

## **A Neighbourhood Plan for your Parish?**

### ***What is a Neighbourhood Plan?***

It is a legal, planning document prepared by a community to show how they want land to be used and developed in their area.

When a neighbourhood plan passes a local referendum, it becomes part of the development plan and must be used by the planning authority to help make decisions on planning applications in that area.

### ***What is the Development Plan?***

In England, decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In Northumberland, the development plan consists of the Northumberland Local Plan and made neighbourhood plans.

### ***What area would be covered by a Neighbourhood Plan?***

The 'Neighbourhood Area' would cover the whole of the civil parish or parishes in the case of a multi-parish plan.

### ***Who would be responsible for the Neighbourhood Plan?***

The Parish Council is the 'qualifying body' and is ultimately responsible for the Plan though a steering group would be given delegated authority to prepare the Plan.

The steering group and parish council would agree a 'terms of reference' setting out the structure and detail of how the steering group would operate.

### ***Must a Parish Council develop a neighbourhood plan?***

No. It is a right introduced in the Localism Act, 2011 but it is not mandatory.

Currently, decisions on planning applications in parishes without neighbourhood plans are decided using policies in the Local Plan.

### ***What support is available?***

Up to £10,000 is available as grant funding that can be used to pay for consultancy support, for example.

In addition, the Government provides free technical support for complex issues, such as establishing housing need or allocating sites for development.

### ***How is the community involved?***

Community support and input into the process is vital: local people must be consulted on the draft plan and they will have a vote in the local referendum on whether the Plan should be adopted by the planning authority.

### ***Can a neighbourhood plan stop development?***

No. A neighbourhood plan must support the strategic needs set out in the Local Plan; it cannot promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.

### ***What should you include in your plan?***

Your plan must be locally-specific; it should not duplicate existing policy (in the Local Plan) and it must be in general conformity with national planning policy.

It can address one or more planning topics that are important to the local community.

NCC would help you to scope out possible planning topics for inclusion in a neighbourhood plan.

### ***How long will it take?***

It depends on what you wish to include: the greater the number of policies, the longer it will take to prepare (see guide, overleaf).

## Stages in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan

Overview	Steps	Responsibility	Completed
<b>Step 1 – Area designation</b>	<i>Submit neighbourhood area designation application</i>	Parish Council	
	<i>Determine neighbourhood area designation application</i>	Planning Authority	
<b>Step 2 – Prepare the Plan</b>	<i>Scope out the Plan</i>	Parish Council	
	<i>Prepare the Plan (gather evidence, draft policies)</i>	Parish Council	
	<i>Screen the Plan for likely environmental impacts: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)<sup>1</sup></i>	Parish Council / Planning Authority	
	<i>Carry out Regulation 14 Pre-submission consultation (6 weeks) on the draft Plan</i>	Parish Council	
	<i>Make revisions to draft Plan</i>	Parish Council	
<b>Step 3 – Submit the Plan</b>	<i>Submit draft Plan to the Planning Authority<sup>2</sup></i>	Parish Council	
	<i>Check submitted plan for completeness</i>	Planning Authority	
	<i>Publicise the Submission Draft Plan (6 weeks)</i>	Planning Authority	
<b>Step 4 – Independent examination</b>	<i>Appoint an Independent Examiner. Forward representations received on the Plan</i>	Planning Authority	
	<i>Publish Examiner's Report</i>	Planning Authority	
	<i>Decide whether to accept examiner's recommendations</i>	Planning Authority	
	<i>Publish Decision Statement to confirm the Plan may progress to referendum</i>	Planning Authority	
<b>Step 5 – Referendum and making the Plan</b>	<i>Organise referendum</i>	Planning Authority	
	<i>Hold referendum</i>	Planning Authority	
	<i>If successful at referendum, make ('adopt') the Plan</i>	Planning Authority	

<sup>1</sup> There may be a requirement for further assessment of your Plan arising from these screenings.

<sup>2</sup> The draft Plan must be submitted with: a neighbourhood area map; a consultation statement; a basic conditions statement; and screening opinions for HRA and SEA (or Appropriate Assessment and an Environmental Report, if required).