



General information about the planning system and Neighbourhood Plans

About this booklet

This booklet explains about 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 and to ensure that this occurs in a sustainable (balanced) manner.

This occurs through producing a *development plan* (land use document) to guide decisions and processing planning applications, which are the means to implement these decisions.

Breckland Council is responsible for both 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, which was published in March 2012.

This gives planning guidance to those producing *development plans* and for local planning authorities when making decisions on planning applications. Achieving sustainable development is the key objective of the planning system.

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

Local Plan

Breckland Council must produce a Local Plan which has 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 plan, a local authority must work with neighbouring authorities (the Duty to Cooperate), meet the relevant legal and procedural requirements, and be '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.

The current Breckland Council *development plan* is an old type of plan, collectively known as the Local Development Framework. This is made up of a Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (2009), Site Specific Policies and Proposals (2012) Thetford Area Action Plan (2009), and a policies map.

A Local Plan is currently being produced to replace all these documents.

Norfolk County Council also produces a Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework with a policies map.

Planning Applications

The Local Plan, or its predecessor documents, and any relevant Neighbourhood Plans, are used as the basis for making planning decisions about *planning applications*, along with national planning guidance, and material considerations (other relevant factors).

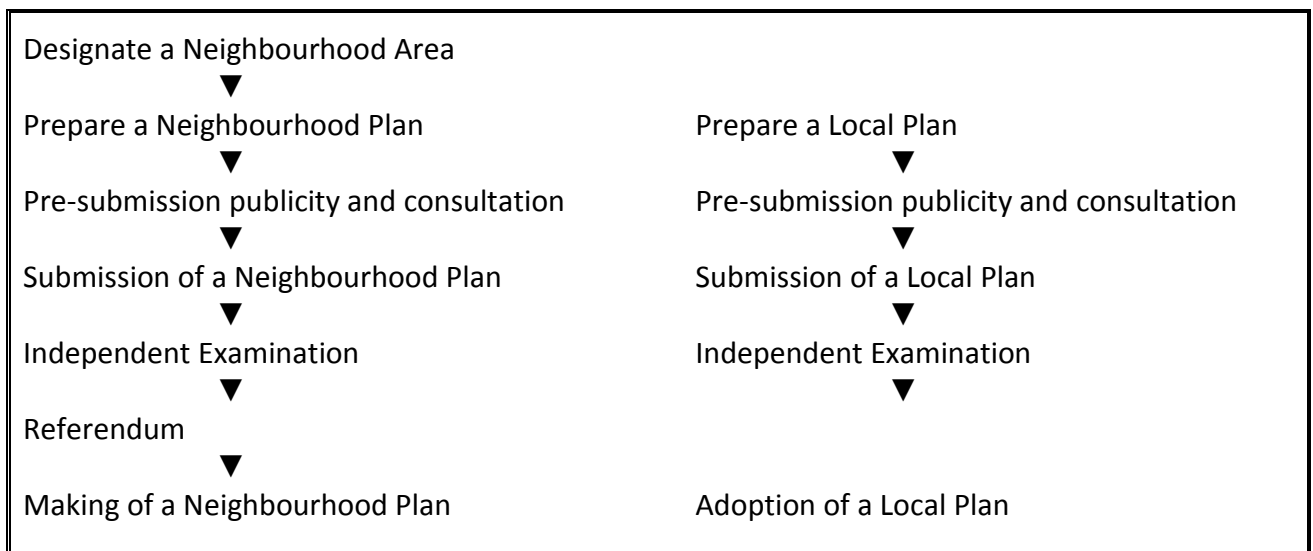
Neighbourhood planning

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 (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 need to meet some tests (Basic Conditions), which 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 and human rights requirements.

There is a statutory preparation process, similar to the Local Plan one, which needs to be followed to make a Neighbourhood Plan:



Once 'made' the Neighbourhood Plan will have the same status or weight as a Local Plan, and will need to be taken account of when making decisions about planning applications within the parish area.

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