

Produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government

NEW REGULATORY REFORMS

2015 will see new powers to speed up the neighbourhood planning process.

The reforms, which will take effect in February 2015, will enable this by

- Reducing the time it takes for a neighbourhood area to be designated
- Amending the information submitted with a plan proposal regarding its environmental impact

The Government has also published its response to the planning consultation launched in June 2014, which posed questions about how to make it easier for residents and businesses to produce a neighbourhood plan. It can be read [here](#).

The Minister of State for Housing and Planning Brandon Lewis said, “These reforms will make it quicker and easier for more communities to join the neighbourhood planning movement.”

The Government held a consultation on the reforms to understand the public’s views on them, and a full response to the feedback received through the consultation can be [read](#).

MOBILISATION WORKSHOPS

Applications for grants to host a Neighbourhood Planning Mobilisation Workshop will be closing on 13 February

There have been some excellent events already, with plenty more coming up. See inside for more information or click [here](#).

TOTAL SPEND CASE STUDIES

Three new case studies detailing the time and money that communities have spent on their neighbourhood plans were published at the end of 2014.

They demonstrate the flexibility of neighbourhood planning, as well as the extensive range of support available. To find out more about support, see page 4. More case studies will go [online](#) soon.

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REFERENDUM NEWS



The number of successful referendums has risen from 37 to 44, with the plans of Ferring, Cerne Valley, Marsh Gibbon and Acle all recently gaining their community's support at the ballot box.

These figures also include the first three referendums on Community Right to Build proposals, all of which were in Ferring.

It's a busy time of year for referendums, with a further five planned in January and three in February.

A GOOD YEAR FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

2014 was an exciting year for neighbourhood planning in England, which saw many new communities beginning the neighbourhood planning process.

There were 37 successful neighbourhood planning referendums last year, up from 6 the year before. This trend looks set to continue with another 9 planned for the first two months of 2015, with one having already taken place in the village of Acle in Norfolk.

Almost 1,300 communities across England have now begun the neighbourhood planning process, meaning that more than 5.2 million people (10% of the population) live in a neighbourhood planning area.

Throughout 2014 we saw the development and implementation of many innovative policies that will shape development. We also saw great diversity in the types and sizes of communities seizing the right to shape local change.

We hope that 2015 sees even more people able to benefit from neighbourhood planning and harness its power.

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THE POWER OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

A brand new publication has been released that demonstrates just how powerful neighbourhood planning can be in shaping the development of local communities.

The Power of Neighbourhood Planning outlines some of the many innovative policies that communities have devised to ensure they benefit from development in their area.

Ideas range from policies on protecting green space to allocating sites for housing, and preserving the High Street to choosing where new industry goes.

You can find it [here](#).

COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BUILD

In December 2014, the West Sussex village of Ferring became the first place to hold a successful referendum on a Community Right to Build proposal. In fact, they held not just one referendum, but three.

But what is a Community Right to Build? Introduced as part of the Localism Act within the neighbourhood planning framework, this right enables parish councils and certain types of community organisations to bring forward their own development proposals that can proceed without the need to apply for planning permission in the conventional sense.

A Community Right to Build Order supports housing delivery and economic growth and empowers communities to identify small site-specific developments within their local area that they wish to see built.

A number of diverse community groups besides Ferring are currently working to use this right. In doing so, they are also taking advantage of direct support, and there will be a further £3.5m available to groups between 2015-18.

In Ferring, the three proposals cover separate specific sites in the village. The first two proposals are for new housing, and the third is for a new community centre. The three proposals were each subjected to a referendum, and all passed with majorities ranging from 71% to 79%.

To find out more and explore support options, visit [here](#).

UPDATE ON MOBILISATION WORKSHOPS

Workshops held by local bodies have been taking place up and down the country to inform and enthuse communities in their area about neighbourhood planning.

Successful events have already taken place in Portsmouth and Broadlands, both of which were attended by Ministers keen to support the spread of neighbourhood planning.

Amongst those hosting events have been universities, associations of local councils, local planning authorities and groups who have already completed neighbourhood plans.

To host your own workshop, please visit [here](#).

STUDENTS IN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Students have played an important role in neighbourhood planning across the country so far, and we hope that many more will be able to participate this year.

Involving university students, whether they're studying undergraduate geography or postgraduate planning, brings great benefits to all parties. For students, it can provide invaluable experience of real-world planning issues and a chance to develop skills that will set them apart in the job market.

Neighbourhood planning groups can benefit in turn from the students' work, whether it's completing surveys or collecting evidence in support of the plan's policies.

A number of universities have pioneered this approach, including Oxford Brookes, University College London, Brighton and Leeds Beckett, but many more are realising the benefits and exploring how they too can get involved.

To assist them in this, the Royal Town Planning Institute has just launched a new webpage full of information and links to case studies. You can find it [here](#).

FOCUS ON: Oxford Brookes



Oxford Brookes was one of the first universities to get involved in neighbourhood planning, and its students have gained unrivalled experience from (and provided invaluable assistance through) participating in the local Headington Neighbourhood Plan.

The university and its students have been working together with Headington Forum for two years, allowing students to see a plan develop through all the relevant stages.

Final year undergraduates undertake project work with the Forum and their contribution is then assessed as part of their course. Last year, projects included setting out ideas for the issues the plan could address, including retail use and participation strategies.

This year, the students are helping with the Forum's topic working groups.

The benefits have been many and varied. The Forum has benefitted from a supply of ideas and examples drawn from the students' research, and the Forum has said the students gave them the enthusiasm to carry on with the plan.

The students gained great experience of planning and working with the community, and their work has put them in great positions to secure the careers they want. For more, please see [here](#).

APPLYING FOR THE NEW SUPPORT GRANTS

From the start of April 2015, groups will be able to apply for financial assistance through the £22.5m Neighbourhood Planning Support programme, which will run until 2018 to help communities create a neighbourhood plan or Neighbourhood Development Order.

The new support programme exceeds previous packages, and will enable all groups demonstrating a need to apply for up to £8,000. Groups in priority areas will also be eligible for a further £6,000 together with direct support from specialists.

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We hope to open applications for grants in advance of April, so that groups can receive money promptly from the start of April. To ensure your group is in the best position to apply for support, it might be useful to think of the following:

- Identify the issues in your neighbourhood that can be addressed through a plan or an Order and draft a vision for your area. The [catalogue of existing plans](#) may be a useful starting point.
- Develop a project plan and timeline setting out what you need to do to develop and consult on a plan or an Order
- Get in contact with [Neighbourhood Planning Champions](#) or the [free advice service](#) for expert advice.
- Establish the costs of the activities you want to pay for with a grant. For example, how many households you want to survey and what professional advice you will need. See examples of costs [here](#).
- Use the free resources and guides available [online](#).
- Talk to your Local Planning Authority to see what support they can offer, and also your local [university planning school](#) to see how students could get involved.

For more information about funding and other support for neighbourhood planning, visit [here](#).

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

At the end of last year, the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis, took to Facebook to answer the questions of neighbourhood planners.

In total, the Minister was able to answer 47 of your questions, on a wide range of topics and it was great to see so many people engaged with the event.

If you want to see the questions that were asked, and the answers that the Minister gave, please click [here](#), and feel free to share them with anyone you know who might have similar questions and hasn't been able to find an answer.

Another useful resource for answering your questions is the [Government's Guidance](#).

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LGIU'S NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNER OF THE YEAR

The Local Government Information Unit is hosting the Councillor Achievement Awards, and DCLG is sponsoring a prize for the Neighbourhood Planner of the Year.

This prize aims to celebrate councillors who have championed the neighbourhood planning process amongst their communities. They may have helped to coordinate a local group, provided support or leadership, or championed neighbourhood planning priorities to local decision makers and policy leaders.

To find out more, and most importantly to submit a nomination, please visit the [LGIU website](#). Nominations must be received by 23 January.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please share this edition of Notes on Neighbourhood Planning with your friends and colleagues, and if you have any questions, please get in touch with the Neighbourhood Planning team at DCLG at decentralisation@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Making Plans

Communities want a say on local issues



of citizens think it is important for them personally to feel they can influence decisions in their local area

Commonplace Survey 2010/11



of citizens say they would be more supportive of house building if local people were given greater control and say over what gets built

Local Survey 2011/12

With neighbourhood planning you can have your say

Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to set local planning policies. You can shape the place where you live, decide what type of development is needed, where it should go and what it should look like. After a successful local referendum, neighbourhood plans have real weight in the planning system.

More than 1200 areas are making neighbourhood plans

1200+ areas have started neighbourhood planning



44

successful referendums

5 million + people live in a neighbourhood planning area



average

34%

voter turnout

160+ draft plans published for local consultation

on average



9 in 10

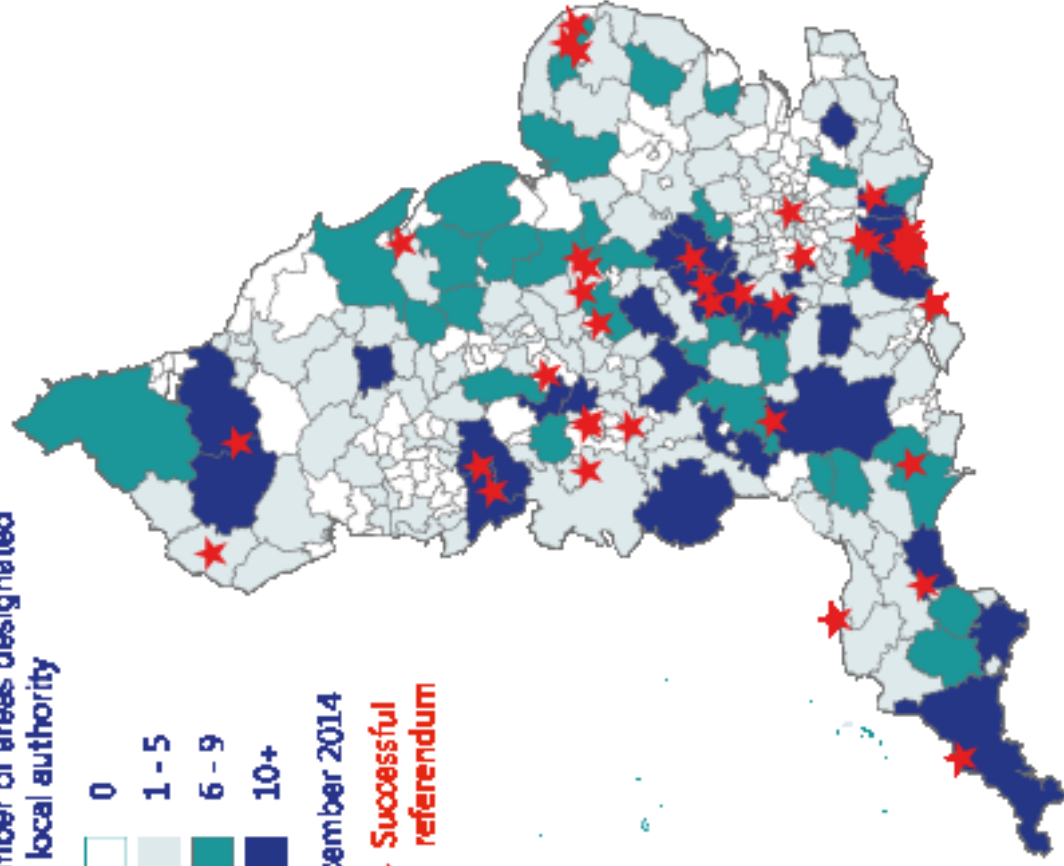
vote **'YES'**

Neighbourhood planning ...

Number of areas designated per local authority



December 2014



... is happening across the country