



# **Neighbourhood Planning: Support Offer to Parish Councils**

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Adopted July 2018

This is version 2 of the Adopted Support Offer (July 2018). The document 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: [Neighbourhood planning \(greatercambridgeplanning.org\)](https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org).

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

As the local planning authority, South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) has a duty to give advice and assistance to parish councils when it considers appropriate in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan.

SCDC wishes to support its parish councils in developing their neighbourhood plans, and this offer document sets out the support that SCDC will provide to all parish councils. This is SCDC's current offer and it will be kept under review<sup>1</sup>. Any parish council that would like support, advice or assistance that goes beyond that set out in this offer should contact SCDC via [neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org](mailto:neighbourhood.planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org) or [07514922444](tel:07514922444) to discuss their requirements.

You should also use these contacts for advice on Neighbourhood Planning for those parts of the district where there is a parish meeting rather than a parish council. In these areas a neighbourhood forum would need to be designated as a first step towards taking a plan forward.

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<sup>1</sup> The support offer was first adopted in December 2017, and the first review was adopted in July 2018. It was updated in February 2023 to amend broken hyperlinks.



## Step One: Getting Started

### How will SCDC support parish councils in getting started?

- a) SCDC will **provide advice on its website** as first port of call for enquiries about neighbourhood planning;
- b) SCDC will **meet with any parish council** considering preparing a neighbourhood plan to discuss:
  - the requirements of preparing a plan,
  - any other options that might also be available to meet local objectives, and if the parish council has the necessary information to decide what approach would be best for them.
- c) SCDC will also provide **a lending library of resources** that parish councils may find useful to help decide on whether to prepare a neighbourhood plan e.g. examples of Neighbourhood Plans.

### Guidance and Regulations

#### Neighbourhood Planning Regulations

- Original (April 2012): [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#)
- Amended (February 2015): [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2015](#)
- Amended (October 2016): [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) and Development Management Procedure \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)

*These regulations may occasionally change or new regulations introduced*

#### National Guidance on Neighbourhood Planning

- [National Planning Practice Guidance](#)

### Other Resources

#### [GCSP Neighbourhood Planning webpages](#)

#### [GCSP Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit](#)

Is a Neighbourhood Plan the Right Tool for your Parish  
Getting Started

#### Herefordshire Council:

[Which is the right approach for your parish?](#)

Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (DCLG) – [Notes on Neighbourhood Planning](#)

**Locality** [they have a website dedicated to neighbourhood planning <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>] – they have a [Neighbourhood Plan Roadmap Guide](#) which provides a good introduction to neighbourhood planning.

**Planning Advisory Service (PAS)** – they have published a number of guides, tools and templates for neighbourhood planning.

## Step Two: Designating a Neighbourhood Area

### How will SCDC support parish councils in designating a neighbourhood area?

- a) SCDC has an application form that should be completed and submitted for a Neighbourhood Area designation to be considered. When a parish council is completing this application SCDC can help by preparing a map to show the proposed area.

#### Other Resources

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

Maps for Neighbourhood Plans

### Once a Neighbourhood Area application is submitted, SCDC will:

- b) consider the application, including whether it is valid, as set out in the Regulations;
- c) carry out public consultation on the application; where appropriate (see our guidance note Getting a Neighbourhood Area Designated for more details).

#### Other Resources

**SCDC Neighbourhood Area Application Form** – this application form can be found on the [GCSP Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit](#) page on our website next to the guidance about getting a neighbourhood area designated. It should be completed and submitted to SCDC for any Neighbourhood Area to be designated.

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

Getting a Neighbourhood Area Designated

#### Timescales

Public consultation where appropriate, and decision made by SCDC within the timescales set out in Regulations.

## Step Three: Early Stage of Plan Development

### How will SCDC support parish councils in the early stage of plan development?

- a) Once the Neighbourhood Area is designated, SCDC will offer to meet with the parish council(s) to:
- offer the parish council the opportunity to sign up to a **Memorandum of Understanding** to set out how we will work together;
  - explain this **support offer** which is available to all Neighbourhood Plan groups;
  - inform the parish council about the range of **online guidance available and future workshops**;
  - make the parish council aware of the grants and technical support packages available from Locality which could assist them in their plan making;
  - Recommend **the parish council appoints a planning consultant** who specialises in neighbourhood planning to help them in the technical process of preparing a neighbourhood plan, which in most cases go beyond the level of support that SCDC can provide.

#### Other Resources

##### Locality:

[Applying for grants and technical support](#)

- b) SCDC will not provide direct financial grants to local communities to prepare their neighbourhood plan. SCDC will however where appropriate, **offer to part fund a Health Check and undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening** (see Step Five and Step Six).

#### Other Resources

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/npguidance> **GCSP Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit** :

Getting Started

Memorandum of Understanding – this sets out the commitments both SCDC and a parish council will make to working together on a specific neighbourhood plan.

Herefordshire Council: [Getting started](#)

##### Locality:

- [Support and Grants](#)
- [Project Planner](#)

- c) SCDC will **attend meetings** with the parish council(s) or the neighbourhood plan working group.

SCDC will aim to respond positively to all requests. However, please be aware that this will be subject to resources and may need to be managed if requests coincide with peaks of neighbourhood plan activity or other work of the Planning Policy Team, and potentially support may be provided via a third party. In these instances, attendance at meetings will be subject to discussion and agreement with the parish council. Resources to support neighbourhood planning will be kept under review.

d) SCDC will also **provide advice and guidance on how to meet the basic conditions** as set out in the Regulations, including:

- highlighting the strategic policies in the adopted South Cambridgeshire District Local Plan that the neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with;
- highlighting the main national policies and advice that will need to be considered;
- considering how the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- providing advice on undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to ensure compatibility with EU obligations, including identifying who needs to be consulted. If a full SEA is triggered this could require a substantial amount of work in order to address any issues (see also Step Six).

### Guidance and Regulations

Information on the basic conditions is set out in:

[National Planning Practice Guidance](#)

*These regulations may occasionally change or new regulations introduced*

### Other Resources:

<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/> **GCSP Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit:**

What are the Basic Conditions and How to Meet Them  
Strategic Policies

- e) SCDC will **provide a range of online guidance** on how to do different tasks in neighbourhood planning such as:
- methods of community engagement; and
  - how to achieve effective public consultations.

### Other Resources

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/sustainability-appraisal-requirements-for-neighbourhood-plans/> **GCSP Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit:**

Communities Engagement and Neighbourhood Plans

- f) SCDC will host regular **technical workshops / seminars** for parish councils and those in the local community who are preparing neighbourhood plans.



### Other Resources

Information from the workshops / seminars such as presentations and notes will be published on the [GCSP Neighbourhood Planning webpage](#).

- g) SCDC will provide a **lending library of resources** that parish councils may find useful to help decide on whether to prepare a neighbourhood plan e.g. examples of neighbourhood plans.
- h) SCDC will provide advice on the **legal requirements** for neighbourhood planning as set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Localism Act 2011).

### Timescales

Please **keep your timeline up to date** (attached to the Memorandum of Understanding) and keep in touch with SCDC so that we know when you may need help and when you are reaching stages where SCDC has a formal role, so we can respond to requests for help in a timely way.

**SCDC has a duty to support a parish council** and can help keep up the momentum of your plan making.

## Step Four: Building the Evidence Base

### How will SCDC support parish councils build the evidence base?

- a) SCDC will provide information about where a parish council can find data for the **evidence base they will need to support their neighbourhood plan**, including signposting to the evidence base and supporting studies underpinning the emerging new Local Plan. Evidence should be focused on that needed to support the neighbourhood plan objectives.

Locality provides a technical support package for eligible groups that aims to help with developing challenging policy aspirations. This ensures the evidence for a policy will stand up to scrutiny at examination.

#### Other Resources

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

Sources of Evidence and Information

#### Locality

[Resources](#) - there is a specific support package for Evidence Base and Policy Development

- b) SCDC will provide a range of guidance on how to do different tasks in neighbourhood planning, such as:
  - **methods of community engagement;**

This guidance will be provided as a flexible 'live' resource on [SCDC's website](#), but provided in a format that is capable of downloading and printing as a single document at any point in time. Not all the guidance will be available from the start and future guidance provided will be informed by feedback from parish councils.

#### Other Resources:

##### Locality:

[Resources](#) – provides a suite of documents that cover different aspects of neighbourhood planning.

##### Planning Aid:

[Resources](#) a suite of documents and resources to assist those developing a neighbourhood plan.

##### Other Council's Guidance Notes

Herefordshire Council: [Guidance Notes](#)

- c) SCDC will share information on **contacts** for key consultees.
- d) SCDC will provide up to date information on the emerging South Cambridgeshire **Local Plan**.

#### Other Resources:

[Neighbourhood Planning Policy Monthly Update](#) – This is issued by the government and provides a monthly update relating to Neighbourhood Planning.

[GCSP Local Plan Page](#) – This page provides regular updates about the progress of Greater Cambridge's Local Plan, which is being made by Cambridge City Council and SCDC.

- e) SCDC will **highlight the key allocations and designations** included on the Local Plan **Policies Map** which a parish council will need to be aware of. This includes:
- Housing allocations
  - Development Frameworks
  - Conservation Areas
  - Local Green Spaces

### Timescales

Please keep SCDC informed of your progress by keeping the timeline up to date (attached to the Memorandum of Understanding).

## Step Five: Writing the Plan

### How will SCDC support parish councils in writing the plan?

- a) SCDC will provide **constructive comments** on emerging draft policies in the neighbourhood plan against the basic conditions.

#### Timescales

SCDC will need 3 weeks notice of when documents or policies will be submitted to us for comment. If you have kept us informed of your progress (by keeping the timeline up to date) we will know when you will be asking for help and can plan our resources accordingly.

SCDC will seek endeavour to respond within 3 weeks and often sooner, subject to resources and taking account of local timescales as far as possible, or as agreed with the parish council. We want to ensure that we provide constructive comments which will help your plan-making and need sufficient time in order to do so.

- b) SCDC will provide a range of **guidance** and **specialist advice**, subject to capacity, on planning issues that may be included in a neighbourhood plan, such as local housing need and affordable housing,

This guidance will be provided as a flexible 'live' resource on [GCPS's website](#), but provided in a format that is capable of downloading and printing as a single document at any point in time. Not all the guidance will be available from the start and will be informed by feedback from parish councils.

- c) SCDC will organise and pay for the **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulation Assessment Screening (HRA)** of your neighbourhood plan to ensure that it meets the statutory environmental standards up to a maximum cost of £1,000. If the cost is higher you would need to make up the difference or if a repeat screening is required this will need to be fully funded by the parish council.

It should be noted that if a full SEA or HRA is required Locality is offering technical support packages to carry out full Habitat Regulation Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessments where they are required.

#### Other Resources

##### [GCSP's Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit:](#)

Strategic Environment Assessments (SEA)

[Technical Support – Available Packages](#), there are specific support packages for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment

#### Guidance and Regulations

National Planning Practice – [Strategic Environmental Assessment requirements for Neighbourhood Plans](#)

*These regulations may occasionally change or new regulations introduced*

#### Timescale

Need to consult with statutory bodies, therefore need to allow time for them to respond. The whole process is likely to take 2-3 months.

- d) SCDC will provide **technical mapping support** as set out in 'Maps for Neighbourhood Plans'. SCDC will also offer the following services (anything additional to the below will require further cost):
- **Neighbourhood area designation**
  - **Exhibition poster** - size A0, 3 copies
  - **Online mapping for the parish council**
  - **Policies map** – 8 hours of mapping time
    - create map
    - provide 3 electronic copies at A3 or smaller
    - additional layer sharing of neighbourhood plan policies and proposals
    - anything beyond 8 hours will require additional costs.

#### Other Resources

[GCSP Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit:](#)

Maps for Neighbourhood Plans

#### Timescale

Technical mapping support will be provided as set out in 'Maps for Neighbourhood Plans'.

## Step Six: Pre-submission Consultation and Preparing the Plan for Submission to SCDC

### How will SCDC support parish councils in the pre-submission consultation and preparing the plan for submission to SCDC?

- a) Where appropriate, SCDC will offer up to a maximum of £1,000, towards a single pre-submission **health check** of the draft neighbourhood plan before the parish council submits their neighbourhood plan and supporting documents to SCDC. The health check should be carried out by an independent Neighbourhood Plan examiner and it will check to see if the neighbourhood plan would be successful at examination, meeting all the basic condition tests. The parish council should submit the application to the independent Neighbourhood Plan examiner for the health check, and liaise with SCDC.

This offer will not apply to those parish councils whose neighbourhood plans are eligible to have a health check carried out as a technical support package available through Locality. The eligibility test for this support is if your plan meets any of the following criteria:

- Is allocating sites for housing; or
- Includes design codes which provide detailed design guidance for a site or area in your plan.

#### [GCSP Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit](#)

Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)

What are the Basic Conditions and How to Meet Them

Strategic Policies

#### Other Resources

SCDC are aware that a PC can apply directly to an independent Neighbourhood Plan examiner or approach the following organisations to refer them to an examiner to carry out health checks of Neighbourhood Plans:

- [Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service \(NPIERS\)](#) [Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service \(NPIERS\)](#)
- [Intelligent Plans and examinations \(IPE\)](#)

There may be other organisations that offer this referral service.

#### Locality:

- [Eligibility for Technical Support](#)
- [Technical Support – Available Packages](#), there is a specific support packages for a plan health check review prior to examination

- b) SCDC will provide a **lending library of resources** that parish councils may find useful to help prepare their neighbourhood plan e.g. exhibition boards, banners, examples of neighbourhood plans.

## Step Seven: Submission of the Plan to SCDC

### How will SCDC support parish councils in the submission of the plan to SCDC?

The final stages of preparing the neighbourhood plan are undertaken with SCDC as the lead rather than the parish council.

- a) SCDC will keep the parish council **informed of progress** and liaise with them to resolve any issues as the plan goes through the examination and referendum stages towards its completion, including:
- liaise with the parish council regarding appointment of an examiner,
  - liaise with the parish council over changes proposed in the examiner's report to ensure the plan meets the basic condition tests,
  - liaise with parish council over any changes to the Neighbourhood Plan,
  - liaise with parish council over Council decision to proceed to referendum and the timing of the referendum.

#### Other resources

[NPIERS Guidance to service users and examiners – March 2018](#)