Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

How to address regeneration in your neighbourhood plan

A toolkit for neighbourhood planners

© Crown copyright, 2026

Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the

Open Government Licence. To view this licence visit http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/ This document/publication is also available on our website at www.gov.uk/mhclg If you have any enquiries regarding this document/publication, complete the form at http://forms.communities.gov.uk/or write to us at:

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building 2 Marsham Street London
SW1P 4DF Telephone: 030 3444 0000
For all our latest news and updates follow us on Twitter: https://twitter.com/mhclg
July 2026

Contents

Introduction 5
Regeneration in neighbourhood plans 6
Overview 6
National Policy 6
Evidence base and analysis 7
Community and stakeholder engagement 7
Vision and aims 8
Growth strategies and policies 8
Neighbourhood Development Orders 8
Regeneration tool: Part 1 - Analysis 9
Other initiatives 9
Analysis of causes of decline 9
Evidence and data to support analysis 12
Strategic context 12
Economy 12
Community and housing 13
Environment 13
Regeneration tool: Part 2 - Planning Policies 15
General principles for effective regeneration 15
What to avoid 16
Regeneration scenarios 16
Viable housing market areas 17
Depopulation and under-demand for housing 17
Affordability and under-supply of housing 18
Transitional commercial and industrial areas 19
Retail centres and shopping streets 19
Quality of place 20
Heritage-led regeneration 21
Transport Challenges 21

Complementary actions 22
Non-planning matters 22
Community-led development 22
Case studies 23
Hartley's Village, North Liverpool 23
Central Milton Keynes 23
Further information 24

Introduction

This tool has been prepared to help neighbourhood planning groups address regeneration issues in their neighbourhood plans. This can involve a wide range of issues, including regeneration of housing estates, town centres, and industrial and commercial areas. Indeed, successful regeneration usually requires a range of issues and uses to be addressed.

The purpose of this document is to provide practical tools to help with the analysis of an area's regeneration challenges and to help develop solutions in the form of effective planning policies.

This tool sets out a framework for analysing the characteristics and needs of an area in regeneration and economic development terms. It then suggests possible content for neighbourhood plans to address a range of local issues and provide a positive framework for growth and development.

To this end, the tool is structured around four main parts. The first part, 'Regeneration in Neighbourhood Plans', is an overview of neighbourhood planning, from a regeneration perspective. The second part, 'Regeneration Tool – Analysis', is a tool for looking at and analysing the causes of decline in an area and opportunities for regeneration. The third part, 'Regeneration Tool - Planning Policies', is a tool for identifying regeneration policies for an area. The fourth part of the document, 'Complementary Actions', looks at actions that can be taken in parallel to neighbourhood plans.

Regeneration in neighbourhood plans

Overview

Neighbourhood plans can provide a positive vision for an area and clear aims. These can then be applied by planning policies and possibly site allocations and/or Local Green Space designations. This positive planning framework, and the process of preparing it, can help to build confidence in an area and bring together potential delivery partners.

The neighbourhood plan will normally need to be part of wider strategy for the area. So it is very likely that it will need to be accompanied by other initiatives, such as environmental enhancement projects, marketing strategies, business support, projects to build skills and employability, community-led development schemes, to name just a few.

To be successful, regeneration strategies must address the specific characteristics and issues of the area and the wider strategic context. For example, in some areas the primary concern may be with attracting employment whereas in other areas shortage of housing may be the key issue.

National Policy

Paragraph 82 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states:

“Planning policies should:

a) set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;

b) set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;

c) seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and

d) be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.“

Paragraph 94 of the NPPF also makes reference to estate regeneration and how planning policies and decisions should consider these:

Planning policies and decisions should consider the social, economic and environmental benefits of estate regeneration. Local planning authorities should use their planning powers to help deliver estate regeneration to a high standard.

Find out more information on estate regeneration on gov.uk

Evidence base and analysis

There is often a considerable amount of evidence already in existence for areas that are a focus for regeneration, for example that under-pin existing masterplans, economic development plans and investment strategies.

Where gaps exist in the local evidence base, it will be necessary to build additional evidence as part of the neighbourhood plan process.

The Part 1 Regeneration Tool in this document deals with evidence and analysis, as a means to identifying and understanding the economic, social and environmental challenges in an area.

Community and stakeholder engagement

For all neighbourhood plans, effective community and stakeholder engagement is essential, right from the start of the process.

A good starting point is to map key stakeholders in the area. Such stakeholders could include:

- other bodies involved in economic development and regeneration
- public bodies and political representatives
- creative organisations and businesses
- development and regeneration bodies
- local enterprise partnerships (LEPs)
- landowners and developers
- business organisations, employers, SMEs and micro-businesses
- community organisations
- universities, colleges and schools
- cultural institutions
- housing trusts and associations.

Vision and aims

In order to develop effective policies for regeneration and economic development, it will be useful and even essential to formulate a clear underlying strategy. This may be expressed in clear set of realistic and achievable aims and perhaps a vision. A positive strategy and aims can set the tone for a neighbourhood plan and help to create business and investor confidence in the area. Policies may be developed to help deliver the vision and/or aims.

Growth strategies and policies

There are various ways in which a neighbourhood plan can help enable and deliver growth:

- Clear aims to set out an ambitious and confident direction
- Enabling policies to make the physical and economic transformation of the area easier, for example by making some changes of use easier
- Highlighting harmful changes of use that could compromise the economic development potential of an area or suggesting conditions to reconcile different uses
- Policies to protect the viability of retail areas, for example by preventing dispersed retail development
- Quality assurance policies (such as design) to help ensure new development is sustainable, improves the local environment and addresses local problems rather than making them worse
- Setting out infrastructure deficiencies and requirements
- Supporting the role of historic areas in supporting enterprise and creative and knowledge-based industries
- Policies setting out the location of growth, such as site allocations, development envelopes and identification of areas where development would not be sustainable.

Part 2 of this Regeneration Tool looks at ways in which neighbourhood plan policies can provide regeneration solutions.

Neighbourhood Development Orders

In parallel to a neighbourhood plan, consideration should be given to preparing a neighbourhood development order. Whilst a neighbourhood plan can include enabling policies, a neighbourhood development order could actually grant permission for certain kind of specified development, such as changes of use, new walls or fencing, or reinstatement of better designed shopfronts. Design specifications could be included to ensure that such developments achieve the necessary standards. Find out more here: Neighbourhood planning - GOV.UK

Regeneration tool: Part 1 - Analysis

Other initiatives

A good starting point in understanding the regeneration challenges and needs of an area, and what is already being done to address them, is to identify other organisations, regeneration strategies and projects or initiatives that already exist. There are several benefits to this:

- Representatives from other organisations may join or work closely with neighbourhood forums or neighbourhood plan working groups
- Evidence, data and analysis may already have been compiled to support other organisations, strategies or projects
- There may be scope for partnership working with other organisations
- Knowledge of what is already being delivered will help in the development of planning policies for the area
- Other organisations may be able to help to deliver the neighbourhood plan's aims, once it is in place
- Regeneration usually requires a multi-agency and cross-sector approach and the neighbourhood plan may form part of a wider strategy for the area.

Analysis of causes of decline

In order to develop a strategy and policies to deliver regeneration, it is necessary to identify, analyse and understand the area's challenges, problems and the root causes of decline. These are very varied, but there are some common themes. These include:

Refurbishment Cycle

Need for regeneration may arise from the regular cycles of refurbishment to replace aging infrastructure. This is a predictable and repetitive issue, which can be planned for. Where however adequate maintenance budgets have not been put in place, infrastructure can become defective. For example, public spaces can become overgrown, seating can fall into disrepair and planting beds or water features can be neglected. This can reduce the functionality of places and create safety problems but can also create a degraded environment which creates an impression of decline. This can also apply to buildings, which similarly require ongoing maintenance and refurbishment.

Economic Trends

Decline can also be a consequence of longer-term and perhaps less predictable trends, such as the decline of traditional industries or changes in the way that people buy things (e.g. online shopping). This has resulted in huge changes to towns and

cities all around the country. Some areas have successfully restructured their economy, replacing traditional manufacturing jobs with newer industries and service sector jobs. Some other areas are still trying to adapt and diversify their economies. It should be noted that small, medium and micro businesses account for most economic activity in the UK. Low land-values resulting from economic decline can actually be helpful in supporting small business start-ups and enterprise to an area.

Technological Impacts

Technological changes can lead to the decline of commercial areas, where office accommodation is no longer fit for purpose, for example due to difficulties in accommodating IT infrastructure. Technology has also impacted in live-work patterns, making home working possible and changing needs for commercial and industrial areas. Lack of adequate broadband infrastructure and mobile coverage can significantly harm an area's viability as a place to work and invest in.

Poor design

A significant proportion of development from the past was poorly built or poorly designed and this is often a root cause of failure. Unfortunately, a significant proportion of development today demonstrates similar design deficiencies, creating potential for future problems. Identification of the impacts of poor design can help inform neighbourhood plan policies for future development. Design is not about imposing stylistic preferences but rather is about the way in which places function and can support a range of social and economic activities. There is a clear relationship between quality of place and an area's ability to attract investment.

Geographical Economic Factors

There are also geographical dimensions to regeneration. It is often the case in London and the Southeast that the primary challenge is in meeting housing need and addressing affordability, in addition to addressing infrastructure capacity. In the Midlands and the North, the key challenges are often more about economic restructuring and attracting investment. This is a generalisation. For example, many towns in the Southeast and Southwest are in need of economic and physical regeneration. In most parts of the country, it is necessary to adopt a holistic view rather than focusing narrowly on one issue, like housing or employment.

Market Failures

Market failure is not just about low land values. Excessive demand can create severe inflationary problems in some areas, especially in and around London. This results in a lack of affordable floorspace for business and enterprise and housing that is well beyond the means of those on low incomes, and even people on above average incomes. Thus the challenge is in creating affordable commercial and residential accommodation. In areas with low land values, the issue is more one of

economic viability. The income potential through sales or rentals is not always sufficient to cover the costs of development. This is not simply an issue for the North, but pockets all around the country and even in parts of the south-east.

Viability

Where an area has lost key industries, it can leave a legacy of polluted land, depopulation and suppressed land value, due to lack of demand for employment premises and housing. This can create viability problems in attracting new development due to low rental or sale values. Some programs designed to address this problem have actually made things worse.

Past Programmes

In some areas, decisions were made that there was an over-supply of housing (despite the national housing crisis) and that ‘managed decline’ was the solution, including demolishing housing. Predictably, this has actually made the problem of decline worse in many cases. The real issue in such areas is usually under-demand and the solution could be a positive programme to attract and enable employment-related investment. The neighbourhood plan could replace a narrow focus on housing and an approach of managed decline with a positive strategy to create investor confidence and attract employment and economic growth.

These are a selection of common causes of decline. The reality is often complex and involves a combination of the above and other factors. Once there is an understanding of the root causes for decline, options for progress may be considered. Understanding the nature of the local economy and local market failures is fundamental to effective planning for regeneration and economic development.

Barriers to achieving regeneration should be identified but also opportunities. For example, low land values, whilst creating viability problems, can also stimulate economic activity, providing affordable and flexible floorspace for enterprise and business start-ups. This is why many towns and cities have peripheral historic areas where commercial or industrial decline has occurred, but which have then become a focus for new and small-scale enterprise, creative industries and IT and knowledge-based businesses.

For housing estates, positive planning may be a significant part of the solution but inadequacies in estates management may also need to be addressed. For example, poor maintenance may be indicative of inadequate service charges or sinking funds to enable regular maintenance and refurbishment of estates.

The image of an area and negative perceptions can be a real barrier to attracting investment. To create investor confidence, it is necessary to address environmental problems through planning policies, but also through projects and initiatives to directly address environmental degradation.

Evidence and data to support analysis

The following is a series of check-lists of different kinds of data needed to support an analysis of regeneration challenges in a local area. These lists are not exhaustive and the data needed will vary between local areas.

Strategic context

Although a neighbourhood plan applies only to the neighbourhood designated area, it is necessary to understand the wider strategic context.

Strategic issues to consider:

- Geographical location within the wider region/city/town
- Economical characteristics of surrounding areas
- Proximity to other towns and cities
- Proximity to key environmental assets, such as parks
- Proximity to key institutions, such as universities
- Significant transport links to surrounding areas.

Economy

The economic characteristics of an area will need to be understood both to understand why regeneration is needed, but also to provide a context for policies to move forward. In particular, it will be necessary to consider whether there is evidence of market failure (for example over-heating, land inflation, lack of demand, suppressed value or viability problems).

Employment issues to consider:

- Key employment trends (for example growth, decline, economic transitions)
- Breakdown of employment in the area, including key industries
- Local employment losses
- New employment
- Local skills and specialisms or skills gaps.

Land and property issues to consider:

- Predominant land uses
- House prices and rents
- Commercial prices and rents
- Industrial prices and rents
- Extent of brownfield land
- Vacancy and derelict buildings
- Viability challenges.

Other issues to consider:

- Transport infrastructure, including infrastructure deficiencies
- Other infrastructure, such as broadband connectivity and community infrastructure.

Community and housing

Socio-economic issues to consider:

- Population characteristics and changes or trends
- Demographic characteristics of the area and trends (age, employment status, income, gender, ethnicity, etc.)
- Local education and skills levels.

Housing stock issues to consider:

- Mix of house types
- Mix of tenure
- Quality, condition and maintenance issues
- Identified local need, including for any specialist housing
- Evidence of housing market failure.

Community facilities issues to consider:

- Local community facilities (sports, shops, transport, medical, etc.)
- Quality and distribution of community facilities
- Deficiencies in meeting local need.

Environment

Environmental issues to consider:

- Special heritage designations (e.g. conservation areas, listed buildings)
- Special nature/wildlife designations (e.g. SSSIs, etc.)
- Other land-use designations (e.g. green belts)
- Flood risk zones
- Air quality.

Design and character issues to consider:

- Townscape character of area
- Key streets, spaces and public realm
- Quality of environment, including condition and maintenance issues
- Pedestrian permeability

- Use and movement patterns.

Walking Permeability Checker

This exercise can help to understand the usage and viability of local shopping and other community facilities. Assessing pedestrian permeability is important for several reasons:

- It is an indicator of how sustainable an area is in terms of encouraging walking
- Poor permeability can be a cause of social exclusion for those without access to a car
- Impermeable environments can impact negatively on the viability of neighbourhood centres, shops and community facilities.

The methodology for this simple exercise is as follows:

- Plot the local neighbourhood shopping area into a scale map of the neighbourhood
- Draw a circle of radius 1,000 metres, centred on the shopping area
- From different properties in the circle, plot the shortest route that pedestrians would need to take to reach the shopping area
- Measure the actual distance required for pedestrians to reach the shopping area.

The longer the distance, the less likely people are to walk to the facility. Also, if people need to use a car, there is a good chance that they will go to other facilities instead of using the neighbourhood centre, for example a large supermarket.

This exercise can help to explain why neighbourhood centres are doing well or badly. If pedestrians find it difficult to move through an area (known as permeability), then that could be a contributory factor in failure of the shopping area. Of course, there can be other factors too, such as new, nearby competition or poor-quality shops.

Regeneration tool: Part 2 - Planning Policies

General principles for effective regeneration

Regeneration strategies will differ greatly according to the nature of the local challenge. There are however, certain good practice principles which may be applied anywhere. The following suggests some general principles.

Creative and robust planning

Planning and regeneration should be creative and entrepreneurial activities, not just about statutory process and meeting targets. The aims should be to fulfil the needs of all sections of the community. Clear policies create certainty and confidence, essential in attracting more entrepreneurial developers and investors.

Community and stakeholder engagement

As discussed previously, effective engagement and participation by a range of stakeholders and the wider community is essential from the earliest stages of the planning process. This ensures that policies and proposals are well-informed, realistic and deliverable. It also ensures that there is wider buy-in to the plan's vision, aims and policies. This is essential to delivering effective and sustainable regeneration.

A balanced approach

Successful regeneration usually requires a wide focus, addressing interrelated issues, such as employment, housing, day and night economies, environment, culture, recreation and other relevant factors. Choice and quality of housing is a key part of attracting people to live and invest in an area. Expanding an area's cultural facilities can have a transformational impact on the economy. Well-designed local parks and facilities support active and healthy lifestyles. Addressing infrastructure deficiencies is essential to enabling new development. Attracting employers and investment to an area often requires a complex range of factors to be addressed.

Environment matters

There is a direct relationship between quality of environment and an area's ability to attract investment, jobs, and visitors. Areas that have achieved dramatic physical and economic transformations have addressed negative perceptions, for example through initiatives to enhance the quality of the local environment and public realm, and regenerate historic buildings and areas. Good design is good economics. Poor design can lead to failure of projects and undermine an area's growth potential.

As set out in the previous section of this tool, there needs to be a firm analysis of the causes of decline, as a basis for then identifying planning policies. What follows looks at specific challenges and suggest policy responses to address them.

What to avoid

Managed decline

The concept of ‘managed decline’ has already been mentioned. Planning for decline can only result in decline, with the associated loss of local life opportunities. An approach of managed decline can arise from a narrow focus on housing demand, rather than considering regeneration in wide economic, social and environmental terms.

Narrow focus

Housing, employment, retail and other issues should not be considered in isolation. For example, in many areas, the solution to housing problems is in attracting economic activity and new or better employment. In other areas, housing capacity may be a barrier to economic growth. A one-size-fits-all solution is not realistic.

Development at any cost

There is considerable evidence to suggest that acceptance of poorly designed and unsustainable development, whilst delivering a short-term boost, can actually lock an area into a cycle of poor-pay and environmental degradation, making it difficult then to attract additional and higher-value investment.

Weak planning

A lack of clarity and quality assurance through planning policy and development management may be attractive to very short-term developers but will undermine certainly and investor confidence for more entrepreneurial ‘investor’ developers.

Regeneration scenarios

The following deals with different regeneration scenarios, suggesting possible policy responses. Some of the different kinds of market failure have already been mentioned. The following sections deal with:

- Viable housing market areas
- Depopulation and under-demand for housing
- Affordability and under-supply of housing
- Transitional industrial and commercial areas
- Retail centres and shopping streets
- Quality of place

- Heritage-led regeneration
- Transport challenges.

Viable housing market areas

Where housing markets are operating reasonably well, the main challenge will be in providing the right mix of housing to meet future need.

Evidence to support housing mix policies may include a housing needs assessment and housing needs survey. The complexity of the evidence will depend on the scale and nature of the area and expected levels of growth. Housing mix policies can be a way of addressing local need, where the market has not provided certain kinds of accommodation.

Housing standards have been developed by the Government to set out the size of rooms. Such standards can be used in housing mix policies to ensure that properties meet the requirement of the policy, for example ensuring bedrooms are large enough to be functional.

Possible policy areas:

- A balanced approach to enabling housing, employment-related development and supporting community facilities
- Housing mix based on number of bedrooms and specialist housing
- Growth accommodated through site allocations and infill sites, including sites for employment, housing and community facilities
- Encouraging mixed use, including housing above commercial units
- Local Green Space designations, to protect green space provision
- Design policies, including layout, pedestrian permeability, and public realm requirements
- Improvement of communications infrastructure (e.g. digital infrastructure and broadband services)
- Housing standards, including storage for bins and cycles
- Enabling beneficial alterations to housing stock.

Depopulation and under-demand for housing

This is usually a result of decline of local industries and commerce, and a failure to attract modern commerce and industry. Depopulation is a result of people moving to other areas to gain employment.

The policy response in such areas has sometimes been one of managed decline, rather than a positive strategy for achieving economic development. Managed decline has always failed, as planning for decline can only achieve decline. A

neighbourhood plan provides an opportunity for positive strategy to attract employment.

Care is required to ensure that planning requirements are not so onerous as to harm viability. At the same time, policies need to assure quality so as to ensure that new development does not add to existing problems.

Possible policy areas:

- Emphasis on new commercial development in the area or mixed use, rather than extensive housing growth
- Policies to enable and encourage economic development, especially to provide a range of local employment opportunities
- Policies to protect against the loss of commercial and industrial sites to housing development
- Site allocations and use policies to encourage redevelopment and reuse of vacant and derelict sites and buildings (including historic buildings)
- Local Green Space designations, to protect green space provision
- Policies to protect or enable local community facilities
- Improvement of communications infrastructure (e.g. digital infrastructure and broadband services)
- Design policies, including layout, pedestrian permeability, and public realm requirements.

Affordability and under-supply of housing

In London, parts of the Southeast and elsewhere in the country, land inflation has placed housing beyond the means of much of the local population. This means that those on low incomes and even people of above-average incomes cannot afford housing. This is a difficult issue to address and ill-conceived polices can actually worsen the problem.

Possible policy areas:

- Site allocations to accommodate housing growth, but also taking account of supporting community facilities
- Encouraging mixed use, including housing above commercial units
- Housing mix policies, including smaller accommodation to cater for downsizing and first-time buyers
- Policies to ensure that affordable housing provision is provided as an integral part of developments, rather than being provided remotely
- Local Green Space designations, to protect green space provision
- Policies to protect against loss of community facilities
- Design policies, including layout, pedestrian permeability, and public realm requirements
- Housing standards, including storage for bins and cycles

- Improvement of communications infrastructure (e.g. digital infrastructure and broadband services).

Transitional commercial and industrial areas

Commercial or industrial areas that have experienced decline can have suppressed land values, vacancy and signs of physical neglect. There is a particular problem where the income potential from sales or rentals is insufficient to make refurbishment viable. This may require direct intervention, beyond the scope of planning. Planning policies may however be a means to enabling the transition of such areas, especially in accommodating newer enterprises.

Possible policy areas:

- Diversification of uses, for example recreational and cultural uses, hotels, and performance space
- Design policies, including layout, pedestrian permeability, public realm
- Enabling heritage-led regeneration, including changes of use (for example to enable the creation of enterprise space) and meanwhile uses
- Enabling housing development through site allocation and use policies, but ensuring that it is not allowed where it would compromise existing commercial uses, and that new commercial uses are not allowed where they would harm the amenities of residents
- Hours of operation policies, to reconcile night economy and residential uses
- Balanced transport provision, avoiding over-reliance on car-parking standards
- Improving infrastructure, including broadband and digital infrastructure.

Retail centres and shopping streets

Considerable care is required in planning for retail centres to retain their retail function whilst allowing for diversification. Retail centres and streets rely increasingly on cultural, recreational and community uses to enhance their viability. This includes a diverse food and drink offer. Allowing temporary ‘pop-up’ uses can be one way of stimulating economic activity and footfall. Specialist local markets can also be effective.

Allowing housing growth in and around retail areas is one way of increasing their local catchment population. Care is however required to reconcile daytime uses, the night economy and residential development. This may be addressed through location of residential development but also conditions on hours of operation.

Whilst it may be desirable to allow for some dispersed retail provision in different localities, care is required not to undermine existing retail centres. Concentrating community facilities in and around existing centres can be a way of making the centres more viable and ensuring good accessibility.

Possible policy areas:

- Diversification of uses, for example recreational and cultural uses, hotels, and performance space
- Enabling housing development through site allocation and use policies but ensuring that it is not allowed where it would compromise existing retail uses and that new retail uses are not allowed where they would harm the amenities of residents
- Use policies to provide new housing above commercial units, where appropriate
- Enabling heritage-led regeneration, including meanwhile uses and changes of use, for example to enable the creation of retail space
- Improving infrastructure, including broadband and digital infrastructure
- Design policies, including layout, pedestrian permeability, public realm
- Hours of operation policies, to reconcile night economy and residential uses.

Quality of place

Urban design and quality of the public realm are key strategic issues for all kinds of development, often making the difference between success and failure of regeneration initiatives. Design is not about stylistic preferences but about how an area works, safety, pedestrian convenience, environmental sustainability and social inclusion. Quality of place is a major factor in an area's ability to attract and retain jobs, investment and population. Creative design can be an effective way of demonstrating that an area is changing and regenerating.

The Design Council's Building for Life 12 provides a useful starting point for developing planning policies on design. Whilst this is targeted at housing development, many of the principles are more widely applicable.

Possible policy areas:

- Pedestrian convenience and permeability
- Active frontages to be provided to streets and public spaces, creating natural surveillance
- Servicing areas to be at the rear and screened
- Clear separation of public and private space, avoiding need for blank walls and fences adjacent to the highway
- Development to integrate with surrounding network of pedestrian paths
- Enabling creative and innovative, site-specific design, including in historic areas
- Guiding shopfront design

- Encouraging use of shared surfaces.

Heritage-led regeneration

Historic areas based on declining industrial and commercial areas can have a particularly important role in delivering regeneration. As land values fall, such areas often become a focus for enterprise and start-ups, for example creative enterprises, IT and knowledge-based businesses. Historic environments can also be factor in attracting shoppers and visitors to an area.

The economic development role of heritage should not be under-estimated. A neighbourhood plan is an ideal tool for enabling heritage-led regeneration, for example through flexible use policies.

Possible policy areas:

- Enabling heritage-led regeneration, including meanwhile uses and changes of use, for example to enable the creation of enterprise space
- Design policies (including layout, pedestrian permeability, public realm), encouraging creative and innovative building design
- Clarify approaches to alterations and extensions of historic buildings, including contemporary interventions
- Improving infrastructure, including broadband and digital infrastructure
- Hours of operation policies to reconcile night economy and residential uses
- Clarity over which parts of the area would benefit from redevelopment, such as poor-quality buildings and undeveloped land.

Transport Challenges

A neighbourhood plan can identify infrastructure deficiencies, such as highway improvements necessary to enable sites to be developed.

Whilst development may pay for these in high growth areas, it should be recognised that in areas with viability problems there is unlikely to be much scope for paying for infrastructure on the back of development. Such areas may have a zero-rate Community Infrastructure Levy (or no CIL), for the same reason.

Possible policy areas:

- Balanced transport provision, including car, public transport, walking, and cycling
- Ensuring layouts provide easy access to surrounding public transport facilities
- Varied approach to accommodating car-parking as an integral part of the layout, so that it does not dominate the public realm
- Development to integrate with surrounding network of pedestrian paths

- Highlight transport infrastructure deficiencies, especially infrastructure requirements to allow new sites to be developed.

Complementary actions

Non-planning matters

In parallel, there will need to be analysis of non-planning causes of decline and identification of initiatives outside of the scope of the neighbourhood plan. These may be addressed through things like:

- Reviewing estates management activities
- Environmental enhancement or public realm improvement projects, including upgrading and refurbishing key urban spaces and parks
- Ensuring management and maintenance provisions are in place for all aspects of the public realm
- Business support, including business planning, marketing and web development
- Addressing local skills gaps and employability through training initiatives
- Projects to support sports and physical activity
- Culture and heritage-led regeneration schemes
- Incentives, for example by making cheap land available
- Boundary improvements, for example new walls, fences and gates
- Asset transfer, for example passing disused public buildings to community organisations
- Approaching public transport service providers to discuss the potential for improved services
- Organising specialist markets.

Community-led development

Where there are entrenched viability issues, or the market is failing to cater for the full range of local needs, community-led development may be considered as part of the solution. Community-led schemes can use different business models and different ways of raising funds, such as community-share issue or crowd funding.

Case studies

Hartley's Village, North Liverpool

The Hartley's Village Neighbourhood Plan is still being developed at the time of writing. A significant part of the neighbourhood area comprises a grade II listed factory, in poor condition and largely vacant.

The aspiration is to achieve regeneration of the factory complex through refurbishment and selective redevelopment to create enterprise space and community facilities. At an early stage, the neighbourhood planning group started to consider viability and deliverability and to engage with key land and property owners.

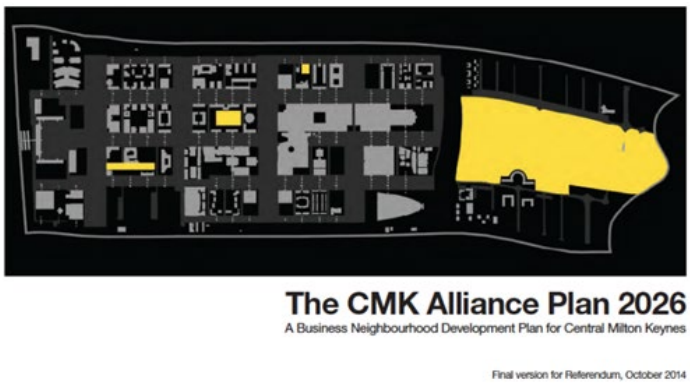
Hartley's Village, Factory Complex

Good practice points

- Assess the land and property economy at an early stage as a means to understanding problems with viability, vacancy and poor maintenance and to ensure deliverability
- Engage with key land and property owners from the earliest stage
- Consider different means to delivering regeneration, such as community-led projects.

Central Milton Keynes

The Central Milton Keynes Neighbourhood Plan provides a comprehensive set of policies for development, placing Milton Keynes against a wide strategic context. It provides a positive framework for growth, recognising the importance of Milton Keynes's distinctive urban structure and identity.



Good practice points

- For complex towns and city centres, it is important to consider the role of the centre in a wider regional context
- Neighbourhood plans for complex urban areas usually require a more comprehensive set of policies to guide future development
- It is essential to understand the qualities of a place that attract people to invest, live, work and visit
- Culture, quality of place and heritage are important factors in delivering effective and sustainable economic development.

Milton Keynes Shopping Centre, a Grade II listed building.

Further information

National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK

Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK

Neighbourhood planning - GOV.UK