

Core brief on neighbourhood planning

- Neighbourhood planning is a vital part of the Government's reforms to help local communities play a much stronger role in shaping the areas in which they live and work and in supporting new development proposals.
- For the first time community groups can produce plans that have real statutory weight in the planning system. Neighbourhood plans become part of the local development plan and have the same status as the Local Plan for the area.
- A neighbourhood plan can include policies on where development, such as homes, shops and offices should go, what it should look like, and what facilities should be provided.
- Neighbourhood planning can act as a catalyst to wider community engagement, bringing a community together to work on the regeneration and development of its local area.
- Where the Community Infrastructure Levy (a levy on new developments) has been adopted neighbourhood planning groups will benefit from 25% of the total raised in an area. This is compared to the 15% that a community group benefits from in a non-neighbourhood planning area.
- A new £22.5 million support programme for 2015-18 was announced recently, and applications for grant opened on last month.
- We also recently announced a new £12 million funding pot to help local planning authorities meet the cost of their responsibilities.

Neighbourhood planning progress to date

- Over 1,400 communities in England have applied for designation as a neighbourhood planning area – the first step in the process. Over 1,200 communities are now preparing neighbourhood plans – this covers more than 6.1 million people (11% of the population) and 63% of the local planning authorities in England.
- Around 200 draft plans have been published for pre-submission consultation with the wider community.
- Communities have given overwhelming support for neighbourhood planning at the 63 successful neighbourhood referendums held so far (with an average turn-out of 33 per cent and an average 'yes' vote of 88 per cent).
- The first 42 neighbourhood plans are now in force and beginning to make a real, tangible difference to those communities.

Q & A

The neighbourhood plan was drawn up by unelected people Neighbourhood plan approved by the parish council by a majority of one

- Parish councils are an established body in those communities which have them. They have been elected by their community and already have responsibilities and roles they deliver on behalf of their community.
- They are required to conduct their business in an open and transparent way. Effective governance checks must be in place to ensure that the decisions and actions of the parish council are lawful and transparent to the public at large, for example the public must have access to minutes of meetings and accounts of a parish council.

Neighbourhood plan has been drafted in secret behind closed doors

- The Government's reforms ensure that communities are at the heart of planning; all plans and planning applications are subject to public consultation.
- There are several checks and balances along the way to ensure that neighbourhood planning is not captured by unrepresentative interests.
- The legislation requires consultation with, and participation by, local people and those with an interest in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan.
- Those preparing a neighbourhood plan have to demonstrate to an independent examiner that they have appropriately sought and taken into account local people's views in the preparation of their neighbourhood plan.
- A Consultation Statement that must be submitted to the local planning authority with their draft proposals. This will be considered by the Independent Examiner. This statement must set out:
 - details of persons and bodies who have been consulted about the proposals
 - explains how they were consulted;
 - summarises the main issues and concerns raised in those consultations (e.g. in representations); and
 - describes how those issues have been addressed in the draft plan or order.
- And of course the referendum is important not just as a check in the system but as a way of involving the whole community in deciding the future of their neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood plan wants to control your property

- It is important to remember that neighbourhood planning is initiated by the community coming forward. It is the community that will lead the process; it is the community that must decide whether to take up the option of preparing a neighbourhood plan; and it is the community that decides what the neighbourhood plan will focus on.
- Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.
- They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.

Neighbourhood planning is all about delivering the District Councils housing numbers

- It is important to remember that neighbourhood planning is initiated by the community coming forward. The community decide what they want to achieve with their neighbourhood plan.
- You can use your neighbourhood plan to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, alongside development such as homes, shops or offices.
- Local communities can use a neighbourhood plan to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances.

Neighbourhood plan has cost you £7,000 already

- There is no fixed format or content for a neighbourhood plan so the costs will vary depending on the scope of your plan or the size and complexity of the community you are planning for.
- The Government is committed to supporting communities throughout the process and encouraging more communities to get involved.
- We recently announced a new support contract worth £22.5 million, which will begin in April 2015 and last until 2018.
- All groups preparing neighbourhood plans can apply for up to £8,000 of funding.

- Priority groups can apply for a further £6,000 and technical support from planning specialists. (*priority groups will include communities in urban areas, deprived areas, mutli-parish areas, and those preparing business neighbourhood plans*).
- All groups will be able to access a specialised advice service, able to deal with technical enquiries.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- The Community Infrastructure Levy (or CIL) is a charge which local authorities can choose to levy on new development in their area to help pay for required and identified infrastructure.
- Communities that draw up a neighbourhood plan and secure the consent of local people in a referendum, will benefit from 25% of the community infrastructure levy arising from development that takes place in their area. This amount will not be subject to an annual limit, and is higher than the 15% of the levy that a community without a neighbourhood plan would receive.
- The community's portion of the levy can be spent on a wide range of things, provided that it meets the requirement to 'support the development of the area'. The wider definition means that the neighbourhood portion can be spent on things other than infrastructure.

NB East Devon District Council is developing CIL in parallel with the Local Plan.

Neighbourhood plan policy 1 states that development in the neighbourhood area is not capped and there is no maximum housing number

- The last Government had top-down Regional Strategies which imposed housing targets on local authorities. This Government did away with that system and put local people in the driving seat. This Government believes in giving people the choice to plan for the future of their areas. It's called Localism.
- Localism means choosing how to meet needs not whether to meet them. As a Nation we have not been providing sufficient housing to meet demand for decades. Housing affordability has worsened substantially as a result.
- We rightly ask local councils to plan to meet objectively assessed development needs as far as is consistent with policy as a whole. It strikes a careful balance between enabling sustainable development and conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment, but is designed to be interpreted and applied locally by local authorities in conjunction with their communities.

The neighbourhood plan has to accept Devon County Council development plan and Devon District Council development plan in its entirety

- Localism means choosing how to meet needs not whether to meet them. As a Nation we have not been providing sufficient housing to meet demand for decades. Housing affordability has worsened substantially as a result.
- There needs to be an appropriate balance between providing a real and powerful tool that will influence decision making in the local area and ensuring that the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.
- But neighbourhood plans are not just re-stating the local council's plan they are a powerful tool for shaping the development and growth of a local area. They can set policies on where development should go, its phasing and design. Communities have never had this degree of power before.
- Unlike many of the parish, village or town plans produced in the past, a neighbourhood plan becomes a formal part of the planning system. It forms part of the local development plan and sits alongside the local plan prepared by the local authority. Planning applications will need to be decided against both the local plan and any appropriate neighbourhood plans, and any other material considerations.
- One of the basic conditions that a neighbourhood plan is tested against is whether it is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan. It does not presume that every policy in a Local Plan is strategic or that the only policies that are strategic are labelled as such. This test also provides an important degree of flexibility enabling communities to suggest a different approach to achieving a strategic objective. For example, the Thame Neighbourhood Plan allocates 770 new homes to six sites dispersed around the town, departing from the local planning authority's proposal to put almost all of the housing on one site on the edge of Thame.

If voted in there will be no second chance it will be here for good

- The neighbourhood plan is intended to be a medium-term document. We don't specify a time-limit for neighbourhood plans so communities can decide, but they are an opportunity to shape development over the next 15 or so years.
- Neighbourhood plans, like Local Plans, should be designed with sufficient flexibility to respond to changed circumstances. And like Local Plans they will need to be reviewed to keep them up-to-date.

Stop the bureaucracy and keep your freedom of choice

- It is important to remember that neighbourhood planning is initiated by the community coming forward. The community decide what they want to achieve with their neighbourhood plan.
- Neighbourhood planning gives real power to local people allowing them to play a much stronger role in shaping their areas. Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, and have their say on what those new buildings should look like in their area.
- Neighbourhood planning is proving very popular and over 1,400 communities, representing around 6 million people, have now applied for a neighbourhood area to be designated – the first step in the process.
- Communities have given overwhelming support for neighbourhood planning at the 63 successful neighbourhood referendums held so far (with an average turn-out of 33 per cent and an average ‘yes’ vote of 88 per cent).
- 42 neighbourhood plans and orders are now fully in force, forming part of the statutory development plan, and giving communities real power to shape planning decisions.