

Notes on Neighbourhood Planning

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**Produced by the Ministry of Housing,
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Departmental name change

Following the appointment of Rt Hon. Sajid Javid MP as the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has been renamed as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Secretary of State Sajid Javid said:

“Building the homes our country needs is an absolute priority for this government and so I’m delighted the Prime Minister has asked me to serve in this role. The name change for the department reflects this government’s renewed focus to deliver more homes and build strong communities across England.”

Junior ministerial appointments have been confirmed by the Prime Minister, along with their responsibilities. This includes an addition of a further Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the ministerial team to reflect the government’s renewed focus on housing issues.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government’s new ministerial line up is as follows:

- **The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP** – Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
- **Dominic Raab MP** – Minister of State for Housing and Planning
- **Rishi Sunak MP** – Parliamentary Under- Secretary of State, Minister for Local Government
- **Jake Berry MP** – Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth
- **Heather Wheeler MP** – Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Minister for Housing and Homelessness

- **Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth** – Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, **500 neighbourhood planning referendums!**

In December 2017 the 500th successful neighbourhood planning referendum took place. Based on our informal monitoring, the honour went jointly to communities in Leeds, Suffolk and Lincolnshire who all went to the polls on the same day. Those communities planned for different priorities:

[Thorp Arch](#) chose to allocate a significant employment site.

[Melton](#) allocated land for development for businesses, homes and open space.

[Coleby](#) safeguarded six important local green spaces.

Neighbourhood Planning Champions

Following a request from Ministers, John Howell MP will be continuing in his role as a national neighbourhood planning champion.

John played an important role in the creation of neighbourhood planning and has been a vocal supporter in Parliament. He was also a member of the Local Plans Expert Group that reported to Government in 2016 and has worked with many groups both in his Oxfordshire constituency and around the country to help them progress plans, especially in relation to allocating local sites for housing.

If you would like John or another one of our neighbourhood planning champions to help out your group or attend a regional or national neighbourhood planning event, please get in touch with Locality, who administer the national champions network.

Our champions collectively supported numerous groups and events last year. For more information about our champions network, including where they are and how to get in touch with one, please visit the dedicated web page: <https://mycommunity.org.uk/help-centre/champions-map/>

Neighbourhood planning support for communities 2018-2022

In September a new £22.8m 2018-2022 neighbourhood planning support programme was announced. We have now completed the process to recruit our delivery partners. Locality have been contracted as our lead partner, with Groundwork UK contracted to provide grant administration support.

Locality and Groundwork UK are our partners for the current 2015-18 programme, which ends on 31 March. The new programme starts on 3 April and will continue to provide the resources and expertise that communities may need to plan for the future of their areas.

Grants will still be available alongside professional planning support on key issues such as housing, design and establishing neighbourhood forums. A new website has been launched, which provides further details about the programme: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>

Tony Armstrong, CEO of Locality, said: *“We believe that local communities are powerful and are the key to building a fairer society. The new neighbourhood planning contract will help thousands of local groups to*

create a neighbourhood plan, giving local people a direct say in what happens in their local area and helping every community to thrive.”

Stuart Woodin, the lead Technical Director at AECOM (who delivers much of the specialist planning support to communities) said: *“Our support provides vital evidence to a whole new generation of ‘lay planners’ from all walks of life who are grappling with the opportunities as well as the challenges presented by planning their places. We are thrilled to be involved for another four years with Locality in this unique Private-Voluntary Sector Partnership.”*

Planning legislation update

Further neighbourhood planning reforms from the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 came into force on 31 January. These reforms:

- Update requirements for local planning authorities to notify neighbourhood planning groups on local planning applications.
- Make it easier to update neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood areas.

[Neighbourhood planning guidance](#) has been updated to explain the new update procedures. Importantly, where substantive plan updates are proposed and those updates do not ‘change the nature of the plan’, the examiner’s report is binding and if the updated plan meets the basic condition conditions there is no referendum. Guidance has also been updated on how to ensure fairness and transparency in the neighbourhood planning examination process.

A further reform requiring local planning authorities to set out their neighbourhood planning support in their ‘Statement of Community Involvement’ document will come into force on 31 July.

Local Plan reforms have also recently come into force. These require local planning authorities to identify their strategic priorities and the policies to address them, and require them to keep their plans up to date. Of particular interest to communities is that from 31 July 2018 local planning authorities must set out in their Statements of Community Involvement their policies for involving communities and other interested parties in the early stages of plan-making.

Planning policy update

The draft revised [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) has been published for [consultation](#). Neighbourhood planning remains a key theme in the document. A final version will be published later this year. The draft revised NPPF demonstrates that Government is committed to the continuing growth of neighbourhood planning as a key part of our plan-led system.

Areas of particular neighbourhood planning interest include:

- Confirmation of the important protection for certain neighbourhood plans from speculative development. As proposed in the Housing White Paper, the draft revised NPPF (paragraphs 12-14) takes forward the protection of certain plans for two years after a plan is successful at referendum, where plans contain

policies for housing and allocate sites for housing development to meet needs. The draft policy and [draft guidance](#) set out more details on when the protection applies.

- A proposed new requirement on local authorities to provide designated neighbourhood planning areas with a housing requirement figure or indicative figure (paragraphs 66 and 67). This figure would take into account factors such as the latest evidence of housing need, the local population and the planning strategy.
- A reference to the important role that neighbourhood plans can play in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development (paragraph 124).
- Communities are encouraged to consider including design code policies in neighbourhood plans.
- Communities are encouraged to consider which local small sites might be suitable for development through neighbourhood planning (paragraph 70).
- A distinction between 'strategic policies' and 'local policies'. Strategic policies prepared by local authorities will address the strategic priorities of the area to provide a clear starting point for any local policies that may be needed. Local policies may come forward as part of a local plan or neighbourhood plan (paragraph 21).
- Detailed amendments to Green Belt boundaries may be made through local policies, including neighbourhood plans, where a need for changes to Green Belt boundaries has been demonstrated through a strategic plan (paragraph 135).
- Transitional arrangements (Annex 1) include proposed implementation dates.

We have also published:

- Draft [neighbourhood planning practice guidance](#),
- Government responses to the recent consultations on: [Housing White Paper: Fixing Our Broken Housing Market, and Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places](#) and: [supporting housing delivery through developer contributions](#)

Neighbourhood planning Written Ministerial Statement

Through a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) on 12 December 2016 the government set out that where communities have planned for housing in their area through a neighbourhood plan, which is less than 2 years old, allocates sites for housing and the Local Planning Authority are able to demonstrate a three supply of housing then decision makers should give significant weight to the neighbourhood plan notwithstanding the fact that the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites.

This WMS was judicially reviewed by a group of 25 developers on five grounds which included that the WMS is illogical and unreasonable and that there was an expectation of consultation. Hearings were held at the beginning of November last year and the judgment was handed down in January in favour of the Government on all counts, so the WMS continues to apply.

As announced in the Housing White Paper last year, the neighbourhood planning protection has been carried forward into the updated National Planning Policy Framework.

#neighbourhoodplanning on Twitter

Twitter is a great place to share your neighbourhood planning progress and news. If you have a good story, need help, want to collaborate or seek views, why not tweet about it? To help people to find it, please include the popular hashtag: #neighbourhoodplanning.