

What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

A Neighbourhood Development Plan can set out a vision for an area and planning policies for the use and development of land.

It will form part of the statutory planning framework for the area, and the policies and proposals contained within it will be used in the determination of planning applications.

A Neighbourhood Development Plan has to support the strategic development needs of the wider area outlined in the local development plan. However it can shape and influence where that development will go and what it will look like.

Who can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?

Where they exist, a town or parish council is the only body that can prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan in their area.

If a town or parish council does not exist then a community group known as a neighbourhood forum needs to be established to lead the process. Its aim must be to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area. It must have a written constitution, have open membership and comprise a minimum of 21 individuals.

The Localism Act recognises that not all communities are residential in nature and in non-parished areas that are predominately commercial a business-led neighbourhood forum can be established.

What is the required process?

Stage 1: Defining the neighbourhood

The town or parish council, or neighbourhood forum, formally submits a neighbourhood area application to the local planning authority, including the proposed boundary of the neighbourhood area. The local planning authority publicises the application for six weeks and invites comments. The local

authority has the power to amend the boundary of the proposed area if it's thought necessary.

Stage 2: Preparing the plan

If approved, the town or parish council or forum then starts preparing the plan. They must engage the community, notify statutory consultees and build an evidence base to justify the eventual policies and proposals. This stage must include a six week consultation period to publicise the proposals and consider responses.

Stage 3: Independent check

The draft plan must then be submitted to the local planning authority, who will formally publicise the proposals for six weeks. An independent examiner will then be appointed to consider any representations and check it conforms to national and local policy. Changes may be recommended.

Stage 4: Community referendum

Once satisfied with the plan the local council will organise a referendum. A majority of people voting must support the plan if it is to be adopted by the local planning authority.

Stage 5: Legal force

The local planning authority will then bring the plan into force and publicise its decision. The plan will then become part of the formal development plan for the area.

