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Thank you for your letter of 6 November concerning neighbourhood planning.

You ask for clarification on the position of neighbourhood plans where a local authority's Local Plan is emerging. Neighbourhood plans can be developed before or at the same time as the local planning authority is producing its Local Plan. A draft neighbourhood plan is not tested against the policies in an emerging Local Plan; it is tested against whether it is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in force.

Where a neighbourhood plan is brought forward before an up-to-date Local Plan is in place the parish council or designated neighbourhood forum and the local planning authority should discuss and aim to agree the relationship between policies in the emerging neighbourhood plan, the emerging Local Plan, the adopted development plan and their degree of consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework.

The local planning authority should take a proactive and positive approach, working collaboratively with a qualifying body particularly sharing evidence and seeking to resolve any issues to ensure the draft Neighbourhood plan has the greatest chance of success at independent examination.

The local planning authority should work with the qualifying body to produce complementary neighbourhood and Local Plans. It is important to minimise any conflicts between policies in the neighbourhood plan and those in the emerging Local Plan as legislation requires that the conflict must be resolved by the decision maker favouring the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan.

In regards to your question about who pays for the referendum, the legislation provides that the relevant council must make arrangements for the referendum to take place. Relevant councils are: district councils; London boroughs; metropolitan district councils; and county councils in any area in England for which there is no district council.

I would be pleased to address these issues when I speak at the NALC Larger Councils' Conference on 27 November. I look forward to meeting you then.

**NICK BOLES MP**