



Getting On with Neighbourhood Planning

Welcome to the first in a series of *Notes on Neighbourhood Planning*: updates from the neighbourhood planning team in the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The updates are aimed primarily at areas that have embarked on neighbourhood planning, including the “frontrunner” areas. But we hope it will be of interest to all who are doing or thinking about neighbourhood planning. We will use the update to let you know what we are up to, how we can help you, and how your varied and exciting work on the ground fits with the national picture.

We want the updates to be part of two way communication between you and the team here in the Department. See below for details of how to drop us a line or give us a call.

For general information on neighbourhood planning go to:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/neighbourhoodplanningvanguards/>



Team members on a visit to Uppingham

Someone recently said that neighbourhood planning is moving from the floor of the House of Commons to the floor of the local community centre. They make a very good point. We started supporting frontrunners before neighbourhood planning had become law. This was a really valuable learning process for us all, and has meant some frontrunners are now well advanced. It has also meant those who started early have had to ensure that they meet the requirements of the legislation, and we appreciate this has not been straightforward for everyone.

Here is a summary of where we now are with the building blocks of neighbourhood planning nationally.

- Neighbourhood planning legislation came into effect in April:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/637/contents/made>
- Further legislation covering the referendum stage of neighbourhood planning came into force on 2 August:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2031/made> .

It is really important that local authorities’ planning and election departments discuss neighbourhood planning referendums early, so that the election department can prepare, considering whether the nature of the designated neighbourhood area would have any impact on the information or software needed.

- Meanwhile, the Department has advised local planning authorities how they can

draw down funding to meet the costs of neighbourhood planning, including examination and referendum. LPAs will be able to claim via LOGASnet from 1 October.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/newsroom/2206422>

At the same time as these building blocks are completed nationally, more and more communities across the country are beginning to buzz with activity. Here is a very small sample.

- Local planning authorities are helping communities to understand the opportunities presented by neighbourhood planning and to weigh up their options:
<http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/housing/planning/59805.asp>
- Areas and forums are being designated:
<http://www.exeterstjamesforum.org/news/formal-application>
- Draft plans are being published for consultation prior to submission to the local planning authority and examination:
Upper Eden
<http://uecp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Upper-Eden-NDP-Draft-Proposal-Final.pdf>
Norland
<http://www.norlandconservationsociety.co.uk/what-we-do/neighbourhood-plan/>
Balsall Heath
<http://www.planningbalsallheath.info/draft-neighbourhood-plan/>

This is all really encouraging to see.

Support

The **first port of call for neighbourhoods looking for support is, of course, the local planning authority**. The Localism Act means that planning authorities have a duty to provide advice and assistance to groups













engaged in neighbourhood planning. They also have certain statutory functions to fulfil when it comes to the designation of areas and neighbourhood forums, the examination process and holding referendums.

To help local planning authorities fulfil their obligation to organise examinations, a number of industry bodies have been working together to **develop an independent panel of highly competent professionals who can act as independent examiners** quickly and at minimum cost. This resource is being developed by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Planning Officers Society (POS), the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and Locality. More information can be found at: www.rics.org/drs or contact: Paul Taylor –RICS Surveyor Court, Westwood Way, Coventry CV4 8JE – ptaylor@rics.org

The Department has also recently announced the **extension of the contracts to support organisations** providing free to access, independent assistance to groups engaged in neighbourhood planning, through the Supporting Communities in Neighbourhood Planning scheme. These are Planning Aid, Locality (the Building Community Consortium), CPRE/NALC and the Prince's Foundation. The Design Council/CABE is also providing support.

The new funding agreement lasts until the end of March 2013. One of the main jobs of the support organisations in this period will be to work intensively with areas as they approach some of the crucial later phases of putting a plan in place. We sent out details of the offer in August. (If you haven't received details and would like to, please get in touch with us using contact details below.)

The DCLG team

	Angela Harrowing	Support for neighbourhood planning	(41349)
	Anton Draper	Direct engagement	(41339)
	Charlotte Dring	Direct engagement	(41855)
	Frances Kirwan	Programme management	(41368)
	Gareth Bradford	Policy and legislation	(44277)
	Jenny Frew	Direct engagement (London)	(41343)
	Kate Thompson	Direct engagement	(41241)
	Mark Hitchen	Direct engagement	(44161)
	Mick Duggan	Information and influencing	(44220)
	Miranda Pearce	Policy and legislation	(41309)
	Susan Peart	Support for neighbourhood planning	(41651)
	Tom Walker	Deputy Director, heads up the team.	(41239)

You can contact any of us via email, following the format: firstname.secondname@communities.gsi.gov.uk (e.g. mick.duggan@communities.gsi.gov.uk).

Or you can call us, using 0303 44 followed by the five digit extensions above.

Our Role

The role of central Government is not just to sit on our hands and wait to see what happens. Our job is to continue all the necessary work on policy and legislation; to nurture enthusiasm for doing neighbourhood planning and help share that with others; to help ensure that communities continue to get the information and support they need; and finally to create and encourage chances to network with others, sharing ideas and learning about what works and what doesn't.

Our team brings together planning expertise with experience in decentralisation and communities work. If you have an existing contact in the team such as a 'link officer', please get in touch with them.

Alternatively, you may find it easier to contact [Susan Peart \(030 3444 1651\)](tel:03034441651) or [Kate Thompson \(030 3444 1241\)](tel:03034441241) and they will be happy to put you in touch with the best person to deal with your query. We work in a flexible and have different specialisms.¹

We are very keen to hear how local communities are getting on as they work through the various stages of neighbourhood planning. We have been out and about recently, visiting several frontrunner communities around the country, and their local planning authorities, seeing for ourselves how neighbourhood planning is taking root, and hearing about the opportunities and challenges that are springing up. It has been a great chance to listen to and respond directly to thoughts and questions of people taking a lead role in implementing neighbourhood planning.

¹ The assistance the team provides is to help local planning authorities and qualifying bodies through a new process. It is not meant to be a substitute for your own professional or legal advice.

We are very grateful to those who have hosted us so far and we hope that we have been able to offer useful advice and assistance along the way. We have also spoken to many of you on the phone in recent weeks and again the help you have given us in building up our understanding has been invaluable.

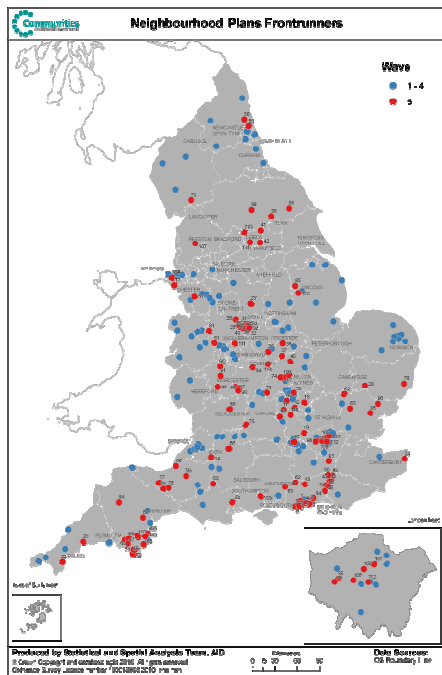
Get in Touch

- Please keep telling us how things are going. We are particularly keen to hear from non front runners who are making progress with their plans or development orders.
- Contact us also if you feel there are ways in which we can help you out or information we can provide, especially as you approach critical junctures in developing your plans and seeing them through to completion.

- We also want to hear from you on wider issues that can have a bearing on success. For instance, are you getting enough opportunities to network with other areas engaged in neighbourhood planning? If your answer is yes, what have been your best experiences? If the answer is no, what do you think may be useful? On this particular question, please get in touch with Jenny Frew or Mick Duggan if you have ideas you would like to share.

We would also be very interested in hearing about any barriers and challenges you have faced and how you have overcome them. This will be really useful for other frontrunner communities.

We are very keen to accept invitations to attend or take part in events that you may be holding in your area to promote neighbourhood planning. Please get in touch if you know of an event coming up that we might want to include in future editions



We will write out again in the near future. In the meantime please get in touch if you think we can help or if you have ideas for topics you would like us to cover in future editions of *Notes on Neighbourhood Planning*.

We look forward to hearing from you and working with you.