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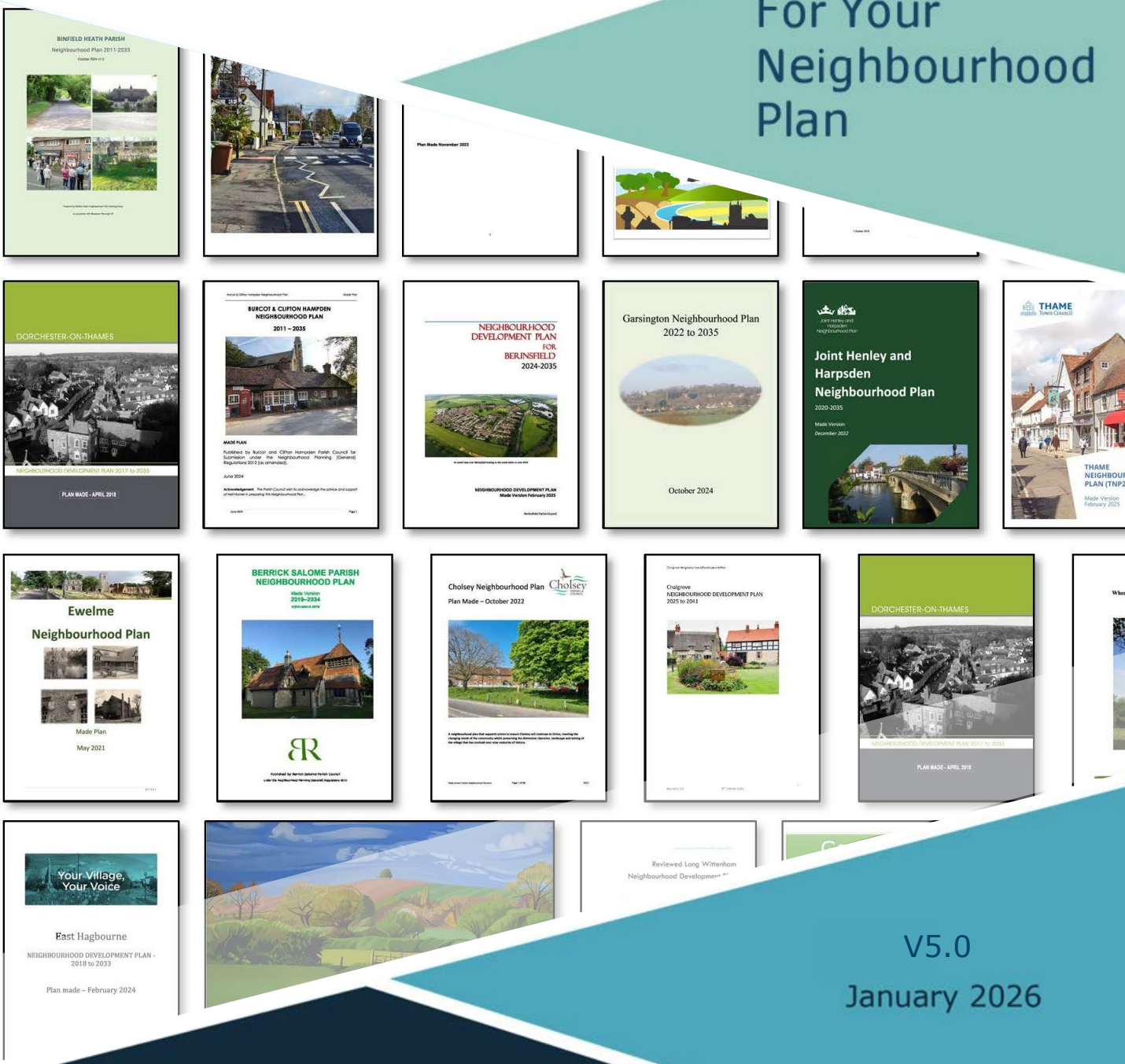
Neighbourhood Planning Guide

For Your Neighbourhood Plan



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Neighbourhood Planning Guides and Templates for Groups in South Oxfordshire

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Section 1: Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning

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1. Purpose of this Neighbourhood Planning Guide

1.1.1 This guide is designed to help communities prepare a neighbourhood development plan, also referred to as a neighbourhood plan. The guide provides clear steps and guidance for those looking to embark on the neighbourhood planning process. Neighbourhood planning offers local communities the opportunity to shape the development and future of their area. However, preparing a neighbourhood plan requires careful planning, collaboration and commitment.

1.1.2 This guide provides a step-by-step overview of how to develop a neighbourhood plan. It outlines the key stages, important considerations and the resources and tools available to support your work. It is designed to be used alongside the Neighbourhood Plan Template.

2. Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced significant reforms to the planning system, giving local communities the power to shape the future of their neighbourhood. As part of the Act, a new initiative was introduced – the neighbourhood plan.

2.1.2 Since being introduced many communities have decided to produce a neighbourhood plan. Across South Oxfordshire many communities have been successful in making neighbourhood plans with 37 made plans across the district, with several reviews completed and more under way. The process of producing a neighbourhood plan can be broken down into several key stages. The main stages are briefly summarised in the diagram overleaf. The diagram only provides a brief description of each step so please refer the detailed section in this guide for more information. Please note that the process can look different for a plan review, depending on the type of review being undertaken. More information about reviewing neighbourhood plans is provided later in this guide.

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NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCESS

01	**Designation:**	A decision is made by South Oxfordshire as to whether to accept the designation.
02	**Preparation:**	Once accepted, the Qualifying Body prepares the plan and the evidence base, consulting with local residents and stakeholders.
03	**Pre-Submission Consultation (Reg 14):**	A Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan is prepared and publicly consulted on by the qualifying body for 6 weeks.
04	**Plan is Amended:**	Following the consultation, the Qualifying Body amend the draft Neighbourhood Plan and submit to South Oxfordshire.
05	**Submission (Reg 15):**	The draft Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents are submitted to South Oxfordshire.
06	**Publication (Reg 16):**	South Oxfordshire check and review the submission. The draft Plan and supporting documents are formally consulted on for another 6 weeks.
07	**Examination (Reg 17):**	An independent examiner is agreed with the qualifying body and appointed by South Oxfordshire. The Plan and supporting documents are reviewed by an independent examiner. The examiner will decide whether a hearing is required for the examination. An unaccompanied site visit to the area is made by the examiner.
08	**Examiner's Report (Reg 18):**	Examiner may ask clarification questions to the qualifying body and to South Oxfordshire. Examiner issues their findings and recommendations and whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. South Oxfordshire will publish a decision statement setting out the actions to be taken in response to the examiner's recommendations.
09	**Referendum:**	The Plan is amended in line with agreed modifications. A final version of the Plan is published and a local referendum is held. If more than 50% of those voting are in favour, the Plan will become part of the Development Plan.
10	**Plan is Made:**	Once approved at referendum, South Oxfordshire then makes the decision of whether the Plan should be made at a Full Council meeting.
11	**Monitoring:**	South Oxfordshire is responsible for monitoring the impact of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan on the environment. Significant changes to planning policy may trigger the need for a review. Minor changes such as corrections would not need a further examination or referendum. Other changes which are more material may need need to be reviewed by an examiner. Substantial changes will require examination and further referendum.

Key - *South Oxfordshire's Responsibility* *Qualifying Body's Responsibility*

Please Note - a 'Qualifying Body' comprises a Town / Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum (the latter would also cover areas with a parish meeting).

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2.2 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

2.2.1 A neighbourhood plan empowers local communities to shape and guide sustainable development and future growth in their area. It gives residents, businesses and other stakeholders the ability to create a shared vision for their neighbourhood, influencing decisions on key land use matters such as green spaces, housing and infrastructure.

2.2.2 Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies outlined in the local authority's local plan and should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies or undermine those strategic policies.

2.2.3 The process of creating a neighbourhood plan is entirely voluntary and initiated by the local community. In areas where there is a parish, the process is usually initiated and led by Town or Parish Councils. In areas where there is no parish, the formation of a Neighbourhood Forum is required to undertake the process. For details on setting up a Neighbourhood Forum, please refer to the 'Neighbourhood Forums' section.

2.2.4 When preparing your neighbourhood plan, it should be developed in conjunction with the community. This means that a wide variety of stakeholders should be involved in the process, such as:

2.2.5 Collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders ensures that your neighbourhood plan accurately reflects the needs of the community, which can help increase support for the plan. Having community support for your neighbourhood plan is important because of the need for a referendum. At the end of the process, in order for the neighbourhood plan to become part of the statutory development plan, more than half of those voting need to be in favour of the neighbourhood plan.

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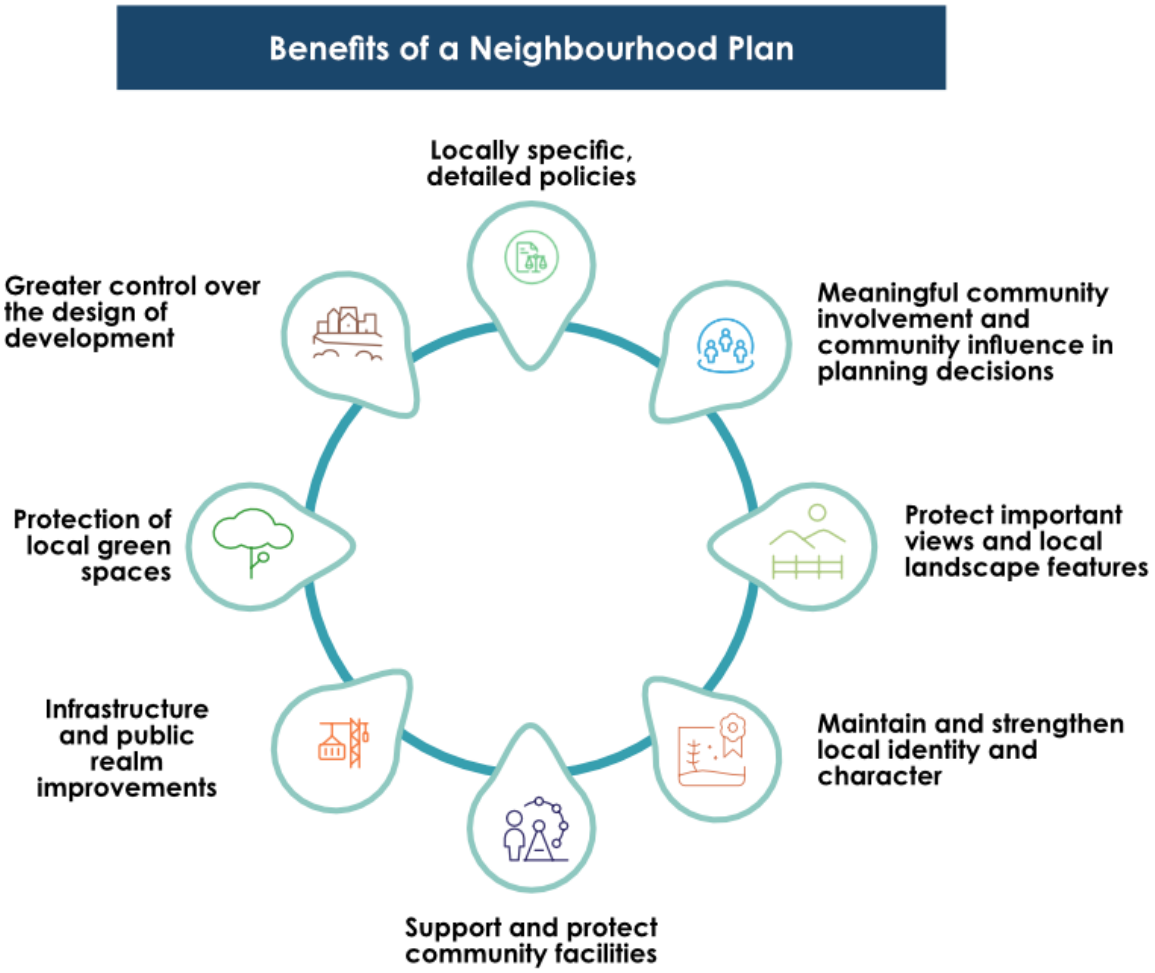
2.3 Benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan

2.3.1 A neighbourhood plan gives local communities a powerful and proactive role in shaping the future of the area where they live and work. Unlike other documents, a neighbourhood plan becomes part of the statutory development plan once approved at referendum, meaning it must be taken into account in planning decisions.

2.3.2 Preparing one offers a wide range of benefits, such as:



Create Locally Specific Planning Policies

2.3.3 A neighbourhood plan lets communities write planning policies tailored to their area. These policies sit alongside the Local Plan and directly influence planning decisions, giving residents meaningful control over what development should look like and where it should go.

Protect Local Green Spaces

2.3.4 Neighbourhood plans can identify and designate important open areas, known as

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Local Green Spaces. These designations offer strong protection against development, ensuring cherished natural spaces are safeguarded for the future.

Protect Important Views

2.3.5 Neighbourhood plans can identify and designate important views and vistas, ensuring that new development responds appropriately to the established visual character and setting of the area.

Maintain and Strengthen Local Character

2.3.6 Through design codes or design policies, a neighbourhood plan can shape the look, feel, scale and layout of new development. This helps reinforce the distinct character of the settlement and prevents poorly designed or inappropriate schemes.

Support and Protect Community Facilities

2.3.7 Neighbourhood plans can list valued community facilities, such as pubs, village halls, schools, shops or sports facilities and include policies to protect and enhance them or ensure suitable replacement if they are lost.

Additional Protection from Speculative Development

2.3.8 Areas with made neighbourhood plans that are less than five years old and which include housing policies and allocations to meet their housing requirement, have additional protection in national planning policy from inappropriate speculative development.

Influence Infrastructure and Public Realm Improvements

2.3.9 Plans can set priorities for improvements such as footpaths, cycle routes, parking or traffic calming. This helps guide negotiations with developers when new development comes forward.

Strengthen Community Influence in Planning Decisions

2.3.10 Because a neighbourhood plan forms part of the statutory development plan, it must be taken into account when planning applications are decided. This gives local communities a stronger, formal voice and provides a clear basis for responding to proposals.

Encourage Meaningful Community Involvement

2.3.11 Developing the plan brings residents, businesses and local organisations together. This process builds local consensus, strengthens community connections, and gives people a direct role in shaping the future of the place they live.

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2.4 Setting up a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

2.4.1 Creating a steering group allows a parish/town council to delegate the day-to-day tasks of producing the neighbourhood plan to others, giving local residents an opportunity to play an active role, whilst the parish/town council continues to focus on existing parish matters.

2.4.2 To help enable the swift preparation of your neighbourhood plan we recommend that the town/parish council establish a neighbourhood planning steering group early on in the process. The council has produced a guidance document on setting up a neighbourhood plan steering group. There is also an example 'terms of reference' document available on the website which you can adapt for your steering group.

2.4.3 Whilst steering groups are one of the most popular ways parish/town councils arrange the tasks of producing a neighbourhood plan, other options are available. A parish/town council can choose to establish an advisory committee, steering group, working party, committee or sub-committee under section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and appoint local people to those bodies. There are subtle differences between these different groups which you will need to consider when deciding which set up is best for you.

2.5 Do you Need a Neighbourhood Planning Forum?

2.5.1 When a neighbourhood plan is proposed in an area with a town or parish council, there is no need to establish a neighbourhood forum, as the parish/town council can lead the process and is the qualifying body. If your area is covered by a town or parish council, please skip to the Designating a Neighbourhood Planning Area section. However, in areas without a town or parish council, a neighbourhood forum must be created. The neighbourhood forum becomes the qualifying body, capable of progressing with the neighbourhood plan.

2.5.2 Neighbourhood forums are formed by local residents and stakeholders who come together to guide development in their area. These groups can play a central role in shaping the future of their community and must be broadly representative of the people who live and work there.

2.5.3 Once designated, neighbourhood forums have the authority to create a neighbourhood plan as well as a Neighbourhood Development Order or a Community Right to Build Order.

2.5.4 These tools allow forums to establish policies for evaluating planning applications, set development principles for specific sites, and identify areas for public spaces, green areas, and community infrastructure improvements.

2.5.5 The designation of a neighbourhood planning forum lasts for five years, after which the forum must apply for renewal if it wishes to continue its work.

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2.6 How to Establish a Neighbourhood Planning Forum

2.6.1 To gain formal recognition, a prospective forum must apply to the local council for designation. Successful applications must meet all regulatory conditions, as set out in the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), 61(F) Part 5 and listed below:

a) it is established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of an area that consists of or includes the neighbourhood area concerned (whether or not it is also established for the express purpose of promoting the carrying on of trades, professions or other businesses in such an area),

b) its membership is open to -

(i) individuals who live in the neighbourhood area concerned,

(ii) individuals who work there (whether for businesses carried on there or otherwise), and

(iii) individuals who are elected members of a county council, district council or London borough council any of whose area falls within the neighbourhood area concerned,

c) its membership includes a minimum of 21 individuals each of whom—

(i) lives in the neighbourhood area concerned,

(ii) works there (whether for a business carried on there or otherwise), or

(iii) is an elected member of a county council, district council or London borough council any of whose area falls within the neighbourhood area concerned,

d) it has a written constitution, and

e) such other conditions as may be prescribed.

2.6.2 For a detailed explanation on how to establish a neighbourhood forum, see **Locality's 'How to establish a neighbourhood planning forum guide'.**

2.6.3 Once you are satisfied that your neighbourhood forum complies with all the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), 61(F) Part 5, as outlined above, you will need to submit an application form to South Oxfordshire District Council. The form is available to download from the website.

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2.7 Designating a Neighbourhood Planning Area

2.7.1 Before you can begin developing your neighbourhood plan, the first step is for the town/parish council or neighbourhood forum to define the proposed neighbourhood area.

What is a Neighbourhood Planning Area?

2.7.2 This is the area within which the neighbourhood planning policies developed by the forum or town/parish council acting as the qualifying body will be applied.

2.7.3 A neighbourhood planning area should have a clear and logical boundary that reflects the local landscape, built environment and the way the area is used by its community. It should also take into account the character of the population and the mix of activities and land uses within the area.

2.7.4 A neighbourhood planning area:

- should be based on the distinct character and identity of the area,
- must not overlap with an existing designated neighbourhood planning area, and
- may take any shape or size, depending on local context.

How to Decide the Boundaries of a Neighbourhood Planning Area

2.7.5 Paragraph 033 of the Neighbourhood Planning Policy Guidance outlines key factors to consider when deciding the boundaries of a neighbourhood area, including:

Tick (✔)	Key Factors to Consider
☐	**Settlement Boundaries - Does the boundary reflect existing village or settlement boundaries including any areas of planned or potential expansion? Are there areas of overlap with other towns or parishes?**
☐	**Services and Facilities Catchment - Does the area cover the walking distance to local services (e.g. shops, schools, doctors, parks, and other local facilities)?**
☐	**Community Groups - Does the area align with where formal or informal community groups currently operate?**
☐	**Physical Characteristics - The physical appearance or characteristics of the neighbourhood, for example buildings that may be of a consistent scale or style;**
☐	**Coherence - Does the proposed area include all elements which are directly related, logical, have an administrative boundary or identifiable elements which are consistently considered to include or group together?**
☐	**Business Focus – For a business plan - is the area wholly or predominantly a business area? Does it cover sufficient land to cover any potential expansion or space required for landscaping?**

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☐	**Physical Infrastructure - Is the boundary defined by hard features (e.g., major roads, railway lines, waterways)?**
☐	**Natural Setting - Does the boundary follow natural settings or landscape features?**
☐	**Population Size - Is the size of the population (living and working) appropriate for a single neighbourhood area?**
☐	**Are there any benefits in grouping one or more areas or parishes together? Have you discussed creating a plan with your surrounding parishes?**

2.7.6 In the vast majority of cases it is assumed that town or parish councils will apply for a neighbourhood area which is the same as their entire town or parish area. This is a streamlined process which does not require any consultation.

Applying to Establish a Neighbourhood Planning Area

2.7.7 To support the designation of a neighbourhood planning area, South Oxfordshire strongly encourages interested groups to engage early with the neighbourhood planning team, ideally in advance of submitting a formal application. An initial meeting or discussion will provide helpful advice on key considerations and ensure that proposals are well-prepared, helping to avoid unnecessary delays in the designation process.

2.7.8 A formal application to designate a neighbourhood area must be submitted to the South Oxfordshire District Council. Applications can be submitted at any time and will be assessed in accordance with legislation and planning guidance.

2.7.9 When submitting your application, please ensure it includes:

- a map clearly showing the proposed neighbourhood area; and
- an explanation why the area is appropriate for neighbourhood planning purposes.

2.7.10 A ***template application form*** is available online. Information about the mapping services officered by the council are also available online.

2.7.11 Applications should be submitted to: ***planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk***

2.7.12 If a Neighbourhood Forum is also being established, the application to designate the forum as the qualifying body can be submitted at the same time as the neighbourhood area application, or separately.

Designation of a Neighbourhood Planning Area

2.7.13 Once the application to designate a neighbourhood planning area has been submitted, the local planning authority will determine whether consultation is necessary (usually only if the entire town or parish area is not included or where it crosses boundaries into more than one area). If a consultation is needed, the

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application and supporting documents will be publicised for at least 6 weeks. As part of this process, key stakeholders will also be informed. Following the close of the consultation the council will determine the area designation application.

2.7.14 Where consultation is not necessary the council will exercise its powers to designate the specified area as a neighbourhood area.

2.8 Support Available

2.8.1 After your neighbourhood plan area has been approved, you are able to start working on developing your neighbourhood plan. It is useful to engage in discussions with the neighbourhood planning team at the council early on in the process to identify what type of support you may need.

2.8.2 The council is committed to supporting neighbourhood planning. The support we offer includes:

- **advice and guidance throughout – an introductory meeting to discuss your aims and outline the process;**
- **a Lead Officer to attend meetings, where appropriate, and offer expert advice alongside their colleagues;**
- **a number of bespoke templates and guidance for you to utilise to streamline your processes;**
- **advice on engaging with your community – including how and why you need to record this;**
- **information on which external organisations and statutory bodies you will need to consult;**
- **advice on what evidence is required to help you write your plan;**
- **consultation on area designation proposals (where appropriate) as well as submitted plans;**
- **review of your draft neighbourhood plan to ensure it meets the basic conditions; and**
- **organising the Independent Examination and Referendum for your plan.**

2.9 Reviewing a Neighbourhood Plan

2.9.1 Once you have reached the point of successfully having a made neighbourhood plan for

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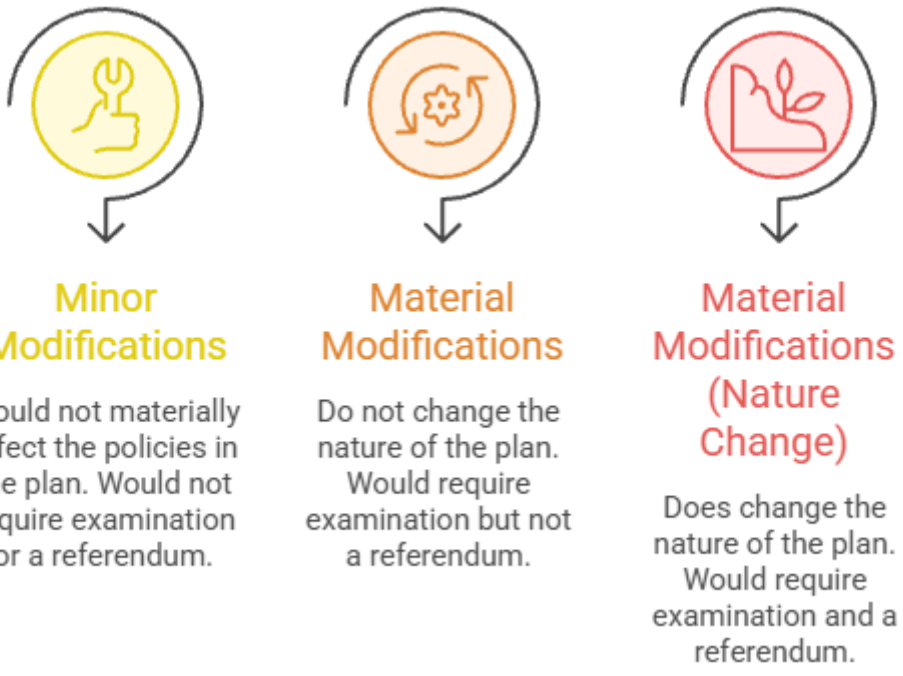
your area, the focus will shift to implementation of that plan and periodically reviewing it.

2.9.2 Neighbourhood plan policies remain in force until the plan policy is replaced, however policies in a neighbourhood plan may become out of date, for example if they conflict with policies in a local plan. In addition, where policies have been in force for a period of time, other material considerations may be given greater weight in planning decisions as the evidence base supporting the policies becomes less robust. Reviewing a neighbourhood plan can help ensure that the policies in the neighbourhood plan remain as effective as possible.

2.9.3 There is no definitive timeline on when a neighbourhood plan needs to be revised. The local circumstances of the parish/town area will likely play into the local considerations. Some points to consider when deciding whether to review a neighbourhood plan are:

- effectiveness of the current plan and policies,
- updates to national policy,
- updates to local policy, and
- changes in local circumstances.

2.9.4 When the time comes to revise the neighbourhood plan, this can generally be categorised into 3 types of modifications. The process undertaken will depend on the degree of change proposed in the revisions. National guidance sets out the types of modifications that can be made to neighbourhood plans, as visible below.



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Minor (Non-Material) Modifications

2.9.5 Minor (non-material) modifications to a neighbourhood plan or order are those which would not materially affect the policies in the plan or permission granted by the order. These may include correcting errors, such as a reference to a supporting document, and would not require examination or a referendum.

2.9.6 Minor modifications that would not materially affect the policies in the plan can be made by the Local Planning Authority, with consent from the qualifying body. In these circumstances there is no need to repeat the Regulation 14 consultation, examination or referendum. Similar provisions are available for correcting errors.

Material Modifications which do not Change the Nature of the Plan or Order

2.9.7 Material modifications which do not change the nature of the plan or order would require examination but not a referendum. This might, for example, entail the addition of a design code that builds on a pre-existing design policy, or the addition of a site or sites which, subject to the decision of the independent examiner, are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan.

Material Modifications which do Change the Nature of the Plan or Order

2.9.8 Material modifications which do change the nature of the plan or order would require examination and a referendum. This might, for example, involve allocating significant new sites for development.

Material Modifications Process

2.9.9 Simply put, the more substantial the modifications to the neighbourhood plan, the more likely that an examination and a referendum will be required.

2.9.10 If material modifications are proposed the qualifying body will have to engage with the statutory process for producing a plan set out earlier in this guide. The only additional requirement is a statement produced by the qualifying body stating whether they believe the modifications proposed are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan. This should be consulted on at the Regulation 14 consultation stage and then submitted for examination. The Local Planning Authority will also produce a similar statement for the examination. These statements, alongside the submission material will allow the examiner to decide whether the modifications proposed change the nature of the plan and if a referendum is required. The qualifying body must then decide if they want to proceed with the examination.

2.9.11 A referendum is not required if the examiner decides that the modifications are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan.

2.9.12 It is important to remember that as set out above, the decision on whether a referendum is necessary is made by the examiner. The qualifying body and Local Planning Authority have an opportunity to express their views, but ultimately, they do not have the power to make the decision themselves.

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2.9.13 If you are unsure about what category the modifications you are proposing would fall into, officers at the council would be happy to discuss through them with you. Whilst a definitive answer about the need or not for a referendum is not possible, we are able to draw on past experiences across the district.

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Section 2: Writing a Neighbourhood Plan

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3. Cover Page, Contents, Appendices and Foreword

3.1 Cover Page

3.1.1 The cover page is the first impression your neighbourhood plan will make on readers, including residents, stakeholders and statutory bodies. While it may seem straightforward, it plays an important role in presenting your plan clearly and professionally. For a detailed breakdown on how to structure your cover page, see below. You may also refer to the cover page provided in the Neighbourhood Plan Template.

What to Include on the Cover Page:

1. **Title**
   - The full title should read: [Town/Parish Council/Forum] Neighbourhood Development Plan or [Town/Parish Council/Forum] Neighbourhood Plan.
2. **Version and Draft Type**
   - Indicate what stage the document is at, whether that be Pre-Submission/Submission Draft and specify the plan period *e.g., Pre-Submission Draft to [2025 - 2041]*.
   - The plan period date should usually align with the date of the adopted or emerging Local Plan, as the neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan. Please note that the South Oxfordshire Local Plan currently covers up to 2035. The emerging Joint Local Plan looks to 2041.
3. **Version Number and Date**
   - Include a version number (e.g., *V1.0*) and the month and year of publication *e.g., V1.0 [April 2025]*.
4. **Prepared By**
   - Clearly state who prepared the document, typically the neighbourhood plan steering group or committee, on behalf of the Town/Parish Council or Neighbourhood Planning Forum
     e.g., Prepared by [Steering Group Name] on behalf of [Town/Parish Council/Forum].
5. **Supporting Parties**
   - Mention any consultants or third-party organisations involved in drafting the plan *e.g., In conjunction with [Consultants or third parties]*.
6. **Visual Identity**
   - Include a photo or graphic that represents your area. This could be a local landmark,

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landscape or community activity – something that makes your area distinctive and gives the plan a sense of place.

7. **Logo**
    - You may wish to add the logo of your Town/Parish Council or Forum in the top corner for additional identity and formality.

3.1.2 This page may be simple but setting the tone with a well-structured and attractive cover can strengthen credibility and impact of your plan.

3.2 Contents

3.2.1 It is recommended that your Plan should include the following sections:

- introduction,
- an explanation of 'The Basic Conditions' and relevant regulations and requirements,
- national and local policy background,
- local context,
- policies with supporting text, and
- community aspirations.

3.2.2 A significant portion of the supporting evidence can be incorporated into standalone appendices to ensure that the neighbourhood plan document itself is concise. If you do decide to use appendices, these should be available to view during the Regulation 14 consultation, a six-week public and stakeholder engagement period. This approach ensures that the public has access to comprehensive details during the initial consultation phase, helping them better understand the plan and its context. More information is provided on this below.

Contents Page

3.2.3 We recommend using Microsoft Word to automatically generate the contents page for you. You can easily customise pre-set styles to fit your needs by modifying fonts, headings and spacing within Word's 'Styles' menu. By using these features, you will save time throughout the many edits you will undertake and produce a more readable document upon publication.

3.2.4 You can of course name the sections as appropriate to your plan and create an order to suit. This will also depend on the topics and policies you intend to include.

3.2.5 An example contents page, including pre-set text styles, is provided in the Neighbourhood Plan Template.

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3.3 Appendices

3.3.1 The appendices of your neighbourhood plan should include the supporting evidence, background documents and technical assessments that have informed the development of your policies. These documents strengthen the credibility of your plan and ensure transparency.

3.3.2 The list of suggested appendices provided in the Neighbourhood Plan Template reflects the types of documents commonly produced during the neighbourhood planning process. You may want to use this list as a guide of what documents to include within your appendices. However, not all may be relevant to your area and you may need to add or remove items based on the nature and scope of your plan.

Including Supporting Documents

3.3.3 You have two main options for including supporting material:

1. **Directly Append to the Plan:** If there are only a few appendices or if the documents are relatively short, you can include them within the same document as the main plan.
2. **Separate Supporting Documents:** For longer or more numerous evidence base documents, it may be more practical to include them as standalone PDFs or documents available online (e.g., on your parish/town/forum website or designated neighbourhood plan webpage). If documents are hosted online, provide direct clickable links within the plan to allow users to easily access the relevant material.

3.3.4 Whichever method you choose, ensure clear referencing throughout the plan. This helps readers understand the link between your policies and the evidence supporting them.

3.4 Foreword

3.4.1 The Foreword serves as an introduction to the neighbourhood plan, setting the tone and context for the document. This section should convey the purpose and significance of the plan, including its vision, objectives and aspirations.

3.4.2 The foreword should also include acknowledgments and recognition of community involvement.

3.4.3 Aim for a length of no more than a page to provide a clear and engaging introduction.

3.4.4 Consider the following points:

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Vision and Objectives	Meeting the Needs of the Future	Community Engagement	Local Support, Knowledge and Appreciation
•Outline the vision and objectives of the neighbourhood plan, such as: •aspirations for future growth and development, •community well-being, •what the plan aims to achieve for the community.	•Describe how the plan serves as a roadmap for future development, ensuring that growth aligns with community values and needs. •Emphasise that the plan empowers residents to have a say in their. community's future. •Fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. •Recognising the plan's role in enhancing the overall quality of life for current and future residents in the plan area.	•Emphasise the importance of community engagement in the neighbourhood plan process. •Highlighting how residents' voices have been incorporated into the development of the plan through community consultations, such as exhibitions and surveys.	•Recognise and thank any individuals, organisations or stakeholders who contributed to the plan's development, showing appreciation for their input and support.

4. Introduction

4.1 Background

4.1.1 The introduction and background section of your neighbourhood plan provides the essential context for the rest of your document. It explains what the neighbourhood plan is, who is responsible for it, why it is being prepared and how it fits into the wider planning system.

4.1.2 This section sets the stage for understanding the scope, authority and process behind the plan, making it a vital reference point for community members, developers, planners and the independent examiner.

4.1.3 Refer to the structure and content in the Neighbourhood Plan Template to guide your own writing.

4.2 Neighbourhood Plan Status

4.2.1 This section explains the legal status of neighbourhood plans within the broader planning system. It should begin by referencing the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), which together

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introduced neighbourhood planning as a formal mechanism within England's planning framework. The purpose here is to establish that the neighbourhood plan is a statutory document, that gives local communities a direct voice in shaping the future development of their area.

4.2.2 Once a neighbourhood plan is successfully passed through referendum, it becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This means that South Oxfordshire District Council will use the neighbourhood plan alongside the adopted Local Plan when assessing planning proposals in that neighbourhood area.

4.2.3 It is important to clarify that while the neighbourhood plan includes policies that relate to land use and development, any broader community aims and projects, though valuable, are not development plan policies and are therefore addressed separately, often in accompanying documents or community action plans.

4.3 Submitting Body

4.3.1 This part of the introduction should clearly identify the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan. In most cases, this will be the local town or parish council, although in areas without a parish structure, it may be a designated neighbourhood forum.

4.3.2 The qualifying body is the organisation authorised to lead and submit the neighbourhood plan on behalf of the community. It is helpful to note the formation of any steering group or sub-committee that has been established to support the process, outlining how it has worked under the authority of the qualifying body to carry out consultation, research and policy drafting.

4.4 Designation

4.4.1 Here you should describe the formal process through which the neighbourhood area was designated. Begin by stating when the parish/town council or forum applied to designate the neighbourhood area under Regulation 5 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. Then provide the date on which the area was officially designated by the local planning authority. A map, which can be provided by South Oxfordshire District Council, should be included to show the boundaries of the designated area.

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5. Basic Conditions

5.1 Background

5.1.1 Neighbourhood plans must meet a series of legal tests known as the 'Basic Conditions' to proceed to referendum and be made. This section should introduce these basic conditions and explain their significance. The conditions are set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and listed below.

5.1.2 The Basic Conditions relevant to neighbourhood plans are:

- Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- The making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- The making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority.
- The making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.
- Prescribed conditions are met in relation to the plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the neighbourhood plan.

5.1.3 The purpose of this section is not to provide a full legal analysis, but to demonstrate that the qualifying body understands these conditions and is working to meet them. A more detailed explanation and justification will be included later in the submission documents, particularly within the Basic Conditions Statement.

5.2 Plan Period, Monitoring and Review

5.2.1 The plan period sets the timeframe for the policies and proposals contained in the neighbourhood plan, which should align with the timeframe of the local plan to ensure consistency between strategic and local planning policies.

5.2.2 This section should also outline how the plan will be monitored and reviewed over time. While neighbourhood plans are not subject to the same regular review cycle as local plans, it is good practice to monitor the plan's effectiveness and make updates when necessary. This should include informal annual reviews or a more formal refresh every few years, especially if there are major changes to planning policy, housing targets or community priorities. This ongoing monitoring and reviewing

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process ensures the plan remains responsive and continues to reflect the aspirations and needs of the community.

5.3 Neighbourhood Plan Stages

5.3.1 This section is to be included for the Pre-Submission Draft stage to help stakeholders, notably residents, understand the key stages involved in preparing the neighbourhood plan.

5.3.2 The Pre-Submission Draft stage is a key opportunity for community input, allowing for meaningful feedback before the plan is finalised. It should be noted that after this stage, the plan will be submitted to the local planning authority, who will then carry out a further statutory consultation before appointing an independent examiner to assess the plan and its supporting documents.

5.3.3 Following examination, the examiner may recommend modifications to ensure the plan meets the Basic Conditions. South Oxfordshire District Council will consider these recommendations and decide whether the plan should proceed to referendum. Once the plan proceeds to referendum, if more than 50% of those voting support the plan, it will be 'made' and formally adopted as part of the statutory development plan for the area.

5.3.4 In addition to detailing the stages involved in preparing the neighbourhood plan, this section should also clearly identify where in the process the current draft sits. Including a diagram to visually communicate the stages - from the initial designation of the neighbourhood area through to community consultation, policy drafting, formal submission, independent examination and referendum - is recommended, as demonstrated in the Neighbourhood Plan Template. Such visual aids provide clarity and can help illustrate what has been achieved and what remains to be done.

5.3.5 Where stages are legally required under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), it is helpful to highlight these statutory elements. This may be done by outlining them in red or using another clear visual marker within the diagram. This distinction helps demonstrate that the correct procedures have been followed.

5.3.6 Once the Pre-Submission Consultation has concluded and you are preparing the plan for submission, this section can be removed from the plan.

6. Planning Policy Context

6.1 Background

6.1.1 The neighbourhood plan must be prepared in alignment with national and local planning policies. This section should outline the broader policy framework that

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informs the neighbourhood plan, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011–2035, the emerging Joint Local Plan 2041 and the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan. Together, these documents set the strategic direction for land use planning and provide the policy context in which the plan has been developed.

6.1.2 Including this section helps demonstrate how the neighbourhood plan complements and adds detail to existing policies, rather than contradicting them.

6.1.3 Please note that the policies and paragraph numbers referenced in this section may be subject to change, particularly where they relate to national or emerging local policy documents. Readers should ensure they refer to the most recent version of the relevant documents.

6.2 National Planning Policy

6.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), most recently updated in December 2024 and revised in February 2025, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It outlines the Government's approach to achieving sustainable development through the planning system and sets expectations for how local plans and neighbourhood plans should be prepared and implemented.

6.2.2 One of the Basic Conditions that a neighbourhood plan must demonstrate is that it has regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State. In this respect, the plan must contain sufficient information to highlight that due regard has been given to the NPPF. This section should therefore explain the role of the NPPF in guiding the preparation of the neighbourhood plan and illustrate how it has regard to the NPPF.

6.2.3 For example, you may want to explain how your neighbourhood plan supports local businesses and jobs (economic objectives), protects or enhances community infrastructure (social objectives) and addresses biodiversity or climate change issues (environmental objectives). These links can be reinforced later in the supporting text of your document when presenting your policies.

6.3 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035

6.3.1 This section should describe how the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 provides the strategic planning framework for the area. You should outline the local plan's vision, its spatial strategy and the strategic objectives that are most relevant to your neighbourhood plan area. This helps to situate your plan within the broader development strategy for the district and shows how it builds on, rather than duplicates or contradicts, local plan policy.

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6.3.2 You may also wish to summarise how your policies align with or expand upon key local plan policies. This is especially important if your neighbourhood plan includes site allocations or sets design requirements.

Settlement Hierarchy

6.3.3 If your settlement is identified in the local plan's settlement hierarchy - which is included in Appendix 7 of the local plan - you should explain what category it falls into (Town, Larger Village, Smaller Village or Other Village) and what that means in terms of expected growth. For example, Towns and Larger Villages are expected to deliver around 15% growth above 2011 housing levels, while in Smaller Villages there is no housing requirement but if a parish council wishes to make housing allocations, the Council will support this provided growth is commensurate to the scale and character of the village, which is expected to be around a 5% to 10% increase. Other Villages are not required to contribute to housing growth beyond windfall or infill development. However, even where no requirement exists, communities may still choose to allocate housing to meet local needs or fund community priorities.

6.3.4 Please note that this whole section should be removed from the Plan once the Joint Local Plan 2041 is adopted.

6.4 The Joint Local Plan 2041

6.4.1 Although still at examination, the emerging Joint Local Plan for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse provides valuable insight into the potential future direction of planning policy in the area. This section should summarise the key objectives and themes of the Joint Local Plan 2041, as far as they are known at the time of writing.

6.4.2 Your plan should reflect an awareness of this emerging strategy, even if it remains aligned to the adopted local plan. Where helpful, you can explain how your policies anticipate or respond to likely changes in the planning landscape. If a draft policies map for your area is available from the Joint Local Plan, it should be included here or in an appendix to illustrate how your area fits within the broader strategy.

6.5 The Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan

6.5.1 This subsection should explain that minerals and waste matters are outside the remit of neighbourhood plans, as they are dealt with at the county level by Oxfordshire County Council. However, it is still important to consider any implications these matters may have for your area, particularly where they interact with development proposals or land use designations within the neighbourhood plan boundary.

6.5.2 You should include a short summary of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy, which was adopted in 2017 and sets out the county's approach to mineral extraction and waste management up to 2031. If your area

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contains mineral safeguarding areas, known mineral deposits, recycling or waste sites or any locations protected from development due to their resource potential, these should be clearly identified. Where possible, include a policy map showing the extent of these areas and highlight any relevant constraints or considerations they create for future development.

6.5.3 It is also important to provide information about any underlying mineral resources present within the neighbourhood plan area and to identify the specific policies from the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan that apply. This may include policies on safeguarding mineral resources, the location of waste facilities or the restoration of mineral sites.

6.5.4 In addition to the Core Strategy, you should refer to any relevant policies in the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 or the emerging Joint Local Plan 2041 that touch on minerals and waste issues. While neighbourhood plans do not directly deal with these matters, acknowledging and aligning with these policies helps ensure your plan is robust, especially where your proposals relate to land that could be affected by minerals and waste designations.

7. The Neighbourhood Plan Area

7.1 Background

7.1.1 It should be noted that the topic areas outlined below are intended as a guide rather than a definitive list. Every neighbourhood is unique and you may wish to include additional topic areas that reflect local priorities, opportunities or challenges.

7.2 Overview of the Plan Area

7.2.1 This subsection should provide a descriptive summary of the area covered by the plan. It sets the scene for readers by explaining the local context, both geographically and socially, and helps establish a sense of place. While it does not need to be exhaustive, it should include enough detail to give a clear picture of the area's setting, form and identity. Contents could include:

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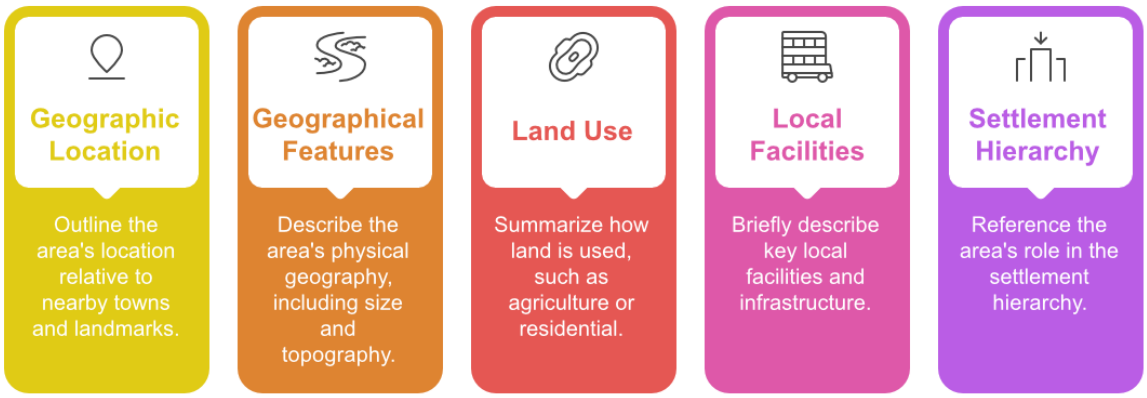

- **Geographic Location:** Start by outlining the geographic location of the area in relation to nearby towns, cities or key landmarks. This helps place the neighbourhood in a broader spatial context and can highlight the area's connections to transport routes or regional infrastructure.
- **Geographical Features:** Briefly describe the area's physical geography, including the size of the area, key geographical features (such as National Landscapes or infrastructure) and general topography - such as whether it lies on a valley floor, rolling farmland or elevated chalk escarpment. These characteristics can be important when discussing environmental policies, design guidance or landscape sensitivity.
- **Land Use:** Provide a short summary of how land is used across the area - such as agricultural land, residential neighbourhoods, woodland or commercial zones - particularly if you do not have a separate section or policies dedicated to landscape or land use elsewhere in your plan.
- **Local Facilities and Infrastructure:** A short summary of key local facilities and infrastructure, such as schools, GP surgeries, green spaces and transport connections - particularly if these are defining features of your community or are relevant to policies in the neighbourhood plan.
- **Settlement Hierarchy Status:** Consider also referencing your area's role in the settlement hierarchy as defined in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011–2035. It is helpful to refer to this early in the document to establish the planning context in which your neighbourhood plan sits, as this correlates to the scale and type of development expected in the settlements in the area.

7.3 Town/Parish History and Historical Development

7.3.1 You may wish to provide a concise historical overview of the plan area, although this is often moved to an appendix in the final version of the plan to reduce the overall size of the finished document.

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7.3.2 This section should highlighting its origins and key events that have shaped its identity rather than a general history of the area. It is used to offer context to the area's development, associations and assets over time. When preparing this historical overview, consider including the following points if known:

- **Early Settlement and Founding Date:** Describe the origins of the plan area, including any evidence of early inhabitants that indicate settlement patterns, such as archaeological findings and/or historical records.
- **Significant Events:** Highlight key historical events which may have shaped the development of area (e.g. wars, industrial changes, transportation routes). Discuss how these events have influenced the community's growth and/or decline.
- **Cultural and Social Changes:** Summarise how social structures, cultural practices and community life has evolved in the plan area. Consider changes in migration patterns, demographics and the establishment of community organisations and/or institutions.
- **References:** To historical documentation or local archives, if available.

7.3.3 This historical context will help provide a deeper understanding of the area's character and evolution, informing policies in the neighbourhood plan.

7.3.4 It is important to assess how the physical and social fabric of the plan area has changed over time, especially in terms of economic activity and architecture as this may still be of relevance today. Examples of content you may include for the historical development section are:

- **Economic Development:** Summarise the evolution of the local economy over time, including changing industries, agriculture and trade. Mention any significant economic milestones that contributed to the plan area's development.
- **Architectural Development:** Describe notable buildings or structures that represent the historical character of the plan area, including any important architectural styles or landmark sites.
- **Modern Developments:** Briefly address how the plan area has evolved in the modern era, including any recent developments, planning or community initiatives.

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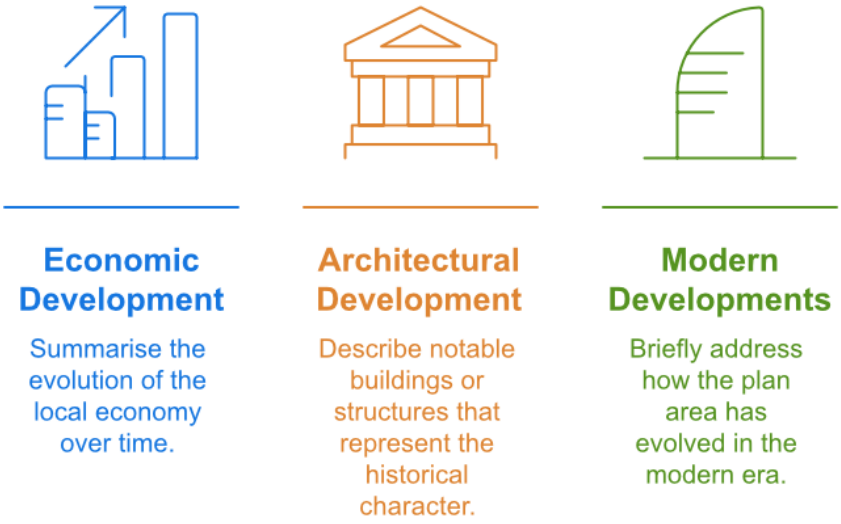

7.4 Town/Parish Profile

7.4.1 This section provides a detailed representation of the plan area's demographic characteristics, including the prevailing socioeconomic status of residents and household composition. This information can be used to support your policies, particularly for housing, employment or education and training facilities.

7.4.2 As with the previous section, this may be removed to an appendix in the final version of the plan, but is helpful in the pre-submission version to understand the context of your vision and objectives in terms of how it relates to the community. Also be aware that particularly in small rural parishes, some sensitive data may be identifying to individuals or households.

7.4.3 You can get detailed data for your area from several sources, including the Office for National Statistics. To build a custom profile for your area, follow the provided link.

7.4.4 It is highly recommended that you use visual representations of data to highlight the profile of your area. These can either be directly sourced from existing databases, such as the Office for National Statistics, or created yourself using software such as Canva, Word or PowerPoint. See the Neighbourhood Plan Template for examples.

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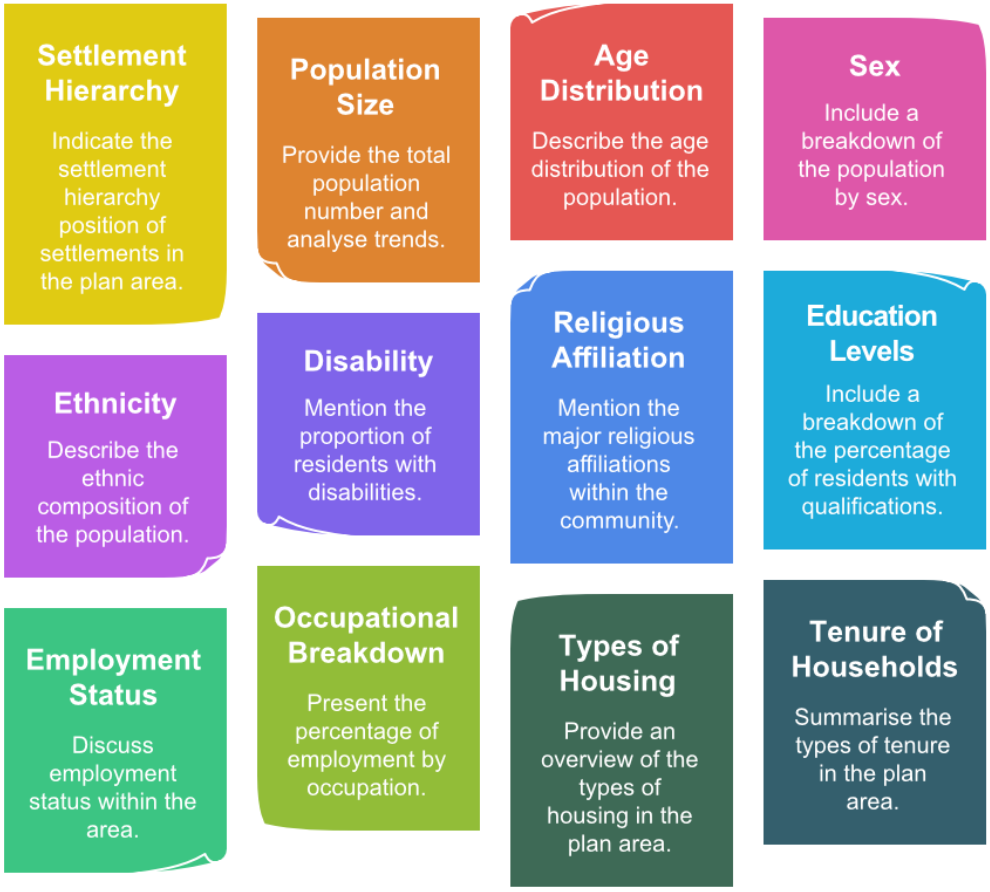
7.4.5 When writing the plan area profile, consider including the following:



7.4.6 Where relevant, all of the data (apart settlement hierarchy level) can be sourced from the Office for National Statistics:

1. **Settlement Hierarchy Level:** Indicate the settlement hierarchy position of any settlements in the plan area, as found in the Local Plan.
2. **Population Size:** Provide the total population number. You may also want to compare the most recent census report with previous data to analyse trends, e.g. a decline or increase in population size. This can be used to support discussions on housing needs and/or community infrastructure.
3. **Age Distribution:** Describe the age distribution of the population, including percentages of various groups. You may also want to compare the most recent census report with previous data to analyse trends.
4. **Sex:** Include a breakdown of the population by sex, indicating the percentage of females and males.
5. **Ethnicity:** Describe the ethnic composition of the population, including percentages of various groups.
6. **Disability:** Mention the proportion of residents with disabilities. This can be used to support discussions on community infrastructure.

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7. **Religious Affiliation:** Mention the major religious affiliations within the community, including percentages.
8. **Education Levels:** Include a breakdown of the percentage of residents with qualifications, such as higher education degrees or vocational training.
9. **Employment Status:** Discuss employment status within the area, including the unemployment rate and the percentage of residents in full-time, part-time or self-employment. This can be used to support discussions on employment within the plan area.
10. **Occupational Breakdown:** Present the percentage of employment by occupation, categorising the workforce into the most prominent occupation types within the area.
11. **Types of Housing:** Provide an overview of the types of housing in the plan area (e.g., detached, semi-detached, terraced, flats) along with their respective percentages. You may also want to compare the most recent census report with previous data to analyse trends - this can be used to support a discussion on housing needs.
12. **Tenure of Households:** Summarise the types of tenure in the plan area, including the percentage of owner-occupied homes, rented properties and any social housing options available. You may also want to compare the most recent census report with previous data to analyse trends - this can also be used to support discussions on housing needs.
13. **Household Size:** Discuss the average household size in the plan area. You may also want to compare the most recent census report with previous data to analyse trends - this can similarly be used to support discussions on housing needs.
14. **Occupancy Rate for Bedrooms:** Using the latest census data, provide information on the occupancy rate for bedrooms, indicating how many bedrooms are typically occupied versus available. You may also want to compare the most recent census report with previous data to analyse trends – this can also be used to support discussions on housing needs.

7.4.7 You can include more or less datasets, as appropriate, to highlight the circumstances of your area. This list seeks to demonstrate the wide range of available datasets; the information you decide to include in your plan should reflect the scale and scope of the neighbourhood plan.

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8. Issues and Opportunities

8.1 Background

8.1.1 This section of the neighbourhood plan should provide a clear summary of the key issues and opportunities identified through community engagement. For more information on community engagement, including consultation methods, see the South Oxfordshire Consultation Guidance.

8.1.2 The issues and opportunities section in your neighbourhood plan should demonstrate how local consultation has shaped the content of the plan, forming the bridge between the vision for the area and the objectives and subsequent policies that follow. The focus should be on issues that relate to land use and development, but it may also be beneficial to acknowledge wider community concerns, even if they fall outside the scope of planning.

8.1.3 Begin by briefly outlining the consultation activities you have carried out as part of preparing the plan. This might include surveys, exhibitions, community workshops, online feedback forms or other methods. Describe how the consultation was publicised, whether through social media, flyers, newsletters, direct mail to residents or posters on community noticeboards, and explain how it was made accessible. For example, if you provided both online and hard-copy versions of a questionnaire, make that clear.

8.1.4 Where possible, include headline figures, such as the number of responses received, percentage of the community reached or particular demographic groups who took part. A summary of key findings should be provided here, supported by visual representations of the data - bar graphs, pie charts or infographics can help make the results easier to read. If you used a digital survey platform such as Google Forms, it is possible to generate these charts automatically. A breakdown of the consultation results can be included in the appendices or referenced in the Consultation Statement.

8.1.5 Following the summary of consultation activities, use this section to outline the main issues and opportunities that emerged from the engagement process. These are typically grouped into two categories: land use issues (which can be addressed through policies in the plan) and non-land use issues (which are better described as community aspirations).

8.2 Overview of Land Use Issues

8.2.1 Land use issues are those that can be addressed by planning policy and influence future development and use of land. These may include matters such as housing need, environmental protection, design quality or infrastructure requirements.

8.2.2 Common land use issues raised in consultations might include:

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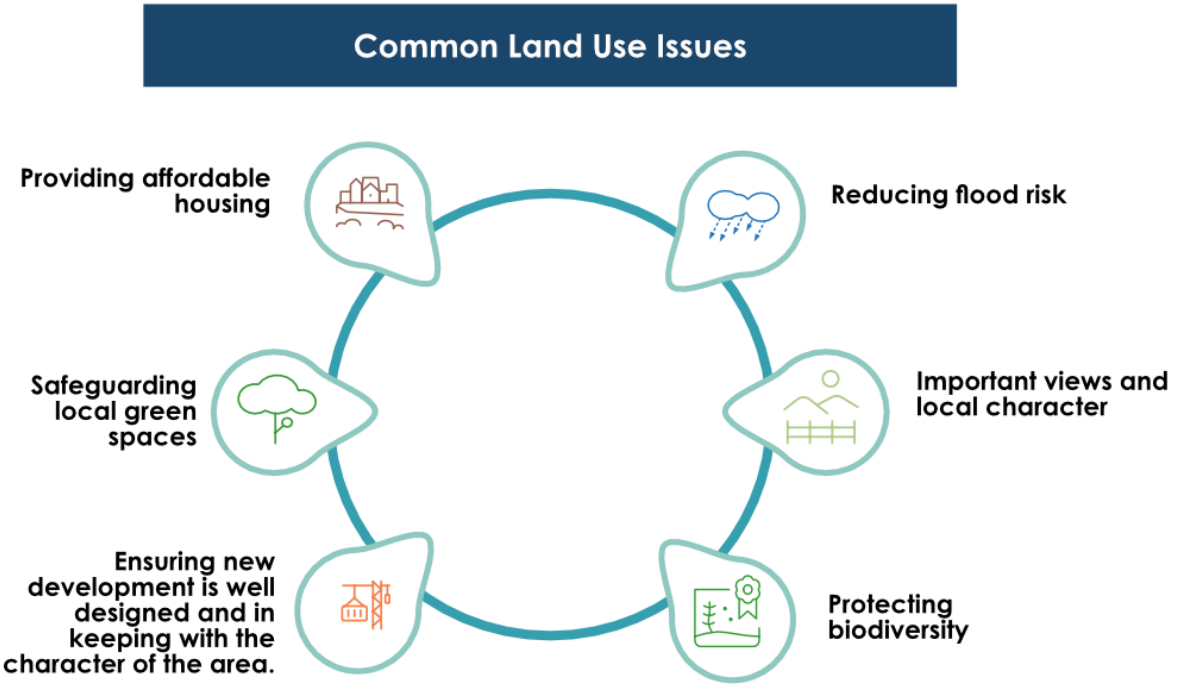

8.2.3 You may also wish to briefly refer to any known development pressures or opportunities, for example, if your area has a large site allocated in the Local Plan or if there is community support for new facilities or infrastructure, such as a local shop.

8.3 Overview of Non-Land Use Issues

8.3.1 This section provides an overview of non-land use issues, such as wider community aspirations. While important, these matters do not form part of the statutory development plan and therefore cannot be presented as policies. Whilst they carry no statutory weight in planning decisions, they may guide future action by the town or parish council or other appropriate bodies.

8.3.2 Community aspirations reflect the broader concerns and hopes of the local community, often raised during public consultation. Typical community issues and aspirations might include:

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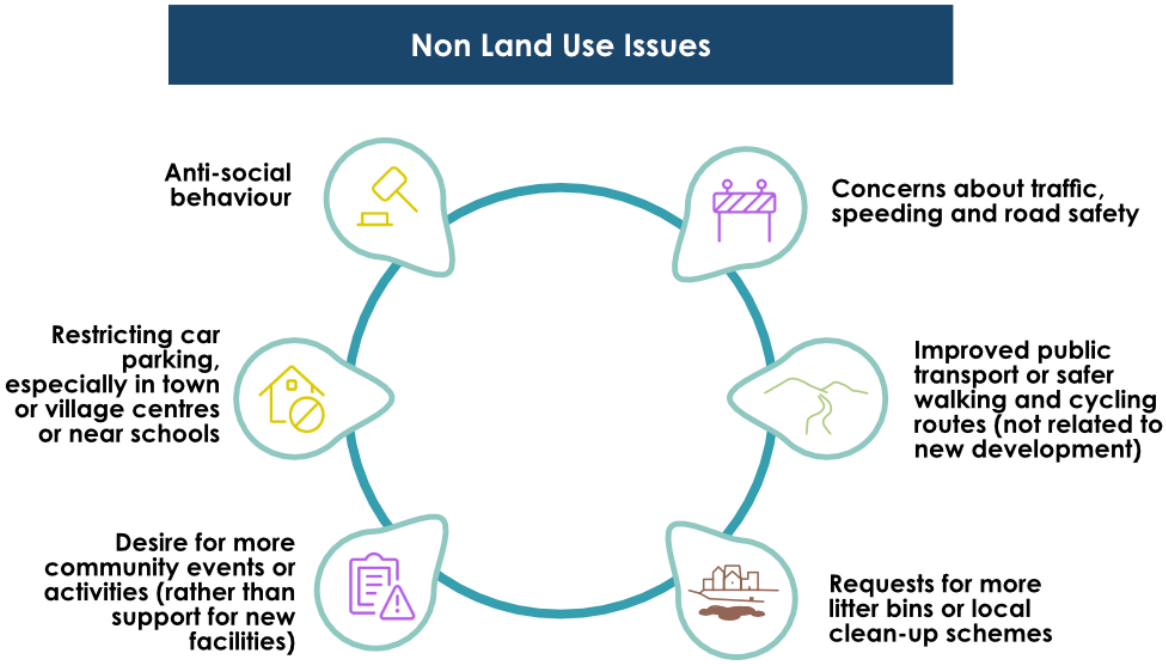

8.3.3 Community aspirations should be included in either a dedicated section at the end of the plan (see South Oxfordshire's Neighbourhood Plan Template) or positioned after relevant policies. In all cases, community aspirations must be clearly distinguished from policies to ensure clarity.

8.4 Vision and Objectives

8.4.1 The vision and objectives section outlines the long-term aspirations for the area, describing what the community hopes to achieve over the plan period. The vision should reflect the community's identity and future aspirations, while the objectives provide specific, measurable goals to help achieve that vision.

Creating the Vision

8.4.2 When creating your vision, consideration should be given to the *social*, *environmental* and *physical trends* that are likely to affect the area over the period of the plan.

8.4.3 The vision should not only be aspirational but also *grounded in evidence and data* – including a mixture of quantitative (*facts and figures* about the area) as well as qualitative (*community and business views* about opinions on what is important) research.

8.4.4 To understand what your area will look like in the future, you will first need to get *a clear picture of the community's current characteristics*. When creating a vision, consider undertaking the following:

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1. **Community Profiling:** Source statistical data, using the Office for National Statistics, on household size, incomes, population size, popular tenures etc.
2. **Listing Assets**: Make a list of all the area's physical assets, their location and current condition. This could include recreational spaces, village halls, footpaths, playing fields, developments of affordable housing etc.
3. **Reviewing Existing Plans and Initiatives:** Gather information from existing plans, initiatives or proposals that affect your area. It is important to try and understand what impact these plans will have on the area and what this means for the community. These could include:
    - Previous Community Led Plans developed in the area (e.g. Village Design Statements and Parish Plans).
    - South Oxfordshire Local Plan, topic and background papers and emerging Local Plan documents: https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/
    - Active Communities Strategy: https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/sports-and-activities/active-communities/active-communities-strategy/
    - Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/ltcp
    - Housing Strategy: https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/housing/housing-delivery-strategy/ or Strategic/Local Housing Needs Assessments.

8.4.5 After compiling a list of local characteristics, amenities and features within the area, it is helpful to engage the community in a "*love it/hate it*" exercise. This activity will help identify what residents value most, what they are dissatisfied with, and what they would like to see improved or expanded. You can gather this feedback through community engagement activities, such as surveys, public consultations or workshops.

8.4.6 Once you have collected this feedback, use it to *draft a series of vision statements* that reflect the community's priorities. For example, based on the feedback, you might create statements such as, "Our parish will protect and enhance local green spaces," or "We aim to support the upgrade and extension of specific essential services and amenities".

8.4.7 For an example vision, see South Oxfordshire's Neighbourhood Plan Template.

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Creating the Objectives

8.4.8 When crafting your objectives, keep in mind that they should be specific and clearly define what you aim to achieve to turn the vision into reality. These objectives must focus on land-use issues, as non-land-use matters will be addressed separately as community aspirations.

8.4.9 Overarching objectives should address the area's strengths (what you want to see more of or continue) and weaknesses (what you want the plan to address) and deal with any other issues identified.

8.4.10 When writing your objectives you should aim to meet the SMART criteria:

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Achievable

R = Relevant

T = Time-bound

8.4.11 For clarity, objectives can be grouped by the natural environment and built environment.

Objectives for the Natural Environment

8.4.12 Objectives for the natural environment aim to protect and enhance the ecological integrity and biodiversity of the plan area. These objectives focus on the conservation of natural resources, promoting sustainability and improving the quality of life for residents through interaction with nature.

8.4.13 For some example objectives for the natural environment, see South Oxfordshire's Neighbourhood Plan Template.

Objectives for the Built Environment

8.4.14 Objectives for the built environment focus on the development, enhancement and management of buildings and infrastructure within the plan area. These objectives aim to ensure that the physical spaces where residents live and work are functional, sustainable and aesthetically pleasing.

8.4.15 For some example objectives for the built environment, see South Oxfordshire's Neighbourhood Plan Template.

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9. List of Policies

9.1 Background

9.1.1 This section provides an overview of some of the policies you can include in your neighbourhood plan. These policies are designed to guide planning decisions in your designated neighbourhood area. They are rooted in the key land use issues identified through community engagement and should reflect your local vision and objectives for the future.

9.1.2 Neighbourhood plan policies typically cover themes such as housing, environment, infrastructure, heritage and economic development. Together, they provide a clear and locally specific framework for managing development and protecting valued assets over the lifetime of the plan.

9.1.3 How to structure the policies section and in which order to place them is a common question. The answer is that there is no right or wrong format. It is often recommended to order the policies to suit your priorities.

9.1.4 You will find that there is a lot of overlap between many different topic areas. Experience has found that there is no one solution to this and a good system of cross referencing generally works best.

9.1.5 If you need guidance on structuring your policies, often it works well when policies are subdivided by topic areas such as:

- the *natural environment*, and
- the *built environment*.

9.1.6 Or by relating to objectives such as:

- *economic,*
- *environment,* and
- *social.*

9.2 Writing Effective Policies

9.2.1 It is essential that your policies are well written and based on robust evidence. Consider:

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1. The Land Use Test	2. The Vision Test	3. The "Added Value" Test	4. The Conformity Test
•**Is it focused on land use**? •Policies must relate to the development and use of land. •They cannot be about operational matters unless related to new development.	•**Is it supported by evidence?** •The policy must directly help achieve the specific vision and objectives set out earlier in your plan.	•**Is it distinct?** •Check the Local Plan. If a policy already exists that covers this, do not duplicate it. •Your policy must add local detail or specificity.	•**Does it conform?** •The policy must generally conform to the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan and national policy.

9.2.2 Policies should not attempt to override or contradict allocations or strategic policies in the adopted local plan (currently the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011–2035). For example, if the local plan allocates a site for housing, your plan cannot include a policy that seeks to block or reduce development on that site. However, your policies can add locally specific detail, for example, regarding design, layout, materials or landscaping, to help shape how that development comes forward in a way that fits your area.

9.2.3 When writing your policies:

Always refer to your plan's objectives to ensure consistency. → **Be concise and clear.** **Be locally specific.** → **Use plain English and avoid repetition of national or local plan policy.** → **Refer to:** **The NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) and PPG (Planning Practice Guidance).** **The Local Plan.** **Supplementary planning documents.**

9.2.4 We strongly recommend that you:

- review the Neighbourhood Development Plan Policy Table for examples of made policies across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse by topic area,
- read Examiner's reports for made plans, which often explain how and why certain policies were changed or removed, and
- visit neighbourhoodplanning.org and review the Locality Policy Writing Toolkit, which includes practical tips and examples for policy writing.

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9.2.5 Each policy should be accompanied by supporting text, explaining the rationale and evidence behind the policy. This text should be accompanied by visual aids, such as maps, images or diagrams and refer to supporting documents, such as those located in the appendices.

10. The Natural Environment

10.1 Background

10.1.1 This section should identify and describe the distinctive environmental qualities of the plan area that you aim to protect and enhance. It provides the foundation for policies that preserve landscape character, support biodiversity, manage flood risk and safeguard green spaces. The content here should be informed by both national datasets (like Natural England's National Character Areas) and local evidence (such as community consultation or ecological surveys).

10.1.2 This section is especially important for demonstrating how the plan contributes to sustainable development and supports national and local environmental objectives.

10.2 Landscape Character

10.2.1 Begin by briefly summarising the significance of the natural environment in your area and why it warrants protection. Highlight themes such as biodiversity, ecosystem services, landscape quality and public access to green space. Emphasise how these environmental assets are valued by the community and support quality of life. This introduction can help justify the policies that follow.

National Character Areas

10.2.2 National Character Areas (NCAs) are broad, natural subdivisions of England based on a combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and economic activity. NCAs are large, covering extensive areas with a consistent landscape character.

10.2.3 At a national level, Natural England publishes National Character Types (NCAs), which highlight distinct landscape areas, their features and their significance.

10.2.4 Use Natural England's NCAs as a high-level framework to describe your local landscape. Explain which NCAs intersect your plan area and summarise their defining characteristics - such as landform, vegetation, settlement pattern and ecological value. A map showing the extent of each NCA is helpful and can be included in this section or in an appendix.

10.2.5 Describe how the NCA context informs your approach to development, particularly in shaping policies on design, biodiversity or protecting views.

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Landscape Character Areas

10.2.6 Local Landscape Character Areas (LCA) are smaller, more detailed areas within a region or county that share a distinct and recognisable character.

10.2.7 At a local level, South Oxfordshire has a Landscape Character Assessment, which entails Landscape Character Area Profiles.

10.2.8 Include a brief explanation of how these elements shape the identity of the area, including existing issues. This can be in the form of a summary for each character area or presented in a table format and include landscape images.

10.2.9 Provide a concise explanation of how these landscape elements shape the identity of the area, highlighting any existing issues or challenges and proposing recommendations. You can present this as a summary for each character area or use a table format for clarity. Be sure to include relevant landscape images to visually support your descriptions and enhance understanding of the area's distinct features. This approach will help illustrate the relationship between the landscape and its influence on the community's character and future development.

Natural Features

10.2.10 When preparing the landscape character section of your neighbourhood plan, aim to provide a rich and descriptive account of the plan area's natural and built environment. Highlight the distinct features that define its identity, visual appeal and ecological value.

10.2.11 Describe the composition and layout of the landscape, such as small fields, woodland areas, hedgerows and tree-lined streets, that contribute to the area's charm and sense of place. Pay close attention to how these elements relate to the settlement pattern and how they help integrate the built environment into the wider countryside.

10.2.12 Include details on:

- **Field Patterns and Hedgerows:** Discuss the scale and structure of agricultural land and the presence of mixed hedgerows that act as wildlife corridors.
- **Tree Cover and Woodland:** Identify areas of significant tree coverage, including mature street trees and deciduous woodland. Note if any trees are within Conservation Areas or protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).
- **Biodiversity and Habitats:** Highlight areas of high ecological value, referencing opportunities to enhance habitat connectivity. Consider how the neighbourhood plan can support the creation of wildlife corridors, especially where they link important natural sites.
- **Water Features:** Mention rivers, streams or other water bodies that shape the

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landscape. Even man-made features, such as canals, can contribute to biodiversity and recreational value.

- **Access and Recreation:** Include Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and how they connect green spaces and natural assets, supporting both local access and visitor enjoyment.

Landscape Policies

10.2.13 If your neighbourhood plan area includes distinctive or valued landscapes, you may wish to include one or more policies focused on their protection and enhancement. These policies should be locally specific and based on evidence. Topics commonly addressed through landscape policies include:

- Preservation of important views and visual character.
- Retention of rural or green gaps between settlements.

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- Protection and enhancement of landscape features such as hedgerows, trees, watercourses, and open spaces.
- Promotion of high-quality design that responds positively to the local landscape character.

Supporting Your Landscape Policies

10.2.14 To ensure your landscape policies are effective and well-evidenced, consider including the following:

- A Landscape Character Assessment describing the key features, patterns and visual qualities of the area. Natural England's National Character Areas (NCAs) offer a useful starting point for identifying broad landscape types.
- Reference to the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, as well as any locally commissioned landscape assessments. These should be summarised in the main text, with locally specific reports included as appendices.
- A short explanation of how the landscape contributes to local identity and influences future development. This can be presented as a narrative summary or as a table, depending on what best suits your content.
- Maps, annotated diagrams and photographs to visually support your policy. Highlight key views, green infrastructure or other defining landscape features to provide context and justification.

10.2.15 For more advice on creating landscape policies, see the separate Landscape Considerations Guidance, available on the Neighbourhood Planning Resources page.

10.3 Important Views and Vistas

10.3.1 This section should identify and describe the important views and vistas within the neighbourhood plan area. Each view or vista should be clearly marked on a map and supported by accompanying photographs.

10.3.2 Detailed information on the selection process, including the criteria used and the justification for each view or vista, can be included in an appendix.

10.3.3 For further guidance on what constitutes an important view or vista, why they should be identified, how to assess them and examples of relevant policies, please refer to South Oxfordshire's Landscape Considerations Guidance.

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10.4 Local Green Spaces

10.4.1 This section should identify and describe the local green spaces within the neighbourhood plan area that are valued by the community and considered suitable for protection. Like important views, each designated space should be shown on a map.

10.4.2 Detailed information about the Local Green Space assessment, including the criteria applied and the rationale for each designation, should be set out in an appendix.

10.4.3 For more information on what Local Green Spaces are, why they are important, how to identify them and policy examples, please refer to South Oxfordshire's Landscape Considerations Guidance.

10.5 Biodiversity and Habitats

10.5.1 This section focuses on biodiversity and key habitats within the plan area. By assessing habitats and biodiversity assets in your area and developing objectives and evidence-based policies to protect and enhance them, you can help to ensure that the area's natural environment is protected for future generations.

10.5.2 When writing a section on habitats and biodiversity, your first task is to gather as much information as possible about the local natural environment. This could include designated nature conservation sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), as well as other important habitats, such as woodlands, hedgerows and wetlands. You can identify key habitats and biodiversity assets by:

1. consulting with local wildlife groups and environmental organisations,
2. reviewing existing data, such as the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas,
3. speaking to South Oxfordshire District Council, and
4. using your own local knowledge of the area.

10.5.3 As a starting point, the below is a list of general sources of information:

- MAGIC (online mapping tool that shows protected sites, including SSSI's, Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation): https://magic.defra.gov.uk/
- Natural England's Impact Risk Zones (assess potential for impacts on SSSI's): https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/5ae2af0c-1363-4d40-9d1a-e5a1381449f8/sssi-impact-risk-zones-england

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- Open mosaic habitat inventory of brownfield land (identify brownfield sites of biodiversity or geological value): https://data.gov.uk/dataset/open-mosaic-habitat-draft1
- NPPF (nature conservation in relation to sites and species): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf
- NPPG (nature conservation in relation to sites and species): https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment

10.5.4 Another source which you can use to identify habitats and biodiversity within your area is Parish Online if your parish is a subscriber.

10.5.5 Parish Online lists all the designated sites and important habitats for your area, barring Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and Local Wildlife Sites. You can use this software to build a portfolio of the habitats and biodiversity in the area. However, this will only be used to create an overview/summary and will therefore need to be supplemented by the Steering Group.

10.5.6 Please note that Parish Online's mapping software is a paid service which is discounted by Ordnance Survey. Pricing is based on the population estimate for your local area, with plans starting from £50 + VAT per year. For individual prices, visit their website. Other mapping services are also available such as Pear Technology Mapping Solutions for example. It is worth investigating this in detail should you wish to use such services, as new products and service change over time.

10.5.7 To provide a strong evidence base for the topic of habitats and biodiversity, you may want to undertake a full search from your local environmental records centre. For South Oxfordshire this will be the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre. Please note there is a charge for this service.

10.5.8 Once you have identified the habitats and biodiversity assets in your local area, you should then assess the condition they are in. This could involve conducting surveys of wildlife, such as birds, butterflies and wildflowers, or assessing the quality of habitats, such as the condition of woodlands and wetlands. You can conduct surveys yourself or commission them from a qualified ecologist. Further support can be provided in the form of habitat and biodiversity survey templates or ecologist recommendations.

10.5.9 You should also identify threats to your existing habitats and biodiversity assets. This could include development, agricultural practices and invasive species. This information may be sourced by:

1. consulting with residents and landowners, and/or

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2. by reviewing existing data, such as planning applications and environmental assessments.

10.5.10 The policies you create will be informed by your aims/objectives, however, generally applicable policies that you may want to include could focus on managing habitats in a sustainable way and reducing the impact of development on habitats and biodiversity.

10.5.11 More detailed information on how to write a section on biodiversity and habitats, including policies, can be found in South Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Guidance.

10.6 Green and Blue Infrastructure

10.6.1 You may wish to include a section on green and blue infrastructure, describing the network of natural and semi-natural features within and around the plan area. This includes green spaces such as parks, woodlands and gardens, as well as blue features like rivers, streams and ponds. Together, these elements play a vital role in supporting biodiversity, enhancing wellbeing and building climate resilience.

10.6.2 When writing this section, consider identifying the existing green and blue infrastructure in your area, including its condition, ecological value and potential for enhancement. You may also wish to explore connectivity opportunities, such as the creation of green corridors or wildlife movement routes across infrastructure. Policies can be used to protect these assets from development pressures and to support ecological improvements through measures like habitat restoration and tree planting.

10.6.3 You may choose to address green and blue infrastructure together in a single policy or split them into separate topics depending on the needs of your area.

10.6.4 Further information can be found in South Oxfordshire's Landscape Considerations Guidance.

10.7 Dark Night Skies

10.7.1 If your plan area benefits from naturally dark skies or includes locations that are vulnerable to light pollution, you may wish to consider a policy to help protect this valued characteristic. Maintaining dark skies can contribute to local character, support nocturnal wildlife and enhance residents' enjoyment of the night-time environment.

10.7.2 If relevant, a dark night skies policy can help guide the design and placement of external lighting in new development, aiming to minimise unnecessary light spill and preserve views of the night sky.

10.7.3 To support such a policy, consider referencing mapping data provided by CPRE's

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Light Pollution and Dark Skies Map: www.cpre.org.uk/light-pollution-dark-skies-map

10.7.4 Further information can be found in South Oxfordshire's Landscape Considerations Guidance.

10.8 Landscape Buffers

10.8.1 Where there is concern about the potential merging of settlements, you may wish to consider including a policy on landscape buffers. These can help maintain the separate identity of villages or hamlets by protecting the smallest practical open gap between them.

10.8.2 Some neighbourhood plans have adopted 'Local Gap' or 'Green Gap' policies, and these must be supported by clear landscape evidence. Any such policy should be focused, justified and relate only to the most vulnerable and meaningful spaces between settlements.

10.8.3 Further guidance, including example approaches, is available in South Oxfordshire's Landscape Considerations Guidance.

10.9 Local Gaps

10.9.1 Where there is a risk that development could lead to the physical or visual coalescence of neighbouring settlements, you may wish to consider including a policy on Local Gaps. These areas help maintain the distinct character, identity and form of settlements by protecting the open land between them.

10.9.2 Local Gaps should be used selectively and only where there is a clear planning purpose. The extent of any gap should be limited to the smallest area necessary to prevent coalescence. Overly extensive designations or gaps that effectively encircle a settlement are unlikely to be supported and may be reduced or removed at examination.

10.9.3 It is important to note that the designation of a Local Gap does not automatically provide public access or recreational use, nor does it imply a change in land ownership or management.

10.9.4 Although the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) does not explicitly refer to Local Gaps, it provides a strong strategic and design-based policy context. Neighbourhood plan policies should be clearly evidenced and demonstrate how the Local Gap contributes to maintaining settlement identity, reinforcing local character and guiding well-designed development.

10.9.5 When preparing a Local Gap policy, you should ensure it is supported by proportionate and robust evidence demonstrating why the gap is necessary and how

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it functions to prevent settlement coalescence. A detailed landscape assessment should not be repeated within the neighbourhood plan.

10.9.6 Further guidance on landscape sensitivity, visual separation and evidence requirements, including example approaches, can be found in South Oxfordshire's Landscape Considerations Guidance.

10.10 Settlement Boundaries

10.10.1 You may wish to consider including a settlement boundary within your neighbourhood plan. A settlement boundary defines the built-up limits of a village or town, clearly distinguishing the cohesive developed area from the surrounding open countryside.

10.10.2 Within a neighbourhood plan, settlement boundaries can help guide decisions about the location and scale of development. They provide a clear spatial framework for policies, supporting development in appropriate and sustainable locations while protecting the wider countryside.

10.10.3 A settlement boundary is not intended to define what is or is not part of a village in a social or geographical sense. Instead, it identifies a single cohesive built-up area. This may mean that some groups of buildings or individual properties that relate to a settlement fall outside the boundary where they do not form part of the main built form.

10.10.4 While the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance do not provide a formal definition of settlement boundaries, they strongly support a plan-led approach to shaping development patterns. National policy emphasises focusing growth within or adjoining existing settlements, making effective use of brownfield land and directing development to locations with good access to services and infrastructure.

10.10.5 The approach to defining a settlement boundary should reflect local context, including the size, character and development pressures affecting the area. It is important that neighbourhood plan groups set out a clear and transparent methodology explaining how the boundary has been drawn or reviewed to ensure consistency and robustness.

10.10.6 When used appropriately, settlement boundaries can provide clarity for communities, decision-makers and developers. They can help reinforce local character, support neighbourhood plan objectives, direct development to sustainable locations and protect open countryside from unnecessary encroachment.

10.10.7 Further guidance on drawing and reviewing settlement boundaries, including methodology and evidence requirements, is available in South Oxfordshire's

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Settlement Boundaries Guidance.

10.11 Flooding and Drainage

10.11.1 Flooding and drainage are critical issues for many communities and can significantly influence local development decisions. A well-informed section on flood risk and surface water management helps ensure that new development is both sustainable and resilient, particularly in areas already affected by flooding or where geology and topography increase vulnerability.

10.11.2 Neighbourhood plans can identify local flooding issues and use policies to guide development away from high-risk areas, promote sustainable drainage solutions and support measures that reduce surface water runoff.

10.11.3 When writing the flooding and drainage section of your plan, consider the following:

- **Known Issues:** Identify any existing flooding problems raised through consultation or supported by evidence, including areas where roadways, properties or green spaces are affected by standing water or regular flood events.
- **Drainage Concerns:** Note whether existing drainage infrastructure is under pressure or failing and whether geology (e.g. impermeable soils) contributes to surface water issues.
- **Future Development Risks:** Highlight areas where future development could worsen flood risk if not properly managed and where drainage infrastructure may require upgrading.
- **Community Knowledge:** Resident observations of recurring or historic flooding events can provide useful supplementary evidence, especially where official records are limited.

10.11.4 To inform this section, it is essential to gather and present up-to-date information on flood risk in your area. You should include:

- **Flood Zone Maps:** Use the Government's 'Flood Map for Planning' to identify areas at risk from rivers and sea flooding. Highlight Flood Zones 2 and 3 where relevant. Access here: https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk
- **Surface Water Flooding Maps:** These show areas at risk from surface water (flash) flooding, which is especially relevant for areas with heavy clay soils or poor drainage.
- **Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRAs):** South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils' joint SFRA offers detailed mapping and analysis of flood risk, drainage capacity and flood history. You can refer to this for evidence on local vulnerability and mitigation requirements.

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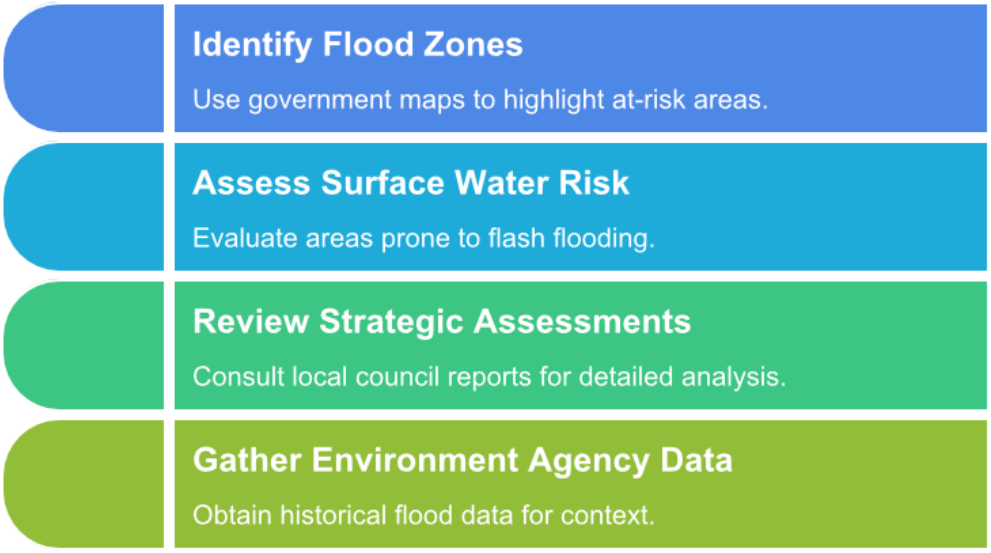
- **Environment Agency Data:** Contact the Environment Agency for more detailed, area-specific information, historic flood maps. This data can provide context on past events and help justify local policies.



11. The Built Environment

11.1.1 The built environment section of your neighbourhood plan provides an opportunity to guide the design, form and quality of future development in your area. This section can cover a wide range of topics, but the key is to focus on locally specific characteristics where your neighbourhood plan can add detail and value to existing policies set out in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and the Joint Design Guide.

11.1.2 Neighbourhood plans should not duplicate national or district-level policies but should provide localised design guidance, support distinctive architectural styles and ensure development reflects the unique identity of your community.

11.2 Heritage

11.2.1 This section of the neighbourhood plan provides an opportunity to recognise and protect the area's historic environment. While many designated heritage assets, such as Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, and Conservation Areas, are already subject to national protections, neighbourhood plans can play a unique role in identifying and managing locally significant heritage assets. These are known as non-designated heritage assets.

What are Non-Designated Heritage Assets?

11.2.2 Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which not meet the criteria for designated

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heritage assets. They may contribute to local identity, represent unique architectural features or reflect important historical, social or cultural associations.

11.2.3 Within a neighbourhood plan, Historic England sets out that:

"Neighbourhood Plans may establish policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood, thus becoming part of the development plan for the area. Work in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan may thus usefully include the development of a policy which sets out how proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets on a list will be considered and consideration of which buildings and sites might merit inclusion on a local heritage list. The Historic Environment section of the PPG points out the usefulness of 'any designated and non-designated heritage assets within the plan area [being] clearly identified at the start of the plan-making process so they can be appropriately taken into account' (Paragraph 005).

A local heritage list prepared as part of a Neighbourhood Plan for an area will be produced through the community because these plans are researched, written and voted on by the people who live in the neighbourhood. They thus have direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area".

Identifying Non-Designated Heritage Assets

11.2.4 Neighbourhood planning groups are well-placed to compile local heritage lists based on community knowledge and historical research. These lists may include a variety of asset types, from old agricultural buildings and boundary walls to schools, war memorials or historic public houses. Local heritage assets should be selected based on transparent criteria, such as design value, use of local materials, contribution to setting, rarity or historic associations.

11.2.5 To assist with this, a structured assessment approach is recommended. This includes describing the asset's age, type and location, evaluating its architectural or historic value and providing visual documentation and mapping of its location.

11.2.6 A policy on non-designated heritage assets should clearly outline how such assets will be considered in the determination of planning applications. This may include encouraging proposals that conserve or enhance these assets or ensuring that their significance is appropriately considered. It should be made clear that inclusion as a non-designated heritage asset does not prevent change but helps ensure development is sympathetic to the asset's character.

11.2.7 The identification of non-designated heritage assets should reflect local values and a shared understanding of what is historically important. Where possible, asset nominations should be informed by consultation and community engagement. Asset owners should also be notified where inclusion in a local list is proposed.

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11.3 Character and Design

11.3.1 This section is a key opportunity to build on existing policies in the Local Plan and the Joint Design Guide. While local distinctiveness and the enhancement of character are already addressed by Policy DES2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035, your plan can provide more detailed, locally specific guidance to ensure new development fits sensitively into its surroundings.

11.3.2 This could include identifying key features such as:

- typical building materials and architectural styles,
- settlement patterns, street layouts and boundary treatments,
- landmark buildings and local views, and
- distinctive design elements like roof forms, porches or fenestration.

11.3.3 One of the most effective ways to provide this detail is through the preparation of a Character Assessment. Many neighbourhood plans include a Character Assessment, either for the whole area or for individual settlements within it. This can help you define the unique qualities of different parts of the plan area that you wish to protect or enhance. This helps provide an evidence base for design policies and guide future development so that it integrates effectively with existing places.

11.3.4 The NPPF (para 139) reinforces this approach, stating that: 'Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes…'

11.3.5 To provide practical guidance for applicants and decision-makers, you may wish to develop a Design Guide or Design Code alongside your plan. These can include:

- clear design principles tailored to different development types (e.g. household extensions, commercial premises, or infill development);
- information on how new development should reflect local character and distinctiveness; and
- expectations for materials, scale, layout and boundary treatment.

11.3.6 Design guides and codes can be referenced in your policies to give them weight in decision making. They should not repeat national guidance but rather complement documents such as the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, while aligning with the Joint Design Guide and adding locally specific detail.

11.3.7 More guidance on how to prepare a Design Guide or Design Code is available in South Oxfordshire's Design Code Guidance and Template.

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11.4 Sustainable Construction, Resources and Climate Change

11.4.1 South Oxfordshire District Council declared a Climate Emergency in February 2021, and the Local Plan already includes several relevant policies, particularly DES8 (on efficient use of resources) and DES10 (on renewable energy). These provide a solid foundation for addressing climate and sustainability in planning decisions.

11.4.2 Rather than repeating these policies, your neighbourhood plan can add value by focusing on local priorities. One effective approach is to develop a Design Guide or Design Code that addresses sustainable construction, low-carbon materials, renewable energy integration and climate adaptation. These documents can go further than plan policies in offering practical guidance and best practice information.

11.4.3 These can include recommendations on building fabric, heating systems, renewable energy technologies and sustainable water use.

11.4.4 When developing this section, consider:

- How new development can contribute to reducing carbon emissions in your area.
- Local opportunities for renewable energy or nature-based solutions.
- Specific challenges your area may face due to climate change (e.g. overheating, surface water flooding).
- How development can be adapted to be more resilient and future-proof.

11.4.5 For more information on how to write a policy on sustainable construction, resources and climate change, see South Oxfordshire's Climate Change Guidance.

11.5 Housing

11.5.1 While housing policies in the Local Plan set strategic requirements, your plan can provide more detailed, community-driven guidance to shape what type of housing is built, where it goes and how it fits with the area's character and needs.

11.5.2 When developing your housing policies, consider how your Plan can add locally specific detail without duplicating policies already contained in the Local Plan or the Joint Design Guide.

11.5.3 When deciding on which type of housing policies to include in your Plan, consider the following:

- Does your neighbourhood area have a housing requirement figure identified by the Local Plan?

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- Is there a need for affordable housing or housing that meets the needs of specific local groups (e.g. older people, first-time buyers or those downsizing)?
- Is there a need to support self-build or custom-build plots?
- Are there any areas that could be improved or enhanced by residential development or re-development?

11.5.4 You do not have to include a policy for each of these topics, but it is useful to include a short explanation of your approach - whether you have chosen to include your own policy or rely on existing Local Plan policies.

Housing Site Allocations

11.5.5 If your neighbourhood plan includes allocating sites for housing, this gives your community greater control over where new development takes place and how it is delivered. Housing allocations are often one of the most powerful tools in a neighbourhood plan and can help ensure that future development reflects local priorities, rather than being imposed through speculative applications.

11.5.6 Allocating sites can have several key advantages, including:

1. **Shaping the Type and Quality of Development:** By identifying housing sites through your neighbourhood plan, you can set expectations for layout, density, design and mix of housing types to meet local needs - such as smaller homes, affordable units or homes for older people and first-time buyers.
2. **Greater Certainty for the Community and Developers:** Site allocations provide

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clarity about where development is expected, reducing the risk of unplanned or inappropriate proposals elsewhere in the area.

3. **Helping to Meet Local Plan Housing Requirements:** If your area has a housing figure set out in the Local Plan or an indicative housing requirement has been provided by the local authority, allocating sites allows you to meet this in a planned and coordinated way.
4. **Stronger Influence Over Design:** Where site allocations are supported by a Design Code or a masterplan, the community can set clear expectations for design quality, layout, open space, access and sustainability features. This ensures that development fits well with the character of the area.
5. **Additional Protection from Speculative Development:** Areas with made neighbourhood plans that are less than five years old, and which include housing policies and allocations to meet their housing requirement, have additional protection in national planning policy from inappropriate speculative development (see Paragraph 14 of the NPPF).

11.5.7 If you decide to allocate one or more sites, your neighbourhood plan should include a clear and concise summary of the process you followed. This might include:

- Outcomes of community engagement, including any specific concerns or preferences;
- Results from a Housing Needs Survey or Housing Needs Assessment;
- The approach taken to a call for sites (if applicable); and
- The site assessment methodology, including criteria used to evaluate site suitability (e.g. access, landscape impact and infrastructure).

11.5.8 Keep the main content brief, using appendices for technical reports, maps and consultation summaries. Each allocation should be supported by a policy that:

- Names the site and identifies it on a location plan.
- States the number of homes proposed.
- References any relevant Design Code or master planning work.
- Sets out key development principles if no Design Code is used (e.g. site access, housing mix, green infrastructure and design standards).

11.5.9 For examples of housing policies and supporting text, see South Oxfordshire's Neighbourhood Plan Template.

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11.6 Local Economy

11.6.1 The local economy section of your neighbourhood plan allows you to support and shape economic activity in a way that reflects the needs and identity of your community. While the Local Plan includes general policies on employment, retail and economic development, your plan can add value by focusing on specific local circumstances and opportunities.

11.6.2 Rather than repeating strategic policies, your neighbourhood plan should highlight locally important economic issues and create policies tailored to your area's particular context. This could include supporting local businesses, guiding the future of employment sites or responding to tourism opportunities. As always, policies should be rooted in local evidence, such as community consultation, surveys of local business needs or mapping of employment clusters.

11.6.3 Some examples of locally focused policies which you may want to include:

- **Protecting Local Shops and Services:** Policies could recognise valued commercial premises in village or town centres, helping to retain convenience stores, post offices, pubs, cafés or other amenities that serve the community. You may also want to set expectations for the design and appearance of new or replacement retail buildings.
- **Supporting Rural and Home-Based Businesses:** This could include the reuse of former agricultural buildings or barns for business use, or policies encouraging live/work units and digital infrastructure for remote working.
- **Enhancing Local Tourism:** If your area benefits from tourism, your plan could support holiday accommodation, visitor attractions or active travel

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connections that encourage sustainable tourism while protecting the character of the area.

- **Site-Specific Economic Policies:** Where there is an existing or proposed employment site or business park, you may include a policy to guide its future development - covering design, access, landscaping or the mix of use.

11.7 Community and Recreational Facilities

11.7.1 This section gives you the opportunity to identify the buildings, spaces and services that matter most to your community.

11.7.2 Community facilities often include places such as village halls, local shops, places of worship, libraries, schools, pubs, recreation grounds and health services. These assets are central to community life, offering spaces for social interaction, services and activities that support wellbeing and cohesion.

11.7.3 When preparing this section, consider including:

- A list of important community facilities in your area (e.g. village hall, playing field, GP surgery), supported by evidence from local consultation or surveys. You may want to consider using a map or table to present your key facilities.
- A short explanation of the role these facilities play in the life of the community. You may also want to include photographs of each facility.
- Any local needs or gaps that have been identified, such as demand for new services (e.g. youth provision, healthcare, accessible play areas).

11.7.4 Community views from engagement activities - what people value, what they are concerned about and what improvements they would like to see.

11.8 Transport and Infrastructure

11.8.1 When creating the transport and infrastructure section, focus on how people move around your area and identify any barriers to safe, efficient and accessible travel. This is an opportunity to highlight local transport challenges, explore opportunities for improvement and shape policies that support better connectivity within the community and to surrounding areas.

11.8.2 Some transport and infrastructure issues fall outside the scope of what neighbourhood plan policies can address. These typically include:

- Speed limits and traffic calming measures (Oxfordshire County Council highways matter).
- Public transport services and bus routes (commercial/County Council matter).

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- Road maintenance and resurfacing (County Council highways matter).
- Road signage and markings (County Council highways matter).
- Enforcement of parking restrictions (District/County Council matter).

11.8.3 These important issues should be captured as Community Aspirations rather than planning policies and pursued through the Town/Parish Council or other appropriate bodies.

11.8.4 This section should bring together data, local knowledge and community feedback. As with all sections, focus on issues that are specific to your parish or town. You may want to include the following.

Road Traffic and Congestion

11.8.5 Identify key roads and junctions within or near the plan area, particularly those affected by traffic issues or congestion, especially during peak times.

11.8.6 This information can come from community consultation - residents are often the best source for identifying problem areas.

Road Safety

11.8.7 Include a map of road traffic incidents over the last 5 to 10 years. This helps identify safety concerns that could inform policies or infrastructure improvements.

11.8.8 Incident data and maps can be obtained from:

- www.CrashMap.co.uk, and/or
- your County Council or a local Transport Consultant.

Public Transport

11.8.9 Provide a map of local bus stops and note:

- bus service numbers,
- destinations, and
- frequency of services.

11.8.10 Consider including any known gaps or community concerns about public transport provision, such as infrequent service or lack of evening/weekend options.

Active Travel

11.8.11 Show existing walking and cycling routes, including:

- Public Rights of Way (PRoWs),
- national Cycle Network routes,

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- dedicated footpaths or bike lanes, and
- you may also highlight areas where improvements could be made, such as missing links, unsafe crossings or poor signage.

11.8.12 By clearly presenting local transport challenges and priorities, your plan can support improvements to infrastructure for walking, cycling and public transport, influence the location and design of new development, ensuring it connects well to existing networks and guide developer contributions (e.g. CIL or S106) toward meaningful infrastructure upgrades.

12. Community Aspirations

12.1.1 This section provides an overview of the community's aspirations. A community aspiration can be an objective that relates to a topic which cannot be addressed through a policy in a neighbourhood plan.

12.1.2 Neighbourhood plans may only have policies pertaining to the use of land and development. However, there are undoubtedly non land-based issues that exist within communities– these can be incorporated into the plan as aspirations. Aspirations, although not legally binding as material consideration for future planning applications, are documented to indicate their importance to the residence and may be taken forward by other bodies, such as the Town/Parish Council.

12.1.3 Like objectives, you may want to write an aspiration to address elements of your vision. Alternatively, you may decide to write aspirations for all your policy topics. Either way, aspirations should address the area's strengths (what you want to see more of or continue) and weaknesses (what you want the plan to address) and deal with any other issues identified.

12.1.4 Some examples of aspirations could include:

- The preservation and maintenance of hedgerows.
- The rewilding of specific fields and meadows.
- To improve the visual appeal of the shopping area through maintenance and new planting.
- Maintenance of bridleways and footpaths.
- Introduce traffic calming measures (not related to a development proposal) such as signage, pavements and safe crossing places for pedestrians.

12.1.5 For community aspirations you may want to include them as a separate chapter or in the relevant topic section of the document. However, you must clearly distinguish your aspirations from your policies. You may want to do this by placing them under a heading called 'Community Aspirations' at the end of your relevant topic section.

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13. Appendices

13.1.1 It is likely that your plan will have evidence base documents. You may decide to include all of these as appendices or just have a smaller number of documents as an appendix, such as a Design Code, but refer back to the evidence base. There is no correct way to organise your evidence base, but consider being transparent, the size of your overall plan and how readable it is for the audience.

13.1.2 Whilst most users are likely to read the document online, also be aware of how the document will be printed and viewed. This is particularly important when including large graphics and plans, which need to be high quality to print and are often added as appendices. You may wish to have a lower resolution online version and a higher quality print version.

13.1.3 For online users, consider how to link the evidence base and any appendices to the neighbourhood plan. Ensure that you have a consistent approach to link and that they can be easy to visually distinguish between a link and general text.

13.1.4 Also consider whether to include a link directly to a document or to a page containing all of the documents online.

13.1.5 Linking directly requires a lot of maintenance and updates, particularly as documents are altered. This can often lead a user to broken links whereby they have no idea of how to find an alternative or most up to date source.

13.1.6 Linking to a page with all evidence documents, will require more navigation for the user, but requires less maintenance. A single page is usually updated more frequently, and previous versions of documents can be listed and made available but archived or clearly marked when superseded.

13.1.7 The key is to minimise broken links or the likelihood of frustration with pages not being available.

14. Alternatives to a Neighbourhood Plan

14.1.1 When thinking about producing a neighbourhood plan, it is essential to evaluate whether this approach is the best fit for your area. There are other options which may be a better fit. The decision will be influenced by various factors, including:

- financial costs, time commitment, resources and support available to you to develop a planning document;
- current local plan policies;
- whether your town or parish already has an adopted or in-progress neighbourhood plan;
- the development pressures in your area;

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- the development needs in your area; and
- whether your goals are directly related to the development of land or buildings.

14.1.2 Some of the alternatives include:

14.2 Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs)

What is a Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO)?

14.2.1 Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) provide local communities with the ability to approve certain types of development without needing to go through the traditional planning application process. There are generally two ways of using an NDO:

- non-site specific (generally a neighbourhood wide area); and
- site specific.

14.2.2 Like neighbourhood plans, NDOs require a qualifying body, such as a parish/town council or a forum, to designate a neighbourhood area in which the order will apply.

14.2.3 Once an NDO is in place, any development specified within the order can proceed without the need to submit a planning application to the local planning authority. However, the NDO can be subject to planning conditions which may need to be discharged through an approval process with the local authority.

What are the Benefits of a NDO?

14.2.4 While neighbourhood plans set out a broader vision for long-term growth, NDOs offer an alternative for specific projects. NDOs may be a good option when:

- The focus is on small, targeted improvements, such as redeveloping a single site or revitalising a local area.

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- The community has a clear, well-defined project and would benefit from the simplified process, potentially saving time and costs.
- There is a need to expedite planning approval for developments like community spaces or affordable housing.
- The specific development requires clarity on conditions and infrastructure requirements from the outset.

14.2.5 For a community aiming to carry out a specific project, NDO can offer a flexible, cost-effective and focused solution for addressing local needs.

14.3 Community Right to Build Orders (CRtBOs)

What is a Community Right to Build Order (CRtBO)?

14.3.1 A Community Right to Build Order (CRtBO) is a type of NDO that gives local communities the authority to grant planning permission for specific developments within their area without the need for a formal planning application. CRtBOs enable small-scale, community-driven projects, such as affordable housing, community centres or local business hubs.

14.3.2 Unlike a NDO, which requires a qualifying body such as a parish/town council or forum, a CRtBO can be made by community organisations. A key feature of CRtBOs is that any profits generated from these projects must be reinvested back into the community, ensuring long-term local benefit.

What are the Benefits of a CRtBO?

14.3.3 While neighbourhood plans provide a long-term framework for guiding growth, CRtBOs offer a more targeted solution for specific community-led projects. CRtBOs may be especially beneficial when:

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- The focus is on small, community-driven initiatives, such as building affordable housing, creating community centres, or establishing local business hubs.
- The community has a clear, well-defined project that would benefit from a focused process, aimed at achieving community benefits.
- There is a need to expedite planning approval for vital developments that directly serve local needs, such as housing or community infrastructure.
- The project requires the certainty that comes with planning permission, with profits from the development being reinvested back into the community.
- A community organisation wants to undertake a small-scale project.

14.3.4 For groups pursuing a specific, community-focused project, CRtBOs can provide a flexible way to address local needs and foster long-term community benefits.

14.4 Town and Parish Plans

What is a Town/Parish Plan?

14.4.1 A Town or Parish Plan, also referred to as a Community-Led Plan or Village Plan, is a document created by the community that provides a broad assessment of the area. It

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typically includes information about local facilities and services, the strengths and weaknesses of the area and identifies the community's needs and aspirations for the future. A Town/Parish Plan sets out a shared vision and outlines how that vision can be achieved.

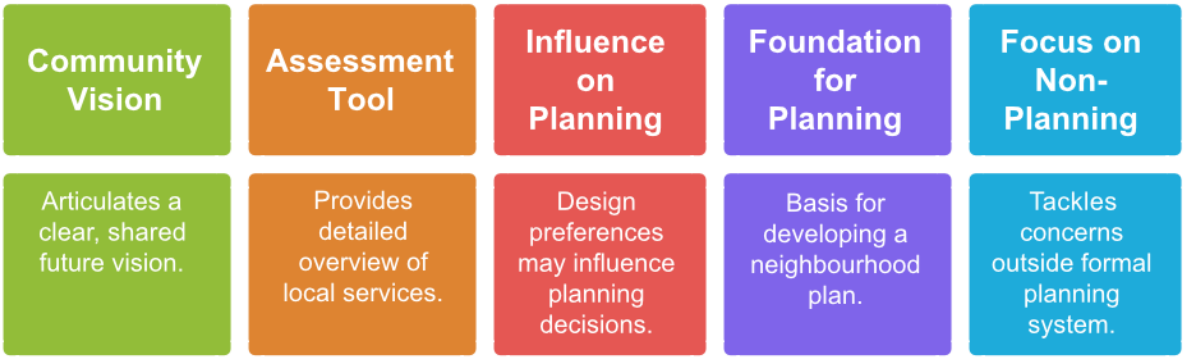
14.4.2 While Town/Parish Plans may include planning-related elements such as the design of buildings or preferred materials, there is no requirement for them to cover issues relating to the development or use of land or buildings.

14.4.3 Importantly, Town/Parish Plans do not carry statutory weight in planning decisions and do not hold the same legal status as a neighbourhood plan. However, if they include planning elements, such as design preferences, these may be considered as material considerations by South Oxfordshire when determining planning applications in the area.

What are the Benefits of a Town/Parish Plan?

14.4.4 Town/Parish Plans can be a valuable tool for guiding local development and expressing community priorities. Key benefits include:

- **Community Vision:** They help to articulate a clear, shared vision for the future of the community.
- **Assessment Tool:** They offer a detailed overview of local services, facilities, and needs.
- **Influence on Planning:** While not statutory, planning-related elements such as design preferences may influence planning decisions if endorsed by the local authority.
- **Foundation for Further Planning:** They can form a useful basis for developing a neighbourhood plan if the community decides to address land use or development in a more structured way.
- **Focus on Non-Planning Issues:** If the issues the community wishes to address are not related to the development of land or buildings, then a Town/Parish Plan allows these concerns to be tackled outside the formal planning system.



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14.4.5 Although Town/Parish Plans do not possess the same legal status as a neighbourhood plan, they can serve as a useful first step in local planning, helping communities identify their goals and build consensus before deciding whether a neighbourhood plan is needed.

14.5 Rely on Local Plan Policy

14.5.1 For communities that do not wish to prepare a neighbourhood plan, relying on the local plan policies can be a practical alternative.

What is the Local Plan?

14.5.2 The local plan provides a comprehensive framework for managing growth and development across South Oxfordshire, covering key topics such as housing, infrastructure, the environment, heritage and economic development.

14.5.3 In many cases, local plan policies already align with the goals of towns and parishes, offering protection for important green spaces, supporting appropriate levels of housing development and guiding the design and character of new buildings. Where communities agree with the direction set out in the local plan and do not wish to shape their area locally, it may be more efficient to engage with the planning process through consultation and community representation, rather than developing a separate neighbourhood plan.

What are the Benefits of Using Local Plan Policy?

14.5.4 Relying on the local plan can offer several practical benefits for towns and parishes, especially where resources are limited or where local planning priorities are already reflected in the wider planning framework. Considerations for this are:

- **Influence Through Consultation:** Communities can still shape outcomes by participating in planning consultations, responding to planning applications, and working with the local planning authority to ensure community concerns are considered.
- **Avoids Duplication:** Local Plan policies may already provide suitable protection or guidance (e.g. on green space, design standards or development boundaries) to meet the needs of the community.
- **Less Time and Cost Intensive:** Developing a neighbourhood plan involves a commitment in terms of time, resources, and community involvement. In contrast, using the local plan avoids these demands while still allowing communities to engage with planning matters.
- **Professional Expertise:** Local Plans are developed by planning professionals with access to extensive technical evidence and consultation feedback. By

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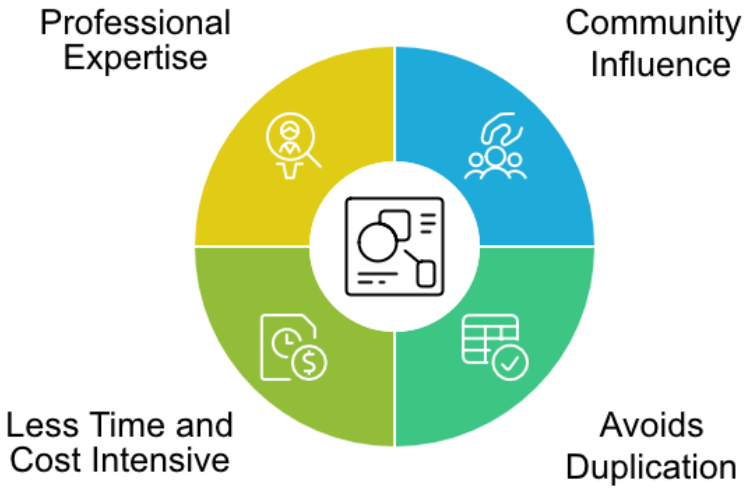
working within this framework, communities benefit from well-researched, comprehensive policies without having to develop them independently.



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15. Glossary of Technical Terms

This section provides a list of technical terms and phrases frequently used in planning policy and neighbourhood planning. Each entry includes a brief definition to support understanding and ensure clarity. Where possible, definitions have been taken from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Glossary (2024).

A

- **Adoption**: The formal approval and implementation of a local plan, which outlines the future development and land use for a specific area.
- **Affordable Housing**: Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

  a) **Social Rent**: Meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the government's rent policy for Social Rent; (b) the landlord is a registered provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

  b) **Other Affordable Housing for Rent**: Meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the government's rent policy for Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent)

  c) **Discounted Market Sales Housing**: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined regarding local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

  d) **Other Affordable Routes to Home Ownership**: is housing provided for sale that enables a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision or refunded to government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

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- **Amenity**: In planning terms, amenity is often used to refer to the quality or character of an area and elements that contribute to the overall enjoyment of an area.

B

- **Basic Conditions**: Only a draft neighbourhood Plan or Order that meets each of a set of basic conditions can be put to a referendum and be made. The basic conditions are set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as applied to neighbourhood plans by section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The basic conditions are:

  a. having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the order (or neighbourhood plan). Read more about National policy and advice.

  b. having special regard to the desirability of preserving any listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses, it is appropriate to make the order. This applies only to Orders. Read more about Listed buildings and conservation areas.

  c. having special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of any conservation area, it is appropriate to make the order. This applies only to Orders. Read more about Listed buildings and conservation areas.

  d. the making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Read more about Sustainable development.

  e. the making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area). Read more about General conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan.

  f. the making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations. Read more about EU obligations.

  g. prescribed conditions are met in relation to the Order (or plan) and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the order (or neighbourhood plan). Read more about Other basic conditions.

- **Biodiversity**: Biodiversity is seen as the total complexity of all life, including not only the great variety of organisms, but also their varying behaviour and interactions.
- **Brownfield Land/Previously Developed Land**: Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed). It also includes land comprising large areas of fixed surface infrastructure such as large areas

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of hardstanding which have been lawfully developed. Previously developed land excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.

C

- **Character Assessment**: An appraisal of the distinctive character of an area, used to inform planning policies.
- **Community Engagement**: The process of working collaboratively with individuals and groups within a community, sharing a common interest or geographic location, to address issues.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**: A levy that local authorities can choose to charge on new developments in their area. The money can be used to support development by funding infrastructure.
- **Conditions**: Requirements attached to a planning permission to limit or direct the manner in which development is carried out.
- **Conservation Area**: An area designated by the Local Planning Authority under section 69 of the Planning (listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.
- **Consultation**: A process by which people and organisations are asked their views about planning decisions, including the local plan.

D

- **Design Code**: A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.
- **Development**: The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land (Town and Country Planning Act 1990).
- **Development Plan**: Is defined in Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made and published spatial development strategies, together with any regional strategy policies that remain in force. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.
- **Development Management**: The process of administering and making decisions on different kinds of planning applications.

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E

- **Evidence Base**: The evidence upon which a development plan is based, principally the background facts and statistics about an area, and the views of stakeholders.
- **Examination**: An examination of a neighbourhood plan is undertaken by an independent examiner, to test whether or not the draft neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions and other matters set out in paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

G

- **Green Belt**: Designated land around a town or city where land is kept permanently open and where development is severely restricted.
- **Green Infrastructure**: A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.
- **Greenfield Site**: Land that has not previously been previously developed.

H

- **Habitats Regulations Assessment**: Used to assess the impacts of proposals and land-use plans against the conservation objectives of a European Protected site and to ascertain whether it would adversely affect the integrity of that site.
- **Heritage Asset**: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- **Housing Need:** An unconstrained assessment of the minimum number of homes needed in an area.
- **Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)**: A comprehensive analysis that determines the current and projected housing needs of residents within a specific area. It involves researching and analysing data to understand the current housing landscape, identify unmet needs, and inform future housing planning and policy development.

I

- **Independent Examination**: The process in which an impartial examiner reviews a neighbourhood plan to ensure it meets all relevant legal and procedural requirements.
- **Infrastructure**: All the ancillary works and services that are necessary to support human activities including roads, sewer, schools, hospitals etc.

L

- **Listed Building**: Buildings and structures which are listed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as being of special architectural and historic merit and whose protection and maintenance are the subject of special legislation. The National

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Heritage List for England (NHLE) is the official register of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England - listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected wrecks, registered parks and gardens, and battlefields: www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/

- **Local Development Order**: An Order made by a local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.
- **Local Green Space**: A designation that protects green areas of particular importance to local communities. Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space: a) is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; b) is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and c) is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
- **Local Planning Authority (LPA)**: The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority include the district council, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority, the Mayor of London and a development corporation, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities.
- **Local Plan**: A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community, under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. AA local plan can consist of either strategic or nonstrategic policies, or a combination of the two.

M

- **Material Consideration**: A matter that should be taken into account in deciding a planning application or on an appeal against a planning decision.
- **Major Development:** Other than for the specific purposes of Paragraphs 190 and 191 in the NPPF, for housing, development where ten or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m2 or more, or a site of one hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)**: Government department responsible for planning policy (formerly the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities).

N

- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**: The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

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- **Neighbourhood Area**: The local area in which a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order can be introduced.
- **Neighbourhood Development Order**:. An order made by a local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) through which parish councils and neighbourhood forums can grant planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.
- **Neighbourhood Forum**: Designated by the local authority in non-parished areas, an organisation established for the purpose of neighbourhood planning to further the social, economic and environmental well-being of the neighbourhood area. There can only be one forum in an area.
- **Neighbourhood Development Plan/Neighbourhood Plan**: A plan prepared by a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- **Neighbourhood Planning:** A community-initiated process in which people get together through a local forum or parish or town council and produce a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order

P

- **Parish Council**: The lowest tier of local government, responsible for a small geographic area. Can lead on the creation of neighbourhood plans.
- **Permitted Development Rights**: Permitted Development rights are set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended. They are a national grant of planning permissions which allow certain building works and changes to be carried out without having to make a planning application. They are subject to conditions and limitations to control the impact and to protect local amenity.
- **Planning Condition**: A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.
- **Planning Obligation**: A legal agreement entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.
- **Planning Permission**: Formal consent granted by a council allowing a proposed development to proceed.
- **Policy:** A concise statement of the principles that a particular kind of development proposal should satisfy in order to obtain planning permission.
- **Previously Developed Land (PDL)**: Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed). It also includes land comprising large areas of fixed surface infrastructure such as large areas of hardstanding which have been lawfully developed. Previously developed land excludes: land that is or was

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last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.

- **Public Realm**: Areas of space usually in town and city centres where the public can circulate freely, including streets, parks and public squares.

R

- **Referendum**: A vote by which the eligible population of an electoral area may decide on a matter of public policy. Neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders are made by a referendum of the eligible voters within a neighbourhood area.
- **Regeneration**: Upgrading an area through social, physical and economic improvements.

S

- **Section 106 Agreement**: A legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act. They are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken.
- **Settlement Boundary**: A boundary drawn around a settlement to define the built-up area and within which development is normally permitted subject to compliance with other policies.
- **Site Allocation**: A site that is earmarked in a local plan for a particular type of development or use, such as housing, employment and leisure.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**: A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.
- **Statutory Consultees:** Bodies that must be consulted on planning applications and development plans.
- **Sustainable Development**: A widely used definition drawn up by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The NPPF taken as a whole constitutes the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.
- **Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS):** A sustainable drainage system controls surface water run off close to where it falls, combining a mixture of built and nature-based techniques to mimic natural drainage as closely as possible, and accounting for the predicted impacts of climate change. The type of system that would be appropriate will vary from small scale interventions such as permeable paving and soakaways that can be used in very small developments to larger integrated schemes in major developments.

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T

- **Town and Country Planning Act 1990**: The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is an act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom regulating the development of land in England and Wales.
- **Town Council:** A form of local government, specifically for smaller municipalities.

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Listening Learning Leading

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include large print, Braille, audio, email, easy read and alternative languages.

If you would like to discuss neighbourhood planning with a member of the team, please call us on 01235 422600 or email planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk