organisations;
- regional or local branches of professional bodies.

Different working arrangements with stakeholders or partners could include:

- inviting individuals to join the neighbourhood forum;
- inviting them onto steering or working groups tasked with the preparation of the plan;
- meetings to discuss their views and the interests of their members or communities;
- working to develop the community engagement programme and discussing ways in which they can engage their members or communities;
- help in compiling and interpreting the evidence base;
- inviting them to contribute to the development and writing of the plan;
- consulting at key stages in the plan preparation;
- use as a source of professional advice and support.

Circulation lists
Explicit permission is required to add people's names to publicity and circulation lists. New regulations issued in 2018 are tightening requirements. The local authority should be able to advise further on this and other aspects of data protection.

The importance of community and stakeholder engagement
The idea behind neighbourhood plans is that they are community-led. The neighbourhood forum or parish/town council leads and co-ordinates the plan-making process. Other community members may become actively involved in the plan-making process. This may be through membership of the forum or of steering/working groups, through informal working arrangements or through community and stakeholder engagement activities.

Effective community engagement and a robust evidence base are the foundations on which an effective neighbourhood plan will be built. It is important to seek to engage the wider community too, to gain from their knowledge and seek their views.

Stages of community and stakeholder engagement
The process of plan-making can be almost as important as the plan itself. It helps generate the content of the plan and provides the means to demonstrate that

people and businesses are really behind it, which will give it momentum for the delivery phase.

There are different stages for engaging local communities and stakeholders. It will be useful to plan the overall programme at the start. However, there also needs to be considerable flexibility, so that the programme can respond to issues arising.

Where intensive community engagement has recently been undertaken for other purposes, the material obtained may be useful in informing the neighbourhood plan.

The following guidance describes broad stages for running a community engagement programme. The reality is more likely to be a continuous and constantly evolving programme. So the following stages should be considered as a general guide, rather than a rigid and linear order of events. Feedback on the outcomes of community engagement should be provided at all stages.

Early engagement
In some ways the most important stage of community engagement is at the beginning. This should be under-taken before the plan's vision and aims are developed. The purpose is to gather information, awareness of people's views and to identify key issues and themes. These may inform the vision and aims and policies of the plan.

Care should be taken to ask open questions and avoid 'loading' the process.

Simple questions may be asked, like:

- what is good about the area?
- what is bad about the area?
- what are the neighbourhood's qualities as a place to live and work in?
- what issues affect the area (now or in the future)?
- what change would you like to see?

Such questions allow individuals to present their own points of view. Local residents and businesses may have very different ideas of an area's merits and problems to those leading the plan-making process and it is important that there is an opportunity to express these.

These questions can be used on a variety of groups, including school-age children. A technique that works

Community engagement is necessary and important for several reasons:

Statutory requirement.
Planning legislation requires publicity and consultation to take place on emerging neighbourhood plans. However, this tends to be late-stage, for example consulting on the draft plan prior to submission. Early stage, informal engagement is also required, from the earliest stages of the plan-making process. When a completed neighbourhood plan is submitted for independent examination, it will have to be accompanied by a consultation statement, demonstrating that the legal requirements for consultation have been met.

Gaining support.
Early community engagement is essential in gaining knowledge and understanding, developing consensus, avoiding misconceptions and creating confidence in the process. This is especially important for neighbourhood plans, which are subject to a public referendum at the end of the process. The possibility of a 'no' vote is greatly reduced if people are aware of the plan, understand its scope and limitations and have had the opportunity to participate in its production. Good community engagement helps to create a sense of public ownership and acceptance. Failure to engage communities properly at an early stage is one of the main causes of conflict later in the planning process. This can lead to additional costs and delays.

Better outcomes.
Finding out what people think and drawing on their knowledge is an important part of developing understanding of the area. It is impossible to write policy for a community unless there is a strong level of understanding of that community. The community knows a lot about its own neighbourhood and also includes people with a range of skills and specialist knowledge. This can include people with expertise in business, land and property, social and community issues and environmental matters. Effective community engagement leads to more realistic and deliverable plans and policies.

Democratic deficit.
The referendum will involve a simple 'yes' or 'no' vote on a complex document dealing with a range of issues. Properly engaging people from the beginning ensures that there is an opportunity to influence the content of the plan through a participatory process, rather than just having the option to accept or reject it in its entirety. Residents will have to weigh up carefully the things in the draft plan they are happy or unhappy about in order to reach a judgement. Democratic legitimacy will come from the combination of the referendum, effective community engagement and legally compliant consultation.

particularly well with school children is to ask them to draw and/or describe how they would like the area to be in the future.

More specific questions could also be asked based on local circumstances. For example, people's views could be sought on the local retail centre, local parks, or the future of key sites and buildings.

As wide a range of views as possible should be sought. It is useful to employ a range of techniques. The responses should allow common themes to emerge. It may also identify more specific themes, such as access for people of limited mobility.

Once responses have been collated and analysed, feedback should be provided, for example through the website, newsletters or through later engagement events.

Mid-stage engagement
Early community engagement should help to identify key themes and issues and these can be used to inform the vision and aims for the plan. Later community engagement can include consultation on the draft vision and aims and also workshop events or discussions to examine specific issues/themes. This can be an interactive process.

Mid-stage community engagement should be designed to provide information needed to develop the detail of the neighbourhood plan. For example, discussions could focus on a town centre or local shopping centre, housing needs, or a key public space. For some sites, policies or proposals, different options may be discussed so that people can discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each.

In developing aims, policies, proposals or site allocations, different options may be considered and be subjected to consultation to find people's preferences. Options could include things like the sites for new housing, commercial development or community facilities.

Simple voting on different options should be avoided. It is the reasoning behind people's preferences that are of more importance. For example, asking people to vote for different sites would be difficult to translate into site allocations. A better approach would be to consult on a site selection methodology and criteria and to ask for comments on the advantages and drawbacks of various sites. This will then allow the community to form balanced and evidence-based judgements on site allocations.

Workshops can be useful, where options can be discussed and examined. In presenting options, it is better to keep them simple and site or subject specific rather than presenting complex sets of options for a range of sites and subjects in an area. The thinking behind each option should be explained fully, preferably with lists of possible advantages and disadvantages. This helps people to make an informed decision.

Consulting on options may not produce any clear preference. Ultimately, it is for those preparing the neighbourhood plan to make rational decisions, exercise judgements and seek to achieve consensus and minimise conflicts. Decisions must be based on a clear planning rationale and evidence.

Consulting on the completed plan
Once a draft plan has been produced, it must be subject to a pre-submission consultation (see later section on Pre-submission consultation).

Few people will have the time or inclination to read a detailed document. Therefore, it may be useful to produce a concise summary version. This can set out the aims, main themes and general direction of policy,

but in very concise form. It should also set out where the full version of the plan may be examined (on-line and printed copies) and how people may respond.

Local partners and others interested in the detailed content of the plan will have the opportunity to comment on matters of detail. There is a requirement to consult with certain statutory bodies and the local authority should be able to advise on this.

The plan may then be amended, taking account of any representations received (see later section on Pre-submission consultation).

Good practice in community engagement
The community engagement strategy/programme needs to be designed for the specific community in question. For example, an area with a population of 100 will need a very different approach to one with 50,000 people. The former could involve direct conversations with all residents. The latter would need to rely more on mass communication, such as media or web-based engagement. Larger populations will require larger budgets, if they are to be engaged with effectively.

Community engagement and consultation is now an established part of planning. However, it is not always done well. The following should help to guide the development of effective programmes of community engagement in the neighbourhood planning process.
In designing community engagement and consultation programmes, it is desirable to target the widest range of people, including both genders and minority or hard-to-reach groups, for example young and elderly, single parents, LGBT+ people, ethnic groups, disabled groups, low income, disadvantaged groups. The best way of engaging will depend on the target group.

Good practice includes:

Clear purpose: There needs to be a clear idea of why community engagement or consultation is being undertaken and how the outcomes will inform the plan. This then informs the format of engagement, so that community feedback is properly recorded and can inform the plan content.

Front loading: Community engagement should be undertaken before work commences on writing the plan - this is called 'front-loading'. The purpose

of early community engagement is to gather information and awareness of people's views, to inform the plan.

Capacity building: It will often be necessary to include awareness-raising, education and training in consultation activities so that those participating in community engagement events are informed about the purpose of the plan and the kind of issues it can deal with. This allows informed participation in the plan-making process and is especially important where complex issues are being considered, such as methodologies and criteria for site allocations.

Open process: Inviting and welcoming new members of the neighbourhood forum or steering or working group helps to better reflect the diversity of the neighbourhood area. It is important that all neighbourhood forums maintain an open and inclusive membership policy. This helps to avoid any later suggestion that only a select number of people were involved.

Avoiding tokenism: The purpose of undertaking community engagement is to inform the content of the plan. If the outcomes have already been determined, then community engagement is tokenistic. In effect it is a public relations exercise. This leads to scepticism and disillusionment.

Being creative: Community engagement needs to be stimulating and enjoyable. It should be relevant to people's lives and give an opportunity to everyone to contribute. Too often it is dull and inaccessible and therefore fails to engage. Developing effective community engagement events requires real skill and creativity.

Managing expectations: Community engagement exercises can raise unrealistic expectations if they are poorly run, leading to disappointment and cynicism. It is necessary to explain the scope and limitations of the planning system and of neighbourhood plans. This includes understanding that they are a means to an end (policy), not the end itself (actual sustainable growth and development).

Targeting: Whilst some people will naturally want to get involved in neighbourhood planning, targeting will be necessary to reach some. This could include the elderly, young people, ethnic groups and other minority or hard-to-engage groups. Working through local partnerships is one of the ways of spreading the reach of community engagement activities.

Accessibility: Careful thought needs to be given to make consultation accessible, including location, timing, media, and format. Events should be informal and unintimidating – for example, those running events may be better dressing informally. They should be timed to avoid clashing with key events, such as sports events, and to cater for people who work at different times. Jargon should be avoided or, where unavoidable, be clearly explained. Indeed, the term 'neighbourhood plan' may be off-putting to some people, whereas they would be more than happy to talk about the area in which they live.

Digital and social media: Full use should be made of digital and social media. Every neighbourhood plan should have a website and email address. Social media is an effective means to disseminating information, encouraging dialogue and targeting different audiences. With the exception of areas with very small populations, where one-to-one engagement is possible, social media should be considered as an essential part of proper community engagement and consultation.

Feedback: It is essential to provide feedback on community engagement activities at all stages of the plan-making process. This means telling people what has been said and then to explain how this informs the emerging plan.

Common mistakes – what to avoid

Consultation is often done badly. Things to avoid include:

Standing in the library with a thick technical document. Not surprisingly, few people will read a completed neighbourhood plan document.

Talking at people at a public meeting. Public meetings allow little time for each person to speak and can be dominated by a few forceful individuals and be confrontational, which can be intimidating for some. They are a poor means of obtaining community input.

Consultants producing options, before consulting anyone. It is poor practice to commission consultants to produce detailed options, before consulting the local community.

Publish and defend. This applies where completed or well-advanced documents are produced before any community engagement takes place.

Boring the people you need to engage. Public meetings, presentations comprising dense slides of text, and boring speakers should be avoided.

Assuming people lack knowledge. The fact that many planning issues are complex is all the more reason why there is a need to draw on the skills, knowledge and understanding of the wider community.

Leadership without consultation. Good leadership is rooted in listening and entering into dialogue. Only weak leaders think they need to instruct and to ignore the opinions of others.

Predetermined outcomes. There is no point wasting time and money on 'consultation' if there is no opportunity to influence what happens. Indeed, statutory consultation of this kind is unlawful.

Community engagement techniques

It is advisable to use a range of community engagement techniques. Different people respond to different approaches. A range of locations should be used for community engagement events, especially in larger neighbourhood areas. Different timings may also cater for people with diverse working patterns.

Some different techniques are as follows:

Workshops: Workshops can take many forms, but essentially they are interactive events where people can make their views known and discuss issues with other participants, often working in smaller groups. They do involve time commitments, but have the advantage of allowing participants to get more involved and for issues to be examined in detail.

Shop units or street stalls: These are a faster and less time consuming form of engagement, aimed at passing people. They need to be sited where there are strong pedestrian flows. They can include a range of ways of participating, from questionnaires to comment boards. It is useful to target local events, such as festivals or market days, which can attract larger numbers of people.

Questionnaires: These have the advantage of being low-cost and of potentially being circulated to large numbers of people. They can include paper-based and on-line versions. Analysing returned questionnaires can be very time-consuming and this needs to be taken into account in their design. Multiple-choice questions are relatively easy to analyse. However, there also needs to be scope for free expression. It is important also to ask open questions and to avoid loaded questions.

Model making: Getting local people to make three dimensional models or layouts of how their area could be developed is a creative and often engaging way of considering options and developing ideas for sites or areas. The outcome of such workshops could be to inform and illustrate briefs for key development sites.

Digital and social media: All neighbourhood plans should have a website and email address. The website may be used for reporting on progress, making available key evidence documents (such as technical reports), providing links to web-based engagement, publicising events, and providing feedback on outcomes of previous engagement activities. Social media is useful for publicising events and sometimes can be a platform for 'live' discussions, though this requires careful management.

School and college projects: It can be quite challenging to gain access to schools. An effective approach can be to work through teachers and identify opportunities to incorporate neighbourhood planning into existing lesson plans, e.g. debate, or art and drawing. For older age groups, pupils or students can be asked to design their own questions to engage their peers.

Stage 2: Preparing the plan

Overview

A neighbourhood plan is a planning document and will guide the future development of the area. That means it is about the use and development of land and associated social, economic and environmental issues. The local planning authority should be able to advise on this.

The legislation does not prescribe what content a plan should have. A plan could be comprehensive, dealing with a wide range of issues, or focused on one or two issues only. It could be detailed, or simply set general principles to guide new development. This will depend on the wishes of the local community. It will also be influenced by the scope and adequacy of existing policy in the local plan.

The task for the parish/town councils or neighbourhood forums is to lead and co-ordinate the process of producing a neighbourhood plan. It is up to the neighbourhood forum or town/parish council to decide how to undertake the work. For example, many parish councils set up a working or steering group to lead in the preparation of the plan. Another option would be to work jointly with other organisations.
Earlier community engagement and evidence gathering should help to identify key issues in the area, which can then inform the aims and policies of the plan.

A neighbourhood plan may also make site allocations for development and designate Local Green Spaces, to protect spaces valued by the community. There is an interactive process of preparing the plan, evidence gathering and engaging with the community (see earlier sections on Building the evidence base and Publicity and engagement).

All neighbourhood plans must meet 'the basic conditions' set out in planning legislation. These relate to having regard to national policy, achieving sustainable development, general conformity with strategic local policy and not breaching EU obligations. The plan must also comply with human rights law.

Once there is a draft neighbourhood plan, it must be subject to a 6-week pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14), undertaken by the neighbourhood planning body.

Following this, the plan will be finalised, with modifications if necessary. Then the plan is submitted to the local planning authority, with supporting statements.

The following sections deal with:

- **Content and structure**
- **Drafting the plan**
- **Policy themes**
- **Meeting the basic conditions**
- **Pre-submission consultation**

Drafting the plan

Overview
The evidence base and community engagement programme will provide understanding of the area and help to identify key issues. These could inform key aims and perhaps a vision for the plan. These in turn may then be translated into policies and, where appropriate, site allocations and Local Green Space designations.

This process will require good leadership and co-ordination skills. Difficult choices may need to be made. Whilst community engagement should occur throughout the process, and people's views need to be given full consideration, some people may be unhappy with the decisions taken. Neighbourhood planning decisions must be based on rational judgements. This includes a willingness to make tough decisions and compromises.

It is important to be transparent at all stages, making clear what decisions have been taken and explaining the rationale and reasoning behind them.

Setting aims
In setting aims for a neighbourhood plan, it is necessary to assess and predict the social, environmental and physical trends affecting the area over that period. But aspirations should also be considered. The whole point of a neighbourhood plan is to have a positive impact. A careful balance needs to be struck between being ambitious, but also realistic.

Based on the evidence, community feedback and direct knowledge of the area, a useful approach

Content and structure of the plan

The following are suggestions for possible structure and content of the plan:

Introduction: Status and purpose of the plan.

Vision and aims: The neighbourhood plan can set out the community's overall vision for the area and should include overall aims for its future development. These can relate to a wide range of planning and regeneration matters – social, economic and environmental. The vision and aims of the plan can then be translated into detailed policies, guidance and proposals later in the plan.

Evidence on the area: An overview of the neighbourhood area will provide a useful context for the policies of the neighbourhood plan. This may include the context of the wider area and key evidence (social, economic and environmental data).

Summary of community engagement: It is useful to provide a brief overview of the community engagement programme that was undertaken and the key outcomes/issues arising.

Local green space designations: Neighbourhood plans may designate Local Green Space. If these are included, a plan showing the boundaries of each Local Green Space will need to be included.

Site allocations and/or development envelopes: The neighbourhood plan may allocate key sites for specific kinds of development, such as housing, retail, employment or mixed use. An alternative approach is for the neighbourhood plan to define areas within which development may be located,

for example village envelopes. The boundaries of sites and/or village envelopes should be shown clearly on scale plans.

Planning policies: A neighbourhood plan, once successful at referendum, will form part of the statutory local development plan for the area and will contain policies against which development proposals will be considered. Planning applications will be determined in accordance with the neighbourhood plan's policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Policies should provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal. It helps if they have supporting text that explains the intention behind the policy.

Supporting guidance: The policies in the plan could be supplemented if necessary by more detailed guidance (e.g. development briefs for particular sites). This would be helpful in interpreting and applying the policies of the plan.

Infrastructure: Infrastructure proposals relating to the use and development of land could be included in the plan. For example, it could include policies around improving public spaces, highways, pedestrian links or providing new community facilities, providing these were essential to allowing the development of certain sites to go ahead.

Matters outside of the scope of the neighbourhood plan: A non-statutory part of the plan could be added, perhaps as an annex, describing proposed actions or projects.

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may be to consider what is the neighbourhood's USP (unique selling point). This is about identifying those factors that make the area distinctive, attractive and a desirable place to live and work in. Or it may be about achieving an area's unrealised potential, such as regenerating vacant historic or community buildings.

Aims may address an area's weaknesses, build on its strengths and deal with any other issues identified. A plan could also have an overall vision, if this is thought to be helpful. The vision and aims should be

as clear and concise as possible, as they will inform the policies of the plan.

Once the vision and aims have been developed, they should be publicised, together with an explanation of how they have been derived from evidence and community feedback.

Drafting policy

The vision and aims will need to be translated into a practical set of policies, as the means to achieving

them, and possibly site allocations or Local Green Space designations.

The policies of a neighbourhood plan and the local plan together form the statutory development plan for the area and will be used as a basis for making decisions on planning applications. The National Planning Policy Framework (often referred to as the NPPF) is also an important material consideration.

It is essential to have copies of the existing adopted local plan and any emerging local plan policy documents to hand and to refer to them when developing policy. It will also be important to consider how the neighbourhood plan aligns with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and the guidance contained in Planning Practice Guidance (see later section on Meeting the basic conditions). The local planning authority must make clear which of their adopted local planning policies are strategic in nature. This will ensure that policies at all levels are complementary. A neighbourhood plan should not repeat national or local plan policies, as such policies already apply and repeating them causes confusion.

Policies should be written to give substance to the plan's aims and vision and help local planning authorities make decisions on planning applications in the neighbourhood area. Each policy should include a statement of purpose, a summary of relevant evidence and clear planning rationale (the thinking behind the policy), and the wording of the policy itself. The convention is for the policy itself to be in bold text. Policies may also be accompanied by explanatory text or by more detailed guidance to help make their interpretation clear. This will help to ensure the policies are applied as intended when they were written.

Policies are best written in a concise and unambiguous way, in order to give clear requirements for development to meet, to inform decision makers and those applying for planning permission. There is no need to use jargon or to write in a legalistic way. Indeed, it is better if the policies are written in simple and clear English.

Before and during writing policies, it is good idea to meet development management and/or planning policy officers from the local authority. Their views should be helpful in writing clear and effective policies and guidance.

Meeting developers, infrastructure providers and landowners in the neighbourhood area can be particularly helpful in clarifying expectations and ambitions and identifying local issues. Key public agencies and service providers should also be approached.

Policies will be written individually, but it is also important to consider how they will work collectively. Many policies will interact and it may be useful to cross-reference them. Collectively, the policies must help to achieve sustainable development. That means they must enable and allow growth, but also take into account the interests of future generations (see later section on Meeting the basic conditions).

For significant sites, it may be useful to include a site-specific development or design brief, to augment the policies.

Drafting effective policies is precise and challenging work. Where planning consultants are being used, engaging them on policy drafting may be a particularly good use of time. This is also the case when dealing with complex technical matters, such as housing need.

It is essential to ensure that the plan and policies do not breach EU obligations (see later section on Meeting the basic conditions).

Infrastructure

A neighbourhood plan can also set out infrastructure requirements for the area. For example, this could include highway works needed to provide suitable access to development sites. A neighbourhood plan may protect land required for infrastructure improvements. The plan should not be prescriptive on the detail of the solution, but can set out the infrastructure deficiency that needs to be addressed.

A neighbourhood plan can also suggest priorities for improving community infrastructure, such as the improvement of key public spaces, parks or green spaces. This could then influence how monies raised through planning gain or the Community Infrastructure Levy are spent. This could be reflected in the plan's policies.

As with other parts of the plan, infrastructure requirements must relate to the use and development of land and be evidence based. It is essential that any infrastructure

requirements are realistic and do not undermine the viability of development sites.

Some community infrastructure will be the responsibility of various service providers, for example, public transport, public car parks, schools, and health facilities. Discussions with such providers will clarify their intentions for the future. The land use dimensions of these may then be reflected in the neighbourhood plan.

Often, planning will not deliver all infrastructure required. So consideration may need to be made of how infrastructure could be funded and delivered (this could go into a non-planning section of the plan).

Site allocations and designations

Site allocations
A decision will need to be taken on whether to include specific site allocations in the neighbourhood plan or other means of defining the area of development such as locational policies or the definition of a growth envelope. This may involve identifying specific sites for new housing, employment, new community facilities or other kinds of development.

The first step would be to discuss this with the local planning authority. The local plan may set overall growth allocations for different parts of the local area. There may also be strategic site allocations made as part of the local plan or emerging local plan. As site allocations can be made in both local plans and neighbourhood plans, close liaison will be necessary to ensure that the allocations made by the different plans are complementary and distinctive.

Local developers and landowners also need to be engaged, especially where sites are being allocated. This allows representations to be made, will highlight any local issues (such as viability) and will help to establish which sites are available for development within the plan period.

The inclusion of site allocations in a neighbourhood plan is likely to make the need for strategic environmental assessment (SEA) more likely. The local planning authority will screen the emerging neighbourhood plan.

A clear and transparent methodology must be employed for making site allocations. This should include a clear criteria for assessing sites. Such criteria could include things like vehicular access, landscape quality, agricultural grade, proximity to town or village centres, environmental constraints, road capacity, proximity to public transport, proximity to community facilities. It is a good idea to consult on the selection criteria, before making draft site allocations and then consulting on them.

Site allocations must be evidence based. Of particular relevance may be the local planning authority's Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, or Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment.

Local Green Space designations
Neighbourhood plans can designate green areas of particular importance to the local community. Local Green Space designations and related policies can provide special protection against development.

Green spaces provide a range of social, economic and environmental benefits. So considering green space is part of ensuring that growth is sustainable. Local Green Space designations and any related policies must be based on a robust evidence base and community and stakeholder engagement.

Local Green Space designations must be made in accordance with the criteria contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and take account of Planning Practice Guidance. This requires a space to be:

· in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
· demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife;
· local in character and not an "extensive tract of land".

Local Green Space designation is rarely appropriate where planning permission for development has been granted for the site and is still capable of being implemented.

Other designations of land, such as green belt or conservation area status, do not necessarily preclude

or support designation as Local Green Space. But it is necessary to consider whether the additional designation is necessary and would serve a useful purpose.

Policy themes

The neighbourhood plan can interpret, add detail, clarify expectations or introduce new complementary policies to those already set out in the local plan, whilst having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework.

In writing policies for different themes, the following may be helpful.

Employment
Employment policy may be aspirational in terms of trying to attract better-paid jobs and more prestigious employers. However, it also needs to take account of local skills and the dynamics of the local labour market (e.g. what sort of employer would be attracted to the area now and in the future). The changing nature of employment should be considered. Neighbourhood plan policies and site allocations can be used to enable employment, including industrial, commercial and tourism-related development.

Encouraging investment in jobs often requires a focus on wider issues such as choice and quality of housing, quality of environment, cultural facilities, telecommunications, infrastructure, branding, image and perceptions. A neighbourhood plan can be an important means to promoting an area and creating investor confidence.

Even in mainly residential areas, employment is an issue. For example, there could be a need for meeting space, hot-desking facilities or faster broadband for people working from home.

Town centres and retail
Where the neighbourhood area includes a city, town or local centre, policies could seek to build on existing strengths and to direct new development into existing centres.

There is a need to consider the different dimensions of town and city centres, including retail, leisure, culture, visitor attractions, residential accommodation, entertainment and community facilities. A neighbourhood plan could be a means to enabling diversification, rec-

ognising the growing importance of non-retail uses as a means to making centres more viable.

Design is an important consideration in town centres, especially to help ensure that new development is of high quality and well integrated though good pedestrian links. Heritage policy may be important for some towns, to recognise the role of historic environments in making centres attractive to shoppers and visitors.

Enabling residential development around city, town or village centres can be an effective way of increasing the catchment and supporting both day and night time facilities such as shops, cafes, pubs and restaurants.

Housing
Housing policies must address local need, including deficiencies in a local area. A neighbourhood plan must accommodate new housing to meet local need, for example through site allocations and infill policies. Common deficiencies include smaller housing for first time buyers or those downsizing and housing suitable for the elderly. Any policies on housing mix must be evidence based. Affordable housing will often be dealt with by local strategic policies in the local plan. However, there may still be scope for fine-tuning these, for example by setting out requirements for affordable housing to be integrated into overall development and be tenure blind.

The neighbourhood plan may make site allocations for housing or mixed use including residential uses. It is essential that the plan meets evidence-derived housing need and growth requirements set out in the local plan through policies, site allocations, village envelopes or other means.

Policies on housing standards and urban design can help to address sustainability. Housing development should be about creating distinctive places, not just applying space and highway standards. Indeed, things like garden space standards can impose poor urban design solutions, which owe little to the distinctive local character.

It is important to recognise that successful housing developments rely not just on the houses, but on employment, community facilities, public transport and good linkages to surrounding areas. It is often useful to encourage mixed-use development rather than large single use housing areas. This can help to

reduce the need for travel to access employment and community facilities.

Design

There is a direct relationship between quality of environment and an areas ability to attract investment, population and visitors. Good design can help to support local businesses and economic growth. It can also support and encourage healthier lifestyles, for example by creating safe, convenient and attractive environments for walking and for recreation. National policy makes clear that neighbourhood plans should not impose arbitrary stylistic preferences. It is usually best to focus on urban design and townscape matters. These include things like:

- enclosure and definition of streets and spaces;
- the form, scale, massing, and height of buildings;
- ease of movement for pedestrians (sometimes referred to as permeability and connectivity);
- distinctive features like terraces, landmark buildings or parks;
- the use of key spaces and the public realm, including social and economic activities;
- the mix of uses in the area.

Design policies can help to ensure that new development responds to these characteristics. Such policies can also enable and encourage creativity and innovation, including green architecture (high environmental performance). Design codes could also be included.

Historic environments

There are special statutory duties that apply to decisions involving listed buildings and conservation areas at the planning application stage. Policies need to guide applications involving or affecting historic buildings and areas. At the heart of heritage legislation and policy is the need for heritage assets to remain in productive use and the need to understand their special architectural or historic interest or significance as a basis for considering change. The setting of historic buildings is also a key consideration. Responding to setting may be about good townscape principles or about maintaining the open landscape setting, depending on the nature of the historic building.

The conservation of heritage assets needs to be reconciled with other social, economic and environmental concerns, recognising the need for heritage to adapt to changing demands. A neighbourhood plan may

highlight the role of heritage in delivering more sustainable forms of economic development and physical regeneration, for example in areas of decline where historic buildings can provide ideal space for enterprise. So it is important to understand how heritage can deliver growth and how growth in the wider area can help to make heritage more viable and sustainable.

Policies on design in historic areas should highlight things like townscape character, but should avoid imposing stylistic copying in new development, which can harm the integrity of historic areas and be really damaging within the setting of landmark historic buildings.

Natural environment

Policy about the natural environment covers issues such as landscape, biodiversity, trees and foliage, allotments, rural paths, parks and open spaces (sometimes referred to collectively as green infrastructure). It is useful to recognise the benefits the natural environment provides, for example, in mitigating the impacts of climate change, alleviating flooding, improving air quality and providing space for recreation and healthy lifestyles.

Important natural environment assets may be identified, such as valued local green spaces, which may be designated as Local Green Space. Other aspects of the local natural environment could also be recognised and be given specific protection by policies. For example, policies could require the retention of trees around the edge of a development site.

There may be opportunities for development to enhance the natural environment and create new facilities, such as wildlife habitats, tree planting or spaces for community and recreational use. Priorities for improving green infrastructure could be identified.

Community facilities

One of the most important factors in making places sustainable is to ensure a good mix of uses, so that housing and employment areas are well linked and served by a range of community facilities, preferably in easy walking distance. This does depend on the nature of the area, for example some rural settlements can be challenging.

Community facilities can include local businesses, such as shops, pubs and entertainment. They can

include public facilities like libraries, medical facilities or schools. Some facilities may be run by community organisations, for example community centres and libraries that have been the subject of asset transfer.

Neighbourhood plans can include land use policies to protect existing facilities or enable new ones. Also, by enabling growth, neighbourhood plans can help to make community facilities more viable, for example by making housing site allocations to increase the local catchment of facilities in towns or villages.

Whilst land use policies can be included, neighbourhood plans can't be used to make decisions on behalf of service providers (for example health, education or public transport). It is essential to engage with such providers therefore to find out their plans for the area. For example, a neighbourhood plan could not take decisions on which schools would expand. However, it could allocate land to allow a school to expand, in liaison with the education provider.

Transport

A neighbourhood plan may deal with transport insofar as it relates to new development. It may not deal with things like traffic management of existing networks, unless such management would be necessary to allow development to be approved. Examples of transport considerations relevant to planning include:

- ensuring that new development has adequate parking and servicing provision. This could include car parking, cycle storage and delivery areas for commercial development;
- making sure the layout of development allows for pedestrian convenience and safety;
- ensuring development includes cycle paths and storage;
- creating easy pedestrian access to public transport facilities in terms of direct and convenient connections;
- considering whether access arrangements to a site, existing or proposed, are adequate;
- making sure that local transport capacity is adequate to serve development. This could include consideration of highway capacity, train services, bus services and other modes of transport.

Many traffic matters fall outside of the scope of planning. For example, changes to traffic management on existing transport networks, including speed limits,

are usually a matter for the highways authority. Policy on transport should seek to encourage a balanced and sustainable provision. The needs of non-car owners should be positively addressed. For example, pedestrian convenience and facilities for cyclists should be encouraged. Careful consideration should be given to creating convenient and safe links to surrounding areas. It may be necessary to encourage new roads, bus routes and other links to key development sites to support their development. Car parking needs to be carefully designed and positioned to create a distinctive sense of place and not to dominate the public realm.

Non-planning matters

Often the process of preparing a plan will highlight non-planning issues or issues that can't be dealt with by neighbourhood plan policies. This could include things like traffic management, street cleaning, environmental improvements, community projects or business support. A decision needs to be made on how to deal with some issues.

One option could be to produce a supplement or an annex to the neighbourhood plan, setting out proposed actions to address these issues. These would not form part of the statutory neighbourhood plan, so would not be subject to the independent examination and referendum. This would need to be made clear at the beginning of the section.

Meeting the 'basic conditions'

The basic conditions

Neighbourhood plans must meet certain 'basic conditions' before they can come into force. These are tested though the independent examination, before a neighbourhood plan may proceed to referendum.

The basic conditions for neighbourhood plans are:

- **have regard to national policy**
- **contribute to the achievement of sustainable development**
- **general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area**
- **compatible with EU obligations.**

In addition neighbourhood plans must meet human rights requirements.

Despite the current negotiations on leaving the EU, the requirements to comply with EU obligations will continue to apply for the time being, but may be replaced with a requirement to meet UK law at some point in the future.

For neighbourhood development orders including community right to build orders, there are additional requirements relating to environmental impacts and the protection and enhancement of listed buildings and conservation areas.

The basic conditions ensure that there is a balance between neighbourhood plan bodies having the freedom to plan for the future of their area, but also ensuring that neighbourhood plans deliver sustainable growth, meet various legal requirements and do not undermine strategic policies for the local area.

National policy

The main source of national policies is the National Planning Policy Framework. This is a concise document dealing with a wide range of planning matters. The key theme of the National Planning Policy Framework is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Sustainability has social, economic and environmental dimensions.

The National Planning Policy Framework deals with a range of issues and policy areas. These need to be considered when formulating neighbourhood plan policies. Much national policy is generalised in nature, so sets overall principles, but leaves the detail to local and neighbourhood plans. So a neighbourhood plan may certainly interpret national policy and apply it to the local area. However, any material departure from national policy would be likely to run into difficulties at the examination stage.

The Government's Planning Practice Guidance is a more substantial document. It is regularly updated, so it is best to use the official on-line version, rather than downloading it. Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on statutory processes and on the application of national policy. This includes specific advice on neighbourhood planning and also on many of the planning subjects that a neighbourhood plan may deal with.

General conformity with strategic local policy

Consideration of general conformity relates to adopted strategic local policies. It does not relate to emerging plans. Also, it relates only to policies that are strategic in nature, not for example the entire local plan. The local planning authority will highlight which policies are strategic in nature. For example, this could include affordable housing policies, overall growth requirements and strategic site allocations.

The independent examination will consider whether a neighbourhood plan in its entirety meets the basic conditions. So where strategic planning policies are in an older document and are in contradiction with current national policies or with recent evidence, the neighbourhood plan may recognise this and still be found to be in general conformity with strategic local policies.

An emerging local plan would not constitute part of the statutory development plan. However, it still needs to be considered by the neighbourhood planning body. Its evidence base may be part of the evidence base for the neighbourhood plan. If neighbourhood plan policies conflict with policies in a local plan that is adopted after the neighbourhood plan comes into force, the more recent plan policy takes precedence.

Achieving sustainable development

Neighbourhood plans must contribute to achieving sustainable development. The Government's approach to sustainable development is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Essentially, it is about enabling growth to cater for the needs of current generations, but ensuring that growth doesn't mean worse lives for future generations.

There are many ways in which a neighbourhood plan can address sustainable development. Some practical examples are:

- encouraging and requiring mixed transport provision, including accessible public transport, cycle facilities and safe and convenient pedestrian routes;
- encouraging mixed-use areas, thereby reducing the need for travel;
- ensuring a good mix of community facilities in the area;
- encouraging facilities to support and encourage home working, including fast broadband;

- requiring good urban design, creating safe, attractive, convenient, well-connected streets and spaces;
- ensuring new development enhances the viability of city, town, village and local centres;
- enabling provision of varied local employment opportunities;
- requiring provision of a good mix of housing of different sizes to meet local need;
- considering the protection and enhancement of the natural environment including wildlife areas and high quality landscapes;
- encouraging and enabling the reuse and refurbishment of existing buildings;
- encouraging green development and local energy generation;
- prioritising brownfield sites;
- conserving historic buildings and areas and ensuring they remain in productive use and realise their potential.

These are just a few examples, but they give a flavour to the diverse ways in which sustainability can be addressed. Things like energy efficient construction are largely covered by building regulations, but may be encouraged by the neighbourhood plan, for example by welcoming innovative design solutions.

Environmental assessments, habitats regulations assessments

Neighbourhood plans must not breach and must be compatible with EU obligations.

Strategic environmental assessment may be required for neighbourhood plans, where they are likely to cause 'significant environment effects'. Where an area has European sites, the Habitats Directive may also be triggered. The regulations require that a plan or order must not have a significant adverse effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site. It is a requirement that all neighbourhood plans submitted for examination be accompanied by either a strategic environmental assessment report or a screening determination stating that the plan would not have significant environmental effects and does not require a strategic environmental assessment, giving the reasons for that determination.

So local authorities should screen emerging neighbourhood plan proposals at the earliest stage, to ascertain whether they are likely to trigger any EU directives. Identifying a need for strategic environmental assessment at an early stage, or determining that

it is not required, helps the community and local authority to deal with the issue in the most efficient way. This is why the Government's Planning Practice Guidance sets out the need for screening for strategic environmental assessment at an early stage in the plan's preparation. To be ready for screening, an emerging neighbourhood plan would need to give a clear indication of the purpose and requirement of policies (not necessarily fully drafted policies) and also details of which sites were being allocated for development.

If a strategic environmental assessment is found to be necessary, the gathering of evidence for its preparation can be integrated into the process of producing the neighbourhood plan.

Even where there is no need to undertake formal environmental assessment under EU directives, it is good practice to prepare a statement setting out how environmental issues have been taken into account and considered during the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. This could be submitted to the local planning authority with the proposed neighbourhood plan as part of the basic conditions statement (See later section on Submission of the plan to the local planning authority).

The local planning authority should be able to advise and assist under its duty to support neighbourhood plans, alongside national bodies like Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Human rights

Neighbourhood plans must be compatible with human rights law. A useful approach to assessing impact on human rights is to undertake an equalities impact assessment.

Pre-submission consultation

The Regulation 14 consultation

Neighbourhood planning regulations (Regulation 14) require the draft neighbourhood plan proposal to be the subject of a pre-submission consultation before it is submitted to the local authority for independent examination. The consultation should last at least 6 weeks. The neighbourhood planning body will need to approve the consultation draft of the plan and that the Regulation 14 consultation takes place.

Prior to the pre-submission consultation, it is sensible to discuss the draft plan with the local planning authority to check if there are any concerns over meeting the basic conditions. This would allow these to be addressed, prior to the consultation.

Pre-submission consultation requirements include publicising the draft plan to people who live, work or run businesses in the area. The publicity must include details of the proposed neighbourhood plan, where and when it may be viewed, and how to make comments on the plan and by what date. In addition, the plan must be sent to the local planning authority. Certain statutory bodies must be consulted, including the county council (if applicable), the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England. The local planning authority should be asked to provide a list of contact details for the statutory consultees.

It is also advisable to consult any neighbouring local, town or parish councils, significant landowners, local businesses and local community organisations, such as chambers of commerce, civic societies and local trusts. Anyone on the neighbourhood plan database that has previously been involved should also be consulted.

Many people will not want to read through the whole document, so it is useful to produce a simple leaflet or display boards that set out the main aims and the focus of the policies in the plan. Drop-in centres may be a useful means of allowing people to ask questions or discuss the plan on a one-to-one basis. The draft plan proposal should be uploaded to the neighbourhood plan website. Printed copies should be made available at convenient locations, such as libraries, community centres, council offices and other key public buildings. Copies should be available to send to people who can't access a digital or displayed copy.

Considering representations and modifications

Any comments received by the end of the consultation period must be considered conscientiously by the neighbourhood planning body. All representations need to be considered, but it is legitimate for the neighbourhood plan body to take a different view. Indeed, different representations may demonstrate opposing views. A planning judgement needs to be taken.

A decision will need to be made over whether or not to amend the neighbourhood plan in response to each representation. The decisions on whether or not to amend the plan, and the reasoning behind them, should be recorded, as this information will need to be incorporated into the consultation statement (see later section on the consultation statement).

The neighbourhood planning body will need to agree the modifications and approve the resulting draft of the plan for submission to the local planning authority.

Stage 3: Bringing the plan into force

Overview

After submission, responsibility for taking the process forward lies with the local planning authority. The local authority will publicise the plan (Regulation 16) and arrange for the independent examination. This will consider whether the neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements.

If successful at the examination stage, with modifications if necessary, then the local authority will arrange for a neighbourhood plan referendum. If there is a majority yes vote, then the neighbourhood plan is made and becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area.

The following sections deal with:

- **Submission**
- **Independent examination**
- **Referendum**
- **After the plan is made**

Submission

Submission of the plan to the local planning authority

The draft neighbourhood plan proposal must be submitted to the local planning authority. The neighbourhood plan submission must include the following:

- a map or statement, which identifies the area to which the plan relates (a map makes more sense than a statement!);
- a consultation statement (see later section on the consultation statement);
- the neighbourhood plan proposal;
- a statement on how the plan fulfils the basic conditions (see previous sections on the 'basic conditions' and later section on the 'basic conditions' statement).

On receiving the submitted plan proposal and supporting documents, the local authority is responsible for checking that the submitted neighbourhood plan has followed the proper legal process, such as the neighbourhood area being designated and the legal requirements for consultation and publicity having been followed. The local authority is then responsible for publicising the plan, arranging for the independent examination and arranging for the referendum to take place. The publicity gives people an opportunity to make representations that will be passed to the independent examiner.

The 'consultation statement'

The focus of the 'consultation statement' is on the 6-week Regulation 14 consultation. However, it should also include a summary of previous community engagement and consultation that has been undertaken. This could include a summary of the main outcomes of such engagement and how this informed the content of the plan. This helps to demonstrate that there has been a rigorous programme of community and stakeholder engagement throughout the process.

The consultation statement should contain the following details of the Regulation 14 consultation:

- details of people and organisations consulted about the proposed neighbourhood plan;
- details of how they were consulted;
- a summary of the main issues and concerns raised through the consultation process;
- descriptions of how these issues and concerns were considered and addressed in the proposed neighbourhood plan.

Essentially, this is about demonstrating that there has been proper consultation and that representations have been taken into account.

The 'basic conditions' statement

The 'basic conditions' statement needs to demonstrate how the neighbourhood plan proposal meets each of the basic conditions (see earlier section on the basic conditions). This provides a useful opportunity to the neighbourhood planning body to explain to the independent examiner how the basic conditions have been considered and how the plan meets their requirements. This includes:

- explanation of how regard has been made to relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework. It may be useful to list relevant national policies and explain how the neighbourhood plan policies have responded to them;
- an analysis of how the plan contributes to achieving sustainable development;
- explanation of how the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the local plan, including in meeting growth requirements;
- information on EU obligations, including screening outcomes from the local planning authority and, where required, an accompanying strategic environmental assessment report;
- confirmation that the plan is compatible with human rights legislation.

In addition the basic conditions statement needs to confirm that the plan meets other legal requirements, as follows:

- the draft plan is being submitted by a qualifying body as defined by the Localism Act (a designated neighbourhood forum or parish council);
- what is being proposed is a neighbourhood development plan (planning policy);
- the proposed plan states the period for which it is to have effect;
- confirmation that the policies do not relate to 'excluded development' (such as minerals extraction of nationally significant infrastructure);
- confirmation that the proposed plan does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area;
- confirmation that there are no other neighbourhood plans in place within the neighbourhood area.

It would be sensible to include the dates of applications and designations of the neighbourhood area and forum (where relevant). The plan submission could also be accompanied by details of where key evidence may be viewed (for example, web links to a housing needs assessment).

Publicity

The plan must be publicised by the local planning authority for a 6-week period (Regulation 16). The local planning authority will also notify anyone referred to in the consultation statement that the plan has been received. Any representations received will be passed to the independent examiner for consideration (see later section on The independent examination).

Publicity under Regulation 16 should not be confused with the earlier pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14). The two are quite different. The Regulation 14 consultation carried out by the neighbourhood planning body would have allowed anyone to comment on any aspect of the plan and for modifications to be made, if necessary. Following the Regulation 16 publicity period, any representations made will be passed to the independent examiner. This means that they will only be considered within the remit of the independent examination (i.e. whether the neighbourhood plan proposal meets the basic conditions).

Neighbourhood development orders

If a neighbourhood development order or community right to build order were being proposed then it would be useful for them to be submitted to the local planning authority at the same time as the proposed neighbourhood plan. This allows them to be dealt with concurrently at the examination and referendum stages.

The independent examination

Appointment of independent examiner

The local authority will appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced person to carry out the independent examination of the neighbourhood plan. This person is known as the 'independent examiner'. The appointment has to be agreed with the neighbourhood planning body.

Things to look for in selecting or agreeing an independent examiner include:

- knowledge and experience of planning legislation, policy and procedures;

- appropriate qualifications and membership of an appropriate professional body (for example, RTPI, RICS);
- freedom from conflicts of interest or bias (real or perceived);
- personal skills to deal effectively with a range of people with varying levels of planning knowledge;
- ability to weigh evidence and make sound and impartial professional judgements.

The local authority will send to the independent examiner the plan and supporting information and also a copy of any comments received during the publicity period. The independent examiner will take these comments into account insofar as they relate to the remit of the independent examination.

The scope of the independent examination

Neighbourhood plans and orders should be examined fairly and transparently. Examiners should ensure that neighbourhood planning bodies remain well briefed on all matters relating to the independent examination. If the examiner requires any additional information, such requests and responses should be made publically available by local planning authorities in a timely fashion to ensure the fairness and transparency of the examination process.

Normally, the independent examination will be conducted by written representations. However, if necessary, the examiner may invite interested parties to a public hearing to present their comments. This might be necessary to examine an issue in more depth or to ensure fairness.

The independent examiner will consider whether the proposed neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions and other requirements set out by law. In addition, they will consider whether the voting area for the referendum should be for the neighbourhood area or a wider area (if the plan is likely to have wider impacts).

The examiner will be considering whether the plan:

- has regard to national policy;
- contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- is in general conformity with the adopted strategic local policies for the local area;
- is compatible with EU obligations;
- meets human rights requirements.

Where neighbourhood development orders and community right to build orders are also being examined, there are additional requirements to consider environmental impacts and the protection and enhancement of listed buildings and conservation areas.

The examiner's report

Following the examination, the examiner will issue a report to the local authority and the neighbourhood planning body. If the plan meets the basic conditions, the examiner will recommend that the plan proceed to the referendum stage. However, they may and usually do, recommend modifications that need to be made to the plan in order to meet the basic conditions, before it can proceed to the referendum.

The examiner may conclude that the plan does not meet the basic conditions and that modification to make it meet the basic conditions is not possible. In that situation the examiner would recommend that the plan does not proceed to the referendum. If the plan can proceed to referendum (with or without modifications) the examiner will be required to advise the local authority on the referendum voting area. This may include people beyond the boundary of the neighbourhood area.

The local planning authority's role

It is the responsibility of the local planning authority to ensure that the plan meets the basic conditions and to determine whether or not it proceeds to referendum, with or without modifications. The local authority is also responsible for deciding whether the voting area should be the neighbourhood area or should include other areas too (where they would be affected by the plan).

If the local planning authority can make modifications to a neighbourhood plan to meet the basic conditions, so that it can proceed to referendum, then they must make those modifications. They will normally follow the independent examiner's recommendations, but may make a different judgement. Clear reasons would need to be given, if departing from the examiner's recommendations. Also, additional consultation would need to take place. There are exceptional circumstances where the Secretary of State may be asked to intervene, where the local authority fails to submit a plan for referendum or departs from an examiner's recommendations.

Modifications must be discussed with the neighbourhood planning body, which has the option of withdrawing the plan if it is unhappy with the changes proposed by the local planning authority.

As soon as possible after modifying the plan, the local planning authority must publicise details of the modification(s) and where they can be inspected on their website. The option for the neighbourhood planning body to withdraw the neighbourhood plan ends once the decision on modifications is publicised (Regulation 18 publicity).

In most instances, the decision on the examiner's recommendations must be made within 5 weeks from the day following receipt of the examiner's report. Or, the local planning authority and neighbourhood planning body may agree a date.

It is the responsibility of the local authority to cover the costs of the independent examination and referendum.

Referendum

If the neighbourhood plan is found to be satisfactory, with modifications if necessary, then the local authority will arrange for the referendum to take place. This will be organised by the local authority's elections unit. The local authority is required to publish information about the neighbourhood plan 28 working days before the date of the referendum. Then 25 working days before the date of the referendum, they are required to give notice that a referendum is taking place and the date of the poll.

The neighbourhood planning body may encourage voting and disseminate information on the proposed neighbourhood plan, within reasonable expense limits. Public money and parish councils can only produce factual material about the neighbourhood plan, not promote a yes vote. However, members of the parish council and others may act independently, using independent funds, to campaign for a 'yes' vote.

The referendum question that will be asked is as follows:

Do you want [insert name of local planning authority] to use the neighbourhood plan for [insert name of neighbourhood area] to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

People on the electoral register will be entitled to vote in the referendum. Where a business area has been designated, there will be two referendums; one for residents and one for non-domestic ratepayers.

If more than 50% of those voting in the referendum vote 'yes', then the neighbourhood plan becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area.

For business areas, a 'yes' vote will also be required in both the residential and business referendums. If there is a different result from the business referendum and the residential referendum, the local planning authority will decide whether to bring the plan into force.

The referendum should be considered from the early stages of preparing the plan. Throughout the process of preparing the plan, factors that will make a 'yes' vote more likely include:

- publicity at all stages, so that the voting population know about the plan;
- close working with local stakeholders;
- robust community and stakeholder engagement throughout the plan-making process, engaging with as many people as possible, including minority groups;
- providing feedback on the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement and explaining how this has informed the content of the plan;
- basing decisions on the content of the plan on a robust, proportionate and relevant evidence base;
- openness and transparency in decision making, based on clear and transparent methodology and planning criteria;
- clearly explaining the choices and compromises made in the plan;
- addressing the diverse range of local needs and wants.

Once the plan comes in to force

Use of the plan in development management
If successful at referendum, a neighbourhood plan comes into force as part of the development plan for the area alongside the local plan. Local planning authorities and planning inspectors considering planning applications or appeals must make their decisions in accordance with the policies of the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Monitoring
It is important to monitor the neighbourhood plan, once it is made. The town/parish council or neighbourhood forum (or organisation that the forum becomes) should put procedures in place to do this.

Planning applications in the neighbourhood area should be monitored. Representations can be made where necessary, explaining how the neighbourhood plan's policies relate to the proposed development. Objections may be made where the scheme does not meet the requirements of policy and supportive comments can be included where the scheme does comply with policy and helps to deliver the neighbourhood plan's aims.

Subsequent decisions by the local planning authority should be monitored, to make sure the neighbourhood plan's policies are being properly applied.

Updating the plan
Changes in planning legislation and national policy will also need to be monitored, as these may have implications for the policies in the neighbourhood plan. For example, if national policy was changed and then conflicted with policies of the neighbourhood plan, the policies in question would be eroded. It may be necessary to consider remaking the neighbourhood plan, in order to find a resolution.

Similarly, changes in local plan policy should be monitored, especially where conflicts arise with the policies of the neighbourhood plan.

Consideration of the above factors may lead over time to a need for the neighbourhood plan to be reviewed and updated. Recent changes to planning law make it easier to modify neighbourhood plans.

Minor updates that would not materially affect policies may be made by the local planning authority, with consent from the neighbourhood planning body. In these circumstances, there is no need to repeat consultation, examination and the referendum. Similar provisions exist for correcting errors in a plan.

Substantial revision to a neighbourhood plan would need to go through the later stages of the process, from pre-submission consultation onwards.

If updates are proposed by a neighbourhood planning body and these materially affect policies, there are certain addition requirements. These are:

- at the consultation stage (pre-submission) the neighbourhood planning body must state whether it believes that the modifications are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan, with reasons;
- when sending the plan to the independent examiner, the local planning authority must state whether it believes that the modifications are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan, with reasons. A copy of the original plan must also be submitted to the independent examiner;
- the examiner will decide whether the modifications proposed change the nature of the plan and the neighbourhood planning body must decide whether to proceed with the examination.

A referendum is not required if an examiner decides that the modifications would not change the nature of the plan and would meet the basic conditions (with modifications if necessary). In this circumstance, a local planning authority must make the plan within 5 weeks of receiving the examiner's report (or as agreed with the neighbourhood planning body).

However, if the examiner finds that proposed modifications do change the nature of the plan, the local planning authority would publicise and consider the examiner's report in the same way as for a new neighbourhood plan.

Delivering development

Having a plan in place is just part of the story. The ambitions of the plan then need to materialise as real changes on the ground. Landowners and developers will help to achieve this. However, elements of the plan may need active interventions on the part of the community, the local planning authority, other organisations and key stakeholders. In both areas of high growth and areas of deprivation, there may be some kinds of development that the market is unable or unlikely to deliver. Community-led development may be the solution in such instances.

It is important to note that neighbourhood forums exist to produce neighbourhood plans and have a life of 5 years only. They do not have a formal role in the implementation of a neighbourhood plan. The members of a neighbourhood forum may wish to consider how they can stay involved and support implementation, perhaps through the creation of another type of organisation, such as a community land trust or community

development trust. Such organisations sometimes take on building assets for conversion or undertake new-build development, for example to create enterprise space, community facilities or residential accommodation.

Delivering infrastructure

At the planning application stage, Section 106 obligations may be used to obtain local infrastructure improvements, where such improvements are necessary to allow the development to go ahead. Some local planning authorities may set a community infrastructure levy to raise funds for local infrastructure. However, this does depend on the local land economy and some local authorities have found community infrastructure levy to be unviable. So community infrastructure levy is unlikely to raise funds. in areas where there are problems with development viability. Similarly, the scope for planning gain through Section 106 may be restrained by viability considerations.

Funded projects

It may be possible to apply for loans or grant funding for local projects outlined in the neighbourhood plan. The challenge is to match funder aims and criteria to the project in question.
Funding sources could include:

Government national programmes.
Government programmes change, with new funding streams replacing older ones. Local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and grant-finding software and organisations like Locality can assist in identifying funding opportunities.

Lottery funds.
These can sometimes offer relatively high-rate grants for projects that deliver their aims. They include the Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery, Arts Council and Sport England.

European funding.
This is administratively complex and availability depends on location. Local authorities should be able to advise on availability.

Private funding.
In some instances, it may be possible to obtain funding from private donors, local companies and local institutions or they may be prepared to directly deliver projects.

Community-led development

Partnerships and collaboration

Increasingly, partnerships and joint or cooperative working are the means to delivering regeneration and community projects. Potential partner organisations can include:

- housing associations and housing trusts;
- community development trusts, community land trusts and building preservation trusts;
- other not-for-profit and community organisations;
- local authorities;
- health and social care bodies
- local enterprise partnerships or business improvement districts;
- private developers or local firms;
- local institutions, including universities and educational institutions.

Local authorities should also adopt policies on 'asset transfer' so that local community groups can take on building assets that are no longer required. Taking on building assets may be a means to creating new community facilities, or maintaining existing ones. The Register of Community Assets and community right to bid may be used to give communities time to raise funds to acquire local community assets that are made available for purchase.

Local authorities and other public service providers

Local authorities and other public service providers deliver a range of services, often involving large budgets. They can include:

- management of parks, playgrounds and sports pitches;
- maintenance and management of public buildings
- health and social care facilities;
- school buildings and grounds, libraries, leisure centres, markets and community centres;
- public urban and green spaces; pedestrian and cycle paths;
- streets, signage, street furniture, verges and public car parks.

A neighbourhood plan can form the basis of discussions and negotiations on how services and new facilities are provided.

Sources of information and support

Policy and advice

National Planning Policy Framework
planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/

National Planning Practice Guidance
www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2

Locality
neighbourhoodplanning.org

Historic Environment Local Management
helm.org.uk

Building for Life 12
http://designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/building-life-12-third-edition

Organisations

Urban Vision Enterprise CIC
www.uvns.org

Civic Voice
www.civicvoice.org.uk

Community Matters
www.communitymatters.org.uk

The Planning Portal
www.planningportal.gov.uk

RTPI/Planning Aid
www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid

Institute of Historic Building Conservation
www.ihbc.org.uk

Design Council CABE
www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/cabe

Historic England
https://historicengland.org.uk

Natural England
www.naturalengland.org.uk

National Planning Forum
www.natplanforum.org.uk

Action for Market Towns
www.towns.org.uk

Historic Towns and Villages Forum
www.historictownsforum.org.uk

National Association of Local Councils
www.nalc.org.uk

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
www.cpre.org.uk

National Council of Voluntary Organisations
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

The Environment Agency
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Planning Advisory Service
www.pas.gov.uk

The Glass-House
www.theglasshouse.org.uk

Communityplanning.net
www.communityplanning.net

Action with Communities in Rural England
www.acre.org.uk

Placecheck
placecheck.info

Toolkits and guidance

A range of helpful toolkits and guidance is available on neighbourhoodplanning.org. This includes:

- Establishing a Neighbourhood Planning Forum

- Memorandum of Understanding: a Toolkit for Neighbourhood Planners

- Neighbourhood Planning: Local Green Spaces

- Housing Needs Assessment at Neighbourhood Plan Level

- Site Assessment for Neighbourhood Plans

- Screening Neighbourhood Plans for Strategic Environmental Assessment

- Neighbourhood Planning Community Consultation

- Neighbourhood Development and Community Right to Build Orders Guide

- Design in Neighbourhood Planning

- Neighbourhood Plans: General Conformity with Strategic Local Planning Policy

- Community Infrastructure Levy: Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit

Glossary of planning terms

There are various technical terms used in this document and in the planning process. This glossary provides definitions to a range of such terms.

Adoption – The final confirmation of a local plan by a local planning authority.

Advertisement consent – A type of consent required for certain kinds of advertisements, such as shop signs and hoardings. Some advertisements are allowed without the need for an application by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulation 2007.

Affordable housing – Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Annual monitoring report – A report that allows the Local Authority to assess the extent to which policies and proposals set out in all the local development documents are being achieved.

Appeal – The process by which a planning applicant can challenge a planning decision that has been refused or had conditions imposed.

Area action plan – A document forming part of the local plan containing proposals for a specific defined area.

Area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) – A formal designation of an area where planning control is based on the protection and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area.

Article 4 direction – A direction restricting permitted development rights within a specified area. They are often used in conservation areas to provide protection for things like windows, doors, chimneys, etc.

BANANA – An extreme kind of NIMBY - Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone.

Biodiversity – The degree of variation of life forms within a particular ecosystem. Biodiversity is a measure of the health of an ecosystem. Human activity generally tends to reduce biodiversity, so special measures often need to be taken to offset the impact of development on natural habitats.

Brownfield land – Land that has been previously developed.

Building for life – A technique for assessing the quality of housing proposals using 20 criteria including sustainability, urban design and social/community factors.

Buildings at risk – A term used to describe historic buildings that are vacant and/or in poor condition. Some local authorities have buildings at risk surveys.

Business area – An area covered by a neighbourhood plan which is wholly or predominantly business in nature. The designation of a business area allows businesses to vote in the referendum, in addition to those living in the area.

Call in – A discretionary power of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to 'call in' certain planning applications and subject them to a public inquiry if the granting of planning permission may substantially conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework or with adopted local planning policy.

Capacity building – Training, education and awareness-raising initiatives, often used as part of community engagement initiatives, to inform people about things like neighbourhood planning and related issues.

Case law – Decisions by the courts on the interpretation of legislation.

Catchment area – The area from which most of the people using/visiting a city/town centre or other attraction would travel.

Central business district – The centre of a city, especially the part where office buildings are focused.

Certificate of lawfulness – A certificate that can be obtained from the local planning authority to confirm that existing development is lawful.

Change of use – A material change in the use of land or buildings that is of significance for planning purposes e.g. from retail to residential.

Character appraisal – An appraisal, usually of the historic and architectural character of conservation areas.

Clone towns – A term coined by the New Economics Foundation in 2004 for towns whose high streets are dominated by chain stores and where the locally distinctive character of the centre has been adversely affected.

Community – A group of people that hold something in common. They could share a common place (e.g. individual neighbourhood) a common interest (e.g. interest in the environment) a common identity (e.g. age) or a common need (e.g. a particular service focus).

Community engagement and involvement – Involving the local community in the decisions that are made regarding their area.

Community infrastructure levy – Allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their areas. Money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure such as transport schemes, schools and leisure centres.

Community plan – A plan produced by a local authority-led partnership to improve the quality of life of people living and working in an area. Community plans take a wide view and cover social and economic issues which development plans, including neighbourhood plans, do not normally address.

Community profiling – Gathering statistical data on the community, e.g. population size, income, which helps build up a 'social profile' of the community.

Community Right to Bid – Aims to give community groups the time to develop bids and raise money to buy public assets that come onto the open market.

Community Right to Build – Allows local people to drive forward new developments in their area where the benefits (e.g. profits from letting homes) could stay

within the community. These developments must meet minimum criteria and have local support demonstrated through a referendum.

Community Right to Challenge – Gives voluntary and community groups the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local service.

Compulsory purchase – A legal process initiated by a local authority to acquire privately owned land in order to implement public policy without the agreement of the owner.

Conditions – Planning conditions are provisions attached to the granting of planning permission.

Conformity – There is a requirement for neighbourhood plans to have appropriate regard to national policy and to be in conformity with local policy.

Conservation area – An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which are preserved and enhanced by local planning policies and guidance.

Conservation area consent – Consent needed for the demolition of unlisted buildings in a conservation area.

Consultation – A communication process with the local community that informs planning decision-making.

Core strategy – A development plan document forming part of a local authority's local plan, which sets out a vision and core policies for the development of an area.

Delivery vehicle – The means of making things happen. It could refer to a partnership or a community development trust or other arrangement designed to make projects happen.

Design and access statement – A short report accompanying a planning permission application. Describes design principles of a development such as layout, townscape characteristics, scale, landscape design and appearance.

Development – Legal definition is "the carrying out of building, mining, engineering or other operations in, on, under or over land, and the making of any material change in the use of buildings or other land."

Development brief – Guidance on how a site or area should be developed in terms of uses, design, linkages, conservation, etc.

Development management (previously known as development control) – The process of administering and making decisions on different kinds of planning application.

Development plan – A document setting out the local planning authority's policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the area.

Duty to co-operate – A requirement introduced by the Localism Act 2011 for local authorities to work together in dealing with cross-boundary issues such as public transport, housing allocations or large retail parks.

Economic development – Improvement of an area's economy through investment, development, job creation, and other measures.

Enforcement – Enforcement of planning control ensures that terms and conditions of planning decisions are carried out.

Enforcement notice – A legal notice served by the local planning authority requiring specified breaches of planning control to be corrected.

Environmental impact assessment – Evaluates the likely environmental impacts of the development, together with an assessment of how these impacts could be reduced.

Enterprise zone – A defined area in which there are simplified planning controls and financial incentives aimed at attracting development.

Equalities impact assessment – For a neighbourhood plan, this would be an assessment of impacts against different characteristics protected by law (such as gender, ethnicity and disability). This can be useful in demonstrating that a plan does not breach human rights law.

Evidence base –The evidence upon which a development plan is based, principally the background facts and statistics about an area, and the views of stakeholders.

Flood plain – An area prone to flooding.

Front loading – An approach to community engagement in which communities are consulted at the start of the planning process before any proposals have been produced.

General (Permitted Development) Order
The Town and Country Planning General (Permitted Development) Order is a statutory document that allows specified minor kinds of development (such as small house extensions) to be undertaken without formal planning permission.

General power of competence – A power conveyed by the Localism Act 2011 to give local authorities the ability to undertake any action in the best interest of their communities unless it is against the law.

Green belt – A designated band of land around urban areas, designed to contain urban sprawl.

Greenfield site – Land where there has been no previous development.

Green infrastructure – Landscape, biodiversity, trees, allotments, parks, open spaces and other natural assets.

Green space – Those parts of an area which are occupied by natural, designed or agricultural landscape as opposed to built development; open space, parkland, woodland, sports fields, gardens, allotments, and the like.

Green travel plan – A package of actions produced by a workplace or an organization setting out how employees, users or visitors will travel to the place in question using options that are healthy, safe and sustainable, and reduce the use of the private car.

Highway authority – The body with legal responsibility for the management and maintenance of public roads. In the UK the highway authority is usually the county council or the unitary authority for a particular area, which can delegate some functions to the district council.

Historic parks and gardens register – The national register managed by English Heritage which provides a listing and classification system for historic parks and gardens.

Housing associations – Not-for-profit organisations providing homes mainly to those in housing need.

Independent examination – An examination of a proposed neighbourhood plan, carried out by an independent person, set up to consider whether a neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions required.

Infrastructure – Basic services necessary for development to take place e.g. roads, electricity, water, education and health facilities.

Inquiry – A hearing by a planning inspector into a planning matter such as a local plan or appeal.

Judicial review – Legal challenge of a planning decision, to consider whether it has been made in a proper and lawful manner.

Legislation – The Acts of Parliament, regulations, and statutory instruments which provide the legal framework within which public law is administered.

Listed buildings – Any building or structure which is included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

Listed building consent – The formal approval which gives consent to carry out work affecting the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building.

Localism – Shifting power away from central government control to the local level. Making services more locally accountable, devolving more power to local communities, individuals and councils.

Local Development Framework (LDF) – Old name for local plans in metropolitan (single tier) areas.

Local authority – The administrative body that governs local services such as education, planning and social services.

Local Development Order – Local Development Orders allow planning authorities to implement policies in their development plan by granting planning permission for a particular development or for a particular class of development.

Local green space – This is a formal designation that may be made by neighbourhood plans, to provide protection for green spaces valued by the local community.

Local enterprise partnerships – A partnership between local authorities and businesses formed in 2011 to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within its local area.

Local list – A list produced by a local authority to identify buildings and structures of special local interest which are not included in the statutory list of listed buildings.

Local plan - The name for the collection of documents prepared by a local planning authority for the use and development of land and for changes to the transport system. Can contain documents such as development plans and statements of community involvement.

Local planning authority – Local government body responsible for formulating planning policies and controlling development; a district council, metropolitan council, a county council, a unitary authority or national park authority.

Local referendum – A direct vote in which communities will be asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal.

Local strategic partnership – Initiative in every local authority to develop partnership working between public agencies, voluntary groups and businesses and to more effectively deliver public services.

Local transport plan – Plans that set out a local authority's policies on transport on a five yearly basis.

Material considerations – Factors which are relevant in the making of planning decisions, such as sustainability, impact on residential amenity, design and traffic impacts.

Micro-generation – The small-scale generation of renewable energy usually consumed on the site where it is produced.

Minerals plan – A statement of the policy, advice and guidance provided by local authorities regarding the extraction of minerals.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government – Government ministry that has responsibility for areas such as local government, housing, planning, community cohesion, empowerment and regeneration.

Mixed use – The development of a single building or site with two or more complementary uses.

Nationally significant infrastructure – Major infrastructure developments such as power plants, airports, railways, major roads, etc.

National park – An area of natural or semi-natural land designated in order to maintain the special ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic features of the area.

National Planning Policy Framework – The government policy document adopted in March 2012 intended to make national planning policy and guidance less complex and more accessible. The National Planning Policy Framework introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It gives five guiding principles of sustainable development: living within the planet's means; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

Neighbourhood area – The local area in which a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order can be introduced.

Neighbourhood development order – An order introduced by a parish or town council, or a neighbourhood forum, as part of the neighbourhood planning process, which grants planning permission for a specific development or type of development.

Neighbourhood plan – A planning document created by a parish or town council or a neighbourhood forum, which sets out the vision for the neighbourhood area, and contains policies for the development and use of land in the area. Neighbourhood plans must be subjected to an independent examination to confirm that they meet legal requirements, and then to a local referendum. If approved by a majority vote of the local community, the neighbourhood plan will then form part of the statutory development plan.

Neighbourhood forum – Designated by the local authority in non-parished areas, an organisation established for the purpose of neighbourhood planning to further the social, economic and environmental well-being of the neighbourhood area. There can only be one forum in an area.

Neighbourhood planning – A community-initiated process in which people get together through a local forum or parish or town council and produce a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order.

Nighttime economy – The network of economic activities which operate in cities and towns principally in the evenings and at night, such as theatres, restaurants, cinemas, nightclubs, and public houses.

NIMBY – 'Not in my back yard' – used when discussing planning issues. The term is used to define the opposition of residents who are against new developments that they believe will devalue their properties

Non-determination – When a planning application is submitted and the local authority fails to give a decision on it within the defined statutory period.

Operational development – The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on over, or under land; part of the statutory definition of development (the other part being material changes of use of buildings or land).

Permitted development – Certain minor building works that don't need planning permission e.g. a boundary wall below a certain height.

Policy – A concise statement of the principles that a particular kind of development proposal should satisfy in order to obtain planning permission.

Parish plan – A non-statutory plan produced by a parish council that sets out a vision for the future of a parish community and outlines how that can be achieved in an action plan.

Parking standards – The requirements of a local authority in respect of the level of car parking provided for different kinds of development.

Plan-led – A system of planning which is organised around the implementation of an adopted plan, as opposed to an ad hoc approach to planning in which each case is judged on its own merits.

Planning gain – The increase in value of land resulting from the granting of planning permission. This value mainly accrues to the owner of the land, but sometimes the local council negotiates with the

developer to secure benefit to the public, either through Section 106 planning obligations or the setting of a community infrastructure levy.

Planning inspectorate – The government body established to provide an independent judgement on planning decisions which are taken to appeal.

Planning (listed buildings and conservation areas) Act 1990 – The primary piece of legislation covering listed buildings and conservation areas.

Planning obligation – Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, secured by a local planning authority through negotiations with a developer to offset the public cost of permitting a development proposal. Sometimes developers can self-impose obligations to pre-empt objections to planning permission being granted. They cover things like high-way improvements or open space provision.

Planning permission – Formal approval granted by a council allowing a proposed development to proceed.

Presumption in favour of sustainable development – The concept introduced in 2012 by the UK government with the National Planning Policy Framework to be the 'golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking'. The National Planning Policy Framework gives five guiding principles of sustainable development: living within the planet's means; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

Public inquiry – See Inquiry.

Public open space – Open space to which the public has free access.

Public realm – Areas of space usually in town and city centres where the public can circulate freely, including streets, parks and public squares.

Qualifying body – Either a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum, which can initiate the process of neighbourhood planning. Referred to as a neighbourhood planning body throughout this guide.

Referendum – A vote by which the eligible population of an electoral area may decide on a matter of public policy. Neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood

development orders are made by a referendum of the eligible voters within a neighbourhood area.

Regeneration - Upgrading an area through social, physical and economic improvements.

Retail – The process of selling single or small numbers of items directly and in person to customers. The use category defined as Class A1 in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

Rural – Areas of land which are generally not urbanised; usually with low population densities and a high pro-portion of land devoted to agriculture.

Scheduled ancient monument – A nationally important archaeological site, building or structure which is protected against unauthorised change by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Section 106 – see Planning obligation.

Sequential test – A principle for making a planning decision based on developing certain sites or types of land before others, for example, developing brownfield land before greenfield sites, or developing sites within town centres before sites outside town centres.

Setting – The immediate context in which a building is situated, for example, the setting of a listed building could include neighbouring land or development with which it is historically associated, or the surrounding townscape of which it forms a part.

SHLAA – This is Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, which is undertaken by the local planning authority to identify potential development sites for housing in their area.

SHMA – This is Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which is an evidence-based assessment of the housing market to establish housing need in an area. It is undertaken by the local planning authority.

SHELAA – This is Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment which is similar to a SHLAA, but also includes assessment of potential sites for employment development.

Significance – The qualities and characteristics which define the architectural or historic interest of a historic building or area.

Site allocation plan – A plan accompanying a planning policy document or statement which identifies sites within the plan area on which certain kinds of development are proposed, e.g. residential or retail development.

Site of special scientific interest – A protected area designated as being of special interest by virtue of its flora, fauna, geological or geomorphological features. Sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) are designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 by the official nature conservation body for the particular part of the UK in question.

Social enterprise – A business that trades primarily to achieve social aims, whilst making a profit.

Soundness – The soundness of a statutory local planning document is determined by the planning inspector against three criteria: whether the plan is justified, whether it is effective, and whether it is consistent with national and local planning policy. Plans found to be unsound cannot be adopted by the local planning authority. It should be noted, neighbourhood plans are NOT required to meet these tests of soundness.

Space standards – Quantified dimensions set down by a local planning authority to determine whether a particular development proposal provides enough space around it so as not to affect the amenity of existing neighbouring developments. Space standards can also apply to garden areas.

Spatial planning – A wider view of planning, which involves co-ordination and integration across different sectors such as transport and industry. Brings together all policies and programmes which have an impact on the environment in which you work, live or play.

Stakeholders – People who have an interest in an organisation or process including residents, business owners and government.

Statement of community involvement – A formal statement of the process of community consultation undertaken in the preparation of a statutory plan.

Statutory undertaker – An agency or company with legal rights to carry out certain developments and highway works. Such bodies include utility companies, telecom companies, and nationalised companies. Statutory undertakers are exempt from planning permission for many minor developments and highway works they carry out.

Strategic environmental assessment
Environmental assessment as applied to policies, plans and programmes. Has been in place since the European SEA directive (2001/42/EC).

Sustainability appraisal – An assessment of the environmental, social and economic impacts of a local plan from the outset of the preparation process to check that the plan accords with the principles of sustainable development.

Statutory development plan – Focus on land use development set within the context of wider social, economic and environmental trends and considerations. Reflects national planning policies to make provisions for the long-term use of land and buildings.

Strategic planning – The overall vision and policies for the planning system in an area. Lays out what an area wants development to accomplish.

Strategic policy – A policy that is essential for the delivery of a strategy, for example, the overall scale and distribution of housing and employment in an area.

Supplementary planning document – Provides detailed thematic or site-specific guidance explaining or supporting the policies in the local plan.

Sustainable development – An approach to development that aims to allow economic growth without damaging the environment or natural resources. Development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – Currently the main planning legislation for England and Wales is consolidated in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990; this is regarded as the 'principal act'.

Townscape – The pattern and form of urban development; the configuration of built forms, streets and spaces.

Tenure – The terms and conditions under which land or property is held or occupied, e.g. five year leasehold, freehold owner occupation, etc.

Tenure blind – This means that affordable housing is treated in the same way as market housing, so that it is indistinguishable.

Tree preservation order – An order made by a local planning authority to protect a specific tree, a group of trees or woodland. Tree preservation orders (TPOs) prevent the felling, lopping, topping, uprooting or other deliberate damage of trees without the permission of the local planning authority.

Urban – Having the characteristics of a town or a city; an area dominated by built development.

Urban design – The design of towns and cities, including the physical characteristics of groups of buildings, streets and public spaces, whole neighbourhoods and districts, and even entire cities.

Urban fringe – The area on the edge of towns and cities where the urban form starts to fragment and the density of development reduces significantly.

Use class – The legally defined category into which the use of a building or land falls (see Use classes order).

Use classes order – The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) is the statutory instrument that defines the categories of use of buildings or land for the purposes of planning legislation. Planning permission must be obtained to change the use of a building or land to another use class.

Village design statement – A document that identifies and defines the distinctive characteristics of a locality, and provides design guidance to influence its future development and improve the physical qualities of the area. Village design statements have generally been produced for rural areas, often by parish councils.

World heritage site – A place that has been designated by UNESCO as being of outstanding cultural or physical importance to the common heritage of humanity.

About this document

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Dave has acted as a neighbourhood plan independent examiner. In addition to authoring this guide, he has written a range of other documents, including guides on regeneration, community-led housing and conservation professional practice. He authored parts of BS7913. Dave is a chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute, a full member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and a Fellow of the Institute of Leadership and Management.

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About Locality

The Locality network is for community organisations that believe in the power of local communities to transform lives. We have hundreds of members across the country all supporting local people. We know the place, the people, the needs and we care. We also support groups to develop neighbourhood plans led by local people so they have a say over new affordable housing, the high street, local spaces and more.

We give support through specialist advice, peer-learning, resources, and using evidence from members to create better operating conditions.

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