

What is a Neighbourhood Forum?

A Neighbourhood Forum is a community group that is designated to take forward neighbourhood planning. The right of communities to establish Neighbourhood Forums is a result of the Localism Act 2011 which introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development by coming together to prepare neighbourhood plans.

The Dore Village Society was designated a Neighbourhood Forum in October 2014. This means that every member of the Dore Village Society is also a member of the Dore Neighbourhood Forum and thereby entitled to participate in the development of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The legal entities which designate a Neighbourhood Forum are the relevant local authorities, in our case Sheffield City Council and the Peak District National Park Authority.

Neighbourhood forums can use new neighbourhood planning powers to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. These are described legally as Neighbourhood Development Plans.

In an important change to the planning system communities can use neighbourhood planning to permit the development they want to see (in full or in outline) without the need for planning applications. These are called Neighbourhood Development Orders.

Local councils will continue to produce development plans that will set the strategic context within which Neighbourhood Development Plans will sit.

Proposed Neighbourhood Development Plans or Orders have to be put to a referendum and to gain the approval of a majority of voters of the neighbourhood to come into force. Everyone on the electoral roll in the neighbourhood is eligible to vote in the referendum.

Neighbourhood Development Plans also 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.

The 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
- they must be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.

An independent qualified person checks that a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Order 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.

If proposals pass the referendum, the local planning authority is under a legal duty to bring them into force.