

Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning - November 2024



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Purpose of this Toolkit

This Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit has been published by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (for Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council) to support and guide parish councils, neighbourhood forums and groups through the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. It has been designed to explain the stages involved and sets out the help that is available from the two Local Planning Authorities.

It is our statutory duty as a Local Planning Authority to support groups in preparing a neighbourhood plan. Our adopted [Statement of Community Involvement](#) broadly sets out how we will carry out this duty to advise and assist parish councils and neighbourhood forums at each of the key stages. The amount of support provided will be subject to both our resource availability and the needs of the parish council or neighbourhood forum.

The Toolkit takes the form of a directory so that users can find relevant information in each chapter of the Toolkit as and when necessary. It follows the chronological order of the stages of plan-making and provides more information in the appendices, including a Glossary to assist with key words used throughout the document. The Toolkit also sets out 'Top Tips' throughout the document to support the smooth running of preparing a neighbourhood plan.

[Guidance on the preparation of neighbourhood plans](#) has also been published by Locality, a national membership network supporting local community organisations. Reference to the resources published by Locality is made throughout this Toolkit for neighbourhood plan groups to use in preparing their neighbourhood plan.

It is recognised that other topics may be helpful to parish councils and neighbourhood forums moving forwards and the Toolkit will be kept under review and updated to provide further guidance.

More information and updates about neighbourhood planning can be found on our dedicated [neighbourhood planning website](#).

Foreword

The Councils have prepared the Greater Cambridge Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit to provide continued support for neighbourhood planning groups within Cambridge City and parishes across South Cambridgeshire.

It is important that we empower our local communities in the plan-making process through community-led approaches. Neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity to deliver a community's vision for the area and can shape future development and growth.

We recognise the considerable time, effort and resource that goes into preparing a neighbourhood plan so we hope that the guidance provided within the Toolkit will support with the neighbourhood planning process.

The Toolkit is intended for groups and individuals involved in neighbourhood planning, anyone considering creating a neighbourhood plan, as well as those simply interested in learning more.

We look forward to continuing our support of neighbourhood planning for groups across Greater Cambridge.



Councillor Katie Thornburrow

Executive Councillor for Planning Policy, Cambridge City Council



Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins

Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, Cambridgeshire District Council

Chapter 1. Introduction

What a neighbourhood plan is

- 1.1 Neighbourhood plans were introduced in 2011 as part of the [Localism Act](#), and provide the opportunity for local communities to shape where they live and work through the preparation of locally specific planning policies.
- 1.2 Neighbourhood plans set out policies for the development and use of land in a local area or neighbourhood. A neighbourhood plan helps to set out a local community's vision through objectives and policies related to themes such as housing, employment, community uses and the design of new developments. It can identify suitable local sites for development, key areas for protection such as historic buildings and green spaces, and can provide local context to support existing planning policy documents such as a local plan.
- 1.3 A neighbourhood plan must meet certain specified '[basic conditions](#)' as set out in paragraph 8 (2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These ensure plans contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, have regard to national policy and guidance and are in general conformity with adopted strategic local planning policies.
- 1.4 A neighbourhood plan cannot propose less growth than the local plan or prevent development from ever taking place in an area. More guidance on [why it is important that neighbourhood plans are in general conformity with strategic local planning policies](#) is provided by Locality.
- 1.5 Once adopted or 'made', neighbourhood plans form part of the statutory development plan for the area and have the same status (also known as planning weight) as a local plan. This means that when planning applications are being considered, the policies in a neighbourhood plan hold the same planning status as the local plan, and are considered alongside any other material considerations.

Who can prepare a neighbourhood plan

- 1.6 The production of a neighbourhood plan is the responsibility of a parish council or a neighbourhood forum acting as the qualifying body, but also requires support from the local community in the preparation of the plan. Whilst the neighbourhood plan making process itself is community led, Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty to help local communities as set out in the [Neighbourhood Planning \(General Regulations\) 2012 regulations](#) and are

responsible for leading the Plan from submission through to the making of the Plan.

The role of the Local Planning Authority

- 1.7 Once a neighbourhood plan is prepared and has undergone an independent examination and a successful referendum it falls to the Local Planning Authority to 'adopt' it as a made plan. A neighbourhood plan within South Cambridgeshire would be the responsibility of South Cambridgeshire District Council, and a neighbourhood plan in Cambridge City would be the responsibility of Cambridge City Council.
- 1.8 An overview of how the Local Planning Authority will provide advice and support for neighbourhood planning is provided on pages 29 and 30 of the Councils' adopted [Statement of Community Involvement](#). [Appendix 2](#) provides a summary of the responsibilities of the qualifying body and Local Planning Authority at each stage of plan-making and [Appendix 3](#) sets out when it is best to get in touch with the Local Planning Authority as the plan is prepared.

The planning weight of the neighbourhood plan in determining planning applications

- 1.9 The planning weight to be given to a neighbourhood plan when determining planning applications depends upon the stage at which a particular plan has reached. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) sets out the weight that may be given to relevant policies in emerging plans.
- 1.10 In summary, in the early stages of plan making such as the pre-submission stage, no weight can be given to the plan as it may not be legally compliant and has not yet been tested against the '[basic conditions](#)'. An emerging neighbourhood plan will only start to have weight once the qualifying body formally submits their plan and supporting documents to the Local Planning Authority. One of the supporting documents is a consultation statement setting out objections that have been received during the pre-submission consultation and how the submission version of the plan has been amended to consider these objections. At this early stage of submission, the emerging plan will have limited weight.
- 1.11 After the Local Planning Authority carries out a consultation on the submission version of the neighbourhood plan, an independent examiner will carry out an examination of the plan to see if it meets the 'basic conditions' set out in national guidance. The outcome of the examiners report will state what modifications will need to be made for it to meet these tests, and therefore the Local Planning Authority will consider whether with the changes made the plan can proceed to

referendum. Until this decision is made, the post examination plan has little planning weight. [Section 70\(2\) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as amended\)](#) states that a Local Planning Authority must have regard to a post examination draft neighbourhood plan, as a material consideration to planning applications.

1.12 When the Local Planning Authority has decided that a plan can proceed to referendum, a formal decision statement must be published, and the plan then gains significant weight. Once the referendum has taken place, the neighbourhood plan will be recommended to be adopted or 'made' at a full council meeting. This is when the plan forms part of the statutory development plan for the area, and therefore has full weight when determining planning applications as the plan has the same status as the local plan.

1.13 Our [neighbourhood planning website](#) identifies which stage of plan making the parish councils and neighbourhood forums are in with their neighbourhood plans.

What a neighbourhood plan can do

1.14 It is important to understand before preparing a neighbourhood plan what it can and cannot do. Locality guidance provides examples of the opportunities and advantages of producing a neighbourhood plan, as well as issues to consider. More guidance on what a neighbourhood plan can do can be found on pages 1 to 3 of part B of the [Locality Roadmap](#).

Benefits, challenges and limitations of preparing a neighbourhood plan

1.15 Before deciding that a neighbourhood plan is the right tool for your area, there are benefits and disadvantages of a neighbourhood plan that should be considered. These are set out in the bullet points below.

Benefits

- **Community-led** - A neighbourhood plan is community-led and gives local people direct power to develop a shared vision for their community and the opportunity to shape future development.
- **More influence** - A neighbourhood plan becomes part of the statutory development plan once it is made (adopted) by the Local Planning Authority, therefore carrying equal weight to the local plan.
- **Site allocation** - A neighbourhood plan can enable the community to allocate sites to meet any local needs for different uses, such as housing, leisure, shops and community uses.

- **More relevance** - A neighbourhood plan focuses on the needs of the local community within the Neighbourhood Area. It could contain policies on what is expected from developments such as the design of buildings, the range and type of housing to meet the needs of the community, identifying preferred sites for housing and other development, and identifying priorities for new development such as improving existing pedestrian links, paths and open space.
- **Opening up a dialogue** - In preparing a neighbourhood plan, the local community will need to speak to a range of local stakeholders and organisations which helps form good relationships for the parish council, neighbourhood forum and community.
- **Identifying issues in the local area** - In carrying out consultations and engaging with the local community on the neighbourhood plan, non-planning issues may be identified that can be resolved by the parish council, neighbourhood forum or community.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** - Any area with an adopted neighbourhood plan will be entitled to an extra 10% of CIL from schemes within the neighbourhood area to spend on projects within their area. This only applies where there is a CIL in place in the district, city or area.
- **A voice for the community** – Establishing a community forum in Cambridge can create a locally recognised group that potential developers, infrastructure providers and others can engage with on matters in and around the neighbourhood area. This is particularly beneficial where a neighbourhood forum is not covered by one or more resident associations or also contains local businesses which are not typically represented by resident groups.

Challenges and limitations

- **Knowledge of planning regulations and procedures** - The community must follow a set process and meet a number of statutory tests which lengthen the process and require planning expertise.
- **Time and resources** - Depending on the number of people involved and their expertise, it can take a long time to prepare a neighbourhood plan. Locality [guidance on how to create a Neighbourhood Plan](#) sets out that plans can take 18 to 24 months to make, however, the average time taken for plans across Greater Cambridge is six years. This is due to a number of factors including

delays in the process due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and resourcing of neighbourhood plan groups.

- **Cost of preparing a plan** - The average cost of preparing a neighbourhood plan is £13,000, although government grants are currently available to contribute towards any costs. Locality provides [guidance on how neighbourhood plan groups can be supported by funding and grants](#).
- **Skills required by the neighbourhood plan group** - Strong interpersonal skills and a variety of specialist skills are required. Specialist skills required will depend on the nature of the area and the issues being covered, but may include reading maps or plans, data analysis, and/or knowledge of specific topic areas such as environmental assessments. The neighbourhood planning group can appoint a consultant to support the neighbourhood plan making process by providing further skills and experience to aid the completion of the plan.
- **Passing a referendum and completing various formal processes** - In the preparation of a neighbourhood plan it must successfully make it through several formal stages including public consultation, independent examination, and approval at a referendum. There are specific requirements to meet at each of these stages.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** - CIL benefits are limited where development is likely to be limited to small-scale proposals. In addition, “self-build” housing is exempt from CIL.

Alternatives to a neighbourhood plan

- 1.16 A neighbourhood plan is only the right tool if the issues that are of importance to the community have solutions that can be achieved through the planning process. Other tools are available that may be better suited to meeting your community aspirations if the issues of importance relate to things other than planning.
- 1.17 [Appendix 4](#) highlights a variety of alternatives to help in making a decision on what is right for your community. Please note that this appendix does not provide an exhaustive list of alternative options, but instead focusses on the key ones to consider.

Top Tip 1

Once you have read the neighbourhood plan Toolkit, we advise that you discuss whether it is the best option for your community with your parish council, or members of the community that may be interested in forming a neighbourhood forum.

We are then happy to provide guidance on the next stages or answer any questions to help the parish council or neighbourhood forum get started. Please get in contact with us to arrange an initial meeting with our officers. Our email address is: neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org.

Chapter 2. The stages in preparing a neighbourhood plan

- 2.1 This chapter of the Toolkit sets out a summary of the stages of preparing a neighbourhood plan. Detailed information regarding each stage is set out from [Chapter 4](#) onwards.

Designation of a Neighbourhood Area

- 2.2 Before a neighbourhood plan can be prepared, the area that it relates to needs to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area. An application to designate the Neighbourhood Area must be submitted by a qualifying body, which is either a parish council or neighbourhood forum, to the relevant Local Planning Authority of Cambridge City Council or South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- 2.3 A Neighbourhood Area can be the whole of a parish, part of a parish or a combination of two parish areas in South Cambridgeshire. For areas in Cambridge, a Neighbourhood Area can represent a ward boundary, part of a ward or a combination of two wards. The formal process for the consideration and designation of a Neighbourhood Area, and the timescale for achieving the designation, will vary depending on the nature of the area chosen.
- 2.4 The designation of a Neighbourhood Area can be done alongside the designation of a neighbourhood forum, where there is not a parish council(s) to be the qualifying body. More detailed information on the designation of a Neighbourhood Area is set out in [Chapter 4](#).

Designation of a neighbourhood forum

- 2.5 A neighbourhood plan must be prepared by a qualifying body. In South Cambridgeshire, where there are parishes, the qualifying body is the parish council. The exception to this is where the parish only has a parish meeting, rather than a full parish council. In areas with a parish meeting, a neighbourhood forum must be designated as the qualifying body.
- 2.6 In Cambridge, a neighbourhood forum must be designated as the qualifying body. A neighbourhood forum is defined in national legislation as being a group of at least 21 people from different sections within the community who live or work in the area or are elected members for the area, and who have a written constitution.
- 2.7 Where a neighbourhood plan is to be prepared by a neighbourhood forum, an application to designate the neighbourhood forum must be submitted by the proposed neighbourhood forum to the relevant Local Planning Authority.

- 2.8 A formal process will be undertaken to consider and designate the neighbourhood forum.
- 2.9 More detailed information on the designation of a neighbourhood forum is set out in [Chapter 4](#) of the Toolkit.

Preparing the neighbourhood plan

- 2.10 Once the Neighbourhood Area has been designated, the qualifying body and other volunteers from within the community can start to prepare the neighbourhood plan. At an early stage, the qualifying body will need to decide what issues and topics will be covered by the plan, and evidence will need to be gathered to support the policies and proposals that are to be included in the plan. This should involve reviewing existing planning documents, gathering information through public engagement with the local community, and analysing data for the area such as information from the [Office for National Statistics Census](#).
- 2.11 The neighbourhood plan should be drafted so that it clearly sets out a vision and objectives, each policy and its justification, and any community aspirations. The qualifying body may wish to seek constructive feedback through informal comments from the Local Planning Authority on early drafts of the neighbourhood plan.
- 2.12 Once a complete draft of the neighbourhood plan has been prepared it is also important to consider seeking a 'Health Check' of the neighbourhood plan from an independent consultant. A 'Health Check' can be secured via the [Technical Support](#) provided by Locality.

Top Tip 2

Once the qualifying body has prepared a draft of the vision, objectives, and key themes and has an outline for the policies in the neighbourhood plan, we are happy to advise neighbourhood plan groups on the next stages of preparing the plan. Please get in contact with your designated Officer, or via our email address: neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org.

- 2.13 More detailed information on preparing a neighbourhood plan is set out in [Chapter 5](#) of the Toolkit.

Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) Public Consultation

- 2.14 Once the neighbourhood plan and any evidence documents are fully drafted, this pre-submission version of the neighbourhood plan will need to be approved by the qualifying body, and then be subjected to formal public consultation. The

public consultation is undertaken by the qualifying body and must last at least six weeks, and consultees, specified in the neighbourhood planning regulations, must be notified of the consultation.

2.15 From the comments received during this consultation, the qualifying body will understand whether the pre-submission version of the neighbourhood plan is supported by the local community and other stakeholders, and if any policies are not supported or need to be changed.

2.16 More detailed information on the pre-submission (Regulation 14) public consultation is set out in [Chapter 5](#) of the Toolkit.

Submission (Regulation 15) and Submission (Regulation 16) Public Consultation

2.17 Once the qualifying body has considered all the comments received on its pre-submission version of the neighbourhood plan, and made any amendments to the neighbourhood plan, it can be formally submitted to the Local Planning Authority alongside the necessary supporting documents.

2.18 These supporting documents include a Consultation Statement and Basic Conditions Statement. The Consultation Statement identifies the public engagement carried out during the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. It sets out comments that have been received during the pre-submission public consultation and how they have been responded to, including whether any amendments have been made to the plan in light of these comments. The Basic Conditions Statement is required to demonstrate to the independent examiner how the neighbourhood plan has met the requirements of each of the [‘basic conditions’](#) and other legal tests as detailed in [Chapter 3](#) of the Toolkit.

2.19 Once a neighbourhood plan is formally submitted, the Local Planning Authority has to carry out a public consultation on the submission version of the neighbourhood plan. This consultation must last at least six weeks, and consultees specified in the neighbourhood planning regulations must be notified of the consultation. Any comments received during this public consultation are shared with the Examiner.

2.20 More detailed information on the submission of the neighbourhood plan (Regulation 15) and the submission (Regulation 16) public consultation is set out in [Chapter 6](#) of the Toolkit.

Examination

- 2.21 A neighbourhood plan is examined by an Independent Examiner, who is appointed by the Local Planning Authority having liaised with the qualifying body. Most neighbourhood plan examinations are carried out using a written representations process, with a few exceptions which include the need for a hearing.
- 2.22 The Examiner will consider whether the neighbourhood plan meets the 'basic conditions' that are set out in national regulations. The outcome is an Examiners Report which will set out what modifications (if any) the Independent Examiner recommends are made to the policies in the neighbourhood plan, so that it meets the ['basic conditions'](#).
- 2.23 The Local Planning Authority must decide whether to accept the recommendations and any modifications proposed by the Independent Examiner and therefore whether with these changes the neighbourhood plan can proceed to referendum. A formal decision statement must be published by the Local Planning Authority.
- 2.24 More detailed information on the examination is set out in [Chapter 7](#).

Referendum

- 2.25 The Local Authority is responsible for organising the referendum, which must be carried out in accordance with neighbourhood planning referendum regulations. At the referendum, the local community is given the opportunity to vote on whether the referendum version of the neighbourhood plan (which includes the Independent Examiner's modifications) should be used for determining planning applications within the Neighbourhood Area. Where more than half of those voting are in favour of the neighbourhood plan, the referendum is deemed successful.
- 2.26 More detailed information on the referendum is set out in [Chapter 8](#) of the Toolkit.

Making (adopting) the neighbourhood plan

- 2.27 Following a successful referendum, the neighbourhood plan is made (adopted) by the Local Planning Authority and the neighbourhood plan becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area, having the same status as the adopted local plan in determining planning applications.
- 2.28 More detailed information on the making (adopting) of the neighbourhood plan is set out in [Chapter 9](#).

Implementing, monitoring and reviewing a neighbourhood plan

2.29 Whilst there is not a statutory requirement for a qualifying body to review their neighbourhood plan, we recommend that the plan is monitored through subsequent decisions and actions to identify how effective it is in practice. It is important to review how policies are being applied to shape decisions on planning applications and also whether the main aims of the plan are being achieved. Detailed information on implementation and monitoring of a neighbourhood plan is set out in [Chapter 10](#).

2.30 Neighbourhood plans benefit from being reviewed and revised to reflect changing contexts and changing needs or to improve effectiveness of the policies. Reviewing a neighbourhood plan to assess any need for revision may be done as part of the monitoring process. The decision to review a neighbourhood plan is down to the neighbourhood plan group.

2.31 Detailed information on the reviewing of a neighbourhood plan is set out in [Chapter 11](#).

Summary table of the main stages of preparing a neighbourhood plan

Starting the Process	• Members of the community agree to prepare a neighbourhood plan • Designate Neighbourhood Area • Form a neighbourhood plan working group • Consider appointing a consultant • Secure Locality grant funding
Evidence Gathering	• Carrying out Residents' Survey • Gathering relevant information • Completing Technical Studies
Plan Preparation	• Decide what the Plan is going to address and start first Draft • Parish Council approve the Draft consultation • District Council asked to "screen" for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment
Consultation	• Plan must be consulted on for at least 6 weeks • Must seek to engage all residents and businesses

	• District will provide details of statutory bodies to consult • Plan must be available and accessible to view and comment on
Review and Submission	• Comments received are reviewed and the Plan amended as necessary • The Plan and required supporting documents are submitted to the Local Authority
Submission Consultation	• The Local Authority consults on the Plan for at least 6 weeks
Examination	• Independent Examiner appointed by the Local Authority in agreement with Qualifying Body • Examination of the Plan against the “Basic Conditions” takes place • Production of a Report that identifies the changes required to take the Plan forward to Referendum
Referendum	• Referendum called and run by the Local Authority • Held in same way as elections and under election rules • Simple majority will mean that the Plan can be “made” by the Local Authority

Table 1: Summary of the plan-making process in stages

Chapter 3. What to consider when preparing a neighbourhood plan

3.1 This chapter sets out different elements to consider when preparing a neighbourhood plan. The chapter identifies national policy and guidance that need to be addressed through the neighbourhood plan. It also sets out what makes a good plan, the key themes to consider and the gathering of evidence in the preparation of the plan.

National legislation, regulations, planning policy and guidance

Meeting the ‘basic conditions’

3.17 All neighbourhood plans must meet the [‘basic conditions’](#) set out in national legislation and regulations. Neighbourhood plans must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- Be compatible with EU obligations
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area
- Meet the prescribed condition relating to not breaching the Habitats and Species Regulations
- Meet a number of other basic conditions.

3.18 A parish council or neighbourhood forum will need to prepare a statement about how their neighbourhood plan meets the [‘basic conditions’](#) and submit this to the Local Planning Authority.

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment

3.19 The ‘basic conditions’ includes a requirement that states that the making of the neighbourhood plan “does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU Obligations”. These obligations remain in place despite the United Kingdom no longer being a member of the European Union, and this includes a requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This is an important tool for integrating environmental considerations into the preparation of plans.

- 3.20 A Strategic Environmental Assessment is required if a neighbourhood plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, particularly where it affects a sensitive area and the features for which it was designated. Proposals may also have the potential to give rise to significant effects if they affect other designations or features, such as Conservation Areas or Listed Buildings. The more environmentally sensitive the location, the greater possibility that effects might be significant and will require an assessment.
- 3.21 To identify whether a neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects and if there is a consequential need to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment Report, the neighbourhood plan must be 'screened'. The requirements of the 'screening' process are set out in [Regulation 9 of The SEA Regulations](#).
- 3.22 The Local Planning Authority will commission the screening of the draft policies to see whether a full Strategic Environmental Assessment Report is required. External consultants have been retained to undertake this work and we will contribute a combined up to £2,000 towards the screening costs for the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment.
- 3.23 Neighbourhood plan proposals should be screened at an early stage of the plan's preparation. Once all the policies for the neighbourhood plan have been drafted, and subject to informal feedback from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning officers, there will be a need for the screening process to be carried out to see whether a full Strategic Environmental Assessment Report is required.
- 3.24 Early screening will help any 'full' Strategic Environmental Assessment to be built into the project plan so that it can be carried out alongside plan development. This will allow the environmental considerations to shape the plan and will avoid delays later in the process.
- 3.25 A parish council or neighbourhood forum will need to submit the results of the screening process, and if required the full Strategic Environmental Assessment Report, to the Local Planning Authority alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.26 One of the most significant environmental effects that a neighbourhood plan could have is on certain sites for wildlife conservation that are identified and designated at the European level. These sites, known as 'Natura 2000' sites, include designations such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The Habitats Directive requires special consideration of these designated sites. These designations are also established through further EU Directives which neighbourhood plans still need to comply with to meet the ['basic conditions'](#).

3.27 As for the Strategic Environmental Assessment process, the Local Planning Authority will also commission (through retained consultants) the screening of the draft policies to give an opinion as to whether the contents of emerging neighbourhood plans require a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). This is an important part of the screening test that must be undertaken to see if a neighbourhood plan is likely to have a significant effect on any of the wildlife sites that have protection at a European level. Within South Cambridgeshire there is only one such site – Wimpole and Eversden Woods (a SAC). Despite this, due to the sensitivities of SPAs and SACs, impacts from development can be felt from wider afield.

3.28 Should the screening process identify that a Habitats Regulation Assessment will be required, then it is strongly advised that specialist ecological consultants are commissioned, due to the technical nature and requirements of such assessments.

Top Tip 3

It is advised that a draft of the neighbourhood plan with largely finalised policies is shared with the Local Planning Authority ahead of the pre-submission consultation to enable the screening process to be undertaken. This will allow for any further requirements, such as a full Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report to be built into the timetable for the preparation of the neighbourhood plan and be carried out alongside other elements of plan making, such as the pre-submission consultation.

3.29 As part of our Support Offer to parish councils and neighbourhood forums, once the external consultants have prepared the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report, the Local Planning Authority will also carry out the necessary consultation with the relevant bodies. Regulations require consultation with three identified relevant bodies.

These are:

- Historic England
- Natural England
- Environment Agency

3.20 Each consultation body will be able to advise on particular topics relevant to their specific area of expertise and responsibility, and the specific information that they hold. The consultees will either agree or disagree with the screening opinion of the report, for example, whether a ‘full’ Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report should be undertaken. This is an important step towards demonstrating that a neighbourhood plan has met the [‘basic conditions’](#).

- 3.21 If the SEA and HRA screening process ‘screens out’ the need to undertake a ‘full’ SEA Environmental Report and Habitats Regulations Assessment, then an up-to-date SEA and HRA Screening Report will satisfy the ‘basic condition’ regarding this EU obligation.
- 3.22 It is recommended that this screening process and the consultation with the relevant bodies take place prior to the parish council or neighbourhood forum undertaking consultation on the pre-submission neighbourhood plan (Regulation 14). The responses from the three identified bodies that were consulted during the screening process will need to be included in the final SEA Screening Report. It is recommended that consultation with the statutory bodies on the Screening Report is undertaken as early as possible, and for a period of three weeks.
- 3.23 Locality provides more guidance on the [SEA/HRA screening process](#) and information on when a full screening is required can be found in [Appendix 5](#).

Complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty

- 3.24 The [Equality Act 2010](#) places an [Equality Duty](#) on all public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between persons who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not.
- 3.25 “Protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 3.26 It is strongly encouraged to consider the equality implications of the neighbourhood plan at an early stage. Carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) helps to ensure that neighbourhood planning policies and objectives do not disadvantage or discriminate against potentially vulnerable groups and that, where possible, they promote equality. An EqIA also provides documentary evidence that the parish council or neighbourhood forum has complied with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Top Tip 4

Get in touch with our officers to request an Equality Impact Assessment form which can be used when preparing the supporting documents that will be submitted alongside the neighbourhood plan. Please get in contact with your designated officer, or via our email address: neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org.

Having regard for National policies

- 3.27 A neighbourhood plan must not constrain the delivery of important national policy objectives. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) is the main document setting out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- 3.28 The [NPPF](#) sets out that a neighbourhood plan should support the delivery of strategic policies set out in the local plan or spatial development strategy and should shape and direct development that is outside of those strategic policies. It states that within this broad context, the specific planning topics that a neighbourhood plan covers, is for the local community to determine but should contain policies for the development and use of land.
- 3.29 Guidance on neighbourhood planning set out in the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#) (NPPG) should also be considered in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan alongside the NPPF. The parish council or neighbourhood forum will need to demonstrate regard for national policy and consider whether a particular policy is or is not relevant. This will need to be set out in a basic conditions statement.

Strategic Policies in the adopted Local Plans and Area Action Plans

- 3.30 A neighbourhood plan can include policies that differ from non-strategic local plan policies or introduce new policies, but any such policies must still be in general conformity with the identified strategic policies. The Strategic Policies in the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and adopted Area Action Plans for Northstowe, Cambridge East, Cambridge Southern Fringe and North West Cambridge are identified in [Appendix E of the Local Plan](#).
- 3.2 The Strategic Policies in the adopted Cambridge Local Plan 2018 were agreed at [Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2019](#) (see item 19/8/PnT).

Other guidance or support available when preparing a neighbourhood plan

Grants and funding

- 3.3 The average cost of preparing a neighbourhood plan is £13,000, although government grants are currently available to contribute towards any costs. In most cases parish councils and neighbourhood forums are able to access government grants to assist with the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. An organisation called Locality administer the grant process on behalf of the

government and their website provides [full guidance on what costs are eligible and how to apply](#).

3.4 Most costs incurred by the parish council or neighbourhood forum will be incurred up to the point of submitting the plan to the Local Planning Authority. Once the plan has been submitted, the costs of further consultation, the examination and the referendum will be met by the Local Planning Authority. Further costs may be incurred by the parish council or neighbourhood forum if there is a hearing on the neighbourhood plan where the parish council or neighbourhood forum may wish for the planning consultant to appear with them. There may also be costs associated with updating the neighbourhood plan and maps following receipt of the Examiners Report.

3.5 Currently, basic grants are available for up to £10,000 for parish councils and neighbourhood forums. For the year 2023 to 2024, the guidance states: “If you are writing a neighbourhood development plan or neighbourhood development order and are based in England you can apply to the programme for a Basic Grant of up to £10,000.” The basic grant will cover the costs of fees such as:

- Seeking advice, drafting of policies and project management from external consultants
- The preparation of technical reports, and preparation of evidence bases
- Training sessions
- Facilitator costs
- Project costs, such as room hire, website development, publicity costs and printing costs

3.6 Where a Neighbourhood Area has yet to be designated, the maximum basic grant allowed is £1,000. But once a Neighbourhood Area has been designated, the remaining basic grant can be applied for.

3.7 Where a Neighbourhood Plan meets certain eligibility criteria, such as by allocating sites or including design codes (as of January 2024), a further £8,000 of additional grant funding is available.

3.8 More guidance on [what the basic and additional grant funding are, and the eligibility for the additional grant funding](#) is provided by Locality, as well as a note that sets out more about [how a neighbourhood forum or parish council can spend the grant funding](#).

Government Technical Support

3.9 In addition to financial support, the government also provides free “technical support” to assist with detailed elements of preparing a neighbourhood plan. The

Locality guidance for the year 2023 to 24 states: “Technical Support includes professional support and advice on technical or process issues. It is available for eligible groups facing more complex issues in developing their neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order. Technical Support is awarded as a technical work package and is separate to grant. It has no relation to how much grant a group can have. It is delivered free of charge to groups who qualify by meeting the eligibility criteria.”

3.10 If [Technical Support](#) is awarded to the qualifying body, this takes the form of professional consultants tasked with completing specific pieces of work. The cost of this is met directly by the Government and does not come out of the available grant money. As of January 2024, the technical support packages available include:

- Setting up a neighbourhood planning group (in non-parished areas only)
- Carrying out a housing needs assessment
- Site options and assessments
- Site viability
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Masterplanning
- Design including Design Codes
- Habitats Regulations Assessment
- Plan Health Check Review; and
- Facilitation for designated neighbourhood forums and areas.

3.11 More guidance on [the eligibility of seeking technical support and what the different support packages involve](#) can be found on the Locality website.

Making a grant application

3.12 [Applications for the basic grant, additional grant and technical support](#) are made online through the Locality website. They should preferably be made by the Clerk of the parish council or someone with authority to make the application.

3.13 Applications for technical support are made in the same way and at the same time as financial grants. It is possible, however, to apply for technical support packages without seeking a financial grant.

3.14 Given that the grant rules can change from time-to-time, this Toolkit does not provide details of the grant application process and what needs to be submitted, but the Local Planning Authority can provide guidance to neighbourhood forums and parish councils that are carrying out the process.

3.15 The application form allows for answers to be saved and the completion of the form to be continued as long as it is completed within 30 days. The Locality website also provides a [blank copy of the application form](#). The website states that “this is not your actual application form and you cannot submit this. This is to help you prepare answers to your questions in advance of submitting your actual application form.”

Consultants

3.16 Producing a neighbourhood plan requires effective project management at all stages of the plan making process. During stages of evidence gathering, policy writing and community engagement, the parish council or neighbourhood forum may look to commission a planning consultant with expertise to provide insight into effectively managing these stages of the plan. A consultant will act as a guide to support the parish council or neighbourhood forum during the plan making process with the gathering of evidence, writing of policies and drafting of supporting documents. Guidance on [the process of commissioning a consultant](#) can be viewed on the Locality website.

3.17 The neighbourhood plan grant can pay for consultants’ fees, but it should be noted that there is a maximum day rate. For the year 2023 to 2024 it is £550 a day.

Top Tip 5

Of the eight neighbourhood plans that have been ‘made’ in Greater Cambridge, seven have commissioned a consultant to help in the preparation of the plan. Neighbourhood plan groups are encouraged to speak with other parish councils or neighbourhood forums in Greater Cambridge who have prepared a neighbourhood plan to share advice on their experience working with consultants and any recommendations. Groups may also want to consider requesting support from Cambridgeshire ACRE in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. Our GCSP website [lists the neighbourhood plans that have been made](#).

Mapping guidance

Using maps in the neighbourhood plan

3.18 The use of maps at all stages of the neighbourhood planning process will help bring the neighbourhood plan or consultation event to life. People can better relate to maps or pictures, and express their feelings about an area with the aid of a map easier than with just the written word. A good neighbourhood plan will have maps that identify sites or features that are set out in the planning policy.

3.19 It is also mandatory within a neighbourhood plan to include maps if any of the policies relate to specific sites or areas. Below are the stages in which maps are used in the neighbourhood planning process:

- **Designating the Neighbourhood Area or Neighbourhood Forum:** A map showing the proposed Neighbourhood Area is required as part of the application submitted to the Local Planning Authority requesting the designation of a Neighbourhood Area or Neighbourhood Forum.
- **Consultation:** Maps can be used throughout the drafting phase of preparing a neighbourhood plan, as they can aid the consultation process when neighbourhood plan groups start to explore the possible options for policies and proposals within the plan.
- **The neighbourhood plan:** When a neighbourhood plan is submitted it will need several things to support it, one of which is a map identifying the area the plan relates to, this will be the Designated Neighbourhood Area Map. A neighbourhood plan also needs to include a policies map. Once adopted, the details on the policies map will be used in determining planning applications and other council functions, such as land searches. A policies map shows policies with a spatial element such as:
 - **Site allocations:** areas of land that have been allocated for specific uses
 - **Designations:** areas to receive protection from development including local, national and international environmental designations.

Our support offer for producing maps

3.20 The Local Planning Authority can support in producing a package of maps, free of charge. This includes the preparation of the Neighbourhood Area designation map that is submitted by the parish council or neighbourhood forum alongside the designation form as detailed in [Chapter 4](#). The free package of maps prepared for a neighbourhood plan is typically around 10 maps but depends on the complexity of the maps requested. Additional or more complex maps can be provided at an hourly rate and can be explored in the initial meeting with the neighbourhood planning group, where a programme of work can also be agreed.

3.21 Before we can provide support, the parish council or neighbourhood forum must obtain the necessary Ordnance Survey license requirements by signing up to the Ordnance Survey's Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA). This will allow for the Local Planning Authority to share mapping data with the neighbourhood plan group more easily. [Sign-up for free](#), or find out more

information on the [PSMA website](#). If the parish council or neighbourhood forum uses an external supplier to create the maps using OS data, in addition to the PSMA, the supplier will need to sign and send in a third party contractors agreement.

3.22 All data and maps supplied by the Local Planning Authority is solely for the use of creating the neighbourhood plan.

3.23 Alternatively, online mapping sites can also provide the facility to produce maps of the neighbourhood area. There may be a subscription required or costs associated with using such sites. It should be noted that some online mapping sites rely on members of the public to keep them updated, and therefore the Local Planning Authority cannot guarantee that the data on these sites is up to date or valid for neighbourhood planning purposes.

Licensing and copyright

3.24 For any data or GIS layers, the neighbourhood planning group must ensure they seek and attain the permission and/or rights for the use of all data for mapping purposes. Please contact the author of the information to confirm this.

3.25 A copyright line must be included whenever mapping is used, written as: “© Crown copyright and database right 2024. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100022500”. The year will change.

3.26 Other copyright statements may be required; these will be advised as and when appropriate.

Useful data sources for maps

3.27 There are many useful datasets that can be used for gathering evidence and downloading data or maps for use in a neighbourhood plan. These data sources are set out in [Appendix 7](#).

Chapter 4. Designating a Neighbourhood Area or a Neighbourhood Forum

4.1 A parish council or neighbourhood forum that wishes to prepare a neighbourhood plan, will need to apply to the relevant Local Planning Authority for an area to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area.

Plan area

4.2 For a parish, this would normally coincide with the parish boundary. It is possible to designate a Neighbourhood Area that covers a part of the parish or covers two or more parishes. If the Neighbourhood Area is to cover the whole parish, the designation process is straightforward and relatively quick. However, where a Neighbourhood Area is not the same as a parish boundary, it will be necessary for the Local Planning Authority to consult on the proposed area before it can be designated.

4.3 There are advantages to choosing the same area as the parish boundary. These are:

- a) If a parish council applies to have its parish as a Neighbourhood Area this does not need to be consulted upon
- b) It is more likely to be supported by the local community
- c) The choice of area will be easy to justify in your Neighbourhood Area application form.

4.4 There are also benefits to working together as a group of parish councils:

- a) Common issues can be tackled together
- b) There will be more people with a wider range of experience that can help with creating the neighbourhood plan
- c) Costs can be shared
- d) It can build upon one or a number of individual parishes' Community-Led or Parish Plans.

4.5 Where no parish council exists, it will be necessary to establish a neighbourhood forum and for the forum to apply to designate the Area. In an urban area, such as in Cambridge, it can be difficult to define a distinct locality that can be recognised as being different to other surrounding areas. As a starting point the following criteria should be considered:

- a) Could the Area cover a ward? There is a ward map available to view on the [Cambridge City Council website](#).

- b) If a ward is too large, consider using some of the areas defined by the Office for National Statistics and which are used to collect and disseminate Census and other data.

4.5 In all instances a Neighbourhood Area cannot include an area that is already designated by another Neighbourhood Area.

4.6 The application to designate a Neighbourhood Area should be made to the relevant Local Planning Authority by using [the application form](#) on the GCSP website. The form will ask you to provide a name of the Neighbourhood Area and a statement as to why you have considered the boundary proposed. A map of the proposed Neighbourhood Area also needs to be submitted with the completed application.

Who can prepare a neighbourhood plan

Parish or town councils

4.7 To produce a neighbourhood plan, the area it covers must be formally designated by the local authority. For parishes, neighbourhood plans normally cover the whole parish but in areas without a parish or parish council, a neighbourhood forum has to be established, and the area has to be defined.

4.8 Where a parish council is in operation, that body is responsible for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan in the parish. For the purposes of neighbourhood planning, they are known as the “qualifying body”. The decision to proceed with a neighbourhood plan should be taken at a parish council meeting and it is recommended that the decision is noted in the meeting minutes.

Neighbourhood forums

4.9 When an area that does not have a town or parish council, a neighbourhood forum must be established in order to produce a neighbourhood plan. The application to form a neighbourhood forum must meet the [2012 neighbourhood plan regulations](#) so that the Local Planning Authority can consult on the neighbourhood area ahead of designation the qualifying body to produce a neighbourhood plan for its area. A neighbourhood forum can be designated for five years and then it must go through the process again to re-designate the forum once this time has lapsed.

4.10 The basic requirements of forming a neighbourhood forum are:

- The forum is established to promote or improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of an area that consists of or includes the Neighbourhood Area concerned

- A purpose that reflects the character of the area in general terms
- Membership to the forum is open to people living and working in the area, and elected members for the area (reasonable steps must be taken to secure at least one of each)
- A minimum of 21 members from the above groups
- Membership to the forum should be drawn from different places in the area and different sections of the community.

4.11 Where a neighbourhood forum is established, that body is responsible for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan in the parish. For the purposes of neighbourhood planning, they are known as the “qualifying body”. The decision to proceed with a neighbourhood plan should be taken at a neighbourhood forum meeting and it is recommended that the decision is noted in the meeting minutes.

4.12 More [guidance on the steps to take to establish a neighbourhood forum](#) can be found on the Locality website.

Neighbourhood planning group

4.13 Once a decision has been made to produce a neighbourhood plan it is recommended to set up a working group to oversee the project. Locality guidance recommends that [a working group is established comprising volunteers from the community and members of the parish council or neighbourhood forum](#). This helps to reduce the burden on parish councillors or members of the neighbourhood forum and ensures that the plan reflects the vision of the local community who will ultimately decide whether to vote for the plan at referendum.

4.14 The parish council or neighbourhood forum may wish to consider holding informal publicity events aimed at informing residents about neighbourhood plans, the aims of the plan and seek volunteers to join the neighbourhood planning group.

4.15 There is no prescription for the size of a neighbourhood planning group, but experience of working with communities shows that between 6 and 10 members is most efficient and effective. It is recommended that:

- Either a parish councillor or representative of the forum acts as the link between the neighbourhood planning group, and the parish council or a neighbourhood forum
- Regular updates are provided to the parish council or neighbourhood forum for noting and decision making at meetings
- The relationship between any group and the formal function of the parish council or neighbourhood forum should be transparent to the wider public. It should be clear whether the working group is a formal sub-committee of the parish council or neighbourhood forum, and the minutes of meetings should be made available to the public.

Chapter 5. Preparing the neighbourhood plan

Community engagement

5.1 The parish council or neighbourhood forum wishing to prepare a neighbourhood plan will need to ensure that the wider community is involved from the outset. Early engagement is essential in developing support, understanding and consensus. Delayed engagement can cause conflict, additional costs and delays.

5.2 Engagement activity can be carried out in different ways including:

- **Informing** – giving people knowledge so that they are informed, for example, through leaflets and newsletters, posters, information stalls, news releases, web-based information and social media
- **Consulting** – asking people what they think so that decision-makers can make even better decisions, for example, through questionnaires and surveys (online or printed), focus groups, events and feedback on written plans
- **Involving** – acting together with the local community, for example, through devolved decision-making such as sub-groups of a neighbourhood plan group with community members involved, and round table workshops
- **Empowering** – supporting the local community to take action on its own, for example, through devolved responsibility for evidence gathering, sourcing local knowledge, and policy writing.

5.3 The possibility of a ‘no’ vote at referendum is greatly reduced if people have ownership of your plan and an opportunity to shape it, rather than merely having the opportunity to accept or reject it in its entirety.

5.4 It is a statutory requirement that publicity and consultation take place. When the neighbourhood plan is submitted, it will be accompanied by a consultation statement in which the parish council or neighbourhood forum will need to demonstrate that the legal requirements have been met.

Neighbourhood plan website

5.5 It is important that the preparation of the neighbourhood plan is transparent and that anyone with an interest in the area has the opportunity to find out about the neighbourhood plan and its progress.

5.6 The parish council or neighbourhood forum should have a public-facing website dedicated to the neighbourhood plan. This can be the repository for all information about the preparation of the plan, including details of the working group, consultation engagement events and evidence reports.

5.7 The Local Planning Authority at each stage in the neighbourhood plan making process will also update the Council's dedicated [neighbourhood planning pages](#) to reflect the stage of the neighbourhood plan and to publish information throughout the process.

What a good neighbourhood plan looks like

5.8 The neighbourhood plan should be set out in an easy-to-read structure. Planning policies must be written in a manner that makes their intention clear to the end users of the neighbourhood plan. There should be a clear distinction between the general body of text and the planning policies. The policies should be supported by a proportionate amount of contextual text, such as the rationale or justification, and can provide separate evidence documents or appendices that are necessary to support the content of the plan's policies.

5.9 [National Government Planning Practice Guidance](#) states that "a policy in a neighbourhood plan should be clear and unambiguous. It should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence. It should be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared." [Appendix 6](#) provides a checklist to consider when drafting policies.

5.10 The neighbourhood plan policies can be written in different styles, appropriate to the intent of the policy. The main policy types are:

- **General policies:** These are broad policies that apply universally to development proposals across the whole of the neighbourhood plan area and can be based on specific themes like parking provision or the design of new buildings.
- **Criteria based policies:** These identify the requirements that development proposals should meet. Criteria are usually set out in bullet points and all criteria would usually have to be met to make a proposal acceptable. It is important that the policy is written to be clear whether all of the criteria apply or whether they should be considered as alternatives. The use of "and" or "or" linking the criteria can provide the certainty for users as to whether all criteria apply or if there are alternative criteria.

- **Site specific policies:** These apply to a specific area of land or site. They might allocate development or they could seek to protect a site such as an important local green space. Where development is proposed, the policy will usually specify the principles that need to be followed in developing the site such as the type and amount of development, and any site specific considerations. Site allocation policies can also be criteria based where specific requirements are required to be met.

Top Tip 6

With all site specific proposals, it is important to speak to the landowner and/or development promoter. When the neighbourhood plan is examined, the Examiner will need to ascertain whether policies and site allocations are deliverable, and the landowner's/site promoter's views will be critical in satisfying this question.

- 5.11 More guidance on [drafting the plan, the content and structure](#) can be found on pages 17 to 28 of part C of the Locality Roadmap. Locality also provide a guide on [how to keep a neighbourhood plan simple and as focused as possible](#).

Developing a vision and objectives for the neighbourhood plan

How to develop the vision

- 5.12 A vision is an ideal mid to long-term goal describing what the neighbourhood plan group want the neighbourhood to look like at the end of the plan period. In setting the vision for the plan, consideration should be given to the likely social, environmental and physical trends affecting the area over the period of the plan. The vision should be aspirational as well as supported in evidence and data.
- 5.13 A community wishing to develop a neighbourhood plan will first need a clear idea of what it is that they want to achieve, and how they are going to achieve their goals. Before proceeding to the stages of policy writing and evidence gathering, a community consultation is needed to ensure that a vision statement for the neighbourhood area is developed.
- 5.14 A community may already have a vision in an existing Community-Led Plan or parish plan and this can be used as a starting point for the vision for the neighbourhood plan. Alternatively, a vision can be created by using a survey to gather thoughts from the community on what they would like to see from the vision for the Neighbourhood Area, or through a series of workshops with the community. Locality provide more guidance on [how to write and conduct a](#)

[survey](#), and [how to conduct meaningful community participation and engagement](#).

- 5.15 Community engagement from the outset of the plan-making process is of paramount importance as it supports the formation of the plan's vision, objectives and policies. Policies and objectives will emerge from the vision and should link back to it. The policies are the 'how' to achieve the 'what' of the vision.

How to create objectives

- 5.16 Objectives set out what the community want to achieve in order to make the vision a reality. Usually there is more than one objective to address each element of the vision; these are the broad statements of intent that link back to the elements of the vision.
- 5.17 Objectives can be worded to highlight the area's strengths (what the community want to continue to see more of) and weaknesses (what the community want the neighbourhood plan to address). Every policy that is produced should relate back to at least one objective, which also relates back to the vision. This link between vision, objectives and policies is often described as a 'golden thread' running through a plan.

Key themes for the neighbourhood plan

- 5.18 Through developing the vision and objectives, and in early community engagement, the common themes will be identified that relate to the Neighbourhood Area. From experience working with parish councils and neighbourhood forums in Greater Cambridge, there are several key themes that policies tend to centre around. These are:
- Securing an appropriate housing mix
 - Site allocations for new development
 - Delivering high quality design, and protecting local character, conservation areas and local heritage assets
 - Protecting the surrounding landscape, key views and Important Countryside Frontages
 - Identifying Local Green Spaces and Protected Village Amenity Areas
 - Protecting biodiversity, habitats and the natural environment
 - Retaining and / or delivering community facilities, recreation and leisure facilities
 - Supporting employment uses and economic growth
 - Protecting and / or securing active travel networks, transport infrastructure, and public rights of way

- Securing developer contributions to community infrastructure and the public realm.

5.19 Some locally important non-planning issues (which cannot be dealt with through the policies in the neighbourhood plan) may be identified through the plan making process. Issues could include traffic management such as parking, speeding and road safety, or aspirations for the provision of specific services and facilities. Although these issues cannot be dealt with through the policies within the neighbourhood plan, it is possible for the plan to include information or actions within a 'community aspirations' section, which will not form part of the statutory development plan but does allow these issues to be recognised.

5.20 More guidance [on key themes arising in neighbourhood plans](#) can be found on pages 20 to 23 of part C of the Locality Roadmap.

Evidence gathering

5.21 As set out throughout previous sections of the Toolkit, the neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted local plan, it should also have regard to national planning policy, planning practice guidance, and written ministerial statements. Therefore, it is important that the policies in the neighbourhood plan have supporting evidence that underpin them. The evidence should be proportionate, robust, and should be used to justify the intention and rationale for each policy in the neighbourhood plan. The evidence should be as up to date as possible.

5.22 There are two ways of building the evidence base for a neighbourhood plan. Firstly, review existing evidence and information already prepared by others to see if it provides what is needed, or secondly, identify and develop new evidence. The evidence can be categorised into the six following types:

- **Socio-economic data:** socio-economic data can be used to gain an understanding of the social and economic composition of the local area and therefore the local issues that are affecting the area that may be able to be addressed through a neighbourhood plan.
- **Evidence to support the local plan:** Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have a substantial amount of evidence, which was developed to inform the preparation of the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans, and this evidence can be used to support a neighbourhood plan.

- **Other projects, plans and strategies:** there are also other projects, plans and strategies that include evidence that can be used to support a neighbourhood plan. These may include corporate council strategies and projects being led by transport bodies or infrastructure providers.
- **Statutory lists and environmental designations:** there are statutory lists and environmental designations that highlight what is special in an area and what should be protected or enhanced when planning for development. These designations should be taken into account when preparing a neighbourhood plan.
- **Local plan allocations and designations:** the adopted local plans include allocations and designations that should be taken into account of when preparing a neighbourhood plan.
- **Existing plans for the area:** There may be existing plans or strategies for the local area, such as a Parish Plan or Village Design Statement. The evidence, community views and priorities included in these documents could provide a starting point for a neighbourhood plan.

5.23 More information on gathering evidence, set out under each of these headings can be found in [Appendix 7](#).

Indicative housing requirements

5.24 The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) sets out that within the strategic policies of the local plan, a housing requirement should be included for any designated Neighbourhood Areas, and that this requirement should reflect the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development in the area and any relevant allocations.

5.25 It states that where a housing requirement has not been provided for a Neighbourhood Area, then the Local Planning Authority should provide an indicative figure if requested by the qualifying body. It sets out that the indicative figure should take into account the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood area, and the most recent development strategy for the area.

5.26 As the adopted Local Plans were drafted and examined ahead of the introduction of this requirement in the NPPF, there are no housing requirements for Neighbourhood Areas included in the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plans. The Local Planning Authority will therefore provide an indicative housing requirement for any neighbourhood area if it is requested by the qualifying body.

Top Tip 7

Get in touch with our officers to request an indicative housing requirement to help inform the policies and evidence base. Please get in contact with your designated officer, or via our email address:

neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org.

Getting ready for Pre-submission (Regulation 14) public consultation

5.27 It is advised that before the parish council or neighbourhood forum proceeds with the pre-submission (Regulation-14) consultation on the draft neighbourhood plan, a discussion should take place with the Local Planning Authority to address any outstanding concerns regarding the plan. The Local Planning Authority will be able to support the parish council or neighbourhood forum in addressing these outstanding concerns allowing them to progress to the next stage of the plan-making process.

5.28 Once the parish council or neighbourhood forum are ready for pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation, the Local Planning Authority will check whether the parish council or neighbourhood forum have completed the following:

- a) Has shared a final draft of the neighbourhood plan for review
- b) Has let the Local Planning Authority know of the proposed consultation dates ahead of the consultation commencing
- c) Has requested a list of Statutory Bodies to consult on during the consultation
- d) Preparation has been made to publicise the consultation before and during the consultation.

Top Tip 8

Officers can provide a list of contacts for statutory bodies to notify of the pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation. The list come from a consultation database that has a range of contacts. Other than the statutory bodies, the neighbourhood plan group can ultimately decide which other groups or individuals to notify from the suggested lists. To receive the contact list for pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation, please get in contact with your designated officer or via our email address: neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org.

5.22 The parish council or neighbourhood forum may also request at this stage for the Local Planning Authority to commission the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment screening ahead of or alongside the pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation.

Chapter 6. Pre-submission (Regulation 14) public consultation

6.1 Once a neighbourhood plan group have finalised a draft of the neighbourhood plan that has been agreed at a parish council or neighbourhood forum meeting, they will carry out a consultation on the neighbourhood plan. This stage is commonly referred to as the pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation.

6.2 The parish council or neighbourhood forum should refer to [Government Regulations on pre-submission consultation and publicity for neighbourhood plans](#). The parish council or neighbourhood forum, as the qualifying body, must carry out the consultation for a minimum of six weeks and follow Regulation 14 to:

- Publicise the neighbourhood plan to anyone living, working or carrying out business in the neighbourhood area
- Provide details of where and when the neighbourhood plan may be inspected and how representations can be made on the plan
- Provide the date by which those representations must be received, being not less than 6 weeks from the date on which the draft proposal is first publicised
- Consult statutory bodies and key stakeholders
- Submit a copy of the neighbourhood plan and associated documents to the Local Planning Authority.

Top Tip 9

It is good practice for the parish council or neighbourhood forum to extend the consultation period to eight weeks if the consultation runs over public holidays including Christmas, Easter holiday or summer holidays.

6.3 It is not necessary to print a copy of the plan for every household or business, but the parish council or neighbourhood forum should make a copy available in a public place for inspection. The Local Planning Authority will support groups in printing five copies of the neighbourhood plan. If the Neighbourhood Area does not have a publicly accessible place, it is recommended that members of the parish council or neighbourhood forum hold a copy of the neighbourhood plan and make it available to view by appointment.

6.4 Consultation publicity should be sent to every household, business, known organisations and landowners, and should identify where the plan will be available to view, both in person and online, when the consultation ends and how to submit comments. A mechanism for collecting comments (representations) should be put in place. This could be via an online form, with the option to submit comments through email or post.

6.5 When the neighbourhood plan is being consulted on, it is good practice to include a privacy notice that states that the name and contact details of those making comments is collected. This is so that, should they wish, they can be notified when the plan is submitted to GCSP and when further consultation is carried out on the neighbourhood plan.

6.6 It is advised that the parish council or neighbourhood forum provide information regarding the consultation on the neighbourhood plan website, through noticeboards and local newsletters to maximise outreach and demonstrate that appropriate engagement has taken place. The Local Planning Authority will also update relevant webpages to inform of the start of the consultation.

6.7 Any member of the public can comment on the neighbourhood plan during the consultation, it is not limited to people living, working or carrying out business in the neighbourhood area. The Local Planning Authority will also submit comments to set out recommendations for the neighbourhood plan in a formal response. This will help the parish council or neighbourhood forum address any concerns ahead of progressing to the next stage of Submission (Regulation 16) consultation.

What to do after pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation

6.8 Following the conclusion of the pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14), the parish council or neighbourhood forum should collate all of the representations and review the comments received. The neighbourhood plan group should identify what changes are required to the plan as a result of the consultation.

6.9 The neighbourhood plan group can request a meeting with the Local Planning Authority to discuss the comments made, and to request support in amending maps as part of an agreed mapping package.

Dealing with major changes to the neighbourhood plan

6.10 If, as a result of the pre-submission consultation, the parish council or neighbourhood forum wants to make what are deemed to be major changes to the plan, it will need to undergo a further round of pre-submission consultation before the neighbourhood plan can be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

6.11 There is no prescription as to what constitutes a major change, but it is likely to include anything that designates sites for development that was not in the previous draft plan or the introduction of a new policy that designates areas for protection from development. If these major changes have been made, this may also result in the need to for the screening process to be carried out again to see whether a full

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report is required.

Top Tip 10

It is recommended that the parish council or neighbourhood forum discuss whether any changes might be considered to be major and may need re-consulting on. Get in contact with the designated officer or via our email address:

neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org.

Preparing a Consultation Statement

6.12 The neighbourhood plan group should prepare a consultation statement to accompany the neighbourhood plan when it is formally submitted to the Local Planning Authority at Regulation 16 stage. The consultation statement should identify the quality and effectiveness of the consultation that has informed the plan proposals.

6.13 The consultation statement should set out briefly what pre-consultation community engagement has taken place while focusing on the Regulation 14 consultation. It should identify what was done to satisfy the Regulation 14 regulations, identify what comments have been received and it is recommended that it identifies what changes were made to the draft neighbourhood plan as a result of the comments.

Top Tip 11

Officers can provide advice on best practice examples of how to prepare and present the comments received at pre-submission consultation in the consultation statement.

Get in contact with the designated officer or via our email address:

neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org.

Basic Conditions Statement

6.14 The parish council or neighbourhood forum must submit a Basic Conditions Statement alongside the neighbourhood plan when it is formally submitted to the Local Planning Authority at Regulation 16 stage. Typically, the document would identify how the planning policies in the neighbourhood plan meet the requirements of the legislation and regulations set out in [Chapter 3](#) of the Toolkit.

Preparing to formally submit the neighbourhood plan to the Local Planning Authority

6.15 The submission of a neighbourhood plan to the Local Planning Authority is a key milestone in the preparation of a plan. It marks the conclusion of the neighbourhood plan being led by the qualifying body and the commencement of the final stages in preparing the neighbourhood plan that are led by the Local Planning Authority.

6.16 A neighbourhood plan can only be submitted when the following steps are complete:

1. The neighbourhood plan has completed the pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation stage
2. A Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report has been completed and the plan has been screened out of requiring a full assessment or a full environment assessment has been completed as a result of the screening opinion
3. A Basic Conditions Statement has been prepared
4. A Consultation Statement has been prepared and sets out previous stages of consultation, the comments received and how they have been addressed.

Top Tip 12

It is recommended that the parish council or neighbourhood forum share the final draft of the neighbourhood plan for final checks ahead of formally submitting the plan to the Local Planning Authority. It is also helpful for the neighbourhood plan group to provide an estimated date that the parish council or neighbourhood forum will be formally submitting the neighbourhood plan.

Chapter 7. Submission (Regulation 15) and submission (Regulation 16) public consultation of the Neighbourhood Plan

7.1 Once the neighbourhood plan and supporting documents have been finalised following the pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation, the neighbourhood plan, supporting documents and evidence documents should be formally submitted to Local Planning Authority.

7.2 The neighbourhood plan, supporting documents and evidence documents should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority by an email that clearly states that this is the formal submission of the neighbourhood plan and that the parish council or neighbourhood forum have formally agreed to the submission at a meeting.

7.3 The submission documents that should be submitted are:

1. The submission version of the neighbourhood plan (including a map with the proposed area to which the proposed plan relates)
2. The Basic Conditions Statement
3. The Consultation Statement
4. The Screening Report and, if necessary, the Environmental Appraisal
5. All supporting evidence documents prepared.

7.4 The Local Planning Authority will review the neighbourhood plan, supporting documents and evidence documents to ensure that the plan complies with the relevant statutory requirements against a checklist called a 'legal compliance check'.

7.5 Once the Local Planning Authority confirms that the plan meets the requirements, proposed dates for the public consultation will be shared for agreement with the parish council or neighbourhood forum.

7.6 [Planning Practice Guidance](#) states that where the draft neighbourhood plan meets the requirements in the legislation, the Local Planning Authority must publicise the neighbourhood plan for a minimum of 6 weeks, invite representations, notify any consultation body referred to in the consultation statement and send the draft neighbourhood plan to independent examination.

7.7 The Local Planning Authority will carry out a public consultation for a minimum six weeks at the earliest possible opportunity, subject to potential conflict with upcoming elections in the area.

7.8 Once the consultation has formally started it is advised that the parish council or neighbourhood forum provide information on their website, through posters on noticeboards in the area and publicise in local newsletters about the plan being out for consultation. As part of the consultation the parish council or neighbourhood forum will be required to make the neighbourhood plan and its supporting documents available at a location in the neighbourhood area. The Local Planning Authority will provide printed materials for this stage.

7.9 Once the consultation has concluded, the Local Planning Authority will collate the representations submitted during the consultation via the consultation system, through email and post. Once processed, the representations will be sent to the Examiner appointed to Examine the neighbourhood plan. The representations will also be published by the Local Planning Authority to view online by members of the public.

Top Tip 13

The submission stage of the plan-making process provides the parish council or neighbourhood forum opportunity to respond to the consultation. This allows the qualifying body to share any thoughts regarding the preparation of the neighbourhood plan, or comment on the policies within the plan.

Chapter 8. Examination of the Neighbourhood Plan

8.1 Once the neighbourhood plan is submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the consultation is underway, the Local Planning Authority will commission an Independent Examiner. The appointment of the Examiner follows a set procurement process and requires agreement from the neighbourhood forum or parish council to appoint the Examiner.

8.2 An Independent Examiner will test the neighbourhood plan against the 'basic conditions' to see whether the draft neighbourhood plan complies with relevant acts and convention rights. An Independent Examiner will also check that engagement has been carried out at all stages of plan development. This is important, as it gives the examiner confidence that the plan has been informed by the local community and that they have been involved throughout its preparation.

8.3 The Independent Examiner will recommend any necessary modifications to the neighbourhood plan so that it meets the basic conditions. These recommendations are usually given to help improve the clarity of the planning policies and the relationship between the neighbourhood plan policies and national and local planning policies.

8.4 Localities provide more guidance on [what to expect from an examination](#) and how to prepare for a smooth and successful examination period.

Proceeding to referendum

8.5 After the Examiner's Report has been received, Officers will work with the parish council or neighbourhood forum to prepare a referendum version of the neighbourhood plan that includes all of the Examiner's recommended modifications. Any further minor modifications can be made at this stage, but changes will be limited in scope, such as amending factual errors. The Local Planning Authority will then make a formal decision that the neighbourhood plan, with its modifications, meets the ['basic conditions'](#) and can proceed to referendum.

Chapter 9. Referendum

- 9.1 The referendum is where engagement with the community is truly tested, as members of the community decide whether the proposed neighbourhood plan becomes a part of the statutory development plan for the area and therefore can be used for determining planning applications in the area.
- 9.2 The referendum is run in the same way as council elections, and people on the electoral register living in the referendum area will be eligible to vote. Those eligible to vote will receive a polling card ahead of the referendum with details of when and where the referendum will be held. Postal votes and voting by proxy are also available.

Publicity

- 9.3 There are specific rules that apply in relation to publicity during the period leading up to any neighbourhood plan referendum. This period runs from the publication date of the information statement (a minimum of 28 days before the date of the referendum) to the date of the referendum.
- 9.4 During the referendum period, there are some restrictions in relation to an individual's role as an elected or co-opted councillor. There are also restrictions on how much may be spent by campaigners by way of expenses incurred in the conduct of any campaign, either in support of or in opposition to the referendum question.
- 9.5 The meaning of publicity is wide and includes any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public as a whole or to a section of the public. Publicity can take the form of speeches, interviews, items on a council or neighbourhood forum's websites or notice boards, press releases, newsletters, leaflets, and newspaper articles issued by or on behalf of a council. Publicity can also include publicity issued by organisations that receives funds from the parish council or neighbourhood forum. For example, if the parish council or neighbourhood forum funds an activity group that organises an event which overtly attacks or supports a referendum campaign, this could amount to a breach of the rules.
- 9.6 The parish council or neighbourhood forum cannot fund other organisations to produce publicity it is unable to issue itself. If the council holds public meetings or supports or assists in meetings organised by others, then this is also caught by the provisions.

Chapter 10. Making (adopting) the Neighbourhood Plan

10.1 If the referendum is successful the neighbourhood plan is made (adopted) by the Local Planning Authority and becomes part of the statutory development plan for the district, having the same status as the adopted Local Plans in determining planning applications.

10.2 If the majority of those who vote in a referendum are in favour of the neighbourhood plan, then the neighbourhood plan must be made (adopted) by the Local Planning Authority within eight weeks of the referendum. The [eight week time limit](#) does not apply where a legal challenge has been brought in relation to the decision to hold a referendum or around the conduct of the referendum.

10.3 The Local Planning Authority will support the parish council or neighbourhood forum in creating a made (adopted) version of the neighbourhood plan that will include the referendum results and amend the title to be the made (adopted) version.

10.4 The neighbourhood plan comes into force as part of the statutory development plan once it has been approved at referendum and once it has been formally made (adopted) by the Local Planning Authority at a full Council meeting.

10.5 Once the neighbourhood plan is adopted, the Local Planning Authority will publicise the making (adoption) of the plan and update relevant websites with the made (adopted) version of the plan, supporting documents and evidence documents.

Chapter 11. Implementation and monitoring of a neighbourhood plan

Implementing the neighbourhood plan once it's made (adopted)

11.1 Once made (adopted), the neighbourhood plan becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material consideration indicate otherwise. The Local Planning Authority has a key responsibility in implementing the neighbourhood plan, by applying the policies when considering planning applications.

11.2 The role of the qualifying body does not need to end when the plan is made as they can make representations (comments) on planning applications, highlighting how neighbourhood plan policies apply to planning proposals. These representations are considered by Planning Officers and support in ensuring that schemes are modified in order to conform to the required standard set out in the neighbourhood plan. Locality provide guidance on [making effective representations on planning applications](#).

Monitoring the effectiveness of a neighbourhood plan

11.3 It is recommended that the parish council or neighbourhood forum monitor the effectiveness of their neighbourhood plan. This could be through annual reports assessing how the policies of the neighbourhood plan are being implemented in decision making for planning. Monitoring reports could include:

- Reviewing how the policies are being applied to shape decisions on planning applications
- Identifying whether projects and/or actions identified are being achieved
- Recording level of monies raised through the S106 obligations and how such monies are being used
- Assessing whether plan aims are being achieved
- Noting changes to national and local policy
- Identifying changes in the local area

11.4 Locality provide more guidance on [how to effectively implement, monitor and review a made \(adopted\) neighbourhood plan](#).

Chapter 12. Reviewing your neighbourhood plan

Should the neighbourhood plan be reviewed?

12.1 There is no statutory requirement for a neighbourhood plan to be reviewed. However, we recommend ensuring that the neighbourhood plan is monitored continually to ensure that policies remain up to date and are delivering intended outcomes.

12.2 It is important to consider a variety of external variables when reviewing the plan. Firstly, consideration needs to be made on whether policies in the neighbourhood plan are up to date with any changes to external policies including National Planning Policy, new Ministerial statements, or emerging Local Plans. If the neighbourhood plan is not in conformity with these policies, the newer strategic policy will take precedence.

12.3 Neighbourhood plan groups should consider whether factors have changed locally that would result in the need to review policies in the plan. Groups should consider new evidence that can be introduced in the plan such as emerging community ambitions or new data that can justify a change in policy.

12.4 Reviewing the neighbourhood plan also gives neighbourhood groups the opportunity to identify whether the policies are being interpreted as expected in planning applications to deliver intended outcomes.

12.5 Reviews should not be limited to matters addressed in the original plan. This is because:

- hopefully the plan will have successfully addressed some matters
- many of the social, economic and environmental factors are likely to have changed
- wider policy and regulations will have changed too.

12.6 The decision to review a neighbourhood plan is down to the neighbourhood planning group. If a previous neighbourhood forum designation has expired (5 years from designation) then a new designation of the forum will be necessary, if the plan is to be reviewed. The neighbourhood area designation will remain the same unless changes to the boundary are proposed.

12.7 When revising the neighbourhood plan, there are certain options in terms of the statutory process, depending on the extent of the revisions to the neighbourhood plan. These are:

- Minor (non-material) updates that would not materially affect policies. These changes can be made by the Local Planning Authority, with consent from the qualifying body.
- Material modifications that will affect the policies in the neighbourhood plan will have to undertake the same statutory processes as when the plan was first adopted. This includes carrying out a pre-submission consultation, providing a statement of the significance of the changes alongside the modified neighbourhood plan to the Local Planning Authority. The Local Planning Authority will then carry out a public consultation and arrange an independent examination of the Plan. The examiner will decide whether or not the proposed modifications will change the nature of the Plan and decide whether a referendum is required.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Area Action Plan (AAP)

Provides a statutory planning framework for an area of change.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Biodiversity net gain is a way of creating and improving natural habitats. BNG makes sure development has a measurably positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity, compared to what was there before development.

Cambridge City Council (CCC)

The Local Authority for Cambridge, formed in 1951. The Council is responsible for providing a planning service across the City of Cambridge.

Community Land Trusts (CLT)

Are democratic, non-profit organisations that own and develop land for the benefit of the community.

Community-Led Plans (CLP)

A plan that is produced by communities, that sets out an action plan for their local area identifying how local problems and issues can be tackled.

Community Right to Build (CRtB)

A form of Neighbourhood Development Order that can be used to grant planning permission for small scale development for community benefit on a specific site or sites in a neighbourhood area.

Development Plan (DP)

Defined in Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made, and published spatial development strategies, together with any regional development strategy policies that remain in force. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the Local Planning Authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP)

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, formed in 2018, is a partnership between Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils, which provides the planning service to both councils.

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

All plans, which may have a significant effect on designated European Sites are required to undertake an HRA. These assess the effect on the flora and fauna that are listed as the reason for designation.

Important Countryside Frontages (ICFs)

Distinctive boundaries which contribute to the identity of a rural village and the preservation of its relationship with the countryside.

Local Green Space (LGS)

A formal designation that is made to provide protection for green spaces valued by the local community.

Local Plan (LP)

Sets out policies to guide the future of developments in both South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Council. It also sets out where future development will take place, and identifies land for new housing, community facilities shops and employment. A local plan is a key document used to determine planning applications for new development in the district.

Local Planning Authority (LPA)

They are responsible for planning functions of an area. Usually through the planning service of a borough, district or unitary council. This is either Cambridge City Council or South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Neighbourhood Area (NA)

The local area in which a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order can be introduced.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs)

They are locally recognised buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

Neighbourhood Area (NA)

A Neighbourhood Development Order can grant planning permission for specific types of development in a neighbourhood area.

Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO)

A Neighbourhood Development Order can grant planning permission for specific types of development in a neighbourhood area.

Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

A plan prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a designated Neighbourhood Area. In law, this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Sets out the Government's planning policies in England and provides a framework in which local plans can be produced.

Parish Council (PC)

A parish council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish. They are responsible for ensuring the well-being of the local community and representing local views in relation to planning matters.

Protected Village Amenity Areas (PVAAs)

Areas that are designated within a village framework to safeguard underdeveloped land for its contribution to the character of a village.

Rural Exception Sites (RES)

Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC)

The Local Authority for South Cambridgeshire, formed in 1974. The Council is responsible for providing a planning service across South Cambridgeshire.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Provides additional details to help implementation of policies set out in development plan documents.

Appendix 2: Responsibilities in preparing a neighbourhood plan

The headings below illustrate the key stages in preparing a neighbourhood plan, and who has responsibility for each stage. The tables specify (where relevant) the differentiation between qualifying bodies within Cambridge City Council, and qualifying bodies in South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Getting started

Qualifying Body responsibility

- Initial gathering of information to help decide if a neighbourhood plan is the right tool for the community
- Decision to prepare a neighbourhood plan

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Provide advice through Neighbourhood Plan Toolkit, through email or telephone enquiries
- Available to meet with parish councils and neighbourhood forums to discuss preparation of the plan

Designating a neighbourhood forum (only applicable where there is not a parish council)

Qualifying Body responsibility

- Establish a neighbourhood forum and then apply to the Local Planning Authority to designate the neighbourhood forum.

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Public consultation on the proposed neighbourhood forum, ahead of designation.
- Designate the Neighbourhood Forum.

Designating a neighbourhood area

Qualifying Body responsibility

- Establish the boundary for the Neighbourhood Area and apply to the Local Planning Authority to designate the Neighbourhood Area.

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Designate the Neighbourhood Area.
- This will include a public consultation on the proposed Neighbourhood Area ahead of designation if the area is within Cambridge or if the area is anything other than the whole of an individual parish.

Preparing the plan and evidence base

Qualifying Body responsibility

- Engaging with the local community, residents, stakeholders and businesses in the preparation of the plan.
- Preparing the draft plan, evidence and supporting documents.

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Advise on regulatory and legal requirements, sources of information and data for the evidence base.
- Provide constructive feedback through informal comments on emerging neighbourhood plan policies.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Qualifying Body responsibility

- Share the draft neighbourhood plan with the Local Planning Authority to determine whether it is ready to screen.

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Arrange for the SEA/HRA screening to be undertaken by consultants. Provide advice on technical support packages if a neighbourhood plan requires a full SEA/HRA.

Pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14)

Qualifying Body responsibility

- It is advised that a draft of the neighbourhood plan is shared with the Local Planning Authority prior to consultation.
- Share the consultation dates with the Local Planning Authority ahead of the consultation commencing.
- It is also encouraged that you publicise the consultation ahead of commencement of the consultation such as through the parish council website, noticeboards with posters and parish newsletters.
- Notify the Local Planning Authority and other consultees at the start of the consultation.
- Consult on the neighbourhood plan for a minimum of six weeks. The details of how people can make representations should be clear, and easily accessible - for example, providing a range of ways to respond such as via web forms, email and paper. The consultation must be publicised on the parish council or neighbourhood forum website.
- Paper copies of the neighbourhood plan available to view by members of the public during the consultation period.

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Provide constructive feedback through informal comments on the plan if not seen in earlier preparation stages.
- Provide list of statutory bodies for consultation. The list comes from our consultation database that has a range of contacts. The Neighbourhood Plan group can ultimately decide which groups/contacts to notify from our recommended list.
- Update the relevant Greater Cambridge and Cambridge City or South Cambridgeshire neighbourhood plan pages to reflect the start of the consultation.

Preparing the plan for Submission

Qualifying Body responsibility

- Review the comments received at Regulation 14 stage and amend the neighbourhood plan as necessary.

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Provide advice on the comments received through a meeting with the neighbourhood plan group.

Submission of the neighbourhood plan (Regulation 15) and public consultation (Regulation 16)

Qualifying Body responsibility

- Submit submission versions of the documents to the Local Planning Authority to meet statutory requirements. This needs to be done electronically and include:
 - A map or statement identifying the area to which the proposed neighbourhood plan is related (within the neighbourhood plan itself)
 - Submission version of the neighbourhood plan
 - Basic Conditions statement
 - Consultation statement
 - SEA/HRA screening report
 - Other non-statutory documents such as the evidence base for the neighbourhood plan.
- To ensure the Local Planning Authority consult the appropriate consultees, please provide a list or spreadsheet of the consultees that were consulted on the pre-submission plan.
- It is advised that the neighbourhood plan group provide information on their website, noticeboards in the area and publicise in local newsletters and have a paper copy of the documents available to view during the consultation period.
- Once the consultation is live, upload the Regulation 16 neighbourhood plan documents (including the supporting documents and appendices) to the parish council or neighbourhood forum website.

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Check the submission documents against legal compliance regulations.
- Inform the neighbourhood plan group of the proposed consultation dates and update the group with progress.
- Upload the documents to the relevant Greater Cambridge and Cambridge City or South Cambridgeshire neighbourhood plan pages and have a copy of the documents available to view at our offices.
- Publicise the neighbourhood plan for a minimum of six weeks. Notify consultation bodies referred to in the consultation statement and invite representations.
- Provide the neighbourhood plan group with posters to use in publicising the Regulation 16 consultation.

Examination (Regulation 17)

Qualifying Body responsibility

- Agree the Local Planning Authorities recommendation for the appointment of an Independent Examiner.
- Correspond with the Local Planning Authority and Independent Examiner throughout the examination stage.
- Consider the Examiner's Report and support the Local Planning Authority in making amendments to the neighbourhood plan.

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Consult the parish council or neighbourhood forum when procuring the appointment on an Independent Examiner.
- The Local Planning Authority cover the costs of the independent examination.
- Correspond with the parish council or neighbourhood forum, and Independent Examiner throughout the examination stage.
- Consider the Examiner's Report and make amendments to the neighbourhood plan with the support of the parish council or neighbourhood forum.
- Determine whether the plan proceeds to referendum with or without modifications.
- Implement the voting area for the referendum as decided by the Examiner. This will be the neighbourhood area or should include other areas too (where they would be affected by the plan).

Referendum (Regulation 18)

Qualifying Body responsibility

- It is encouraged that the parish council or neighbourhood forum publicise factual material about the neighbourhood plan referendum (not promoting a yes vote).

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Inform the parish council or neighbourhood forum of the decision to proceed to referendum and the subsequent timescales.
- Arrange for referendum to take place. This is undertaken by the Elections Team at either Cambridge City Council or South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Making (adoption) of the neighbourhood plan

Qualifying Body responsibility

- Agree final made (adoption) version of the neighbourhood plan with the Local Planning Authority. This should include the referendum results and state the 'made' version not 'referendum version' in the plan.
- Await confirmation that the neighbourhood plan has been made (adopted) by the Council.

Local Planning Authority responsibility

- Agree final made (adoption) version of the neighbourhood plan with the parish council or neighbourhood forum.
- Recommend to Full Council that the neighbourhood plan is made (adopted) within eight weeks of the referendum date.

Appendix 3: Checklist for Neighbourhood Plan groups and getting in contact with the LPA

Stage and whether it is required, recommended or optional to get in contact with the LPA

- Representatives of the parish council, proposed neighbourhood forum or neighbourhood planning group meet with Greater Cambridge Shared Planning for initial discussion: Recommended.
- Parish council or neighbourhood groups decision to proceed with neighbourhood plan: Required.
- Applying to designate Neighbourhood Area / Neighbourhood Forum: Required.
- Decision by as to whether to engage consultants: Optional.
- Applying for neighbourhood plan grant: Recommended.
- Setting out programme of work for preparing the neighbourhood plan: Optional.
- Early community engagement including household survey and community events: Recommended.
- Information gathering, for example, requesting indicative housing numbers: Recommended.
- Requesting early informal feedback on the draft neighbourhood plan: Recommended.
- Requesting a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment screening: Required.
- Requesting key contacts and stakeholders for pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation: Recommended.
- Requesting a meeting to discuss pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation responses and next steps towards formal submission: Recommended.

Appendix 4: Alternatives to a Neighbourhood Plan

As well as neighbourhood plans, there are other statutory and community planning tools that are available which may be better suited to meet community aspirations. This appendix sets out summaries of the alternative options:

- Neighbourhood Development Orders
- Community-Led Plans
- Community Right to Build
- Community Land Trusts
- Rural Exception Sites
- Supplementary Planning Documents

Neighbourhood Development Orders

What they are

The Localism Act 2011 introduced the opportunity for local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs). These may be prepared by parish councils or designated neighbourhood forums and form part of the statutory plan for the area which can be used in deciding local planning applications.

Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) grant planning permission for specific developments within a designated Neighbourhood Area and remove the requirement to submit a planning application for this type of development. Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) allow local communities to determine the forms of development that permission would be granted for and could include specified changes to the use of a building, the reinstatement of historical features, or can be used for allocated sites such as housing.

Who prepares it

Both Cambridge City Council or South Cambridgeshire District Council can assist communities, neighbourhood forums and parish or town councils with the preparation and delivery of Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) which grant planning permission for buildings, specific sites or for alterations across areas. There have not yet been any Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) in Greater Cambridge.

[Guidance on the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Orders \(including community right to build orders\)](#) has also been published by Locality.

Community-Led Plans

What they are

This is a comprehensive plan for an area, identifying a wide range of local issues and the community's priorities and aspirations. The parish will produce an 'Action Plan', owned and delivered by the community, with support as appropriate from Local Authorities and other agencies. A Community-Led Plan is also known as a Parish Plan.

South Cambridgeshire District Council provide guidance and support on Community-Led Plans through their [online toolkit](#).

Who prepares it

These plans are prepared by the parish council and the local community. There are currently two Community-Led Plans in South Cambridgeshire, these are [Heydon](#) and [Litlington](#).

Benefits

- Enables communities to produce a vision for their area, addressing all issues of interest to the community. Provides detailed knowledge and insight not otherwise available to the Local Planning Authority.
- It is an established process as over 4,000 plans have been produced nationwide. A parish plan and a neighbourhood plan can be produced simultaneously.
- They are a material consideration in decisions on planning applications; however, they only have limited weight.
- Non-development focused community goals can be achieved more quickly than development focused goals that must go through the planning process.
- Unlike a neighbourhood plan, a referendum is not required in the making of the Community-Led Plan.
- The average cost to prepare is £3,000. Grants are available including up to £2,000 from South Cambridgeshire District Council's [Community Chest](#).

Challenges and limitations

- Community-Led Plans have limited weight in determination of planning applications in comparison to neighbourhood plans, which are part of the statutory development plan.
- They can be time intensive and can take over a year to produce from getting started and consulting the community through to identifying priorities and actions.
- They cannot propose specific land uses or planning policies.
- Non-development focused actions can also be identified and addressed through community aspirations the neighbourhood planning process.
- If dependent on external pots of money, voluntary contributions and the Parish Precept there is a risk that resource and finance won't be available to deliver actions.

Community Right to Build (CRtB)

What it is

A form of Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) that can be used to bring forward small scale development for community benefits on a specific site or sites in a Neighbourhood Area without the need for planning permission. This could be for new small-scale developments such as new homes, shops or other community facilities.

Who prepares it

It can be undertaken by a parish council, neighbourhood forum, or a community organisation as part of the work on their neighbourhood plan.

Benefits

- Enables communities to deliver small-scale, site-specific development without the need for a separate planning application. This is particularly beneficial in rural areas with a need for small-scale development and/or economic regeneration.
- Follows a streamlined version of the neighbourhood planning stages but with lighter consultation requirements and examination process.

- The Local Planning Authority play less of a role in approving schemes as the Community Right to Build gives the community the right to bypass normal planning consent.
- Benefits, such as profits generated, are kept and managed by community organisation on behalf of the whole community, regardless of the ownership of the development.
- Development can be located in the Green Belt as long as the National Planning Policy Framework criteria are met.
- Groups can ensure affordable housing remains affordable in perpetuity.
- If built by a developer, the Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus apply.

Challenges and limitations

- Before the Right to Build Order comes into force, the community must follow a set process and meet a number of statutory tests, which lengthen the process, add costs and resources, and require planning expertise.
- The process is similar to that required for neighbourhood plans but is focused on a single site. Proposals will also be subject to an independent examination and referendum that come with associated costs and risks.
- They are only for the use of community organisations in which local people (based on electoral register) have majority voting rights and directorships and include people from at least 10 different addresses within the area. This prevents developers gaining easy planning permission against community wishes.
- Proposals requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment or having a significant impact in terms of Habitat Regulations are not eligible.
- Proposals must not be at odds with conservation and listed building legislation, and must conform with the strategic policies for the area as set out in the local plan or neighbourhood plan if there is one.

Community Land Trusts (CLTs)

What they are

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are local organisations set up and run by communities to develop and manage homes and other assets important to that community, such as community enterprises, food growing or workspaces.

Who prepares it

A CLT will be run by the local community which could include the parish council.

Benefits

- A helpful organisational structure enables communities to deliver their own services, housing, pubs or community enterprises.
- Community Land Trusts can create housing opportunities by members of the local community working with landowners to acquire land that would not otherwise be developed for housing.
- They can build homes that people can afford and are a way for communities to deliver their own services.
- They can be used in combination with another of the community planning tools set out in this document. For example, a Community Right to Build or rural exception site for affordable housing.

Challenges and limitations

- Can be complex to set up and resource intensive over a long period of time. Some parish councils may not be sufficiently resourced.
- Community Land Trusts may have to compete with other non-profit housing organisations for scarce public and private resources. Lack of resources can make it difficult for CLTs to achieve critical mass and build sufficient inventory to serve the community.

Rural exception sites

What they are

Rural exception sites are housing schemes, which are located outside of the village framework, providing affordable housing for local people who either live, work or have close family members in the village. Homes are generally owned and managed by a Registered Provider (Housing Association).

Who prepares it

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Housing Team working with a Registered Provider take the lead on a rural exception site project; it is carried out in liaison with the parish council. For more information on rural exception sites and guidance on how to propose a site, visit the Council's [website](#).

Benefits

- Provides affordable housing in areas where it is needed, targeted to local people.
- Less resource intensive for communities than a neighbourhood plan or Community Right to Build.
- Process is led by SCDC and the Registered Provider in liaison with the parish council.

Disadvantages

- It only delivers housing and cannot be used for other community development proposals.

Supplementary Planning Documents

What they are

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) build and expand upon existing policies in the adopted Local Plans.

SPDs could also, for example, take the form of a Village Design Statement which contains a description and analysis of the distinctive aspects of a village, and outlines design guidance for new development. [Adopted Village Design Statements](#) can be accessed on our website.

An SPD has a specific process that must be undertaken for its preparation, including formal consultation, in accordance with regulations

Who prepares it

The Local Planning Authority is usually responsible for preparing an SPD; however, other organisations in the local community or planning consultants can prepare an SPD with guidance from the Local Planning Authority.

All of the [Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents](#) can be found on our website.

Benefits

- SPDs form a material consideration which the Council must take into account when determining planning applications
- The community could have a leading role in preparing it, in agreement with the Local Planning Authority
- Provides a very clear focus on design and local distinctiveness
- Clear parameters: how, not whether or where, development should take place
- Can draw developers in the process
- A Village Design Statement provides a local insight and information, which is not otherwise available to local planners

Disadvantages

- Do not carry as much weight as a neighbourhood plan in planning decisions
- A Village Design Statement might attract only 'design-aware' residents and not the whole community, and they sometimes can place too much emphasis on conservation

Community Rights to Bid (Assets of Community Value)

What they are

Enables communities to nominate public or private community assets of value to their community. Once the community has nominated them, they will be identified by the Local Planning Authority on a list of 'Assets of Community Value'. Once on the

list, if an asset comes up for sale or lease, a community group has a period of time in which they can register their interest as a potential bidder, delaying a sale on the open market.

Who prepares it

Nominated by the local community and identified and placed on the list of [Assets of Community Value](#) by South Cambridgeshire District Council or the register of [Assets of Community Value under the Right to Bid scheme](#) by Cambridge City Council.

Benefits

- It gives communities a right to identify 'up front' a building or other land they believe to be of importance to their community social well-being.
- Gives some protection to valued community facilities by providing an extended window of opportunity for the community to get organised if such an asset is put up for sale.

Disadvantages

- Just because an asset is added to the list, it does not mean the community will definitely be able to buy it for community use; they will need to be able to meet the asking price.
- Not all nominated assets will be added to the formal list: to be added to the list, the Asset must meet certain tests relating to community value.

Appendix 5: When a full SEA/HRA screening is required

If the neighbourhood plan is “screened in”

Should the SEA Screening Report identify that either a full SEA or HRA will be required, then it is strongly advised that the assessment is commissioned as soon as possible. The Locality Technical Support programme provides for consultants to prepare these assessments free of charge to the neighbourhood plan body. An application will need to be made for the support via the Locality Site.

The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) includes a number of sites for development and policies that seek to prevent significant effects from occurring at district level. Such significant effects have been identified within the Local Plan’s ‘Sustainability Appraisal’, which is a process that also derives from The SEA Regulations and satisfies the EU Obligation that is the SEA Directive.

If the neighbourhood plan’s content does not broadly differ from the content of SCDC’s Local Plan (i.e. in policy approaches, housing numbers or allocated sites for development purposes), then this should be identified within the SEA Screening Report and a ‘full’ SEA Environmental Report will not be required to accompany the neighbourhood plan.

Should a neighbourhood plan change throughout the plan-making process (for instance if any sites are allocated in addition to those of previous plan drafts) and a ‘full’ SEA has been ‘screened out’ through the Screening Report earlier in the process, then the SEA Screening Report should be similarly revised to reflect the Plan as submitted. It is not unusual for SEA Screening Reports to be revised several times to reflect a Plan’s changing content.

Appendix 6: Checklist for drafting neighbourhood plan policies

In determining what policies to include in the neighbourhood plan, the following considerations should be made:

- a) Is there a clear intention behind your policy?
- b) Is it distinctive for your area and not duplicating local plan or national policy?
- c) Is it supported by robust evidence?
- d) Is it clear and unambiguous?
- e) Is it positively worded?
- f) Is there a clear “golden thread” between the neighbourhood plan’s vision, objectives and the policy?
- g) Does the policy relate to the development and use of land for which planning permission would be required?
- h) Is it in line with the National Planning Policy Framework?
- i) Is it in conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted local plan?
- j) Does it contribute towards sustainable development?
- k) Is it compatible with EU obligations e.g. does it need a SEA assessment?

Appendix 7: Sources of Evidence and Information

The evidence and information is split into socio-economic data and statutory lists and environmental designations that can be considered in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan and associated maps.

Socio economic data

Socio-economic data can be used to gain an understanding of the social and economic composition of your local area and therefore the local issues that are affecting your area that may be able to be addressed through your neighbourhood plan.

Census 2021

Census statistics provide a detailed snapshot of the population and its characteristics. This data is available for your local authority, ward and parish area via the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) website](#). ONS offers free access to data for your local area and allows you to analyse and compare selected areas using maps and charts, and view or download whole datasets.

ONS includes data on:

- **housing**, including accommodation type, household size and composition, housing tenure, number of rooms, and homelessness
- **population**, including age, ethnicity, and gender
- **health and care**, including life expectancy, numbers with long term health problems or disability
- **local economy**, including economic activity, job seekers allowance claimants, and number of local businesses
- **education, skills and training**, including examination results, ethnicity and gender of pupils, and pupil absence
- **income and lifestyles**, including car ownership, and distance travelled to work.

Cambridgeshire Insight

[Cambridgeshire Insight](#) is a shared research and knowledge base for the Cambridgeshire area and includes publications and data produced by Cambridgeshire County Council's Research Group. It includes the [Cambridgeshire Atlas | District Report](#) which is an interactive atlas displaying key socio-economic and demographic data at a district level.

The Research Group also produces local population estimates and forecasts, and dwelling estimates and forecasts, for parishes, wards and settlements, which are published on [Cambridgeshire Insight](#). From these estimates and forecasts you can see how your village has grown over time, and what further growth is anticipated.

NOMIS

[NOMIS](#) provides free access to the most detailed and up to date labour market statistics from official sources. It includes information for your ward and local authority area on:

- population
- employment (including number of jobs)
- unemployment (including job seekers allowance counts)
- qualifications
- earnings
- benefit claimants
- businesses.

Statistical Digest of Rural England (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)

The [Statistical Digest of Rural Statistics](#) is a collection of statistics on a range of social and economic subject areas. The statistics are split by rural and urban areas, allowing for comparisons between the different rural and urban area classifications. The Digest includes high level statistics which present an overall picture for England.

Although the Digest only includes high level statistics, it may be helpful in allowing you to compare the national situation with your local situation to show how similar or different your area is.

Rural Indicators

[Rural Living – Statistical Indicators](#) and [Rural Economy – Statistical Indicators](#) are a set of publications containing statistics, data and research relating to:

- living in rural areas, including information on demography, provision of services, broadband speeds, and availability of public transport
- the contribution of rural areas to our economy.

Housing Statistical Information Leaflet

The [Housing Statistical Information Leaflet](#) (2022) provides a summary of key housing statistics and information relating to affordable housing including:

- housing register information
- low cost home ownership information
- summary of council housing stock, including sheltered housing properties
- summary of housing association stock
- information on new affordable housing developments.

Greater Cambridge Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)

The [AMR](#) includes data to assess the performance of the individual planning policies in the development plan but also to provide a general portrait of the social, economic and environmental conditions in the district and the wider affects of the development plan on the district.

South Cambridgeshire Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

Sustainability Appraisal is an integral part of the plan making process for a Local Plan and its overall aim is to help ensure that the Local Plan makes an effective contribution to the pursuit of 'sustainable development'. The [Scoping Report](#) is the first stage in the Sustainability Appraisal process and identifies issues of particular importance to the district that should be considered.

Statutory Lists and Environmental Designations

There are statutory lists and environmental designations that highlight what is special in your area and what should be protected or enhanced when planning for development. You should take account of these designations when preparing your neighbourhood plan.

Heritage, Landscape and Townscape

- [Listed Buildings](#) – this dataset owned by SCDC is available to view on our interactive map or can be requested from SCDC. It identifies buildings that are protected by being 'listed' as they are judged to be of special architectural or historic interest.
- [Scheduled Monuments](#) – this dataset owned by Historic England is available to download. It identifies land designated as scheduled monuments, which are historic buildings or sites that are protected for their archaeological importance.

- [**Conservation Areas**](#) – this dataset owned by SCDC is available to view on our interactive map or can be requested from SCDC. It identifies land and buildings that are within Conservation Areas.
- [**Registered Parks and Gardens**](#) – this dataset owned by Historic England is available to download. It identifies land designated as Registered Parks and Gardens, which are parks and gardens of special historic interest.
- [**Buildings at Risk**](#) – this dataset owned by Historic England is available to search or view. It identifies buildings, places of worship, monuments, parks and gardens, conservation areas, battlefields and wreck sites that are listed and have been assessed as being at risk.

Environment

- [**Sites of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\)**](#) – this dataset owned by Natural England is available to download. It identifies land designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which are areas protected due to their characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features. [**Magic Map**](#) also provides a feature to check whether a site is a SSSI.
- [**RAMSAR sites**](#) – this dataset owned by Natural England is available to download. It identifies land designated as RAMSAR sites, which are wetland areas of international importance protected under the Ramsar Convention.
- [**Agricultural Land Classification**](#) – this dataset owned by Natural England is available to download. It classifies agricultural land into five grades, with grade one being the best quality and grade five being the poorest quality.
- [**Tree Preservation Orders**](#) – this dataset owned by SCDC is available to view on our interactive map or can be requested from SCDC. It identifies trees and woodlands that are legally protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).
- [**Flood Zones**](#) – this dataset owned by the Environment Agency is available to download. It identifies the chance of flooding from rivers and/or the sea, based on four flood risk categories that take into account flood defences and their condition.
- [**Ancient Woodlands**](#) – this dataset owned by Natural England is available to download. It identifies ancient woodlands, which are woodlands that have existed since 1600AD and therefore have unique features such as relatively undisturbed soils, and communities of plants and animals that depend on the

stable conditions ancient woodland provides, some of which are rare and vulnerable.

- [County Wildlife Sites](#) – this dataset is held by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Environmental Records Centre and is available from them on request. It identifies County Wildlife Sites within Cambridgeshire, which are sites chosen for their conservation value and include woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, and roadside verges.
- [Local Nature Reserves](#) – this dataset owned by Natural England is available to download. It identifies Local Nature Reserves, which are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally.

Transport

- [Public Rights of Way](#) – this dataset owned by Cambridgeshire County Council is available to view on their interactive map (under Leisure and Culture). It identifies public rights of way, which are restricted byways for walking, cycling or horse-riding that meet specified criteria.
- [Cycle Routes](#) – this dataset compiled by Sustrans is available to view on their interactive map. It identifies designated cycle routes.