
Introduction

The Government has created new powers for local communities to prepare plans and strategies for development in their area called Neighbourhood Plans. Where Parish or Town Councils exist, plans will be led by the Parish / Town Council responsible for the area. However, there are also opportunities for local communities who are not represented by a Parish or Town Council to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, by firstly developing a Neighbourhood Forum, or local group, who will represent the area then undertake a similar role as a Town or Parish Council in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

This document sets the stages required by applicants in the formation of a Neighbourhood Plan and sets out what Doncaster Council aim to do in support at each stage. It also contains sources of advice and contact details for community groups interested in preparing Neighbourhood Plans. The document should be read in conjunction with the resource material and advice set out on Doncaster Council’s Neighbourhood Planning web page:

http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplans

At the time of writing, there are still parts of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations that are unknown. Therefore this guidance document, the proposed process and the commitments made by the council to support applicants could be subject to change.

In the Doncaster Borough there are 41 Parish or Town Councils which cover approximately 11 of the 15 Towns defined in the LDF Core Strategy and 33 of 48 defined larger villages though there is overlap between Parish/Town Council areas and the defined villages. Only areas non-parished areas (those not covered by Parish or Town Councils) are allowed to set up neighbourhood forums.

There are 5 main stages to preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for a Parish/Town Council and 6 for non-parished areas. These are:

A. Neighbourhood area designation
B. Designation of Neighbourhood Forum*
C. Plan preparation
D. Independent checking
E. Community referendum
F. Adoption

(*only in non-parished areas)

If you are considering undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan or for general enquiries on Neighbourhood Planning please contact the Built Environment Team.

E-mail: LDF@doncaster.gov.uk
Telephone: 01302 735500
Address: Planning Department, 2nd Floor, Danum House, St. Sepulchre Gate, Doncaster DN1 1UB
Process Guide

Pre-plan stage
In the first instance Town / Parish Councils or local groups interested in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan are advised to speak to the Local Planning Authority, or planning team at Doncaster Council who have a duty to support local groups in preparing their plans and have a statutory role in ensuring they are complementary to the Councils wider plans for the Borough. This communication with the Council planning team is important as it may be that there are alternative, or more effective, methods for local communities to shape the future of their area, without embarking on what could be a long and resource intensive process in producing a neighbourhood plan (for example by becoming involved in the Local Development Framework plans for Doncaster being prepared by the Council).

When deciding whether or not to undertake Neighbourhood Planning for your area, it is useful to think about the following key questions and discuss these with the planning officers:

- What are the local issues in your area, or put another way, what is it you are trying to achieve from a Neighbourhood Plan?
- Is a Neighbourhood Plan the best tool for the job, or are there other methods of trying to achieve your aims?
- Do you have the necessary capacity, commitment and resources to undertake a Neighbourhood Planning exercise?
- What support do you think you will need, by whom, and when in the process?

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<th>Neighbourhood Planning Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application stages for Parish/ Town Councils and Neighbourhood Forums</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-plan stage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary, but important stage where:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Parish/Town Councils and potential neighbourhood forums thinking of starting a plan contact the council for pre-advice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Information on the intention to produce a Neighbourhood Plan is made public e.g. through a local newsletter. This is in order to gain early community support and buy in.</td>
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Stage A- Neighbourhood Area Designation

Following early discussions with the council the Town / Parish Council submits an application to designate a neighbourhood area, to which the Neighbourhood Plan will relate. The table below sets out the key requirements of the application. Usually for Town and Parish Councils this neighbourhood area will follow the parish council boundary. The council will check the information submitted and publicise the application for 6 weeks as detailed in the table below. If the council anticipate that the application is unlikely to be successful, we may give applicants the opportunity to amend the application prior to consideration by planning committee, however this will be determined on a case by case basis. The application and any associated responses will be published on the Council website via Public Access.

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Application stages for Parish/ Town Councils and Neighbourhood Forums</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage A – Neighbourhood Area Designation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Council receives application from Parish/Town Council or a neighbourhood forum to designate a neighbourhood area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This must include:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A map identifying the area e.g. 1:10000 scale with a red line around the area for consideration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement as to why the area is appropriate for example, if it is the same as the Parish/Town Council boundary will the plan cover all areas, is it an area with particular development pressure or an area in need of improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement as to who the council or forum is and how they are capable of being a qualifying body It must define the group as a relevant body under section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In the case of Parish/Town Councils this is relatively straightforward but it may be useful to mention if it is a particular sub-group of the Town Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood forums must have a membership of at least 21 and a proportion of members must live/work in the area (please refer to ‘section 61F of the 1990 Act’ on Neighbourhood Forum Designation)</td>
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| | • Report to Planning Committee with recommendation to approve, refuse or
suggestion changes to plan based on Doncaster’s Local Plan, relevant parts of the 1990 Act as updated, Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and responses received as part of the publicity.

Publicise designation (approval):
- Notify applicants of decision, then;
- Publish on our website:
  - name of the neighbourhood area
  - map of area
  - name of the designated body e.g. Parish/Town Council or neighbourhood forum.

or

Publicise refusal:
- Notify applicants of decision, then;
- Compile ‘The decision document’ detailing the reasons for refusal.
- Publish on website and give details of how to view the document.

Stage B – Designating a Neighbourhood Forum

When an application to designate a neighbourhood area is made by a group which is not a Parish or Town Council and does not cover a parished area, the group will also have to apply for Neighbourhood Forum status. This process needs to run parallel to an application to designate an area when the application is not being made by a Parish or Town Council. The council will check that the area is not already covered by a Parish or Town Council and where appropriate suggest amendments.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Application stages for Parish/ Town Councils and Neighbourhood Forums</th>
<th>What the council will do</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stage B – Designating a Neighbourhood Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>When an application to designate a neighbourhood area is made by a group which is not a Parish or Town Council the group will also have to apply for Neighbourhood Forum status. They will need to submit:</td>
<td>On receipt of application to designate a forum, the council will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The name of the proposed forum</td>
<td>- check it does not cover an area already covered by a Parish or Town Council and if it does refuse, or if not go on to;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Copy of their written constitution</td>
<td>Publicise alongside the area application, specifically:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Name and map of their neighbourhood area</td>
<td>- advertise for at least 6 weeks receipt of forum application on our website giving the name of the group and the area proposed to represent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contact details of at least one member</td>
<td>- make people aware that if the forum is designated no other group can be designated for the area until the forum is withdrawn or expires</td>
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<tr>
<td>- A statement of how they meet the conditions of section 61F(5) of the 1990 Act as follows:</td>
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</table>
A local planning authority may designate an organisation or body as a neighbourhood forum if the authority are satisfied that it meets the following conditions:

(a) it is established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of an area that consists of or includes the neighbourhood area concerned (whether or not it is also established for the express purpose of promoting the carrying on of trades, professions or other businesses in such an area),

(b) its membership is open to—
   (i) individuals who live in the neighbourhood area concerned,
   (ii) individuals who work there (whether for businesses carried on there or otherwise), and
   (iii) individuals who are elected members of a county council, district council or London borough council any of whose area falls within the neighbourhood area concerned,

(c) its membership includes a minimum of 21 individuals each of whom—
   (i) lives in the neighbourhood area concerned,
   (ii) works there (whether for a business carried on there or otherwise), or
   (iii) is an elected member of a county council, district council or London borough council any of whose area falls within the neighbourhood area concerned,

(d) it has a written constitution, and

(e) such other conditions as may be prescribed.

It can be seen in full here: 1990 Act amendments

- invite comments/representations from community, businesses and elsewhere, giving details of timescales and methods for responses
- notify neighbouring Parish/Town Councils
- notify Area Managers, Local Ward Members and neighbouring Parish Councils.

Responses:
- Compile list of responses to be considered when making decision to designate

Decision:
- Officers will report to Planning Committee with recommendation to approve, refuse or suggest changes to plan
- notify applicants of decision or changes to be made, then;

Re-advertise any changes for 6 weeks following above procedure

or

Publicise approval (designation):
- Publish on our website:
  - name of the neighbourhood forum
  - copy of their constitution
  - name of the neighbourhood area
  - contact details for at least one member

or

Publicise refusal:
- Compile a ‘refusal statement’ detailing the reasons for refusal.
- Publish on website and give details of how to view the statement.

Stage C - Plan Preparation

Once a Town / Parish Council or neighbourhood forum has agreed to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan, has established a representative group and has agreed the boundary of the area with the council’s planning team, the group can start preparing the Neighbourhood Plan. The method by which the plan is written is at the Parish/Town Council or neighbourhood forums discretion and will be influenced by their aims and objectives. We actively encourage groups forming a plan to get in touch with the council again for help, advice and support prior to commencing this stage. The neighbourhood plans may be text based, or they might include photos, sketches, maps and diagrams to explain the ideas behind the plan. Usually planning documents follow a similar format which can include:
• A description of the area, its strengths, weaknesses, issues and opportunities
• A vision and objectives- what it is you are trying to achieve in the area
• Projects / proposals- the things you think need to happen to achieve your aims, this could include what type of development you think you need, where in the neighbourhood you think this should take place, what it should look like or contain
• Action plan / implementation- what is needed to make it happen, who will lead on this and by when

In preparing a plan the applicants must also prepare a number of accompanying key documents set out in the submission section of the table below.

Publicity / consultation and engagement

An important part of preparing the plan is to show that you have talked with people within your local area about the ideas contained in it, and given them opportunity to get involved in shaping the plan and its proposals through appropriate publicity. So it probably makes sense to involve these people early in the process to try and avoid abortive work on the plan. These individuals / groups may be able to help you identify other groups and advise on the best way to engage those groups. It is worth getting in touch with key contacts early on. The consultation and engagement could involve talking to people such as:

• Local residents - those members of the community living in the area, but who may not form part of any specific local group
• Local interest groups - neighbouring Town / Parish Councils, Tenants and Residents Associations, local interest groups (e.g. ‘friends of’ groups), local businesses and other relevant organisations
• The Council - Doncaster Council's planning team and local elected council members, and / or neighbouring councils if the neighbourhood is located at the edge of the borough

There are a wide range of methods available to engage these groups in the process, for example meetings, leaflet drops, questionnaires, surveys, open / drop in days, public meetings. You should think carefully about what method is most appropriate to reach these groups, for example engagement with children will require a different approach to older adults, and some people may not feel comfortable participating in certain arenas (such as public meetings). Design Council CABE is an organisation which provide information on this through their web resources identified in the appendix. The council's planning team and other support organisations listed below can also help to identify who you need to engage with and provide advice regarding what approaches might work best, but these will vary from area to area.

A Neighbourhood Plan will only be adopted where it has the support the local community (which is measured through a local referendum in that area) and approval of an independent inspector. So it is essential to get people on-board with a Neighbourhood Plan and where appropriate keep them engaged through the process.

In addition to these local groups, the Neighbourhood Planning regulations state that a number of Statutory Consultees need to be consulted on your draft Neighbourhood Plan, prior to the independent examination. These include, English Nature, English Heritage, the Environment Agency, Sport England, Highways Agency, and the Forestry Commission. A list of the contact details for these Statutory Consultees can be found at appendix A.
### Neighbourhood Planning Process

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<tr>
<th>Application stages for Parish/ Town Councils and Neighbourhood Forums</th>
<th>What the council will do</th>
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</table>
| **Stage C – Plan preparation, consultation and submission** | **Publicising and undertaking consultation**  
In this stage the council will support applicants by:  
- advising of necessary consultees  
- providing our LDF Statement of Community Engagement  
**Plan preparation** In this stage the council will support applicants by giving:  
- basic help with plan topics in the form of meetings and review of draft plans. The amount of help and support offered will be dependant on resources available and the priority assigned to the area;  
- details and electronic copies of existing and emerging Local Development Framework plans such as the Core Strategy;  
- electronic copies of any existing evidence base we may have;  
- advice on need for Environmental Impact Assessments, Habitats Regulations Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment  
**Publicising** The council will:  
- Provide details of statutory consultees  
- Advise on appropriate consultation strategy  
**Submission** Upon submission the council will:  
- Check the submission includes all the documents listed under regulation 15(1) and any sustainability statements as advised (and refuse to accept if not)  
- Publicise that the plan has been received  
- But also, notifying respondents they can request to be informed of decision  
- Notifying any consultation body listed in the consultation statement  
- Advise Planning Committee on the plan. |
content. Consideration should be given to the format and structure of the plan, the period of time it will cover and how it can be measured or monitored.

**Submission** when a Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the council it must include the following (from regulation 15(1)):
- a map (or statement) identifying the area which the plan relates (as agreed in stage A)
- a consultation statement
- Sustainability Appraisal and any other appraisal or assessment documents required under national/EU legislation
- the completed plan
- a statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood plan meets the requirements of paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act (link)

**Stage D- Independent Checking**

Neighbourhood Plans have to meet a number of conditions before they can be put to a community referendum and legally come into force. These conditions are to ensure plans are legally compliant and take account of wider policy considerations (e.g. national and local planning policy).

Conditions are:

- they must have regard to national planning policy
- they must be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area (i.e. such as in a core strategy)
- they must be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements

Once the draft Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared it must be independently checked by an independent assessor, who will be agreed between the council and the relevant Parish / Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum. The independent assessor has to be a suitably qualified Town Planner who is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. Once the assessor has been agreed, the council will then organise the independent assessment and provide the assessor with the relevant information as detailed below.

The independent assessor then checks that a neighbourhood development plan appropriately meets the conditions before it can be voted on in a local referendum. This is to make sure that referendums only take place when proposals are workable and of a decent quality.

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<tr>
<th>Stage D – Independent checking</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parish/Town Council or designated Neighbourhood Forum must agree to the appointed independent assessor.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>This stage is organised by the council as soon as feasible following submission of the neighbourhood plan, but will be subject to the council's priority procedure</strong></td>
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</table>
The council will:
- Appoint an independent assessor from an approved source. (looking into potential for using a suitably qualified planner from a neighbouring council)
- Agree this appointment with applicant; then,

Provide the independent assessor:
- the plan and supporting documents
- any document under habitat regulations
- representations made at the submission stage.

The plan will be considered by the assessor and will either be:
- referred to be submitted for referendum,
- subject to modifications,
- refused.

Note: Modifications are only on ‘basic conditions’ including covenant rights, compatibility and spelling and grammar.

### Stage E - Community referendum

The community referendum or vote on the plan is the final stage in the process. The referendum is an important part of approval for a Neighbourhood Plan. The council will organise the referendum. Normally this will be at the same time and form part of any local elections taking place to reduce costs. The Neighbourhood Plan needs to gain the approval of a majority of voters in the area who turn out to vote in order for it to come into force. If proposals pass the referendum, the local planning authority is under a legal duty to bring them into force.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage E – Community referendum</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The referendum is an important part of approval for a neighbourhood plan. The guidelines for referendums are yet to be published by the Government.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The council will:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Organise referendum</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time, cost, need to be with other elections and need to be run by democratic services all unknown at present. Currently awaiting announcement by Government</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Results:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Majority percentage of electorate must vote in favour</td>
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<tr>
<td>- If voted in favour it will be adopted</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The results and a statement will be publicised on line and potentially via the Parish/Town Council or designated Neighbourhood Forum</td>
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<td>- If the plan unsuccessful applicants may</td>
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Stage F - Adoption of the plan

The final stage of the process is adoption of the plan, making it available and using it when determining planning applications and making land allocation decisions.

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<th>Stage F – Adoption</th>
<th>The council will:</th>
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<td>• Make plan available online</td>
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<td>• Use it when determining planning applications</td>
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<td>• Use it when planning land allocations and other strategic policy</td>
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Plan updates and revocation

The need to update and amend plans is a necessary part of all planning policy. As such it is a local requirement for Neighbourhood Plans to have a fixed time period suggested as 5 years by which time a review will take place (if not done so previous to this time) to assess if the plan is still up to date and effective and if the group responsible for the plan is still in place.

Details of plan modifications will be publicised and a statement of modifications available on the council’s website. Where a plan is revoked this decision will be published and the plan removed from the council’s website.
Further support and advice

Whilst the responsibility for preparing Neighbourhood Plans largely rests with the Town / Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum. Doncaster Council's planning team have a key statutory role in determining applications for Neighbourhood Plans, checking the proper procedures have been followed and helping organise the independent examination and referendum at the relevant time. The council will support local groups in the preparation of neighbourhood plans wherever possible, by providing targeted advice and information, supporting and facilitating engagement and helping to develop proposals and strategies. However, in some cases the amount of additional support available may be limited to the council's statutory functions.

There are also other not for profit organisations and private planning consultants who can support local communities in preparing plans, although some charitable groups have specific criteria you will need to meet to be eligible for support and private consultants will usually charge for their services or advice.

The table below provides contact details for a number of key organisations who can help provide advice in the Neighbourhood Planning process or sources of reference to find these groups:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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</table>
| Doncaster Council's planning team | Statutory Local Planning Authority for Doncaster with a duty to support those wishing to prepare neighbourhood plans | Phone: 01302 734419  
e-mail: LDF@doncaster.gov.uk  
Post: Doncaster Council  
LDF Team  
Colonnades House  
Duke Street  
Doncaster  
DN1 1ER. |
| Planning Aid England | Planning Aid England provides free, independent and professional planning advice to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees and who meet certain criteria. | http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid/planning_aid_in_your_area/  
Tel: 0330 123 9244  
e-mail: advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk |
| Royal Town planning Institute | List of planning consultants with experience of Community Planning | http://www.rtpiconsultants.co.uk/listing/category/9/ |

Neighbourhood Planning Advice / Resources

A list of key web-resources is indicated below to help you think about neighbourhood planning, the list is not exhaustive but provides an initial starting point. The links below will take you to external web-sites and documents which contain background information, guidance and advice in relation to Neighbourhood Planning. This will help you to understand the role of Neighbourhood Plans and help you decide whether or not a
Neighbourhood Plan is the right tool for you to use in helping plan the future of your area. We would also recommend you speak to Council planning officers using the contact details below, before deciding whether or not to submit an application for a neighbourhood plan, as discussed above.

**Legislation**


**Department of Communities and Local Government web resources**

A short introductory video explaining the thinking behind the new Neighbourhood Planning powers for local communities: http://www.communities.gov.uk/multimedia/newsroom/1878309


A few neighbourhood planning case studies: http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/neighbourhoodplanningvanguards/casestudies/


**The Planning Portal web resources**

http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/inyourarea/neighbourhood/

**Planning Aid England web resources**

Leaflet giving an overview of the 'tools' available to local communities to plan their local areas: http://www.rtpi.org.uk/download/13871/Existing-Tools-for-Neighbourhood-Planning.pdf
Design Council CABE Neighbourhood Planning web resources


A useful web resource including a wide range of information such as:

- Briefings, questions and answers and short summaries relating to Neighbourhood Planning
- Practical guidance on ways to engage communities
- Examples of approaches to community / neighbourhood planning
- Academic research
- Discussion forums and other information links
Appendix: Statutory Consultee Contact details

Please also check latest Statement of Community Involvement for up-to-date lost at time of consultation. This can be found on at www.doncaster.gov.uk/ldf

Natural England
Government Team West
Government Buildings
Otley Road
Lawnswood
Leeds
LS16 5QT
e-mail: consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

English Heritage
Planning and Development
37 Tanner Row
YORK
Y01 6WP
e-mail: e-yorks@english-heritage.org.uk

Environment Agency
Phoenix House
Global Avenue
LEEDS
LS11 8PG
e-mail: planningliaison_yorkshire@environment-agency.gov.uk

Sport England
SportPark
3 Oakwood Drice
Loughborough
LE11 3QF
e-mail: planning.yorkshire@sportengland.org

Highways Agency
Network Operation PPT Team
Highways Agency
3rd Floor South
Lateral Building
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS11 9AT
e-mail: NOYNEnoPlanning@highways.gsi.gov.uk

Forestry Commission
Northumbria And Yorkshire Conservancy
Wheldrake Lane
Crockey Hill
YORK
YO1 4SG