

Neighbouring Planning: Frequently Asked Questions

Updated December 2024



1. What are Neighbourhood Plans?

A Neighbourhood Plan is a planning document which helps to guide and shape development in the local area, usually a parish area, but it can be wider and is created by local people through a town and parish council as the “Qualifying Body”.

Neighbourhood Plans are about addressing local development issues, for example, where additional new homes and community buildings should be located (in addition to any local plan allocation) and how local character and design should be reflected. Neighbourhood Plans should focus on guiding development, rather than preventing it, and meeting a locally justified and agreed need. They need to be in general conformity with national policy and the Council’s strategic local planning policies set out through the Local Plan and supporting documents and justified through evidence. A Neighbourhood Plan should support the delivery of the strategic policies set out in the Local Plan and should help shape and direct development that is outside of the strategic policies. e.g. through including but not limited to including further residential site allocations, the identification of regeneration areas, and employment land designation etc.

A Neighbourhood Plan should be prepared in a positive way seeking to address local needs, add local distinction to reflect the specific Neighbourhood Area as long as the approach is **justified and evidenced**. Neighbourhood Plans should **address the evidenced issues in each Neighbourhood Plan Area**, NPA, and should **add additional value or further local policy considerations** to the existing and emerging local policy framework. They should not seek to repeat, replace or impose unrealistic aspirations on the strategic policies of the Local Plan, or repeat or duplicate national planning policy or existing policies in the Local Plan. Such policies are usually removed at examination as they have the capacity to cause ambiguity and reduce the effectiveness of the combined approach for decision making purposes. Policies should be designed to be positive, be realistic in their expectations and deliverability, and complement existing strategic approaches. Once adopted, the combined suite of policies in a Local Plan and a Neighbourhood Plan form the material considerations in the determination of planning applications for that NPA, collectively known as the Development Plan.

2. Who can prepare them?

In North Norfolk, Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by town and parish councils working with their local communities. The Neighbourhood Plan needs to be supported by the majority of the community before it can be adopted. The process follows statutory guidelines and requires formal consultation at specific stages of plan making and where a local referendum must be held before the District Council can ‘make’ the Neighbourhood Plan as part of the wider Development Plan. To this end it makes sense to involve as many people as possible right from the start of the process.

3. What area should the plan cover?

Any geographic area can have a Neighbourhood Plan. They can cross local authority boundaries, although they should not overlap with other neighbourhoods who may already have a Neighbourhood Plan or wish to produce a plan solely for their parish area. Parish councils will need to apply to the Council to have a Neighbourhood Area designated, and for which the Council will need to advertise the proposal and agree it before the Neighbourhood Plan can be started.

Before applying for a Neighbourhood Area to be designated it is recommended that parish councils carefully consider the type of issues which are most important to them and whether these issues are likely to impact on other neighbouring areas. It is also recommended that before setting out, careful consideration and review is given to the existing and emerging suite of Local Plan policies to see what policy areas are already covered and where additional value could be added to address local land-use planning issues.

4. How does a Neighbourhood Plan fit in with Decision Making?

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the development plan, unless 'material considerations' indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements.

A 'made' neighbourhood plan forms part of the development plan for the district in as far as the neighbourhood plan area is concerned. The wider development plan is made up of the adopted Local Plan and published spatial development strategies, together with any regional strategy policies that remain in force.

Decision making on planning applications rests with the local planning authority (LPA). A community leads on preparing a neighbourhood plan and setting out and justifying the policies for development in the neighbourhood plan area, but it is the LPA that will grant planning permission in accordance with those policies and the wider development plan. The LPA is also responsible for enforcing them. It is for the decision maker in each case to determine what is a material consideration and what weight to give to each policy in the neighbourhood plan.

The starting point for decision making is the development plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that permission should not usually be granted where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plan which forms part of the development plan).

5. How much work will be required and is this similar to a parish plan?

The level of work will depend upon the complexity of the issues and the level of detail the plan goes into. This will be decided by the parish council and local community but there are some statutory requirements which must be met, and the Neighbourhood Plan must comply with national policy and the strategic policies of the Local Plan.

A Neighbourhood Plan can be kept very simple by setting out a plan that only deals with the planning issues that matter to the local community and that are not already covered in the detail required in the strategic policies of the Council. They should not include a policy on every area of planning or include every idea that is put forward. In reality, a Neighbourhood Plan will be a compromise between the people involved, the ideas they generate and the resources (volunteers, time, money, skills and information) available, the evidence to justify the approach and the suite of existing Local and National policies. Keeping a plan simple and clear from the start will make it easier to understand, reduce ambiguity and conflict between policies and make it more likely that it will make a difference.

Our top tips:

- A. Avoid duplication - if a local issue raised is already adequately addressed in the Local Plan there is no value in duplicating it.
- B. Consider the adequacy of existing policy i.e. is it robust, relevant to the NPA, before setting off on developing a new approach.
- C. Review existing evidence, such as that which underpins the Local Plan, social and economic data for the parish, existing community plans and other published studies that form part of the existing evidence base from which policy will need to be informed.
- D. Be practical - every idea requires evidence to justify a policy approach.
- E. Be realistic - you will not be able to address or justify every issue raised.
- F. Evidence, not opinion should be used to inform and justify the development of any options and proposed policies that will be included in the Neighbourhood Plan and be made publicly available in a full and transparent way throughout its production. Evidence should not be used retrospectively to justify the policies in a selective way but undertaken upfront to inform plan making. Planning policies need to be based on a clear planning rationale and a proper understanding of the legislative requirements and the place they refer to.
- G. Opinion and views of the local community demonstrate that the policies in your plan have been informed by the participation of the local community and others with an interest in the area but opinion itself does not provide the justification for policy choices.
- H. You can't please all the people all the time.
- I. Support and advice can be obtained at all stages from the planning policy team, who have an in-depth professional working knowledge of process, procedure and local and national planning policy.

- J. Much guidance already exists through published guides including the process which is set out in the [National Planning Practice Guidance for neighbourhood planning](#).

6. How can I get Involved in Neighbourhood Planning?

Contact your town or parish council to see whether they are considering or undertaking a plan.

7. What is the role of North Norfolk District Council?

The council has a duty to provide technical and practical support to those undertaking neighbourhood planning as well as providing formal advice at the key consultation and submission stages. The Council is responsible for making decisions at key stages in the process within the time limits that apply as set out in the legislation.

The council must ensure and be satisfied that a Neighbourhood Plan submitted for independent examination complies with all the relevant statutory requirements in order to meet a set of basic conditions which can be found in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Schedule 4b paragraph 8(2)).

Proactive engagement throughout the production of a Neighbourhood Plan is strongly encouraged, even where a third-party consultant has been engaged locally.

North Norfolk District Council will:

- Agree the boundary of the area to be covered by the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Provide information to communities about neighbourhood planning.
- Take decisions at the key stages of the neighbourhood planning process and provide advice and assistance to the town / parish council.
- Provide both formal and informal advice and review.
- Check that the submitted plan meets the legislative tests-
- Organise the independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Arrange and fund the referendum.
- Formally adopt the Neighbourhood Plan and bring it into force.
- Maintain a dedicated neighbourhood plan page for your group on the NNDC web site where all formal material and consultation responses will be published.

In addition, the Council can:

- Provide general advice and assistance on process and legislative requirements.
- Provide support and review in policy drafting.
- Seek to resolve areas of duplication, repetition, and potential policy conflicts at an early stage.
- Provide and/or signpost to available evidence and help to identify any gaps.

- Help provide appropriate mapping.
- Provide assessment frameworks where appropriate, for example, site assessment, Local Green Space assessment proforma.
- Undertake SEA & HRA screening at the agreed and appropriate stage.
- Provide an indicative housing target. This is either set out in the Local Plan through the spatial strategy or based on local characteristics and evidence in agreement with the neighborhood plan body. Any housing requirement is subject to the Basic Conditions tests and needs to be in general conformity with the Local Plan and will need to be tested at examination.
- Provide assistance in setting out and review of the consultation statement and other documentation before submitting the Plan for examination.
- Provide suggested statutory consultee lists to assist with consultation and engagement exercises.

North Norfolk District Council have produced a suite of additional guidance aimed at supporting local communities in North Norfolk who are undertaking neighbourhood planning. These are based around specific check sheets and frequent topics that parish and town councils have sought to include in neighbourhood plans. They are designed to provide background information and guidance on how neighbourhood planning groups can reflect local circumstances and develop policies that are justified and evidence in a positive and realistic way which, if followed, will provide more certainty at the examination stage. These guides can be found on the Council's web site: www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplans

8. What subjects should a Neighbourhood Plan cover?

A Neighbourhood Plan should support the strategic development needs set out in the Local Plan and plan positively to support local development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 16). Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area. Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or seek to undermine or add ambiguity to those strategic policies. They can add additional local criteria / considerations to a policy approach set out in the local plan, as long as they are justified but there is no need to re produce or seek to change the approach as set out in the local plan as this could introduce conflict.

Neighbourhood Plans should generally seek to address the development and use of land. However, they do not need to include policies addressing all types of development and early engagement with the community to help develop the plan's vision and aims is essential. By producing a plan that specifically deals with the planning issues that matter to the local community and that are not already covered in the detail required in the strategic policies of the Council, a Neighbourhood Plan will bring added value to the decision-making process and ensure local considerations are taken into consideration in the planning balance. i.e when an officer weighs up the merits

of an application - it is established by law that planning applications should be refused if they conflict with local (and neighbourhood) policies “unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.) They should not have a policy on every area of planning or include every idea that is proposed. By keeping a plan simple and clear from the start, and addressing the vision and aims, it will be focused on what additional matters are identified by the community provided each can be justified through evidence and that these meet the Basic Conditions Tests.

Wider community aspirations than those relating to development (and the use of land) can be included in a Neighbourhood Plan, but actions dealing with non-land-use matters should be clearly identifiable and separated from policies. Noting that they will not be enforceable or taken into consideration in the determination of planning applications.

[Deliverable policies and those that are seeking developer contributions](#)

If policies and proposals are to be implemented as the community intended, a Neighbourhood Plan needs to be deliverable. The National Planning Policy Framework requires that the sites (and scale of development) identified in a plan should not be subject to such a scale of obligations and policy burdens that may affect their viability.

Working with the Council, a Neighbourhood Plan can allocate sites for development following an appraisal of all of the potential options and an assessment of identified sites against clearly identified criteria. Advice on how to undertake such assessments is set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance and detailed assessments that support the Local Plan are already published and available along with a site assessment methodology which can be replicated. Consideration may be given to what infrastructure needs to be provided in a neighbourhood area alongside development such as homes, shops or offices. Infrastructure is needed to support development and ensure that communities can grow in a sustainable way.

However, where the intention is to include in policies the specific contributions expected from development in order to address wider issues eg wider infrastructure delivery - NPPF para 57 should be noted. In order for planning obligations to be sought, for example, for road network improvements, off site junction improvements, community play facilities etc, the National Planning Policy Framework states the following:

Planning obligations must only be sought where they meet all of the following tests:

- a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;*
- b) directly related to the development; and*
- c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.*

NPPF para 57 (As set out in Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

Any policy which seeks such obligations will need to be justified by factual evidence and in most cases, agreement sought with the relevant statutory body.

Nationally, many forms of development benefit from permitted development rights where certain types and scale of development do not require planning permission. As such, planning policies should not seek to restrict these permitted development rights unless there is a clear justification to do so. For example, permitted development rights allow the improvement or extension of many homes without the need to apply for planning permission, as long as it meets certain conditions around size (height, depth and eaves) and impact of the works carried out such as the use of materials that complement the existing property. [Current legislation referred to as the GPDO](#) sets out the types of development that are permitted subject to certain limitations and conditions. More information can be found on the Councils web site [Home | What is development and permitted development? \(north-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#) Development is also subject to the Use Classes Order which categorises different uses of property and land. Change between uses within the same use class does not normally constitute development and therefore does not require planning permission and as such, any Neighbourhood Plan policy would need to be in conformity with this national policy.

9. Local Lettings: Can groups set their own local lettings housing policy?

The Council is supportive of the delivery of affordable housing including those delivered through Community-Led Housing Groups and Community Land Trusts. CLT's can set their own rules and regulations and include their own lettings policies, but these need to be set up in a separate legal framework outside planning. The Council's housing team can provide more information on how to bring forward a CLT.

Nationally, occupation is not a planning land use matter and there is no justification provided for this in national policy. The requirement for affordable housing to be made available first to those with a local connection (as defined through a neighbourhood plan policy and executed through a section 106 agreement), is not strictly a planning matter and would potentially conflict with the Councils legal obligations under the Housing Act and its published allocations policies, which in the case of rural exception sites already includes the prioritisation of those with a local connection.

Development of affordable homes in the countryside (i.e. in the defined countryside policy area- which includes those areas that generally sit outside the settlement boundaries of the designated growth settlements as defined on the Policies Map) is already permitted through a housing exceptions policy (where there is demonstration of a proven local housing need). See Policy HOU 3, Affordable Homes in the Countryside.

Preference in occupation through the Affordable Homes in the Countryside policy is already given to those with a local connection and housing need through the Councils Local Allocations Agreement. This is detailed in the Councils adopted Housing

Allocations Scheme and would apply to Neighbourhood Plan affordable housing allocations identified in the Countryside policy area.

It is **often wrongly assumed that neighbourhood** plans can set policies that determine who gets priority in occupation and which housing provider can supply the properties. These are not land use policies which could conflict with the councils legal housing duties. Neighbourhood plans seeking restrictive letting policies on windfall¹ development in their NPA need to be aware of the policy restrictions in national guidance and the potential to conflict with the strategic approach of the Council, which is partly reliant on a windfall allowance to achieve its housing target. This is particularly relevant to restrictive policies where no additional growth is being brought forward through the neighbourhood plan to address the identified local need or the housing target set for the plan.

The Council uses its own Local Allocations Agreement (available on web site) as part of the North Norfolk Housing Allocations Scheme, which has been developed in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, relevant statutory regulations and regard to the Codes of Guidance and the Council's Homelessness Strategy, Tenancy Strategy and the public sector equality duty. In developing the Housing Allocations Scheme the provisions in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 have also been considered. An Equality Impact Assessment of the Housing Allocations Scheme has been undertaken and is available on request. The North Norfolk Housing Allocations Scheme has been designed to be used by North Norfolk District Council and the Registered Providers and Housing Associations who participate in the North Norfolk Your Choice Your Home Scheme through choice-based lettings.

The Local Allocations Agreement applies to those affordable housing permitted under the Rural exception policy and gives preference to applicants with strong local connections to the parish in which the property being allocated is located and the adjoining parishes equally. This is because there will be some towns or villages which have very little affordable housing stock and some towns and villages where it will not be possible to develop new affordable housing because of constraints including sensitive local environments, coastal erosion, flooding and lack of available land. It is essential that applicants with strong local connections to such towns and villages are not disadvantaged as a result. It is also important not to restrict qualifying criteria too tightly as this has the tendency to restrict developer finance and mortgage availability.

For affordable housing permitted in all other areas, including Local Plan strategic allocations affordable housing, allocation is prioritised according to need, as set out in the Council's Allocation Scheme which is aligned to the Councils' statutory requirements. The councils' allocations in the Local Plan provide for and meet the agreed and tested strategic level of need, both market and affordable and as such

¹ A site that is not specifically identified or allocated in a Development Plan.

provide for the general housing needs of the DISTRICT. It does so at the at the levels and types set out in policy HOU 2. It should be noted that these are strategic policies.

10. Second Homes: Can a neighbourhood plan include policies restricting new homes as second homes?

The terms 'second home' and 'holiday home' have become interchangeable and there is scope for considerable confusion about the difference between a second home, other types of holiday accommodation, and mainstream housing

In some Neighbourhood Plan Areas the number of second homes can be perceived as an important local issue and neighbourhood planning groups may wish to consider policies to help to mitigate any perceived impacts. Some residents may be concerned that provision of second homes and holiday homes that are potentially occupied only part of the week or part of the year, or let out seasonally, can contribute to making housing unaffordable or less accessible for local people, due to a perceived adverse impact on the local housing market and the reduction in supply. It is often overlooked that such homes also contribute significantly to the available tourist accommodation and contribute to the local economy through tourist spend and employment opportunities and as such the issues are broader than just access to the housing market. For homes to be classed as holiday lets (i.e business rates) properties must have been available for commercial holiday lettings for at least **140 days** in the previous 12 months and be intended to be available for at least 140 days in the upcoming 12 months actually let for short periods totalling at least **70 days** in the previous 12 months

Often a solution championed is a restrictive policy on additional, where occupancy is controlled to that of a principal residence i.e. where a home is the sole or main residence and presumably where the occupants spend most of their time when not working away from home. Such an approach was first brought forward by the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan where the justification to better meet the needs of the local community was established through an assessment of the **key evidence around the positive and negative impacts on the sustainability of the town**. This established that any approach to introduce such a policy needs to be supported by key evidence around the impacts the level of second homes is having on the sustainability of the NPA.

Successful Np to follow this approach in North Norfolk Include Wells Next the Sea NP.

However, **some NPs have run into trouble** at the external examination stage, as there was insufficient evidence to support the policy and or justification included in the emerging plans when presented. Others have concluded that such a policy approach was not conducive to meeting the wider aims of ensuring new homes were made available for local people and at a price they could afford and choose other policy

approaches. The St. Ives Neighbourhood Plan introduced the principal of occupancy restrictions on the proposed housing in their neighbourhood plan and they did this on the basis of demonstrating the wider impacts on the sustainability of the town rather than the populist reasons cited around the often-tenuous links between house prices and supply limitations and arguments of access to the housing market by local people. This was not straightforward, and the justification will vary between location, as such neighbourhood planners should be aware of a number of potential pitfalls and considerations prior to considering and developing any justifiable approach

It should also be noted that there are many reasons why someone would have a second home including some of the below:

- Long term investment; (local rental market)
- Holiday Home;
- Future retirement home;
- Previous main home;
- Temporary home (due to impending sale);
- Work reasons.

Many properties are also used in the intervening years as holiday accommodation and as such the frequency of use along with the proportion of second homes is a consideration when assessing potential impacts. Where there is a high concentration which are let out the occupation contributes to the local economy and overall sustainability of a community and may bring added benefit, especially in higher order towns that act as service centers where the level of shops and services are supported due to the tourism. Conversely, rarely occupied second homes could harm the fabric of a community, if there is a high proportion and limited services. Either way, the evidence will need to be established, and conclusions drawn.

For those communities wishing to investigate this area and peruse such policies in a neighbourhood plan from the outset it must be understood that:

- The occupation of homes is **not** a matter for land use planning. The use of a dwelling as a second home is not defined in planning legislation as development and hence does not require planning permission. **This means that there are no planning controls that can be utilised to control the use of the existing housing stock as a second home through planning policies.**
- Any such policy **would only apply to growth brought forward to that contained in the neighbourhood plan and not the strategic allocations in the Local Plan.**
- Existing controls and measures such as differential council tax rates, business rates and other fiscal restrictions such as increased stamp duty for those with more than one home lie outside planning controls and are not relevant to the planning process.

Officers monitor annually the number of second homes and holiday home sin each parish and have data that could be shared. Similarly, officers have experience in helping NP groups write such policies and interpret the evidence and can help guide

policy wording so as to ensure consistency and that they remain enforceable can help in the required evidence.

[For those going down this route please first arrange a discussion with the policy team](#)

It should be noted that a recent change is that with effect from 1 April 2025, North Norfolk District Council elected members have voted to use its discretionary powers granted under Section 11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to charge an additional 100% Council Tax premium to furnished second home properties subject to legislation. This is subject to any legislation changes or exemptions that may come into law before 1 April 2025. More information can be obtained on these changes from the council tax web pages.

11. Can Neighbourhood Plans incorporate a Principal Residency Policy?

A Principal Residence is defined as a property occupied as someone's main or sole residence where the residents spend the majority of their time when not working away from home. It has been established that Neighbourhood Plans can include a Principal Residency Policy for new open market housing (outside any strategic Local Plan allocations and replacement dwellings) within the Neighbourhood Area. Such an approach would need to be subject to appropriate and proportionate evidence and would need to be adequately justified. It would need to be established that such an approach would also contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Appropriate evidence to support this type of policy can be obtained from the Council, which collects data on second and holiday homes on an annual basis broken down by parish. Such evidence could be used to demonstrate the level of second homes and holiday lets in the Neighbourhood Area in comparison to the total number of dwellings within the area, expressed over a period of recent years.

A Principal Residency Policy would require that any relevant planning permission be subject to a legal agreement where the matter of principal residency would be a requirement in perpetuity, and which would require occupiers to provide information to prove principal residency to the Council if requested. The wording of any policy needs to be specific, and it is helpful if it is consistent across the district. As such NNDC can recommend appropriate text.

12. What is meant by General Conformity (in relation to strategic policies and national policy/guidance)

Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan. This is one of the Basic Conditions Tests (as detailed in Question 12).

General conformity is a well-established principle in planning. An issue or policy is in general conformity if it upholds the general principle of the strategic policy or issue that it is concerned with. Policies in neighbourhood plans should not seek to change the principle. Similarly, plans should not seek to duplicate the approach or introduce different wording as that would cause ambiguity and potential conflict in decision making.

13. What are 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 can proceed to referendum.

These are:

- Having regard to national policies and advice
- Contributing to the achievement of sustainable development
- Being in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan
- Not being in breach of, and being otherwise compatible with, EU Obligations eg a Strategic Environmental Assessment may need to be carried out if the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. A Plan will also need to be compatible with human rights obligations
- Not likely to have a significant effect on a European site

Once a Plan is ready to be examined, a number of key documents need to be submitted along with the draft neighbourhood plan. These include a **Basic Conditions Statement** which explains how the proposed plan has appropriate regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and any evidence requirements set out in it, and also sets out how the proposed plan meets the basic conditions. A separate **Consultation Statement** which sets out who was consulted and how, the issues raised and how they were addressed and resolved in the final submitted.

In order to demonstrate the draft neighbourhood plan has appropriate regard to the NPPF, a statement will need to be prepared that demonstrates how each policy of the draft plan relates to relevant paragraphs of the NPPF and its evidence requirements. It is recommended that the same approach is taken in demonstrating general conformity with the Local Plan policies. NNDC can provide example templates to help frame such reports.

In order to demonstrate the draft neighbourhood plan contributes to sustainable development, a statement should set out how the neighbourhood plan will contribute to improvements in environmental, economic and social conditions or that consideration has been given to how any potential adverse effects arising from the proposals may be prevented, reduced or offset (referred to as mitigation measures).

Sufficient and proportional evidence must also be submitted and published that substantiates the approaches taken in the plan and how the plan as a whole contributes to sustainable development.

There is no legal requirement to produce a **Sustainability Appraisal**, however in more complicated plans such as those that assess and allocate sites, it is a useful and recommended approach to demonstrating compliance with the Basic Conditions tests.

More information on the Basic Conditions, related information and FAQ can be found in the published NNDC [Neighbourhood Planning Guidance](#).

14. What is the role of the Broads Authority, and how does the Council work with them?

The Broads Authority (BA) are the Local Planning Authority (LPA), for the Broads Executive Area. Both LPA's have a formal role to play in designation and key consultation and submission stages and the taking of decisions at key stages where a NPA crosses boundaries. If part of a designated NPA falls into the area covered by the Broads, then the strategic policies of the Broads Local Plan also need to be taken into consideration in the making of the Neighbourhood Plan and the BA can provide related support and advice.

Unless a Neighbourhood Plan falls entirely into one LPA area, both LPA's are formal statutory consultees and will need to be consulted and notified at the appropriate stages and provide formal decisions. LPA's are encouraged to agree a lead authority. Unless otherwise agreed, final draft Plans should be submitted to North Norfolk District Council who will arrange the examination and referendum.

Both LPA's will publicise the relevant Neighbourhood Plans on their web sites and work with each other for the timely taking of key decisions.

15. Funding: Who will Pay for the Neighbourhood Planning Process?

The local community, through the town or parish council, will be responsible for the cost of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. This is likely to come from grants, the precept and local organisations. North Norfolk District Council will finance the independent examination and referendum.

The government, through the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), provide grant funding and technical support for each financial year through Locality and the Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme. [Home - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#). Expenditure met through a grant is often time-limited and must be spent by the end of the financial year.

All groups undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order are eligible to apply for up to £10,000 in Basic Grant. Grants can be used for a range of activities to support the neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order-making process.

For plans that are more complex i.e. those allocating sites, proposing design codes, representing more than three parishes', or where there is a population greater than 25,000, a further additional grant of £8,000 is available.

Technical support packages are also available which will be delivered through the professional bodies such as AECOM and Urban Vision. This support is available for those undertaking site selection and design codes.

Funding for third party consultants i.e those appointed by the town or parish council will need to be funded via the grant allowance and/or own funding.

It should be noted that the government confirm the availability of grants in each new financial year. Only those groups that are designated can apply and a Neighbourhood Plan needs to be scoped out in order to apply. Any unspent funding in the year granted will normally need to be returned.

It is recommended that the parish council set a budget for the anticipated work and have in place a project plan and appropriate resources from the start.

16. What Makes a Good Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood Plan policies will need to be practical and useable for development management officers making decisions on planning applications. A well-made Neighbourhood Plan will add value to the planning process through the use of additional policy requirements that are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the LPA, address local issues and is justified through appropriate evidence. Building a strong evidence base to inform the production of a Neighbourhood Plan is vital to its justification and to its immediate and long-term success.

A good understanding of the legislative and existing policy base provides a good foundation upon which to build a focused Neighbourhood Plan and to identify a proportionate evidence base. It is good practice to try and ensure the steering group membership reflects the character and diversity of the local population and has a range of skills. 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, especially around setting and managing the scope and project management of an emerging plan.

Establishing and maintaining an early and continuous dialogue with the LPA and relevant stakeholders is essential.

Neighbourhood plans are led and developed by the community. Effective community engagement is key to developing a good plan and a successful outcome at referendum. The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan should be inclusive and open, ensuring that the wider community is kept fully informed of what is being proposed, is able to make their views known throughout the process, have opportunities to be actively involved and made aware of how their views have informed the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. This is a legal requirement at various stages of the Neighbourhood Plan-making process and is usually demonstrated through the production of a consultation statement which summarises comments received and explains how they have been taken into account and the plan altered as a result. Officers can provide templates and further advice.

Consultation must take place with all organisations who are considered to be affected by the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Lists of suggested consultation bodies can be provided by the LPA. Other public bodies, landowners and the development industry should be involved in preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan, as this will ensure that the Plan prepared delivers sustainable development which benefits the local community whilst avoiding placing unrealistic pressures on the cost and deliverability of that development.

17. What are the most common errors or traps that steering groups fall into?

- The requirements for a robust evidence base and meaningful engagement being overlooked.
- Inappropriate or misleading influence by an individual or organisation.
- Misunderstanding and misconceptions from the start around the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan and what it can and cannot include .
- Seeking to include a policy on every planning related area without reviewing and understanding the existing policy framework.
- Trying to justify predetermined outcomes.
- Difficulties in setting out the evidence objectively, the potential policy approaches and to adequately justify the preferred approach at consultation.
- Ensuring that any questionnaires/ information gathering exercises ask open questions instead of closed questions. E.g. using as many questions that seek feedback from individuals in their own words instead of just responding to yes/ no or rating support from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
- Simple voting on different policy options should be avoided. The reasoning and the justification behind the preferences expressed are more important and how they align with the wider planning policy structure and the facts of

the supporting evidence. (remember opinion alone is just evidence of consultation and does not justify a policy approach)

- Reliance on public meetings. Although useful in publicising a call for feedback, reliance on them can be confrontational and be dominated by a few individuals.
- Missed opportunities in taking advantage of the experience and objective advice of the LPA. E.g. not seeking advice on available evidence or approach

18. In the event of a conflict of views how would an issue be resolved?

Evidence, **not opinion**, should be used to inform and justify the development of any options and proposed policies that will be included in the Neighbourhood Plan. This evidence should be fully available to the public throughout the production of a Plan.

Planning policies need to be based on a clear planning rationale, a proper understanding of the legislative requirements, and relate to and address specific local issues. Policies should be informed by facts. Opinion itself does not provide the justification for policies. Evidence can be both quantitative (facts and figures such as census data) as well as qualitative (e.g. opinions given in consultation responses, **as long as they are backed up by facts**) and should be used to support the decisions made and the policies developed for a Neighbourhood Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan in order to meet the Basic Condition Tests at examination. It is therefore in the best interests of the town or parish council to work with the LPA to iron out any potential conflicts and ambiguity in approaches so that complementary policies are produced prior to public consultation and submission of the plan for examination.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the range of strategic matters which are expected to be addressed through policies in Local Plans and these are detailed in the emerging Local Plan and set out in [Background Paper 12: Strategic Policies Identification ref \[C12\]](#).

Strategic policies set out overarching aims and objectives, which seek to shape the broad characteristics of an area and the scale at which the policies are intended to operate. These policies also set a framework for decisions in terms of how competing priorities should be balanced and sets standards that are essential to be met in order to achieve the wider vision and aspiration of the Local Plan. Examples include but are not limited to, the amount and distribution of housing and employment land, site allocations, sustainable construction, energy efficiency and carbon reduction, flood risk, biodiversity net gain, development in the countryside, high quality design, minimum space standards and accessible and adaptable homes, protection of landscape character including National Landscapes (formerly AONB) and the Broads, delivering the right mix of homes, approach to affordable housing including rural exception sites and the setting of the required affordable housing percentages. A full

breakdown is contained in the emerging Local Plan and [Background Paper 12: Strategic Policies Identification \(Examination Library C12\)](#).

It is important to minimise any remaining conflicts between policies in the draft Neighbourhood Plan and those in the Local Plan, including housing supply policies because it is important to manage expectations and workloads. Policies that remain in conflict at examination stage are likely to be objected to and in the Council's experience will be removed from the draft Neighbourhood Plan at examination. Where ambiguity remains, [section 38\(5\) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#) requires that any remaining conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan.

19. What are the best ways to engage all parts of the community to 'buy into' the NP?

Neighbourhood Plans are led and developed by the community. Effective community engagement is key to developing a good plan and a successful outcome at referendum.

The legislative process requires formal consultation with the local community and stakeholders at key stages of the production. Local engagement and transparency is key throughout the production of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Methods to effectively engage the community include:

- Advertising the intention to prepare a Plan to a broad audience via suitable methods and inviting expressions of interest around participation.
- Form a balanced steering group (age, gender, skills etc).
- Early engagement on ideas to develop a plans vision and aims through workshops and exhibitions.
- Further engagement of emerging key themes and issues and options
- Continued informal involvement with LPA.
- Regular updates at Parish council meetings.
- Up to date dedicated web site detailing the stages, meeting minutes, evidence and consultation material.
- Formal engagement at Regulation 14 stage – a six-week consultation with the community and statutory bodies.

When the Plan is ready to be examined, and the steering group has submitted all relevant material, the Council will organise a six-week period of publicity under Regulation 16 and invite representations prior to commencement of the examination.

20 Appointing Consultants

[If your group is planning to tender for consultants to help with aspects of plan production, evidence gathering or project management – we advise you to contact us in the first instance.](#)

There are only a few professional groups offering sound neighbourhood planning assistance currently known to be operating in North Norfolk. There are many other consultancies that are not local but also support groups in the production of Nps and as such could also provide assistance and there are also individual specialists across the district that have researched and provided themed-based evidence for various neighbourhood plan groups.

Third party assistance is not always required depending on the resources of the steering group and parish council. A clear understanding of the role and scope envisaged is required e.g. is it a project management role or is it writing the Neighbourhood Plan and scoping/ undertaking evidence studies. Whatever the role, it is helpful to ensure that whoever is appointed will work constructively throughout with the LPA, and have knowledge of the Councils policies, rules and decision-making process as well as being qualified in planning, ideally with a nationally recognised degree and membership of a professional body.

Locality also provide specialist technical assistance through consultancies such as AECOM e.g. in the areas of site assessment and design coding, and they work on behalf of NP groups through Locality once funding has been agreed.

Some groups only use consultants to produce specialist evidence review e.g. on environmental issues and/or housing matters e.g. see [Ryburgh Neighbourhood Plan](#) evidence pack where background papers were commissioned from C Yardley landscape consultant and a separate report was commissioned that detailed the housing stock and population position.

Officers can advise further and provide contact details at the appropriate time.