

Weight of emerging neighbourhood plans

- 1.1. Once a neighbourhood plan is ‘made’ (adopted), it carries the same weight as other development plan policies.
- 1.2. However like all planning documents, neighbourhood plans will gather increasing weight as a material consideration the further they get through the process prior to their adoption.
- 1.3. The following table demonstrates the regulated stages of neighbourhood plan preparation and sets out the level of weight that can be attached. Up-to-date information on the progress of neighbourhood plans in the district can be found at: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning>.

Stage	Comment	Weight
Neighbourhood Area Designation	All that is really known is the intention of a community to prepare a plan – there is likely to be little content to take into consideration and, importantly, detailed proposals have not been widely consulted on and endorsed by the community. <i>Neighbourhood plans currently at this stage: Burghfield, Enborne, Lambourn, Newbury, and Thatcham.</i>	No weight can be given.
Pre-submission consultation (carried out by the neighbourhood planning group), also known as a Regulation 14 consultation	Following this 6 week consultation the steering group will have evidence of community support for the plan – and if any policies are not supported or need to be changed. However the plan might not be legally compliant and has not been tested against the Basic Conditions (these are the tests against which the plan will be examined and include: having regard to national policies, general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan, and contributes to the achievement of sustainable development). <i>Neighbourhood plans currently at this stage: Hungerford and Tilehurst</i>	Little weight can be given as the Plan has not been tested and may be subject to change following consultation.
Submission to West Berkshire Council / legal compliance check	The plan is formally submitted to West Berkshire Council and checked for legal compliance. <i>Neighbourhood plans currently at this stage: None</i>	Limited weight can be given, subject to evidence of support (this will be set out in the Consultation Statement that is submitted alongside the neighbourhood plan). Any weight is dependent on the Council being of the opinion that the plan is

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		legally compliant (but the Examiner must confirm this).
Publication consultation	<p>This 6 week consultation is undertaken when West Berkshire Council endorses the plan as legally compliant. Further comments made at this stage will be assessed by the Examiner.</p> <p><i>Neighbourhood plans currently at this stage: None</i></p>	Increasing weight can be given – taking into account any comments received during the consultation and with the knowledge that the examiner can require changes to the plan.
Independent examination	<p>The Examiner determines whether the plan meets the basic conditions and recommends whether it proceeds to referendum or not. He may also require changes to be made to the plan. The Council decides whether the plan will proceed to referendum.</p> <p><i>Neighbourhood plans currently at this stage: None</i></p>	A successful plan carries considerable weight. It has now been confirmed that the plan is legally compliant and meets the Basic Conditions, one of which is general conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework.
Referendum/Adoption	<p>Those on the Electoral Register within the plan area vote in a referendum, in a Yes/No vote on whether the plan should be adopted. A simple majority, regardless of turnout, means that the Plan can be adopted.</p> <p><i>Neighbourhood plans currently at this stage: Cold Ash (adopted May 2024), Compton (adopted February 2022), Hermitage (adopted May 2024), Stratfield Mortimer (adopted June 2017),</i></p>	<p>In West Berkshire, if successful at referendum, the neighbourhood plan is adopted immediately and has full development plan weight in decision making.</p> <p>If the plan is unsuccessful at referendum then it has no weight.</p>