

Neighbourhood Planning

What is neighbourhood planning?

Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and provides a way in which local communities can take a proactive approach to deciding the future of the places where they live and work. Producing a neighbourhood plan is not a legal requirement but a right, which communities can use to determine the development and use of land and to make other improvements to their neighbourhood, including the design and development of homes, shops, offices and infrastructure. This can be done through a Neighbourhood Plan, a Neighbourhood Development Order or a Community Right to Build Order, all of which follow similar processes.

The Neighbourhood Plan

In terms of planning for future development, the Neighbourhood Plan can:

- propose more development than the Local Plan
- identify the most suitable sites for development
- help to determine what type and design of development should take place

However, a Neighbourhood Plan cannot:

- propose less growth in an area than is proposed in the Local Plan
- prevent any development from ever taking place in an area
- be prepared without community input and support
- be in conflict with local, national or EU policies

Why undertake a Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood planning is an optional process. There is no statutory requirement for a plan to be prepared for any area. A Neighbourhood Plan helps set out a community's vision for their area over ten, fifteen, twenty years and puts in place planning policies that will help deliver that vision. Once complete, the Neighbourhood Plan has the same legal status as the Local Plan, meaning that decisions on planning applications must take the Neighbourhood Plan into consideration.

Who and what is involved?

Neighbourhood plans are primarily prepared by parish councils. However in Cambridge, where there are no parish councils, Neighbourhood Forums or Business Forums must be established to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. In each case, the proposal to establish a Forum has to be consulted on and approved by the City Council.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN GUIDANCE



Those behind establishing the neighbourhood forum are responsible for initiating the process and for working with those in the local community to develop their proposals. The consent of local people must be secured through a referendum before the plan can come into force.

Neighbourhood Plan Stages

The main stages in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan are summarised below.

Step 1: Designate neighbourhood area and neighbourhood forum

Step 2: Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan

Step 3: Pre-submission publicity & consultation

Step 4: Submission of a neighbourhood plan to the City Council

Step 5: Independent Examination

Step 6: Referendum and Making the neighbourhood plan (bringing it into force)

Step 1: Designate neighbourhood area and neighbourhood forum

- 1.1 Prospective neighbourhood forum submits an application to the City Council to designate a neighbourhood area and to designate the neighbourhood forum;
- 1.2 City Council publicises and consults on the area application for minimum 6 weeks
- 1.3 City Council designates a neighbourhood area within the statutory timescales
- 1.4 The prospective neighbourhood forum submits an application to be the designated neighbourhood forum for a neighbourhood area
- 1.5 City Council publicises and consults on the forum application for minimum 6 weeks
- 1.6 City Council decides on whether to designate the neighbourhood forum

Step 2: Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan

- 2.1 Forum develops proposals;
- 2.2 gathers baseline information and evidence;
- 2.3 engage and consult those living and working in the neighbourhood area and those with an interest in or affected by the proposals (e.g. service providers);
- 2.4 talk to land owners and the development industry if necessary;
- 2.5 identify and assess options;
- 2.6 determine whether a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effect (ask City Council for Screening Opinion); and
- 2.7 start to prepare proposals documents e.g. basic conditions statement

Step 3: Pre-submission publicity & consultation

The Forum:

- 3.1 publicises the draft plan and invites representations;
- 3.2 consults the consultation bodies as appropriate;
- 3.3 sends a copy of the draft plan to the City Council;

- 3.4 where European Obligations apply, complies with relevant publicity and consultation requirements;
- 3.5 considers consultation responses and amends plan if appropriate; and
- 3.6 prepares consultation statement; and
- 3.7 prepares a Basic Conditions Statement.

Step 4: Submission of a neighbourhood plan to the City Council

- 4.1 Forum submits the plan to the City Council
- 4.2 City Council checks that submitted proposal complies with all relevant legislation
- 4.3 If City Council decides that the plan meets the legal requirements it:
 - a. publicises the proposal for minimum 6 weeks and invites representations;
 - b. notifies consultation bodies referred to in the consultation statement; and
 - c. appoints an independent examiner (with the agreement of the Forum)

Step 5: Independent Examination

- 5.1 City Council sends plan and representation to the independent examiner;
- 5.2 Independent examiner undertakes examination;
- 5.3 Independent examiner issues a report to the City Council and the Forum;
- 5.4 City Council publishes report;
- 5.5 City Council considers report and reaches own view; and
- 5.6 City Council takes the decision on whether to send the plan to referendum.

Step 6: Referendum and Making the neighbourhood plan (bringing it into force)

- 6.1 City Council publishes information statement;
- 6.2 City Council publishes notice of referendum;
- 6.3 Polling takes place (in a business area an additional referendum is held);
- 6.4 Results declared;
- 6.5 Subject to results, City Council considers plan in relation to EU obligations and Convention rights; and
- 6.6 If the plan is compatible with EU obligations and does not breach Convention rights – City Council makes the plan.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN GUIDANCE



Information, Guidance and Funding

As the Local Planning Authority, the City Council will provide some support to the neighbourhood forum during the preparation of the neighbourhood plan.

In the first instance we encourage community groups to arrange to contact us to arrange a meeting to discuss the planning options open to you and to explore the implications - advantages and challenges - of undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan. Call 01223 457000 or email: policysurveys@cambridge.gov.uk

Guidance

There is an extensive range of online neighbourhood planning guidance available from a number of organisations, as identified below:

[Locality](#): their website includes current news and information relating to Neighbourhood Planning, along with good practice guides and case studies. Locality is the organisation providing support to local communities on behalf of the Government.

[Planning Aid](#): their website includes a suite of resources to assist those developing a Neighbourhood Plan. Planning Aid is part of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

[Planning Advisory Service](#): their website includes guides, tools, templates and case studies to support Neighbourhood Planning.

[Planning Practice Guidance on Neighbourhood Planning](#): sets out national guidance on Neighbourhood Planning, including guidance on the basic conditions that need to be met by a Neighbourhood Plan.

[Notes on Neighbourhood Planning](#): regular bulletins from the Neighbourhood Planning Team at Department for Communities and Local Government.

[Community Planning Toolkit](#): a useful guide to community involvement in projects.

Funding

Neighbourhood Planning Grants are available from Locality as well as packages of technical support in complex areas: [Neighbourhood Planning Grants and Support](#)