

Neighbourhood Planning



**Guidance and resources for
Neighbourhood Plan groups in
Broadland and South Norfolk**

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Cover images:

Focus group ([GreenBook Blog](#))

New build homes in Fakenham ([Latimer](#))

Venta Icenorum Roman town in Caistor St Edmund ([Heritage Daily](#))

Introduction

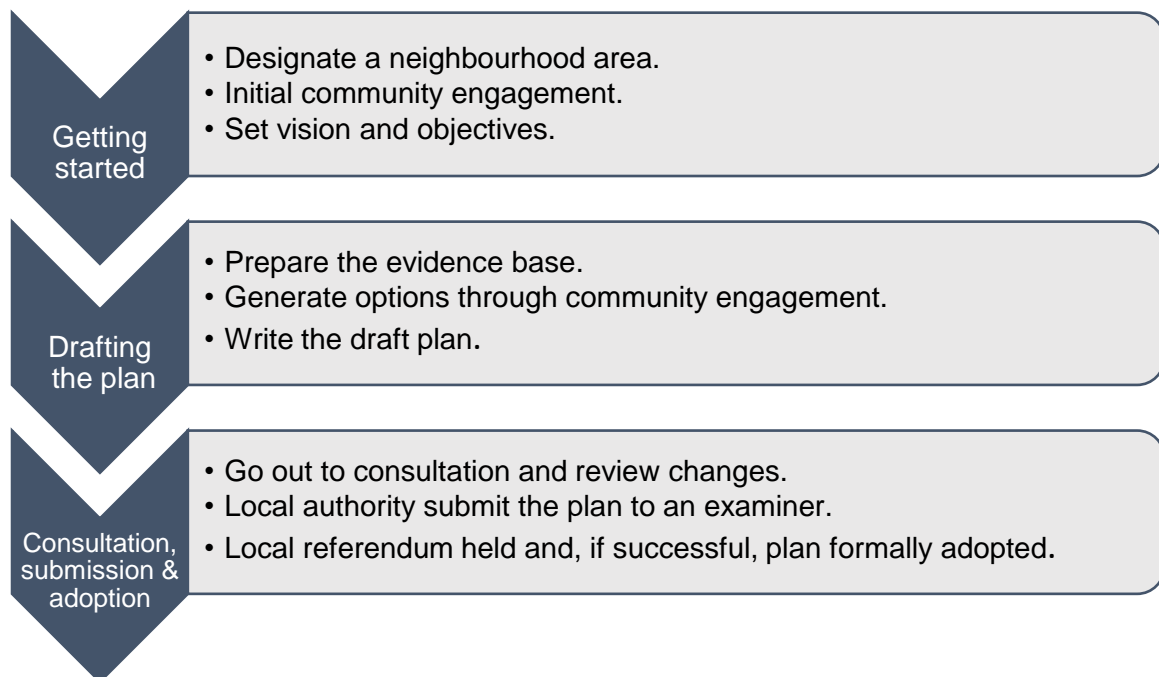
Planning has often been considered a detached, bureaucratic process conducted from a central office and imposed on individuals and communities. Approaching planning at a neighbourhood level can begin to address these concerns. Neighbourhood plans represent an expression of community will which carries weight in the planning system.

This guide aims to signpost existing guidance to local individuals and groups with an interest in shaping where they live. Each section summarises a variety of resources which can be accessed by following the hyperlinks.

[Locality](#) has produced an informative roadmap to introduce the concept of neighbourhood plans and their place in the planning system. Plans can be heavy documents full of jargon, but Locality's overview uses everyday terms which help foster understanding.

Once you're familiar with the basic elements of the neighbourhood planning timeline, [Locality](#) has a whole host of resources to guide you through beginning the process, such as:

- A quick [overview](#) of key milestones and common pitfalls to avoid.
- More detail in the comprehensive [roadmap](#) to producing a Neighbourhood Plan.
- Understanding the [powers](#) a neighbourhood plan gives to a community.
- How to go about establishing a [neighbourhood forum](#).
- Which [financial and technical support](#) is available and how to apply.
- A [project planner](#) with links to resources at each stage.
- The value of [consultants](#) and how to approach them with a project brief.
- Whether your plan will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment ([SEA](#)).



Existing policies

According to the UK Government “neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area”. Certainly, many Neighbourhood Plan groups have already utilised the opportunity to feed into the planning system to shape their locality. This section sets out how neighbourhood plans fit within existing national and local policy.

Guidance

Guidance on the [UK Government](#) website sets out the scope of neighbourhood planning as introduced by the Localism Act (2011) and serves as the definitive reference document.

Resources

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) sets out planning policy in England, with a number of specific references to neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood Plan policies must have regard to the NPPF.

[South Norfolk](#) and [Broadland](#) District Councils each have an adopted local plan which includes a Joint Core Strategy which was developed in partnership with Norwich City Council. Parishes are sorted according to a settlement hierarchy which determines where development will be targeted. Critically, neighbourhood plans should complement the local plan and be ‘in general conformity’ with its strategic policies. Each district council’s local plan also includes a site allocations document (which allocates sites across the district for future development), a development management policies document (which sets out thematic policies to guide development proposals) and a small number of area action plans (which includes policies to shape major growth in specific locations).

Included in the local plan are several Supplementary Planning Documents ([SPDs](#)). The Open Space SPD sets out the requirements for outdoor recreational facilities as a result of new development and can help guide projects. Landscape Character Assessments divide the districts into areas distinguished by landscape characteristics, making them an excellent contextual tool for neighbourhood plans. Other useful resources include the South Norfolk Place-making Guide SPD and the Broadland Design Guide, which are illustrated guides to local building styles which could support a Neighbourhood Plan design code.



The Place-making guide identifies distinctive local features and design styles. ([South Norfolk 2012](#))

Evidence gathering

A Neighbourhood Plan makes a statement about your local area and needs to be backed up with firm evidence. Quantitative data and statistics can form an objective base and are also important for justifying the content of your plan.

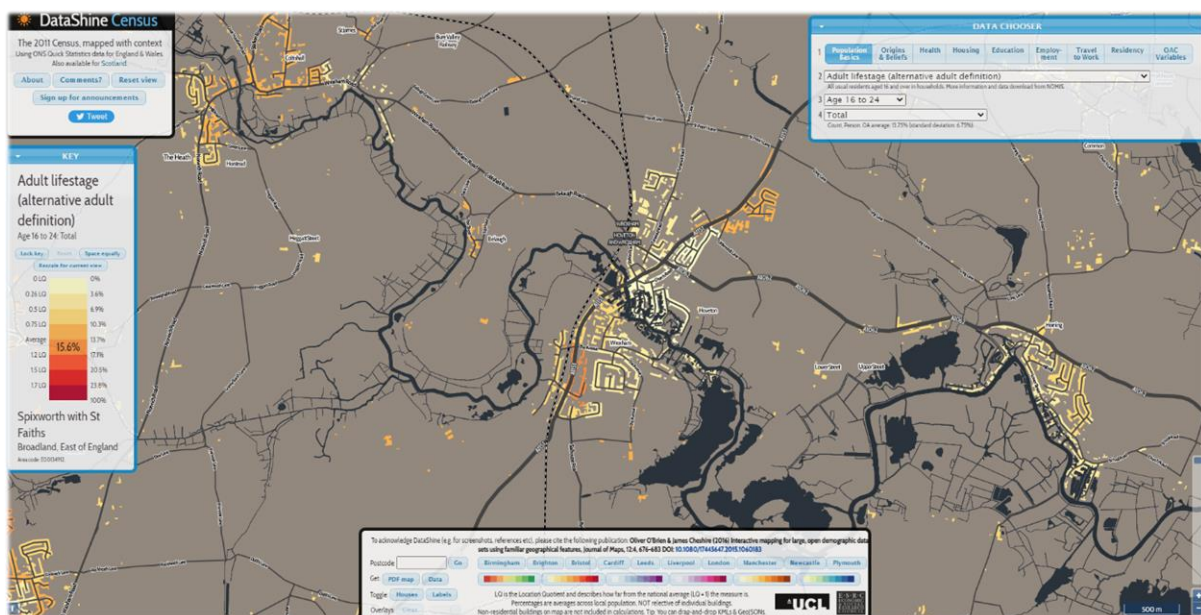
Resources

[NOMIS](#) is the publishing database for the Office of National Statistics, with raw demographic data available at various local levels including for electoral wards.

Much of this information is available to view using [DataShine](#), which allows you to view data collected in the 2011 Census on user friendly mapping rather than in tables.

[Norfolk Insight](#) also offers at-a-glance information for Norfolk and County wards.

[Norfolk County Council](#) includes a helpful page on its website which signposts Neighbourhood Plan groups to various information on relevant County Council services.



[DataShine](#) can be used to overlay a map with data from the 2011 Census, as here in Wroxham.

Community engagement

Beyond quantitative evidence, neighbourhood plans should be supported by committed community engagement. Traditionally, consultations might mean display boards in town or village halls and whilst there is definitely still a place for these methods of engagement, there are a range of other resources available which can help to reach a diverse cross section of the community, resulting in a broader range of responses.

Guidance

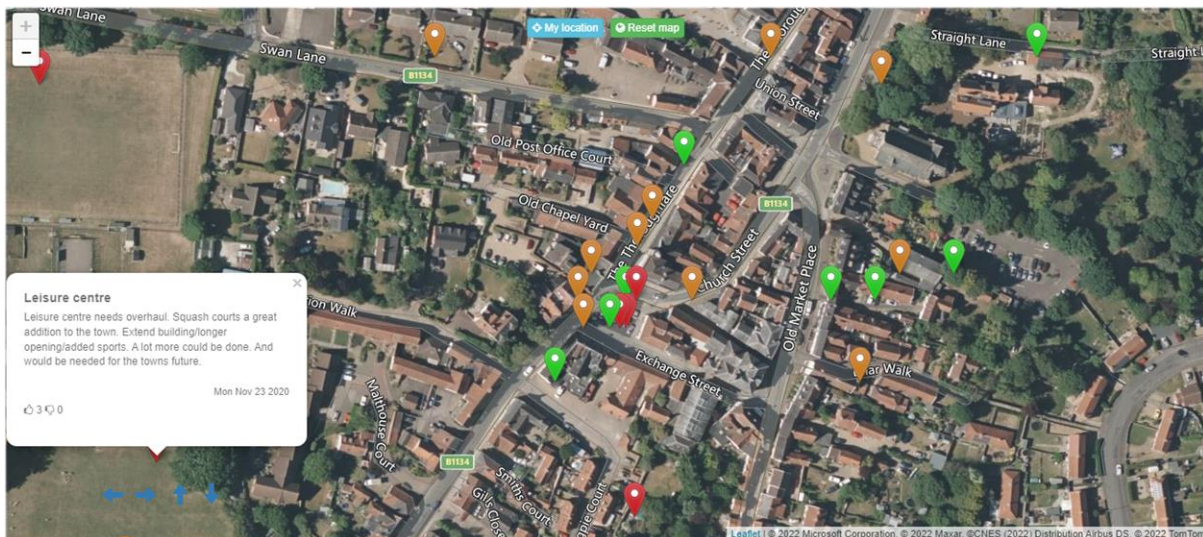
[Locality](#) has tips on inclusive engagement and include several engagement techniques with an indication of who is most likely to be reached in such a manner. Specific advice regarding the effective use of [social media](#) in engagement is also available.

The [Local Government Association](#) has further guides from councils across England about engaging residents with planning. Note these are not specific to neighbourhood plans.

Resources

[Communityplanning.net](#) is a treasure trove of ideas, tools and case studies on the topic of community engagement..

[Placecheck](#) suggests bringing a group of interested people together to walk around an area and discuss what they like, dislike and would like to change locally. Taking the initiative like this can stimulate debate and ideas for how issues can be addressed within the Neighbourhood Plan. It can also encourage further input.



A Placecheck, as seen here in Harleston, allows residents to plot markers on a map and leave a comment about a village feature or concern, which other people can then give a thumbs up or down. ([Harleston TC 2020](#))

Local economy

Maintaining and encouraging local business opportunities can be crucial in ensuring the vitality of the local economy both now and into the future.

Guidance

[Locality](#) has a guide focusing on regeneration through a process of economic analysis. It breaks down possible causes of decline alongside broader contextual factors to help build an understanding of the local economy. Policy remedies are also suggested for a variety of struggling sectors, from traditional industrial areas to newer retail centres.

Resources

[Norfolk County Council](#) leads a steering group which produces a rural economic strategy for the county based on market town regeneration, supporting the green economy, community resilience, skills, innovation, digitalisation, and modernising infrastructure.



Aylsham Neighbourhood Plan placed the importance of the Cittaslow values of a slower pace of life and locally produced food at the heart of its economic policy. ([Cittaslow Aylsham](#))

Housing

Ask anyone what they think a Neighbourhood Plan entails, and most will answer housing development. Often proposals for new housing development in an area will draw strong reactions and robust engagement, and so taking ownership of this aspect can be very empowering for a community. Yet many Neighbourhood Plans do not seek to allocate sites for housing development (although this is possible), and instead focus on enhancing existing or emerging local plan allocations to meet their own needs. If your Neighbourhood Plan is to include policies that seek to influence housing in your area then these policies need to be underpinned by robust, objectively assessed data on local housing need.

Guidance

Locality has written several guides addressing housing, beginning with the practicalities of undertaking a [Housing Needs Assessment](#) if this is within the scope of your proposed plan. This is also something for which you may be able to secure [technical support](#) from Locality.

Should the Neighbourhood Plan be proposing allocations for housing development, further guides set out the processes of [assessing and allocating sites](#) for development and [ensuring the viability of plan proposals](#). Specific guidance is also available for taking forward a [community-led housing](#) scheme.

[BIMBY](#) turns the notorious acronym on its head by encouraging Neighbourhood Plan groups to propose *beautiful* development in their back yard. Their housing toolkit suggests three workshops to identify which type of houses residents would like to see in their area.

Resources

The [Greater Norwich Local Housing Needs Assessment](#) (2021) highlights the nature and make-up of current and future housing needs across Greater Norwich through all stages of life.. This could be useful in setting the broader housing context to your Neighbourhood Plan.



New housing development in Cringleford ([Big Sky](#)). The number of new homes required was set by the Local Plan, but it was the Neighbourhood Plan that allocated the sites (i.e. determined the location of the housing) and sought to influence the design and layout, in accordance with the Place Making Guide for South Norfolk (2012).

Design and character

Appreciating well-designed places is an acknowledgement that our interactions with our surroundings shape our experiences. Neighbourhood Plans should conserve and enhance local character to foster pride in an environment which brings joy to observers. Good design can facilitate a multitude of enduring benefits, from well-being to a flourishing local economy.

Guidance

The [National Design Guide](#) (2021) introduces ten characteristics of good design in an easy-read format with numerous examples of best practice to serve as inspiration.

In its document, '[Achieving well-designed places through Neighbourhood Planning](#)', Locality reiterates some of these strong principles of design with their own examples and demonstrate how these can be applied to your plan using a toolkit-style format.

Resources

Local Green Spaces can be designated within Neighbourhood Plans, protecting key spaces within your community where they meet specific criteria set out in the NPPF. Further guidance is provided by the [UK Government](#), here.

Further advice on how to designate a Local Green Space is offered by [Locality](#), including how to gather evidence, engage the community and the effect of existing designations.

For neighbourhood areas in Broadland district, the [Landscape Character Assessment](#) (2013) and [design guide](#) (1997) will help contextualise your locality within the broader landscape. Similarly, the 2012 [landscape assessments](#) and [Place Making Guide](#) for South Norfolk will be of assistance to Neighbourhood Plan groups in that local authority area. Note that these are useful reference documents which have aged somewhat, meaning that you may want to reference more recent interpretations where available.



The National Design Guide praised this development in Trowse for successfully drawing together local historical precedents. (NDF 2021, p.15)

Heritage

Across your neighbourhood area will be signs of human interaction with the environment over time. These can include listed buildings, ancient monuments and protected landscapes. In order to look to a neighbourhood's future, we need to understand the ongoing significance and impact of this heritage on shaping the area's people and places.

Guidance

[Historic England](#)'s advice note on neighbourhood planning and the historic environment is a comprehensive guide detailing the steps neighbourhood groups should take to fully consider the role of historic places and local history in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Perhaps a more accessible overview of evaluating heritage while engaging with neighbourhood planning is provided by the [National Trust](#). Included in its 2019 guidance as appendices are basic design, character and sustainability analysis tools.

Resources

All nationally protected historic buildings and sites are held on the [National Heritage List](#) compiled by Natural England. You can search using a map to find assets in your area.

A similar map search tool is provided by the [Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#), but this county-level database also includes sites of archaeological interest and find spots. [Natural England](#) have also published an advice note on identifying and conserving local heritage.

[Norfolk Historic Mapping](#) doesn't display heritage assets, but the interactive tool allows you to view old tithe maps, early Ordnance Survey maps and more recent aerial photography for most of the county. [Norfolk County Council](#) also has a section of their website dedicated to heritage and archaeology.



Earsham's Grade I Listed All Saints' Church is unusual to Norfolk due to its spire, which is visible for miles and an important heritage feature. ([Wikimedia Commons 2008](#))

Natural environment

As the climate emergency accelerates, it's becoming clearer that we shape our environment and that we in turn are affected by our surroundings. Flooding issues and impact on wildlife are important considerations. Neighbourhood Plans represent an opportunity to focus the environmental requirements of higher-level policy in a specific and locally oriented manner.

Guidance

Locality has written guides dedicated to taking Neighbourhood Plan groups through [environmental considerations](#) that will help to ensure a sensitive plan, how to engage with environment [statutory consultees](#), and writing a plan during a [climate emergency](#).

For a guide focused on reducing the carbon footprint of development within the neighbourhood area, the Centre for Sustainable Energy has republished its '[Neighbourhood Planning in a Climate Emergency](#)' guidance document.

[Anglian Water](#) has issued a guidance note where they set out their stake in Neighbourhood Plans and how they can assist at each stage of the process.

Resources

[Natural England](#) have published a framework which introduces the principles of green infrastructure in a design guide alongside an interactive map which could provide an invaluable resource for mapping natural assets in your area.

[Norfolk Wildlife Trust](#) has a webpage on planning and biodiversity which includes a factsheet with suggestions for incorporating biodiversity within Neighbourhood Plans.

[MAGIC](#) is freely available online mapping software with over 300 available map layers showing environmental designations, habitats and land classifications across the UK.

On the [UK Government](#) website is a tool identifying which areas are in designated flood zones, which is a key viability check when proposing new housing or other development.

Finally, the countryside charity [CPRE](#) has published an interactive map of the UK relating to light pollution and dark skies. You can find more information about how to use this resource and relate it to your Neighbourhood Plan at the CPRE's [NightBlight](#) website.



Flash flooding, as seen here in Long Stratton, could well become more common if new development is poorly situated or environmental issues are not addressed. ([EDP 2020](#))

Transport

Many neighbourhood plans are concerned with vehicle access and parking, but even in rural villages there is scope to encourage modes of public and active transport such as walking and cycling. This would aid a plan in meeting the national requirement for all development to be sustainable, as transport is the largest emitting UK sector of greenhouse gas emissions.

Guidance

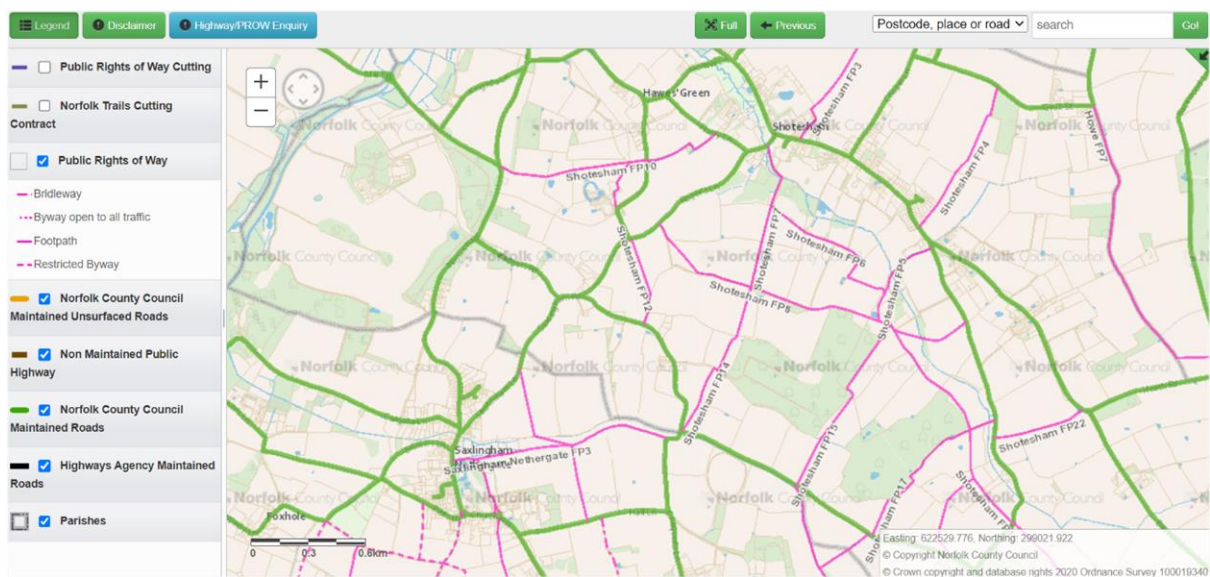
[Locality](#) explains that the scope of transport policies in a planning context relates to the use of land. Several examples are given of how development could integrate with and enhance the existing transport network as well as meeting the sustainability requirements of the plan.

Guidance on how to decarbonise transport through neighbourhood plan policies is provided by the [University of Manchester](#). Using a carbon-based hierarchy of transport options from reducing travel through to fossil-fuel based cars, this toolkit examines the benefits of low-carbon travel, ideas for policies and possible projects beyond the neighbourhood plan.

Resources

The [Norfolk Local Transport Plan](#) sets the county-wide context for transport infrastructure.

[Norfolk County Council](#) also has an interactive map of public rights of way across the county which can help you to identify how the footpath network within your neighbourhood area could be enhanced. There may also be key local views along some of these paths.



Snapshot from Norfolk County Council's map showing roads in green and public footpaths in pink. ([NCC](#))

Community facilities

Some buildings lie at the heart of the community, providing a benefit to all in the local area. A neighbourhood forum has the potential to adopt or encourage the construction of such a building through various mechanisms brought in with the Localism Act 2011.

Guidance

[Locality](#) offers advice on two technical measures which may be of interest when considering a neighbourhood plan. Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders can grant consent for a certain type of development, such as a community facility.

[My Community](#) offer guidance on Assets of Community Value and how a Parish/Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum can nominate a building or land and make a purchase bid in the event of a sale.

Further resources on this topic can be found on the [community planning](#) website.

Resources

[South Norfolk and Broadland](#) have a full list of successful and pending application for Assets of Community Value as well as information on how to apply.



Pulham St Mary's Pennoyer Centre was listed as an Asset of Community Value in 2019 due to its licensed café, rooms for business use, event hire facilities and history of the Pulhams ([Tripadvisor](#))

Policy writing

Planning documents can often appear complex and confusing, but the most effective planning policies are those which can clearly and simply convey a message. In fact, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies should be 'clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals'. Neighbourhood Plan policies should also serve a clear purpose and not unnecessarily duplicate existing policies within the District Council's Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Plan groups should refer to the Neighbourhood Plan's vision and objectives in order to construct a clear argument which can be readily understood.

Guidance

[Locality](#) once again provides a guide on how to write clear, positive policies which add value to existing national or local plan policies. Included in the toolkit are a series of tests designed to ensure that policies are supported by clear evidence and are precisely written.

Resources

The [Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service](#) (NPIERS) can offer a health check review of your Neighbourhood Plan once you have drafted the document. This can help to ensure your policies are suitably written and justified by appropriate evidence. Groups that have taken on a consultant may not require this service as this expertise may already be on hand. When the plan is ready for examination the local planning authority will organise and pay for an examiner with the input of the neighbourhood forum.



Implementation

Although the focus will naturally be on which issues to address and policies to include, best practice is to also consider how the policies you write will help to determine future planning applications, and how you will ultimately measure the success of your plan.

Guidance

[Locality](#) explains the role of the examination and how to prepare well in advance. This will reduce the need for reworking or even removing policies when it comes to examination.

Work on a neighbourhood plan does not end when it is adopted (or 'made'). [Implementation](#) as part of the overarching development plan requires ongoing application of the plan policies, not only by planning officers, but also by the parish/town council that has developed the plan. For example, the parish/town council can comment on planning applications in their area and cite the adopted Neighbourhood Plan policies as evidence. Ongoing monitoring can identify whether the aims of the plan are being met, with any issues eventually able to be addressed through a plan review.

Resources

[Locality](#) also have a document explaining the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and how receipts can be raised and spent by local councils. Parishes with a neighbourhood plan in place will receive a higher percentage (25%) of the levy collected from development than would be the case if they do not have an adopted Neighbourhood Plan.



Seven of Easton neighbourhood plan's policies were applied to an application for 72 homes as part of the EAS1 allocation. Although the allocation was determined by the local development plan, the neighbourhood plan influenced the housing mix, as seen above. ([Orbit Homes 2021](#))

Neighbourhood Planning Support

In addition to the statutory duties that we have as district councils in relation to progressing Neighbourhood Plans, we can offer a range of support for communities that are undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan. This includes:

- general advice and guidance on the process, how to gather evidence, getting people involved and policy development.
- reviewing draft documents produced by Neighbourhood Plan steering groups such as consultation material, briefs for consultants and policies.
- attendance at specific steering group meetings, as required.
- providing potential financial support for developing the Neighbourhood Plan through the council's Neighbourhood Planning Grant Scheme. Up to £6,000 is available for parish or town councils that are preparing Neighbourhood Plans in the district.
- assistance with mapping for consultation events and documents.
- loaning of display boards for use in local consultation events.
- organising networking meetings for groups producing plans.
- production of Neighbourhood Planning guidance and other practical documents.
- providing training through a variety of means as and when resources become available.
- producing a basic 'Parish Profile' document for newly-established Neighbourhood Plan steering groups, setting out key statistics, local plan policies and allocations, and statutory designations relevant to the parish.

Please feel free to contact us using the details below:

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