



Step 5: Preparing your draft Neighbourhood Plan

Deciding on the detail and bringing your plan together.



You will already have described the issues and problems that your Neighbourhood Plan is aiming to address and you may have agreed the vision and/or objectives for your Neighbourhood Plan. It's recommended that these form the 'upfront' sections of your draft Neighbourhood Plan.

You now need to decide the detail to include in your draft Neighbourhood Plan. This would normally be the options that have the most support, and perform best against the sustainability objectives and criteria if you have carried out a Sustainability Appraisal, unless there is good reason to choose another option (e.g. there may be a piece of land that would be ideal for development of a community centre, but the landowner is unwilling to use the land for that purpose).

If you are undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal as part of preparing your Neighbourhood Plan, the 'effects' of the policies and proposals in your draft Neighbourhood Plan should be appraised against sustainability objectives and criteria.

If your Neighbourhood Plan area includes or is close to a wildlife site that has been designated as being of international importance - known as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites - your Neighbourhood Plan may need to be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment, sometimes known as Appropriate Assessment (see box below).

Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment)

The purpose of Habitats Regulations Assessment is to ensure that a plan will not result in significant damage to designated wildlife sites. You can find out whether this will apply to you by asking your local planning authority, or the Government's statutory adviser on nature conservation - Natural England. If it's decided that a Habitats Regulations Assessment is required, then it is recommended that you ask your local planning authority for advice and assistance, since this requires technical skills that most parish or town councils, or neighbourhood forums, are unlikely to have.

Drafting policies

If you look at your Local Plan, you will see what is meant by policies. Policies set out the key details of what you want to happen. Policies can be quite short (a few sentences) or quite long (but generally no longer than one page).

It is useful to include more detailed explanation in 'supporting text' to the policy to justify the policy and to put the 'meat on the bones' on what it is that your Neighbourhood Plan is really trying to achieve.

Types of policy

There are different ways of writing policies. It's recommended that the policies set down the key components of development or use of land that your Neighbourhood Plan will support, and the criteria that will be used to decide whether a proposal is likely to be acceptable or not. Some policies might be 'actions' - things that you want to happen, such as the development of housing or community facilities. Other policies might be a set of 'criteria', describing what development should look like, and the issues development will need to take into account if it's to be granted planning permission.

Possible types of policy include those which:

- ▶ Allocate specific sites for development, setting out what the development should comprise (e.g. if you want housing to happen on a particular site, you may wish to ensure that the housing type is targeted at first-time buyers, or elderly people) and information about design (e.g. to ensure that it fits with

local building styles and character, sometimes known as 'the local vernacular').

- ▶ Set out specific requirements for a piece of land, for example in relation to access, landscaping, play areas.
- ▶ Specify which locations will be protected from development, such as open space, nature reserves, allotments, historic assets, gardens.
- ▶ Seek to protect certain community buildings and land uses from changes of use, such as pubs and village shops.
- ▶ Are area based, for example setting out areas (and boundaries) that will be reserved for certain uses, such as shopping areas.
- ▶ Are general in nature, and will apply to all development proposals in your Neighbourhood Plan area, such as the maximum height of buildings, or the use of renewable energy.

Top tip

Check each policy against the agreed vision and objectives of your Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that they will help achieve the aspirations of the Plan and do not create any conflicts with any other policies. Also make sure that nothing important is missing in terms of addressing the vision and all the objectives in your plan.

Proposals map

It is recommended that your draft Neighbourhood Plan includes a 'proposals map'. A proposals map shows which areas of land have been allocated for which uses (these should be linked to policies in your Neighbourhood Plan), including those areas that are to receive protection from development (again linked to policies in your Neighbourhood Plan). If your Neighbourhood Plan is dealing with a single site, then the proposals map may show in broad terms which parts of the site should be used for different uses, including access and open space. Again, your local planning authority should be able to help you with this.

Making it happen

Before completing your Neighbourhood Plan, it is recommended that you carefully check it to make sure that what you are proposing stands a realistic chance of actually happening. You may find it useful to add a



**USE YOUR
IMPLEMENTATION**

section on 'implementation' or prepare a separate implementation plan.

The implementation section sets out what actions are required to turn your Neighbourhood Plan into reality on the ground. For each policy, this should describe the linked actions, who is responsible for undertaking action, the priority the action should be given (e.g. high, medium, low), the timetable for the action, and the source of any funding to enable the action to happen. You might find it useful to include targets and indicators to measure whether or not the policy is being achieved once your Neighbourhood Plan is adopted (monitoring is also a requirement of Sustainability Appraisal).

**PLAN, TARGETS
OR INDICATORS TO
HELP MONITOR
PROGRESS
TOWARDS YOUR
NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLAN OBJECTIVES**

Top tip

It will be important to ensure that you 'sign up' all those organisations and individuals for whom an action has been identified in the implementation section otherwise your Neighbourhood Plan may face problems being turned into reality.

[Step 6: Consultation and Submission](#)

Further reading

[Further information on Sustainability Appraisals](#)

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