

Differences between neighbourhood plans and other community plans

1. Introduction

- 1.1. It is important to consider which approach is right for your parish. There are a number of options available to your parish and some consideration should be given to these before proceeding.

2. Neighbourhood plans

- 2.1. Neighbourhood plans will set out the vision for an area and the planning policies for the use and development of land. These policies will be at a local level to support the strategic policies within the West Berkshire Local Plan. Plans should be focused on guiding development rather than stopping it. Neighbourhood plans will give your community an increased ability to influence planning within your area. When adopted your neighbourhood plan will become a statutory plan carrying equal weight to the West Berkshire Local Plan and will be used in making decisions on planning applications in your area. In West Berkshire, a neighbourhood plan can only be produced by parish or town councils.

3. Other neighbourhood planning tools

(a) Neighbourhood Development Orders

- 3.1. These can grant planning permission for specific developments in a Neighbourhood Area. This could, for example, be for certain types of household applications, shop fronts or 'green energy'. Where there is a Neighbourhood Development Order in place there would be no need to apply to West Berkshire Council for planning permission for the development it covers. The Neighbourhood Development Order can apply to all of the Neighbourhood Area or a particular site within the neighbourhood.

(b) Community Right to Build Orders

- 3.2. Similar to Neighbourhood Development Orders, these will enable community groups or parish councils to bring forward small scale development on specific sites without the need for planning permission. These could be for new small scale development such as new homes, shops or other community facilities.
- 3.3. A community group not just the parish council is able to develop a 'Community Right to Build' Order. However, over half the members of the community group must live within the Neighbourhood Area. The process for preparing and adopting a 'Community Right to Build' order is broadly the same as that for a Neighbourhood Development Order.
- 3.4. Proposals will be subject to an independent examination and a referendum.

4. Parish / community-led plans

- 4.1. Parish plans and community-led plans contain a wide range of community issues and aspirations. Many parishes already have some experience in producing Parish Plans and many of these plans provide a basis for taking forward planning related and land-use elements into Neighbourhood Development Plans. There is no requirement for Parish Plans to include planning issues regarding the use and development of land or buildings. There is also no requirement for a parish to produce a Parish Plan prior

to producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan. Therefore, if the issues you would like to tackle within your parish are not directly related to the development of land or buildings, planning is not the major issue or if policies in the West Berkshire Local Plan are sufficient, then a Parish Plan may be for you.

5. Village Design Statement

- 5.1. A Village Design Statement contains a description and analysis of the distinctive aspects of a village and outlines design guidance for further development. These can form part of both a Parish Plan and a Neighbourhood Development Plan but can also be a document in their own right. A Village Design Statement can be endorsed by West Berkshire Council as material consideration in determining planning applications.

6. Rely on the West Berkshire Local Plan

- 6.1. Producing Neighbourhood Development Plans or any other of the available planning tools is not compulsory to guide land use and development within your area. The West Berkshire Local Plan contains policies to guide development within the district.

Table 1: Differences between neighbourhood plans and parish/community-led plans

	Neighbourhood plan	Parish / community-led plan	Village Design Statements
Content	<p>Must contain policies on the development and use of land. It can contain as many or as few policies as you like, and can be focused around a particular issue.</p> <p>Policies and proposals must be realistic, achievable, and based on evidence.</p>	<p>Can include an action plan of practical actions which a community can work together with local agencies to achieve and bring about change.</p> <p>May address a range of social, economic and environmental issues</p>	<p>Contains a description and analysis of the distinctive aspects of a village and outlines design guidance for further development</p>
Restrictions	<p>Must be in conformity with strategic policies in the local plan, and with national planning policy and guidance. Note that West Berkshire Council are currently preparing the Local Plan Review which will be ready in its final form in 2022.</p> <p>A Neighbourhood Plan cannot be used to stop development or to seek a lower level of development than that set out in the Local Plan.</p>	<p>Cannot allocate sites for development.</p>	

West Berkshire Council Neighbourhood Planning Advice Note 2: Differences between neighbourhood plans and other community plans

	Neighbourhood plan	Parish / community-led plan	Village Design Statements
Example content	Location and type of housing, affordable housing, regeneration of derelict land, design, infrastructure, Local Green Space, conservation, specifications for development and type of use	Village halls, community shops, waste and recycling, rights of way, public open space, biodiversity, energy saving schemes, communication, community support, anti-social behaviour	Design
Cost to prepare	Anything between a few thousand to tens of thousands depending on the complexity of plan and whether you hire consultants to help. Groups preparing plans can apply for a Government grant of £9,000.	Can be produced at low cost, eg. a few thousand, and do not require much technical (planning) expertise.	
Timescales	Around 2 years, depending on the complexity of the plan. Requires independent examination and a referendum.	Generally easier and quicker to prepare, eg. 18 months. Does not require independent examination or referendum.	
Weight in determining planning applications	When adopted, a plan forms part of the development plan for the district and must by law be used by the local planning authority in the determination of planning applications	No formal weight, although it can be taken into account in determining planning applications if it covers issues that are material planning considerations. They are useful in giving a community perspective on issues, but it could not be used to justify refusing or granting planning permission	
Process for review	Not compulsory, but plans may need to be reviewed in light of changes to national and local plan policies in order to remain up to date. Any out of date policies can no longer be taken into account in determining planning applications.	The community can choose when to review a plan	