



## **Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit Guidance Note 2**

# **Neighbourhood Planning: Is a Neighbourhood Plan the right tool for your Parish?**

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Adopted December 2017

This is version 2 of the document 'Is a Neighbourhood Plan the right tool for your Parish? (December 2017) was updated in February 2023 to amend broken hyperlinks.

This document includes hyperlinks to a range of websites, and the hyperlinks can be accessed using the published version of this document, which is available to view via:

<https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/emerging-plans-and-guidance/neighbourhood-planning/>

Every effort has been made to ensure that these hyperlinks are up-to-date, however as websites change these hyperlinks can become invalid.

Herefordshire Council has kindly given permission for us to provide links to their guidance on neighbourhood planning.

Huntingdonshire District Council has kindly allowed us to take inspiration and wording from their Neighbourhood Planning Guidance.

If you have any queries relating to this document, please contact us via [neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org](mailto:neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org) or [07514922444](tel:07514922444).

## Introduction:

There are advantages and disadvantages of preparing a neighbourhood plan and **your parish needs to consider whether it is the right tool for your area** before proceeding.

**Other community planning tools are available** to your parish which may be better suited to meeting your community aspirations.

In particular, if the primary issues of importance to your community relate to things other than planning, then a parish plan is a quicker and lighter-touch process for creating a plan of action for improving your community. The flowchart in Appendix 1 gives some guidance to assist you in making a decision on what is right for your community. This chart has not attempted to include all the alternative options to a NP listed in this guidance note. This would have resulted in a very complex diagram.

Here is a guide to neighbourhood planning and some of the alternative options available to a local community:

## Option 1 – Neighbourhood Plan

### What is it?

A **Neighbourhood Plan** is a community-led initiative giving local communities power to prepare a planning document that will be part of the statutory development plan for the district. It can therefore be used in the determination of planning applications for a local area.

A **Neighbourhood Development Order** can also be created as part of a Neighbourhood Plan. This grants planning permission for specific types of development in a specific neighbourhood area, such as certain types of household applications, shop fronts or 'green energy'. Where there is a Neighbourhood Development Order in place there would be no need to apply to South Cambridgeshire Council for planning permission for the development it covers.

### Benefits:

If the primary issues of importance to your community relate to planning a neighbourhood plan can be a powerful tool for shaping new development for the following reasons:

- **Community-led** - It gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development of their local area. Parish councils write the plan themselves (or ask others to write the plan but under their control).

Parish councils have the opportunity to engage with their wider community from the start of the plan making process to ensure it genuinely represents the needs in their local village(s).

- **More influence** – The plan has statutory status once it is made (adopted) by the Local Planning Authority, carrying equal weight to the Local Plan and will become part of the statutory development plan for the district.
- **Site allocation** - It allows the community to allocate sites to meet the local need for different uses in the village like housing, shops, workplaces, leisure and community uses.
- **More relevance** - A neighbourhood plan focuses on the needs of the local community within the neighbourhood area. It could obtain policies on what you expect from developments such as urban design, the range and type of housing needed to meet the local market, identifying preferred sites for housing and other development; and priorities for new development such as improving pedestrian links, upgrading 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.
- **Identifying issues in the local area** - In carrying out consultations with the local community on the neighbourhood plan, non-planning issues may be identified. These issues could be included in an appendix to the neighbourhood plan, or in a Community Led / Parish Plan prepared at the same time as your neighbourhood plan.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** - Any village 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.

## Disadvantages

- **Knowledge of planning regulations and procedures** - The community must follow a set process and meet a number of statutory tests, which lengthen the process, add costs, and require planning expertise.
- **Cost of preparing a plan – both the time and resources required** - It could take about **two years** to prepare your neighbourhood plan after a neighbourhood area has been designated. The average cost of preparing a plan is **£13,000**, although government grants are currently available to pay towards these costs.
- **Skills required by the neighbourhood plan team** - Strong interpersonal and specialist skills will be required. Specialist skills required will depend on the nature of the area in question. For example: reading maps or plans; data analysis; knowledge of specific topic areas, and environmental assessment.
- **Limitations** - A neighbourhood plan cannot change the boundary of the Green Belt or that of a Conservation Area.
- **Passing a Referendum** - It requires various stages of formal consultation, independent examination and needs to be approved by referendum – with associated costs and risks.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** - CIL benefits are limited where small-scale developments are proposed. In addition “self-build” housing is exempt from CIL.

## First Step

Contact the Planning Policy team on [07514922444](tel:07514922444) or [neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org](mailto:neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org)

## Other Resources

### [SCDC Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit:](#)

Getting Started  
Support Offer

## Option 2 - Rely on South Cambridgeshire Local Plan

### What if I rely on South Cambridgeshire Local Plan?

There is the adopted Local Development Framework (LDF) for South Cambridgeshire, which comprises a number of development plan documents (DPD):

- Core Strategy DPD
- Development Control Policies DPD
- Site Specific Policies DPD
- Various Area Action Plans for specific growth areas.

There is also an emerging Local Plan which is currently going through examination.

### Benefits:

- If you are happy with the policy guidance within the South Cambridgeshire documents above for your parish then you may decide there is no need to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.
- A simpler and more selective neighbourhood plan could be produced.

### Disadvantages

- May lack specific or detailed policies that influence development for your part of the district.
- Some of the policies within the existing LDF may also be out of date.

### Top Tip

For 'big picture' issues such as the need for additional roads (such as a bypass), flooding, or sustainability and urban design standards, then you may be better off trying to influence the higher level, strategic Local Plan or negotiating with the local highways authority.

## Option 3 - Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

### What is it?

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) are part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) which carries weight when the Council makes decisions on planning applications. SPD's builds and expands upon existing policies in the adopted Core Strategy, Development Plan Documents (DPD's) and Area Action Plans (AAP's).

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.

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

### Who prepares it?

SCDC as 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 the guidance of SCDC.

### 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 very clear focus on design and local distinctiveness;
- Clear parameters – how, not whether or where, development should take place;
- Can draw developers into the process;
- A Village Design Statement provides 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.

## Option 4 - Rural Exception Sites for affordable housing

### What is it?

Rural exception sites for affordable housing 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?

SCDC'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.

### Benefits:

- Provides additional 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 - it cannot be used for other community development proposals.

### First Step

Contact the Housing Strategy Team on [01954713000](tel:01954713000) or [Strategic.Housing@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:Strategic.Housing@scambs.gov.uk)

### Other Resources

**South Cambridgeshire District Council:**  
Housing Strategy Team

[Cambridgeshire ACRE](#)



## Option 5 - Community Right to Build (CrTB)

### What is it?

A form of Neighbourhood Development Order that can be used to bring forward small scale development for community benefit on a specific site or sites in a neighbourhood area without the need for planning permission. These 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 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;
- Follows a streamlined version of the Neighbourhood Planning process;
- Lighter consultation requirements and examination levels than Neighbourhood Plans;
- Less of a role for the local planning authority to approve schemes;
- Often allows communities to take forward small-scale development even where the local planning authority is opposed;
- Benefits (such as profits generated) are kept and managed by a community organisation on behalf of the whole community, regardless of the ownership of the development;
- Groups can ensure Affordable Housing remains affordable in perpetuity;
- Development can be located in the Green Belt as long as the National Planning Policy Framework criteria are met;
- Particularly beneficial in rural areas with a need for small-scale development and/or economic regeneration;
- If built by a developer, the Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus apply.

### Disadvantages

- Time and resource intensive: 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 require planning expertise;
- The process is similar to that required for Neighbourhood Plans, but is focused on a single site;
- Proposals will be subject to an independent examination and referendum – with associated costs and risks;
- Only for use by community organisations in which local people (based on electoral register) have majority voting rights and directorships and include different people from at least 10 different addresses within the area (preventing developers gaining easy planning permission against a community's wishes);
- Proposals requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment or having a significant impact in terms of Habitats regulations are not eligible;
- Community Right to Build only gives the community the right to bypass normal planning consents. Normal land acquisition, financial processes (including raising finance) and

building regulations apply;

- Proposals must not be at odds with conservation and listed buildings legislation, or be at odds with the strategic policies in the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan, if there is one.

### First Step

Look on the South Cambridgeshire DC webpage about [Right to Build](#)

Contact the Right to build project team at SCDC: [rightto.build@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:rightto.build@scambs.gov.uk)

### Other Resources

South Cambridgeshire District Council has introduced a Right to Build scheme and was part of the vanguard to introduce this scheme nationally.

**Locality:** read their [My Community Guide: Understanding the Community Right to Build](#) document

## Option 6 - Community Land Trusts (CLTs)

### What is it?

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.
- CLTs create housing opportunities. They can win over local people who are otherwise opposed to new housing and can bring forward land that would not otherwise be developed for housing.
- CLTs build homes that people can afford.
- CLTs can be used in combination with another of the community planning tools set out here (e.g. rural exception site for affordable housing or Community Right to Build).
- Potentially beneficial for land / organisations having charitable status.
- A way for communities to deliver their own services.

### Disadvantages

- Can be complex to set up and resource intensive over a long period. Some parish councils may not be sufficiently resourced.
- Replicates what Registered Providers (housing associations) do.

### First Steps

Consider asking for introductory meeting with CLT East to learn more about CLTs on [07766991145](tel:07766991145) or via [emily.howard@eastcambs.gov.uk](mailto:emily.howard@eastcambs.gov.uk)

If you decide a CLT is right for your Parish you can also apply for a Community-led Housing Grant via CLT East.

For planning matters contact the Planning Policy team on [01954713694](tel:01954713694) or via [localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org](mailto:localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org)

### Other Resources

#### South Cambridgeshire District Council

Planning Policy team

Housing Strategy Team

There is more information on the [Community Land Trust](#) website, and on the [South Cambs](#) website.

## Option 7 - Community Right to Bid (Assets of Community Value)

### What is it?

Enables communities to nominate public or private community assets of value to their community (e.g. a village pub). 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.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has produced a protocol detailing the council's approach to the Community Right to Bid - Assets of Community Value.

### Who prepares it?

Nominated by the local community and identified and placed on the list of [Assets of Community Value](#) by SCDC.

### Benefits:

- It gives communities a right to identify 'up front' a building or other land they believe to be of importance to their community's 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.

### First Step

Read the [Community Right to Bid](#) guidance and protocol document on the SCDC website. Contact the Sustainable Communities Team: [duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk)

### Other Resources

**South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Sustainable Communities Team - [partnerships@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:partnerships@scambs.gov.uk)

## Option 8 - Parish / Community Led Plan

### What is it?

This is a comprehensive plan for an area, identifying community priorities and actions to address these. A parish or community plan can contain a wide range of community issues and aspirations.

### Who prepares it?

These plans are prepared by the parish council and the local community.

### 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 (LPA);
- If the issues you wish to tackle are not related directly to planning then a parish plan may be for you;
- Non-development focused community goals can be achieved more quickly than development focused goals;
- No formal process to follow;
- It is an established process: over 4,000 plans have been produced nationwide. Also 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.
- The average cost is £3,000 to £10,000.
- Unlike a neighbourhood plan, a referendum is not required.

### Disadvantages

- They have limited weight in the determination of planning applications in comparison to neighbourhood plans, which are part of a statutory development plan;
- Time intensive: can take over a year to produce, including getting started, consulting the community, and identifying priorities and actions;
- Non-development focused actions can also be identified and addressed alongside the neighbourhood planning process;
- Cannot make specific land use proposals;
- No legal power;
- Can be dependent on the enthusiasm of local people and vigour of parish council;
- Not necessarily possible to prioritise for support from the local planning authority in the planning or delivery. However, at SCDC wherever possible completed plans are presented to the Leader's portfolio holder meeting for information;
- 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;
- Challenge of managing expectations;
- Uncertain power to implement proposals;

### First Step

Contact the Sustainable Communities team: [duty.communities@scams.gov.uk](mailto:duty.communities@scams.gov.uk)

### Other Resources

#### **South Cambridgeshire District Council –**

Sustainable Communities Team can provide guidance / good practice on how to approach producing a parish plan.

**Locality – [Roadmap Guide and Worksheets](#)** – Part A of the guidance is about deciding to produce a neighbourhood plan and Worksheet 1 is about making the decision to prepare a neighbourhood plan.

Appendix 1 - Guidance to assist you in making a decision on what is right for your

