

**West Suffolk Council**

**Neighbourhood Development Plan Protocol**

**September 2025**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Localism Act 2011 provided local communities with rights to shape development in their area through the preparation of neighbourhood plans. These plans can be prepared by parish and/or town councils (the qualifying body) and while they can develop and contain a vision for the area, they must also follow a statutory process.
- 1.2. The purpose of this document is to provide a protocol and guidance on the stages and requirements to be undertaken when preparing a neighbourhood plan. This guide can be used by those who are involved in or are contemplating the production of a neighbourhood plan in West Suffolk and will also be helpful to officers and councillors who may be less familiar with the process.
- 1.3. There is a wealth of national guidance available on producing neighbourhood plans (see Annex 1) and while this protocol reflects current legislation and best practice, it also sets out West Suffolk Council officers' experience of neighbourhood plan preparation in the district to date.
- 1.4. As well as providing an overview of the process, the protocol is intended to aid local communities in making a decision to produce a plan. It also sets out what support the council can provide at each stage in the process in terms of resources and assistance.

**If you are thinking of commencing work on a neighbourhood plan, or would like more information, please contact the council's planning policy team at [neighbourhood.planning@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhood.planning@westsuffolk.gov.uk) or by calling 01284 757368.**

## **2. What is neighbourhood planning?**

- 2.1. Neighbourhood planning provides communities with the power to develop a shared vision for an area, usually within the parish or town council boundary, and to shape the growth of the local area. It is not a legal requirement, but a right which communities can choose to use.
- 2.2. A neighbourhood plan can decide where new homes, shops and areas of employment can be built. The plan can include land use allocations and/or other policies that guide the determination planning applications, for example in relation to design, climate change, landscape and environment.
- 2.3. Once a neighbourhood plan is 'made' (brought into force) it becomes part of the development plan for West Suffolk and will be used in the taking of planning decisions.
- 2.4. There are a number of steps in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan that are set out in the planning regulations. A simplified version of the steps is shown in Figure 1, which also sets out the structure for this protocol and guidance.
- 2.5. The [Neighbourhood Planning Regulations](#) require councils in their role as local planning authorities to undertake specific tasks as a neighbourhood plan progresses through to being 'made'. At the end of each section in this guidance there are table outlining the responsibilities of the qualifying body (parish or town council) and West Suffolk Council.

### 3. Stages of neighbourhood plan preparation

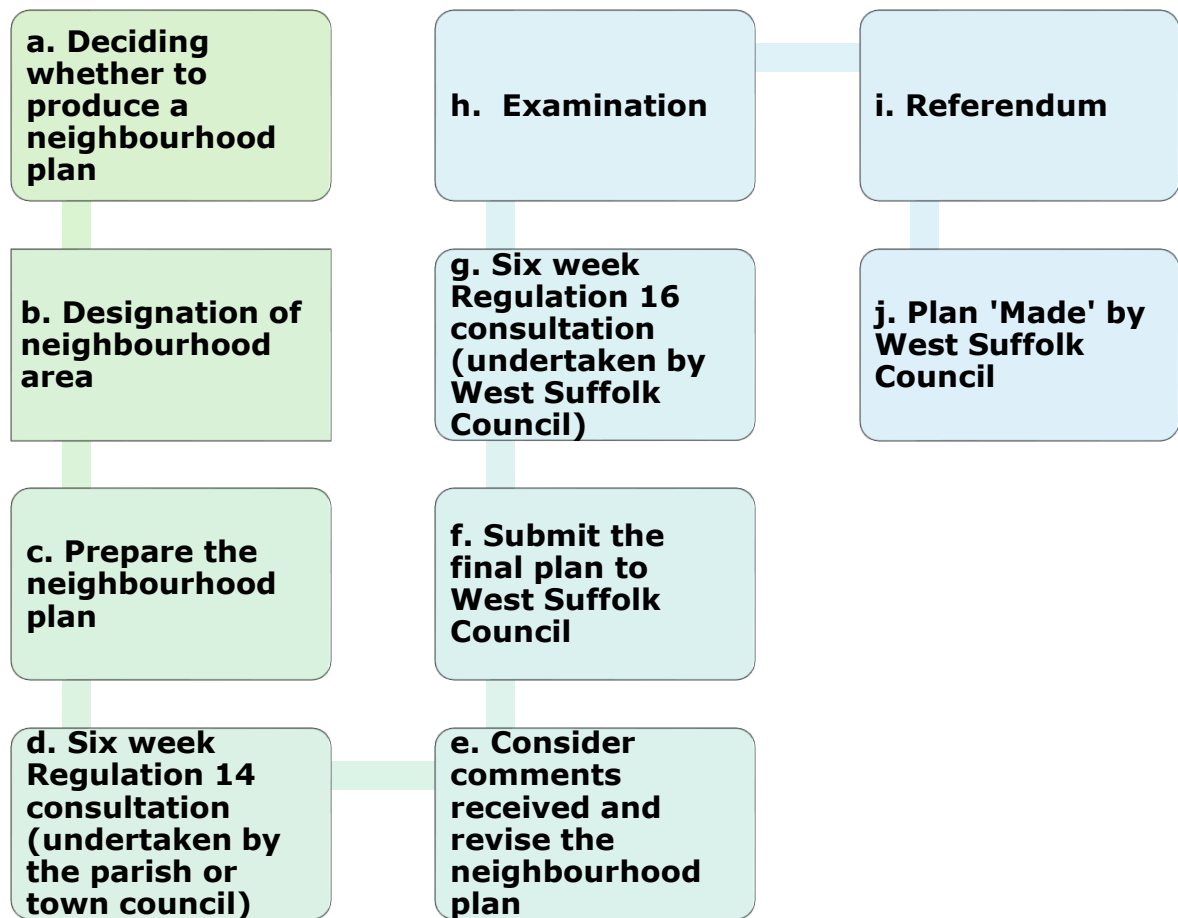


Figure one: stages of neighbourhood plan preparation

## **a. Deciding whether to produce a neighbourhood plan**

- 3.1. To date, council officers are assisting and/or have assisted with the preparation of 16 neighbourhood plans across West Suffolk. This experience has identified that there are a wide variety of reasons why a parish or town council might decide to progress a neighbourhood plan. Being clear at an early stage of what the issues are and what the plan might include can cut down the likelihood of undertaking abortive work or even making the decision to abandon a neighbourhood plan once preparation has commenced.

### **What are the advantages of producing a neighbourhood plan?**

- 3.2. There are a number of advantages in preparing a neighbourhood plan, rather than simply relying on a council's local plan and these should be considered as part of the decision-making process.



Figure two: Advantages of producing a neighbourhood plan

## **Other issues to be considered prior to commencing a neighbourhood plan**

- 3.3. We would suggest that the qualifying body considers the following questions/issues as part of a wider discussion around whether a neighbourhood plan is an appropriate tool for the area:

### **Have an early conversation with a planning officer at West Suffolk Council**

- The planning team can provide an outline of the process, explain what support is available and provide information on funding streams.

### **Establish the core motivations for wanting to undertake a neighbourhood plan**

- Bear in mind that Neighbourhood plans cannot be used as a tool to obstruct or prevent growth. Plans can propose more growth than is allocated in a council's local plan.

### **Decide on the key local issues for consideration**

- These could include housing, heritage, environment, ecology, design or transport issues. It will be useful to discuss these and agree on priorities as a local community.

### **Look at examples of other neighbourhood plans in West Suffolk and speak with neighbouring town and/or parish councils to hear their view of the process**

- It can be invaluable to speak with another town or parish council which has prepared or is in the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan.
- They will be able to share the pros and cons of each part of the preparation process, provide a realistic view of their day-to-day experiences and the commitment and resources required.
- Details of all neighbourhood plans being prepared in West Suffolk can be viewed on the West Suffolk Neighbourhood planning webpage.

### 3.4. Issues to be considered prior to commencing a neighbourhood plan continued

#### **Is a neighbourhood plan the right tool to deal with the issues identified?**

- In our experience, neighbourhood plans have typically taken between three and four years to produce so it is important to decide at the start whether this is the right tool to achieve the community's aspirations.
- You might consider if the council's adopted local plan contains up to date and robust policies that can appropriately deal with the issues of concern instead. There may be other documents that could be prepared to assist with the issues, for example a local housing needs survey and an affordable housing exception site to meet local needs, a community land trust, or a parish plan.

#### **Consider finance and the available funding options**

- Neighbourhood plans can be costly to produce, and while some of these costs are the responsibility of the district council, other costs will need to be funded by the body producing the plan, for example the appointment of consultants to cover specialist advice and policy writing. In June 2025 the government announced that as a result of the spending review, funding for the neighbourhood plan support programme would no longer be available. It is therefore important that qualifying bodies consider how to financially support the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. Further information can be found on [Locality's neighbourhood plan website](#) and by speaking with a planning officer.

#### **Consider the basic conditions**

- All neighbourhood plans must meet the 'basic conditions' set out in planning law. This will be tested through an independent examination. The basic conditions for neighbourhood plans are that they must:
  - have regard to national planning policy and guidance.
  - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
  - be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area.
  - be compatible with EU obligations and Human Rights Law.

## Getting Started

- 3.5. Once the decision has been made to prepare a neighbourhood plan, please confirm this with the council via the contact details in the introduction. You will then be designated an officer as your key point of contact throughout the plan preparation process. Before you get started on the detail, there are some key tasks that will help you get off to a good start.

### Identifying key contacts

- Consultation and engagement is an important part of the neighbourhood plan process. In the early stages it will be beneficial to compile a record of the contact details of those who will be involved, which could include community group representatives, local services and facilities (e.g. schools, businesses, health services) and landowners. As the plan progresses you will be able to update this list with contact details of those interested in the progress of the neighbourhood plan.
- The neighbourhood planning regulations identify a number of consultation bodies that a parish or town council should consult before submitting a plan proposal (at the regulation 14 consultation stage which is set out in further detail later in this guidance). West Suffolk council can provide a copy of the contact details for these bodies at an early stage.

### Set up a steering group

- Establishing a steering group with community commitment at the outset of the process is essential to ensure the project is properly planned and coordinated.
- The group should comprise town/parish councillors, but also representation from the wider community such as local residents, businesses and organisations to ensure the neighbourhood plan reflects the aspirations of the entire community. Ensuring that the selection process is open and inclusive is more likely to ensure community support.
- Setting up a terms of reference is a good idea, as this can set out the links between the parish or town council and the steering group, as the parish is the qualifying body with the overall responsibility for the plan.
- Informing the community of the intention to produce a neighbourhood plan through a public meeting will help recruit volunteers to the steering group and generate key issues the plan may consider.

### **Talking to the community**

- Getting the community on board from the outset is necessary in order that the neighbourhood plan will reflect their priorities and aspirations is essential.
- Informing the community of the intention to produce a neighbourhood plan through a public meeting will help recruit volunteers to the steering group and generate key issues the plan may consider.

### **Establishing a project plan**

- Prior to work commencing on the neighbourhood plan, a project plan or timeline should be produced setting out what activities will need to be undertaken at each stage.
- Project planning will also assist in identifying the type and level of resources needed, and the estimated consultation dates.

### **Appointing a consultant**

- The majority of qualifying bodies we have worked with have appointed a planning consultant to help prepare the neighbourhood plan.
- The benefit of consultant support is that expert planning advice can be given, which can result in a better neighbourhood plan that meets the requirements set out in the regulations. However, this can be costly, and many bodies begin the plan preparation process themselves, seeking help after the early community engagement has taken place.

## **Deciding whether to produce a neighbourhood plan: roles and responsibilities**

<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
The parish or town council should seek advice from West Suffolk Council prior to deciding to proceed with a neighbourhood plan.	Meet with a qualifying body to discuss neighbourhood plan preparation in greater detail and answer any questions.
If the parish/town council make the decision to proceed with a neighbourhood plan, this should be confirmed with West Suffolk Council at the earliest opportunity.	Should the decision be made to progress a neighbourhood plan, the council will support the qualifying body through the stages set out on the following pages of this protocol.  A dedicated officer and point of contact will be provided.

## **b. Designating a neighbourhood plan area**

- 3.6. The neighbourhood area is the area to which the proposed neighbourhood plan will relate. In most cases this will be the parish or town boundary, but the area can be part of a parish or combination of parishes (where this is the case consent should be sought from the neighbouring parish, and they should be represented on the steering group).
- 3.7. The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations state that an application for the designation of a neighbourhood area must include:

A map which identifies the area to which the area application relates.

A statement explaining why this area is considered appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area, and;

A statement that the organisation or body making the area application is a relevant body for the purposes of section 61G of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act.

- 3.8. Once at the stage of making the application, please use the area designation application form available on the [Neighbourhood plans](#) page of the council's website.

### **Designating a neighbourhood area: roles and responsibilities**

<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
Submit the proposal for the designation of a neighbourhood area to West Suffolk Council using the application form, with a map identifying the area to which the application relates and a statement explaining why the area is appropriate to be designated.	Assess the application and, if in accordance with the regulations, designate the area. The name of the neighbourhood area, map and the name of the body making the application will be placed on the council's neighbourhood planning webpage.
	Where consultation is required because the area does not follow the parish boundary, we will publish the name of the neighbourhood area, a map of the area and the name of the body making the application to bring the application to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the area. This consultation will run for a minimum of six weeks from when the application is published on our website.

## c. Prepare the neighbourhood plan

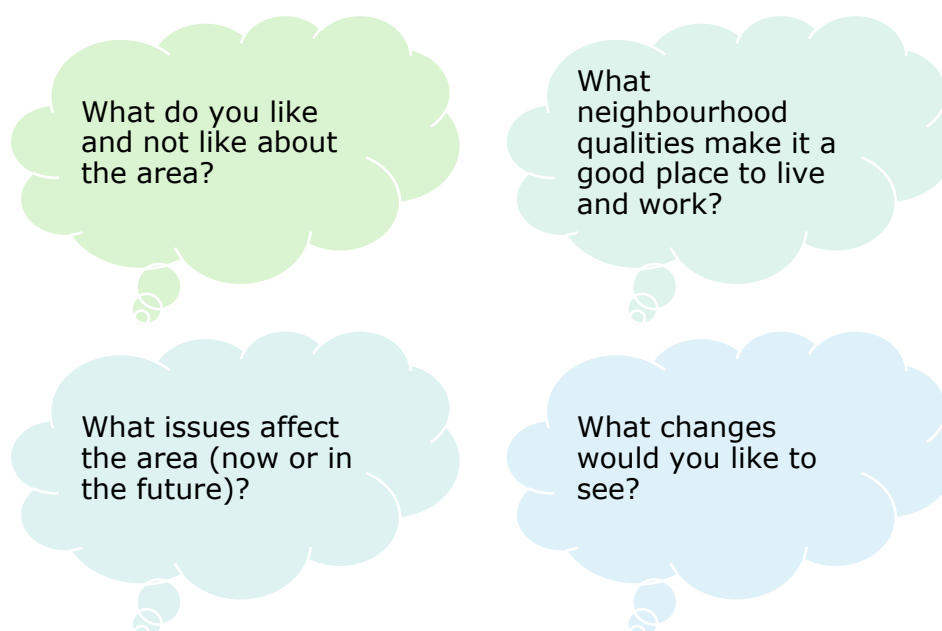
- 3.9. The structure and contents of neighbourhood plans vary significantly. They can include a comprehensive set of policies to address a wide range of issues or focus on one or two specific planning issues. They can provide detailed requirements or set general principles to guide new development. We have found the more time taken to get the plan right during this stage will save time in the later stages and maximise chances of a successful examination and referendum.

### Setting objectives and a vision for the neighbourhood plan

- 3.10. At the earliest stages of the neighbourhood plan-making process, it is important to identify what the neighbourhood plan is expected to deliver by establishing the vision and objectives. This allows aspirations to be set for how the neighbourhood plan intends to influence development environmentally, socially and economically within the local area.

### Early community engagement

- 3.11. Early engagement with the community should be undertaken to gather information, seek people's views and to identify key issues and themes that could be addressed in the neighbourhood plan. At this stage it may be useful to ask open questions such as:



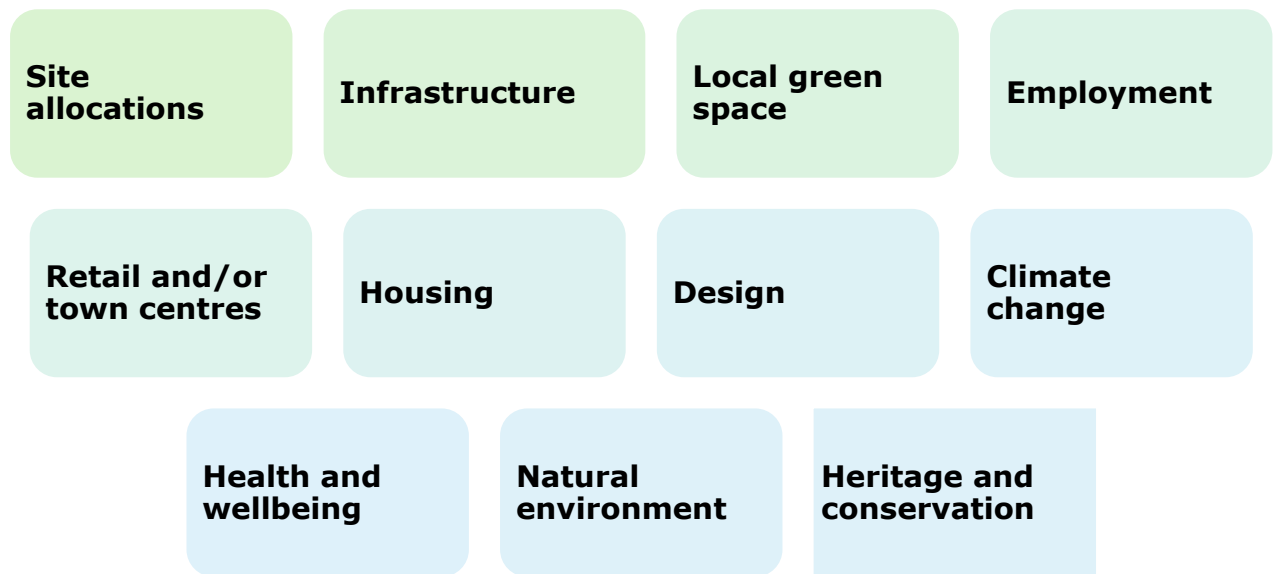
- 3.12. Local residents and businesses may have different ideas of an area's merits and problems, and it is important to provide an opportunity to express these. This engagement should seek to gather a range of views from the community using different techniques. Locality Neighbourhood Planning provides guidance for [effective methods to engage with your community](#) and gathering responses. The responses should assist in identifying common themes within the area and inform the key objectives and vision for the neighbourhood plan.

## **Gather baseline information and evidence**

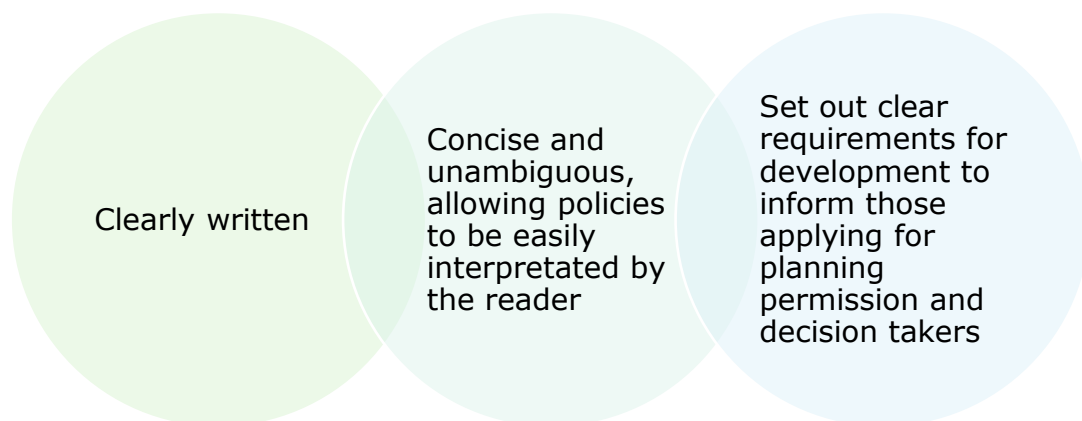
- 3.13. [National planning practice guidance](#) highlights that proportionate, robust evidence should support the choices made and the approach taken in a neighbourhood plan. In the early stages, evidence gathering will help you identify social, economic and environmental characteristics of the neighbourhood plan area.
- 3.14. As a starting point, we advise that the evidence supporting the adopted [West Suffolk Local Plan](#) is reviewed in respect of how this can help inform neighbourhood plan policies. There is no 'tick box' list of evidence required for neighbourhood planning and the existing evidence in the local plan may be sufficient to justify a neighbourhood plan policy.
- 3.15. As the neighbourhood plan progresses, it may become clear that new evidence is needed to justify an intended policy approach or to provide additional locally specific detail. This requirement for additional evidence will depend on the scale and scope of the neighbourhood plan. Officers can advise the qualifying body on whether this evidence is required during the plan preparation stage.
- 3.16. It is important to note that while the local planning authority can provide guidance in preparing evidence documents for neighbourhood plans, we cannot prepare specific evidence for a neighbourhood plan group. Locality neighbourhood planning provides further details of [guidance and toolkits](#) for preparing evidence documents. The qualifying body may also commission a consultant to prepare evidence to inform or justify a policy which will form part of the neighbourhood plan evidence base.

## **Drafting neighbourhood plan policies**

- 3.17. Neighbourhood plan-making is an iterative process, with policies being shaped and reshaped using new information as you progress through the neighbourhood plan process. As a starting point, it will be useful to review the information gathered during the early stages of the neighbourhood plan preparation and identify broad topic areas for the policies which might to cover:



- 3.18. Planning law requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Made neighbourhood plans will form part of the development plan and are used in determining planning applications in the neighbourhood plan area. Therefore, policies need to set out practical requirements, which will deliver the neighbourhood plan’s vision and how planning applications will be considered within the area.
- 3.19. The neighbourhood plan will be read by a range of people with varying degrees of local knowledge and understanding of the planning system. Policies should be:



- 3.20. It may be helpful to review policies in made neighbourhood plans as good practice examples. The policies below are examples of a site allocation concept plan and a Biodiversity and Habitats policy from made neighbourhood plans in West Suffolk. All emerging and made neighbourhood plans in West Suffolk are available on the [Neighbourhood plans](#) page of the council’s website.

## Policy HAR 8 - Biodiversity and Habitats

In addition to the biodiversity net gain requirements of the Environment Act 2021, development proposals must seek to protect and should avoid the loss of, or substantial harm to, trees, grass verges, hedgerows and other natural features such as ponds and watercourses. Where such losses or harm are unavoidable:

- i. the benefits of the development proposal must be demonstrated to clearly outweigh any impacts; and
- ii. suitable mitigation measures, that provide better replacement of the lost features will be required to achieve measurable biodiversity net gain.

Any such mitigation measures should form an integral part of the design concept. In addition, the layout and design of the development proposal concerned should be landscape-led and appropriate in relation to its setting and context and have regard to its ongoing management.

Where new access is created, or an existing access is widened, through an existing hedgerow, a new hedgerow of native species shall be planted on the splay returns into the site to maintain the appearance and continuity of hedgerows in the vicinity.

Proposals will be supported where they integrate improvements to biodiversity which will secure a measurable net gain as part of the design through, for example,

- a. the creation of new natural habitats including ponds;
- b. the planting of additional native trees and hedgerows (reflecting the character of Hargrave's traditional trees and hedgerows);
- c. the installation of bird and bat boxes; and
- d. restoring and repairing fragmented wildlife networks and creating new links between them.

Figure three: Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan Review 2013 - 2040 Biodiversity and Habitats policy HAR8



Figure four: Great Barton Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2014. Concept plan for site allocation policy GB3

### Preparing a policies map book

- 3.21. Some policies may be site specific and will only apply to particular areas of land, for example a site allocation, landscaping or local green space policy. To make it clear to the reader where these site-specific policies would apply, a policies map should be included with the neighbourhood plan.
- 3.22. The local authority can provide maps to assist with the neighbourhood plan preparation, for example to show the neighbourhood plan area or provide a base map that can be used by the neighbourhood plan group to designate site specific policies. However, the neighbourhood planning group will be required to sign a contractor licensing agreement form to allow the use of maps provided by West Suffolk Council within a neighbourhood plan document.

### The basic conditions

- 3.23. Neighbourhood plans are required to meet specific 'basic conditions' before they can be made. These basic conditions are tested through an independent examination before a neighbourhood plan may proceed to referendum. To meet the basic conditions, neighbourhood plans must:

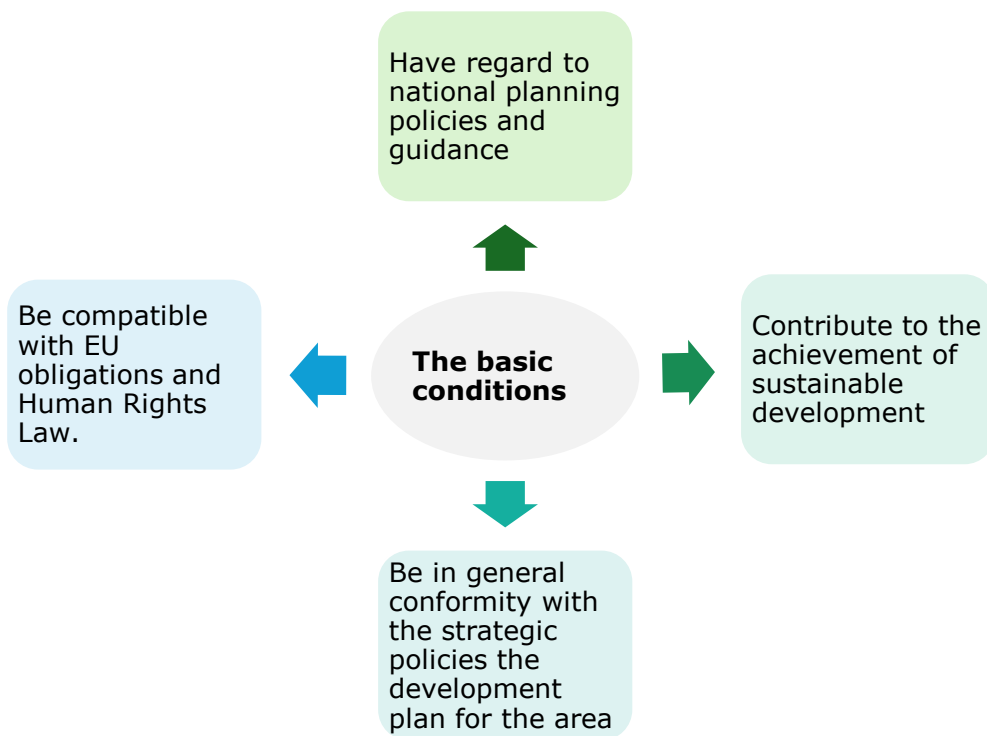


Figure 5: Basic conditions neighbourhood plans must meet

### Have regard to national planning policies and guidance

- 3.24. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) covers a wide range of planning matters and sets out general principles for neighbourhood plans to consider when drafting policies. The NPPF is an important document to review when preparing the neighbourhood plan, as policies that materially depart from national policy will be raised as an issue during the examination stage and may

require modifications, or in some circumstances, the examiner may require the policy to be removed.

- 3.25. [Planning Practice Guidance](#) (PPG) is a suite of online documents that focus on specific topic areas and are updated regularly. We would strongly recommend reading through the PPG on [neighbourhood planning](#) which provides guidance on the key stages and considerations required for preparing a neighbourhood plan.
- 3.26. To avoid repetition and duplication, there is no need for a neighbourhood plan to repeat national or local plan policies.

### **Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development**

- 3.27. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a high level, this can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 3.28. The neighbourhood plan should demonstrate how its policies contribute to improving the environmental, economic and social conditions of the local area without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### **Be in general conformity with the strategic policies the development plan for the area**

- 3.29. The National Planning Policy Framework establishes strategic policies as those that set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places and make sufficient provision for development over the lifetime of the local plan. A list of the West Suffolk Local Plan's strategic policies is included at Annex 2.
- 3.30. Neighbourhood plan policies must align with the strategic policies in the development plan and so it is important to consider the West Suffolk Local Plan when drafting policies. To avoid repetition and duplication of existing policies, there is no need for a neighbourhood plan to repeat local plan policies, however the neighbourhood plan can build upon strategic policies to provide local detail or more specific requirements within the neighbourhood area.
- 3.31. Whilst West Suffolk has a recently adopted local plan (July 2025) the council is commencing an immediate review, and the timeline for this is set out in the local development scheme which can be viewed on the [supporting information](#) pages of the council's website. Emerging local plans do not form part of the adopted development plan, but as they get closer to adoption they gain in the weight that can be attributed to them in the taking of planning decisions.
- 3.32. We would strongly recommend that advice is sought from council officers on the weight to be attached to the emerging local plan, to avoid the risk of the neighbourhood plan policies being superseded upon the adoption of the new local plan.
- 3.33. In the case that a neighbourhood plan policy conflicts with an emerging local plan policy, the more recent plan policy takes precedence. If there is a conflict between a made neighbourhood plan policy and an emerging local plan policy,

once the local plan is adopted, the local plan policy would supersede the neighbourhood plan.

### **Be compatible with EU obligations and comply with Human Rights Law**

- 3.34. West Suffolk Council can provide advice where policies are considered to be compatible with over international legislation for example, the European Convention on Human Rights. Whilst the UK is not part of the European Union, the UK government has incorporated many of its EU obligations into UK law.

### **Strategic environmental assessment and habitat regulations assessment**

- 3.35. Neighbourhood plans will be required to undertake strategic environmental assessments (SEA) screening opinion at the earliest stage to determine whether they are likely to cause significant environmental effects and/or trigger any EU directives.
- 3.36. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening, as required by the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations), will also need to be undertaken to consider whether a proposed development plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on a European site designated for its nature conservation interest.
- 3.37. Depending on the complexity of the neighbourhood plan, the screening opinion may require a full sustainability appraisal including a strategic environmental assessment and potentially appropriate assessment and screening under the habitats regulations. Completing a screening opinion at an early stage will help the qualifying body and the local authority identify possible issues and any additional evidence required to complete the neighbourhood plan.
- 3.38. The qualifying body (or its consultants) will be expected to undertake the SEA and HRA screening. This will be reviewed by West Suffolk Council to ensure they comply with EU obligations. Locality Neighbourhood Planning provides further [guidance for preparing SEA](#).
- 3.39. It is important to note that whilst there is no specified timeframe for completing an SEA screening, West Suffolk requires the completed screening reports to be subject to a five-week consultation with statutory consultees. West Suffolk Council will provide the qualifying body with the contact information for the statutory bodies that will need to be consulted on the SEA screening report.

### **Housing need requirement**

- 3.40. National policy requires councils to set a housing requirement figure for designated neighbourhood plan areas. Strategic policy SP15 Neighbourhood plans and Appendix H of the West Suffolk Local Plan (2025) sets out the minimum housing requirement of existing designated neighbourhood plan areas over the plan period to 2041. These housing requirements reflect the overall spatial strategy of the local plan.
- 3.41. We are able to provide a housing requirement to neighbourhood plan groups upon request for newly designated neighbourhood plan areas or where a

neighbourhood plan group is undertaking a review of their neighbourhood plans. We will work with neighbourhood plan groups to ensure the neighbourhood plan and local plan are aligned as far as possible. It should be noted that this housing requirement figure is a minimum figure and neighbourhood plans can include site allocation policies to provide housing in addition to those site allocations within the West Suffolk local plan.

### **Community and stakeholder engagement**

- 3.42. Community engagement throughout neighbourhood preparation is a vital part of the process and will ensure the neighbourhood plan has support from the local community and stakeholders. In drafting a neighbourhood plan, we would recommend regularly communicate with the local community at key stages to inform them of progress and keep them engaged.
- 3.43. As policies are drafted, it may be beneficial to hold more focussed discussions on individual topics to assist in understanding local concerns and how they may be addressed through the policy. Locality Neighbourhood Planning provides guidance for [effective methods to engage with your community](#).
- 3.44. Whilst land use policies can include requirements that impact the delivery of community infrastructure, neighbourhood plans cannot be used to make decisions on behalf of service providers, for example electricity, water, gas and telecoms. It is important to engage with service providers to understand how policies can be supported and ensure policy requirements are realistic and deliverable. West Suffolk can advise whether wider discussions are required.

### **Material weight to be attached to a neighbourhood plan**

- 3.45. During the preparation of a neighbourhood plan it can be expected that planning applications within the neighbourhood area will still be made. A planning application is determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.46. The emerging neighbourhood plan is likely to be a material consideration prior to it being 'made' and the weight to be attached to it will be determined in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Annex 3 provides a guide to the amount of weight to be attached to the neighbourhood plan at each stage of the preparation process.

### **Prepare the neighbourhood plan: roles and responsibilities**

<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
Set objectives and a vision for the neighbourhood plan.	Meet with the qualifying body to advise on the preparation of the neighbourhood plan.
Engage with the local community.	Provide the qualifying body with contact details of local organisations and service providers where required.
Gather baseline information and evidence.	Provide access to existing local planning authority evidence to support the neighbourhood plan preparation.

<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
Become familiar with the neighbourhood planning regulations.	Provide advice on meeting the legislative requirements.
Review the national and local policy framework.	Provide advice on draft neighbourhood policies in terms of their general conformity with national and local policies.
Draft the neighbourhood plan policies based on the information gathered.	Provide guidance on policy drafting.
Prepare SEA Screening and SEA and HRA to support the plan as required	Provide guidance on whether strategic environmental assessment and habitats regulation assessment is required.  Review the SEA Screening and provide feedback.
Ensure the plan meets the basic conditions.	Provide advice on meeting the basic conditions requirements.

#### **d. Six week Regulation 14 consultation (undertaken by the parish and/or town council)**

- 3.47. [Regulation 14 of the neighbourhood plan regulations](#) requires draft neighbourhood plans to be subject to a pre-submission consultation (also known as a regulation 14 consultation) before it is formally submitted to the local planning authority for a final round of consultation and independent examination. The purpose of the pre-submission consultation is to gain feedback on the plan and identify areas that may require improvement. This consultation must be undertaken by the qualifying body and conducted over a six-week period.
- 3.48. It is strongly recommended that the qualifying body send the pre-submission draft of the neighbourhood plan to their designated officer at West Suffolk Council for review at least four weeks prior to the start of the planned consultation. This will allow us to provide advice on the draft plan and confirm whether it meets the basic conditions.
- 3.49. The pre-submission neighbourhood plan should be published on the qualifying body's neighbourhood plan website for the consultation. As a minimum, the qualifying body will be required to:

**Publicise the draft plan to people who live, work or run businesses in the area.**

**This publicity must include details of the proposed neighbourhood plan, where and when it may be viewed, and how to make comments on the plan and by what date.**

**Consult statutory bodies as set out in the neighbourhood plan regulations. As the local planning authority, we can provide you with a list of contact details for the statutory consultees that you will be required to consult.**

- 3.50. To raise more awareness for the neighbourhood plan, you may wish to hold additional events or advertise the pre submission consultation more widely. Locality Neighbourhood Planning provides guidance for [effective methods to engage with your community](#) that should be considered when hosting your consultation.
- 3.51. Alongside the draft neighbourhood plan, West Suffolk Council also require a completed strategic environmental assessment screening to be published as part pre-submission consultation. This includes any comments made during its consultation as set out in the section on strategic environmental assessment above.
- 3.52. UK legalisation requires all public sector websites and mobile applications to be made accessible, which includes all documents published on those websites. As the final submission consultation will be hosted by West Suffolk Council (see

stage 7), all neighbourhood plan documents that form part of the consultation must be accessible. The National Association of Local Councils has published [Website accessibility and publishing guidelines](#) to assist parish councils in making websites and documents on their websites accessible.

- 3.53. There is also [guidance](#) available to assist you in making documents accessible for publication on the council's website. When reviewing the neighbourhood plan consultation documents, we will also provide advice and recommendations on meeting accessibility requirements if required.

### **Six-week regulation 14 consultation: roles and responsibilities**

<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
Ensure all neighbourhood plan documents are drafted taking into account accessibility guidelines	Review the draft plan to ensure the accessibility guidelines and basic conditions are met
Send West Suffolk Council the pre-submission neighbourhood plan for review at least four weeks prior to the start of the pre-submission consultation	Provide the qualifying body with statutory consultee contact details for consultation notification
Publicise and host the pre-submission neighbourhood plan consultation	Respond to the consultation as a consultee

**e. Consider comments received and revise the neighbourhood plan**

- 3.54. Any comments received during the consultation period should be considered by the qualifying body, and the decision made whether the neighbourhood plan should be amended to deal with the issues raised.
- 3.55. To ensure a good audit trail, and to assist with the consultation report that is required at the next consultation stage, it is recommended that a report is prepared setting out the issues raised during the pre-submission consultation with responses by the qualifying body, including the reasoning for any amendments, or why issues do not need to be addressed.

**Consider comments received and revise the neighbourhood plan: roles and responsibilities**

<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
Consider the consultation comments and issues and whether any changes are needed to the draft neighbourhood plan	The planning authority has no role at this stage
Prepare a report of comments received to the pre-submission consultation, setting out reasons for any changes made to the plan, or why comments do not need to be addressed	

## **f. Submit the final plan to West Suffolk Council**

- 3.56. Once the pre-submission consultation comments have been taken into account and the neighbourhood plan has been reviewed, the final neighbourhood plan can be submitted to the local planning authority.
- 3.57. After submitting the plan, the local planning authority is responsible for the remainder of the plan making process but will still be able to offer advice.
- 3.58. The neighbourhood plan submission must include:

### **The draft neighbourhood plan**

- The neighbourhood plan that will be consulted on during the submission (regulation 16) consultation. Before the plan is submitted to West Suffolk Council, we strongly recommend review the plan to ensure it has been prepared in accordance with the legislative requirements set out below.

### **A map of the neighbourhood area**

- A map or statement showing the area that the neighbourhood plan relates to. We strongly recommend that a map is submitted rather than a statement.

### **A consultation statement**

- This statement should explain how you have consulted on neighbourhood plan and responded to the comments received.

### **A basic conditions statement**

- This statement should explain how the neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions.

### **An updated SEA screening report**

- This report must reflect any changes made to the plan since preparing the initial screening report.

### **Any additional supporting documents that have been used to support the neighbourhood plan**

- For example, site options and selection, information to support design, landscape or local green space policies.

### **Document review**

- 3.59. West Suffolk Council will require four weeks to review the documents submitted by the qualifying body to ensure the neighbourhood plan has been prepared in accordance with the legislative requirements, including meeting the basic

conditions and national accessibility requirements. If the plan meets these requirements, the local planning authority will progress the plan towards the neighbourhood plan Regulation 16 submission consultation.

- 3.60. If the draft neighbourhood plan is found to not have met the legislative requirements or the basic conditions, we will provide recommendations on how to proceed and what amendments are required. There is no specific timeframe for making these changes, however we would recommend they are made by the qualifying body in a timely manner to avoid delay in commencing the submission consultation. After these changes have been made, the local planning authority will require another four weeks to review the amended neighbourhood plan and provide additional comments.

### **Accessibility requirements**

- 3.61. As in previous stages, the plan and supporting documents should be drafted to meet UK legalisation around [website accessibility and publishing guidelines](#). When reviewing the submission neighbourhood plan consultation documents, we will also provide advice and recommendations on meeting accessibility requirements if required.

### **The consultation statement**

- 3.62. The consultation statement needs to demonstrate that the neighbourhood plan has been subject to consultation in accordance with the regulations, and the representations from the consultation have been considered and taken into account.
- 3.63. The statement should focus on the pre-submission consultation; however it should also include a summary of other community engagements and consultation that have been undertaken. As a minimum, the consultation statement should include the following details:

**Details of people and organisations consulted about the proposed neighbourhood plan.**

**Details of how they were consulted.**

**A summary of the key issues and concerns raised through the consultation process.**

**Descriptions of how these issues and concerns were considered and addressed in the proposed neighbourhood plan.**

- 3.64. The consultation statement can also include summarise other engagement that has informed the neighbourhood plan, for example with stakeholders and statutory consultees.

## The basic conditions statement

- 3.65. The basic conditions statement sets out how the neighbourhood plan meets each of the basic conditions as described in stage 3 above. As a minimum, the basic condition statement should:

**Explain how the neighbourhood plan has considered national policy.**

**Demonstrate how the plan contributes to achieving sustainable development.**

**Explain how the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan, including in meeting growth requirements.**

**Summarise how the neighbourhood plan meets EU obligations, including SEA screening outcomes and, where required, any subsequent reports.**

**Confirm that the plan is compatible with human rights legislation.**

## Submit the final plan to West Suffolk Council: roles and responsibilities

<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
Submit the neighbourhood plan and associated documents to the local planning authority.	Review the plan and associated documents to ensure the accessibility guidelines and basic conditions are met.

**g. Six-week Regulation 16 consultation (undertaken by West Suffolk Council)**

- 3.66. Once satisfied that the neighbourhood plan documents have met the legal and accessibility requirements, West Suffolk Council will commence the regulation 16 neighbourhood plan submission consultation (also known as a submission consultation). The consultation usually commences within four weeks of signing off the documents.
- 3.67. The consultation will be organised by West Suffolk Council and will invite comments on the neighbourhood plan from the local community and statutory consultees. To help raise awareness of the consultation, we will ask you to provide contact details of any local consultees that have asked to be kept informed of the neighbourhood plan. The consultation will run for at least six weeks from the first day the neighbourhood plan is publicised.
- 3.68. The council are also able to prepare two hard copies of the neighbourhood plan consultation documents to be placed in community areas, for example a village hall or community centre. Hard copies of the neighbourhood plan will also be made available in our council offices at Bury St Edmunds and Mildenhall.
- 3.69. Any representations made during the consultation are not formally considered by West Suffolk Council and are passed to the independent examiner. West Suffolk Council will also provide a formal response to the neighbourhood plan consultation.

**Six-week regulation 16 consultation: roles and responsibilities**

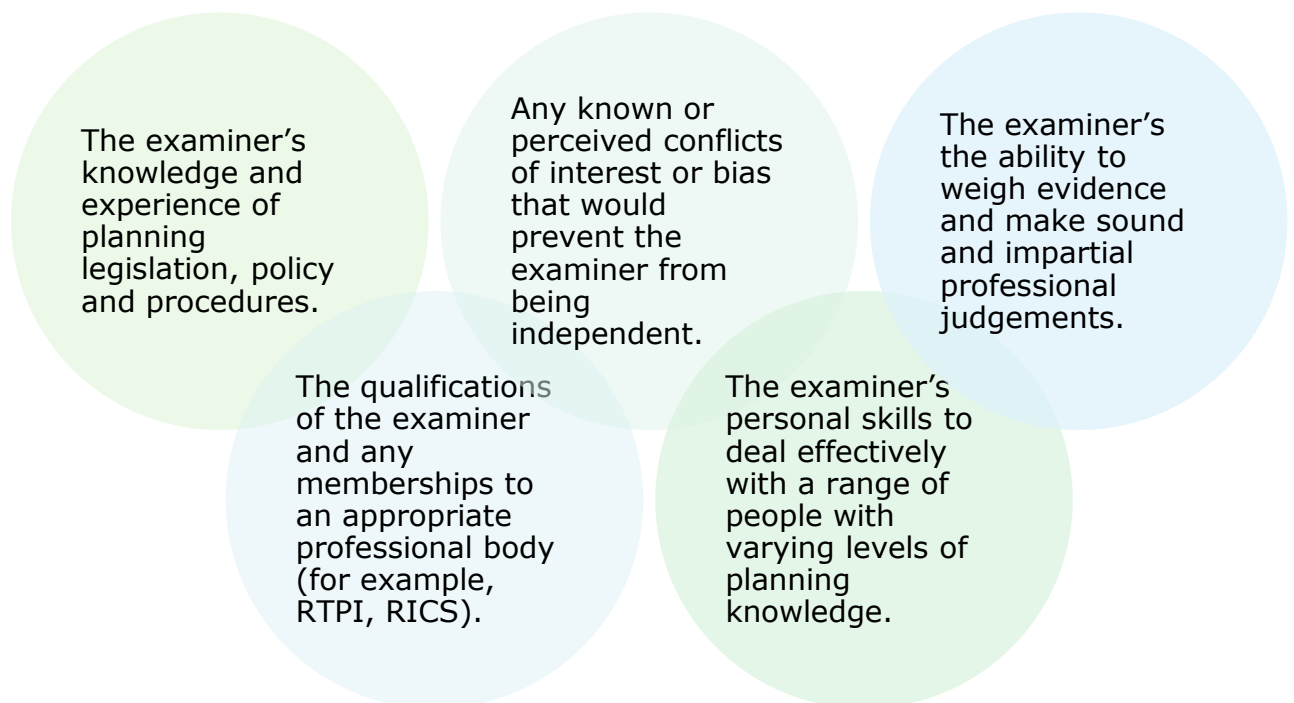
<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
Provide the planning authority with contact details of any local consultees who have asked to be kept informed of the neighbourhood plan.	Publicise and host the regulation 16 neighbourhood plan consultation on the council's website for six weeks.
Promote the regulation 16 consultation within the local community.	Provide a maximum of two hard copies of the consultation documents for placing in the local community.
	Respond to the consultation as a consultee.

## **h. Examination**

- 3.70. During this process, the examiner will consider the evidence submitted and determine whether the proposed neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements.

### **Appointing an independent examiner**

- 3.71. As the local planning authority, we will appoint and fund an independent examiner to conduct an independent examination of the neighbourhood plan. The appointment of the examiner must be agreed between the local planning authority and the qualifying body who can propose a preferred examiner for West Suffolk Council to consider. When discussing and agreeing an examiner with the local authority, we would recommend considering the following factors:



- 3.72. Once an examiner has been agreed and appointed, the planning authority will submit to them the neighbourhood plan, any supporting information and all representations made during the regulation 16 submission consultation.

### **The independent examination**

- 3.73. The neighbourhood plan examination process is led by the examiner. The examiner will review the information submitted and consider whether the plan meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements in order to make a recommendation whether the plan should proceed to referendum.

- 3.74. The examiner will usually seek additional information from the qualifying body at an early stage in the examination through a clarification note. The note, and the response to it, will be published on the council's website.
- 3.75. The examination process is normally conducted through written representations, however, depending on the complexity of the neighbourhood plan or issues raised during the submission consultation, the examiner may invite interested parties to a public hearing to present comments.
- 3.76. If the examiner requests that a public hearing is held to discuss the neighbourhood plan, the planning authority and qualifying body will agree a suitable local venue for hosting the public hearing.

### **The examiner's report**

- 3.77. The examiner will prepare a report of their findings which will set out recommendations for whether the neighbourhood plan should proceed to referendum and whether any modifications are required. Before the examiner's final report is published, a draft report will be sent to the local planning authority and qualifying body for fact-checking. This is not an opportunity to raise new issues or challenge the contents of the report, but clarification may be sought if necessary.
- 3.78. The final examiner's report will be published on the council's website. The most common outcome is that the examiner recommends that the neighbourhood plan should proceed to local referendum subject to modifications. West Suffolk Council will discuss the recommendations with the qualifying body, including any modifications needed for the plan to meet the basic conditions and proceed to referendum.
- 3.79. It is usual to follow the independent examiner's recommendations. However, in exceptional circumstances and where there is a clear reason to do so, we may conclude that it would be necessary to depart from the examiner's recommendations to meet the basic conditions.
- 3.80. West Suffolk Council will prepare a decision statement, considering each of the examiner's recommendations and concluding whether the plan should proceed to referendum. Typically, the decision statement will be published within five weeks of publishing the final examiner's report.
- 3.81. Once the modifications have been agreed, the qualifying body will be asked to include them in an updated referendum version of the neighbourhood plan.

## Examination: roles and responsibilities

<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
Liaise with the planning authority over the appointment of an examiner, giving an indication of any preference.	Appoint and fund the examiner.
	Respond to any queries raised by the examiner.
	Submit to the examiner the neighbourhood plan, any supporting information and all representations made during the regulation 16 submission consultation.
	If required by the examiner, organise and fund a public hearing.
Review the examiner's fact check report for inaccuracies.	Review the examiner's fact check report for inaccuracies.
	Publish the final examiner's report on the council's website
Discuss and agree any proposed modifications with the planning authority.	Discuss and agree any proposed modifications with the qualifying body.
Update the neighbourhood plan to reflect the agreed modifications ready for referendum.	Within five weeks of receiving the examiner's report, publish a decision statement stating that the neighbourhood plan will proceed to a local referendum

## **i. Referendum**

- 3.82. If the examination concludes that the neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions and, if necessary, any modifications have been agreed and made, the local planning authority will arrange for a local referendum to take place.
- 3.83. The referendum is organised by the council's elections team who will set the election date following national guidelines and regulations. The qualifying body's help may be sought in booking the necessary polling stations. Information about the neighbourhood plan referendum will be published by West Suffolk at least 28 working days before it takes place. We are also required to give 25 working days' notice to those participating in the referendum of the date of the poll.
- 3.84. The referendum will ask voters a standard YES/NO question:
- 'Do you want West Suffolk Council to use the neighbourhood plan for [neighbourhood plan area name] to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'**
- 3.85. A positive vote is achieved if 50 per cent plus one vote in favour of the referendum question. West Suffolk Council will undertake the count, usually on the day following the referendum and the qualifying body may nominate count observers. A declaration of the poll results will be published on the council's website.
- 3.86. As the qualifying body, you may encourage people in the neighbourhood plan area to vote on the proposed neighbourhood plan, which can include the preparation of materials. However, public money, including parish council funds, can only produce factual material about the plan and cannot influence individuals to vote in a particular way.

### **Referendum: roles and responsibilities**

<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
When required, provide help with the booking of polling stations.	Arrange, fund and run the local referendum in accordance with national guidelines and regulations.
Make the local community aware of the referendum, without influencing voters.	

## **j. Plan 'Made' by West Suffolk Council**

- 3.87. If a neighbourhood plan gains a fifty per cent plus one vote in the referendum, the plan is given full weight in making planning decisions in the neighbourhood area. West Suffolk Council has eight weeks from the day after the referendum to 'make' the neighbourhood plan. The plan will be 'made' at a meeting of full council, a public meeting open for anyone to attend.
- 3.88. Once made, the neighbourhood plan will formally become part of the development plan for West Suffolk. This means applications for planning permission within the neighbourhood plan area will be required to be in accordance with the neighbourhood plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.
- 3.89. After the plan has been 'made' the council will publish a decision statement confirming the outcome of the referendum, the date the plan was 'made' and that it now forms part of the statutory development plan for the district. The decision will be published on our website and will be sent to the qualifying body and anyone who has asked to be notified of the council's decision.
- 3.90. The qualifying body will be asked to update the front cover of the neighbourhood plan to reflect the date it was 'made' and it will then be added to the development plan pages of the council's website.

### **Plan 'made' by West Suffolk Council: roles and responsibilities**

<b>The qualifying body's role</b>	<b>The local planning authority's role</b>
Update the front cover of the plan to reflect the date the plan was 'made'.	If the plan was successful at referendum, decide on the date the plan will be made at a meeting of full council (no later than eight weeks from the date after the referendum).
	Once the plan is made, issue a decision statement and notify anyone who has asked to be kept updated on the progress of the neighbourhood plan.
	Include the 'made' neighbourhood plan on the development plan page of the council's website.

## **k. Monitoring the neighbourhood plan**

- 3.91. After a plan is made, it is recommended that a process for monitoring the neighbourhood plan is established to ensure the neighbourhood plan is effective at delivering the plan's vision and objectives.
- 3.92. It is recommended that planning applications in the neighbourhood plan area are monitored. This can include making representations where necessary on planning applications setting out how proposals are supported or not supported by the neighbourhood plan.
- 3.93. It may also be appropriate to record how the policies have been interpreted by decision takers when determining planning applications and planning appeals. Monitoring the use of the neighbourhood plan will help highlight areas where the neighbourhood plan may require updating to ensure the neighbourhood plan meets its objectives.

## **I. Reviewing a made neighbourhood plan**

- 3.94. There are no specific requirements for neighbourhood plans to be reviewed or updated. However, there may be circumstances that mean the neighbourhood plan may need to consider a review:

### **Changes in circumstances and evidence**

- 3.95. Through monitoring how the neighbourhood plan is being applied when determining planning applications, you may identify that policies are not having the expected outcome for development in the neighbourhood plan area. The local community and/or new evidence may highlight new or different local issues in the area that are not addressed through the neighbourhood plan, in which case the policies may benefit from being revised to ensure they are effective in delivering the desired outcomes.

### **A review of local policy**

- 3.96. The National Planning Policy Framework requires that a local plan is reviewed at least every five years to determine whether policies need to be updated. Subsequently local policies may be updated in response to this review. Where policies within a neighbourhood plan and the local plan conflict, the most recently adopted (or made) plan will take precedence when determining a planning application. Therefore, it may be appropriate to undertake a review of neighbourhood plan policies to ensure they remain in line with local policy.

### **A review of national legislation and policy**

- 3.97. National policies, legislation and planning guidance is updated regularly and could potentially impact the neighbourhood plan. Case law and appeal decisions can also be a material consideration for interpreting policies. Changes to national policy could lead to neighbourhood plan policies being in conflict with national policy. This conflict in policy would be a material consideration when considering applications and may be used to justify planning applications to be determined in departure of some neighbourhood plan policies.

### **Updating the neighbourhood plan**

- 3.98. In reviewing the neighbourhood plan, one or multiple policies may be identified that are considered to be out-of-date and/or require amendments. However, this does not necessarily mean that the whole neighbourhood plan is out-of-date.
- 3.99. Where changes are needed to update the neighbourhood plan, there are different statutory processes depending on the nature and extent of the modifications required. The table below shows the three processes for updating a neighbourhood plan.

	<b>Minor (non-material) updates</b>	<b>Material Modifications that do not change the nature of the plan</b>	<b>Material Modifications that changes the nature of the plan</b>
<b>Examples of the changes that could be included</b>	<p>Correcting typographical errors.</p> <p>Updating inconsistencies.</p> <p>Adding information for clarification that would not change the stance or interpretation of the plan.</p> <p>Updating references.</p>	<p>Providing additional detail to an existing policy.</p> <p>Introducing new allocations that will not change the nature of the plan.</p>	<p>Changing a housing settlement boundary.</p> <p>Creating a new policy.</p> <p>Modifying the neighbourhood plan area.</p> <p>Introducing new allocations that will change the nature of the plan.</p>
<b>An overview of the process required</b>	<p>Required to agree changes with West Suffolk council.</p> <p>No consultation, examination or referendum required.</p>	<p>Requires a pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation.</p> <p>Requires a submission (Regulation 16) consultation.</p> <p>Requires an examination.</p> <p>No Referendum required depending on the examiner's recommendation.</p>	<p>Requires a pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation.</p> <p>Requires a submission (Regulation 16) consultation.</p> <p>Requires an examination.</p> <p>Requires a referendum.</p>

3.100. We would recommend as a first step having a discussion with the local planning authority prior to commencing the review process. We will be able to discuss the differences in the three approaches in more detail, including which process we expect the changes you are considering will need to be undertaken. The greater the changes to a neighbourhood plan, the more involved the review is expected to be. Similar to when preparing the neighbourhood plan, it is important to consider the resources required to undertake the review process, for example, the need for external support, funding, and volunteers to carry out the review of the neighbourhood plan.

## **Annex 1: Further sources of information on neighbourhood planning**

### **West Suffolk Council**

- Email the planning policy team at [neighbourhood.planning@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhood.planning@westsuffolk.gov.uk)
- View information on the council's [Neighbourhood planning](#) webpages

### **National guidance and regulations**

- [The Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#)
- [National Planning Policy Framework](#)
- [Neighbourhood planning - GOV.UK](#)

### **Other sources**

- [Home - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)
- [Neighbourhood Plans | Local Government Association](#)
- [How to shape where you live: a guide to neighbourhood planning - CPRE](#)
- [Neighbourhood Planning - MyCommunity](#)

## Annex 2: West Suffolk Local Plan Strategic Policies

Neighbourhood plans should conform with the West Suffolk Local Plan strategic policies listed below:

Policy SP1 The climate and environment emergency and sustainable development
Policy SP2 Flood risk and sustainable drainage
Policy SP3 Health and wellbeing
Policy SP4 Design
Policy SP5 Green Infrastructure
Policy SP6 Locally valued landscapes
Policy SP7 Landscape
Policy SP8 Biodiversity net gain and enhancements
Policy SP9 Protected sites, habitats, and features
Policy SP10 Special protection areas and special areas of conservation
Policy SP11 Recreational effects of development
Policy SP12 The Spatial Strategy
Policy SP13 Settlement hierarchy
Policy SP14 Housing needs
Policy SP15 Neighbourhood plans
Policy SP16 Affordable housing
Policy SP17 Housing type and tenure
Policy SP18 Rural exception sites
Policy SP19 Gypsies and Travellers and travelling showpeople
Policy SP20 Custom and self-build
Policy SP21 Housing in the countryside
Policy SP22 Strategic employment
Policy SP23 General employment and rural employment areas
Policy SP24 Economic development and essential utilities in the countryside
Policy SP25 Retail and other complimentary town centre uses
Policy SP26 Horse racing industry development
Policy SP27 Development affecting the horse racing industry
Policy SP28 Change of use and development of horse racing industry sites
Policy SP29 Safeguarding horse walks and crossings
Policy SP30 Historic environment
Policy SP31 Infrastructure
Policy SP32 Existing special operational uses
Policy AP1 Land at Warren Close, Brandon
Policy AP2 Brandon Cemetery
Policy AP3 Land north of Rougham Tower Avenue, Bury St Edmunds
Policy AP4 West Bury St Edmunds
Policy AP5 North-east Bury St Edmunds
Policy AP6 South-east Bury St Edmunds
Policy AP7 Land to the north of Mount Road, Bury St Edmunds
Policy AP8 Former railway sidings, Bury St Edmunds
Policy AP9 Land west of Rougham Road, Bury St Edmunds
Policy AP10 West Suffolk Hospital
Policy AP11 West Suffolk Operational Waste Hub and reserved land
Policy AP12 Suffolk Business Park extension, Bury St Edmunds
Policy AP13 North-west Haverhill

Policy AP14 North-east Haverhill
Policy AP15 Former Wisdom Toothbrush Factory, Colne Valley Road, Haverhill
Policy AP16 Land west of Mildenhall, north and south of West Row Road, Mildenhall
Policy AP17 Land at College Heath Road, Mildenhall
Policy AP18 Mildenhall Academy and Dome Leisure Centre site, Mildenhall
Policy AP19 Hatchfield Farm, Fordham Road, Newmarket
Policy AP20 Pinewood Stud, Newmarket
Policy AP21 Land off High Street, Black Bear Lane and Rowley Drive (Queensbury Lodge), Newmarket
Policy AP22 Former St Felix Middle School site, Newmarket
Policy AP23 Primary school provision in Newmarket
Policy AP24 Land off Bury Road, Barrow
Policy AP25 Land off Denham Lane, Barrow
Policy AP26 Land north of Barrow Primary School
Policy AP27 Land north of Cavendish Road, Clare
Policy AP28 Land south of Cavendish Road, Clare
Policy AP29 Land at Bardwell Road, Ixworth
Policy AP30 Land north of Crown Lane and west of A143, Ixworth
Policy AP31 Land at junction of Hall Road and Mill Road, Kedington
Policy AP32 Matthews Nursery, High Street, Lakenheath
Policy AP33 Land west of Eriswell Road, Lakenheath
Policy AP34 Land at Rabbithill Covert, Station Road, Lakenheath
Policy AP35 Land north of Station Road, Lakenheath
Policy AP36 Land off Briscoe Way, Lakenheath
Policy AP37 Land north of Burrow Drive and Briscoe Way, Lakenheath
Policy AP38 Land north of Acorn Way, Red Lodge
Policy AP39 Land east of Warren Road, Red Lodge
Policy AP40 Land east of Bury Road, Stanton
Policy AP41 Shepherds Grove, Stanton and Hepworth
Policy AP42 Land south of Hopton Road, Barningham
Policy AP43 Land at Lamble Close, Beck Row
Policy AP44 Land at Rookery Drove, Beck Row
Policy AP45 Land off Bury Road, Hopton
Policy AP46 Land at Mill Lane, Hundon
Policy AP47 Land east of School Road, Moulton
Policy AP48 Land north of Moulton Primary School
Policy AP49 Land west of Kingshall Street, Rougham
Policy AP50 Land east of Beeches Road, West Row
Policy AP51 Land west of West Row Primary School
Policy AP52 Land west of Bunters Road, Wickhambrook
Policy AP53 Land at School Lane, Bardwell
Policy AP54 Land east of Church Lane, Barton Mills
Policy AP55 Land at Queens Lane, Chedburgh
Policy AP56 Land west of Queens Lane, Chedburgh
Policy AP57 Land adjacent to Moseley's Farm, Fornham All Saints
Policy AP58 Land fronting The Street, Fornham St Martin
Policy AP59 Land north of village hall, Freckenham
Policy AP60 Land north of Troston Road, Honington and Sapiston
Policy AP61 Land south of Bardwell Road, Honington and Sapiston
Policy AP62 Land off Chevington Road, Horringer

Policy AP63 Land north of Griffin Gardens, Ingham
Policy AP64 Land adjacent to Park Farm, Fornham St Genevieve
Policy AP65 Park Farm (St Genevieve Lakes) Ingham

## Annex 3: The material weight of neighbourhood plans

During the preparation of a neighbourhood plan it can be expected that planning applications within the neighbourhood area will still be made. A planning application is determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The emerging neighbourhood plan is likely to be a material consideration prior to it being 'made' and the weight to be attached to it will be determined in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The NPPF at paragraph 49 states that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) The stage of preparation of the emerging plan.
- b) The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies.
- c) The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF.

The table below provides an indication of the material weight likely to be attributed to the neighbourhood plan as it progresses.

<b>Stage in neighbourhood plan preparation</b>	<b>Material weight</b>
<b>Neighbourhood Area designation</b>	<b>No weight</b>
<b>Regulation 14 Plan published (post consultation)</b>	<b>Limited weight</b> The regulation 14 consultation is undertaken by the parish council, with the local planning authority not party to any objections made.
<b>Regulation 16 Neighbourhood Plan published (post consultation)</b>	<b>Limited to moderate weight</b> The regulation 16 consultation is undertaken by the local planning authority. The parish will have provided a consultation statement and legal compliance check, so conformity with national and local policy can be established. The authority can make a judgment on any unresolved objections. More weight can be given to those neighbourhood plan policies with limited or no objections.
<b>Examiner's Report published</b>	<b>Considerable weight</b> The neighbourhood plan will have been assessed against the basic conditions. Any unresolved objections will have been assessed and where necessary modifications to the plan proposed.
<b>Post Referendum</b>	<b>Full weight</b> After the announcement of the referendum results, the neighbourhood

Stage in neighbourhood plan preparation	Material weight
	plan will have full legal weight prior to it being 'made'.
<b>The neighbourhood plan is 'made'</b>	<b>Full weight</b> The neighbourhood plan comes into force and forms part of the development plan.