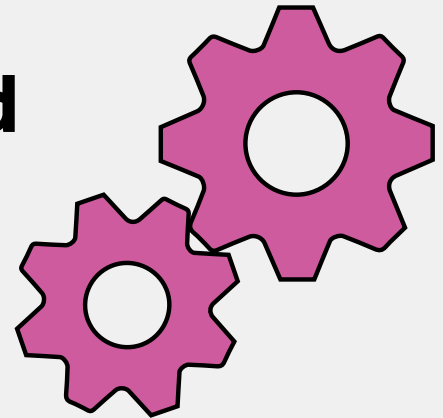




02

Developing options and preferred approach

Developing options and preferred approach



By now, you should have:

- ✓ Identified your plan themes.
- ✓ Developed a vision and objectives.
- ✓ Started building up your localised evidence base.

Once your vision and objectives have been established, you can focus on potential policies and site allocations. The evidence and information you have collected along the way should help you form conclusion and identify key issues. Policies will naturally start to emerge as a result of the supporting evidence. However, before you commit to any specific policies, it is important to consider whether this is the best way of achieving the intended outcome (i.e. the options).

Why do you need options?

Looking at different options will help you decide what works well and what does not. You may find that the initial solutions to the issues are not the most appropriate. Consulting with your community will lead to open and transparent decision making. This will make sure the policies in your plan are the best way to address your community's vision.

With a well-documented decision-making process, you will reduce the risk of conflict or challenge to the plan.



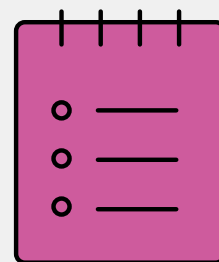
What sort of options?

Options can be generated from ideas developed by the steering group or from other consultation exercises with the wider community.

The sort of options you want to consider will depend on what you want your Neighbourhood Plan wants to achieve. Examples of options might include:

- Alternative sites, areas and uses of land.
- Different scales, types, mixes and locations of development.
- Different development 'conditions' – e.g. how development should look (its design) and how certain issues, such as transport, renewable energy and landscaping should be incorporated?

When considering options, it is best practice to include a 'do nothing' option (also known as 'business as usual'). This is what would happen to the plan area (and sites in question) if you did not prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.



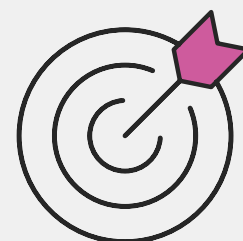
How many options?

The number of options you generate is likely to be influenced by the intended scope of your Neighbourhood Plan. If your plan is dealing with a single housing or employment site, then there may be just two or three options you feel you need to consider for that site. However, if your plan is covering a large range of issues and aims to address in your area then there may be several options required, grouped around issues and topics.

Are the options appropriate?

Options should be realistic and achievable. If your community wants a new children's play area, think about how this can be delivered and who will pay for it. If you believe there is a need for more affordable housing in your community, is there a housing association or key landowner that you could have initial discussions with to help identify appropriate sites?

When you are developing your options it is important that you check them against the existing strategy and policies in the Local Plan (Wiltshire Core Strategy) to make sure there are no major conflicts. Similarly, it is a good idea to contact us at this stage so we can discuss and agree the relationship between your Neighbourhood Plan and our emerging Local Plan policies.



Testing the draft options with your community

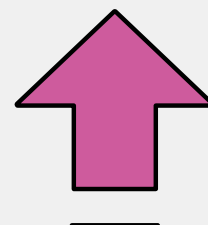


As with the vision and objectives, we recommend consulting your local community on your options before you make your final choice. Questions you might ask, when testing your options are:

- Have we identified the right options?
- Are there any options missing?
- Which option(s) do you prefer and why?

Representations from your community may demonstrate opposing views. However it is legitimate for you, as the qualifying body, to make decisions and achieve consensus to determine the way forwards and minimise conflicts. Decisions must be based on clear planning rationale and evidence though.

Taking the options forward in developing your plan



Following consultation, the preferred option(s) can be taken forward to provide the detail and policies within your Neighbourhood Plan, subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) outcomes (see next section). If either of these processes indicate that the roll out of a particular option would have an adverse impact on the environment and/or a European site¹, then a different approach should be taken.

You may also need to choose another option because of reasons beyond your control. For example, a piece of land that would have been ideal for development of a community centre is unavailable as the landowner is unwilling to use the land for that purpose. Any decision taken should be clearly documented along the way.

¹There is a network of protected sites across Europe, which includes Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and RAMSAR Sites which are collectively known as European Sites.

Ask the Council for SEA and HRA Screening opinions

You will need to ask us to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screenings of your Neighbourhood Plan as soon as there is sufficient information/detail about your plan's proposed content or intentions (e.g. whether it will allocate sites). This will ensure any subsequent process effectively informs the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

SEA is a European Union (EU) requirement that seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing certain plans, including neighbourhood plans. An SEA will not be required for all neighbourhood plans – only when the proposals in a neighbourhood plan are considered likely to have significant environmental effects will an SEA be required.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 include regulations on the assessment of plans (including neighbourhood plans) and projects on European sites. The first stage is to screen the plan to see whether it is likely to have any significant effect on a European Site.

Further information on SEA and HRA is set out in our guidance note **Environmental Assessment**.

