



Neighbourhood Planning Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ sheet is intended to provide details about neighbourhood planning in Peterborough. It should assist in identifying what neighbourhood plans are, what the process of producing a neighbourhood plan is and whether a neighbourhood plan is right for your area.

If you have any further questions or want to discuss neighbourhood planning, the Planning Policy Team can be contacted at planningpolicy@peterborough.gov.uk or on 01733 863872.

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1. What is a neighbourhood area?

A neighbourhood area is the area to which a neighbourhood development plan or neighbourhood development order applies. Neighbourhood areas can match parish boundaries; cover part of a parish; cover two or more parishes; compose of an area that includes a parish or part of one, and a non-parished area beyond the parish boundary; or be an entirely non-parished area. They may even straddle more than one local planning authority area.

Designation of the neighbourhood area is one of the first steps in the neighbourhood planning process, as explained in question 5 below.

2. What is a neighbourhood development plan?

A neighbourhood development plan, or neighbourhood plan for short, is a planning policy document which sets planning policies for a specific local area, such as a parish or a part of the city, rather than the authority area as a whole. Once adopted, a neighbourhood plan will be used alongside the local plan in making decisions on planning applications.

Policies included in neighbourhood plans must be related to development or the use of land in the area.

3. What is a neighbourhood development order?

A neighbourhood development order is a tool for a community to grant permission for specific development that complies with the order. This can apply to a specific site, sites, or a wider geographic area and can apply to specific types of development or land uses.

A neighbourhood development order is effectively produced in the same way as a neighbourhood plan and follows the same process as is detailed below.

4. Who can write a neighbourhood plan?

Neighbourhood plans are prepared by and for communities. In a parished area the parish council is responsible for producing the plan, although it may be produced by members of the community with support of the parish council.

For neighbourhood areas that extend beyond a parish into a non-parished area, the parish council is still responsible for producing the plan, but again members of the community may produce the plan with the support of the parish council.

In non-parished areas community groups will need to set up a neighbourhood forum. A neighbourhood forum must be formed of 21 or more individuals who live or work in the neighbourhood area, or who are elected members of Peterborough City Council.

If you are thinking about setting up a neighbourhood forum it is recommended that you contact the Planning Policy Team to discuss arrangements.

5. What is the process for producing a neighbourhood plan?

The key stages of producing a neighbourhood plan are:

- 1. Area designation (and creation of a neighbourhood forum in a non-parished area):**

In order for a neighbourhood plan to be produced, the geographic area that the plan will cover, known as a neighbourhood area, must be formally designated. This designation must be requested by the parish council or community group. For non-parished areas, the neighbourhood forum must also be formally designated by the council. Communities

may submit their neighbourhood forum and area applications simultaneously, though most groups choose to designate the neighbourhood area first in the event that the area boundary is amended and has consequences for their neighbourhood forum membership.

2. **Produce neighbourhood plan:** There is no single way to produce a plan. The process will likely revolve around: what is intended to be in the plan; how much consultation will be needed; what level and type of evidence will be needed to support the policies; and how many people will be working on the plan and the skills in the team. Typically, neighbourhood planning groups spend a period of time identifying and investigating the issues that are important to them and the wider community; developing a vision and objectives for the plan; evidence gathering to inform the policies in the plan and writing the plan itself. Many neighbourhood planning groups undertake informal stages of consultation during the production of the plan to help identify issues, to use as evidence or to test initial thoughts on what the plan might include with the community.
3. **Pre-submission (Reg 14) consultation:** Once the plan has been drafted the parish council/ neighbourhood forum must arrange for (and cover the costs of) a formal six-week consultation on the draft plan. The neighbourhood plan must be brought to the attention of the community, local organisations and businesses, and a number of bodies specified in legislation. The parish council / neighbourhood forum must then consider all comments received and can make amendments to the plan where necessary.
4. **Plan submission:** Once the plan has been finalised the plan can be submitted to Peterborough City Council. The parish council/ neighbourhood forum will also have to submit some other documents alongside their neighbourhood plan, including a Consultation Statement and Basic Conditions Statement. The council will check over the documents to make sure everything is in order and will then make the arrangements for the final stages of the process.
5. **Publication (Reg 16) Consultation:** Once the council is happy that it has received all necessary documentation it will commence a further formal six-week consultation on the submitted plan.
6. **Examination:** The council will, in consultation with the parish council or neighbourhood forum, appoint an independent examiner to assess the plan. Once the publication consultation has closed, the council will send the plan, associated documents and all consultation responses received to the examiner. The examiner will consider the plan and issue a report confirming whether or not the plan meets a number of tests, called basic conditions. The examiner may suggest modifications to ensure that the plan meets the basis conditions.
7. **Referendum:** Assuming the plan meets the basic conditions, the council will make arrangements for a referendum to take place. This referendum will ask a simple question – whether the plan should be used in determining planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
8. **Adoption:** Provided that more than 50% of those *voting* in the referendum opt for the plan to be used in determining planning applications, it will then be adopted by the council and become part of the development plan.

More details of the process and what the council will do at each stage is provided in the [Statement of Community Involvement](#). It is highly recommended that groups keep in close contact with the Planning Policy Team throughout the process.

6. Who will pay for the Neighbourhood Planning process and how much will it cost?

It will be up to the community to pay for the preparation of their neighbourhood plan. Costs can include those associated with holding public consultations, printing costs, consultant fees, or costs associated with developing evidence to support the plan, for example.

Once the plan has been submitted to Peterborough City Council, the council will pay for the Publication (Reg 16) consultation, the independent examination and referendum.

The exact cost of producing a neighbourhood plan will depend on what the plan contains, how much time the group producing the plan have, the groups skills set, the type and size of area that the plan will cover, and the level of consultation needed.

The government has made grants available as well as direct technical support from planning professionals. For the latest information on the grants and support available, please visit <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>. No financial support is available from the council.

7. How long does it take to write a Neighbourhood Plan?

It is up to the individual group producing the plan to decide on the pace at which it will progress and this will depend on the amount of resources and skills available to the group, and the complexity of the plan. Given the required stages of producing a plan it is likely that it will take at least a year from the neighbourhood area being designated to the neighbourhood plan being adopted, but it can take longer.

8. Will help be available from Peterborough City Council?

Peterborough City Council will provide professional assistance in producing the plan, but will not write the plan or produce evidence work to support it.

Details of what support can be expected are provided in the [Statement of Community Involvement](#). In summary, this may include:

- **Initial scoping:** the Planning Policy Team can help groups:
 - Understand the reasons for producing a neighbourhood plan;
 - Identify whether a neighbourhood plan is the most appropriate tool;
 - Provide details of where evidence can be obtained to support the plan;
 - Talk through the process in more detail and provide advice about gathering evidence or undertaking consultation events; and
 - Advise on the necessary arrangements for the designation of the neighbourhood area and, where necessary, the neighbourhood forum.
- **Production of the plan:** The Planning Policy Team will provide advice upon request throughout the production of the plan. This will normally be provided through email or telephone conversations, but it can also include meeting with the group to talk through the issues or process. This can include:
 - advising on topics for your plan;
 - making data available or advising where data can be found;
 - providing advice on legal requirements for the plan or evidence that will be needed;
 - advising on ways to engage with the community or other organisations; and
 - informally reviewing the draft plan and providing feedback.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening:** Once the neighbourhood plan is at an advanced stage of production, the Planning Policy Team will conduct an SEA

Screening to test whether the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This requires consultation with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

- **Pre-submission (Reg 14) consultation:** The Planning Policy Team can help identify organisations that should be contacted as part of this formal stage of consultation and how best to bring the plan to the attention of the community. Peterborough City Council will also respond to the consultation, providing a view of whether it is considered that the plan meets the basic conditions. Following the consultation, the Planning Policy Team may also be able to assist in addressing any issues raised in the consultation on the plan.

9. What are the basic conditions?

The basic conditions are a set of tests against which a neighbourhood plan is assessed by the examiner: in order for a neighbourhood plan to proceed to referendum and adoption it must meet these basic conditions. The basic conditions are that a neighbourhood plan must:

- a. have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- b. contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- c. be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area.
- d. not breach, and otherwise be compatible with, EU obligations.
- e. Meet any prescribed conditions.

There are a couple of additional basic conditions that neighbourhood orders must meet: the council can advise on these if you choose to prepare a neighbourhood order.

10. What is the role of National Policy in Neighbourhood Planning?

All neighbourhood plans and orders will need to take national policy into account in order to meet basic condition 'a', as explained above.

Primarily this will be the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and there is further guidance available from the government in the [Planning Practice Guidance](#) (this is 'live' guidance that is updated on an ongoing basis).

11. Can a Neighbourhood Plan stop development?

A neighbourhood plan cannot:

- prevent development that has been identified in the local plan;
- stop development that has been granted planning permission (outline or full);
- put a blanket ban on speculative development.

However, a neighbourhood plan can influence where new development is located, and the design, layout and materials used. A neighbourhood plan can help to ensure that new development is sympathetic to the surrounding area and meets the needs of the local community. It can seek to protect particular aspects of the neighbourhood area that are important to the character of the settlement, its history, or its community: for example, a neighbourhood plan can allocate areas of open space as 'local green space' for protection.

The government is very clear that it is not possible to use neighbourhood plans to stop all development: rather, neighbourhood plans provide an opportunity for communities to plan for more development in their local area than that which is set out in the Local Plan in order to meet local needs.

12. What weight (importance) will be given to a Neighbourhood Plan?

Once adopted, a neighbourhood plan holds the same legal status as the local plan. In an area with an adopted neighbourhood plan, planning decisions will be taken in accordance with both the neighbourhood plan and the local plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

13. Where can I find more information or who can advise further?

Locality have produced a [Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap step-by-step guide](#). This provides information to help you decide if a neighbourhood plan is right for your area, it breaks down the process of producing the plan, and provides a lot of useful suggestions for how to deliver a successful neighbourhood plan.

Locality has also produced a [Keeping it Simple](#) guide. This guide explains how to keep the process and plan simple; the essential content of a neighbourhood plan; what a neighbourhood plan is not (e.g. a place to repeat local policy or a guide to the local area); and that you don't need to include every idea that gets put forward- you may get 300 ideas but only develop 3 policies.

If you would like to speak to someone in the Peterborough City Council Planning Policy Team please contact planningpolicy@peterborough.gov.uk or call on 01733 863872.

14. What sources of information are available to inform the policies in the plan?

It is essential that a neighbourhood plan has a robust evidence base to justify the contents – there are a number of sources of information that can help build this evidence base.

The following information sources can provide a starting point, but additional bespoke evidence gathering may also be necessary. If you are unsure what evidence you might need, the Planning Policy Team can help to identify the appropriate evidence needed.

Peterborough Local Plan: The [adopted Local Plan](#) provides the framework for neighbourhood plans and includes site allocations and the strategic policies for the area. The Local Plan maps illustrate a number of policies to show what policies apply to specific locations in your area.

Local Plan Evidence Base: The Peterborough Local Plan is supported by an [extensive evidence base](#) on a number of topics including site allocations, housing need, housing and economic land availability, open spaces, village boundaries, landscape character, retail, and much more.

Supplementary Planning Documents: [Supplementary Planning Documents \(SPDs\)](#) provide more detail to Local Plan policies. Peterborough has a number of SPDs relating to topics such as design in villages, flood and water management, shop front guidance, and more.

Allocating sites: If site allocations are a possibility for the neighbourhood plan you can use the [Council's Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment \(SHELAA\)](#) as a starting point to understand the sites that might be available for development in the area. Please note: Peterborough City Council does not hold

information on land owners, if this is required, it is recommended that you contact [HM Land Registry](#).

Statistics: Statistical information can help to develop a clear understanding of an area, including the make-up of the population and households. The Census is the most detailed and most reliable data source for this and profiles of the Peterborough City Council area and of individual wards and parishes are available on the [Peterborough City Council website](#) . These profiles provide a good starting point but a wider array of information is also available at the [Nomis website](#). The [Cambridgeshire Insight website](#) is also a useful resource.

Maps: A map will be needed for any application to designate a neighbourhood area - Peterborough City Council can provide this on request. Maps are also a useful tool for understanding an area and for illustrating policies. Peterborough City Council is not able to provide other forms of mapping to neighbourhood planning groups, but groups producing a neighbourhood plan can sign up to the Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA) which will provide access to OS mapping data and other tools are also available to produce maps.

Who to consult: The [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations](#) set out who must be consulted at the formal consultation stages (i.e. the regulation 14 consultation carried out by the Parish Council / Neighbourhood Forum, and regulation 16 consultation carried out by Peterborough City Council). Groups producing a neighbourhood plan may be well positioned to understand how to bring the plan to the attention of their community, but the Planning Policy Team will also be able to help make sure that all regulatory requirements are satisfied.

Flood risk maps: Maps showing areas at risk from flooding are provided online by the [Environment Agency](#).

Other information about the area: A number of designations, constraints, habitats, and other map-based information is available at [Magic Map](#).