

Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Implementation and Monitoring

What to do once your plan is made and how to put your plan into action

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Neighbourhood Planning Guidance – Implementation and Monitoring

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1. Purpose of this guidance

Once a neighbourhood plan has been made, it is important to consider how to implement the plan (put it into action) and monitor its outcomes. This guidance has been produced to explain how this can be achieved and what processes and methods can be used.

- Implementing a neighbourhood plan is the process of putting the plan into action and turning policies into real changes.
- Monitoring a neighbourhood plan involves keeping track of how the plan is performing to understand whether it is achieving its aims and objectives.

Your plan will be used by officers, and Planning Committees where applications are considered by Committee, in East Suffolk Council or the Broads Authority where appropriate, to determine planning applications in the plan area. You should use your plan to inform your comments on applications in your area, and this guidance will help you get the most from your plan and use it effectively.

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is intended for anyone using the neighbourhood plan. This is usually town and parish councils who may wish to plan community projects, comment on development applications in the area, or consider Parish Infrastructure Implementation Plans (PIIPS).

The information in this guide may also be useful if you are thinking about reviewing your neighbourhood plan as it will help to identify whether the plan is doing as it intended.

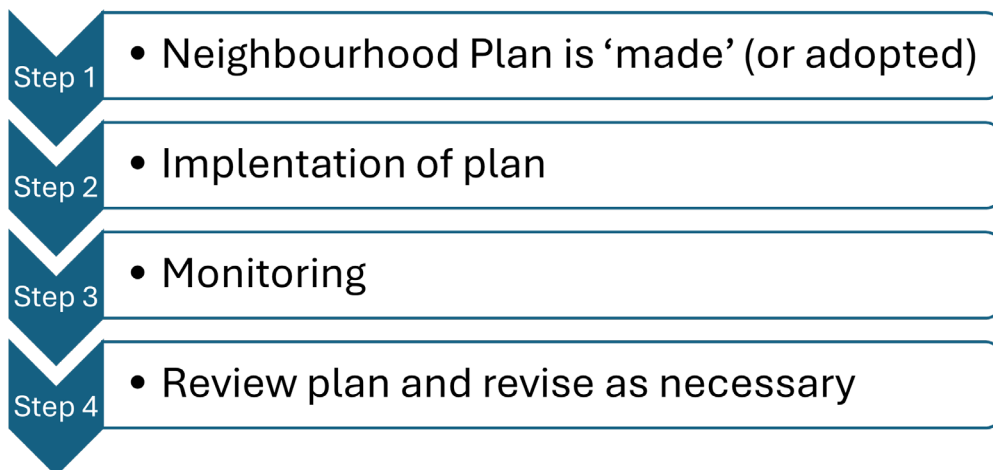


Fig. 1: Process of Implementation and Monitoring of Neighbourhood Plans

2. Implementation: The plan is made – what is next?

Implementation of a neighbourhood plan means putting its policies and proposals into action after the plan has been formally adopted (or “made”) following a successful referendum.

There are many ways to implement your plan, this guidance considers the following methods:

- Getting to know your plan
- Training and development
- Commenting on planning applications
- Engaging/collaborating with stakeholders and developers
- Community actions- how to go about it

Getting to know your plan

The first thing you will need to do is ensure that the town or parish council as a whole, is familiar with made plan and understands its aims and objectives. This may involve in-house training or workshops, and East Suffolk Council will aim to assist you where possible. The Council will continue to support parishes with made neighbourhood plans.

You may want to consider the following:

- Are parish or town councillors aware of the plan and its purpose?
- Who else needs to know about the plan?
- How can the plan be used effectively?
- Who is responsible for using the plan?
- Is your plan available and accessible?

Your plan should be accessible to all. It should be available on your parish website and also in hard copy, which is usually held by the parish clerk. Neighbourhood plans within East Suffolk are also available on the [East Suffolk Council](#) website and will have been made available to local libraries. Plans that include the Broads Authority area are also published on their website: [Neighbourhood planning](#).

Importantly, it will be critical to manage the expectations of Councillors and members of the public, particularly in terms of what the plan can achieve.

Training and development

It is recommended that training is given to town and parish councillors who will be using the plan but may not have been involved in the plan making process. Any training should explain the overall aims of the plan, the policies and how they should be applied.

Over time, you may find that the members of the group who prepared the neighbourhood plan are no longer involved with the town or parish council, and any new councillors should also be given training. Creating and providing your parish councillors with training materials that can be used in the future will ensure that they fully understand the aims and objectives of the plan. These materials could include documents from the plan's evidence base or the plan making process, and consultation comments for example.

Town or parish councils may also wish to provide workshops or other learning activities. East Suffolk Council can provide assistance and expertise on planning matters, but you may need to seek outside help on specific training.

Commenting on planning applications

Once made, your neighbourhood plan becomes part of East Suffolk's statutory development plan. If your Neighbourhood Plan includes the Broads area, then the Broads Local Plan will also form part of the statutory development plan. This means that your plan's policies are considered by the relevant local planning authority when deciding planning applications in the area. Town and parish councils are able to comment on any applications that are submitted for development in your neighbourhood plan area.

How to effectively comment on planning applications

The council's '[Comment on a planning application](#)' page provides guidance on how to effectively comment on an application, but in summary comments should:

- be kept as concise as possible
- clearly state whether the response is an objection or is supporting the development
- give clear and unambiguous reasons for objecting or supporting an application

You can comment via the on-line portal, by email or by post¹.

Your comments should focus on the consideration of your neighbourhood plan policies and those in the local plan along with any other material considerations you think are appropriate.

You can also refer to any evidence base document which underpins the neighbourhood plan policy or policies you are using. These should be publicly available on the town or parish website, or in hard copy, which is usually held by the town or parish clerk. The supporting

¹ Details will be included in your consultation letter

evidence may contain additional relevant information which might help you to explain the policy and the rationale for it being included in the neighbourhood plan.

Material Considerations

Applications should be considered in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan is the relevant East Suffolk Local Plan, the Suffolk County Council [minerals and waste plan](#) and any made neighbourhood plan in the district.

Examples of material consideration include:

- Impact on traffic, parking, and highway safety
- Noise, overshadowing, or loss of privacy
- Design, layout, and appearance of buildings
- Effect on listed buildings or conservation areas
- Flood risk or environmental impact
- Local and national planning policies
- Housing need and infrastructure capacity

Examples of matters that are not material considerations:

- Loss of private views
- Impact on property value
- Personal opinions about the applicant
- Private disputes or covenants

There may be some cases whereby material considerations indicate that a planning application should be determined contrary to adopted neighbourhood plan or local plan policies. If you need advice or clarification on any issues or want to discuss how issues are being considered and weighted, you can discuss this with the case officer who is considering and processing the application. This information can be found on your consultation notification.

Engaging with developers and stakeholders

Town and parish councils are encouraged to work directly with developers in relation to development in their neighbourhood plan area.

In the [East Suffolk Developers Charter](#), developers of ‘major residential schemes of 10 houses or over’ are encouraged to engage with town and parish councils. Having early conversations with developers can help to ensure that important parts of the neighbourhood plan are considered at the early stages of any development proposal.

Town and parish councils can help developers to engage with the wider community. Experience in East Suffolk has shown that early engagement can help to identify views and provide an opportunity for these to be considered early on during the planning stages. Promoting an active and constructive dialogue between parties can significantly improve the success of a development and the experience of the planning application process.

Community actions - how to go about it

The majority of neighbourhood plans in East Suffolk contain ‘non-policy’ projects. These are projects that the community would like to see achieved but a planning policy may not be the appropriate vehicle for them. They may be called community actions, projects or aims amongst other titles.

For the purpose of this guidance, they will be referred to as community actions.

Community actions can feature in your neighbourhood plan, but they are not part of its statutory function. However, they can be just as important in delivering your plan’s aims as the neighbourhood plan policies themselves. Therefore, part of the implementation can involve the direct delivery of community actions.

You may want to consider how the community actions in your neighbourhood plan are to be achieved and which ones are deemed critical, essential, or desirable. If your plan includes a priority list of infrastructure related community actions these should also be outlined in your [Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan](#). However, your plan may include community actions that do not relate to the delivery of infrastructure.

There are several things you can do to deliver a project or community action, and taking a project planning/management approach for the delivery of community actions may be beneficial. Having a clear project plan in place will help you to keep track of the projects and when they have been completed. Project management also helps to highlight any issues with the delivery of the project.

For further detailed guidance on project planning for community actions see **Appendix 1**

What will East Suffolk Council do?

East Suffolk Council will continue to support towns or parishes with made neighbourhood plans. In addition, we will where possible, provide guidance and advice and answer any queries you may have. See contacts below:

Planning Policy: PlanningPolicy@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Development Management: planning@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Communities: Communities@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Community Infrastructure Team: CIL@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

3. Monitoring

Having considered implementation, it is important to think about how you will monitor your plan. Whilst there is no formal requirement to monitor your neighbourhood plan, it is good practice to keep track of how well it is performing in relation to its policies and overall aims and objectives.

Monitoring could also include considering whether the overall aims and objectives of a neighbourhood plan are being achieved. This is not just about looking at individual decisions, projects and actions but considering their collective impacts and outcomes for the area.

There are many ways to monitor your plan, this guidance considers the following methods:

- Checking planning application outcomes- checking whether development proposals have been permitted, refused or decisions appealed.
- Monitoring policies- tracking how the plan's policies are being followed and whether new development aligns with the plan's vision.
- Monitor your Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income and expenditure which supports improvements to or new local infrastructure and amenities.

East Suffolk Council's website contains useful information for monitoring your plan:

- [Planning delivery dashboard](#)
- [Geographic Information System](#)
- [Housing Land Supply](#)
- [Housing Action Plan](#)
- [Open data, monitoring and housing supply](#)
- [Annual Performance Reports](#)
- Key Performance Indicator reports²
 - Environmental Impact
 - Sustainable housing
 - Tackling Inequalities
 - Thriving Economy

² These are found on the Council's [Performance reports](#) on the East Suffolk Council website

Some of the information contained in the links above may be available at parish level, such as housing completions, but other data may only be available at a district level.

Checking planning outcomes

One of the main ways to do this is to monitor the outcome of any planning applications in your town/parish. You can monitor relevant planning application outcomes by signing up for notifications and receiving planning and/or appeal decisions or by checking the [Public Access](#) page on the Council's website.

Additionally, you can also look at the use of conditions or reasons for refusal of an application. Conditions could be applied as a direct response to neighbourhood plan policies. Likewise, where a scheme has been refused, the reasons for refusal should be examined as these may make explicit mention of neighbourhood plan policies.

Considering planning decisions will identify any strengths or weaknesses in the neighbourhood plan's policies.

Planning appeals

You can also consider how appeal decisions might impact on how your neighbourhood plan policies may be interpreted in future planning applications/appeals, although each application is assessed on its own merits.

Appeals are submitted by developers/applicants, usually in response to a refusal of a scheme (although there are other instances where an appeal may be submitted). An independent planning inspector will assess the submitted application, reasons for refusal and consider any relevant local plan and neighbourhood plan policies alongside any material considerations. They will then outline their reasons for allowing/dismissing the appeal in their decision statement which will also include assessment of any policies they have used to reach their decision. You will then be able to read these decisions and see if and how your neighbourhood plan policies have been used and interpreted.

East Suffolk Council will publish any appeal decision received on the relevant application and you will be able to view the decision notice via [Public Access](#) on the Council website.

Monitoring policies

You can assess how the policies in the neighbourhood plan have been performing by looking at existing planning permissions and completed development in the area. Are the new schemes in line with the plan's aims and objectives? Are there any obvious successes or gaps that have been identified?

You can maintain a log of policy outcomes and make a record of planning applications, and which policies were relevant and track the outcomes.

You can also prepare reports for your town or parish council, and it is up to you how frequently you do this. However, these should ideally be prepared at least once a year, and a

report could take the form of a town or parish monitoring statement if appropriate. This report can also include any update on other issues such as housing completions (if appropriate) infrastructure delivery, environmental improvements linked to policy or successful and completed community actions.

Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) monitoring

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge paid by developers which contributes to infrastructure needs within East Suffolk. Neighbourhood CIL is distributed from these funds to towns and parishes within East Suffolk. The existence of a neighbourhood plan affects the amount of Neighbourhood CIL the town or parish will receive, which will increase from 15% to 25% if the area has a made plan³.

Not all parishes or geographic areas will be subject to a CIL charge, and some towns/parishes have a zero CIL rate, which means that developments in that area do not pay any CIL.

You can look at the Council's [Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\)](#) pages for further information.

You should monitor all CIL monies received and spent in your town or parish and you must produce an annual CIL Report to show how any funds have been spent.

Further information on CIL:

- [CIL parish support](#)
- East Suffolk Council is currently preparing guidance on Planning for Infrastructure and CIL in Neighbourhood plans.
- Suffolk County Council
 - [Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\)](#)
 - [Developers guide to infrastructure contributions in Suffolk](#)

4. Reviewing your plan

There is no formal requirement to review neighbourhood plans, but it is good practice to consider a review every 5 years or so and it will help to ensure that your plan remains effective and relevant. It can also be used to help with Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bids and to monitor non-policy aims of the plan such as community actions.

You may want to consider reviewing your neighbourhood plan if:

³ "Neighbourhood CIL" is typically 15% of the CIL from development within the parish, with an annual cap of £100 per Council Tax dwelling (or an amount specified in the councils CIL Schedule. However, this cap is removed, and the parish receives a larger portion of 25% if there is an adopted Neighbourhood Plan

- There has been a consistent problem with the implementation of any of the plan's policies
- The plan is not achieving its aims and objectives
- The plan has achieved its aims and objectives, and you want to update or add new aims.

An effective and relevant plan will enable you to answer any queries arising from members of the public as to how the neighbourhood plan is performing

East Suffolk Council have produced some guidance which covers the type of review that you may want to consider and what is involved:

[Neighbourhood-Planning-Guidance-Note-Review-of-Made-Neighbourhood-Development-Plans.pdf](#)

Appendix 1

Project management of community actions

There are many different ways to manage a project, but the project brief is fundamental to a successful delivery. The project brief should cover:

- Importance: is the community action desirable, essential or critical?
- The purpose of the project
- The nature of the project
- Specifications
- Timetable
- Budget.

Your project/management plan should also consider the need for any professional input and contractors that may be required to progress the project. This should include time allowed for assessing bids and interviews (procurement of services). A clear project plan is likely to be required by any funding bodies you may be applying to.

Carrying out a SWOT analysis is always a good starting point if you are unsure of what to do. A SWOT analysis is a simple but powerful tool used to understand a situation or make decisions, whether for a business, project, or even personal goals.

S = Strengths: What are you doing well? What advantages do you have? (e.g., strong community support, skilled team, good reputation)

W = Weaknesses: Where could you improve? What's holding you back? (e.g., limited funding, lack of experience)

O = Opportunities: What's happening externally that you can benefit from? (e.g., new funding programmes, growing demand, partnerships)

T = Threats: What risks or challenges could affect your success? (e.g., new competitors, policy changes, economic downturns)

Feasibility

One of the first tasks is to consider how feasible your project is.

The suggestions below are not going to apply to all projects, and it will be up to you to decide how to take a project forward and what stages are appropriate to your project/s and the level of consideration needed will depend on the complexity or simplicity of your project.

1. Technical Feasibility

- Do you have the right skills, equipment, or technology to deliver the project?
- Can the idea be built or implemented?

2. Financial Feasibility

- What's the cost of the project and do you have, or can you get the funding?
- Will the benefits outweigh the costs involved?

3. Operational Feasibility

- Do you have the relevant people, processes, and support systems in place?
- Can it fit into your current workload and organisational structure?

4. Timeline Feasibility

- Is your schedule realistic for the work involved?
- Are there any time-sensitive factors (deadlines, approvals, seasons) to consider?

5. Legal & Regulatory Feasibility

- Are there any legal requirements or permissions (e.g. planning, data protection, contracts)?

6. Social & Environmental Impact

- Will the project be supported by stakeholders and the local community?
- Are there any environmental risks or opportunities?

You can use your Neighbourhood Plan and any project plans to monitor if you are achieving your objectives and see if there are any common threads stopping you from achieving these.