

# Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit

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# Contents

- 00** Welcome to your toolkit
- 01** Understanding Neighbourhood planning
- 02** Initial research and community engagement
- 03** Is a Neighbourhood plan right for you?
- 04** Getting going
- 05** Make it engaging!
- 06** Creating your evidence base
- 07** Writing your plan
- 08** The formal process
- 09** You have a finished plan! Now what?
- 10** Links and resources

# Welcome to your neighbourhood planning toolkit

**Thinking about shaping the future of your local area? This guide is here to help!**

Whether you're a parish council, community group or a bunch of passionate neighbours, this toolkit offers a clear, step-by-step introduction to Neighbourhood plans in the Canterbury District. We know there's lots of guidance out there already and this isn't meant to replace it. Instead, it complements existing resources and shows how we can support you along the way. We'll also link to key documents like the Corporate Plan, Local Plan and other planning policies to help you connect your ideas with the bigger picture.

Neighbourhood plans carry real weight in shaping future development but they do take time, energy and commitment. That's why we encourage you to start by exploring local issues and listening to your community. There are other tools too, like Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) and Design Codes, that might suit your goals better.

Before diving in, take a look at our flow chart to help you scope things out and decide whether a Neighbourhood plan is the right fit for your area. Sections 01, 02, and 03 of the guide are for everybody and are written to help you make your mind up if a Neighbourhood plan is right for you and your area. Sections 04 through to 09 are aimed at those groups which have decided to produce a Neighbourhood plan.

So, this guide begins at the very start of your journey. Let's explore your options together.

The image features a dark blue background. In the top-left corner, there is a light blue geometric shape that resembles a stylized 'L' or a corner cut-off. The shape is composed of a vertical rectangle on the left and a horizontal rectangle on top, meeting at a sharp corner. The rest of the background is a solid, dark blue color.

01

# Understanding Neighbourhood planning

Before you commit to preparing a Neighbourhood plan, it is important to do some initial research and speak to your community about what issues are important to them and think carefully about whether a legal Neighbourhood plan is the right route for addressing these.



## **Initial research:**

To include early community engagement and information gathering.



## **Deciding whether a Neighbourhood plan is the best route:**

Think about what a Neighbourhood plan can and can't do and what other options are available.

The following page shows the process of preparing a Neighbourhood plan to let you know the process.



# The Neighbourhood plan process

If you decide, following this early research, a Neighbourhood plan is the right approach, the next stages of preparing the plan are as follows.



## **Preparing your evidence base**

to include robust and thorough community engagement, detailed research and determining options and priorities.



## **Drafting the plan**

including planning policy and plan development.



## **Pre-Submission (Reg 14) consultation**

lasting minimum of six weeks, run by the 'qualifying body' (the jargon for the town or parish council or neighbourhood forum responsible).



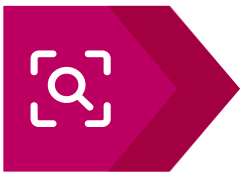
## **Revisions**

the revision of the draft plan, prepare the statutory documents (ie Submission Plan, Basic Conditions Statement and Consultation Report).



## **Submission plan**

subject to a majority 'yes' vote, the Neighbourhood plan is made.



## **Independent examination**

to receive the examiner's report recommending modifications.

# The Neighbourhood plan process



## **Modified plan**

to be subject to a local referendum.



## **Making the plan**

the revision of the draft plan, prepare the statutory documents (ie Submission Plan, Basic Conditions Statement and Consultation Report).

The most time intensive phases are the first two and running these early phases thoroughly is critical to the success of the remaining phases.

Phase 3 onwards can often happen in quick succession and are typically far less time consuming than the first two phases.

The first phase requires attention to detail to ensure inclusivity by involving all parts of the community, while the second phase must be responsive to national planning policy, Local Plan policies and other influencing factors, such as environmental designations and recently-granted planning permissions.

Ensuring Phases 1 and 2 are completed properly is an investment in the foundations of the project, allowing future work elements to proceed smoothly and quickly.

# How can Canterbury City Council help?

Our officers are here to provide help and guidance.

We are on hand to advise on practical and legal requirements of preparing a Neighbourhood plan which could include guidance on engagement and consultation, providing contact details of relevant stakeholders and reviewing written drafts to ensure 'basic conditions' are met.

We can also provide existing data and evidence used in the preparation of Local Plans, which may help in the development of Neighbourhood plans.

Your council is there to help, not to take over.

Officers will discuss your group's ideas, offer guidance when needed and make sure your plan is robust and ready to make a real difference.

It's a partnership built on local knowledge, shared goals and a commitment to shaping places that work for everyone.

It's a good idea to involve them throughout and especially when you're drafting your first set of planning policies.

We can help ensure your policies are robust, compliant and fit for purpose.

The contact email for Neighbourhood plan support is [policy@Canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:policy@Canterbury.gov.uk)

The following page shows some of the typical ways they can lend a hand.

# How can Canterbury City Council help?

Stage or Task	Support that can be provided
Help you get started	Explain what a Neighbourhood plan is and how it works, support you in applying to designate your neighbourhood area, offer advice on whether a Neighbourhood plan is the right tool for your goals.
Provide useful information	Discuss any initial ideas you may have, share maps, data and planning policies relevant to your area, help you understand the Local Plan and how your Neighbourhood plan can fit, also to point you to other useful resources, toolkits and examples.
Offer technical advice	Guide you through the legal steps and planning rules, advise on writing planning policies that are clear, effective and evidence-based, help you understand what kind of evidence you'll need to support your ideas.
Support community engagement	Suggest ways to involve local people and gather views, share best practice from other groups, help you design surveys or host consultation events.
Review and comment	Give feedback on your draft plan before it goes to formal consultation, check that your plan meets the basic conditions required by law.
Organise the final stages	Arrange the independent examination of your plan, run the final local referendum so residents can vote on it.

# What can your Neighbourhood plan do?

## What does a Neighbourhood Development Plan do exactly?

Imagine you could have a say in how your neighbourhood changes over the coming years. Well, that's exactly what a Neighbourhood plan is all about. It's a community-led framework used for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. It's like a roadmap that outlines what the community wants to achieve, how it plans to do it and what they want the area to look like in the future.

## Is a Neighbourhood plan right for you?

To help you decide the approach that will be best for you, we set out here how a Neighbourhood plan can empower your community to influence local development in meaningful ways. But it must work within the wider framework of national and local policies.

Understanding what it can and cannot do helps make the most of this tool to benefit your area.

## What a Neighbourhood plan can and cannot do

Think of a Neighbourhood plan as a way for your community to have a say in how your area develops and grows. Here's what it can do:



### Shape future development:

decide where new homes, shops and workplaces should be built and what they should look like.



### Protect green spaces:

designate cherished parks and open spaces for special protection.



### Enhance local amenities:

plan for better local facilities such as schools, healthcare and transport links.

# What can your Neighbourhood plan do?



## **Support local businesses:**

include policies that encourage new and existing businesses to thrive.

While a Neighbourhood plan is powerful, it has some limits. This is what it cannot do:



## **Override national policies:**

it must align with national planning rules and the broader plans of the city council.



## **Block development:**

it can't be used to prevent development that is already permitted or allocated the Local Plan.



## **Force changes:**

it can't compel existing property owners or businesses to alter their properties.



## **Manage large projects:**

major infrastructure projects, like big roads or institutions such as hospitals or colleges, are usually beyond its scope.

So, whether you choose a Neighbourhood plan or one of its alternatives, such as Conservation Area Appraisals or Parish Plans, remember that they're all about giving you and your community a say in the future of your area.

The background is a solid teal color with several overlapping geometric shapes. On the left, there is a vertical bar of a slightly lighter shade. In the center, there is a large, light teal triangle pointing downwards. On the right, there are two large, semi-transparent teal circles, one above the other, and a horizontal bar of a slightly lighter shade crossing between them.

02

# Initial research and community engagement

Before jumping into the formal process of creating a Neighbourhood plan, it's a good idea for a parish council to take a step back and explore whether it's the right tool for its community. This early stage doesn't require any formal designation or steering group, just a bit of thoughtful research and local conversation.



Start by considering what's happening in your area.



Are there particular issues or opportunities that people are talking about?



Perhaps there's pressure for new housing, concern about protecting green spaces or interest in improving community facilities and services.

These kinds of topics can help you understand whether a Neighbourhood plan might offer a useful way forward.

# Initial research and community engagement

It's also worth remembering what planning powers a Neighbourhood plan actually gives you.

It can shape future development, influence design standards and allocate land for specific uses but it won't stop development altogether or override national and local planning policies. Understanding what a plan can and can't do will help you decide if it's the right fit for your goals. You might want to gather some informal feedback from residents, businesses and community groups. This could be through casual conversations, a short survey or a simple drop-in session at the village hall.

The aim is to get a sense of what matters to people and whether there's enough interest and energy to take the project forward.

At the same time, take a look at other tools that might help address local priorities. For example, a Conservation Area Appraisal, a Design Code, or a Parish Plan might be more appropriate in some cases. These options are often quicker and less resource-intensive than a full Neighbourhood plan. Council officers can provide advice on other available options. There's more information about alternative routes in Section 3.

Finally, think about your capacity.

Do you have the time, people and resources to support a multi-year planning project? Neighbourhood plans can be rewarding, but they do require commitment. If there's enthusiasm and a clear purpose, it could be the right path. If not, there may be other ways to make a difference locally.

This early research phase is all about asking questions, exploring options and laying the groundwork. It's a chance to reflect before you commit and to make sure any future plan is rooted in real community needs. Our officers can also provide advice and guidance on the best routes to help achieve your objectives – a Neighbourhood plan is not always the best way.

# Initial research and community engagement

The following section includes some examples for how to undertake this initial research and community engagement.

## Talk to your neighbours!

Planning is a collaborative process. The first step in understanding the place you live from an architectural and planning perspective is to have a chat with your neighbours. They're a treasure trove of information and can provide insights into the history, culture and unique characteristics of your area. Plus, it's a great way to build community spirit. If you do decide to commit to a Neighbourhood plan, you will require a steering committee. But for now an informal group of friends and neighbours can undertake and coordinate this early research.



**Research where you live:** next up, do some research. Look into the history of your area, find out who designed the buildings and learn about the planning decisions that shaped your neighbourhood. You might be surprised at what you discover. Remember, every building, street and park has a story to tell.



**Explore where you live:** now that you've done the first phase of desktop research, it's time to get out and about. Take a walk around your neighbourhood and really look at the buildings, streets and public spaces. Notice the architectural styles, how the spaces are used and how they make you feel. This hands-on exploration is a key part of understanding your environment.



**Love where you live:** find the things you love about your neighbourhood. Maybe it's a charming old building, a local pub or shop or a tranquil green space. These are the things that make your area special.

# Initial research and community engagement

## What really matters to you all?

Now, think about what really matters to you and your neighbours. Is it preserving historical buildings? Creating more accessible green spaces? Improving public transport?

These are the things that will guide your future actions and decisions. You can design and organise an initial survey to test out the things you uncovered in your earlier research.

## How to create a community survey that gets people talking

If you want to find out what people love, or want to change, about your neighbourhood, a simple survey or questionnaire can be a great way to start meaningful conversations and gather ideas that reflect real local priorities.



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# Initial research and community engagement

Survey	Description
Start with a clear purpose	Think about what you want to learn: exploring ideas for a Neighbourhood plan, improving local spaces, understanding what matters most to residents. Keep your goal simple and focused to help shape questions.
Keep it short and friendly	Aim for five to 10 questions max. Use a mix of tick-boxes, rating scales, open questions. Use everyday language, no jargon. Make the survey easy and welcoming.
Make it inclusive	Offer paper and online copies. Use large print or easy-read formats. Translate into other languages. Include a short intro explaining why views matter.
Test it first	Try with a few people before launching. Ask if it is clear, too long or confusing. A test run helps you to fine-tune.
Spread the word	Share online via social media, email lists, community websites. Use existing newsletters. Drop off paper copies at libraries, shops, schools and cafés. Ask local groups, schools, places of worship to help. Host a pop-up stall or event.
Say thank you and share what you learn	Let people know their input matters. Share a summary of results in a newsletter, on website or at a community meeting. This builds trust and shows you're listening.

# Initial research and community engagement

## How to make sense of and prioritise what you have learned

Finally, take all the information you've gathered, all the insights you've gained and start making sense of it. Prioritise what's most important to you and your community. Remember, this is a collective effort.

So, involve your neighbours, share your findings and work together to identify the common themes and issues. You can use various methods to weight or prioritise your findings, ensuring they focus on the most impactful and important issues.

Here are some approaches to consider:



### **Urgency:**

prioritise issues that need immediate attention such as road safety or missing elements of critical community infrastructure like a village hall.



### **Impact:**

focus on changes that would have the most significant positive impact on your community's quality of life such as improving public spaces or increasing accessibility.



### **Community consensus:**

gather feedback on your research from community members to understand their priorities and preferences. This democratic approach ensures the group's actions reflect the community's needs and desires.



### **Cost and feasibility:**

evaluate the cost and feasibility of addressing each issue. Prioritise projects that are cost-effective and can be realistically implemented within the group's resources and the tools available.

# Initial research and community engagement



## **Long-term benefits:**

consider the long-term benefits of potential projects. Prioritise actions that will provide lasting improvements to the community. Remember, Neighbourhood plans are long-term projects and a finished plan typically has a shelf-life of 10-15 years so this is an option that should be given proper consideration.



## **Alignment with other goals:**

ensure the prioritised actions align with your community overall goals and vision for the area. This might be with goals around jobs and community facilities, climate change action or an existing plan for heritage or environmental management within the area. This coherence and coordination can help give focus to your final document and direction to the policies and actions contained within.



## **Legal and regulatory requirements:**

address any issues that must comply with legal and regulatory standards. Prioritising these ensures the community meets necessary regulations and avoids potential legal challenges.

By using a combination of these methods, you can create the foundations for a well-rounded and effective strategy to improve your local area, addressing both immediate concerns and long-term goals.

# Resource 1a: place assessment structure

## How to analyse a place

In order to effectively analyse a place, take each of the following topics in turn, starting with number one and working systematically through to number four:

**1.** **Uses and activities:** You're looking at what buildings and spaces are used for, and what activities people are doing in them. For example, is a building a shop, a house, or a school? Are people using a park for picnics, sports, or walking dogs? To record this, you could make a list or draw a map showing different uses and activities. Think about this topic over a wider area, such as the whole parish, as this influences what comes next, which is how people move around.

**2.** **Access and movement:** This is all about how people get around. You need to know all the routes people can take. Look at things like streets, roads, footpaths, cycle lanes, and public transport. How easy is it for people to move around? Which directions do people go in, to connect where they live to where they work or go to school. Are there any barriers like busy roads or steep hills? You could draw a map showing the different routes and any issues you notice.

**3.** **Streets and spaces:** You're looking at the public areas like streets, squares, parks, and playgrounds. What are they like? Are they busy or quiet, clean or dirty, safe or dangerous? Do streets have trees to provide shade in the summer? Are streets narrow or wide, with parked cars? What is the quality of the street, not just where it goes to and from. You could take photos or make sketches to record what you find.

# Resource 1a: place assessment structure

## 4.

### Form and detail:

Only now do we start to look at the buildings themselves. You're looking at the shape and design of buildings and spaces. Are buildings linked together in rows, or individual set in their own space? What height are they, and what age are they? Look at things like the style of architecture, the materials used, and any interesting details like decorations or signs. You could draw or photograph interesting buildings or features.

It's all about observing and understanding your local area but when a survey is undertaken in this order, you can quickly produce an audit map of where you live as part of your Evidence Base for your community or Neighbourhood plan.



# Resource 1b: place assessment checklist

Category	Assessment questions	Findings/comments
1. Uses and activities	What types of activities take place in the area (e.g. shopping, jobs, recreation)?	
	Are there enough community facilities (e.g. parks, pubs, community centres)?	
	Is the area vibrant and active at different times of the day and week?	
	Are there events or activities that bring the community together?	
2. Access and movement	Are the main routes clear and easy to navigate?	
	Is public transport accessible and reliable?	
	Are there safe walking and cycling routes?	
	Is there adequate parking for cars and bikes?	

# Resource 1b: place assessment checklist

Category	Assessment questions	Findings/comments
3. Streets and spaces	Are the streets clean, well-maintained and welcoming?	
	Are there sufficient open spaces and green areas?	
	Do the streets feel safe and/or well-lit, especially at night?	
	Are there places for people to sit and rest?	
4. Form and detail	Do the buildings have an attractive and cohesive design?	
	Are there interesting architectural details or landmarks?	
	Is there a mix of building types and uses?	
	Are public art and cultural elements present?	

Feel free to adapt this checklist to better fit your community's specific needs and preferences. The questions included above are just there to get you going. This should help in creating a comprehensive overview of your neighbourhood's strengths and areas for improvement.

**03**

# Is a Neighbourhood plan right for you?

By this stage you should now have a better sense of what matters to your community. But how can you go about affecting change? What options are available to you? This really depends on a few things, the first linked to people and the second linked to topics of importance:



**People:** When talking to your neighbours, was there a sense that there is enough enthusiasm in the community to get involved and form a steering group? Or did you feel that maybe there's only a handful of people with the time and energy to support a project of this type? Neighbourhood plans take time and effort, and a good steering group needs around five to eight people as a minimum to cover all the necessary tasks. Other routes can be less resource intensive and can be delivered by fewer people.



**Topics:** What were the main priority topics that emerged from your initial research phase? Were they mainly about design, architecture and the quality of new development? Or about heritage, and the protection and restoration of older buildings? Or about transport, access and movement issues? Of the different types of reports and documents on offer, some are better suited to meet the requirements of different topics. This section explains the options available to you.

# Is a Neighbourhood plan right for you?

So, if your research revealed priorities that include a desire to decide where new homes are to be built, to protect valuable green spaces and direct investment towards community specific infrastructure priorities then a Neighbourhood plan is perhaps the right route for you. The tools available in a Neighbourhood plan are policy-based, describing the outcomes your community wishes to see.

## What are the alternatives?

However, creating a Neighbourhood plan is a big commitment and it might not be right for everyone. It requires time, resources and a lot of community engagement.

If you're thinking about shaping the future of your area, but don't want to go down the route of a full-blown neighbourhood development plan, there are a few other options you might consider.



### **Joining in on the Local Plan:**

you can work together with us to have a say in the big picture plan for your area in an informal, collaborative way throughout the development of the Local Plan. There are also formal points in the preparation of a Local Plan when communities can comment and make representations



### **Creating a Community-Led Plan:**

think of this as a DIY project for your community. It could be a Village Design Statement or a Parish Plan. It's a chance to influence the future of your area but it's not as formal as a Neighbourhood plan and doesn't have the same legal status.



### **Making an Area Action Plan:**

this is like drawing up a game plan for a specific area or site that needs some minor interventions or a big change.

# Is a Neighbourhood plan right for you?



## **Design Codes:**

these are a set of illustrated design rules that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. This is more about the look and feel of a place. These may be suitable if the main issues that emerged from your research were design-led such as about architecture, materials and aesthetics.



## **Design Guides:**

these are documents that provide general advice and guidance to influence the design of a development. They're less detailed than Design Codes and are more about broad principles than specific rules.



## **Community Action Plans:**

these are plans developed by the community to identify local issues and projects that the community wants to address. They're less formal than NDPs and can cover a wider range of issues.



## **Using other planning tools:**

there are other tools like Neighbourhood Development Orders and supplementary planning documents or you can discuss development proposals before they happen with local planning officers.

Remember, every community is unique. So what works best will depend on your specific needs and resources. When you reach this stage it's a good idea to have a chat with our Policy Team to discuss your work so far and understand all the options you have for shaping your neighbourhood.

**The rest of this document is for those who have decided that a Neighbourhood plan is right for them!**

04

# Getting going

So, you have decided on a policy-based Neighbourhood plan.

You've done some initial research and you're ready to get involved in the world of architectural design and Neighbourhood planning. There are now two key steps:



Designate your Area



Build your Team



# Getting going

## Designate your area

The first step is to designate the Neighbourhood plan area. To designate an area for a Neighbourhood plan, you need to go through a few steps to make it official.



First, the group should define the boundaries of the area they want to cover in the plan. This could be a whole parish, a neighbourhood or just a specific part of it. They should also make sure the proposed area makes sense in terms of how the community functions and interacts.

The group needs to be aware of any existing neighbourhood areas in the vicinity, in particular those that adjoin the boundaries of its own preferred Neighbourhood plan area.



Next, they need to submit an application to us which must include a map showing the boundary of the proposed area and a statement explaining why this area is suitable for a Neighbourhood plan.

If the application is from a parish council and the designation would cover the whole of the parish area, this will usually be automatically approved by us. If not, then we will need to publicise the application and invite comments from the public and other stakeholders.

We will also need to check if the proposed area makes sense, if the community group has followed all the necessary steps and review any comments received before making a decision on the designation.

# Getting going

## Build your team

The next task is to build your team and then, with that team, develop and agree on a plan of action.

Think of this plan of action as your roadmap. It should outline what you want to achieve, the steps you need to take and the resources you'll need.

Remember, this is a team effort, so make sure everyone involved agrees with the plan.

This will ensure everyone is on the same page and working towards the same goal.

When it comes to creating a Neighbourhood plan, it's all about teamwork.

The best people to work with are those who are passionate about your neighbourhood and want to make it better. They could be your neighbours, business owners or even schoolteachers.

The key is to bring together a diverse group of people who can bring different perspectives and ideas to the table.



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# Parish council input

## **Where does the Parish Council fit in?**

In the context of preparing a Neighbourhood plan, the qualifying body is the main agency responsible for leading and coordinating the plan's development. The qualifying body is typically the town or parish council. In areas of the district without such councils, it can be a neighbourhood forum, which is a group of local people who come together to represent the community.

This body has the official authority to prepare the Neighbourhood plan, engage with residents, gather ideas and draft the policies that will shape the future of the area. Think of the qualifying body as the team captain for the Neighbourhood planning process.

It makes sure everyone's voice is heard, the necessary steps are followed and that the final plan truly reflects what the community wants.

## **Leadership from the Parish Council is vital**

To meet the regulations, it is critical the parish council is leading the process and on top of all the details. However, it can, and indeed should, devolve the day-to-day running of a Neighbourhood plan to a bespoke steering group, assembled just for the purposes of plan preparation.

This approach is more flexible because meetings can be arranged as and when, is more responsive because the group can zoom in on the issues that matter and can draw in skills and views from members of the community beyond the parish council itself.

The group can also seek out specific expertise from within the community to help it tackle issues that were identified as a priority, such as housing design, open spaces or biodiversity.

# Your steering group

## **How to assemble your steering group**

If the parish council is the team captain, then the steering group is the team. It'll follow the process, do the work and make sure everything stays on track. When assembling your steering group, look for people who are committed, have some free time and are willing to take on responsibility.

It's also a good idea to include people with different skills and experiences. This could include someone with planning experience, someone with a knack for communication or someone who's great at organising events.

Revisit your research findings and look again at the priority issues and try to map these against the skills in your steering group.

## **How often should you meet?**

A Neighbourhood plan steering group should aim to meet regularly to keep the planning process on track. Generally, meeting once a month works well as it provides enough time to make progress between meetings while keeping momentum going.

However, there might be times when more frequent meetings are needed, like during key stages of the plan such as community consultations or when drafting policies.

Flexibility is key. Regular, consistent meetings ensure everyone stays informed, engaged and on top of tasks without overwhelming the group. It might be helpful for council officers to attend one of your early steering group meetings, get them to share their opinion on your roadmap for consultation and how you might go about building your evidence. Officers do not have to attend every steering group meeting but they can help on some of the more technical agenda items such as how your plan can best avoid policy duplication with the Local Plan.

# Collaboration

## How to get the best from people, their skills and experiences

Everyone has something unique to bring to the table so it's important to make the most of this. Encourage people to share their ideas and experiences and make sure everyone feels valued and heard. Remember, this is a collaborative effort, so the more people feel involved and appreciated, the more they'll want to contribute.

Key roles in a Neighbourhood plan Steering Group could be:

- 1. The organiser:**  
think of the organiser as the conductor of an orchestra. They're the one who keep everything running smoothly. They set up meetings, make sure everyone knows where to be and when and keep track of all the tasks that need to be done. They're the go-to person for questions about what's happening next.
- 2. The researcher and analyst:**  
this is the detective of the group. They love digging into information, finding out all the details about the neighbourhood and understanding what it all means. They look at things like how the area has changed over time, what people in the community want and what might be possible in the future.
- 3. The facts and statistics person:**  
this person is all about numbers and hard facts. They can tell you things like how many people live in the area, what kind of houses there are and how the local economy is doing. They use this information to help the group make decisions based on real, concrete data.

# Collaboration

**4.** **The engager:** the engager is great at talking to people, getting their opinions and making sure everyone in the community has a chance to be heard. They might organise events, run surveys or just chat with people to find out what they think.

**5.** **The presenter:** this person is the storyteller. They're the one who takes all the information the group has gathered and shares it with others. They might present the group's plans at a community meeting, write up reports or explain things to local officials. They're all about making sure everyone understands what the group is doing and why.

Remember, these roles can overlap and people might take on more than one role depending on their skills and interests. It's all about working together as a team to make the plan and ultimately neighbourhood the best it can be.



# Professional support

## **When and why to bring professional support into the process**

While a lot of the work can be done by the community, there might be times when you need a little extra help. This could be when you're dealing with complex planning issues or when you need specialist advice.

Independent professional planners, urban designers, architects or community engagement specialists can provide valuable expertise and guidance.

They can help ensure your plan is robust, achievable and complies with all the necessary regulations.

It should be noted the definition of professional help in this instance is not help from us but from external professional advisors, either paid for through grant funding or directly by the qualifying body.

## **Which topics can most benefit from professional input?**

Certain topics can really benefit from independent professional input.

This could include things like understanding heritage, designing sustainable buildings, assessing the local housing needs or assessing the impact of new development on local wildlife.

So don't be afraid to seek out professional input when you need it although consider carefully where this is needed, and how it is used, as this professional support will need to be paid for.



05

# Make it engaging!

## How to develop and agree your community engagement and consultation plan

Ready to get started on your Neighbourhood plan?

The first step is to develop a community engagement and consultation plan. This is like your game plan for how you're going to involve your community in the process. It should outline who you're going to engage with, how you're going to do it and when. Remember, this is a team effort, so make sure everyone involved agrees with the plan.

## What is the difference between engagement and consultation?

Engagement and consultation are two key parts of the process, but they're not the same thing:



**Engagement** is all about gathering information. It's part of your research phase where you're trying to understand your community and its needs.



**Consultation** on the other hand, is when you have some ideas or proposals that you want to share and test with your community. It's about getting feedback and making sure your plans align with the community's needs and desires.

# Engagement

## **Approaches and techniques to engage your community**

Engaging your community is a bit like throwing a party – you need to think about who to invite, what to do and how to make it fun and engaging.

There are lots of techniques you can use from workshops and surveys to using video and photography.

The key is to mix it up and use different techniques to reach as many people as possible.

Asking the right questions at the right time is crucial.

In the early stages, you might want to ask broad questions about what people love about your neighbourhood and what they'd like to improve.

As you move into the consultation phase, your questions will become more specific, focusing on the ideas and proposals you've developed.

## **Talking to everyone: choosing the right engagement techniques**

Community engagement is at the heart of Neighbourhood planning. It's how you discover what matters to local people, build trust and shape a plan that reflects real priorities. But not everyone responds to the same approach.

So, choosing the right techniques for the right moment and the right audience makes all the difference.

# Engagement

**Here's a quick guide to some popular engagement methods, when to use them, and who they're most likely to reach.**



## Drop-in events and pop-up stalls

These informal, face-to-face sessions are great for sparking conversation and gathering quick feedback. They work well in busy places like village halls, markets or school fairs. You'll reach a broad mix of people, including those who might not usually attend formal meetings. They're especially good for older residents, families and passers-by who prefer a relaxed setting.



## Online surveys and questionnaires

Perfect for reaching people who like to respond in their own time. These are useful when you want to gather views on specific topics, such as housing, green spaces or transport. They're ideal for working-age adults, commuters and younger residents who are comfortable online. Just make sure the questions are short, clear and easy to understand.



## Workshops and focus groups

These are more in-depth sessions where people can explore ideas, share experiences and help shape priorities. They're best used when you want to test options or develop policies. You might run separate workshops for different groups, such as young people, business owners or parents to make sure everyone feels heard.

# Engagement



## Community walkabouts and audits

Walking the area with residents is a brilliant way to gather local knowledge and spot issues on the ground. It's especially useful for exploring access, safety and character. These sessions work well with older residents, disabled people and anyone who prefers practical, hands-on engagement.



## Creative activities

Art projects, mapping games and storytelling sessions can help people express their ideas in imaginative ways. These are great for engaging children, young people and those who might find traditional consultation methods intimidating. They also help reveal emotional connections to place that might not come through in surveys.



## Social media and digital platforms

Quick updates, polls and comment threads can help you reach a wider audience and keep people informed. They're also useful for raising awareness and gathering informal feedback. You'll likely reach younger adults, digitally active residents and people who prefer bite-sized engagement.

# Engagement



## Printed materials and newsletters

Not everyone is online, so printed leaflets, posters and parish or community newsletters still play a vital role. Use them to share updates, promote events and invite feedback. They're especially helpful for reaching older residents, those without internet access and people who prefer traditional communication.



## One-to-one conversations

Sometimes, a quiet chat is the most powerful tool. Talking directly to key community members like shopkeepers, school staff or faith leaders, can uncover valuable insights and help build support. These conversations are best used early on or when exploring sensitive topics.

The best engagement strategies mix and match these techniques to suit your community. Think about who you want to reach, what you want to learn and how people prefer to get involved. By making engagement varied, inclusive and welcoming, you'll build a stronger plan with a stronger sense of ownership.

## What to do with the engagement results

Once you've gathered all this information, it's time to make sense of it. Look for common themes, interesting ideas and areas of concern. This will help you understand your community's needs and aspirations and will guide your planning decisions. This will all feed into the building of your Evidence Base, which is our next section. Read on!

# Resource 2: workshop template

Here's a model or template for a community workshop, comprising a series of six related topics. The thinking behind this is it will deliver a quick, energetic engagement that can be run over a maximum of two hours one evening in a village hall or a similar venue.

Participants should work in groups of no more than five to six people. Give each group 10-15 minutes to complete each task, before moving on to the next task. In this way, each task will be completed six times, and your steering group will have 36 sets of results to work with at the end of the night – a rich set of data! The results will be a key input to your evidence base.

## 1.

### **Task One: What is your character?**

Rank the one-word descriptions for your place as it is now to create a top 10 list.

Choose from the following 20 words: inspiring, enterprising, green, serene, distinctive, unique, independent, clean, fun, ingenious, safe, friendly, imaginative, inclusive, attractive, harmonious, open, considered, refreshing, dynamic. Or add your own words.

## 2.

### **Task Two: How do you move around?**

On a map of the parish area, use felt pens to mark out the main routes between where people live and where they work, shop, go to school etc.

Write a few words to explain the experience of using these routes as a pedestrian, cyclist, horse-rider or car driver.

What new links could be created? Mark these clearly on the plan as distinct from the current route options.

# Resource 2:

## workshop template

3.

### **Task Three: What are your challenges?**

Rank the descriptions for your place as it is now to create a top 10 list.

Choose from the following 20 words and phrases: housing growth, shops, non-school youth opportunities, opportunities for seniors and the retired, schools and education, sports and leisure provision, leadership and volunteering, countryside protection, access to recreational land, health services, architectural quality, sense of community, traffic, rail services, spaces for jobs like offices and workshop/industrial, work from home, superfast broadband, community organisation and structure, town squares and civic spaces. Or add your own words.

4.

### **Task Four: Postcard challenge for architecture and design likes and dislikes**

Take approx. 40-50 photos of individual buildings found within your parish area.

Make sure you have as much variety as possible within the photos, such as new build, older properties, residential, employment, agricultural, conversions and more besides.

Ensure you have a mix of materials too, brick, render, timber framed and more contemporary materials and forms too, if they are present.

Print each photo in colour in 6" x 4" size or 8" x 10" and then ask participants to sort the stack of prints into two piles of like and dislike.

On a nearby notepad, ask them to write a few words to explain the reasons behind the two different piles of images.

# Resource 2: workshop template

5.

## Task Five: Quality audit

On a map of the parish area, stick coloured dots on the plan to mark places you cherish (green) and places you don't (red). Write a few words against each dot to explain why.

6.

## Task Six: What does the future hold?

On a large sheet of paper:

- list all the best things about the parish
- list all the things about the parish that could be better
- complete this sentence: "In 15 years' time, [insert name of place] will be..."





06

# Creating your evidence base

All this information you've gathered through the engagement process will go towards informing your Evidence Base.

This is a collection of facts, data and insights that support your Neighbourhood plan. All the policies that you go on to include within your Neighbourhood plan should be informed and justified by your evidence base, so it's important you get it right.

It's like the foundation of a house – it supports everything you do and helps ensure your plan is robust. The Evidence Base is not just about community engagement results, it's all the information, data and research you have gathered in response to the community feedback, to make informed decisions.



# Creating your evidence base

So, based on the community feedback, what local people think and want, the evidence may include things like:

- demographic data (who lives in the area, their ages, jobs, etc)
- housing needs (types of homes needed, current housing stock)
- job needs
- environmental data (protected areas, flood risks, green spaces, air quality)
- infrastructure (roads, schools, healthcare facilities)
- community facilities (village hall, local shops)

Don't think of the Evidence Base as a single report. The chances are it will be a series of reports, data sheets and findings all in a variety of formats.

Do keep them all organised and all in one place, perhaps an online drive, but don't feel all this information needs to be formatted into a single document.

This stage is all about turning those community priorities into well-justified planning policies.

And to do that, you'll need the right evidence.







This isn't just about collecting facts and figures from websites, you may also need to prepare the specific assessments that match your community's goals and use them to build a strong, credible case for your policies.

## **Understanding Existing Designations**

The Neighbourhood plan must also consider various designations in the district, most of which can be found in the adopted Canterbury District Local Plan (2017). One of the basic conditions is Neighbourhood plan policies must not conflict with Local Plan designations.

# Creating your evidence base

A designation is a specific land use classification that helps to guide planning decisions. Some examples of designations include:

-  **Site allocations** which specify the location of new homes, commercial space or sites for jobs
-  **Infrastructure policies** such as safeguarding for new roads or pedestrian/cycle links
-  **Environmental designations** such as Flood Zones, Coastal Protection Zones. Overtopping Zones
-  **Open space designations** such as Green Gaps and Protection of Existing Open Space
-  **Landscape and biodiversity designations** such as Area of High Landscape Value, Kent Downs National Landscape, International Wildlife Sites (Special Protection Areas, RAMSAR, Special Areas for Conservation), Local Green Spaces, Local Wildlife Sites, National Nature Reserve, and Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)
-  **Heritage designations** such as Conservations Areas, Areas of Archaeological Importance, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and The World Heritage Site in Canterbury and its buffer zone


For help identifying which designations fall within your Neighbourhood Area, please check the planning maps which can be found on the [Canterbury City Council website](#) or talk to council officers.


# Where to find existing evidence and data

To inform the production of the Neighbourhood plan, it is worth starting to draw information and data from existing evidence bases. There is a wide range of key players that will hold existing data and information within the district that might be a useful starting point for gathering evidence relevant to your Neighbourhood Area. These include key bodies such as Kent County Council, Natural England, the Environment Agency, Southern Water and South East Water to name a few.

We have a huge range of evidence documents, that we have either produced internally or have commissioned from outside agencies. These are all available on the [council's website](#). It is worth looking through these documents to see whether some of the data could be useful to help to inform your Neighbourhood plan and support the policies that you want to prepare

It may be a good starting point when looking at what evidence you might need to collect, as it has existing evidence documents which cover topics including:

 **The natural environment:** the council produces evidence which covers the natural environment, setting the background for the council's approach to the protection, enhancement and the provision of open space within the district. These includes various assessments and reviews and maps of various parcels of open space which may be of use if your community is seeking further open space designations or protections for example.

 **Climate change:** existing evidence which justifies Local Plan climate change policies could be useful to contribute to the justification of further neighbourhood level carbon emission requirements if that is a priority within your neighbourhood area.

# Where to find existing evidence and data



**Transport:** evidence which justifies the approach to the council's Transport Strategy will outline the vision and goals of the strategy. If your community wants to address local level transport improvements within their plan, looking to see what evidence the council has available and the types of data and methods used to justify the strategy in the Local Plan, may be a good place to start.



**Residential development:** residential development proposed within the Local Plan will be evidenced through a series of documents. These will include documents outlining the site assessments of sites submitted for consideration as well as documents explaining and further justifying the reason for the sites allocated. There will be evidence explaining how the Local Housing Need has been calculated and justifying the housing mix.

All of these could be of use if your steering group is looking to allocate additional development sites or include policies which affect the type or homes delivered in your area. The site assessments and methodology in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment may help you to identify areas for consideration when looking at various sites. You could use the Local Housing Need to justify your allocation, or information on housing mix to inform any draft allocation policies.

# From priorities to proof

## The right evidence for your plan

Once you've listened to your community and identified what matters most, whether it's protecting green spaces, shaping new housing, or improving local infrastructure, and established what designations and evidence already exists, you may need to dig deeper in some areas. Here's some specific assessments that you might need to consider:



### Housing, space for jobs and community uses

If your community wants to allocate land for housing, jobs or community uses, you may need to run a Call for Sites. This means inviting landowners and others to suggest sites that could be considered for development. You can also check our Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) to see which sites have already been identified and assessed. If housing is a priority, especially affordable homes or a better mix of types, you may also need to commission a Housing Needs Assessment. This will help you understand what kinds of homes are needed locally, such as house sizes and tenures and how many.



### Protection of green spaces

If your community wants to protect green spaces, you'll need to think carefully about the right mechanism for each one. Local Green Space designation works well for spaces that are close to the community and demonstrably special, but other tools, such as open space policies, green infrastructure networks, or biodiversity designations, may offer stronger or more appropriate protection in some cases. Choosing the right approach is a detailed process but it's essential for making sure your protections hold weight.

# From priorities to proof



## Spending on community projects

If you're thinking about how to spend the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Portion funds, you'll need to create a clear infrastructure list. This means identifying specific projects like new play areas, improved footpaths or community buildings, and showing how they respond to local needs. The more detailed and locally grounded your list, the more likely it is to attract support and funding.



## Evidence for other topics

If your plan includes policies on design, environment, transport or jobs, you may need to gather additional evidence such as character assessments, traffic studies or business surveys, to back up your proposals. The key is to let your community's priorities guide your research. Once you know what matters most, you can choose the right tools to explore those issues in depth. This makes your plan stronger, more focused and more likely to succeed at examination.

We can advise on suitable methodologies and help you access existing data. But for many topics, you may need to commission or carry out your own assessments. It's a bit of extra work but it's what turns good intentions into robust, well-evidenced planning policy.

# From priorities to proof

Having a solid Evidence Base means you're not just guessing, but making decisions based on actual, real-world information. This helps ensure the plan meets the needs of the community and ultimately that it gets approved. Don't just rush out or go online and collect a random set of evidence – be considered and only collect the evidence that supports the topics and themes that your plan is seeking to address. This will give the evidence gathering process more focus and avoid unnecessary work. However, as well as creating an Evidence Base specifically, it is also important that your Neighbourhood plan steering group can evidence the approach that you have taken in creating your Neighbourhood plan.

When taking your plan through examination it is important that you can evidence that your plan went through a certain level of public consultation and that the feedback received was reviewed and considered through the process of drafting your plan. This ensures that your plan is effective in communicating the vision and aims of the community rather than just those of the steering group or the parish council.



# Deliverability

## **Making sure your plan can actually happen**

When it comes to writing planning policies, it's easy to get excited about what could be done, from new homes to better green spaces, to improved transport links, and thriving high streets. But for your Neighbourhood plan to carry real weight, it needs to be more than just aspirational. It needs to be deliverable.

## **What does deliverability mean?**

In planning, deliverability refers to whether a policy or proposal can realistically be implemented. That means:

- it's achievable within the plan period
- it's supported by evidence, funding and practical means
- it's compatible with national and local planning rules
- it's likely to be taken forward by developers, landowners or the community itself

If a policy sounds good but can't be delivered, because it's too vague, too costly or not supported by landowners or infrastructure, it may be challenged during examination or simply ignored in practice.

# Deliverability

## What does deliverability look like in practice?



### Example One:

Let's say your community wants to allocate land for new housing.

To be deliverable, you'll need to show:

- the site is available (eg through a Call for Sites or landowner confirmation)
- it's suitable for development (eg not in a flood zone or protected area)
- it's viable (eg developers are likely to build there within the plan period)



### Example Two:

Perhaps you want to protect a green space. You'll need to demonstrate:

- the space meets national criteria for Local Green Space designation
- it's valued by the community
- it's not already earmarked for development in the Local Plan



### Example Three:

Even infrastructure projects, for example, new footpaths or community buildings, need to be backed up with:

- a clear project list
- cost estimates or funding sources (such as CIL contributions)
- evidence of local need and support

# Deliverability

## **Why deliverability matters**

Deliverability isn't just a technical requirement - it's about making sure your plan leads to real change. It helps you focus on what's possible, build confidence in your proposals and avoid disappointment down the line.

When your policies are deliverable, they're more likely to be supported by the council, approved at examination and used in day-to-day planning decisions. That means your community's voice will genuinely shape the future of your area.

## **The allocation of land for development**

For Neighbourhood plan policies that identify land for allocation or designation, it is important that the steering group has evidence of the deliverability of that policy.

This includes ensuring the ownership of the land has been confirmed and that the site has been made available for the use that is being proposed, whether that be for an open space designation or for a housing development.

You may decide to commission consultants to undertake specific research or evidence documents depending on the aspirations of your allocations and the policies written to support the allocations and on the capabilities of your Neighbourhood plan steering group.

If you feel that professional advice from a consultant would help you to justify your policies and create a more robust plan, this may be worth considering if you have funding available.

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**07**

# Writing your plan

## **Translate your research findings into the written plan**

So, you've done your research and gathered a ton of information. Now what?

It's time to translate all that into your written plan.

This is where you get to tell the story of your neighbourhood and outline your vision for its future.

Remember, your plan should be clear, concise and easy to understand.

Think of it as a guidebook for your neighbourhood's future development.



# Writing your plan

## **Write a concise introductory and history text**

The introduction is your chance to set the scene. It should provide a brief overview of your neighbourhood and its unique characteristics. The history text is where you delve into the past and share interesting facts and stories about how your neighbourhood has evolved over time.

Remember, keep it concise and engaging. Consider setting out your vision for the Neighbourhood plan Area based on the feedback received through your early engagement. What is the community's collective vision for your local area?

## **Make sure there are clear links between your plan and the national planning policy framework (NPPF) and the Canterbury District Local Plan.**

Your Neighbourhood plan doesn't exist in a vacuum. It should link with and complement both national and local planning policies as well as the national Planning Practice Guidance. This ensures your plan aligns with the broader planning framework and can help streamline the planning process.



# Writing your plan

Here are some pointers about how to achieve this complementarity:



## National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework, or NPPF, is like the rulebook for planning decisions in England. It sets out central government's development policies. This includes policies on housing, economic development and protecting the environment. The goal is to ensure development is sustainable, meaning it meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

For a Neighbourhood planning group, the NPPF is like a guidebook. It shows you what the government thinks is important and how your plan should align with these priorities.

As you prepare your Neighbourhood plan, you should refer to the NPPF to make sure your policies are in line with national policies.

When your plan goes for approval, if it does not comply with these national policies, an inspector will be unable to approve it.

Essentially, by closely referring to it, it will ensure that your plan is well thought-out, fair and sustainable.



## Local Plan Policy

By referring to the adopted Canterbury District Local Plan (2017) as well as the NPPF, you will be able to see what more specific, district level policies we have in place.

# Writing your plan



## Local Plan Policy (Continued)

Your plan should not contradict the strategic policies in the Local Plan or prevent housing developments allocated in the Local Plan. However, there is scope to make amendments to or update policies to better align with your more local neighbourhood priorities. While there is scope for adding a local twist to existing policies, straight duplication of Local Plan policies should be avoided.

Your version of the same policy can be differentiated through locally specific details and an application at a level more suited to your neighbourhood or parish area.

Much like reviewing against the NPPF, the question to ask is how can you improve or add to the existing policies affecting your area through your Neighbourhood plan policies?

We are currently preparing a new Local Plan for the district and can provide advice on the content and status of its emerging policies as Neighbourhood plans are developed. Once the new Local Plan is in place, new Neighbourhood plans will need to reflect this new suite of district-wide policies.

It is worth checking in with council officers to ensure these policies are neither duplicating nor contradicting existing Local Plan policies. It is also worth following the progress of the draft Local Plan as it progresses through public consultations and closer to examination as the policies can be changed and amended throughout the Local Plan process up to adoption.

# How to write a robust planning policy

Once you've assessed both national and local planning policy, you will be in a better position to draft a robust set of Neighbourhood planning policies. These need a strong foundation in the form of your research findings, including your evidence base and engagement work, and a clear set of goals and objectives that each policy sets out to meet.

There is no minimum or maximum number of policies required within a Neighbourhood plan but remember that all policies must be evidenced and justified when it comes to taking your plan through examination with an Inspector.

Your policies should be clear, specific, actionable and positively prepared.

This means that rather than stating what the community does not want development to achieve, policies must be written to outline what will be supported. An example of this would be "development will be supported where it can evidence that there will be no adverse impact on the local wildlife".

The policies within your Neighbourhood plan should also align with broader planning policies and regulations both at the district level and nationally. When planning policies are written clearly and effectively, they become powerful tools to help guide and determine development that best suits the community.

Neighbourhood plans are used by us when determining the outcome of planning applications.

Planning applications that are received from within the Neighbourhood plan area, that stick to the policies outlined in the Neighbourhood plan are more likely to be accepted than those that ignore or conflict with the policies that have been put in place.

The instructions carried by the policy need to be precise and easy to follow, so anyone can follow them.

# How to write a robust planning policy

Here's why they need to be robust:



**Consistency:**

clear policies ensure that everyone, developers, planners, councillors and the community, are on the same page, leading to fair and consistent decisions.



**Efficiency:**

well-written policies save time and reduce misunderstandings, making the planning process smoother and faster.



**Predictability:**

applicants know exactly what is required of them, reducing the risk of failed applications and wasted resources.



**Transparency:**

clear policies make it easier for the public to understand and engage with the planning process, fostering trust and collaboration.

In short, strong, clear policies make the whole process work better for everyone involved.

If you would like to see some examples of well-written policies, you can refer to our policy bank to help get a better idea of how all these tips might look in practice! See later section for the policy bank and how this works.

# Considering different options

Once you've gathered your evidence and listened closely to your community, you'll probably have a good sense of what matters most locally. That's a big milestone, well done!

But before you dive into writing policies, it's worth taking a moment to pause, reflect, and explore the different ways you could respond.

## **Why consider different options?**

There's rarely just one way to tackle a local issue. Whether you're thinking about where new homes could go, how to protect green spaces or how to support local businesses, there are usually a few different routes you could take.

By exploring a range of options, you can:

- test ideas against your evidence and community priorities
- weigh up the pros and cons of each approach
- spot any unintended consequences before they become problems
- build confidence in your final decisions

This is especially important if you're thinking about allocating land for development. Choosing where new homes, shops or community facilities should go is a big decision and one that deserves careful thought and wide input.

# Considering different options

## **What might an options analysis look like?**

You don't need to write a formal report unless you want to! An options analysis can be as simple as setting out a few different ways to meet your objectives, then comparing them. For example, if your community wants to provide more affordable housing, your options might include:

- allocating a single large site on the edge of the village
- spreading smaller developments across several infill sites
- encouraging conversions of existing buildings in the area

For each option, you could consider how well it meets community needs, what the evidence says about its suitability, potential impacts on traffic, landscape or services and deliverability eg how likely it is to happen.

## **Involve the community (again!)**

If you've identified a few possible directions, this is a great time to check back in with your community. You might run a short survey to test preferences, host a drop-in session or workshop to explore the options together or create a simple visual summary or map to help people compare. This extra step of engagement can help build trust, uncover new insights and make sure your plan reflects a shared vision, not just a single solution.

## **From options to policies**

Once you've explored the possibilities and gathered feedback, you'll be in a much stronger position to start drafting your policies. You'll know not just what people want but why and you'll have tested your ideas in the real world, including thinking about deliverability.

# Considering different options

Taking time to explore your options now can save time and stress later, especially as you move toward the formal Regulation 14 consultation. It's all part of making sure your plan is thoughtful, evidence-based, transparent and truly community led.

## **A starting point for shaping your local area**

This section includes a handful of examples of typical planning policies you may wish to use, depending on what your Neighbourhood plan is trying to achieve. Some policies may be applicable to all development in the area, whereas others may only apply to some forms of development or within specific parts of the area. In some cases, policies may need to be reflected on a map to show clearly the area to which they apply.

Policies may also be grouped by themes, such as policies for housing, open spaces or community infrastructure. The following policy examples are intended as a guide into how Neighbourhood plan Policies could look.

This list is not exclusive to all possible types of policy and if you require further guidance or would like the council to review your draft policies, you should contact our Policy Officers for advice.



# Different types of planning policies

Types of Policy Assessment questions	Examples
<p><b>Generic policies</b></p> <p>Policies which apply to all development planning applications within the Neighbourhood Area.</p>	<p>Policy XX - Public Rights of Way</p> <p>Proposals for development should protect, and where possible, enhance public rights of way within the neighbourhood area.</p>
	<p>Policy XX - Light Pollution</p> <p>Proposals and initiatives which include measures to reduce light pollution and promote the visibility and clarity of the night sky will be supported. Applications for external lighting in the Conservation Area will be supported where they do not increase light pollution and/or adversely affect their surroundings.</p>
<p><b>Criteria-based policies</b></p> <p>Policies which have requirements that should be met by development planning applications within the Neighbourhood Area.</p>	<p>Policy XX - Good Quality Design</p> <p>Development proposals within the Neighbourhood Area that demonstrate good quality design, will be supported. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Responding to and integrating with the local surroundings and the landscape context.</li> <li>b. Demonstrating high quality design that respects the scale and character of existing and surrounding buildings.</li> <li>c. Using green hedging and/or trees for highway boundaries wherever possible and in keeping with the existing streetscape.</li> </ul>

# Different types of planning policies

Types of Neighbourhood planning Policy Assessment questions	Examples
<p><b>Criteria-based policies (continued)</b></p>	<p>d. Ensuring safe access to the site for pedestrians, cyclists and road users.</p> <p>e. Providing adequate refuse and recycling storage incorporated into the scheme to minimise visual impact.</p>
<p><b>Site Allocation policies</b></p> <p>Policies which look to identify specific sites for a certain use, whether that be for housing development or for open space for example.</p>	<p><b>Housing allocation</b></p> <p>Policy XX - Land at # [Site Allocation Map - showing the site boundary]</p> <p>Residential Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-XX dwellings</li> <li>-Affordable housing units</li> <li>-Older persons provisions</li> </ul> <p>Non-Residential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-On-site provision of a new village hall</li> </ul> <p><b>Open space allocation/designation</b></p> <p>Policy XX - Land at # [Site Allocation Map - showing the site boundary]</p> <p>Development proposals located within the 'Land at #', will be managed in accordance with the national planning policy for Green Belts.</p>

# Different types of planning policies

## What is supporting text and why does it matter?

When you read a Neighbourhood plan, you'll notice that it's not just a list of policies. Each policy is surrounded by paragraphs of explanation, context and background. This is what we call supporting text. Supporting text is there to help readers understand:

- why the policy exists
- what evidence has informed it
- how it responds to local priorities
- what the policy is trying to achieve

In other words, it's the story behind the policy. It connects the dots between your community's views, the evidence you've gathered and the decisions you've made. For example, if your plan includes a policy to protect a local green space, the supporting text might explain that the space is well-used by residents, that it scored highly in your Local Green Space assessment and that it contributes to health, biodiversity and community wellbeing. This helps anyone reading the plan, be that a resident, developer or planning officer, understand the reasoning behind your choices. It also helps during the examination stage, when your plan is being reviewed for legal compliance and clarity.

Good supporting text is clear, concise and focused. It doesn't need to be technical or lengthy but it should show that your policies are grounded in real evidence and shaped by local voices. Think of it as the conversation that sits alongside the policy, helping people see not just what you're proposing but why it matters to your community.

# Different types of planning polices

## Illustrating your plan

A picture is worth a thousand words, and this is especially true when it comes to planning. Maps, plans, photos and diagrams can help illustrate your ideas and make your plan more engaging. They can show everything from the layout of your neighbourhood to the design of a proposed building.

So, get creative and use visuals to bring your plan to life.

However, be aware that not all images meet accessibility guidelines and copyright permission may need to be obtained if using imaged from the internet. If using Ordnance Survey mapping data, you need to ensure you have the relevant permissions. Check with the council which can provide advice on mapping and other techniques for visualising your policies.



The background is a composition of various shades of purple and pink. It features several geometric elements: a large, light purple circle in the upper right; a dark purple circle in the lower right; a vertical band of medium purple on the left; and a diagonal band of light purple crossing the top. The number '08' is printed in a large, white, sans-serif font in the bottom left corner.

08

# The formal process

## **What is the (reg 14) pre-submission consultation and what is required?**

So, you've got your Neighbourhood plan all drafted up and ready to go.

But before you submit it, there's an important step called the Pre-Submission Consultation, also known as Regulation 14.

This is your chance to share your draft plan with the community and get their feedback.

This requires a formal six-week consultation as a minimum and a range of statutory consultees must also be informed about the draft plan.



# Getting the consultation right

## **Making the most of Regulation 14**

This formal consultation stage is one of the most important parts of Neighbourhood planning. It's your chance to share ideas, test proposals, and make sure your plan reflects the views of the people who live and work in your area.

Under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood planning Regulations, you're required to carry out a formal public consultation before submitting your plan but it's also a valuable opportunity to build trust, gather insight and improve your draft.

## **What does Regulation 14 involve?**

At its core, Regulation 14 is about giving people a chance to comment on your emerging Neighbourhood plan. This consultation must run for a minimum of six weeks and it should be open, inclusive and well-publicised. You don't have to wait until you've written a full draft plan.

You can consult on:

- your vision and objectives
- policy options or preferred approaches
- specific draft policies
- supporting evidence or land allocations

Make sure your consultation questions are tailored to your plan rather than generic. Use them to test changes you've made since any earlier version, to check that priorities identified through engagement are properly reflected, or to focus responses on the issues that matter most locally. We will need to review your actual draft policies before formal submission. This helps ensure they meet the required basic conditions and avoids delays later on.

# Getting the consultation right

## Planning your consultation

A successful consultation doesn't happen by accident; it needs careful planning. Think about:



### Timing:

allow enough time to prepare materials, promote the consultation and analyse feedback afterwards.



### Questions:

ask clear, purposeful questions that invite both tick-box responses (quantitative) and open comments (qualitative). For example:

- Do you agree with our proposed policy on local green spaces?
- Are there any areas you think should be protected or improved?
- What do you think of our approach to new housing?



### Accessibility:

Make sure everyone can take part. Offer paper and online versions, use plain language and consider translations or easy-read formats if needed.

## Promoting the consultation

Raising awareness is key. Use a mix of methods to reach different audiences. For example, posters in local shops, libraries and community centres; social media posts and email newsletters; articles in parish magazines or local papers; and pop-up events, drop-in sessions or stalls at community gatherings. Let people know why their views matter and how they can get involved. The more inclusive your approach, the stronger your plan will be.

# Getting the consultation right

## Analysing and responding to feedback

Once the consultation closes, your group will need to:

- review all responses both numbers and comments
- identify common themes, concerns and suggestions
- consider changes to your draft plan based on what you've heard
- explain how feedback has shaped the final version

This isn't just good practice - it's a legal requirement.

When you submit your plan, you'll need to include a Consultation Statement that shows who you consulted, what they said and how you responded.

Taking the time to run a thoughtful, inclusive consultation will help ensure your Neighbourhood plan is well-supported, legally sound and ready to make a real difference.



# Statutory consultees during the consultation

## **The role of statutory consultees during the regulation 14 consultation**

In addition to your local communities, statutory consultees are basically the key players you need to consult when you're drafting your Neighbourhood plan.

They're the official bodies that must be involved to make sure all aspects of planning and regulations are covered.

Think of them as a panel of experts you need to check in with.

They include councils, the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England, among others.

These bodies will review your plan to ensure it aligns with broader policies and regulations and to offer expert advice on specific issues like any environmental impacts, historical sites and local infrastructure.

By consulting these statutory bodies during the pre-submission process, and responding to the comments they provide, you're ensuring your plan is robust, comprehensive and stands a better chance of being approved without objections.

When your project reaches this stage, we can provide you with a list of the relevant statutory consultees and their contact details.

# Strategic environmental assessment

## What is SEA and why is it needed?

SEA stands for Strategic Environmental Assessment. It's a process that looks at how your plan might impact the environment. Think of it as an environmental check-up for your plan. An SEA is only needed for a Neighbourhood plan if it's likely to have significant environmental effects.

Here's when an SEA is typically required:

1. if the Neighbourhood plan proposes new development that would have significant effects on the environment, like large housing projects or industrial sites
2. if it might impact protected sites such as the Kent Downs National Landscape or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) such as the Stodmarsh SSSI or Old Park and Chequers Wood SSSI

Even if you don't think any of these factors apply, you must still get this confirmed formally by the city council. This is known as screening which is a formal process to determine, in consultation with statutory bodies, whether a full SEA is required. This can take a number of weeks. Screening to determine if an SEA is needed or not should happen at the earliest possible stage of the process such as when you have drafted your policies.

If an SEA is needed, the SEA report should be published in parallel with the draft plan. If a SEA isn't needed, then a statement confirming this is the case should be published in parallel with the draft plan.

It should be noted that any costs incurred in the preparation of an SEA are the responsibility of the qualifying body, not us at Canterbury City Council.

# Progression following the Reg.14 consultation

## **What do you do with all the comments? How to revise your plan**

Once you've got all the feedback from your community and the statutory consultees, it's time to roll up your sleeves and get to work on the revisions.

Look through all the comments, take note of the common themes and suggestions and use this to revise your plan.

It's like editing a book – you're refining and improving your plan to make it the best it can be.

Pay particular attention to the comments you receive from the statutory consultees.

As already stressed, the statutory consultees are the experts you need to keep in the loop while making a Neighbourhood plan.

They provide important advice and feedback, ensuring the plan is sound and compliant with wider regulations.

It's crucial for a Neighbourhood planning group to follow their recommendations because these consultees have specialist knowledge and insights that can help avoid potential pitfalls.

Ignoring their advice could mean your plan doesn't meet the necessary standards, leading to delays or even rejection.

In short, sticking to their recommendations will help to ensure your plan is robust, legally sound and has a much higher chance of being approved.

It's all about building a plan that stands up to scrutiny and can be approved so that it can truly benefit the community.

# Progression following the Reg.14 consultation

## What is the (reg 16) submission consultation and what is required?

After you've revised your plan, it's time for the Submission Consultation, also known as Regulation 16.

This is when you formally submit your plan to us.

It will check to make sure it meets all the necessary requirements and then publish it for a further round of consultation.

You'll need to provide a few things, including:

- **The Basic Conditions Statement:** this is a document that explains how your plan meets the basic conditions for Neighbourhood plans. It's like a report card for your plan.
- **The Consultation Statement:** this is a record of all the consultations you've done, who you've spoken to and how you've addressed their comments. It's like a diary of your consultation journey and how you've changed the plan as a result.



# Progression following the Reg.14 consultation

## **The Basic Conditions Statement**

This is like the final check to make sure your Neighbourhood Plan meets all the necessary legal and planning requirements before it gets submitted for approval. It shows your plan is ready to be considered and stands a good chance of passing through the examination process.

The Basic Conditions Statement supports the submitted version of a Neighbourhood Plan by demonstrating that the plan:

- has regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
- is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area
- is compatible with retained EU law (as transposed into domestic law) and does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, the European Convention on Human Rights
- meets any prescribed conditions and the prescribed requirements for the making of the plan (including, where required, compliance with Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment processes)

# Progression following the Reg.14 consultation

## The Basic Conditions Statement

Here is an example structure for a good Basic Conditions Statement:

- 1. Introduction:** outline the purpose of the statement and the basic conditions that the Neighbourhood Plan needs to meet.
- 2. National Policies and Guidance:** explain how the plan aligns with national policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 3. Sustainable Development:** describe how the plan contributes to sustainable development, considering economic, social and environmental factors.
- 4. Local Strategic Policies:** show how the plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.
- 5. Legal Compatibility:** confirm the plan is compatible with retained EU law as incorporated into domestic legislation and the European Convention on Human Rights.
- 6. Prescribed Conditions:** confirm compliance with any applicable procedural requirements, including SEA screening and, where required, Habitats Regulations Assessment.

By following this structure, a Basic Conditions Statement can effectively support the neighbourhood plan, showing that it's well-prepared and ready for the next steps.

# Progression following the Reg.14 consultation

## The Consultation Statement

This is a crucial document in the Neighbourhood planning process. Think of it as the story of how the community was involved and consulted while creating the Neighbourhood plan. It shows that the community's voice has been heard and considered. The Consultation Statement supports the submitted version of the Neighbourhood plan by:

- demonstrating that the community and key stakeholders were actively engaged
- showing transparency in the planning process, which builds trust and legitimacy
- providing a record of the issues raised and how they were addressed in the final plan

Here's an example structure for a good Consultation Statement:

- 1. Introduction:** explain the purpose of the statement and the Neighbourhood plan
- 2. Engagement process:** describe how the community and stakeholders were engaged (surveys, public meetings, workshops, etc)
- 3. Feedback received:** summarise the main issues and concerns raised by the community
- 4. Responses to feedback:** explain how the feedback was considered and incorporated into the plan
- 5. Conclusion:** summarise the consultation process and highlight key changes made to the plan as a result of community input

By following this structure, a Consultation Statement can effectively show the Neighbourhood plan is truly a community-driven project.

# Progression following the Reg.14 consultation

## What is the examination?

Next up is the Examination. This is when an independent examiner reviews your plan to make sure it meets all the legal requirements. It's a bit like taking an exam but don't worry, you've done your homework and you're well prepared. Just make sure you have all your documents in order and be ready to answer any questions the examiner might have. The examiner is like a referee who checks if the Neighbourhood plan follows all the rules before it can move forward.

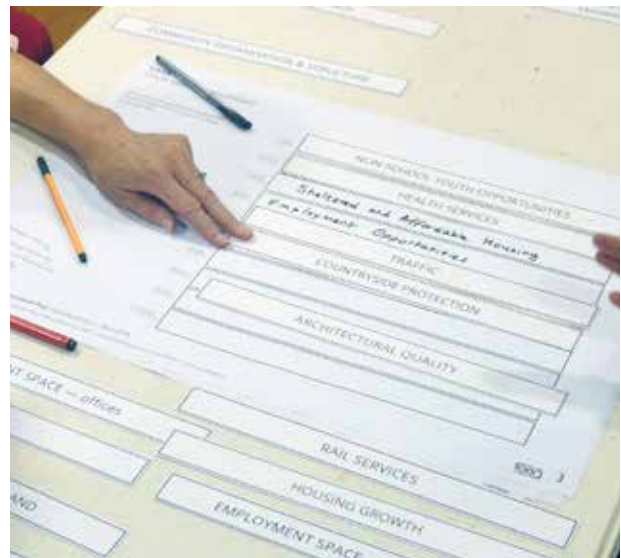
Here's how it works:

- 1.** First, and in consultation with the qualifying body, we find and appoint an independent examiner. They usually pick someone with expertise in planning and no personal stake in the area, ensuring fairness and impartiality.
- 2.** The examiner reviews the plan against key criteria, like whether it meets legal requirements, aligns with national and local policies, and supports sustainable development. They also consider feedback from the consultation (Reg 16) with the community and stakeholders. They may also ask for more information from you, the city council or from other stakeholders, to help them reach their conclusions.
- 3.** If the examiner finds the plan meets all the necessary conditions, they recommend it proceed to a referendum, where the local community gets to vote on it. If the plan needs changes, the examiner will suggest modifications. If significant issues are found, the plan might need to be revised and resubmitted.

So, the examiner's role is to ensure the Neighbourhood plan is thorough, compliant and ready for community approval.

# Progression following the Reg.14 consultation

Two minor but important tasks for the examiner is to agree the end date for the plan, usually linked to the end date of the corresponding Local Plan. The other key task is to agree the franchise for the referendum ie who gets to vote. Typically, this is those on the electoral roll who reside within the designated area, although there have been instances when the franchise was widened where the designated area was particularly small.



# Progression following the Reg.14 consultation

## Two different methods of examination

When it comes to examining a Neighbourhood plan, there are two main methods: written representations and an examination in public. The Examiner will decide which approach to take.



**Written representations** are like a paper-based review.

People send in their comments and objections in writing and the examiner considers these documents to make their decisions.

It's a quieter, behind-the-scenes process without any face-to-face discussions.

Think of it as submitting your homework online and waiting for feedback.



**An examination in public**, on the other hand, involves public hearings.

This is a more interactive process where the examiner invites people to come and discuss their views in person or via video call.

It's like having a public debate where everyone gets a chance to voice their opinions and the examiner can ask questions directly.

This method can be more transparent and allows for a deeper exploration of complex issues.

So, the key difference is that written representations are more about sending in your views in writing, while an examination in public is about discussing them in person. Both aim to ensure the plan is thoroughly checked and considers all perspectives.

# After the examination: what happens next?

Once your draft Neighbourhood plan has been submitted and examined by an independent Examiner, you're nearly at the finish line, but there are still a few important steps to go.

## **The Examiner's Report**

After reviewing your plan, the Examiner will publish a report. This includes a recommendation on whether the plan should proceed to referendum and a list of modifications (if needed) to make the plan legally sound and fit for purpose.

These modifications might involve rewording policies, removing parts that don't meet national or local planning rules or clarifying certain points. They're not optional but they're not imposed without discussion either.

## **Agreeing the modifications**

We will review the Examiner's recommendations and work with your group to agree on how to apply them. In most cases, the modifications are accepted and incorporated into the final version of the plan. In some situations, the Examiner may suggest additional consultation especially if the changes are significant or introduce new content. If that happens, we will help coordinate the process and make sure the community has a chance to comment.

## **Decision to proceed to referendum**

Once the modifications are agreed and the plan is ready, we must make a formal decision to send it to referendum. This is called the Decision Statement and it confirms that the plan meets all legal requirements and is ready for a public vote. This step is handled by Canterbury City Council's Electoral Services team which also organises the referendum itself.

# After the examination: what happens next?

## Decision to proceed to referendum (Continued)

It's worth noting:

- the referendum must follow official election rules
- it can take time to arrange, especially if other elections are happening nearby
- the timing may be affected by national or local election schedules

Be patient ... it's worth it!

While it might feel like the final stretch takes a while, it's all part of making sure your plan is fair, legal and ready to carry real weight. Once the Referendum is held and if the majority of voters say yes, your Neighbourhood plan will become part of the official planning framework for your area.



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# After the examination: what happens next?

## **How does the referendum work and who is responsible?**

As discussed above, if your plan passes the Examination, it goes to a referendum. This is when the people in your neighbourhood get to vote on whether they support your plan. It's the ultimate test of community support.

We are responsible for organising the referendum. If more than 50% of people vote in favour, then congratulations, your Neighbourhood plan can become part of the local planning policy. But there are a few final steps for the council to take to make it all official. The council must check all the procedural details to ensure everything was done correctly during the referendum. Once they're happy with it, a Canterbury City Council Cabinet meeting takes place where the plan is formally "made" meaning it becomes part of the legal development framework for the area.

From that point on, the Neighbourhood plan is used alongside other planning policies to guide and influence decisions on future development proposals. So, with the council's seal of approval, the Neighbourhood plan becomes a powerful tool in shaping the future of the community.

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09

# You have a finished plan! Now what?

Congratulations! You've crossed the finish line and have a completed Neighbourhood plan in your hands. But wait, the journey doesn't end here. Now comes the exciting part – bringing your plan to life.

## **Monitoring and implementation**

Think of your plan as a living document. It's not meant to just sit on a shelf gathering dust. It's meant to be used, monitored, and implemented. This means regularly checking how well the plan is working and making sure its goals are being achieved. It is important to remember that when development management planners at Canterbury City Council write committee reports, they will reference your Neighbourhood plan policies to show how a proposed development aligns with your community's vision and goals. They'll directly quote specific policies from your Neighbourhood plan and explain how the proposed development meets or doesn't meet those policies. This ensures decisions are transparent and rooted in the guidelines set by the community.

By doing this, planners can justify their recommendations to approve or reject a development proposal based on established local priorities, including defending decisions at planning appeals. Essentially, they're making sure that every step of the process respects the collective vision of the neighbourhood.

Check that this is the case and if you read committee reports that fail to reference your Neighbourhood plan, or misquote it, get in touch with your contact at the local planning authority and bring this to their attention. That's monitoring in action!




# How to use your plan in a proactive way

Your Neighbourhood plan is a powerful tool. Use it proactively to guide development in your area. Share it with your community, discuss it at town and village meetings, and use it to make informed decisions about your neighbourhood. Remember, this plan is your vision for your neighbourhood's future. So, don't let it sit on a shelf – put it into action!

## Use your plan to comment on future planning applications

When your community wants to voice its opinion on a planning application, quoting your own Neighbourhood plan policies gives you a more powerful voice.

Here's how you can do it:

-  **Identify the relevant policies:** read through your Neighbourhood plan to find the specific policies that relate to the planning application in question
-  **Provide context:** when commenting, clearly state which policy you're referring to and why it matters for this particular application. For example, "Policy XYZ states that any new development should include green spaces. This application doesn't include any, which we believe goes against our community's vision".
-  **Be specific:** Use direct quotes from your plan to back up your points. This shows your comments are grounded in the established guidelines and carry more weight in the decision-making process.

By quoting policies, your community can make a compelling case for why a development should be approved or rejected, showing that your stance is well-informed and aligned with the collective vision of the neighbourhood.

# How to use your plan in a proactive way

## **How to make sure that developers, architects, planners and the local planning authority know about your Neighbourhood plan and take it seriously**

Communication is key here. Make sure developers and their architects and planners know about your plan.

Share it with them, discuss it with them and show them how it reflects the community's vision.

The more they understand the value of your plan, the more seriously they'll take it.

It's like showing off a masterpiece – the more people see it, the more they'll appreciate it.

## **How to refresh and update your plan in a few years' time**

Just like fashion trends, Neighbourhood plans can become outdated too.

That's why it's important to refresh and update your plan every few years.

This could involve revisiting your community engagement, updating your research or revising your policies.

It's a chance to reflect on what's worked, what hasn't and what's changed in your neighbourhood.

So, keep your plan fresh, relevant, and ready for the future.

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**10**

# Links and Resources

- The Neighbourhood planning (General) Regulations 2012 - [Link](#)
- Neighbourhood planning Act 2017 - [Link](#)
- Localism Act 2011 - [Link](#)
- The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026 - [Link](#)
- For any queries please contact: [policy@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:policy@canterbury.gov.uk)



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