

Frequently asked Questions about Neighbourhood Planning.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

These are plans that will establish planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. They can be undertaken by a Parish Council within part or all of their parish or by a Neighbourhood Forum if there is no parish, such as Boston town. A Parish Forum's purpose must be to promote or improve the economic, environmental or social wellbeing of the area and have a constitution as well as a minimum of 21 members who live or work in the Neighbourhood Area or are elected borough or county councillors for the Neighbourhood Area. Collectively these are "Qualifying Authorities" and before commencing either must apply to the Local Planning Authority to designate the Neighbourhood Area the plan will cover. An [application form](#) is provided.

What is the purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan is a tool that allows communities to plan for growth themselves. Normally, the Council would allocate housing and employment sites and write planning policies for the Borough as a whole. Neighbourhood Planning gives that power to communities. There are still some national rules to abide by but this is a new power that allows communities more freedom than previous legislation.

What does a Neighbourhood Plan contain?

There are a few restrictions as to what kind of content can be in a Neighbourhood Plan. It cannot relate to:

- A County Matter (minerals, mining, aggregates, cement manufacture);
- anything in Annex 1 of the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations (oil refinery, power stations, disposal of radioactive waste, works for casting metal and steel, asbestos works, chemical works, construction of motorways, long distance rail lines and airports, trading ports and inland waterways, water incineration);
- Nationally significant infrastructure projects;
- Development removed through an article 4 direction or similar;
- Development in a conservation area.

A Neighbourhood Plan will have to incorporate the local housing target for the area as a minimum. It cannot have less housing than the Borough target but can have more.

How do you prepare or modify a Neighbourhood Plan?

Stage 1: Getting Started

- Consult with your community on whether a Neighbourhood Plan is right for you
- Establish a Steering Group which could include members not on the town/parish council/neighbourhood forum
- Define your Neighbourhood Area and submit to Boston Borough Council
- Develop a project plan for developing your plan

Stage 2: Develop your Vision, Objectives and Key Priorities

- Review available evidence
- Gather information about your Neighbourhood Area

- Identify your area's strengths, weaknesses and key issues
- Review South East Lincolnshire's Local Plan for your area
- Draft your vision and objectives
- Consult the wider community on your proposed vision, objectives and key issues

Stage 3: Develop your Plan

- Develop policies
- Develop an implementation and monitoring plan
- Finalise your draft Neighbourhood Plan
- Check conformity of your plan with South East Lincolnshire's Local Plan and national policy
- Produce a Habitat Regulations Assessment for your plan
- Prepare a consultation statement
- Consult the wider community on your draft plan

Stage 4: Independent Examination

- Submit your final plan and supporting documents to Boston Borough Council
- Boston Borough Council will arrange and pay for the independent examination

Stage 5: Referendum

- Boston Borough Council will make arrangements for a referendum

Stage 6: Adoption

- If the referendum shows community support then your Neighbourhood Plan will be 'made' by Boston Borough Council

What skills, resources and funding is available?

The Neighbourhood Planning web site <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/> has information on this and also more detail on the issues covered by this advice note.

How long will it take?

The timetable is set by the community. The larger and more complex the settlement, the longer the process is going to take. Initially settlements should consider planning their timetable over a 12 month period.

How does the community get involved?

The Qualifying Authority will initially set up a Steering Group. This group will work with a planning advisor from the Council to support, advise and ensure that they have any training necessary to assist them (See website link above). There will be various consultation stages throughout the process and the members of Steering Group may alter and change as more people become interested and involved.

Does that mean building over all the green space in a village?

No. Public open space is protected under national planning policy. Public open space is classed as parks, playing fields, allotments, football pitches etc. If, there were a move to develop on a piece of public open space, the Council would expect a developer to provide equal or better value facilities to replace that which would be lost. Failure to do so would result in justified objections to the plan from Sport England and the Council.

Will there be building on green fields?

If a settlement does not have sufficient previously developed land and there is a need to find housing in that settlement, then it is inevitable that green field land would be looked at to accommodate growth. Neighbourhood planning however is about giving the community a greater say on which sites are chosen.

Will the Borough Council interfere in the process and try and chose the sites it thinks are best?

The Borough Council is only present to advise and support in order to try to ensure that the plan will pass its examination.

Officers of the Council will advise the Steering Group/Parish Council on matters such as ensuring that the plan is in line with national planning policy, helping with the consultation process, ensuring that the plan complies with European Regulations. The Council will provide assistance and guidance on getting the best out of the plan for the community. They will provide a conduit into all the sections of the council and into the statutory consultees, such as the Environment Agency and Lincolnshire County Council.

The Council will not be choosing the sites for allocation. As long as the sites cover the amount of housing required and are in line with national planning policy requirements, in that they are in a sustainable location, then it is for the community to make that choice.

Where do the sites come from?

Landowners and developers have been putting sites forward for inclusion in the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan. Subject to the council complying with the General Data Protection Regulations information could be passed onto the steering group about all the sites in the Parish/neighbourhood area. After extensive consultation and if necessary a further call for sites, the choice of sites will come from those put forward.

Only land put forward by landowners and developers can be considered. Any other land is not considered deliverable under national planning policy and if put forward and allocated, the neighbourhood plan would not pass its examination.

Who will carry out the examination?

It will be a nominated person in agreement with the Council and the Parish Council. They must be a qualified person (in that they are a qualified Town Planner), not living in Boston Borough, and not have any interest or connection with the settlement concerned and not work with the Council or any other party with a connection with the settlement.

How does the referendum work?

All those qualified to vote in the parish will be allowed to participate. The Council will run the referendum and voting will be carried out in the same way as when a general election is held. If more than 50% of those who vote, vote in favour, the neighbourhood plan is considered to have been passed.

What happens if the neighbourhood plan passes the referendum?

The Council has to adopt the plan and it will be used in the determination of

planning applications and given the weight along with the Councils Local Plan and National Planning Policy.

What happens if the neighbourhood plan fails the referendum?

If it fails on a matter, which can be rectified, then the plan can be put to the community again. If it fails on a major issue, then plan making will fall back to the council. This means that the Council will have to allocate sites up to the housing growth figure in the village as part of the Borough Wide plan making process.