

A Guide to Preparing Neighbourhood Plans in Camden

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Planning Policy and Implementation
Investment, Place and Opportunity
London Borough of Camden

planningpolicy@camden.gov.uk



1 Introduction to neighbourhood planning

Purpose of this guide

Communities can prepare neighbourhood plans to influence the future of their areas.

The Council has prepared this guide to help communities decide whether to get involved in neighbourhood planning and help them in preparing a plan if they do.

This guide:

- gives an introduction to neighbourhood planning;
- explains the steps communities need to follow when they are preparing a neighbourhood plan;
- set outs the role of the Council;
- gives information on sources of support and help.

Preparing a neighbourhood plan is a substantial undertaking which takes significant time and effort from a community. It is therefore important that communities are aware of the implications of producing a neighbourhood plan before they start work and are clear about what a plan can achieve.

What is a neighbourhood plan?

Neighbourhood plans are planning documents that allow communities to set out their vision for their local area and general planning policies to shape and direct development in their neighbourhood. They are led and written by the local community, not the Council. At the time of writing, there are eight adopted neighbourhood plans in Camden.

Neighbourhood plans can provide detail on how the Council's borough-wide planning policies should be applied in a local area, to reflect the aspirations of the community and local circumstances. Neighbourhood plans have to be in line with the overall strategic approach in Camden's existing adopted plans and national policy.

If a neighbourhood plan is prepared in line with the legal requirements and supported at a local referendum (by more than 50% of those voting)¹, it becomes part of the development plan for the area – the starting point for planning decisions. The Council will also formally adopt (or 'make') the plan.

¹ Different arrangements may apply to the review of an adopted plan – see 'Updating a plan' section

Who can prepare a neighbourhood plan?

All communities can write a neighbourhood plan. However, they must be prepared by a designated neighbourhood forum (see the section on *Setting up a neighbourhood forum* below for further information).

Things to think about before you start

Neighbourhood planning is a significant undertaking in terms of time, effort and resources. Plans have to pass through several statutory stages and meet a number of legal tests before they can be used.

“Leading the production of a neighbourhood plan will require a range of skills, depending on the scope and complexity of the plan. These include both inter-personal skills and specialist skills...”

“Neighbourhood planning involves leadership, project management, organisation, communication, negotiation, analysis and other skills. It also involves compromise, consideration of differing viewpoints and collaborative working. Listening is a key skill. A balanced team of people with different skills should be the aim”

(Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap, Locality)

A neighbourhood plan is likely to be most effective if the community is clear from the start what it wants to achieve and how it is going to go about it.

It may be that what concerns the community are matters that can best be tackled outside of the planning system (for example, licensing or parking). You may wish to discuss this with Council officers before you decide.

Questions communities should ask themselves at an early stage include:

- ➔ What do we want our neighbourhood plan to achieve?
- ➔ What area should our plan cover? What is the boundary of the neighbourhood?
- ➔ Who will be part of our neighbourhood forum?
- ➔ Do we have at least 21 members with at least one in each of the following categories: lives in the area; works in the area; and is a Councillor?
- ➔ How can we make the neighbourhood forum as inclusive and reflective of the local community as possible, involving the full range of people who live, work and do business in the area?
- ➔ How will we engage the wider community while preparing our plan? How can we make sure they will support our plan?
- ➔ Have we got the support and involvement of our local councillors?
- ➔ What skills and support are available from the local community and businesses to help us prepare our neighbourhood plan?
- ➔ How long will the plan take to prepare? What are our timescales?

➔ What resources are available to support preparation of the plan?

In addition to the advice in this guide and the other sources of support and information set out in section 3, you can contact the Council for assistance on neighbourhood planning at planningpolicy@camden.gov.uk

What area can be covered by a neighbourhood plan?

It is for the community to define the area to be covered by their neighbourhood plan, although the Council has a role in checking that the neighbourhood area meets the legal requirements and has local community support. Neighbourhoods can cross the borough boundary into other local authority areas.

Please see the section below on *Setting a neighbourhood area boundary* which explains the process for agreeing a boundary.

What is the Council's role in neighbourhood planning?

Neighbourhood plans are prepared by the community but there are a number of things the Council has a duty to do. These include:

- ➔ providing advice and support to neighbourhood forums;
- ➔ consulting on and making a decision on the boundary of the area to be covered by the neighbourhood forum and neighbourhood plan;
- ➔ consulting on and making a decision on applications to designate neighbourhood forums;
- ➔ consulting on the final draft plan;
- ➔ organising the independent examination of a neighbourhood plan;
- ➔ organising the local referendum into the plan where applicable;
- ➔ formally adopting the neighbourhood plan as part of the borough's development plan; and
- ➔ taking the final neighbourhood plan into account in planning decisions in the area.

This guide forms part of the support the Council is providing for Camden's communities. Other parts of this guidance note give more detail on the Council's role. Alongside our legal duties, the Council is happy to provide informal advice to assist communities throughout the process.

What weight will the Council give to neighbourhood plans in planning decisions?

Neighbourhood plans are statutory planning documents. If successful at referendum², a neighbourhood plan comes into force as part of the statutory development plan for the area alongside the Local Plan and London Plan. The

² Different arrangements may apply to the review of an adopted plan – see 'Updating a plan' section

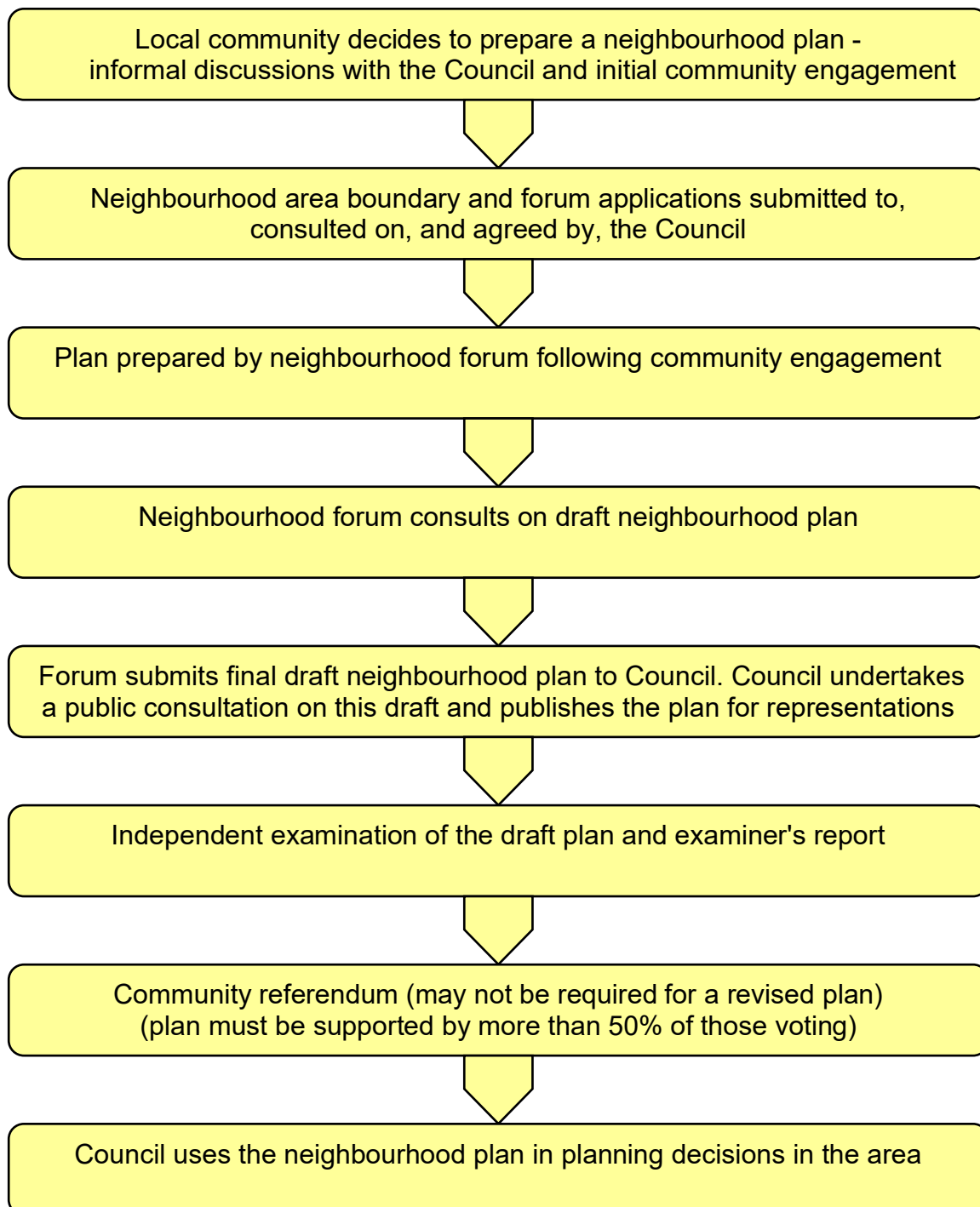
Council must take it into account when it makes decisions on planning applications in that neighbourhood. A neighbourhood plan will therefore have significant weight in decisions by the Council on planning proposals.

A neighbourhood plan will have the same weight as the Camden Local Plan and greater weight than 'supplementary planning documents', such as Camden Planning Guidance, planning briefs, and Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Strategies.

Where there is a conflict between the policies in a neighbourhood plan and non-strategic Council planning policies, the policies in the neighbourhood plan take precedence, unless they are superseded by Council policies that are adopted subsequently.

2 Preparing a neighbourhood plan

The diagram below summarises the stages in preparing a neighbourhood plan. The rest of this section provides more detail on these stages, setting out what communities need to do and the role of the Council.



Defining a neighbourhood area boundary

Setting the boundary of the neighbourhood area will be one of the first tasks for a community intending to produce a neighbourhood plan. The proposed boundary needs to be agreed by the Council, following a period of public consultation.

The Council is happy for applications for a neighbourhood area boundary and neighbourhood forum to be submitted and consulted upon at the same time, which effectively speeds up the process.

Forums are strongly advised to send draft applications to the Council before formally submitting the applications. The Council will check the drafts and if necessary will suggest alterations to ensure that applications meet the relevant regulations before public consultation.

What the community should do?

It is for communities to set the boundary of their neighbourhood. It should be noted that neighbourhood boundaries cannot overlap as, under the regulations, areas can only be part of one neighbourhood area.

As neighbourhoods in London do not always have neat boundaries, we strongly recommend that you engage with all communities inside and outside your boundary when setting your neighbourhood area. If there are any disputes over the boundary you should look to resolve them prior to submitting the applications for your neighbourhood area and forum. The Council also expect forums to undertake to work closely with neighbouring areas in regard to places of mutual interest.

It is important to secure wide support from all parts of the community within a neighbourhood boundary. The Council would not normally support the inclusion of an area if those living there do not wish to be involved.

When the community have started drafting or are beginning to draft their boundary the forum is strongly advised to get in touch with the Council. This will help to ensure that your area application meets all the legal requirements.

An area application must include:

- ➡ a map showing the boundary of the proposed neighbourhood area;
- ➡ a statement that explains why the community consider that their proposed area is appropriate to be a neighbourhood plan area; and
- ➡ a statement that the organisation making the application is, or is capable of being, designated as, a neighbourhood forum (see the section on *Setting up a neighbourhood forum* below).

Cross borough plans

If your neighbourhood boundary crosses into another council's area, the councils will work together to give you support. Decisions relating to a cross boundary plan will need to be taken by both councils.

What the Council will do

When we get an application for a neighbourhood boundary, the Council have to publicise it on our website and bring it to the attention of people who live, work or carry out business in the local area. The Council will also publicise the application in adjoining areas where we think this is appropriate.

Residents and other interested parties will have at least 6 weeks to respond with their representations on the proposed boundary.

When making a decision on an application the Council will ensure it is in line with the legal requirements and take into account comments made during the community consultation.

Prospective neighbourhood forums are strongly recommended to make sure they have support across the whole community and have discussed and agreed their boundary with neighbouring areas before they apply to the Council. This includes engaging with other existing community and residents groups, recognising that they may be able to bring skills, knowledge and expertise to the preparation of a neighbourhood plan.

Setting up a neighbourhood forum

A neighbourhood plan has to be prepared by a body called a 'neighbourhood forum.' So, before a community can formally produce their neighbourhood plan they need to set up a neighbourhood forum for their area. (There can be only one neighbourhood forum for each neighbourhood area)

What the community should do

When you are thinking of setting up your neighbourhood forum you should make sure that it meets the legal standards.

The forum application should include:

- ➡ the name of the proposed forum;
- ➡ the name of, and a map showing, the relevant neighbourhood area;
- ➡ contact details of at least one member of the proposed forum (which will need to be made public);
- ➡ a list of 21 members* - these should live or work in the neighbourhood or be a councillor (at least one person from each of these categories is required)³;
- ➡ a copy of the proposed forum's constitution;

³ Please note that the Council will not publish the full details of address on the website. Full details are confidential and will only be used for the purposes of checking your application against the regulations.

- ➔ a statement saying how the proposed neighbourhood forum meets the legal standards.

The Council attaches great importance to forums being inclusive and representative of the diversity of their communities. In 2023, the Council adopted a [Strategy for Diversity in the Public Realm](#). Amongst its aims is to encourage a wide, diverse, and inclusive audience and participation in all spaces and places that people come together. One of the recommendations is to “*review how neighbourhood forums are established and how to ensure their members are representative of diverse communities*”. We have set out below some key considerations about the steps forums can take to ensure they are representative of the communities living and working in their area.

Membership of the forum

- When preparing the application for the forum to be designated (or redesignated), it is important to understand the existing characteristics of the community and its diversity.
- Compare the population in the neighbourhood area with the membership of the forum and any sub-committees / working groups in place or that you are intending to establish. Are they representative of the local population? The Council can provide ‘best-fit’ demographic information for your area using tables from the 2021 Census.
- A survey of the forum’s membership is a good way of gaining insights on representation. This should be relatively easy to carry out and is likely to be most effective where the objectives are clearly explained, data is collected on an anonymised basis (i.e. identifiable data such as names, addresses and email addresses should not be included) and participants are given the opportunity of opting out of any question. The Council can share a sample survey form.
- When collecting data on diversity, we suggest asking respondents whether they are also a member of the forum’s executive/lead committee to allow under-representation of any groups to be considered.
- A Neighbourhood Plan will apply to the whole of the neighbourhood area (except where policies are stated as applying to a sub area or site). Therefore, a strategic approach should be taken to drawing in residents from different parts of the local area. Are all parts of the neighbourhood area represented? It may be useful for the forum to prepare a map showing the geographical distribution of its membership.

Taking an inclusive approach

- Try to ensure that the forum will bring together people with a range of viewpoints, strengths and talents. People from different parts of the community and areas within it may have a range of views and perspectives about what the plan might seek to address and prioritise. This is also likely to be beneficial in planning the forum’s consultation and engagement activities.

- Give consideration to all groups with protected characteristics. These are set out in the [Equality Act 2010](#). The Council has also identified other groups which can potentially be impacted by decision making. These are foster carers, looked after children/care leavers, low-income households, refugees and asylum seekers, parents, people who are homeless, private rental tenants, single parent households and social housing tenants.
- Consider how the forum currently seeks to involve particular groups as well as make adjustments for people with different levels of knowledge and experience. Where underrepresentation is identified, the forum should set out steps that it intends to take to improve representation. This matter should be addressed both as part of the designation application and reviewed by the main committee at appropriate intervals.
- It is acknowledged that the demographics of neighbourhood areas will vary and people from all protected groups may not be willing to take part. However, the forum should look to ensure that there are suitable ways for people within these parts of the community to become involved. Any actions to promote wider participation should be proportionate and feasible taking account of the resources likely to be available.
- Consider whether there are existing channels the forum can target to engage 'missing' groups. Organisations supporting communities in the neighbourhood area may operate across a larger geographical area, and therefore, engagement outside of the neighbourhood area should be considered. Partnering with voluntary and community organisations can help neighbourhood forums become more diverse and inclusive. [Cindex](#) is the Council's local community information database containing details of around 4,000 organisations and services.
- Local businesses may overlap with or specifically represent people with protected characteristics. It is a requirement that at least one member of the forum should work or carry out business in the local area.

Changes to membership and the constitution

- As designation of the forum will last for a five year period, it is important that the application considers potential changes in the main/executive committee and the wider forum membership over time. This may provide an opportunity to address underrepresentation and is most likely to be successful where underrepresented groups have already been identified (or targets set) and therefore, the membership profile is kept up to date.
- The forum is required to submit a copy of its constitution to the local planning authority as part of its designation application, which is one of the documents made available for public consultation on a designation application.
- The constitution can help to create and maintain an environment in which diversity will be valued, inclusion promoted and equality maintained. It can provide assurance of how diversity and representation of the forum will be addressed and monitored and in the way the neighbourhood plan will be

prepared. For example, it may contain commitments relating to the recruitment of new members/participants and boosting the involvement of underrepresented groups.

- A forum's constitution is an important tool in ensuring sound governance and robust decision making. It can set out general principles around how forum activities are to be conducted, for example it could set out that a range of views and perspectives be actively welcomed and how any barriers to participation will be tackled.

Where forums are able to demonstrate the involvement of people from different groups and different parts of the local area, there will be a greater likelihood that the forum (and area where applicable) will be supported during public consultation on the designation (and area) application.

Consultation on the designation application

When the Council receives an application for a neighbourhood forum, we have to publicise it on our website and to bring it to the attention of people who live, work or carry out business in the local area. The Council will also publicise the application in adjoining areas where this is appropriate.

People will have at least 6 weeks to respond with their representations on the application.

When making a decision on an application, the Council will take into account whether it is in line with the legal requirements set out above, and any views on the application we receive during the consultation. Applications that do not meet the standards will not be approved. The Council attaches particular importance to the need for forums to be representative of their community and that diversity and inclusion will be considered across forum activities. This should be thoroughly explored both as part of the designation application and constitution, responding to the survey findings and census data.

You are able to submit both an area application and forum application at the same time.

There is no standardised application form but we have a checklist (Fact Sheet 1) available [online](#) to help you with this part of the process.

Preparing a neighbourhood plan

When you have your area boundary and neighbourhood forum approved you are ready to get on with preparing your plan. If this has not already happened, at this point, the forum's representatives are strongly encouraged to meet Council officers to discuss the neighbourhood's intentions for their plan and the nature and timing of support from the Council. This line of communication should continue throughout the preparation of your neighbourhood plan.

It is for individual neighbourhoods to decide how they should go about preparing their plan and this is not covered in this guide. However, other organisations have prepared useful advice on how to go about preparing a neighbourhood plan which you may wish to refer to, for example the [Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide](#) prepared by Locality.

Support for neighbourhood forums

The government support scheme for neighbourhood planning administered by Locality has ended, and therefore forums must find alternative sources of funding and technical advice.

It may be possible to use Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds, collected from development in the borough, to contribute towards funding the preparation of neighbourhood plans, subject to local ward councillor support. Please see the Council's [website](#) for further details on CIL funding.

Content of neighbourhood plans

What is in a neighbourhood plan is largely up to the community. The topics covered will reflect the issues the local community consider important. Your plan can include as many or few topics as you want and be as detailed or general as you want. For example, a plan could provide guidance on:

- ➔ what new buildings in the area should look like;
- ➔ what type of development should happen on development sites in the neighbourhood;
- ➔ how buildings and places can support greener and healthier choices.

Neighbourhood plans should be focussed on influencing development, not stopping growth and development from happening in line with national planning policy.

Neighbourhood plans are primarily planning documents so should focus on planning matters. There are no legal restrictions on neighbourhood plans covering non-planning matters, but when the Council assesses planning applications, any non-planning content in neighbourhood plans will not be considered. If your plan does include material on non-planning matters, such as highways or licensing, you may consider incorporating these in an appendix to clearly separate them from the planning element.

Basic conditions, SEA and EqIA

Neighbourhood plans must be assessed by an independent examiner to ensure they meet the legal requirements, known as the 'basic conditions'. It is important to note that if you do not meet relevant statutory requirements your plan will not pass the independent examination and will therefore not be able to proceed to local referendum and adoption.

To meet the basic conditions a neighbourhood plan must:

- ➔ have appropriate regard to national policy (that is, the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and [guidance](#));
- ➔ have 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;
- ➔ have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of any conservation area, it is appropriate to make the order;
- ➔ contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- ➔ be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan of the local area;
- ➔ be compatible with human rights requirements; and
- ➔ be compatible with EU regulations transposed into UK law.

Neighbourhood plans must also be in line with all relevant laws and regulations.

SEA is a process to determine whether plans will have significant environmental impacts. Forums should provide the Council with a draft of their neighbourhood plan at an early stage so it can assess whether an SEA is required. This should happen prior to consultation on the draft plan (Regulation 14).

Whether you need an SEA for your plan will largely depend on the scale and impact of the proposals in your neighbourhood plan. It is more likely that an SEA will be required if a neighbourhood plan includes site allocations specifying the land uses considered to be suitable on a potential development site, the size of development envisaged and any detail about how the site may come forward.

Separate guidance notes on SEA and basic conditions (Fact Sheets 2 and 3) are available on our [neighbourhood planning advice page](#).

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is a tool used to help eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and promote good relations between different groups and communities. An EqIA should start early in the plan making process and be developed in parallel with it. It is used to identify the potential impacts of draft policies, identifying any potential negative effects and will consider how these might be mitigated. The Council will undertake an EqIA of the draft Neighbourhood Plan and share its findings with the Forum.

Building evidence for your plan

You are also likely to need evidence to support your plan (see section 3 below) and may need to demonstrate the policies or proposals in your plan are viable. The evidence requirements for a particular neighbourhood plan will depend on what it says, for example, the issues it covers and the level of detail it contains.

The Council will be happy to give you advice on the preparation of your plan both on content and on meeting the basic conditions. The Council may be able to refer you to evidence prepared by the Council or provide advice on the relationship between neighbourhood plan and Camden planning policies.

Community engagement

As mentioned above, forums should seek to involve as much of the community, and the different elements within it, as possible. People may be reluctant to engage because they feel they may not be welcome, could lack confidence or perhaps find the language and procedures difficult to understand. Individuals may have past experiences of being ignored or excluded about matters affecting their lives.

Take the time early on to understand how people would like to be involved. Does the forum welcome people from different backgrounds? What are you doing to support this?

Census data can provide valuable insights into diversity in the neighbourhood area and the forum's membership. As preparing plans are long-term projects, it is important to track over time whether underrepresented groups are being reached.

Consider if there are any factors that could discourage participation and how these might be overcome, e.g. the timings of meetings may be important. Also, outreach is likely to be critical to awareness and understanding of what you are trying to achieve. There may be community and cultural organisations based outside of the neighbourhood area which are important stakeholders.

The [regulations](#) (Schedule 1 – Consultation Bodies) set out various named consultees that must be consulted on draft plans and other types of organisations and bodies that should be notified. The Council can provide the forum with information relating to this and advise on how these organisations can be consulted.

You are also strongly encouraged to involve landowners where possible. This includes private homeowners whose land may be affected by emerging policies. Land registry searches are likely to be required in some instances.

If your plan includes the allocation of sites for development, or proposed designations such as 'Local Green Spaces', you need to have actively engaged with the landowner to find out their views and whether they agree with what you are proposing.

Publication of consultation draft (Regulation 14)

The initial consultation and engagement with the community will identify the issues the plan should cover and possible ways in which these might be addressed. This will inform the development of a full draft plan. Under the legislation, forums are required to undertake consultation on this draft (sometimes referred to as the 'Regulation 14 draft'). These are the key requirements set out in [regulations](#) (see s.21):

- ➔ publicise the draft with those who live, work or carry on business in your neighbourhood area, letting them know how to respond and details of where and when it can be viewed;
- ➔ give people at least 6 weeks to respond;

- notify other people, organisations, neighbouring councils, and bodies whose interests may be affected by the plan, this should include the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England;
- give consideration to specific engagement with landowners;
- send a copy of the draft to the Council;
- prior to launching the consultation, establish if a SEA is needed (-the Council will be able to provide a formal 'screening opinion').

Council consultation on the draft plan

The forum should consider all comments received during the Regulation 14 consultation (set out above) and determine what amendments to the plan may be necessary.

Having made these changes, the plan, and supporting documentation, should be submitted to the Council, who will carry out a further round of consultation in accordance with statutory requirements. This is the stage prior to independent examination.

What the community should do

When you submit your draft neighbourhood plan to the Council you must include:

- a map or statement setting out the area it covers;
- a consultation statement that:
 - sets out the people and organisations that you consulted about the neighbourhood plan;
 - explains how they were consulted;
 - summarises the main issues that they raised; and
 - describes how you have considered these issues and, where relevant, how you addressed them in your draft neighbourhood plan;
- a statement explaining how your plan meets the legal requirements (basic conditions) - these are set out above under 'preparing a neighbourhood plan'.

What the Council will do

When the Council receives a draft neighbourhood plan, it will publicise this locally, including on our website, to bring the revised plan to the attention of people who live, work or carry out business in the local area. Residents and interested parties, including the Council, can make representations during the consultation period.

The Council will check that the contents of the draft neighbourhood plan and the way that it has been prepared meet the statutory requirements. This includes whether the draft neighbourhood plan:

- has been prepared in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended;
- is consistent with the strategic elements of the Council's planning policies;
- is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); and
- is in line with relevant planning, and other, legislation and regulations.

If the plan meets the requirements, it is ready to be submitted for an independent examination (see below).

Independent examination

When a neighbourhood plan has been consulted upon by the Council, it can then undergo an examination by an independent person. This person should be independent of the forum and the Council; not have any interest in any land affected; and have appropriate qualifications and experience. The Council will appoint an independent examiner in consultation with the neighbourhood forum, in line with the regulations. It is the Council, not the neighbourhood forum, who has to arrange and pay for the examination.

The examination will generally be carried out through written representations, although the examiner could hold a hearing if they decide one is needed.

The examiner will determine that the neighbourhood plan meets the required standards by being in line with the basic conditions and other legal requirements (see above), they will also consider:

- comments, supporting or objecting, made during consultation on the plan;
- whether the plan is consistent with any neighbourhood plans for adjacent areas; and
- whether the area for the referendum should extend beyond the neighbourhood area.

The appointed examiner is likely to send questions to the forum and Council about the draft plan policies, particularly where there are objections. They may also ask the Council and forum to prepare a 'statement of common ground', which can propose modifications to address issues raised in representations.

It is therefore important to bear in mind that the forum will need to provide responses during the examination and the documents will be published as part of the 'examination library' on the Council's website.

Report of the examiner

After the examination, the examiner will produce a report which will recommend that the neighbourhood plan should either:

- go forward to a referendum;
- go forward to a referendum, subject to recommended amendments; or
- not go forward to a referendum.

The Council and neighbourhood forum will then consider how to proceed; for example, what modifications to make to the plan in response to the examiner's recommendations. The Council is required to publish a 'Decision Statement' confirming how each of the recommended modifications are addressed.

If the examiner recommends that the plan should go forward to a referendum, they can recommend that the referendum extends beyond the neighbourhood area, although this is unusual. If an extension of the area covered by the

referendum is recommended the Council is required to make a decision on the referendum area informed by the independent examiner.

If the examiner finds that the plan should not go forward to a referendum they must explain the reason for this in the report; for example, because particular a legal requirement has not been met.

Referendum on using the plan

To ensure that the local community supports a neighbourhood plan and has the final say on whether it comes into force, plans passed at examination will normally be subject to a referendum in the neighbourhood area.

The referendum is organised and paid for by the Council. People living in the referendum area who are registered to vote in local elections will be entitled to vote.

Individuals who carry out business in the neighbourhood area do not have a right to vote on the neighbourhood plan, unless the neighbourhood was designated as a business area (this is defined at the outset of the process, at the area and forum application stage). For an area to be designated as a business area it would have to be dominated by business interests. In business areas there will be two referendums, one for those living in the area and the other for those carrying out business in the area.

It is the Council's duty to publicise the referendum on the Council's website 28 days prior to the referendum and make available an information statement and the 'specified documents'.

The information statement should specify:

- that a referendum will be held and the date of the referendum;
- the question to be asked;
- a map of the referendum area and neighbourhood area if not identical;
- a description of those entitled to vote;
- the referendum expenses limit applicable (this is the amount the neighbourhood forum can spend on campaigning during the referendum period) and the number of people identified as entitled to vote on which the limit was calculated;
- that the referendum will be conducted in accordance with procedures similar to those for local government election; and
- the address and times a copy of the 'specified documents' can be inspected.

The 'specified documents' are:

- the draft neighbourhood plan;
- the independent examiners report;
- a summary of representations submitted to the examiner;
- a statement that the Council is satisfied that the plan meets the basic conditions; and

- ➔ general information on town and country planning and neighbourhood planning, to ensure voters have sufficient knowledge to make an informed decision.

If more than 50 per cent of people voting in the referendum support the plan, then the Council must use it in its planning decisions in the area alongside its other adopted plans (and the London Plan) as the basis for decisions on planning applications in the neighbourhood area. If less than 50 per cent of the people voting support the plan, then the Council cannot use the plan in its decisions.

The Council's Election Services team will lead on arranging a local referendum and will engage with the forum directly.

Updating a neighbourhood plan

There is no requirement for neighbourhood plans to be reviewed. However, it should be borne in mind that where plans have been in place for a long period of time, it may become increasingly out of date (e.g. in terms of conformity with national and local policies, or the evidence it is based on) and therefore may be given less weight in planning decisions.

Where there is conflict between an adopted local plan and neighbourhood plan policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that the most recently adopted policy should take preference. The Council can provide advice on whether it considers policies in an adopted neighbourhood plan to be up-to-date.

The forum may wish to make relatively focussed changes to update a neighbourhood plan. However, public consultation and engagement could identify the need for a more comprehensive set of changes. Unless only minor changes ('non-material alterations') are being sought, such as factual updates or corrections to typographical errors, the forum will need to follow the same steps for a 'review' as when the neighbourhood plan was originally prepared. This includes two formal stages of public consultation (one undertaken by the forum at Regulation 14) and an independent examination. The Council will also need to undertake an SEA screening and prepare an EqIA.

Where an existing plan is being reviewed, the examiner will also recommend whether the revised plan should be subject to a referendum. This will be based on a judgement as to whether the proposed changes alter the nature of the plan. The Council's and forum's views on this matter will also be sought.

It is feasible to undertake a plan review for a revised area, however, this could give rise to practical difficulties. There may already be a forum and/or extant plan for any area you may be looking to include (it is not possible to have two forums for the same area). Furthermore, as the adopted plan will have been in force for a number of years, local residents and decision makers are likely to have gained familiarity with the existing area's geography. Altering the area is also likely to have implications for how effectively the forum represents people

living in different parts of the neighbourhood area. The Council can provide further advice on this matter.

For a revised plan to address a wider area, there would be a need for a new neighbourhood area and a new forum to be designated before the forum embarks on the plan making stages set out in this document.

3 Further support and information

Support from the Council

In addition to this guide, the following sources of support and advice on neighbourhood planning are also available from the Council:

Camden Neighbourhood Planning webpage

Our neighbourhood planning webpage is intended to be a first stop for information and includes general advice and guidance on neighbourhood planning and links to other documents and sources of information. You can access it using this [link](#).

Government National Planning Practice Guidance

As part of its suite of online guidance documents, a specific section addresses neighbourhood planning. It provides further detail on how each of the plan making stages should be undertaken and how neighbourhood plans are tested. This [link](#) opens up the section.

Neighbourhood planning support

We aim to provide support and advice on setting up a neighbourhood forum and preparing a plan and to answer any questions you have on neighbourhood planning. If you have any questions or would like to discuss neighbourhood planning with us, then please email the Planning Policy Team on planningpolicy@camden.gov.uk

Maps

Mapping can provide a useful context to your forum. Maps can be created using Geographical Information System (GIS) applications. There are many free GIS applications available, these include but are not limited to:

[QGIS](#)

[Google My Maps](#)

[Atlas](#)

Camden recommend using the Ordnance Survey base map as the authoritative base map for the country. There are a number of free mapping products available on their [Open Data site](#).

Camden publishes a range of mapping data on the [Camden Open Data site](#), including some boundaries and planning data. Other useful data may also be available through the [London Data Store](#).

Under certain circumstances Camden can grant access to groups working with the council to other Ordnance Survey data through the [Public Sector Geospatial Agreement](#). Please contact us if this is of interest.

Evidence and information

The Council holds a large amount of information that can be used as background information and evidence for neighbourhood forums and plans.

This includes:

- ➔ ward profiles and local area census information - you can access these from the Camden data site [here](#).
- ➔ studies carried out to provide evidence for the Council's planning documents. Evidence to support the adopted Camden Local Plan 2017 is [here](#) and evidence for the draft new Local Plan is [here](#).

We can also provide 'best fit' census data cut to the neighbourhood area – please contact us if you would like access to this.

CINDEX

Camden's local community information database containing details of around 4,000 organisations and service; clubs and societies, council departments and services, community groups and associations, charities, political campaigns, statutory and government agencies. You can access the database [here](#).

Other sources of information

You can also find further information and advice on neighbourhood planning from the following sources:

Locality

They have prepared a variety of resources and best practice advice, including the neighbourhood planning 'roadmap'. It is available [here](#).

Statutory bodies

These provide a range of guidance and tools to assist neighbourhood planning groups:

Historic England provide sources of information on the historic environment, [here](#). There is also a [micro site](#) on neighbourhood planning.

Natural England have prepared advice on incorporating Green Infrastructure into neighbourhood plans, [here](#).

The Environment Agency and Natural England have published a neighbourhood planning [advice note](#).

Neighbourhood Planners London

Historic information about neighbourhood planning in London is available at this [website](#). At the time of writing, their activity was on hold awaiting further funding.

Placecheck

This is an established tool that can be used by communities as part of their community engagement and evidence gathering. Their website is [here](#).

Legislation and Regulations

The rules and regulations that need to be followed are set out in the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. You can see these at the following links:

- ➔ [Localism Act 2011 schedule 9](#)
- ➔ [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#)
- ➔ [Neighbourhood Planning \(Referendum\) Regulations 2012](#)
- ➔ [The Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) and Development Management Procedure \(Amendment\) Regulations 2017](#) (addresses updating an adopted neighbourhood plan)