



Eynsford Parish Council

Eynsford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Terms of Reference

1. Background

This document replaces the Terms of Reference created for the Joint Neighbourhood Plan with Farningham dated 6 May 2025. Eynsford Parish Council formally validates and incorporates all plan-making functions performed by the Steering Group prior to the 31st December 2025. All such prior work is deemed to have been performed on behalf of the Council, and all future work shall proceed strictly under the requirements set out in these Terms of Reference.

2. Objective & Purpose

Our goal is to have a neighbourhood plan ratified by Sevenoaks District Council before the end of May 2027. Changes to the planning landscape might, however, dictate that this self-imposed deadline is put back or brought forward.

The Steering Group will maintain channels of communication to and from the community so that an ongoing dialogue is possible. These will include a parish council maintained database plus paper updates and the use of surveys to ensure that the voice of the wider community is central to the planning process.

The remit of the Steering Group is to develop a complete neighbourhood plan that is a vision for the future of the village that is shared by the community. It will take into consideration all representations made during the plan making process and any existing plans adopted by the local planning authority. Once completed and approved by Eynsford Parish Council it will be submitted to Independent Examination then put out for referendum and ultimately be adopted by Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) to become planning policy.

The Steering Group will engage the local community to ensure that the Plan is truly representative of the ambitions of Eynsford. The Steering Group will maximise support of the approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan by ensuring high levels of community engagement throughout the plan-making process. The Neighbourhood Plan will be consistent with SDC planning policies and mindful of the Local Plan (once the Local Plan has been adopted) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. Principle

The Steering Group will undertake the process in a democratic, transparent and fair fashion, encouraging widespread participation and giving equal consideration to options and ideas from all members of the Eynsford community. The Steering Group will utilise technology together with local groups and networks to assist publicity, communication, monitoring and analysis throughout.

Adopted 2.2.2026

4. Roles and Responsibilities

In order to achieve this, the Steering Group will carry out the following roles.

- a) Be accountable for direction and strategic management of the Neighbourhood Plan
- b) Produce, monitor and update the project timetable.
- c) Produce a consultation and engagement strategy, showing how the public will be involved throughout the process (Appendix 1).
- d) Report back to every Eynsford Parish Council meeting until the Plan is completed and the final consultation has taken place; and for approval of the selection of the Consultant to assist the process; and any commitment to spend more than £250.
- e) The Parish Council may request information from the Steering Group; requests would be submitted with justification via a formal PC request. The information requested may include any formal correspondence, financial records, data collected and proposed consultation documents.
- f) Undertake analysis and evidence gathering to support the plan production process.
- g) Actively support and promote the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan throughout the entire project.
- h) Identify sources of funding.
- i) Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to ensure the plan is acceptable to all relevant authorities.
- j) Gather data from a wide range of sources to ensure that the conclusions reached are fully evidenced and that the aspirations and issues of all residents are understood.
- k) Consult widely and thoroughly to ensure that the draft and final Neighbourhood Plan is representative of the views of residents. Prior to any consultation with the community the Steering Group will provide Eynsford Parish Council with the proposed consultation documents for ratification by the Council.
- l) The Steering Group shall submit a final draft of the Neighbourhood Plan to Eynsford Parish Council. The Council reserves the right to amend, omit, or add policies and content as it deems necessary. Further the Council reserves the right to revisit any work carried out on the Neighbourhood Plan prior to the date of this document. The final submission version is subject to the formal approval and adoption by the Council before it may proceed to any external body or consultation.
- m) In accordance with the law, the steering group will only collect a limited amount of information about individuals that is necessary for correspondence and information provision. The Steering Group will not use profiling and will not sell or pass data onto third parties. The Steering Group will make sure all data is stored securely and will be deleted when the information is deemed to be no longer necessary and within six months after the Neighbourhood Plan receives final stage approval.

n) The Steering Group will use the GDPR policy of Eynsford Parish Council.

5. Steering Group Membership

The Steering Group shall consist of no more than 12 members. Membership is subject to formal ratification by Eynsford Parish Council. The group must include at least 2 Parish Councillors. The council with evidence of just cause provided in writing to the SG in advance to support its decision may with a formal resolution appoint, replace or remove members. A meeting shall only be considered quorate if at least one Parish Councillor is in attendance.

The Steering Group may nominate individuals for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. However, all such appointments are subject to formal ratification by Eynsford Parish Council.

6. Decision making

The steering group is granted authority by Eynsford Parish Council to perform planning making functions. The Steering Group shall provide monthly progress reports which will be published on the EPC website (within a week).

Eynsford Parish Council has the final approval of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan prior to consultation and independent examination (Regulation 14, Regulation 15 if changes made and prior to Referendum Version).

The plan-making process remains the responsibility of Eynsford Parish Council as the qualifying body. All publications, consultation and community engagement exercises will be undertaken by or on behalf of Eynsford Parish Council via the Steering Group, with appropriate recognition of the Parish Council position given in all communications associated with the project.

7. Meetings

- Steering group meetings will take place as required. Sub-committees which are closed working groups constituted to achieve identified goals will meet as required with their work / results being fed into the Steering Group.
- The dates of future meetings of the Steering Group will be made publicly available via the Eynsford Parish Council website, the Trident (local parish magazine) relevant social media and village notice boards. If online sessions are necessary, 'attendees' are to clearly identify themselves. The Chair reserves the right to remove anyone who is not willing to do so.
- The Secretary shall publish an agenda and keep accurate notes of the meeting together with action points and circulate these to the Steering Group Members and to Eynsford Parish Council within 2 weeks of the meeting. The record of each meeting shall be made publicly available on the Eynsford Parish Council website within 3 weeks of the meeting.
- At no point should any information be released without prior approval of the Steering Group to ensure information is accurate and appropriate.

- Decisions made by the Steering Group will normally be by consensus at Steering Group meetings. Where a vote is required, each member shall have one vote. A simple majority vote will be required to support any motion. The Chair or in their absence the Vice-Chair shall have one casting vote. A minimum of one Eynsford Parish Councillor shall be present where matters are presented for decisions to be taken.
- Steering Group Meetings where a key decision is required, are open to all residents of Eynsford. All groups and interested parties will be encouraged to participate at such meetings. The agenda will include an item to receive any representations from members of the public. This item will last no longer than 15 minutes unless agreed by the Chair, with a maximum of 5 minutes allowed per speaker. Only members of the Steering Group are permitted to vote.

8. Sub-Committees

- The Steering Group will establish sub-committees to aid them in any Neighbourhood Plan related work.
- The chair of each Sub-Committee will be a member of the Steering Group
- Members of the community will be encouraged to participate in the process, as appropriate.
- The work of these groups does not need to be open to the public and their meetings are not required to follow the procedure referenced for Steering Groups.
- Sub-Committees have no authority to make decisions or incur expenditure without the agreement of the Steering Group and Eynsford Parish Council as appropriate.
- These groups may include, but are not limited to Planning, Protected Landscapes, Transport and Amenities.

9. Finance

- Eynsford Parish Council will initiate the Neighbourhood Plan by providing initial funding to the Steering Group to enable them to get established. If additional funding is required from the Precept, the Steering Group must request this from Eynsford Parish Council by the end of October each year to allow for budgeting purposes.
- The Steering Group will notify Eynsford Parish Council advising them of planned expenditure in excess of £250 before it is incurred and requesting access to the funds.
- Steering Group members from any Sub-Committee may claim back any previously agreed expenditure incurred during any Neighbourhood Plan related work.

10. Conduct

It is expected that all Steering Group members will abide by the principles and practice of Eynsford Parish Council's Code of Conduct including conflicts of interest.

Whilst Members as individuals will be accountable to their parent organisations, the Steering Group as a whole is accountable to the wider community for ensuring that the Neighbourhood Plan reflects their collective expectations.

The Steering Group will achieve this through applying the following principles:

- Be clear and open when their individual roles or interests are in conflict;
- Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion and belief: and
- Actively promote equality of access and opportunity.

11. Changes to the Terms of Reference

No amendment to these Terms of Reference of the Steering Group shall be valid unless it is first proposed in writing by the Steering Group (or Eynsford Parish Council) and approved by Eynsford Parish Council (or the Steering Group if changes proposed by the Parish Council).

12. Dissolution

The Steering Group will be dissolved once its objectives have been attained and/or when at least two-third of its members and Eynsford Parish Council, consider its services are no longer required.

The Steering Group will pay any remaining funds held in accordance with these Terms to Eynsford Parish Council.