

Neighbourhood Development Plans - Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

Neighbourhood Development Plans are planning documents which are specific to local level planning. They have been introduced as part of the Government's reforms to the planning system to give local people new opportunities to shape the development of the communities in which they live. A Neighbourhood Development Plan can bring together residents, businesses, local groups, landowners and developers to share ideas and build consensus about what needs to be accomplished in their area.

Do we have to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

No. Preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans is optional and it is recognised that not all areas will want to prepare one.

Who prepares them?

The preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans are initiated and led by Parish and Town Councils, working with their local community. In areas where there is no parish/town council, such as Grantham, they can be prepared by local people working together through a Neighbourhood Forum. A Neighbourhood Forum must:

- Have at least 21 members and be comprised of people who are elected members or who live and/or work in the neighbourhood area. There should preferably be:
 - inclusive and representative of the community in the neighbourhood area
 - have a written constitution and be established for the economic, social and environmental well being of the area

A proposed neighbourhood forum must apply to the Council for formal recognition. Once a neighbourhood forum has been established, it will exist for 5 years, and within that period another neighbourhood forum cannot be designated for the same area.

What area does a Neighbourhood Development Plan cover?

A Neighbourhood Development Plan would normally cover a whole parish (the neighbourhood area) but it could cover a smaller area if justified. Neighbourhood areas can also cover more than one parish area, if this is justified and providing all the Parishes involved agree to this.

One of the first actions needed is for the Parish or Town Council to formally apply to South Kesteven District Council to designate a Neighbourhood Area. The District Council will publicise the application and agree to designate the area unless it has valid planning reasons to identify a revised area.

What will a Neighbourhood Development Plan look like?

It is up to each community to decide what is included in a Neighbourhood Development Plan and how much detail they wish to go into. Policies included in Neighbourhood Development Plans will need to be related to the use of land in the area or to spatial matters. It is likely that wider issues will arise during community engagement in the course of the plan making process.

Can it stop development from happening in our area?

No, the Government has made clear that Neighbourhood Development Plans are not tools to stop development. They are intended to be enabling documents so they cannot, for instance, promote a lower rate of development in an area than may have already been agreed. They must also be consistent with national and local planning policies.

We have produced a parish plan: is this no longer relevant?

Parish Plans will still be useful for setting out local priorities and actions to take within a community as they provide the freedom to look at a very broad range of issues, including those not normally dealt with directly by the planning system e.g. broadband speeds, rural crime initiatives or service related issues.

They can normally be prepared more quickly and will tend to be less costly than neighbourhood plans. However, subject to the resources available, neighbourhood planning may be the best means for a community to deal with planning and land use matters.

It will be possible for communities to prepare BOTH a parish plan and a neighbourhood plan to provide a comprehensive coverage of all planning and non-planning related concerns.

What is the cost of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

This will depend on the size, scope and complexity of the Plan being prepared. The Parish or Town Council will be responsible for all costs associated with preparing the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan: this will include the collection of any new evidence or information to support the Plan, consultation with the local community and making available copies of the draft Plan.

Once the Plan is sent to the District Council, then it becomes responsible for organising and funding subsequent stages including the examination and referendum.

The Department of Communities and Local Government estimate the average costs being between £20K and £86K per plan.

How long will it take to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

It will be up to individual areas to decide on the pace at which they wish to progress their plans. However it is anticipated that on average the process is likely to take around two years.

If we have a Neighbourhood Development Plan does this mean that we don't have to use South Kesteven's existing planning policies?

No. However, when made, neighbourhood plans will be statutory planning documents. They will form part of the Development Plan which, in South Kesteven, is made up of the Core Strategy and the Site Allocation and Policies Development Plan Document and, therefore, will have significant weight in planning decisions.

Which will carry more planning weight – a Neighbourhood Plan or South Kesteven's development plan?

The weight (importance) that is attached to a particular policy can only be decided when considering a specific proposal. At a general level Neighbourhood Development Plans and South Kesteven's development plan should complement each other.

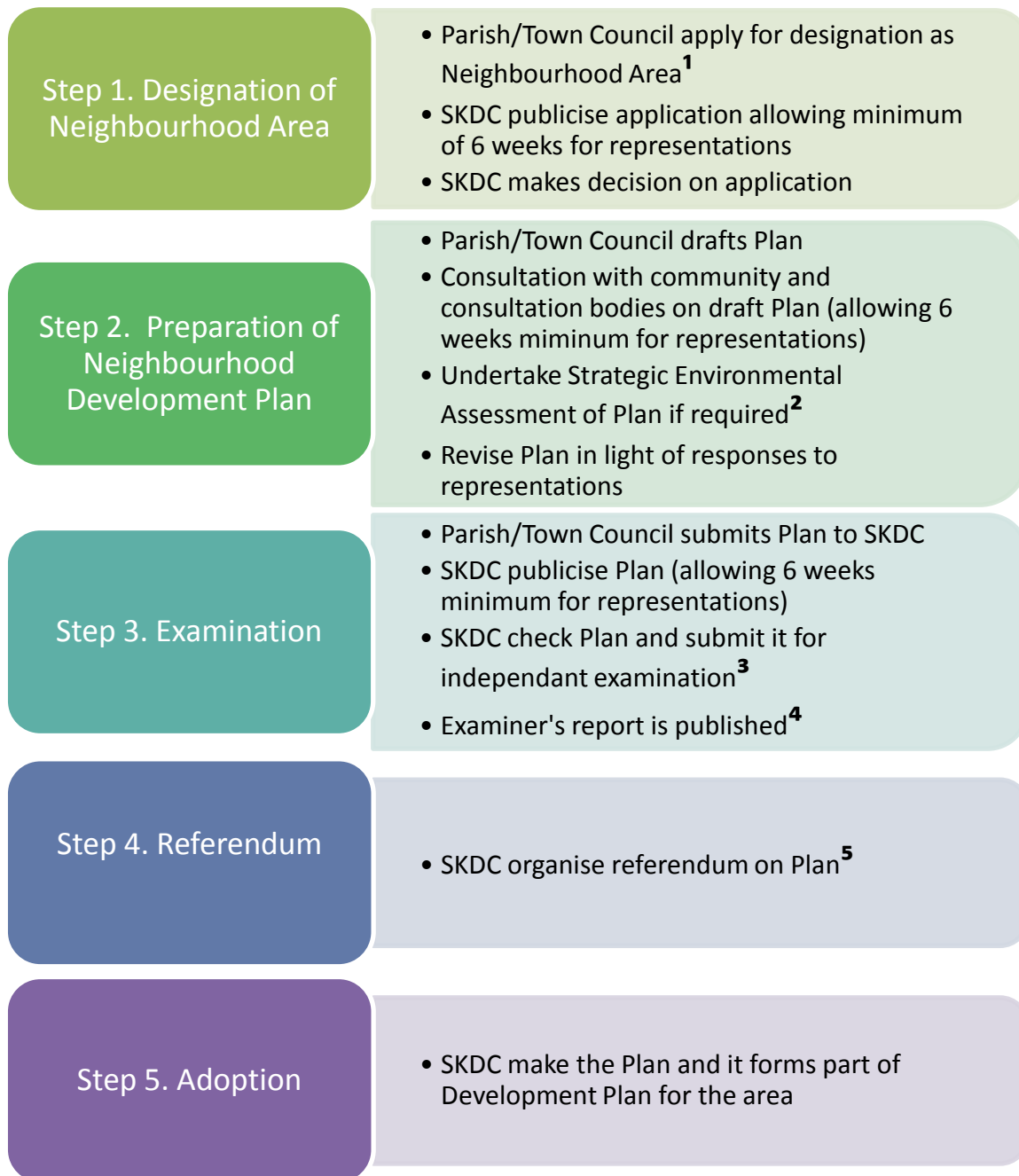
Who will decide planning applications?

This will remain with the District Council as the local planning authority.

What is the process for preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

See steps diagram below

Neighbourhood Development Plan Process



Notes:

¹Where there is no Parish or Town Council an application to designate a Neighbourhood Forum will also need to be made

²The draft Plan will have to conform with the EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA). At a minimum a screening procedure to determine whether the proposals are likely to have an impact on the environment is likely to be required.

³SKDC will check the Plan for legal compliance before it is submitted for examination by an independent suitably qualified person.

⁴The Inspector's report is not binding. They can recommend that the Plan is put forward for referendum, or that it should be modified or that the proposal should be refused.

⁵Where the examination is favourable the draft Plan will be subject to a referendum organised by SKDC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Plan, SKDC will make the Plan.