



Neighbourhood Planning FAQs



Neighbourhood Planning Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can my community have a Neighbourhood Plan?

Yes, Neighbourhood Planning is available to all areas.

In areas covered by Parish or Town Councils, only the Parish or Town Council can prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. Outside parished areas, Neighbourhood Planning can be carried out by anyone who wants to set up or join a group to write a Neighbourhood Plan. The group should include residents, businesses and local councillors and it will need to be designated as a Neighbourhood Forum by Solihull MBC.

2. Do we have to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?

No, it is entirely up to your local community.

Solihull MBC will help local people get involved in the planning of their areas. However, there are a variety of ways in which you can shape the development of your local area, one of which is Neighbourhood Planning.

Read the Council's Neighbourhood Planning Guidance and think carefully about whether Neighbourhood Planning is the best way of achieving the local ambitions for your area. For further information, contact the Council's Policy and Spatial Planning Team.

3. What can a Neighbourhood Plan do?

Neighbourhood Plans can be used to influence the use and development of land within a specific area, such as what new housing will look like, and can bring forward sites for development. However, they will not be able to stop development that Solihull MBC has identified in the Local Plan as being suitable for the Borough.

4. Does a Neighbourhood Plan have to follow Parish Council boundaries?

No. In non-parished areas of the Solihull your community will need to set up a group and apply to Solihull MBC designate your area as a formal Neighbourhood Area. The boundary is up to you but it cannot include any part of a Parish or Town Council Area and must make sense in terms of community, communications, transport and service arrangements.

In the case of Parish and Town Councils the area covered can be the Parish or Town Council boundary, just part of it, or Parish Councils can work together to make a joint Neighbourhood Plan.

5. What help can Solihull MBC provide?

Solihull MBC's Policy and Spatial Planning Team are able to provide guidance on Neighbourhood Planning and advice on how to get through the process. The extent of support will depend on the amount of enquiries we receive and the resources available, however, the kind of things we might be able to help with are:

- Sharing evidence and information on planning issues
- Helping with public consultation events
- Providing advice on national and local planning policies that the Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order will need to fit with
- Providing advice on which organisations to consult
- Organising the independent examination of the Plan
- Organising the community referendum of the Plan.

6. Who pays for Neighbourhood Planning?

Neighbourhood Planning is led by local communities so it will be down to the Parish or Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum to fund the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Order. There may be funding available from Government to help with this and a list of useful contacts and websites are provided in our Neighbourhood Planning Guidance.

7. What are the costs likely to be?

There is no fixed format or template for Neighbourhood Plans so the costs of the Plan are likely to vary depending on the size and complexity of the Plan. The latest Government estimates show that Plans could take 1-2 years to prepare and cost between £20,000 and £86,000. Community Right to Build Orders could take 6 months to prepare and cost up to £40,000.

8. How much work is involved?

The level of work will largely depend on how much detail the Plan goes into. This is up to you. However, as a minimum you will need to organise and keep a record of consultation events/surveys and complete statutory assessments such as a Habitats Regulations Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal. Solihull MBC will provide technical support and guidance to help you through the process. However, remember, this is a new way of working and it will be a learning curve for all of us involved.

9. Does everyone in the Neighbourhood Area have to agree to the Plan?

Yes. Without support from the majority (more than 50%) of your local community a Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to get through the process.

10. How do Neighbourhood Plans relate to the Solihull Local Plan?

Any Neighbourhood Development Plans will have to be in general conformity with the local planning policies, national policy guidance and legislation.

11. Next Steps?

If you would like to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Order, or would like further information, think firstly about what you would like to achieve in your local area and contact the Policy and Spatial Planning Team on:

- Sarah James, Principal Planning Officer, sajames@solihull.gov.uk 0121 704 8376 or,
- Emma Tinsley-Evans, Principal Planning Officer, etinsley@solihull.gov.uk 0121 704 6428