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# Is Neighbourhood Planning the right approach?

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Neighbourhood Planning gives local people a real say in the future of their area and helps people come together to shape it. However, it is not compulsory and does require significant time. It is also not the only option available to you. Before you begin, it is a good idea to consider all the possible options, including alternatives to Neighbourhood Planning.

The right approach will depend on many factors. For instance:

- What the development requirements are for your area?
- Whether there are any specific pressures or Local Plan policies for your area?
- What your community wants for your area?

If you are interested in producing a Neighbourhood Plan, we recommend that you notify us of your interest early on and take a look at our suite of Neighbourhood Planning guidance documents and toolkits.

## Neighbourhood Plans

A Neighbourhood Plan sets out a positive shared vision for an area and includes planning policies to help deliver that vision.

The policies within a Neighbourhood Plan should support the delivery of strategic policies set out in the Local Plan (presently the Wiltshire Core Strategy) by shaping and directing development outside of those strategic policies. A Neighbourhood Plan cannot be used to promote less development than the Local Plan and it cannot undermine any of the strategic policies within it. It should add detail and provide a local steer on future development.

Neighbourhood Plans can be used to allocate sites for development and help secure provision of infrastructure and community facilities at a local level. They can also establish design principles and include other development management policies.



## Who can produce a Neighbourhood Plan?

Within Wiltshire, the town and parish councils are the 'qualifying bodies' who are responsible for producing Neighbourhood Plans. They can enlist the help of others within the community, but they must act as the 'lead' and fulfil their legal requirements.

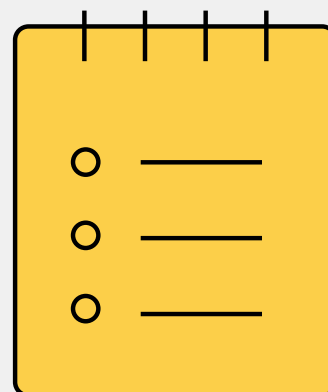
Ultimately, a Neighbourhood Plan will need to be approved by the local community through a referendum. Therefore, to achieve its full potential any neighbourhood planning process needs to be properly organised and supported with a clear plan for engaging with the community, including those that live, work or carry on a business in the Neighbourhood Area.



## What is the scope and scale of a Neighbourhood Plan?

The scope and scale of a Neighbourhood Plan will depend on various factors and what it is you want your plan to cover. It could be selective (simplistic, focused and narrow in scope), comprehensive (complex, covering everything, addressing bigger issues and involving more people) or somewhere in between. The approach you take will depend on your own circumstances, including how much time, energy and resources (including finances) you can dedicate to the project. Ultimately, the focus of your plan will be informed by the evidence collected and the outcomes of the community engagement undertaken along the way.

There are limitations on what a Neighbourhood Plan can influence. Its policies can only relate to the development and use of land and can only influence development that requires a planning application. A Neighbourhood Plan should not duplicate planning policy and must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in force. In addition, a Neighbourhood Plan cannot deal with minerals, waste or highways issues governed by the Minerals and Waste Plans or Local Transport Plan and must conform with national planning policy, such as Green Belt policy.



## What are the benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan?

Developing a Neighbourhood Plan offers an opportunity to bring people and businesses together and to set priorities for planning within your area, based on the shared vision and objectives.

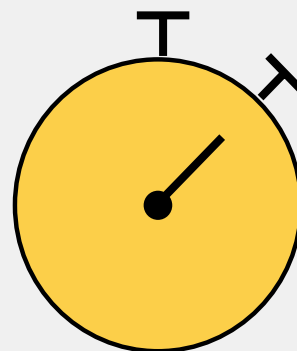
Producing a Neighbourhood Plan has advantages over other kinds of community-led plan because once it has been approved at a referendum, it attains the same legal status as a Local Plan (and other documents that

form part of the statutory development plan). Therefore, the policies within a Neighbourhood Plan sit alongside the policies within the Local Plan. Decisions on planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

If you have a 'made' Neighbourhood Plan you will also be entitled to a larger share of any Community Infrastructure Levy brought in through new development that takes place in your area, to put towards infrastructure projects that support development of your area.

### **How long will it take to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?**

Although a useful planning tool, embarking on the Neighbourhood Plan route is a significant commitment. Done properly, and in accordance with statutory regulations it may take between 15 months to three years from start to being 'made'. The rewards, though, could be significant.



## **What are the other options?**

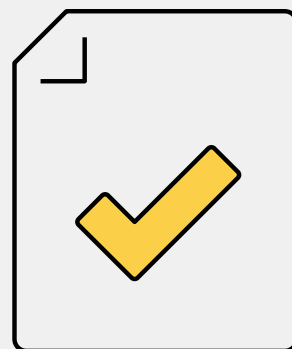
Producing a Neighbourhood Plan is a big undertaking. Before you commit to this approach, it is a good idea to look at the other options available to you.

### **Neighbourhood Development Order**

Neighbourhood Development Orders can grant planning permission for specific types of development in a particular area. For instance, it may mean that certain building operations, material changes of use of land and buildings or engineering operations can go ahead in an area without making a planning application, as long as they comply with the current policies and regulations.

### **Community Right to Build Orders**

Community Right to Build Orders can be used by community groups or parish councils to grant them planning permission for the right to build small scale developments on specific sites. For instance, you can use them to encourage development which benefits the community, like affordable housing, village shops, playgrounds or community energy schemes.



## Parish Plans

Parish Plans tend to focus on all aspects of community life. They can help a community assess the current and future issues in an area and set out proposed remedies, even when these require outside assistance. They can, but do not have to, include planning issues such as land use, design and types of materials used in new development. However, their focus usually extends beyond planning issues to cover things like local services, leisure activities and highway improvements. They come in all shapes and sizes. Some are text based, some are map based and some are a mixture.

They are not statutory plans and therefore do not need to go through a formal adoption process. Whilst this makes them relatively quick to prepare and update it does mean that they cannot allocate development sites and have no formal weight in determining planning applications.

Parish Plans rely on solutions within the parish and need to be driven by the parish itself. It can be appropriate, and helpful, for a community to complete a Parish Plan as a preliminary to preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

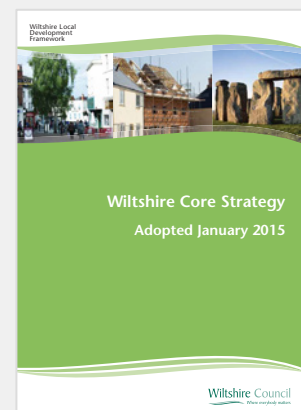
## Village Design Statement

Village Design Statements focus solely on design issues and are less strategic in nature than Parish Plans. They tend to contain a description and analysis of the distinctive aspects of a village and are usually full of illustrations and photographs showing the 'dos' and 'don'ts' for the area. They are essentially guidance documents for developers and individuals that encourage good design to enhance and protect the local area without preventing future growth. They can provide a source of local information about vernacular design, local builders and specialists and sources of materials. They are also a useful source of information when commenting on planning applications.

Village Design Statements do not determine or detail what type of development can occur, where it should go, how individual buildings should be managed or maintained, or the state of local services and facilities. They are only concerned with the visual characteristics of an area and how these might be protected or enhanced. A village design statement can form part of a Neighbourhood Plan but can also be a document in its own right.

## Do nothing / relying on the Local Plan

Producing a community-led plan or any of the other available planning tools is not compulsory. The Local Plan (presently the Wiltshire Core Strategy) contains both strategic and non-strategic policies to guide development within the county. Some rural areas of Wiltshire will face few development issues and pressures and the rural policies in the Local Plan may provide the necessary guidance. If you are happy with the policy guidance provided in the Local Plan for your parish then you may decide there is no need to prepare a community-led plan at all.



# Which option is best for your community?

Before you settle on an approach, it is important to consider which option is right for your parish and community.

So that we can understand your motivations and intension, we would like you to email us ([neighbourhoodplanning@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodplanning@wiltshire.gov.uk)) your answers to the following questions:



1. Have you defined the geographic area for your proposed neighbourhood plan (e.g. one parish or a smaller/larger area)?
2. What community engagement or publicity (if any) have you carried out or plan to carry out?
3. What are the key planning issues in your area? (It may be helpful to consider what are the challenges for your community/area now and into the future? What are the aspirations? What planning issues or development needs relate to these?)
4. What way(s) would a Neighbourhood Plan help your community deliver the priorities set out within the Wiltshire Core Strategy?
5. Are there any specific outcomes you are looking to achieve through the Neighbourhood Planning process?
6. Are there any specific proposals you are seeking planning permission for?
7. Are you seeking to allocate a site for development, or be more permissive towards development in your area?
8. Have you looked at our Neighbourhood Planning guidance documents and toolkits available on our website?
9. It is estimated that the Neighbourhood Planning process may take 15 months – 3 years. Does this match your timeframe, or do you have a specific timeframe in mind?
10. Do you have a budget and volunteers to help with consultation activities? Have you previously considered any other route to meet your community aspirations; if so, what were they and why have they been dismissed?

Your answers will provide us with a good starting point to help you make your decision on whether to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan.

If you choose the Neighbourhood Plan approach, we have prepared a suite of Neighbourhood Planning guidance documents and toolkits to help you through the process.



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