

Neighbourhood planning

An introduction

What is it?

The Localism Act 2011 introduces statutory neighbourhood planning in England. Neighbourhood Planning is one of the many changes to the planning system; it is intended to give communities more of a say in the development of their local area (within certain limits and parameters).

It will enable communities to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan for their area. These plans will be used to decide the future of the places where they live and work. They will give local people the opportunity to:

- choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built
- have their say on what those new buildings should look like
- grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.

How will it work?

There are six key stages to neighbourhood planning.

Stage 1: Defining the neighbourhood

Local people will decide how they want to work together. Considering and determining who leads, what's the boundary, etc.

Stage 2: Preparing the plan

A Neighbourhood Plan must be in conformity with existing planning policy, other than that local people decide what they want!

Stage 3: Independent check

Once a neighbourhood plan has been prepared, an independent examiner will check that it meets the right basic standards. If the plan doesn't meet the right standards, the examiner will recommend changes. The planning authority will then need to consider the examiner's views and decide whether to make those changes.

Stage 4: Community referendum

The local council will organise a referendum on any plan that meets the basic standards. If more than 50 per cent of people voting in the referendum support the plan, then the local planning authority must bring it into force.

Stage 5: Legal Force

Once a neighbourhood plan is in force, it carries real legal weight. All decision-makers will be obliged, by law, to take what it says into account when they consider proposals for development in the neighbourhood!

Stage 6: Implementation

The fun part! Now the plan is in place don't let it sit on the shelf.

