

Introduction

This guide is aimed at communities who are considering the production of a neighbourhood plan. This guidance note is not exhaustive and further guidance can be found online at the [Planning Practice Guidance](#) pages.

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning was introduced as part of the Localism Act 2011, enabling communities to influence and shape development. Neighbourhood plans are spatial, land-use planning documents, and should be about local rather than strategic issues. A plan could cover local issues such as rooflights, basement development, protection of green spaces or other planning related issues.

Neighbourhood plans are part of the positive approach to development and must be developed in accordance with national, regional and local planning policy. Once a neighbourhood plan is adopted, it will become part of the [Local Development Framework](#) for the borough. In order for a neighbourhood plan to be adopted, it must be assessed by an Independent Examiner and finally through a Referendum.

Neighbourhood Planning Process

There are a number stages that a neighbourhood plan must undertake, this guidance note will briefly cover the main stages, the key areas of work and the main responsibilities. The key milestones are:

Area Designation

In order to undertake neighbourhood planning in Hammersmith & Fulham (H&F), the community will need to firstly agree and propose the boundary for the neighbourhood area to which the plan will relate. Early dialogue with the Council and any groups interested in undertaking a neighbourhood plan is encouraged; details on how and who to contact are contained at the bottom of this note.

Once this has been submitted to the Council, the proposed area boundary will be consulted upon. Following this, the Council will decide whether to approve or decline the proposed area designation boundary. The following considerations may be included in determining any area designations:

- The existing settlement/administrative boundaries and/or areas of planned expansion;
- The relationship with social and community facilities and services;
- Where community organisations/networks operate;

- The physical appearance or characteristics of the neighbourhood;
- Whether the area forms part of, or all of a coherent estate for businesses or residents;
- The impact of infrastructure or physical features;
- The natural setting or features in an area;
- The size of the population (living and working) in the area;
- Assessment against the LBHF Statement of Community Involvement;
- The methodology and assessment of the proposed area boundary;
- Whether there are any existing neighbourhood plan boundaries and conflicts with those;
- Any comments received during the consultation.

Information on what should be submitted for an area designation nomination and deadlines for deciding any nominations, please see the Regulations:

- [Neighbourhood Planning 2015 Regulations \(Amendments\)](#)
- [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#)

Applications for area designation and neighbourhood forums can be consulted upon at the same time.

Neighbourhood forum status

As there are no Parish and Town Councils in Hammersmith & Fulham a neighbourhood plan will need to be prepared by a neighbourhood forum. Any neighbourhood forum must demonstrate that it is capable of meeting the criteria set out at in [section 61F\(5\) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#).

The neighbourhood forum will ultimately be the group organising, gathering evidence, consulting and writing the neighbourhood plan. H&F will provide technical assistance and support as and when is necessary. See the full list of H&F's responsibilities, in the section below.

For further information about setting up a neighbourhood forum, agreeing the boundary of a neighbourhood area and preparing a neighbourhood plan, please see the following guides:

- [Neighbourhood Planning Roadmap Guide and Worksheets](#)
- [A Quick Guide to Neighbourhood Planning](#)

Producing a neighbourhood plan

Once a neighbourhood area boundary and neighbourhood forum have been agreed and designated by the Council, a community can then begin to prepare their neighbourhood plan.

Any neighbourhood plan must be developed in accordance with local, regional and national planning policy. It is recommended that the neighbourhood forum familiarises themselves with these documents. Neighbourhood plans are not intended to be a duplication of existing policy and are most effective where they add greater detail and local insight. In order to understand what neighbourhood plans can cover and guidance on evidence gathering, consultation and other matters, it is recommended to refer to the following documents:

- [Writing Planning Policies](#)
- ['My Community' Resources](#)

Hammersmith & Fulham's role

The council has a duty to provide technical advice and support to those producing a neighbourhood plan. It also has to:

- agree the boundary of the area to be covered by a neighbourhood plan;
- agree the composition of, and formally designate, neighbourhood forums and neighbourhood areas;
- organise the examination of the neighbourhood plan by an independent examiner and the referendum;
- adopt the neighbourhood plan and bring it into force.

Consultation

Consultation and engagement with the local community is vital to seeking to find consensus and developing local input into a spatial strategy. There are a number of rounds of consultation as per the Regulations, these are:

- Area designation – arranged by H&F;
- Of a complete draft version (Reg. 14) – arranged by the Forum;
- The examination draft of the NP – arranged by H&F.

The above are formal rounds of consultation, whereby the community (residents and workers in the area) and the statutory consultees will be invited to comment on a draft plan. However, it is advised that the forum engage and consult the local community from an early stage and throughout the process. Discussion, consultation

and engagement are part of the gathering evidence and developing the plan. Further guidance on methods of consultation can be found here:

- [Consultation Advice \(pdf\)](#)

The forum is expected to produce a 'Consultation Statement' to identify how the community have been consulted, and how their views have been taken into consideration. It can be helpful to create a schedule of all comments that have been received during the Reg. 14 consultation in particular, to include whether any changes have been made to the document as a result of the comments, and if not, a description of why. This is important to ensure the process is transparent and there is a level of accountability.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Where the neighbourhood plan is considered to have a significant environmental impact, an SEA may be required. The considerations as to whether the neighbourhood plans require a whole or partial SEA need to be dealt with throughout the development of the plan.

In order to deal with this, any forums are encouraged to consider any potential environmental impacts any proposals or policies may have. Alternative options, mitigation impacts should also be considered. Early engagement with the relevant statutory consultees is also encouraged.

For full details on how to deal with the SEA, please refer to the following guidance:

- [SEA Requirements](#)

Submission of a NP

Once a neighbourhood plan draft has been produced following the Reg. 14 consultation (see above), the forum can submit the draft Plan to Hammersmith & Fulham. When submitting the draft neighbourhood plan, the following documents must also be provided:

- A map or statement which identifies the area to which the proposed neighbourhood development plan relates;
- a consultation statement (see below);
- the proposed neighbourhood development plan; and
- a statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood development plan meets the requirements of paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act.

A “consultation statement” means a document which—

- contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;
- explains how they were consulted;
- summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
- describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant,
- addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.

A further round of consultation will then be undertaken by the Council, as per the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

Examination

Once an Independent Examiner has been appointed, the Examiner will assess the neighbourhood plan against the ‘Basic Conditions’. These are set out within the Regulations.

The Examiner will produce a report and will identify whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions. The Examiner may propose a number of modifications and changes to the plan either to ensure the plan does meet the Basic Conditions. Based on the Examiner’s report, the Council will come to a view as to whether the plan is considered to meet the Basic Conditions and should proceed to Referendum, or not.

Further information on the examination and process, can be found here:

- [Examination](#)

Referendum

If the NP is considered to meet the Basic Conditions, it will proceed to Referendum. The Referendum area is likely to be the same as the neighbourhood plan area boundary, which gives all residents located in the area boundary the right to vote on whether the plan should be adopted by H&F Council and used alongside the Development Plan documents to assess planning applications. As part of the Examiner’s report, the Examiner may recommend the Referendum area to cover a wider area than the area boundary, where the plan’s policies and proposals are likely to impact upon a wider area.

H&F Council will organise, set up and pay for the Referendum. The Referendum will be organised as per the [Neighbourhood Planning Referendum Regulations](#).

The neighbourhood plan will be adopted as long as over 50% of the votes are in favour of the neighbourhood plan.

Funding and further assistance

Central Government has provided finance for communities producing a neighbourhood plan. Neighbourhood forums can apply directly to 'Locality' for grants to support the neighbourhood planning process. Also through Locality, neighbourhood forums can apply for technical support and assistance. For further information, please view the [MyCommunity Website](#).

Further Contact

Local Development Plans

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