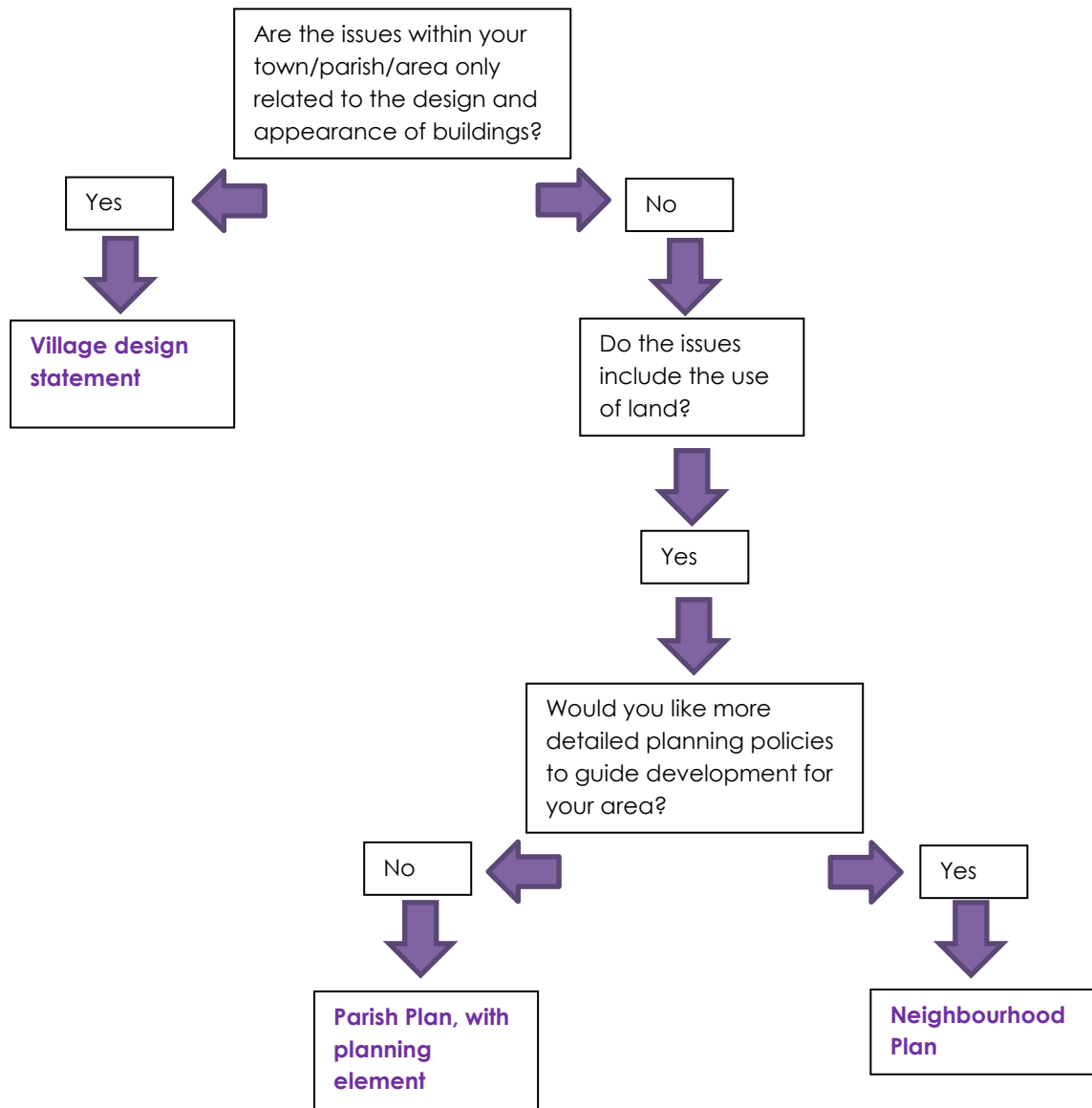


## Stage 1: Getting Started

Neighbourhood Plans provide a town/parish council or neighbourhood forum with the opportunity to have a say on how their neighbourhood is shaped. There is no legal requirement for an area to have a neighbourhood plan and there are many options that provide similar outcomes.

### Initial consultation

We recommend you carry out an initial consultation with your community to decide what objectives you would like a planning tool to achieve. Once you know which issues you would like to focus on, use the following flowchart to find out what is the right choice for you.



Once the decision has been made by the community that a Neighbourhood Plan is the right choice, the following stages need to be undertaken.

## Designate a Qualifying Body

A prospective qualifying body will need to be designated. In South Holland, qualifying bodies for the purposes of Neighbourhood Planning will most likely be a town or parish council.

In some cases it could be a neighbourhood forum (for areas outside parish/town council boundaries), where a different process is used. A group needs to apply to the Council to be designated as a 'neighbourhood forum'. It must:

- have at least 21 people including: one person living in the area, one person working in the area and one Councillor;
- submit the Neighbourhood Forum Designation Form available on the Council's website [www.sholland.gov.uk](http://www.sholland.gov.uk);
- submit an Ordnance Survey map showing the proposed neighbourhood area;
- provide a written constitution.

The Council will publicise the forum application and supporting information on its website (and through other localised publicity) for comment for 6 weeks.

Once a qualifying body has decided to prepare a neighbourhood plan, they should contact the Council so that we can provide further information and guidance. A Liaison Officer (your point of contact with the Council) will be appointed at this time.

## Establish a Steering Group

We advise establishing a steering group, which should be led by the qualifying body but include representatives from the wider community. This will give confidence to the local community that the plan will cover a range of interests. Clear terms of reference should be published and minutes of meetings should be publicly available.

## Produce a Project Plan

Effective project planning is important to successful neighbourhood planning. A project plan should identify the timetable, key stages, actions and responsibilities. This could show where external help may be needed, such as from a planning consultant, Community Lincs or the CPRE, and where funding could be best used.

We would welcome an opportunity to see the project plan at an early stage to advise whether the timescales are achievable and to help us allocate resources to support delivery.

## Funding

The cost of a Neighbourhood Plan for a town/parish council or neighbourhood forum can vary significantly. How much evidence a group gathers, the extent of publicity and consultation, as well as the complexity and scale of the proposed plan will all affect its overall cost. The level of expertise available will determine whether specialist support is needed or whether such costs can be reduced.

The Government have designated £22.5 million to fund Neighbourhood Plans until March 2018. Town/parish councils or neighbourhood forums who are preparing a

Neighbourhood Plan or a Neighbourhood Development Order are eligible to apply for a grant of up to £9,000. Groups that are in 'priority areas' are able to apply for a further £6,000 and technical support packages.

Applications for grants are made through **Locality:**

[mycommunity.org.uk/programme/neighbourhood-planning/?\\_a=funding](http://mycommunity.org.uk/programme/neighbourhood-planning/?_a=funding)

Initially, an Expression of Interest must be completed. This will identify what level of support the town/parish council or neighbourhood forum is eligible for. An application form will then be sent via email which must be completed within 30 days. Locality recommends that care is taken when completing this form as it directly affects how much funding the group will be eligible for. Applications for grants must be between £1,000 and £9,000.

Extra funding may be available if the area:

- Contains a cluster of parishes
- Is experiencing high growth
- Is classed as deprived
- Has a population greater than 25,000
- Is developing a Neighbourhood Development Order
- Has a neighbourhood forum (rather than town or parish council)

The grant can be spent on costs associated with the Neighbourhood Plan (or Order) including:

- Developing a website
- Training sessions for members of the steering group
- Help with putting together a project plan
- Undertaking a housing survey
- Help with doing a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), if required
- Venue hire
- Publicity materials
- Printing

Funding cannot be applied for an activity that has occurred prior to the grant being awarded. Further guidance on what the funding can be spent on is supplied with the application.

Funds must be spent within six months of receiving them or before the end of the financial year, whichever is earliest. Any unspent grant must be returned at this point. A further application for funding can then be made providing the full £9,000 hasn't already been granted. The grant can be applied for up to four times.

Further financial support may be possible when sought through **Awards for All:** [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/Awards-For-All](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/Awards-For-All), a small grants programme designed to help communities.

## Non financial support from South Holland District Council

We will support every Town/Parish Council or neighbourhood forum through the process, providing guidance, support and advice to produce a plan. This could include:

- Making data available for the evidence base
- Highlighting local and national policies which will need to be considered



- Sharing information on key contacts and stakeholders
- Checking the plan prior to formal submission
- Participation in meetings or working groups
- Providing advice on who needs to be consulted
- Providing technical support, such as help laying out and illustrating a plan
- Screening the emerging neighbourhood plan for SEA and HRA

We will try and respond as quickly as possible but the earlier you can let us know your plans the easier it is for us to reply in a timely manner.

## Defining the Neighbourhood Area

A 'Neighbourhood Area' defines the total area to be covered by the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. Mostly, this will either be the parish or town council area, or the area of interest for a Neighbourhood Forum. However, designating part of a parish/town council area or partnering with adjoining parishes/town councils/forums may be considered if this can be justified.

Neighbourhood Areas cannot overlap and there can only be one plan per Neighbourhood Area.

Current designated Neighbourhood Plan Areas are available on the Council's website [www.sholland.gov.uk](http://www.sholland.gov.uk).

Proposals for a Neighbourhood Area will need to be approved by South Holland District Council before the plan can move to the next stage.

The procedure is as follows:

- The qualifying body make an application to designate a 'Neighbourhood Area' using the Neighbourhood Area Designation Form – available at [www.sholland.gov.uk](http://www.sholland.gov.uk)
- The Council will publicise the application on its website, in the local press and all local libraries, in most cases for 6 weeks where it will be open to comment
- The Council will then decide whether to designate the area. The decision will be publicised on the website and in the local press.