

Update to Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit

To:

Cllr Katie Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure
Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee, 4 November 2024

Report by:

Stephen Kelly, Joint Director for Planning
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Wards affected:

All

Director Approval: Stephen Kelly Joint Director for Planning confirms that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to the Executive Councillor for decision.

1.	Recommendations
1.1	<p>It is recommended that the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Agrees the updated version of the Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit (2024) (attached at Appendix 1) for use in supporting communities producing neighbourhood plans, and for publication on the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website. B) Agrees that any future minor amendments that are required to the Toolkit to keep it up to date, such as updates to links, legislation and other guidance, be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, and agrees that any material amendments that are required to keep the Toolkit up to date be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure, and the Lead Member for Planning at South Cambridgeshire District Council.

2.	Purpose and reason for the report
2.1	<p>This updated Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit has been prepared by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (on behalf of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council) to support and guide parish councils and neighbourhood forums (and any of their sub-groups) through the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. It has been designed to explain the stages involved and sets out the help that is available from the two Local Planning Authorities.</p> <p>An initial Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit was adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council in 2018, and has been used informally to support and guide neighbourhood forums in Cambridge through the preparation of a neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>The updated Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit has been updated to cover neighbourhood planning across Greater Cambridge, to reflect national and local changes and requirements, and to provide up to date guidance that is effective in supporting neighbourhood forums and parish councils. The updated version of the Toolkit has been amended to be more user friendly with the Toolkit now all being in one document with accompanying appendices. The document has been structured into sections with clear headings that ensure that each stage of the plan-making process is readily accessible to all users.</p> <p>This report seeks approval to publish the updated Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit to the Greater Cambridge Planning website and to use the Toolkit when supporting our local communities in preparing neighbourhood plans.</p>
3.	Alternative options considered
3.1	<p>When drafting the updated version of the Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit, the Local Planning Authority considered keeping the existing Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit that takes the form of several individual guidance notes. The Local Planning Authority also considered creating two individual Toolkits for each Local Authority, but determined that this would not be efficient due to the significant overlap of the support and guidance across the City and South Cambridgeshire. It was determined that having one overarching Toolkit containing all relevant guidance for neighbourhood forums and parish councils would be more effective for both Councils' in supporting groups, and that the groups would be able to read the updated Toolkit more efficiently through each stage.</p>
4.	Background and key issues
4.1	The Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to support neighbourhood planning

	<p>groups in preparing a neighbourhood plan. The Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit was originally produced and adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council in 2018 but has been updated to reflect the needs of neighbourhood forums preparing neighbourhood plans in Cambridge City.</p> <p>Since the Toolkit was first adopted in 2018 several of the links contained in the guidance were outdated and therefore did not provide local communities with the relevant information on the plan-making process. The updated Toolkit now contains up to date national and local guidance on neighbourhood planning and reflects the recently updated Statement of Community Involvement that sets out how the Council's will support neighbourhood forums and parish councils as they progress through the plan-making process.</p> <p>The Toolkit is designed to help local communities decide whether they want to get involved in creating a neighbourhood plan and if they do, how to go about preparing a neighbourhood plan. The Toolkit takes the form of a directory so that users can find relevant information in each chapter of the Toolkit as and when necessary. It follows the chronological order of the stages of plan-making and also sets out best practice examples, themes and topic guidance, and appendices with more information. The Toolkit also sets out 'Top Tips' throughout the document to support the smooth running of preparing a neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>The Toolkit will be highlighted to local communities looking to prepare a neighbourhood plan when they first enquire with the Councils' and will be referred to at any stage of the plan-making process. The updates to the Toolkit will ensure that neighbourhood forums and parish councils receive the most support they can through the plan-making process and will reduce the amount of dialogue needed between the Councils' and neighbourhood forums or parish councils as a greater number of requests and enquiries can be self-served through using the Toolkit.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Corporate plan</p>
<p>5.1</p>	<p>The updated Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit aligns with the visions and strategies as set out in the Cambridge City Council Corporate plan 2022-2027: Corporate plan 2022-27: our priorities for Cambridge - Cambridge City Council</p> <p>A neighbourhood plan can implement a range of policies that are shaped around the local community's vision and objectives for their local area. The updated Toolkit supports neighbourhood forums in generating policies that meet the intended outcomes and that respond to the Council's strategies. The Toolkit sets out guidance on how policies can address the local context and how to create policies related to a range of themes such as housing, employment, community uses, and the design of new development. A</p>

	<p>neighbourhood plan can identify suitable sites for development, key areas for protection such as historic buildings and local green spaces, and can provide local context to support existing planning policy documents such as a Local Plan.</p> <p>As a result, the Toolkit supports communities in delivering policies aligned with the Council's vision and strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 1: Leading Cambridge's response to climate change and biodiversity emergencies • Priority 2: Tackling Poverty and Inequality and helping people in the greatest need • Priority 3: Building a new generation of council and affordable homes and reducing homelessness <p>Updating the Toolkit has positive implications for the Council as the guidance can be more effectively used by planning groups. Officers are currently having to regularly advise neighbourhood planning groups and provide guidance that is already available in the public domain or within the adopted Toolkit from 2018 that is not very user friendly. With the updated Toolkit and its improved guidance and specific information for neighbourhood forums preparing Neighbourhood Plans within Cambridge, this will transform the way we work, make us more effective in delivering support to neighbourhood forums, and therefore deliver Priority 4: Modernising the council to lead a greener city that is fair for all.</p>
6.	Consultation, engagement and communication
6.1	<p>As the updated Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit is a revision to an existing document and does not set any policy, a public consultation is deemed not to be required. This also reflects the previous approach taken of the existing Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit. Feedback, best practice examples and other requests from neighbourhood planning groups that we have received on the currently adopted Toolkit have been considered and reflected in the updated Toolkit.</p>
7.	Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact
7.1	<p>The updated Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit will ensure that neighbourhood forums will receive effective guidance at any stage of the plan-making process. The document is broken down in order of the plan-making process and offers neighbourhood forums best practice examples and further external and internal guidance to ensure that they can undertake the plan making process effectively.</p> <p>The document outlines the purpose of neighbourhood planning and its intended outcomes and will allow neighbourhood forums to self-serve when producing a plan, therefore reducing officer time spent responding to neighbourhood planning enquiries via</p>

	<p>email or telephone.</p> <p>By providing improved guidance to neighbourhood forums this will support and encourage the preparation of more neighbourhood plans which will allow communities to have greater say in shaping the future of their communities.</p>
8.	Implications
8.1	Relevant risks
	<p>In the writing of this report consideration was given to the following implications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Financial B) Legal C) Equality and socio-economic implications D) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications E) Procurement Implications F) Community Safety Implications <p>All of the implications listed have been considered below.</p>
	Financial Implications
8.2	<p>The updated Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit reflects the financial support that will be provided by the Council, as agreed within the recently adopted Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>The updated Toolkit sets out the number of maps the LPA will provide free of charge to neighbourhood forums preparing Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>There are no fraud risks identified as a result of this report.</p>
	Legal Implications
8.3	There are no legal implications arising from the report.
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
8.4	There are no specific equalities and socio-economic implications of this review. An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken for this update, but an Equality Impact Assessment is carried out by neighbourhood forums as part of the plan making process.

	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
8.5	The Toolkit supports local communities in preparing neighbourhood plans that may consider local issues such as climate change and as a result set out policies that will mitigate climate change and negative environmental factors.
	Procurement Implications
8.6	There are no procurement implications arising from the report.
	Community Safety Implications
8.7	There are no direct community safety implications arising from the report.
	Communication, Consultation & Engagement
8.8	Consideration was given to how the Council presents the material in the Toolkit to ensure that it effectively enables local communities at any stage of the neighbourhood plan making process to use the document as a means of support.
9.	<p>Background documents</p> <p>The adopted Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit (2018) includes 15 individual guidance notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction (adopted February 2018) 2. Is a neighbourhood plan the right tool for your Parish? (adopted December 2017) 3. Getting started (adopted December 2017) 4. Getting a neighbourhood area designated (adopted December 2017) 5. Developing a vision and objectives (adopted December 2017) 6. Generating options (adopted December 2017) 7. Writing planning policies (adopted February 2018) 8. Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) (adopted February 2018) 9. Sources of evidence and information (adopted December 2017) 10. Community engagement and Neighbourhood Plans (adopted December 2017) 11. What are the basic conditions and how to meet them (adopted December 2017) 12. Strategic policies (adopted December 2017) 13. Site assessment (adopted December 2017) 14. Maps for Neighbourhood Plans (adopted December 2017), updated Appendix 2 (Print Costs) (published December 2019) 15. Affordable housing (adopted December 2017)

10.	Appendices
10.1	Appendix A: Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit (2024)
	<p>To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact</p> <p>Lizzie Wood - Principal Planning Policy Officer Telephone: 07593 421045 lizzie.wood@greatercambridgeplanning.org</p> <p>Terry De Sousa - Planning Policy and Strategy Team Leader Telephone: 07563 421289 terry.desousa@greatercambridgeplanning.org</p>