

# 1. What is a neighbourhood plan?

- a) A neighbourhood plan is a document that sets out planning policies for a defined local area. Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011.
- b) It is an important and powerful tool that gives communities statutory powers to shape how their communities develop.
- c) It is used to decide whether to approve planning applications, including new buildings (e.g. community facilities) or changes to existing buildings (e.g. giving permission to change the upper floors of shops to flats).
- d) It is written by the local community, the people who know and love the area, to ensure the community gets the right types of development, in the right place.

## 2. What can a neighbourhood plan control?


- a) A neighbourhood plan is about the use and development of land and may contain a vision, aims, planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, or allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development.
- b) It may deal with a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues (such as housing, employment, design, heritage and transport) or it may focus on one or two issues only.
- c) A neighbourhood plan should not promote less development than that identified in the local plan for the local area (such as new housing allocations) but it can allow greater growth levels, providing it meets the basic conditions.
- d) It can specify policies and guidance on how new development should be designed, orientated and located. Neighbourhood plans can therefore be a powerful tool in shaping the development of a neighbourhood area.

### 3. What tests must a neighbourhood plan meet?

- a) Once a neighbourhood plan has been completed, it will have to be submitted to the local planning authority and then be subject to an independent examination. This will make sure that the proper legal process has been followed and that the plan meets the basic conditions described in the regulations.
- b) Following the independent examination, any necessary modifications are then made to ensure they meet legal requirements.
- c) They are then subjected to a public referendum. It is necessary that more than 50% of those voting in the referendum vote “yes” in order to bring the plan into force.
- d) If successful at referendum, a neighbourhood plan will become part of the statutory development plan for the area. This statutory status gives neighbourhood plans far more weight than some other local documents, such as parish plans, community plans and village design statements.

## 4. What steps are needed to prepare a neighbourhood plan?

These are the steps needed to prepare neighbourhood plan:

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- **Defining the neighbourhood area** – *agreeing the plan boundary*
  - **Drafting the plan** – *research, engagement, drafting policy text etc.*
  - **Formal 6-week consultation (Reg.14)** – *run by the town council on a draft of the whole plan*
  - **Consider revisions and changes** – *based on the results of the Reg. 14 consultation*
  - **Submission to Vale of White Horse DC** – *once the plan is updated*
  - **Formal 6-week consultation (Reg.16)** – *run by the local planning authority*
  - **Independent examination** – *to check the plan's general conformity with the regulations*
  - **Referendum** – *final plan is voted upon by local people*
  - **Plan comes into legal force** – *if the referendum is won*