



General information about the planning system and Neighbourhood Plans

September 2021

About this booklet

This booklet explains the basic parts of the planning system; the national guidance, how planning works at a local level, in terms of the documents (*Local Plan*) and processes (*Planning Applications*), and how this relates to Neighbourhood Planning.

The planning system

Planning involves making decisions about the future of development and use of urban and rural land, to ensure that this occurs in a sustainable (balanced) manner.

This occurs through the production of a *development plan* (land use document) to guide decisions about dealing with *planning applications*, which is the way development is controlled.

Breckland Council is responsible for producing one type of *development plan* – a *Local Plan* – and deciding how to determine *planning applications*.

National Planning Policy Framework

The main national planning guidance is known as the ‘National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)’, which was updated in July 2021.

This gives planning guidance to those producing a *development plan* and for local planning authorities when making decisions on *planning applications*. The NPPF introduced “*a presumption in favour of sustainable development*”, as a means to achieve development in a positive and flexible way.

In addition to this there are a number of supporting national Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) notes, which provides more detailed guidance on a variety of topics including Neighbourhood Planning.

Local Plan

Breckland Council must produce a *Local Plan* that has statutory policies for the local authority area. This includes general guidance for all development, for specific types of development and the allocation of sites for development.

When preparing a *Local Plan*, a local authority must work with neighbouring authorities (the Duty to Cooperate), meet the relevant legal and procedural requirements, and ensure it is *sound*. Being *sound* is a type of test which requires plans to be prepared positively, be justified, and be effective, as well as being consistent with national policy.

Breckland’s *development plan* was adopted (agreed) in November 2019 and is made up of a *Local Plan* and a policies map. This *development plan* replaced a previous type of plan, collectively known as a *Local Development Framework*, which is made up of a number of documents. This included a Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (2009), Site Specific Policies and Proposals (2012) Thetford Area Action Plan (2009),

Norfolk County Council also have produced a *Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework* with a policies map, which is in the final stages of being reviewed as a *Local Plan*.

Planning Applications

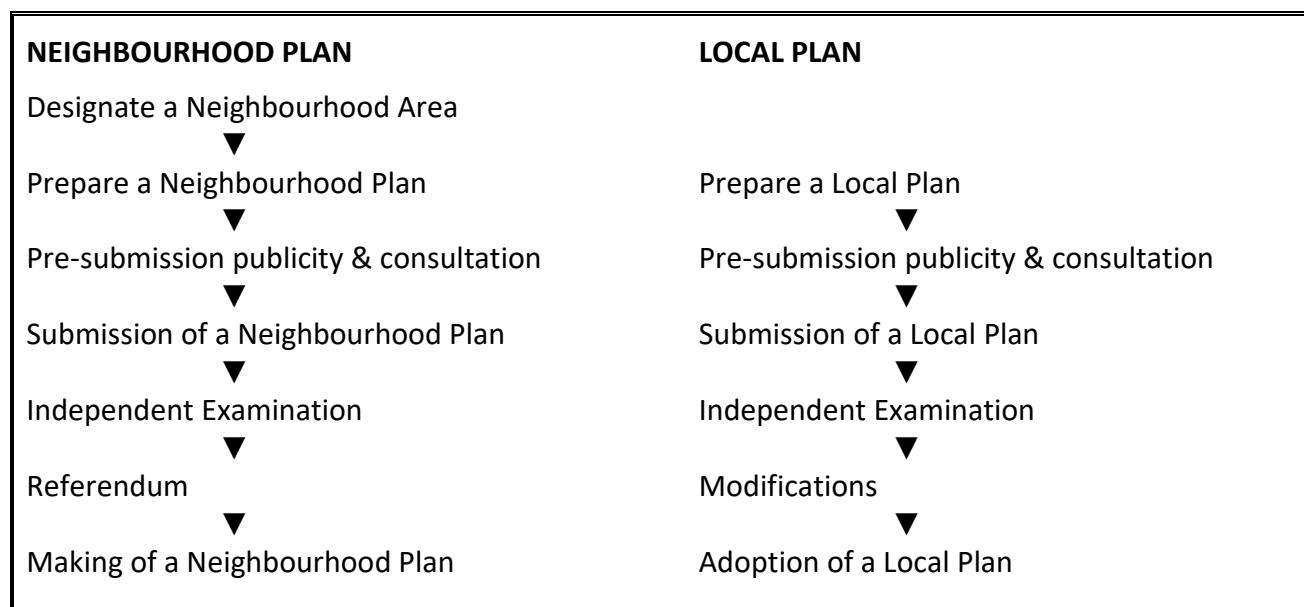
The *Local Plan*, and the relevant *Neighbourhood Plan*, are used as the basis (or starting point) for making planning decisions about *planning applications*. However, there may be *material considerations* (other relevant factors) such as new national planning practice guidance that also needs to be taken account of.

Neighbourhood planning

The Localism Act 2011 introduced Neighbourhood planning to give local communities a greater role in guiding decisions about the development and use of land in their area. It created a new type of *development plan* called a *Neighbourhood Development Plan*, normally referred to as a *Neighbourhood Plan*.

This plan can be produced by a Parish Council (a qualifying body) for their local area. They can contain the same types of policies as a *Local Plan*, but in more detail or focus on areas relevant to their local area. However, they should not support less development than the amount included in the *Local Plan*.

When being prepared, it also needs to meet some tests - *Basic Conditions* - that include taking account of national policy, achieve sustainable development, be consistent with the strategic (headline) policies in the *Local Plan* and be compatible with EU obligations (environmental) and human rights requirements. There is a statutory preparation process, similar to the *Local Plan* one, which needs to be followed to *make* (agree) a *Neighbourhood Plan*:



Once the Neighbourhood Plan has completed the Examination stage, it needs to be taken account of when making decisions about *planning applications* within the neighbourhood plan area. Also once there has been a 'yes' vote in the Referendum, it will have the same weight (status) as the *Local Plan*, unless the Local Planning Authority makes a different final decision.

Additional information about Neighbourhood planning is available on the Breckland Council website: <http://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/4284/Neighbourhood-Plans>