

6.0 How the local community can prepare a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order

- 6.1 The [Localism Act 2011](#) introduced the opportunity for local communities to prepare neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders (NDOs). These may be prepared by parish Councils or designated neighbourhood forums and form part of the statutory plan for the area which can be used in deciding local planning applications.
- 6.2 Neighbourhood plans set out policies for the development and use of land in a local area or neighbourhood. A neighbourhood plan helps set out a community's vision and can allocate sites for development of housing, employment and community uses. The neighbourhood plan cannot propose less growth than the Local Plan, prevent development from ever taking place in an area and is required to be in general conformity with strategic policies in the Local Plan. Once adopted a neighbourhood plan forms part of the development plan for the area and has the same status as a Local Plan.
- 6.3 Neighbourhood development orders (NDOs) grant planning permission for specific developments within a designated neighbourhood area and remove the requirement to submit a planning application for this type of development.
- 6.4 Whilst the neighbourhood plan making process itself is community led, Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty to help local communities as set out in the [Neighbourhood Planning \(General Regulations\) 2015 regulations](#). Local Planning Authorities offer assistance through the [Support Offer](#) and [Toolkit](#) that provide guidance on how Local Planning Authorities will support and assist parish Councils and neighbourhood forums that are preparing a neighbourhood plan. Neighbourhood plans are required to undergo independent examination and are subject to a referendum of the local community before they can be 'made'.
- 6.5 The SCI broadly sets out how the Local Planning Authorities carry out this duty to advise and assist parish Councils and neighbourhood forums at each of the key stages. The amount of support provided will be subject to both the Local Planning Authorities resource availability and the needs of the parish Council or neighbourhood forum. Further detailed guidance has been prepared by the Local Planning Authorities and is available on the [neighbourhood planning page](#) of the GCSP website.
- ## Broad overview of how the Local Planning Authorities will provide advice and support for neighbourhood planning
- ### Step One: Getting started
- 6.6 Planning Officers will provide advice online through the GCSP website and will respond to email or telephone enquiries about neighbourhood planning. Officers will meet with parish Councils in South Cambridgeshire or neighbourhood forums in Cambridge City who may be interested in preparing a neighbourhood plan to:
- identify the area within which their plan would apply
 - the requirements of preparing a plan
 - any other alternative methods for groups to meet their local objectives

- whether the parish Council or neighbourhood forum has the necessary information to decide which approach works best.

Step Two: Designating a neighbourhood area or forum

- 6.7 For parish Councils in South Cambridgeshire, an application form for a new neighbourhood area is to be completed and submitted by the parish Council. For groups seeking to create a neighbourhood forum within Cambridge City, an application form for creating a neighbourhood forum is to be completed and submitted as well as the application for a new neighbourhood area.
- 6.8 Where consultation is required for a neighbourhood area this will be for a minimum of six weeks undertaken by the Local Planning Authority. The publicity for public consultation will correspond with the timescales and methods set out in Table 2. The Local Planning Authority can assist by preparing a map to show the proposed neighbourhood area.

Step Three: Preparing the plan and evidence base

- 6.9 Once the neighbourhood area is designated, the Local Planning Authority will meet with the parish Council or neighbourhood forum to advise on:
- The adopted local plan, emerging policy and guidance documents;
 - What support the Local Planning Authority can give during plan-making process
 - Regulatory and legal requirements, including the requirement to meet the [Basic Conditions](#)
 - Sources of grants and technical support packages
 - Effective methods of public engagement
 - Mapping support
 - Sources of information including providing links to a library of resources
 - The use of a planning consultant who specialises in neighbourhood planning.

- 6.10 During the preparation of the NP, the Local Planning Authority will:
- Provide information about where to find data for the evidence base
 - Share information on contacts for key consultees
 - Highlight the key allocations and designations on the local plan policies map that will impact the neighbourhood plan area
 - Provide constructive comments on emerging draft policies in the NP against the [Basic Conditions](#)
 - Provide guidance in the [neighbourhood planning toolkit](#) which includes how to prepare a NP and the evidence base and specialist advice on planning issues that may need to be included in the NP, such as local housing needs.

Step Four: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 6.11 There is a statutory requirement for neighbourhood plans to carry out an [Strategic Environmental Assessment](#) and [Habitat Regulations Assessment](#) to ensure:
- The emerging NP provides a high level of protection of the environment (SEA)
 - The emerging NP protects and improves Europe's most important habitats and species (HRA).
- 6.12 A neighbourhood development order may also require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to ensure that the full knowledge of any significant effects on the environment are known. Other European directives or future regulations may apply in particular circumstances of a draft neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order and the Local Planning Authority will be able to advise at this stage.
- 6.13 For neighbourhood plans in both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire, the Local Planning Authority will organise and pay for the SEA and HRA screening of the neighbourhood plan up to a maximum cost of £2,000 including VAT. If the cost is higher than this or a repeat screening is required,

the excess will need to be funded by the parish Council or neighbourhood forum. The Local Planning Authority will also advise on third party technical support packages for any Neighbourhood Plan that requires a full SEA or HRA, particularly those offered by [Locality](#) as part of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities funding.

Step Five: Pre-submission consultation and preparing the plan for submission

- 6.14 The Local Planning Authority will advise the parish Council or neighbourhood forum of how to apply for technical support packages that include a health check of the draft neighbourhood plan. This health check is carried out before they submit the neighbourhood plan and supporting documents to the Local Planning Authority.
- 6.15 The [health check](#) review considers whether the draft neighbourhood plan meets the [Basic Conditions](#) and the independent examiner will provide guidance on any amendments required to ensure the conditions are met prior to submission of the neighbourhood plan.

Step Six: Submission of the NP for Public Examination

- 6.16 The final stages of preparing the neighbourhood plan are undertaken with the Local Planning Authority as the lead rather than the parish Council or neighbourhood forum. The Local Planning Authority will keep the parish Council or neighbourhood forum informed of progress and liaise with them to resolve any issues as the plan goes through the examination and referendum stages of the process. This will include liaising with the parish Council or neighbourhood forum regarding:
- The appointment of an examiner
 - Arrangements for any public hearing that might be necessary
 - Changes proposed in the Examiner's Report to ensure the neighbourhood plan meets the [Basic Condition](#) tests
 - Any changes required to the neighbourhood plan.

Step Seven: Public referendum and adoption

- 6.17 Subject to a successful outcome of the Public Examination, the Local Planning Authority will then inform the parish Council or neighbourhood forum of the Council's decision to proceed to referendum and subsequent timescales. The organising of the public referendum and publicity regarding its outcome will be undertaken by the elections team at the Council, rather than by the Local Planning Authority.
- 6.18 Subject to a successful referendum, the neighbourhood plan will then be made by the Council as part of the statutory Development Plan for the area.

