

General Information Statement on Neighbourhood Planning, Town and Country Planning, and the Referendum

1. The Planning System

The planning system in England manages the use and development of land and buildings to create sustainable places to live and work. It ensures that development is appropriately located and designed, balancing environmental, social, and economic needs.

The system has two main components:

- Plan Making: Local authorities prepare development plans that set out policies and proposals for land use over a period of time.
- Development Management: Planning applications are assessed and decided based on these plans and other material considerations. (Some types of development are permitted without planning permission under national regulations. For those requiring permission, decisions are made by the local planning authority).

2. National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England. It promotes sustainable development and guides local authorities in plan-making and decision-taking. The NPPF is supported by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which provides detailed advice on specific planning topics, including neighbourhood planning.

3. Local Plans

Local Plans are prepared by local planning authorities and form part of the statutory development plan. They set out strategic priorities and policies for housing, employment, infrastructure, and environmental protection. Planning decisions must generally align with the Local Plan unless material considerations suggest otherwise.

4. Neighbourhood Planning

Introduced by the Localism Act 2011, neighbourhood planning empowers communities to shape development in their area. A Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) can:

- Set out local planning policies.
- Influence the type, design, and location of development.
- Become part of the statutory development plan once adopted.

To be adopted, a neighbourhood plan must:

- Be prepared by a qualifying body (e.g. parish council or neighbourhood forum).
- Pass independent examination.
- Receive majority support in a local referendum.

5. The Referendum

A referendum is held to decide whether a neighbourhood plan should be adopted. All eligible voters in the designated neighbourhood area can vote. If more than 50% vote "Yes," the local planning authority must formally "make" the plan, giving it full legal weight in planning decisions.