

NOTES ON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

September 2019

Edition 23



Special Interest Articles:

- Message from the Minister
- Meet the Champions
- Introduction to our latest Design toolkit

Individual Highlights:

New research being commissioned

Engagement update

Neighbourhood Planning guidance update

Affordable housing for sale

MESSAGE FROM ESTHER

Welcome to the latest issue of “Notes on Neighbourhood Planning” - new and improved so we can showcase the great work groups are taking forward across the country.

Whilst I've only been Housing Minister for a few weeks, it's been a rewarding experience to see the energy and passion of so many volunteers who are putting in time and effort to improve their towns and villages through the adoption of a neighbourhood plan.

It's something that has been happening in every region since these plans were first introduced in 2011 and I know from personal experience how much of an impact they are having in making people's lives better. In my own constituency of Tatton, residents in Knutsford delivered a neighbourhood plan following months of dedicated work and consultation.

Residents know their area best, so it's only right we continue to give them the opportunity to shape the places where they live and work, allowing them to create environments that allow families to lay down roots, older people to enjoy retirement and professionals to get on and earn a living – this all helping us to meet

the demand for new housing.

This edition is published as part of “Communities Week” which is all about celebrating how citizens are bringing their own drive, enthusiasm and expertise to improve their area - whether that is volunteering to develop a neighbourhood plan, raising money for charity or simply visiting older people in need of some company. So it would be remiss of me not to use this opportunity to champion the excellent work that thousands of volunteers are doing to improve their area by steering what development does and does not take place, and also to underline the Government's unwavering support and commitment to neighbourhood planning and local communities.

I look forward to working with you in the days ahead to ensure more areas benefit from adopting a neighbourhood plan – meeting the needs of residents and building on the real progress made so far.

Best wishes,
Esther



Minister of State for Housing
The Rt Hon Esther McVey



New Neighbourhood Plans Research Commissioned

We are in the process of commissioning new research on the impact of Neighbourhood Planning. The aim of this research is to improve our understanding of the impacts of neighbourhood plans, for example their role in supporting the Department's housing delivery agenda and their broader impact on the planning system. The research aims to conclude early in 2020, and will be useful to inform future thinking on neighbourhood planning. Researchers will be in contact with a number of groups and authorities as part of their work.

GUIDANCE UPDATE



On the 22nd July 2019, we made further updates to the Government's planning guidance. The changes include five new sections that provide guidance on: the role of the Green Belt in the planning system; 5 year housing land supply and the Housing Delivery Test; making effective use of land (including planning for higher density development); planning for

the housing needs of different groups; and the use of Habitats Regulations Assessment.

We have also made amendments to several sections of the guidance including: Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, Town Centres and Retail, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal, Plan-Making, Consultation

and Pre-decision Matters, Historic Environment, Water Supply, Wastewater and Water Quality, Land Affected by Contamination, Land Stability, Healthy and Safe Communities, and Enforcement and Post-Permission Matters. These updates bring the guidance in line with the revised National Planning Policy Framework.

To view these changes to the guidance, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

UPDATE

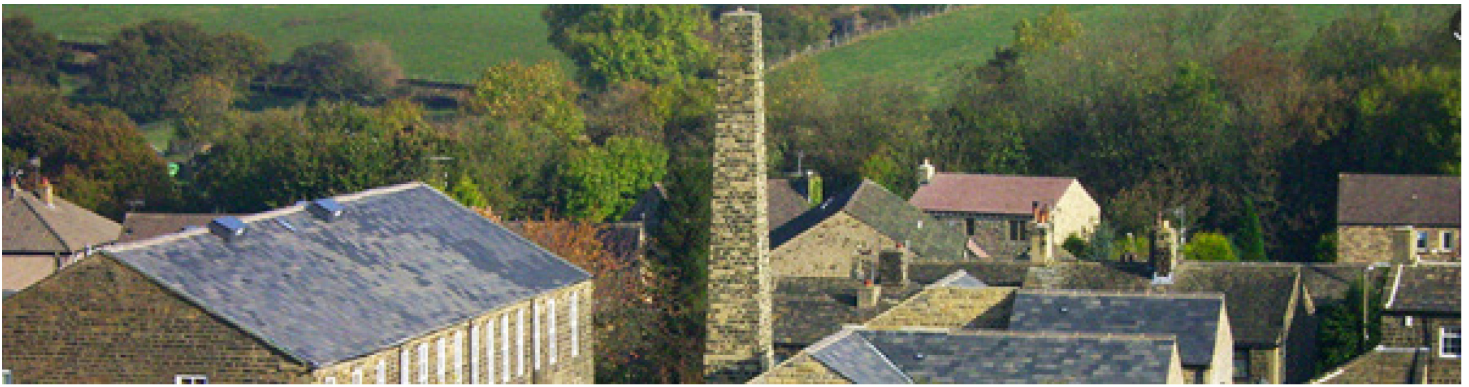
This summer we ran a series of regional events to gather views about the impact of neighbourhood planning, discuss current issues and look at how the system can be further improved.

We engaged with over 50 representatives from neighbourhood planning groups, local planning authorities, consultancies, the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (NPIERS) and academia. Attendees were generally very positive about the impact of neighbourhood planning and highlighted the role it has in empowering communities, improving knowledge of the planning system and acting as a catalyst for community projects and initiatives.

The events also highlighted a number key themes, including:

- the need to communicate more clearly about what neighbourhood planning can do for communities;
- the significance of a good relationship between the neighbourhood planning group and local planning authority in the success of a neighbourhood plan;
- how we can better align local and neighbourhood plan-making processes;
- challenges facing groups in preparing plans in urban and deprived areas; and
- how we can improve the quality of neighbourhood plans.

Thank you to all attendees who came and shared their knowledge and experience with us.



Meet the Champions

We are pleased to introduce **Peter Allison and Ron Simpson**, who are both neighbourhood planning (NP) champions. They both welcomed the opportunity to share with us further insight into their roles as champions as well as their passion and commitment to community involvement respectively in Wilsden, West Yorkshire and Uppingham, Rutland.



Peter Allison, NP champion

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your neighbourhood planning group/area?

I have been a parish councillor in Wilsden, West Yorkshire for 15 years. I am also a member of the board of the Yorkshire Local Council Association and the assembly of the National Association of Local Councils.

Wilsden is a former mill village on the edge of Bronte country in the Bradford Metropolitan District with a population of about 5,000 living in just over 2,000 households. Although there has been significant development in recent years it still retains much of the industrial heritage of a West Yorkshire Victorian mill village at its core, along with links to the pre-Industrial Revolution period when it was a group of agricultural hamlets. It is a popular place to live and as a result the green fields around the village are under significant pressure from developers. Although a significant number of residents commute to Bradford and Leeds, the village has still retained a strong local economy with many small and medium sized enterprises

based in the area. There is a tightly drawn Green Belt and much of the possible developable land within the settlement boundary is valued as local green space.

future development could result in the village merging with neighbouring villages and with the larger Bradford conurbation.



What inspired you to become/interested you in becoming a neighbourhood planning champion?

I have always had a strong interest in communities taking as much responsibility as possible for their local area. Neighbourhood planning, along with other new policies introduced with the Localism Act, is an invaluable tool in communities taking on this responsibility. I am interested in both how to achieve the best result for my own community and helping others to do the best for their communities.

How did you become interested in neighbourhood planning?

In recent years the village has grown significantly and available development land has been built on. The community strongly values its distinct identity and is concerned that

Since you became a neighbourhood planning champion, how have you helped other communities in their neighbourhood planning journey?

I have given presentations and advice to three neighbouring parish councils who are at the early stage of developing a neighbourhood plan. I have also arranged a neighbourhood planning workshop for active groups in the Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees districts. This included a presentation from Historic England on how local historic assets can be incorporated into a neighbourhood plan and from a neighbourhood planning consultant on how the evidence base required for a neighbourhood plan is evolving.

What sort of advice and support can you provide to neighbourhood planning groups?

I can give practical advice on starting to develop a neighbourhood plan and managing the process both in terms of the experiences and challenges we have encountered. One area I feel strongly about is policy writing. Unless you have a clear idea of precisely what you want to achieve by a policy, and then encapsulate your aims in a clear unambiguous policy, your plan is unlikely to achieve your objectives.

Would you recommend becoming a neighbourhood planning champion?

Yes, if you are interested in the broader aspects of how neighbourhood planning can empower a community. I am interested in the development of local councils as a way for communities to become more involved in achieving things in their area. As a parish councillor I have a greater knowledge of the local government sector and what can and cannot be achieved.

And finally, what would you say have been the greatest benefits of neighbourhood planning in your area?

It has made the community think about longer term objectives as well as shorter term issues.



Ron Simpson, NP champion

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your neighbourhood planning group/area?

I am a retired local government chief officer who settled in the lovely market town of Uppingham in Rutland (population 5k) over 25 years ago. My volunteering history is online at www.ronsimpson.uk. I am a local town councillor and was the principal author of my community's neighbourhood plan which was a government front runner and

created with the help of our local business led community partnership, Uppingham First. See www.uppinghamneighbourhoodplan.info for all the working versions of the plan and their supporting data.

How did you become interested in neighbourhood planning?

I saw the original legislation shaping up in the House of Commons and realised that it was likely to be well received in our small community as it devolved some real power

and money to the local level. With the support of the then Deputy Leader of the County Council, and the town council, we submitted a bid from our local community partnership for front runner status. Neighbourhood planning has been a big part of my life since then. I now promote the merits of neighbourhood planning and related matters to parishes through my Executive role in the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils, our local parish network and conference presentations around the UK; also, occasionally, in my

fortnightly column in the county newspaper, the Rutland Times.

What inspired you to become/interested you in becoming a neighbourhood planning champion?

Professional support networks are always a valuable source of help and advice. When government created the role of N Planning Champion, it seemed an obvious move for someone like me with a best practice, training and development background to get involved and both learn from, and contribute to, the collective knowledge and ongoing development of the neighbourhood planning movement.

Since you became a neighbourhood planning champion, how have you helped other communities in their neighbourhood planning journey?

Because I undertake my work in a voluntary capacity without charge, I receive many calls from parishes seeking support on a wide range of issues. I have also led number of village meetings intended to motivate the community to engage with neighbourhood planning or

persuade the parish council to support such an initiative. I really enjoy such debates. I have also contributed to number of neighbourhood planning publications and responded to a range of online queries. Through Uppingham First, I have organised a number of Local-ity funded training events for interested parish councillors.

What sort of advice and support can you provide to neighbourhood planning groups?

As I am not a qualified planner, my advice tends to concentrate on community, business and developer/landowner engagement as well as exercising the entrepreneurial possibilities created by the legislative phrase “ in general compliance with.....” Many groups need a little stimulation to explore the real possibilities!

I have also spent some time advising on delivery issues to ensure real outputs from neighbourhood plans. My own town has a ‘Vanguard Board’ to monitor and promote plan delivery. It is attended by neighbourhood planning group members, councillors, local

business representatives, schools, IT companies, housing developers, community safety and health agencies and CPRE. It’s a great model to move things forward with the board meeting every six months or so to appraise progress. The concept is attracting increasing attention.

Would you recommend becoming a neighbourhood planning champion?

Absolutely! Helping others is rewarding and a great way to increase one’s own knowledge and skills.

And finally, what would you say have been the greatest benefits of neighbourhood planning in your area?

A huge rise in community interest in planning; greater local control of planning policy; an anticipated £200k+ in CIL monies for the town council (more than twice its annual budget); a stronger relationship with the LPA; the homes we actually want where we want them; strengthened interest in local governance; and a huge amount of personal satisfaction.

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/championsmap/>.

Affordable housing for sale

Since the launch of the Discounted Market Homes programmes in May 2019, 19 grants have been approved and 32 qualified bodies have received Technical Support. We continue to encourage groups to apply, especially if they are seeking to allocate sites for affordable housing for sale or they are at an early stage and considering bringing forward affordable housing for sale and are investigating the need by undertaking housing needs assessments and other relevant studies.

Funding packages ranging from £10,000 to £50,000 are available to neighbourhood planning groups to support them in identifying suitable sites for affordable homes for sale and even to grant permission through a neighbourhood development order. Extra training and advice is also available for groups. More information on how to apply and eligibility is available at <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>



DESIGN TOOLKIT: Achieving well-designed places through neighbourhood planning

Andy VonBradsky , Head of Architecture (MHCLG)



Design quality is high on the Government's agenda. Ministers are committed to improving the quality of our built environment, and that we deliver better and more homes.

A Design Team led by a Head of Built Environment and supported by myself, Head of Architecture, was set up in March 2018 and is delivering an action plan with tangible outcomes to raise design quality, including conferences on design, planning policy development, workshops on improving community engagement, direct support for local planning authorities through the Planning Delivery Fund plus lots more.

One of the key approaches to delivering better outcomes is to strengthen the planning system by placing quality at its heart. The NPPF was revised to include a

specific section on quality, Chapter 12 Achieving Well Designed Places and quality is referred to in other chapters, including health, safety and movement that lead to improvements in the quality of life for communities.

We are developing new tools to help deliver not just more homes but better homes. One of the team's first tasks was to comment on the [Neighbourhood Planning Design Toolkit](#) that was in use at the time. It required an overhaul and update to improve the content, case studies and strengthen its application. A consultancy AECOM were appointed to write a new Design Toolkit: Achieving Well-Designed Places through Neighbourhood Planning which has now been launched. It is a downloadable illustrated document that sets out the principles of good design and the tools available to promote good design in



the planning process for neighbourhood plan making.

Neighbourhood planning is being applied successfully in many places, parishes, villages, towns and cities, where communities are shaping plans that are appropriate for their area. Local people may have a deep appreciation of their area yet can be unclear about how new development can be designed to enhance or harmonise their neighbourhood.

The aim of the toolkit is to support groups involved in neighbourhood planning to define and promote good design locally. It is intended for use by community groups and their representatives to engage with and influence the quality of designs. It explains the importance of quality design in terms of quality of life, how the principles can be applied according to the context and

the tools that can help achieve this. It is illustrated with case studies and provides other sources of information on design quality.

It is a community oriented, easy to use guide that is accessible to all.

Our work on design quality is ongoing. We are currently writing a Design Guide to support Planning Practice Guidance and the policies related to quality set out in the NPPF. It sets out 10 characteristics for well designed places and it will be for local planning authorities to apply these principles to their area through local design guidance to support local plans so that design guidance is appropriate for their area. We expect to launch the Design Manual in autumn and when we do we will promote its use including a feature in this newsletter.



Neighbourhood Planning News

It's been a busy time for neighbourhood planning! There have been 839 successful referendums (as of 31 July 2019). This is a 19% increase since we reached the 750th referendum in February 2019. To highlight some of the latest successes **Wembdon Parish Council** and **Godalming Town Council** were the latest neighbourhood planning groups in July to be successful at referendum and both groups have since gone on to have their neighbourhood plans adopted. Similarly, **Moulton Parish Council** and **Standish Voice** have recently had their plans made part of the Cheshire West and Chester Council's development plan, and the development plan for Wigan Council respectively. The groups top priorities:

Wembdon Parish Council

Priorities identified in the Neighbourhood Plan include preserving the allotments, village green, and parklands, and protecting the church, parish centre, village hall, pub and village shop, preserving important Wembdon viewpoints, and promoting the establishment of a doctor's surgery in the village.

Godalming Town Council

The neighbourhood plans seeks to address the housing and social care needs of the population, protect the considerable heritage of the area as well as developing local business and address road and transportation issues.

Moulton Parish Council

The neighbourhood development plan seeks to address building a sustainable community, housing needs, jobs and the local economy, protecting the environment, and improving community services including Sport and Recreation.

Standish Voice Neighbourhood Forum

The neighbourhood plan is the first of its kind to reach the stage of a referendum in Greater Manchester and has now been adopted. The group focussed on housing allocations, preserving open space, parking and the development of the village centre.

Would you recommend becoming a neighbourhood planning champion?

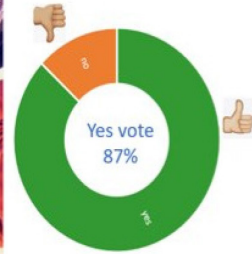
'Yes, if you are interested in the broader aspects of how neighbourhood planning can empower a community. I am interested in the development of local councils as a way for communities to become more involved in achieving things in their area. As a parish councillor I have a greater knowledge of the local government sector and what can and cannot be achieved.'

Peter Allison, NP Champion

KEY STATISTICS

839 Successful Referendums

Over 900,000 Votes have been cast



165 Local Planning Authorities have at least one Made Plan



COMMUNITIES WEEK



Communities Week, held on **9th – 14th September** 2019, is an annual opportunity to celebrate and raise awareness

of the hard work people across the country are doing to improve their communities. The week also provides an exciting opportunity to show the breadth of work that MHCLG is doing to support all communities, raising awareness about the recently published Communities Framework, alongside some of MHCLG policies, including work to stimulate our high streets, Neighbourhood Planning and cross departmental work.

Communities Week is being run in partnership with the Communities Partnership Board, a group of community-based organisations. One of the

organisations, Locality, is taking the lead in co-ordinating the exciting activities for the week, which will be themed around the four key pillars set out in the Communities Framework:

The [Communities Framework](#), published in July, sets out a vision for strong communities, including what makes communities strong, why they matter and celebrating some of the incredible work people are doing to improve the places where they live.

1. Trust, connectedness and local pride;
2. Active citizenship and local control;
3. Shared community spaces; and,
4. Shared prosperity.

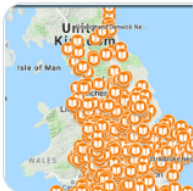
The focus of the week is to socialise and raise awareness of the framework to civil society organisations and their partners, whilst celebrating all the work undertaken to support our communities; and inspire people in communities.

Social Network and Support

All Things Neighbourhood Planning @np_things · Aug 5
I have updated the Neighbourhood Plan Map and Neighbourhood Plan Finder to show the 26 NPs which passed referendum in July 2019.

neighbourhood-planning.co.uk/2019/06/new-in...

#neighbourhoodplanning



New Interactive Map of Neighbourhood Plans
Image: All Things Neighbourhood Planning's interactive map ATNP's Interactive Neighbourhood ...
neighbourhood-planning.co.uk

#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 hashtag: #neighbourhoodplanning. Just some of many recent posts are shared below!

NPlannersLondon @NPlannersLondon · Jul 24
Evidence emerging from @ChrisMountainNP research presented at our workshop that #neighbourhoodplanning forums are reaching less advantaged areas more than parish and town councils



Neighbourhood planning @Nbrhoodplanning · Jul 5
How to prepare for, and what to expect at, examination



How to prepare for, and what to expect at, examination - Locality Neigh...
Why do I need to read this guide? This toolkit is aimed at helping neighbourhood planning groups ensure they have a smooth and ...
neighbourhoodplanning.org

CCBerks @CCBerkshire · Jul 23
Planning for Change through Community Organising. Brand new workshop ran by @corganisers combining #communityorganising and #neighbourhoodplanning skills. Read more here.
ccb2017.wordpress.com/2019/07/23/pla...



NeighbourhoodPlanFan @Neighbo02721596 · Jul 11
100% 👍!!

Lancaster City Council @LancasterCC · Feb 15
The result of the Lancaster district's first neighbourhood plan referendum has been announced, with 100% of voters giving it the thumbs up. All 62 voters, a 60.19% turnout, in the Wennington Parish Council area supported its neighbourhood plan.

MyCommunity.org.uk @MyCommunityHelp · Aug 6
NOW OPEN! The #BrightIdeasFund is open for applications until 30 September ow.ly/E1rD30nzub6

The programme supports new community business ideas through the start-up & planning stages with tailored business support, to the implementation stage with grants of up to £15,000.

Bright Ideas Fund now open

Business development support and up to £15,000 for your new community business idea.

Apply by Monday 30 September 2019



New Neighbourhood Planning Resources

The library of online resources continues to grow as we learn more about neighbourhood planning and respond to suggestions from communities around the country. The new and recently updated resources are:



[Your step by step roadmap guide](#)

Find out about each stage you need to go through in order to create your neighbourhood plan. The roadmap describes the plan making process so that you can understand each necessary statutory stage, without getting too bogged down in legislation.



[How to assess and allocate sites for development](#)

Find out the principles for allocating sites and the methods that should be applied in order to make sure the sites chosen are the most appropriate for the neighbourhood.



[Achieving well-designed places through neighbourhood planning](#)

This is a new toolkit that replaces our previous design toolkit. It is more comprehensive and sets out a host of helpful design tools you can utilise to better shape design through your neighbourhood plan.

Other online resources are available at:

<https://neighbourhood-planning.org/resources/>



The Neighbourhood Planning team at MHCLG

Helen Keen and Rebecca Miles lead the team. Stephen Wright, Sujata Talukdar and Sapphire Malcolm lead on support programmes and finance; Robert Griffith and Jen Beresford lead on plan making policy.

If you wish to get in contact regarding

Departmental issues, please send MHCLG a message via <http://forms.communities.gov.uk/>.

Locality continue to provide advice directly to groups on neighbourhood planning through their website at <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>.

Would you recommend becoming a neighbourhood planning champion?

'Absolutely! Helping others is rewarding and a great way to increase one's own knowledge and skills.'

Ron Simpson, NP Champion