

General Information about the Planning System and Neighbourhood Plans

The Planning System

Most developments, such as new buildings, major changes to existing buildings or major changes to the local environment, will require planning permission from the local planning authority. The planning system in the UK manages the use and development of land and buildings by making decisions about the future of our cities, towns and countryside and considering the vision and sustainable needs of future communities.

The system has two main components:

- **Plan Making:** Local authorities prepare development plans (often called Local 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, in this case Dover District Council.

All planning applications for proposed development will need to conform to national planning policy, the Dover local plan, and any other relevant plans, such as a neighbourhood development plan.

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 and gives guidance to local planning authorities and neighbourhood forums on creating local and neighbourhood plans as well as decision making with respect to planning applications.

The NPPF is supported by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which provides detailed advice on specific planning topics, including neighbourhood planning.

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.

Dover District Council's Local Plan was adopted in October 2024.

Neighbourhood Planning and Referendum

Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 to give new planning rights and powers to members of the local community to develop a shared vision and shape future development in their local neighbourhood. Neighbourhood plans can be prepared by either a Parish Council or a Neighbourhood Forum (a community group designated to take forward Neighbourhood Plans in areas without parishes).

A **neighbourhood development plan** sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land within the neighbourhood area, an area specified in the neighbourhood plan. A neighbourhood plan must cover only one specified area for a set time period and be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with Local Plans, the NPPF, EU obligations and human rights as well as contributing to achieving sustainable development.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan must be prepared following a formal process that involves:

- the designation of a Neighbourhood Area;
- a process of consultation with residents on a draft plan prepared by the community;
- a final draft plan which undergoes the local planning authority's community engagement and legal compliance processes;
- an independent examination which may suggest modifications to the final draft plan before recommending whether the plan can proceed onto a referendum stage;
- the local planning authority decides whether to accept the examiner's recommendations and proceed to referendum;
- a community referendum (only includes voters which are entitled to vote in a local government election in the referendum area and their qualifying address for the election is in the referendum area); and,
- If the referendum majority vote is in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan, then adoption by the local planning authority.

If the majority of those who vote in a referendum are in favour of the plan then the neighbourhood development plan must be 'made' (adopted) by the local planning authority within 8 weeks of the referendum. Once the neighbourhood plan is in force, it will be used in determining planning applications and making decisions where development is proposed in the neighbourhood area.

Additional Information in relation to neighbourhood planning is available online at:
[Neighbourhood planning - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/neighbourhood-planning)