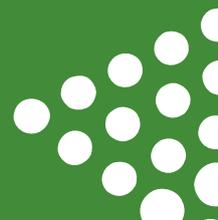




# Neighbourhood Planning

Energy efficiency and renewable energy;  
a community-led approach





**Neighbourhood Plans offer a great opportunity to establish a locally-led, positive strategy for renewable energy and sustainable building design– one which benefits your community.**

Many Neighbourhood Plans focus on the impacts of larger scale renewable energy developments. However, there is much more to be explored and many different ways in which a community can benefit from decentralised energy. This note provides advice on the issues and opportunities to be considered when developing your plan.

Neighbourhood Plans can include policies which support a range of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies which are appropriate for the area, promote community ownership and encourage associated jobs. In doing so, they can help tackle some of the key issues facing communities today and in the future. A Plan which focuses on community ownership and leadership can provide long term sources of income for the community, reduce fuel bills and lead to improved living conditions for residents.

# Conformity with the wider policy framework



## Neighbourhood Plan policies must have regard for the national planning policy and guidance. They must also be in broad conformity Cornwall's Local Plan.

The UK has committed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050. This commitment is supported by a European commitment to generate 15% of our total energy demand by 2020. These targets are not devolved to local authority areas, but the Neighbourhood Plans must have policies which are designed to contribute to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. This is a legal obligation.

The National Planning Policy Framework<sup>1</sup> (NPPF) recognises all communities have a responsibility “to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources” and supports community-led initiatives. Your Neighbourhood Plan should contain a positive strategy to promote renewable and low-carbon development, whilst mitigating adverse impacts.

The key points for neighbourhood planning are as follows. Neighbourhood Plans should:

- 1 Support the transition to a low carbon future by encouraging the use of renewable energy – this is a responsibility of all communities;
- 2 Have a positive strategy to promote renewable energy;
- 3 Design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);
- 4 Consider identifying suitable areas for renewable energy where this would help secure the development;
- 5 Support community-led projects;
- 6 Identify opportunities to link new development (housing and businesses) with renewable energy generation (in particular by co-locating heat generation with potential consumers).

**National Planning Practice Guide<sup>2</sup>** (NPPG) provides further guidance on how the statements on the NPPF can be complied with.

**Cornwall's draft Local Plan<sup>3</sup>** (currently at the formal inspection stage) aims to deliver renewable and low carbon energies, increase energy efficiency and minimise resource consumption through a range of technologies while ensuring the protection and enhancement of environmental assets.

1 <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/10-meeting-the-challenge-of-climate-change-flooding-and-coastal-change/>

2 <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy/developing-a-strategy-for-renewable-and-low-carbon-energy/>

3 <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/localplancornwall>



Community ownership can apply to all types of energy generation project, including heating projects.

**Included below are elements of the main policies<sup>4</sup> that provide the context for the energy elements of your Plan:**

To increase use and production of renewable and low carbon energy generation development proposals will be supported that:

- ▶ Encourage best use of the resource through development which has the greatest energy output (without harmful impacts);
- ▶ Encourage co-location of energy supply with consumers, including using heat and innovative technologies, such as 'smart' energy infrastructure<sup>5</sup>;
- ▶ Enable community ownership;
- ▶ Connect to, or prepare for connection to a heat network.

The Plan also supports the idea of safeguarding important existing schemes and key resources (for example, good locations for deep geothermal, hydro and tidal energy) and highlights the impacts which must be avoided or mitigated. Other policies within the Local Plan relevant to renewable energy development include those covering matters, such as landscape (including the AONB), historic environment and agricultural land.

The Cornwall Renewable Planning Advice<sup>6</sup> provides design and siting guidance for all the main onshore renewable energy technologies and detailed advice on landscape and cumulative impact. It also provides detailed guidance on how the Local Plan views community ownership. This guidance will help to ensure your policies conform to Local Plan policy.

Community ownership can apply to all types of energy generation project, including heating projects. For community ownership the Planning Advice highlights the benefits and details the following key elements which are needed to achieve a community-owned project:

- ▶ The project should be wholly or partly owned by a community energy enterprise.
- ▶ Where the project is being delivered in partnership (perhaps with a traditional developer), there should be an agreement in place to ensure the community energy enterprise can achieve its objectives.
- ▶ The purpose of the community energy enterprise should be to benefit the local community.
- ▶ Membership should be available to all within the community.
- ▶ A mechanism should be in place to ensure the project continues to deliver for the community over its lifetime (e.g. an asset lock or dissolution clause).

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<sup>4</sup> Policies 14 – 16 and the supporting text covers energy-related development: <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/10812522/A1-Local-Plan-Combined-Version-Feb-2015-small.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> For example technology which stores electricity or IT tools which programme your washing machine to start when your solar panels are working.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/renewablespd>

<sup>7</sup> Some more information on the different technologies currently available can be found via this web link [www.cornwall.gov.uk/renewableenergy](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/renewableenergy)

<sup>8</sup> Geothermal takes the heat from Cornwall's underlying granite and turns it into electricity and heat.

## Starting out - identifying your needs



**Sustainability isn't just delivered by technologies. Embedding sustainable thinking into the design of your plan at an early stage can provide much stronger and justifiable policies. This process starts by exploring the challenges that your community currently faces and your aspirations are for the future – what kind of place do you want to live in?**

The following questions are intended to help you generate that discussion as part of your initial consultation:

**?** What does your community think are the key challenges associated with their energy needs, both now and in the future? How can renewable energy generation and efficiency measures help meet these challenges?

**?** Would your community support energy schemes which are owned by and benefit them (community owned)? If there was a community-owned renewable energy project, what could you do with the surplus income?

**?** What are the energy needs and costs of the key employers in your community?

**?** What can your Neighbourhood Plan do to encourage energy efficiency and generation to reduce the cost of running those businesses (and the threat that high running costs might pose to local jobs)?

**?** What energy generation opportunities<sup>7</sup> might there be in your area? Encourage your community to think of different scales (small, large, building integrated, or standalone) and how these may change in the future. For instance, are there:

- ▶ Exposed windy areas, suitable for wind generation?
- ▶ Rivers and lakes which might be suitable for hydroelectricity?
- ▶ Large bodies of water, suitable for water-source heat pumps?
- ▶ Flat or south facing low quality or previously used land which might be suitable for solar panels?
- ▶ Large car parks, rooftops or other structures which might be suitable for solar generation?
- ▶ Areas on the periphery of Cornwall's granite outcrops which might be suitable for geothermal<sup>8</sup> heat and electricity generation? Note that geothermal heat (only) projects are not limited to these areas and can be deployed across most parts of Cornwall.
- ▶ Wooded areas, suitable for growing and harvesting wood fuel?
- ▶ Coastal areas and estuaries which are suitable for marine energy, such as wave and tidal energy (tidal lagoons and tide mills)?
- ▶ Do you have any large heat users or producers, suitable for low-carbon heating or even district heating? This can include new sites for housing development, which can be a good place to start a heat network.



Focus on what your community wants to achieve.

? Do you want to encourage the development of these opportunities? And how can the community benefit from the development of these resources? For instance, can new jobs or businesses be created?

? If your area includes coast stretches or has a working port, would your community support marine energy and the onshore industries which could grow around it?

? Would your community support a positive approach to making use of any heat produced by renewable technologies or from industrial processes? This could also be community-owned and managed.

? Increasingly 'smart' measures, such as matching energy supply with demand and energy storage will become available. Smart technologies can also be used to support community health care. Does the community want to encourage these technologies to help tackle the cost of energy?

? Sustainable transport can be supported through Neighbourhood Plans through, for example, encouraging electric vehicle charging points and cycle routes. Would this be of interest to your community?

The responses to these and other questions will help you identify the objectives and policies that will fulfil your Plan's obligations towards climate change mitigation.. Focus on what your community wants to achieve.



“...would your community support marine energy and the onshore industries which could grow around it?”

# The evidence base



**Some policy initiatives, for example allocating land for renewable energy development, may require technical evidence to demonstrate that the policy is achievable. The Council has undertaken a number of Cornwall-wide studies<sup>9</sup> which might act as a starting point.**

You might want to include information on existing energy consumption and generation to help provide context (a baseline against which to measure progress) or identify the key energy (electricity and heat) generators and consumers. It might also be useful to build an understanding of the current condition of the housing stock in your area. A few information sources are provided below to help with this process. Your local Community Link Officer may also be a valuable source of information.

<sup>9</sup> Cornwall Renewable Energy Resource Assessment: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3626590/E2-Renwable-Energy-Resource-Potential- March-2013 .pdf>  
Solar and Wind Landscape Capacity Study: <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/renewableenergy>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1259>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.renewables-map.co.uk/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change/about/statistics>

<sup>14</sup> <http://tools.decc.gov.uk/nationalheatmap/?statedID=6d4d666a40e9eb7ee6ac0790eefedc14>

- 1** The ONS Neighbourhood Statistics<sup>10</sup> provide information on the following:
  - ▶ How much of your neighbourhood is covered by water, for water source heating (under 'Physical Environment > Land use statistics')
  - ▶ How homes in your neighbourhood are heated. Whilst gas central heating is cheap and comparatively low-carbon, other forms of central heating are typically much more expensive and polluting (under Housing > Central Heating)
  - ▶ Transport methods, which can be useful for identifying sustainable transport needs (under Housing > Travel to Work).
- 2** The Centre for Sustainable Energy<sup>11</sup> provide information that includes statistics on the energy performance of homes, fuel poverty, location of homes that are not on the gas network, the energy details of public buildings.
- 3** The UK Renewable Energy Map<sup>12</sup> draws data from various Government sources to identify the operational and planned renewable energy schemes in your area.
- 4** The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) provide various energy statistics<sup>13</sup> on energy consumption and climate change, as well as resources such as the National Heat Map<sup>14</sup>, which can help you understand where the high levels of heat consumption are in your area and contains a water source heat layer to help identify potential locations for extracting heat from rivers and lakes.

# What can your Neighbourhood Plan say about energy efficiency and renewable energy?



## Vision and objectives

Neighbourhood Plans can include a **vision** for what you want the plan to achieve (what kind of place you want to create). Your vision can be informed by your initial consultation and could include your aspiration to build the resilience of your community by reducing carbon emissions, energy costs and increasing the amount of clean energy that you use. It may also include the ambition to increase income into your community and gain greater control over the important services that you require. All of these could set the context for the energy policies you include in the Plan.

The Plan can also contain a set of **objectives** that set out how you will achieve the vision. These objectives can be quite broad and do not necessarily have to be planning-focussed. They help to provide the context for applying your policies at the decision-making stage and provide a clear steer to developers/investors as to what you are looking to achieve. Energy objectives might include the community's aspiration to establish a community energy company (to manage any community-owned assets, coordinate energy efficiency improvements and help reduce fuel bills).

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.breeam.org/about.jsp?id=66>

<sup>16</sup> Following the commencement of the Deregulation Bill 2015 (expected in late 2016) Neighbourhood Plans will no longer be able to set energy performance standards for new homes. The Deregulation Bill 2015 moves responsibility for driving energy efficiency from the planning system to the Building Regulations.

## Energy efficient buildings

Whilst energy efficiency targets are set nationally in Building Regulations, there are opportunities for your neighbourhood plan to influence new development. Sustainable construction standards can be introduced in the form of 'BREEAM' standards for new non-domestic buildings and, up until late 2016, the Code for Sustainable Homes can be applied to new homes up to Level 4. Thereafter, subject to the Government going ahead with the necessary legislative changes, standards for energy performance in new homes can only be set through Building Regulations. However, your Plan can contain policies which encourage higher levels of energy efficiency and give 'great weight' to outstanding or innovative designs.

You can also include policies which require developers to demonstrate how they've followed the 'energy hierarchy' in reducing energy demand before implementing renewable energy, or make the most of solar gain and passive cooling through the orientation, layout and design of the development.

Smart energy tools and storage devices are beginning to emerge which help to manage energy within the home and within the local network to make better use of the energy we produce and use. These tools have potential to reduce the amount of energy used in homes or businesses and reduce fuel bills. There is also potential for some of these concepts to have a dual use, including enabling better provision of health care within the community. Neighbourhood Plans can encourage their integration into new buildings and deployment within the local energy networks.



Your Plan can contain policies which require a proportion or indeed all of the energy requirements of a new development to be met by renewable energy generation.



One example is the Madely Neighbourhood Plan<sup>17</sup>. As well as stating that any proposals for development incorporating on-site provision of renewable energy or heat and/or low carbon technologies will be supported and encouraged (Policy H5), they also require new housing developments to demonstrate (Policy H4) how they:

- ▶ promote the efficient use of natural resources, the re-use and recycling of resources, and the production and consumption of renewable energy;
- ▶ adopt and facilitate the flexible development of low and zero carbon energy through a range of technologies;
- ▶ link the provision of low and zero carbon energy infrastructure in new developments to existing buildings where proven to be feasible.

The Frome Neighbourhood Plan<sup>18</sup> provides an example of a policy framework designed to encourage and incentivise (rather than require) higher standards of energy efficiency. In addition to policy support, the Plan proposes to reward developers for going beyond Building Regulations standards for energy efficiency with a partial refund of the developer's infrastructure contributions (Community Infrastructure Levy).

Other plans, such as Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale's Neighbourhood Plan<sup>19</sup> require developers to meet certain levels of both BREEAM and the energy requirements of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

## Onsite renewable energy

Your Plan can contain policies which require a proportion or indeed all of the energy requirements of a new development to be met by renewable energy generation. If you want to include this requirement you will need to carefully consider the potential impacts of this policy upon the viability of development in your area. One option to deal with viability concerns is to develop your policy to enable a local community energy group, or a similar regional or national group, to take on the energy installations. This would mean that the developer does not have to bear the cost and the community could then own the generation, giving you the opportunity to create a community income while providing cheap energy to the occupiers of the homes.

The Tickhill Neighbourhood Plan<sup>20</sup> includes Policy DE4, which requires new residential development to secure at least 10% of their total regulated energy from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20172/planning\\_policy\\_and\\_strategy/547/madeley\\_neighbourhood\\_plan](http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20172/planning_policy_and_strategy/547/madeley_neighbourhood_plan)

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.mendip.gov.uk/fromeneighbourhoodplan>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.ascotandthesunningsnp.com/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/planning/tickhill-neighbourhood-development-plan>



...we will work hand in hand with partners and communities to ensure that we have sustainable public services

## Standalone renewable energy generation

Your plan can promote standalone renewable energy generation, including identifying different types and scales that you particularly want to support. While policies have to constitute a positive strategy, they can include criteria to set out the circumstances in which standalone generation projects would and would not be acceptable. Where you are aware of specific locations where your community would support standalone generation projects, the Plan can allocate these sites for that purpose. This could include safeguarding existing schemes that your community values for future repowering (replacing old renewable energy equipment with new more efficient devices).

If the community wishes to support onshore wind energy development (potentially where it might be community owned), the sites should be allocated within the Plan. Your Plan can also consider including positive policies covering the repowering of sites with existing consent if your community supports this. If your community does not wish to support wind turbines (of any size) you do not need to include allocations (or policies) in your Plan.

<sup>21</sup> [http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy/particular-planning-considerations-for-hydropower-active-solar-technology-solar-farms-and-wind-turbines/#paragraph\\_033](http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy/particular-planning-considerations-for-hydropower-active-solar-technology-solar-farms-and-wind-turbines/#paragraph_033)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.gwinearwithianplan.org.uk>

<sup>23</sup> [coniston neighbourhood Plan Annex-1](#)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.wadebridgearnbp.org>

<sup>25</sup> [Anslow Neighbourhood Plan Made.pdf](#)

The Gwithian and Gwinear Neighbourhood Plan<sup>21</sup> (pre-submission draft) identifies broad areas where wind turbines are considered suitable. In line with Government guidance, the Plan also contains a policy covering the key considerations that will need to be addressed at the application stage (for applications concerning wind turbines within the suitable areas)

The Coniston Neighbourhood Plan identifies three potential locations for hydroelectricity, but doesn't mention them in their policy on Environmental Sustainability<sup>23</sup>.

The draft Wadebridge Area Neighbourhood Plan<sup>24</sup> includes a proposal to allocate a site for solar PV development (which it intends will be community-owned).

The Anslow Neighbourhood Plan<sup>25</sup> provides an example of a policy which supports biomass energy by identifying opportunities for tree planting and encouraging the management of wood for fuel and other uses.

## Community ownership

Your Plan can include a policy which supports community ownership to allow weight to be given in favour of such projects as part of the assessment stage of any subsequent planning applications. This can apply to all types of energy generation, (including heat), energy efficiency measures and smart energy management tools. This can be supported by and linked to the wider objectives within the Plan.

<docs/planning/planningpolicy/neighplanning/anslow/AnslowNeighbourhoodPlanMade.pdf>



Your plan can include a policy which supports community ownership.

The Hough on the Hill Neighbourhood Plan<sup>26</sup> supports local renewable and low carbon energy schemes – especially those led by the community. Policy HoH13 states Community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy will be supported where they meet local needs and provide a positive local benefit, and they are in accordance with the Character and Built Environment and Green Spaces policies of the Neighbourhood Plan, including the Neighbourhood Plan Design Guidance.

The Bude-Stratton Neighbourhood Plan<sup>27</sup> includes a clear aim to improve the energy sustainability of Bude by supporting the development of community energy. Policy 14 (renewable energy) only supports community-owned energy.

The Gwithian and Gwinear Neighbourhood Plan<sup>28</sup> (pre-submission draft) supports proposals for renewable energy generation where they are fully or partly owned by local residents or businesses. The policy states that this can be demonstrated by evidence of community ownership.

## Infrastructure

Neighbourhood Plans can include policies relating to infrastructure and can be used to identify infrastructure priorities for your area. In relation to energy you can use your Plan do the following:

- ▶ Identify community owned projects (heat, electricity or energy efficiency) as local infrastructure to be funded (potentially via the Community Infrastructure Levy if there is one in place);
- ▶ Identify and prioritise those energy efficiency measures which are most relevant to the houses in your area (e.g. solid wall insulation for non-cavity walls and heat networks) and those homes that qualify for energy efficiency funding such as the ECO<sup>29</sup>;
- ▶ Include a community benefit statement outlining where the community would like to see any income from energy development to be spent;

An infrastructure policy which includes some of these elements can provide a coherent basis to allow your community to attract further funding and investment to help achieve your objectives.

“ Neighbourhood Plans can include policies relating to infrastructure and can be used to identify infrastructure priorities for your area.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.loveden.org.uk/np>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.budestrattonnp.org>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.gwineargwithianplan.org.uk>

<sup>29</sup> In the case of the ECO homes whose occupiers meet certain requirements (e.g. are in receipt of housing benefit) qualify for grant funding to help with energy efficiency measures.

If you would like this information in another format or language please contact:

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or telephone: 0300 1234 100

email: [enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk)

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