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## **Guidance for Neighbourhood Planning Groups in North Hertfordshire**

The following guidance notes are an extract from the Statement of Community Involvement, adopted in September 2023.

## 7. Neighbourhood Planning

- 7.1 Neighbourhood plans are Community-led documents, prepared by Parish Councils or a Neighbourhood Planning Forum. The District Council is committed to supporting local communities preparing neighbourhood plans and they form an important part of how the local community can be engaged in the planning system.
- 7.2 The [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#) (as amended) set out the statutory requirements for the preparation of neighbourhood plans. Consultation during the early stages of neighbourhood plan preparation is undertaken by the Parish Council or the neighbourhood forum and is not covered by the requirements of this Statement of Community Involvement. However, the SCI might still contain guidance which is useful to groups preparing neighbourhood plans.
- 7.3 When a neighbourhood plan is “made” it becomes part of the statutory development plan for the District, this means that there are a number of legal requirements that the neighbourhood plan must meet. These are known as the “Basic Conditions”. A neighbourhood plan must;
- ❖ have regard to national planning policy;
  - ❖ be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the saved Local Plan;
  - ❖ contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
  - ❖ be compatible with environmental obligations; and
  - ❖ be compatible with human rights requirements.
- 7.4 The table below sets out the key steps for neighbourhood planning and also outlines the level of support that can be expected from the us, the District Council. Further information can be found on the Council's [website](#).

Table 3 : Neighbourhood Plans – Stages of Preparation

Neighbourhood Plan Stage of Preparation	Commentary
Designation of a neighbourhood planning area	<p>In those areas of the District where there is a Parish or Town Council, the Parish or Town Council must apply for a neighbourhood planning area to be designated.</p> <p>If an application is received to designate the whole parish area, we are required to designate the whole area<sup>4</sup>.</p> <p>At this stage, we expect the Parish or Town Council to provide a formal request to designate the neighbourhood planning area and a map which shows the extent of the neighbourhood planning area.</p>

<sup>4</sup> [The Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) and Development Management Procedure \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)

Neighbourhood Plan Stage of Preparation	Commentary
	<p>In those areas of the District where there is no Parish Council, a neighbourhood planning forum must be established in order to produce a neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>Where we need to consult on designating a neighbourhood planning area, we will consult statutory consultees and those people and organisations on our database who have expressed an interest in that neighbourhood planning area. We will advertise the application through its website and social media and will ask the relevant qualifying body to assist in publicising the consultation through its own local mechanisms, for example through a community newsletter or local website</p>
<p>Preparation of the first draft neighbourhood plan</p>	<p>During this stage of plan preparation, we have a duty to support the preparation of neighbourhood plans. This could include advice on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ possible themes and topics for your neighbourhood plan;</li> <li>❖ useful evidence for your neighbourhood planning policies;</li> <li>❖ the legal requirements that have to be met;</li> <li>❖ ways to consult the local community;</li> <li>❖ providing maps where appropriate; and</li> <li>❖ providing advice on policy writing.</li> </ul> <p>This list is not exhaustive; however assistance will be limited to the resources we have available at any given time. If you have a detailed project plan in place, it will be easier to identify when you might need assistance from the Council.</p> <p>At this stage in the neighbourhood planning process, the Strategic Planning Team will offer 30 hours of support for each neighbourhood planning group. Our GIS team can also provide some limited help with digital mapping. Beyond this allowance, further assistance can be provided but will be charged at a rate of £30 per hour to help cover the Council's costs.</p> <p>Whilst we have a duty to support neighbourhood planning, this does not extend to financial assistance. There are other sources of funding which might be available to</p>

<b>Neighbourhood Plan Stage of Preparation</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
	neighbourhood planning groups. Further information is available through Locality: <a href="https://locality.org.uk/">https://locality.org.uk/</a>
Pre-submission consultation on the neighbourhood plan	<p>Once a draft neighbourhood plan has been prepared it will need to be consulted on for six weeks. This consultation is carried out by the Parish Council or the Neighbourhood Forum.</p> <p>Whilst consultation at this stage should be focussed in the local community, we can help Parish Councils and qualifying bodies with the contact details for statutory consultees or other relevant organisations who might have an interest in the neighbourhood plan. Parish Councils and qualifying bodies are encouraged to consult with the wider community which might include community groups, landowners, businesses and developers. Some of the consultation techniques listed in Table 1 might be helpful to use in this early consultation for a neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>The consultation responses can be used to make any changes to the neighbourhood plan as a result of comments from the public in advance of submitting the plan.</p>
Submission of the neighbourhood plan to North Herts Council	<p>Once the neighbourhood plan has been prepared and the first stages of consultation have been completed, the plan will be submitted to NHC to publicise and consult on for six weeks.</p> <p>We will ensure that all of the documents submitted are correct and will arrange for consultation to take place. In most cases, delegated authority will be sought to start the consultation but there are exceptions to this where the neighbourhood planning area includes two or more electoral wards. In these circumstances, the consultation will be referred to Cabinet as a key decision. It maybe that the consultation will be undertaken with other local planning consultations to ensure the efficient use of resources.</p> <p>We will publicise the consultation through our website, news releases and through social media. Emails and letters will be sent to statutory consultees, any organisation referred to in the consultation statement, organisations in the local area and anyone who has</p>

<b>Neighbourhood Plan Stage of Preparation</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
	<p>“opted-in” to be notified of consultations for that particular neighbourhood planning area.</p> <p>We will work in collaboration with the qualifying body or neighbourhood planning forum to encourage the use of local media sources (e.g. newsletters, social media pages) to publicise the consultation.</p>
<p>Independent examination of a neighbourhood plan</p>	<p>We will source an independent examiner at the end of the consultation period, once all of the representations have been confirmed to request the details of a suitable and available examiner to undertake the examination of the plan. A decision to appoint an examiner will be made in collaboration with the Parish Council.</p> <p>We will ensure that the independent examiner receives all of the relevant documentation for the examination.</p> <p>It is normal for neighbourhood plan examinations to be conducted by written representations, however, if the examiner decides that an exploratory meeting or a hearing session is necessary, we will make the appropriate arrangements in consultation with the Qualifying Body and the examiner.</p>
<p>Receipt of Examiner’s report</p>	<p>The examiner will prepare a report which will recommend that the neighbourhood plan proceeds to a referendum with or without further modifications and that the referendum area is to be extended beyond the designated neighbourhood planning area.</p>
<p>Referendum</p>	<p>We will make the necessary arrangements for a neighbourhood plan referendum where the neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions.</p>
<p>Making the neighbourhood plan</p>	<p>Once there has been a successful referendum, the neighbourhood plan will become part of the statutory development plan for the District and will be used in determining planning applications.</p>