Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Neighbourhood Planning

The rural frontrunners: research and case studies

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Contents

Introduction

What is this report?

This report presents a series of case studies that communities considering neighbourhood planning can consult as they develop their own neighbourhood plans and development orders.

It has a particular focus on rural planning issues and is based upon research into the progress made by, and lessons being learnt from, the rural neighbourhood planning frontrunners.

The case study material does not seek to duplicate the many 'how-to' guides that have been published and which are widely available[1]. Rather, it seeks to identify the challenges or regularly occurring issues that communities in rural areas are trying to address, and provides information, links and prompts to those neighbourhood plans that are tackling these.

The report does not provide all the answers and, indeed, does not intend to: there is no one-size-fits-all approach and the response in one place will not necessarily be applicable in another. However, it does seek to show what can be achieved, and what approaches could work or be considered elsewhere.

There is much more to learn. This report was researched less than a year after the introduction of the Localism Act, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. Few neighbourhood plans have been submitted for examination. At the time of writing, only two have reached the referendum stage. As more neighbourhood plans progress, more learning and practical examples will come to light. This report and the case studies contained within it will, likewise, need to evolve over time.

The report has been prepared by Parsons Brinckerhoff on behalf of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) with input from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It has been subject to comment from a wider reference group comprising representatives from Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (Cabe) at the Design Council, Locality, Planning Aid England and The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment.

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[1] Links to a selection of these are embedded within the report and also listed in Appendix A: Useful sources

Who should read this report?

This report will be of interest to anyone thinking about or currently working on a neighbourhood plan. The focus of the report and the case studies is on how neighbourhood planning can help address particular rural issues, but some of the findings on aspects related to process and outputs may be of interest to those involved in neighbourhood planning in urban areas too.

The case studies are primarily aimed at helping community groups, but may also be of relevance to local authority officers and members, as well as the wider planning and development industry.

What is neighbourhood planning?

Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act as a way for communities to have a greater say in how the places where they live and work should change and develop over time. The Act devolves greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods, and gives local communities more control over housing and planning decisions. It is a key reform of the planning system, designed to create the conditions for communities to welcome growth by giving local people a real voice in deciding the look and feel of development in their area - from determining the location of shops, offices and schools, for example, to setting standards of design for new housing.

Neighbourhood planning, as a new policy and plan-making initiative, is still in its infancy. Although there is a wealth of previous experience across the country in relation to community-led planning, in the form of Parish Plans and Village Design Statements for example, neighbourhood planning differs from this as, for the first time, if a plan is brought into force, then very real weight is attached to the community's plans and aspirations. This represents an excellent opportunity for the community to influence and shape change, to address particular concerns, with a strategy grounded in and reflecting local knowledge and objectives.

Understandably, many communities across the country have been excited by the opportunities that neighbourhood planning offers. It has been enthusiastically taken up, in both rural and urban areas, with more than 200 neighbourhood plans being progressed with funding made available by DCLG through its 'frontrunner' programme. Work on these began in advance of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations being in place. Indeed, their purpose was to test the process before the Regulations were adopted, and to enable lessons from them to be learnt and shared. Many more communities across the country are now starting to develop neighbourhood plans.

Why is this important?

The planning system helps decide what gets built, where and when. It has an important role in supporting economic growth, improving people's quality of life, and protecting the natural environment.

In theory, planning was always intended to give local communities a say in decisions that affect them. But in practice, communities have often found it hard to have a meaningful say. The government wants to put power back in the hands of local residents, employees and business, councils and civic leaders - those who know best the needs of their local areas.

Key facts and figures

Nearly one-fifth of England's population live and work in rural areas in a patchwork of farms, hamlets, villages and towns. These rural areas are living, dynamic communities which contribute significantly to the national economy and to our national heritage, culture and character.

- Rural areas are defined as settlements with fewer than 10,000 people.

- 86 per cent of England's landmass is rural.

- 18.9 per cent of the population of England live in rural areas (9.8 million people in 2010).

- 1.2 per cent of the population lives in sparse rural areas (620,000 people in 2010). These are areas where the surrounding area is defined as being remotely populated[2].

Rural Statement 2012

The Rural Statement[3] affirms the Government's overarching commitment to rural communities, setting out a vision of successful rural businesses and thriving rural communities in a living, working countryside.

The Rural Statement recognises that local government, the voluntary sector and the private sector each have a crucial role in delivering the services that rural people depend upon, and it highlights the policies and good practice that are helping people to take local action to meet their own needs.

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[2] Source for figures: www.defra.gov.uk/rural/economy/

[3] Defra (2012) Rural Statement 2012, September

The Rural Statement makes reference to the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and neighbourhood planning, which it notes has sought to simplify the complex planning process and introduce a new, more flexible and positive approach to planning, making it easier for local rural communities to be involved in advancing developments that best suit their needs.

The Rural Agenda

Over the last decade there has been much interest in, and a body of research undertaken into, the particular planning, socio-economic and environmental issues affecting rural areas and communities. At a very high level, these issues can be summarised as a lack of affordable housing and limited or restricted business growth. But this gives rise to a range of inter-related issues, including:

- An ageing population.

- Delivering, supporting and maintaining local services.

- Designing better, more integrated development.

- Diversifying the economic base.

- Enhancing accessibility and reducing dependence on the car.

- Meeting the housing needs and, in particular, the affordable housing needs of rural communities.

- Retaining the very character and qualities that define our rural communities.

These issues come together in what has been called the 'sustainability trap', where 'slavish adherence to what exists'[4] and the application of 'tick box'[5] sustainability exercises has sought to maintain the status quo. This has denied rural communities and villages the opportunity to respond to the need for growth, and denied them the ability to provide homes and jobs which can help sustain local facilities and services that might otherwise close.

In essence, the argument is that planning policies and the interpretation of them has often resulted in villages and rural areas being identified as inherently unsustainable locations. This has denied them of the potential growth they need, such as locally affordable housing, to enable people to remain living and working in those areas. Without this growth it is difficult to sustain shops, schools and other services. If these close or contract, the area becomes even less sustainable. The result is that 'rural communities have slowly but

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[4] The Rural Coalition (2009) Prospectus: The Future is Rural Too, The Rural Coalition (ACRE, CPRE, CLA, LGA, RTPI, TCPA), CRC and CABE, September

[5] Taylor, M. (2008) Living Working Countryside: The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing, DCLG, July

relentlessly become less and less sustainable and less and less self-sufficient'[6]. This can give rise to social exclusion: if lower income households are excluded from rural communities, because of a lack of affordable housing and access to jobs and services, the social and economic vitality of these areas is weakened[7].

Neighbourhood planning presents a real opportunity to address these matters, with local communities, under the leadership of the Parish Council, now being able to develop visions, strategies and planning policies that respond to and are grounded in an understanding of the local area.

How can neighbourhood planning help address the rural agenda?

Irrespective of the final form and focus of the neighbourhood plan, it is clear that a series of rural issues need considering. These will vary from place to place and, in some areas, they may already be addressed through local plans and core strategies. However, neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity to respond to these challenges 'from the bottom-up'. As the introduction to the Taylor Review states:

'Change is inevitable whether development takes place or not, and the choices we make today will shape tomorrow's character of the market towns, villages and hamlets that make up our countryside'.[8]

Neighbourhood planning can help communities to develop a locally specific set of policies that shape the future of an area, and help them have greater control over what change happens where and when. The process of neighbourhood planning can:

- Generate a 'bottom-up' debate about local needs and what needs developing, protecting or providing to help shape a positive and successful future for the community.

- Assess the type and amount of housing required, the type and split of affordable housing, and where and how this can be delivered.

- Assess how planning and policy can respond to and encourage a range of different employment types in rural areas.

- Consider the impact of future change on the presence of facilities and services, and how these might be supported.

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[6] The Rural Coalition (2010) The Rural Challenge: Achieving Sustainable Rural Communities for the 21st Century, TCPA, August

[7] Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research with Land Use Consultants for Defra (2006) The Extent and Impacts of Rural Housing Need, Defra, December

[8] Taylor, M. (2008) Living Working Countryside: The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing, DCLG, July

- Give thought to how accessibility by all modes of transport can be enhanced.

- Help think about the area holistically and how change and development can benefit the place as a whole, rather than being seen in isolation. Policies can help create more attractive and integrated development that is socially and environmentally friendly.

- Ensure that any decisions are based upon a broadly representative range of responses and opinions, with different engagement techniques used to encourage the involvement of all in the process.

The neighbourhood plans we have looked at during our research have been seeking to address a wide range of issues as well as following different routes for producing the plan. Some examples are outlined below.

Housing

Nearly all the rural neighbourhood plans we looked at are grappling with the need for housing and, in particular, local affordable housing. A variety of approaches are being explored.

In Much Wenlock and Thame, land is being allocated for development, giving the community greater control over where housing growth required by the local plan should be located. This is also happening in the Cringleford neighbourhood plan.

In Allendale and Upper Eden, consideration is being given to the reuse and conversion of redundant farm buildings. In Strumpshaw, the neighbourhood plan is looking at the opportunities created by small scale housing to help deliver improved community facilities.

The issue of affordable housing for local people is being tackled in many rural neighbourhood plans. Approaches include the use of rural exception sites and working with Registered Social landlords (RSLs) to introduce a 'cascade', where housing is first offered to local people, followed by others on the waiting list. There are questions here as to how 'local' is defined. Such a definition is provided in the Allendale neighbourhood plan.

In Lynton and Lynmouth there are concerns about the use of housing as holiday or second homes which are only often only occupied for short periods of the year. Policies have been prepared that require new housing to be the purchaser's primary place of residence.

Employment and economic growth

Many neighbourhood plans are looking to protect local services and shops, are considering job creation and the local economy. They are establishing objectives and policies to help promote, strengthen and diversify the economy.

In addition to housing issues, low pay and lack of employment opportunities have been cited as reasons why some people are moving away from rural areas[9]. More and better employment opportunities are required to reduce out-migration, particularly of young people, and to retain skills. Reducing out-migration and retaining this spending power can support the vitality of local shops and services.

In the Slaugham and Upper Eden plans, broadband and provision of 'fibre-to-the-premises' is being promoted as a means of encouraging home working. In Lynton and Lynmouth ideas are being explored to reopen the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway as a way of further capturing spending from tourism.

In the Fosse Villages the neighbourhood plan is looking at how the local economy might be re-balanced, supporting the provision of suitable new premises and sites for smaller businesses and enterprises to start up and expand in the area.

As part of the Cerne Valley neighbourhood plan a separate business strategy group has been established and is developing ideas that will feed into the neighbourhood plan.

Both Allendale and Cringleford include policies to promote economic development in their draft neighbourhood plans, published for pre-submission consultation online. Allendale's policies make it easier to build new business space and facilities for home working, as well as promoting appropriate development for tourism, an important source of income in the area. Cringleford's policies focus on providing space for small businesses and protecting the local retail offer.

Uppingham's plan is strongly led by the town's business group with the town council, and considers the economic benefits that development could bring to the town. A key aim is to attract investment and create local jobs. One of the ways the town intends to do this is by improving both transport and digital communications infrastructure.

Within the current economic climate, the challenge for people involved in neighbourhood planning will be making this happen. A further review of these and other emerging plans in time will help show how successful these policies have been.

Consultation and engagement

The research has found a variety of consultation approaches and techniques being used, though most plans have used traditional methods such as exhibitions, leafleting, meetings, questionnaires, road shows, social media and websites.

In Lynton and Lymouth volunteers have acted as 'community champions': representatives from the local community and local organisations who can then take messages back to their contacts to further spread the word and encourage involvement.

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[9] Colin Buchanan, Gallent, N and Robinson, S, for Defra (2010) Research into Rural Housing Affordability: Final Report, Defra

Along the same lines of the community champions approach, topic groups were created in Thame, based around key themes to be developed in the neighbourhood plan. Consultation in both Thame and Much Wenlock has been extensive, with several rounds of meetings and presentations taking place in both. These have generated a substantial number of responses. In Thame, consultants were employed to help interpret consultation comments and feedback and develop ideas and options.

In the larger, multi-parished areas roadshows have been used to engage with people. Both the Fosse Villages and Upper Eden plans used this approach. This has required some tailoring of the material presented to reflect slightly different parish concerns.

Types of plan

A variety of types of neighbourhood plan are being produced across the country. DCLG has identified that, broadly, six different types of neighbourhood plan are being progressed by the frontrunners[10], as presented in Table 1 below. There is no right or wrong approach. The type of plan prepared will reflect the issues being faced in a particular area and the ambitions of the community.

The case studies in this report reflect this variety. The Upper Eden plan includes seven policies, all primarily focused on the provision of housing in sparsely populated rural areas. At the other end of the spectrum, the Thame plan is comprehensively addressing a full range of issues. It includes site allocations and policies for a range of land uses and activities. It is taking the form of a mini local plan. In the Allendale neighbourhood plan there are no site allocations but again it covers a wide range of policy issues. It is taking the form of a policy plan.

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[10] See DCLG presentation at Planning Aid for London Neighbourhood Planning Event, 9 May 2012, http://tinyurl.com/ckty6jx

Table 1: The different types of neighbourhood plan being undertaken

Type of neighbourhood plan	Scope / content
Mini local plans	Comprehensive coverage of policy issues Allocate development sites for a wide range of uses
Policy and allocation plans	Neighbourhood plans covering a narrower range of issues Often theme specific Allocate development sites for a narrow range of uses
Single policy document	Neighbourhood plan covering a single policy issue (for example, protection of green space)
Policy plans	Neighbourhood plans covering a broad range of policy issues No site allocations Similar to parish plans Augment local plan policy
Neighbourhood development order (minor development)	Residential – minor development (for example, house extensions, windows) Town centre – change of use / minor changes to signage Business park / industrial estate - minor development
Neighbourhood development order (site specific)	Development of a particular site (for example, small housing scheme under Community Right to Build)

Study Method

Overview

Introduction

In this section we present the approach to the research and production of the case studies. As per the project outline issued by Defra, the study is about qualitative rather than quantitative material and experiences. The primary aim of the work has been to draw out examples of how neighbourhood planning is progressing in rural areas. The work thus revolved around interviews and discussions with neighbourhood groups and authorities as opposed to the gathering and analysis of raw data.

Study period

Work on the study commenced in November 2012, with research and interviews undertaken between then and February 2013. It is based upon discussions with the most advanced rural neighbourhood plan frontrunners as of November 2012. The work is thus a snapshot in time: at the time of writing only one neighbourhood plan (Upper Eden) has been successfully voted in favour of at referendum; and only two others have progressed through the examination stage (Thame and Exeter St Davids).

As more neighbourhood plans progress there will inevitable be new lessons emerging from their experiences. What this study has sought to do is to identify those most commonly occurring issues which will be of interest to others and help them progress their neighbourhood plans.

Neighbourhood plans reviewed

A list of the ten most advanced rural based neighbourhood plan frontrunners was provided by DCLG. Telephone interviews were arranged and carried out with the parish council (or representative leading the neighbourhood plan on behalf of the community) and an officer at the local authority within which the plan area falls. Where available, draft plans and emerging material were also reviewed.

The ten neighbourhood plan frontrunners (and the local authority area) identified by DCLG were:

- Allendale (Northumberland County Council)

- Cerne Valley (West Dorset District Council)

- Faversham Creek (Swale Borough Council)

- Fosse Villages (Blaby District Council / Leicestershire County Council)

- Lynton and Lynmouth (Exmoor National Park)

- Much Wenlock (Shropshire Council)

- St Blaise (Cornwall County Council)

- Strumpshaw (Broadland District Council)

- Thame (South Oxfordshire District Council)

- Upper Eden (Eden District Council)

Work stages

Literature review

A review of literature and material prepared by various sources was carried out in relation to (a) rural planning issues and (b) of neighbourhood planning work undertaken thus far.

It drew upon a range of material, including previous research and reports, such as the Taylor Report[11] and the Rural Coalition[12]. Material available from the DCLG through the frontrunner programme was reviewed[13], as well as that prepared by the four organizations who received funding from DCLG to support communities in Planning[14]. Furthermore, research, commentary and papers prepared on neighbourhood planning to date and the lessons learnt were reviewed[15].

Alongside the literature review, a question was posted on the Neighbourhood Planning group on LinkedIn. This sought to ask members about their experiences, areas of learning, key rural issues being address, and how key rural issues are being addressed. At the time of posting the question, the LinkedIn group had close to 2,000 members drawn from a variety of locations and backgrounds. The question drew 47 responses.

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[11] Taylor, M. (2008) Living Working Countryside: The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing, DCLG

[12] See, for example, The Rural Coalition (2010) The Rural Challenge: Achieving sustainable rural communities for the 21st century, TCPA

[13] See, for example, the series of Notes on Neighbourhood Planning published by DCLG

[14] See, for example, Locality (2012) Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide, and the Cabe @ The Design Council online neighbourhood planning toolkits and guidance (http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/CABE/Localism-and-planning/Neighbourhood-planning-toolkits-and-guidance/)

[15] See, for example, Derounian, J. (2012) Localism: what can we learn from the pioneer authorities? and SKM Colin Buchanan (2011) Neighbourhood Planning: Lessons learnt from the frontrunners

Salient points from the review were drawn out. These included concerns with regard to the provision of affordable housing, social and community infrastructure, transport provision and the need to diversify and grow the economic base but, at the same time, retaining the very characteristics of our rural communities.

The messages from the review were used to inform the format of the interviews with the community representatives and local authority officers working on the list of ten identified neighbourhood plans.

Interviews

Telephone interviews were sought with the community representatives and local authority officers for the ten neighbourhood plans. Twenty interviews were sought and eighteen undertaken. Contact details were supplied by DCLG. Initial contact, explaining the purpose of the study and inviting people to participate, was made by Defra.

A list of questions was prepared and agreed with Defra, with some slight variations between those for the community representatives and local authority officers, reflecting their different roles. The questions asked are presented in the appendix to this report.

In addition, questions were also posed of the six organisations providing support to communities, comprising the four groups awarded funding from DCLG for this purpose (CPRE, Locality, Planning Aid England, The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment), plus ACRE and Cabe at the Design Council who also provide similar services to communities. These questions are also presented in the appendix. Four of these groups provided responses to the questions, but all provided input through their role on the study reference group.

Alongside the questions, and where available, the emerging neighbourhood plans, policies and objectives were reviewed.

Case studies

The emerging findings from the literature review, interviews and review of emerging plans were presented in a preliminary report. In this, eighteen potential case studies were identified. The suggested case studies focused on topics rather than being place specific: it was agreed at the early stages of the study that greater benefit would be derived from looking at particular issues, such as identifying land for development, rather than reporting on progress of a single plan. It was felt this would be of more interest and value to other community groups looking to prepare or who are currently working on neighbourhood plans.

Of the list of eighteen potential case studies, some were very much rural-specific, others of interest to a wider audience. Some were focused on policy and outputs, others on process matters. Many also straddled an overarching issue – the delivery of housing, for example.

Following review by the project and reference group, seven case study topics were shortlisted for further investigation. The case studies are those which reflect issues being faced by a wide range of communities. The case studies draw upon different neighbourhood plans and show how different communities are responding to particular issues.

Those potentially interesting case study topics identified in the list of eighteen, but where the neighbourhood plan it would draw upon was still at a relatively early stage of the plan making process, were not been taken forward – at this stage they would only provide limited information, though of course might be worth revisiting at a later date.

Some other suggested case study areas have not been progressed because they duplicate current or emerging national policy positions (for example, the roll out of broadband), or because they are not strictly land use planning policy matters (for example, the provision of local community transport).

The long list of potential case studies and the final selection is shown in the Appendix. Following the shortlisting of the case studies, further background research and discussions with the parish / town councils and the local planning authority officers was undertaken. The resulting case studies are presented in the next section of this report.

The Case Studies

Introduction

Through the research a series of common issues have emerged, relating both to emerging policies and the approaches followed in the production of the plan. These include (1) housing and local development need, (2) governance of the plan, and (3) consultation and engagement.

Seven case studies have been prepared, grouped according to one of three main issues, as shown in Table 2 below. The case studies are ones which:

- Have good information available.

- Have made good progress since being awarded frontrunner status.

- Reflect issues that could be faced by a wide range of communities.

Some neighbourhood plans feature in more than one case study. This partly reflects the status of the neighbourhood plans reviewed: some being more advanced than others and thus having more useful information for the case studies. They do though provide a good geographic spread (see Figure 1). In time, as more neighbourhood plans advance, and more knowledge and experience emerges, this list could widen.

Each case study provides links and signposting to useful plans and documents where the reader can find out more.

Table 2: Overview of selected case studies

Overarching issue	Case study topic	Case study neighbourhood plan(s) drawn upon
Local Development Need	A dispersed housing strategy: allowing modest development in small villages	Upper Eden
	Where should new housing go? Identifying land for development	Much Wenlock and Thame
	Limiting second homes: restricting the use of new housing as holiday homes	Lynton & Lynmouth
	Providing affordable homes for the local community	Allendale and Thame
Governance	Plan areas that cross boundaries: how parishes can work together	Fosse Villages
Engagement	Increasing interest and involvement in the plan: using community champions	Lynton & Lynmouth
	Community consultation: how to involve young people	Fosse Villages and the Leicestershire Neighbourhood Planning Network

Figure 1: Geographic spread of neighbourhood plan case study areas

Map Source: http://www.openstreetmap.org/

Reference	Neighbourhood plan	Local authority area	Case study topic(s)
A	Upper Eden	Eden	1.1: A dispersed housing strategy
B	Much Wenlock	Shropshire	1.2: Where should housing go?
C	Thame	South Oxfordshire	1.2: Where should housing go? and 1.4: Providing affordable homes for the local community
D	Lynton and Lynmouth	Exmoor	1.3: Limiting second homes, and 3.1: Increasing interest and involvement in the plan
E	Allendale	Northumberland	1.4: Providing affordable homes for the local community
F	Fosse Villages	Blaby / Leicestershire CC	2.1: Plan areas that cross boundaries, and 3.2: Community consultation: how to involve young people

Issue 1: Local development need

Most of the neighbourhood plans reviewed for this work, and the people we have spoken to, have been seeking to address the issue of housing development, growth and need. This should not come as a surprise: part of the agenda underlying recent changes to the planning system is the delivery of new homes. Indeed, the rationale behind neighbourhood planning is that when local communities are given the opportunity to consider local needs and issues, and the benefits that come with planning for new homes and development, they are more likely to welcome rather than oppose the development of new homes, and thus help increase the rate of new house building.

In the plans we have looked at and communities we have spoken to, housing has emerged as a major issue for most communities: the need to plan for some growth is recognised, but through the neighbourhood plan, they are seeking to ensure that this comes forward in a balanced way, responding to local character and reflecting local housing needs. In particular, affordability, for local people, is of greatest concern.

Figures presented by the Commission for Rural Communities have shown that increasing numbers of people have moved from urban to rural areas[16]. However, the limited housing stock in rural areas means there is more competition for the available housing, thus increasing house prices, and often putting them out of reach of local people. At the same time, the stock of affordable homes in rural areas is low and the supply of new housing has been constrained, often through the interpretation of sustainability policies. Where new housing has been provided, it has often been through the development of windfall sites and planning exceptions, but, as research by the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research notes, the volume of development appears to be insufficient to meet housing demand[17].

Taken together with increased house prices and the limited development of new stock, unmet demand for affordable housing and low wages, the result is that people who work in rural areas are often priced out of living near to where they work. This primarily affects young people and families who want to stay in the area but cannot afford to do so. There is a knock-on impact for the provision of schools and services: with young families who would use these displaced, these services may close. Some people who work in rural areas cannot afford to live there, but those who can afford to, do not work there. As The Rural Coalition note, the result is that 'much of the countryside is becoming part dormitory, part theme park and part retirement home'[18].

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[16] Commission for Rural Communities (2010) State of the Countryside 2010 Summary Report, CRC, July

[17] Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research with Land Use Consultants, for DEFRA (2006) The Extent and Impacts of Rural Housing Need, DEFRA, December

[18] The Rural Coalition (2009) Prospectus: The Future is Rural Too, The Rural Coalition (ACRE, CPRE, CLA, LGA, RTPI, TCPA), CRC and CABE, September

Research into rural housing affordability undertaken by Colin Buchanan, Gallent and Robinson suggests that the needs of local people should be taken into account in the allocation of local affordable housing[19]. The definition of what is local will vary from place to place, and may relate to how long a person has been living in that particular area and what their ties are to it. In focus group discussions carried out during their research, it was found that proposals for new housing would sometimes be opposed as, in the past, it had not met a local need.

Neighbourhood planning provides communities across the country with the opportunity to grapple with these issues and develop locally responsive policy solutions. The case studies present a variety of different approaches and solutions to local housing issues being proposed by communities in emerging neighbourhood plans in rural areas across the country. They cover:

- Dispersed housing strategies.

- Allocating land for development.

- Limiting future use of new development as second homes.

- Local housing need.

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[19] Colin Buchanan, Gallent, N and Robinson, S, for Defra (2010) Research into Rural Housing Affordability: Final Report, Defra

Case Study 1.1:
A dispersed Housing Strategy: allowing modest development in small villages

Plan information

Neighbourhood Plan	Upper Eden
Weblink	http://uecp.org.uk/upper-eden-neighbourhood-development-plan/
Frontrunner 'wave'	Upper Eden was selected as a Big Society vanguard (July 2010) and developed the neighbourhood plan as part of this.
Area designation	Application approved August 2012
Status of Plan at time of writing	Proceeding to referendum
Local Planning Authority	Eden District Council
Weblink	http://www.eden.gov.uk/planning-and-development/eden-local-development-framework/neighbourhood-planning/

Summary messages

- Small-scale development is permitted in small villages and settlements rather than being solely focused in and around the main centres. It overcomes the concept of the 'sustainability trap' of not permitting development in small centres.

- Development caps or rates have been established to ensure that the quantity of development does not change the character of the village.

- This approach presents a locally responsive policy but remains in general conformity with the strategic objectives of the local plan.

What, why, how

The plan

The Upper Eden Plan covers a group of seventeen parishes in Cumbria. It is one of the most sparsely populated and isolated areas in the country. It also has the most advanced neighbourhood plan in the country. The neighbourhood plan passed through the examination stage in late 2012 and will be subject to the first neighbourhood plan referendum in March 2013.

The plan builds upon work on the Upper Eden Community Plan published in 2006 and concerns expressed within this about the need to plan for a small amount of housing in areas considered unsustainable because of their location, size and limited local facilities,

but where there is a pressing need to meet local housing need. The provision of locally affordable housing has been the long standing issue for the community.

The neighbourhood plan builds upon the culmination of a long and ongoing engagement process. Consultation that first started on the Community Plan has been ongoing and supplemented by a programme of consultation carried out for the neighbourhood plan. The consultation response showed general support for the plan amongst the local community. No comments were reported to have been received during the production of the plan that either opposed it or objected to the proposed policies.

A focus on local housing

The plan is very focused, seeking to address specifically local housing issues. It recognises that within local plans, a settlement hierarchy model is often used to distribute housing growth, focusing growth in primary settlements and built-up areas which have a range of existing services, facilities and infrastructure and are therefore able to support additional development. However, this approach considers many smaller settlements as inherently unsustainable and thus unsuitable for housing. This is particularly acute in Upper Eden. The local plan allocated most development to key centres, but there is a need to provide locally affordable housing in settlements across the area.

The neighbourhood plan has sought to address this. Whilst being in general conformity with the local plan in terms of wider housing distribution and emphasis on larger settlements, it sets policies which allow some growth to take place in the smaller rural settlements. However, the level of growth proposed is in keeping with the scale and size of individual settlements. Again, in this way, the neighbourhood plan still remains in general conformity with the local plan as it is considered that relatively small-scale development will not transform the character or identity of the individual villages and settlements.

The use of development 'caps'

The plan seeks to allow small-scale housing in dispersed areas to address local housing need, but also to support local facilities and services. It does not allocate any land for development, but instead establishes a series of caps or rates on development, which allows a small number of new homes to be built in each village across the plan area. This is based on a percentage of the existing number of dwellings in a particular village. The caps still accord with the local plan settlement hierarchy by providing for the greatest level of growth in key service centres but, importantly, they do not preclude development taking place in other villages and service centres.

Interestingly, and although only by a modest amount, the small scale of development permitted by the neighbourhood plan allows for more development than set out in the local plan. The cap is not a target that must be met. Rather it is the amount of development considered to be a sustainable rate of change for the local communities but beyond which

the nature of the communities might change. Indeed, in his report, the examining inspector stated[20]:

'the remoteness of some of the area requires a particular set of planning policies to ensure that it does not lose the opportunity to be sustainable'.

Signposting:

The Upper Eden Plan, associated background material and consultation papers are available on the neighbourhood plan page of the Upper Eden community website:

http://uecp.org.uk/upper-eden-neighbourhood-development-plan/

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[20] Upper Eden Development Plan Examination Proposal, Report by Examiner John Glester, December 2012
http://www.eden.gov.uk/upperedenneighbourhoodplan/

Case Study 1.2:
Where should new housing go? Identifying land for development

Plan information

Neighbourhood Plan	Much Wenlock	Thame
Weblink	http://www.wenlockplan.org/	http://www.thametowncouncil.gov.uk
Frontrunner 'wave'	1 (April 2011)	4 (August 2011)
Area designation	Application approved September 2012	Application approved December 2012
Status of Plan at time of writing	Pre-submission consultation on the draft plan is now closed: comments are being considered prior to submission	Plan submitted for examination
Local Planning Authority	Shropshire Council	South Oxfordshire District Council
Weblink	http://shropshire.gov.uk/planningpolicy.nsf/open/6272970BABE985BE80257922004CC91F	http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans/thame-neighbourhood-pl

Summary messages

- Every effort should be made to involve landowners, developers, businesses and residents when identifying suitable and deliverable sites for inclusion in the neighbourhood plan.

- This approach has enabled the community to influence the form and location of development and consider wider impacts, benefits and any trade-offs needed. It is shaping, influencing and informing policies and proposals.

- Neighbourhood plans are in places taking the form of mini-local plans and site allocations documents, providing locally derived solutions and responses alongside the more strategic nature of the local plan.

What, why, how

Responding to the local plan

Several neighbourhood plans are actively identifying and allocating land for housing development. This appears to be occurring where the local plan has identified that the area needs to accommodate significant new housing growth, but the community wishes to have greater control over the mix and type of housing to be developed and where it should be located. Neighbourhood plans in Much Wenlock and Thame are examples of this approach.

Much Wenlock

In Much Wenlock, the local plan has established the overall housing requirement for the area. Much of this has already been delivered through windfall development. To meet the strategic objectives of the local plan, the neighbourhood plan did not need to allocate any more land for housing development. However, there is an unmet need for locally affordable housing.

A series of nine objectives have been established within the emerging neighbourhood plan. These include providing for a limited amount of housing to meet local needs, allowing small scale mixed housing development to come forward.

Consultation with the community showed support for development within and around the town, but that it should be of an appropriate scale and style, responding to the character of the area. There was no overwhelming support for large scale development: the view was expressed that no single development should be greater than 25 units in size to help retain local identity.

The Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group met landowners and developers and invited them to suggest possible locations for new development. More than twenty sites were put forward. These were mapped and assessed by the Steering Group against the nine objectives in the emerging plan. The merits of the sites are now being consulted on.

Thame

In Thame, the emerging local plan had identified one large housing site to accommodate the majority of new development. The community, however, wanted to spread development more evenly around the town, representing a more balanced approach.

'One of the principal functions of the Thame neighbourhood plan is for residents of the Parish of Thame to determine how best those homes [required in the local plan] should be delivered across Thame'.

A sifting exercise of available land and constraints was undertaken to identify potential housing sites. Building upon technical background work already undertaken by the local authority for its local plan[21], a composite map of layers was developed, 'sifting out' land which should not be developed, such as in the floodplain, and identifying areas where the sensitivity of development would need to be considered, such as areas of potential visual impact. Overlaying this, bus routes, walking and cycling routes were mapped. Through this sifting approach, a series of potential development sites were identified. These were then assessed in terms of the suitability, availability and deliverability[22] of development, which included discussions with landowners and developers.

Options and assessment

Following this assessment process, a series of development options was consulted upon, including the sites most likely to come forward within the plan period and which contributed to the community's objectives for Thame. In parallel to the site identification, assessment and options consultation, a Sustainability Appraisal was also prepared, with development options being assessed against a set of sustainability objectives.

The outcome of the sustainability appraisal and feedback from the consultation exercise informed the preferred option and allocation of sites in Thame. In support of these, a suite of mini site design briefs has been prepared establishing the key development principles for each site, in terms of development quantum and mix, layout, scale and views. It was reported that one of the outcomes of this has been much greater community cohesion, with residents coming together and compromising on what is best for the town.

Examination

The Thame plan has been examined and was the first in the country to be subject to a hearing. At the hearing the merits or otherwise of different sites were questioned by participants. This highlighted the need to engage as widely as possible in the process, including with developers and landowners as well as residents, businesses, local organisations and relevant statutory consultees. A thorough and comprehensive programme of consultation was undertaken in Thame. It is not possible to please all the people all the time, but the process for site identification and justification has been logical and transparent. During the hearing the examiner asked participants whether or not the proposed sites and policies complied with the basic conditions[23]. Participants appearing

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[21] The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), for example, which is a technical background document identifying potential housing sites.

[22] The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says that 'to be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged. See paragraph 47 of the NPPF. In many places, these issues will have been considered through the local authority's SHLAA. For those neighbourhood plans looking to allocate housing sites, this can provide helpful background evidence.

[23] The neighbourhood plan must meet certain basic considerations. These include having regard to national policy and ensuring the plan is in general conformity with the strategic objectives of the local plan.

on behalf of Thame Town Council explained how they had embedded thinking about the basic conditions from the start of the plan making process.

Neighbourhood plan format

In both Much Wenlock and Thame it is the neighbourhood plan that is identifying and allocating land for new development, as opposed to the local plan. Given the scale of growth to be delivered, both are taking the form of a mini local plan. They include policies for a range of related development issues, including the need for supporting uses, open space, walking and cycling networks. The neighbourhood plan is essentially making local plan policies and allocations far more locally specific.

Signposting:

The draft Much Wenlock plan objectives, policies and site assessments:

http://www.wenlockplan.org/policies-and-sites/

The approach to site identification, sifting, assessment and options consultation in Thame is presented in the Evidence Base Summary that accompanies the submitted neighbourhood plan for examination purposes:

http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Evidence%20Base%20Summary-RD.pdf

Case Study 1.3:
Limiting second homes: restricting the use of new housing as holiday homes

Plan information

Neighbourhood Plan	Lynton and Lynmouth
Weblink	http://www.lynplan.org.uk/
Frontrunner 'wave'	1 (April 2011)
Area designation	Application approved October 2012
Status of Plan at time of writing	Consultation on the draft plan ran between November 2012 and January 2013. Comments are now being considered prior to submission.
Local Planning Authority	Exmoor National Park
Weblink	http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy

Summary messages

- The neighbourhood plan allows for both affordable and open-market housing to be delivered, providing a choice of housing types.

- The plan seeks to limit the sale of open market housing for use as a second or holiday homes, through planning conditions.

- The viability of development is not affected by issues of local affordability or local need, but new market housing must be used as the permanent home of the house buyer.

What, why, how

The issue

Located in the Exmoor National Park, the Lynton and Lynmouth area is an attractive holiday destination. Indeed, much of the local economy is intrinsically related to the tourism industry and many people own second or holiday homes here. These are only occupied for short periods during the year.

The use of housing as a second or holiday home has had the effect of increasing house prices and reducing the availability of housing for local people. It also makes limited contribution to the sustainability of the local economy, community and maintenance of local services. There are also physical and policy constraints within the area that limit the potential for new development. Not only is it within a national park but there are also

special areas of conservation, local wildlife sites and conservation areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and areas susceptible to flooding. It is therefore argued in the plan that any housing that does come forward in the area should make as full a contribution as possible to the creation of a more sustainable local community.

'We need to retain and attract more young people and families, and be somewhere new businesses want to come to, making the best use of the limited opportunities we have for development and growth. New development should be good for our economy, community and environment at the same time'.

Affordability and open market housing

Lynton and Lynmouth is one of the more advanced frontrunners to be working without an up-to-date local plan or housing numbers from the local authority. This constrained the town's ability to address their identified issues by allocating sites for development or limiting it to a specified number of homes. However, the plan recognises that local affordable housing needs should be met. It is acknowledged that the delivery of affordable housing will need to be paid for or cross-subsidised, potentially through open-market housing. However, the community do not want to allow open market housing to be used to cross-subsidise affordable units because they are concerned that open market housing would be used as second homes.

The plan therefore introduces a 'primary residence housing' policy. This allows for some open market housing to be developed within the plan area and which is unburdened by affordable housing price controls or local connection requirements. However, it does require that any new open market home must be used as the primary place of residence of the person buying it. The policy also seeks to ensure that any open market housing that does come forward responds to local housing needs, bringing a mix of housing types onto the market. If the housing ceases to be used as the primary residence, the plan then requires it to be offered for sale or rent as affordable housing. Essentially, any market housing that does come forward, and which helps subsidise the delivery of affordable housing, must be occupied on a permanent basis.

Legal advice

This is an innovative and bespoke approach to a locally specific issue – which is one of the aims of neighbourhood planning. However, because it seeks to restrict the use of open market housing the local authority sought a legal opinion as to the lawfulness of the approach. The advice was that it is lawful, and that the reasons for it are well explained in the plan: that it can be regarded as necessary in the interests of sustainable development.

Enforcement

The bigger issue for the plan is perhaps how this policy might be implemented and enforced in practice. This would work through the use of a planning condition registered on the lease of the property. This would be noted by solicitors and mortgage lenders

whenever the property is sold on. In the case of the mortgage lender, that might reduce the security valuation of the property. That does not stop the cash buyer taking a risk, but if found to be violating the condition, the local authority could take enforcement action. An indirect consequence of this policy approach might be that, in the long term, some property prices would stabilise and become more affordable as they are not influenced by the second home buyer.

Signposting:

Policy H3 of the draft Lynton and Lynmouth Plan - *The 'Lyn Plan'* - presents the local policy approach to second and holiday homes:

http://www.lynplan.org.uk/Lynton-and-Lynmouth-Plan/draft-lyn-plan

Case Study 1.4:
Providing affordable housing for the local community

Plan information

Neighbourhood Plan	Allendale	Thame
Weblink	http://www.allenvalleys.co.uk/	http://www.thametowncouncil.gov.uk
Frontrunner 'wave'	1 (April 2011)	4 (August 2011)
Area designation	Application approved January 2013	Application approved December 2012
Status of Plan at time of writing	Pre-submission consultation now closed: comments are being considered prior to submission	Plan submitted for examination.
Local Planning Authority	Northumberland County Council	South Oxfordshire District Council
Weblink	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=10909	http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans/thame-neighbourhood-pl

Summary messages

- Locally specific definitions of 'local person' and 'local need' have been produced to ensure that affordable housing is delivered for, and accessible to, those who need it.

- Existing County-wide definitions have been used as a starting point but refined through consultation and assessment to reflect local circumstances.

- Where open-market housing is allowed in the plan, policies can ensure that a mix of housing types and sizes are developed, responding to current and future needs.

What, why, how

The issue

Most neighbourhood plans express support for the provision of affordable housing to meet the needs of 'local' people. In most instances, where affordable housing is provided, a cascade arrangement is promoted through emerging policies, where new housing will, in the first instance, be offered to people already living within the area who are in housing

need, then to those in neighbouring areas and then, if not already taken up, to those in need across a wider area. The issue here is what the definition of 'local' is.

Defining 'local'

The provision of affordable housing for local people is a key objective within the Allendale neighbourhood plan. Three policies have been drafted that address: (1) the delivery and location of affordable housing; (2) the retention of affordable housing; and (3) financial contributions to affordable housing. The appendix to the neighbourhood plan defines 'local connection' and 'local need'.

The Allendale neighbourhood plan defines 'local connection' as people aged sixteen years or above who meet two or more of the following criteria:

- *The person was born in Allendale Parish or lived in the area as a child up to the age of sixteen; and/or*

- *The person normally resides in the parish and has done so for at least three years; and/or*

- *The person has family who are currently resident in the Parish of Allendale and have been so for at least fifteen years; and/or*

- *The Parish of Allendale is the person's permanent place of work.*

It goes on to define 'local need', by which it means people who meet the 'local connections' criteria and who are in need of housing locally, but cannot meet those needs locally because they either cannot afford to buy a suitable home that may be currently available or cannot identify a suitable home in the parish that meets their needs to rent or buy, and they fall within one of the situations listed below:

- *An existing resident or family who have lived in the Parish of Allendale for at least the last three years and is seeking to establish a separate household; or*

- *People from outside the parish who meet the criteria of having a 'local connection'; or*

- *Households currently living permanently within the Parish in a dwelling which is either shared but not self-contained, overcrowded, or is otherwise unsatisfactory by health standards; or*

- *People who have to leave tied accommodation within Allendale Parish; or*

- *People who are taking up permanent employment in an already established business within the Parish; or*

    People who do not live in the parish but who are proposing to locate a viable business in the Parish which will help promote the sustainability and viability of Allendale Parish

Source: Allendale draft neighbourhood plan

Allendale is located within the Northumberland National Park. As a starting point, the neighbourhood plan took the definition of local need as set out in the National Park Core Strategy[24]. This was then amended with input from the County Council Housing Enabler[25], based on information of known local need and lettings policies applying to social rented accommodation in the area.

The emerging definitions of local need and connection were then tested and amended at discussion group meetings with the community, businesses and the voluntary sector. Amendments made following feedback were agreed by the neighbourhood plan steering group prior to publication for pre-submission consultation purposes. At the time of writing, the plan is still out to consultation.

'The plan is saying yes to housing development, but the landscape is our USP. Whilst wanting to encourage local development the area must maintain its characteristics which are what draw people to Allendale'.

Allendale is currently working without an up-to-date local plan or housing numbers from Northumberland County Council. The neighbourhood plan does not allocate any sites for development. Where neighbourhood plans are doing this, some are including policies that influence the provision and location of affordable housing.

Planning application requirements

In Thame, for example, where the neighbourhood plan is allocating land for a large amount of housing (both affordable and open-market), a policy has been drafted that requires developers to submit a 'Thame-specific affordable housing and dwelling mix strategy' with any planning application that would result in a net gain of six or more homes[26]. The purpose of this is twofold: firstly to ensure that new development responds to the needs of current and future households, and secondly, to avoid building large areas of uniform housing types and sizes. A delivery strategy accompanies the Thame neighbourhood plan. This states that the affordable housing and dwelling mix strategy should be discussed with and agreed by Thame Town Council and the local planning authority (South Oxfordshire District Council) before submission, and that it should include:

- a review of existing information;

- modelling current and future need in Thame; and

- a postal survey of a sample of Thame residents.

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[24] See page 32: http://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/144275/cs_march_2009.pdf

[25] Northumberland County Council employ Enabling Officers within their Housing Strategy Team. The Team is responsible for assessing the housing market in Northumberland and to identify the need for different types of housing in different areas.

[26] See policy 7D-P2 of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan Examination Version, November 2012

Signposting

Policies ANDP3, ANDP4 and ANDP5 in the Allendale neighbourhood plan (pre-submission draft) address the provision of additional affordable housing in the area. The appendix contains a locally specific definition of local connection and local need:

http://www.allenvalleys.co.uk/front-runner-overview/

The Thame neighbourhood plan delivery strategy sets out how policies in the plan will be delivered and monitored over time. It includes the requirement for applicants for development to submit locally specific housing assessments:

http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Delivery%20Strategy.pdf

Issue 2: Governance

The neighbourhood planning regulations say that, in rural areas, it is the Parish Council who will be responsible for the neighbourhood plan. In practice, many have set up steering or working groups to lead production of the plan. Many, if not all, rural areas will be well placed for this, as the constitution, committees and decision making processes will already be established. Coupled with the knowledge of preparing parish plans and village design statements, there will often be excellent experience and governance structures already in place that will help the community start work on a neighbourhood plan.

When setting up a steering or working group, some respondents said they had purposely opened this up to people and representatives beyond the membership of the Parish Council. Many steering groups are multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral in their make-up. Some groups for example include representatives from local voluntary organisations, youth groups and local residents. Others include local business representatives and social housing providers. Others include officers from the district and county councils. This allows for a wider variety of views and interests to be heard, arguably representing the community as a whole, but also including technical advice and support. In all instances, the steering or working group reports back to the Parish Council. One respondent said that this approach enables you to:

'Get buy-in from many stakeholders so it doesn't fall to the usual suspects to take it all on.'

In some instances, neighbourhoods and communities will transcend top down geography and political boundaries. In these places it may be logical to have a cross-boundary plan. Indeed, one of the first steps in the process is for the plan area to be agreed by the local authority. They will need to agree whether the plan area is appropriate for plan-making purposes. A plan area strictly defined by a parish boundary will not always be right for this. Where plans are cross-boundary, questions have arisen as to who should lead and what governance structures should be put in place.

Examples of cross-boundary working include the Upper Eden neighbourhood plan, which is a collection of seventeen parishes, and the Fosse Villages plan, which is a collection of eleven parishes. In both cases, one parish council has been chosen as the lead and as the status of 'qualifying body'. The case study here is of the approach taken to cross-boundary working in the Fosse Villages neighbourhood plan.

Plan information

Neighbourhood Plan	Fosse Villages
Weblink	http://www.leicestershireforums.org/bsouth/fossevillages.html
Frontrunner 'wave'	1 (April 2011)
Area designation	Application approved February 2013
Status of Plan at time of writing	Drafting and consulting on issues and options. An application to be designated as a plan area has been submitted.
Local Planning Authority	Blaby District Council
Weblink	http://www.blaby.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/planning-and-building/planning/neighbourhood-planning/

Summary messages

- Clusters of parishes can work effectively together on a neighbourhood plan under the right circumstances, and where there are common planning issues.

- A joint working group should be established, including equal representation from all parishes. Terms of Reference should be agreed, with a project lead identified.

- A neighbourhood planning consultation road show can be an effective way of engaging the community across a number of parishes.

What, why, how

Shared issues across the plan area

The Fosse Villages neighbourhood plan was one of the first seventeen frontrunners. The plan area is a collection of eleven Parishes. The plan was unique in that it was the only cross-boundary plan in the first wave of frontrunners[27].

The cluster of Parishes is a natural grouping for a neighbourhood plan area. Whilst the area covered by the neighbourhood plan is essentially rural, it is surrounded by built up and developed areas that have been identified for a large amount of development under the local plan. The Parishes have common planning issues to address. The two major issues that unify the group are (1) large-scale development that does not take into account

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[27] The Upper Eden plan is also cross-boundary, but this is a Big Society vanguard rather than a neighbourhood plan frontrunner.

the character/nature of the area, and (2) traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles travelling through the area.

Working arrangements

Crucially, the Parishes have worked together before on planning matters and thus have experience of how to manage cross-boundary relationships. A Joint Working Board (JWB) was set up to lead the neighbourhood planning process. This consists of the Chair or deputed member of each Parish and their Clerk. Each Parish has a vote, whilst the group chairman has the casting vote.

'The Fosse Villages include lively, highly active communities which share common concerns which provide a cohesive and collective impetus to work together on a Forum wide basis'.

The JWB agreed Terms of Reference to ensure that the Board operates in a clear and transparent manner. The Parish Council of Sapcote was appointed as the project lead. In line with the neighbourhood planning regulations, it is the 'qualifying body' for leading the plan. On behalf of all eleven parishes they made the submission to the district council to have the area designated for plan-making purposes. This submission was signed by all eleven parishes.

Project support

The JWB employed a planning consultant as Project Manager of the neighbourhood plan, and has also received support from both Blaby District Council and Leicestershire County Council. This support has come in many forms, including: professional advice on the planning process; updates on Core Strategy developments; arranging neighbourhood planning meetings; coordinating meetings; taking minutes; helping the JWB to identify funding sources; and supporting stakeholder events by providing maps, photos and area plans. It has always been important for the group to maintain its sense of independence. It was considered important for the consultations not to be seen as County/District Council events.

The JWB recognised the importance of gaining community involvement throughout the process.

'We need the residents' input to develop a robust, strongly supported plan, and all the Parish Councils and meetings have been working very hard to progress the programme.'

Reflecting local concerns in a cross-boundary area

A neighbourhood planning road show event took place in each parish in September and October 2012. The events were advertised widely across the villages and the attendance was good; around 100 people attended each event. The road show events aimed to give residents as much information as possible about the purpose, methodology and objectives

of the neighbourhood planning process. Other information, on issues and opportunities for example, was tailored to be locally specific to each parish.

Signposting

For more information on cross boundary working in the Fosse Villages and the neighbourhood planning road show events:

http://www.leicestershireforums.org/bsouth/fossevillages.html

Issue 3: Engagement

The ethos behind neighbourhood planning is to place greater power within the community to shape decisions on what should happen and where. The way the regulations have been drafted requires community ownership of the neighbourhood plan. This is important: if the plan is to be successful, it needs to reflect the community's aspirations and have their buy-in.

Some of the respondents to our research, within Parish and Town Councils, and local planning authorities, identified the referendum as a potential risk to the neighbourhood plan – that at the end of the process the neighbourhood plan can be stopped if it receives a 'no' vote. To minimise this risk, most respondents told us that the plan truly needs to be community-led, and to engage as widely as possible. Neighbourhood planning is about reflecting what local people want, so working with local people and keeping them informed is paramount to the success of the plan.

'You might have an active Steering Group in place, but you must also consult and get the rest of the population with you. The Steering Group is not working for themselves but for the community'.

'You could get very keen communities who put in a lot of work only for action groups to hijack the referendum'.

One of the questions emerging is how to engage widely and, perhaps of more fundamental importance, how to overcome apathy, generate interest and generate support for the plan.

For the neighbourhood planning process to be effective, the community must be strongly motivated and united in their support of preparing a plan. Many rural communities are well placed for the challenge of preparing a neighbourhood plan, given that many have previously prepared Parish Plans and Village Design Statements, and have strong community networks in place. However, the research carried out for this project identified that it is often older generations that are taking part in community consultation and engagement events. For neighbourhood planning to be as inclusive as possible, it is important that it reaches out to a cross section of the community, including younger generations.

Through our research we have found that a wide range of techniques have been used, including traditional methods such as meetings, exhibitions and questionnaires, through to the use of social media, roadshows, working with school children, the creation of special topic groups and hiring of community champions.

Signposting:

Locality has prepared a Roadmap for Neighbourhood Plans. This includes a useful overview of when to engage, some good practice prompts, and common mistakes to avoid. See pages 27-33 of their guide:

http://locality.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-roadmap-guide/

Case Study 3.1:
Increasing interest and involvement in the plan: using community champions'

Plan information

Neighbourhood Plan	Lynton and Lynmouth (The Lyn Plan)
Weblink	http://www.lynplan.org.uk/
Frontrunner 'wave'	1 (April 2011)
Area designation	Application approved October 2012
Status of Plan at time of writing	Consultation on the draft plan ran between November 2012 and January 2013. Comments are now being considered prior to submission.
Local Planning Authority	Exmoor National Park
Weblink	http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy

Summary messages

- Community champions can provide wide outreach, generate interest and help create ownership of the Plan. They can represent wider interest groups and members of society, such as the young.

- Community champions should report to and form part of wider steering groups, so that messages can be fed directly back and can influence decisions and the direction of the Plan.

- Initial training and generation of job descriptions can help empower volunteers.

What, why, how

The plan

The Lynton and Lynmouth neighbourhood plan, located within the Exmoor National park, is for a remote rural community of about 1,800 people. The neighbourhood plan, which is currently being reviewed prior to submission for examination purposes, has been built upon strong community consultation and involvement, with the community involved at all stages of the plan-making process.

Plan leadership and the champions

The Parish Council is responsible for leading production of the plan. They have set up a steering group, which is chaired by the local County Councillor, and which includes members from the community, parish council and local authority.

Alongside the steering group, people were asked to volunteer and act as community champions. Twenty people are acting as champions, representing a cross section of the community and having their own links to community groups and networks, including, for example, the tennis club, church and local schools.

'Make full use of neighbourhood representatives, community champions and volunteers - people respond better to familiar faces. This builds ownership of the project'.

Role and purpose

Their purpose has been to publicise the emerging plan at the most local of levels. They have been leafleting, attending and facilitating drop-in sessions, printing and circulating questionnaires, and generally raising interest and involvement in the plan amongst their family, friends, neighbours and any organisations they represent. The champions have helped motivate the wider community to become involved.

It is recognised that the neighbourhood planning process can be lengthy: the community champions have been seen as a very useful way of helping to maintain momentum and interest. The champions have been used since the start of the neighbourhood plan process. Feedback from them has helped inform the focus of the plan and the policies within it. Indeed, as the introduction to the consultation draft of the neighbourhood plan states:

'It is a Plan specifically for this parish, put together from what local people and businesses have said they need and want.'

The champions are all unpaid volunteers, although any out-of-pocket expenses are covered. At the outset of the process they received some initial training on the role and purpose of a neighbourhood plan, helping them to talk about wider project and process matters. An outline job description for the community champions was also prepared.

Signposting

For more information on the Lynton and Lynmouth community champions, and the associated job description:

http://www.lynplan.org.uk/Lynton-and-Lynmouth-Plan/neighbourhood-representatives

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Case Study 3.2:
Community consultation: how to involve younger people

Plan information

Neighbourhood Plan	Fosse Villages
Weblink	http://www.leicestershireforums.org/bsouth/fossevillages.html
Frontrunner 'wave'	1 (April 2011)
Area designation	Application approved February 2013
Status of Plan at time of writing	Drafting and consulting upon issues and options. An application to be designated as a plan area has been submitted.
Local Planning Authority	Blaby District Council
Weblink	http://www.blaby.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/planning-and-building/planning/neighbourhood-planning/

Summary messages

- Consultation events and exercises should be designed to encourage interest and involvement of younger people.

- Attempts should be made to go out and engage with young people at places, clubs and events they attend.

- Engaging school children with neighbourhood planning can have wider benefits in that it can lead to increased awareness and interest amongst friends and family who they will talk to about the plan.

What, why, how

Neighbourhood planning network

Leicestershire County Council is particularly keen to address the involvement of younger members of the community in neighbourhood planning. They have set up a neighbourhood planning network for all neighbourhood planning groups in Leicestershire, where people can share and exchange knowledge.

The first neighbourhood planning network event took place in November 2012 and was attended by 30 Parish representatives and twenty representatives from other organisations engaging in the neighbourhood planning process. Each front runner group presented the lessons they have learnt from neighbourhood planning to date. Networking discussions allowed attendees to discuss their experiences and issues. Following on from the success

of the first neighbourhood planning networking event, Leicestershire County Council decided that it would run such events on a quarterly basis.

One of the key questions that emerged from the events has been how to engage young people in the consultation process.

Why engage young people? Because they are the focus for the future!'

Engagement techniques

Different neighbourhood planning groups are using a range of methods to engage younger generations in the neighbourhood planning process. Strategies raised in discussion included:

- Using organised events that are attended by all generations as an opportunity to consult on the neighbourhood plan. For example, one group actively consulted on their neighbourhood plan at the Big Jubilee Lunch that was held in the village to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Families and people of all ages attended, allowing the views of a wide range of age groups to be collected.

- Working with the Guides who are able to earn a badge for Community Engagement. As well as raising awareness among younger generations, this helps the neighbourhood planning group with the delivery of questionnaires.

- Organising a school competition to design a village logo, using Planning Aid England to engage with the schools.

- Asking the opinions of school children at sessions held at local primary schools.

- Other groups have been making use of 'Planning for Real'. This method of consultation, which often takes place in schools, involves the creation of 3D models which are used as a focus for people to put forward their own ideas and thoughts about the area. This technique is often combined with village walks that enable young people to identify various characteristics of their village and take photos of particular points of interest.

School visits

The Fosse Villages Joint Working Group actively engaged with children at three primary schools in the neighbourhood plan area. The events involved children in years five and six (ages nine to eleven). They sat in small groups and were asked to participate in four activities:

- Activity 1: Locating where they live on large maps.

- Activity 2: Listing what they like about the village they live in, and why.

- Activity 3: Listing what they don't like about the village they live in and why.

- Activity 4: Listing what they thought should be improved.

If time allowed, the children were asked to think about where any new housing could be built. The events were relatively short, so children did not lose interest, but long enough to capture useful information. In all, the events lasted for 45 minutes.

The events were attended by one or two members of the neighbourhood planning steering group, who provided a brief introduction to the purpose of the neighbourhood plan. School teachers were in attendance and helped organise the sessions. Children attending one of the schools lived in two different villages. The children were encouraged to mix so they could share views.

Outreach

Key recommendations from the network events and from the Fosse Villages school exercises are that attempts should be made to go out and talk to young people at schools, clubs and events, and that you should be honest about how the feedback will be used. One of the benefits of running events specifically for younger people is that it can help generate wider interest: some of the school children who participated in the Fosse Villages events for example told their parents about the neighbourhood plan and this encouraged them to attend and respond to other consultation events.

'Young people and older people alike want to be informed and involved in a positive and creative way.'

Signposting

To find out more about Leicestershire County Council's neighbourhood planning networking events, visit:

http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/neighbourhoodplanning/npnetworking events.htm

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From the frontline: Tips from the frontrunners

Introduction

Our research has drawn attention to some 'tips' that communities may wish to consider before commencing work on a neighbourhood plan and during production of the neighbourhood plan itself. As a new area of planning, practice and experience is rapidly evolving: as more neighbourhood plans progress through examination and referendum new areas of learning will come to light. It will be useful to monitor progress and supplement the findings contained within this study at a later date. In the meantime, the following provides some useful prompts:

Is a neighbourhood plan right for you?

A neighbourhood development plan is a land-use planning document and, if successfully adopted, will form part of the statutory development plan. The neighbourhood plan can of course include more than just land-use policies, but it is only the land-use policies that will be tested at examination and be subject to referendum. In many instances neighbourhood plans are emerging that include a chapter presenting land-use policies and then others which address wider matters, such as community policies and aspirations. If the neighbourhood plan will not be including land-use policies then it might not be the right mechanism for the community to use.

Some respondents have said to us that, on reflection, the neighbourhood plan approach was not right for them, that their concerns are not land-use related, that the local plan adequately addresses their concerns, or that scope exists to influence the local plan rather than following the neighbourhood plan approach. As one respondent said to us:

'A neighbourhood plan can be the right thing to do in many circumstances, but it is important that from the outset the local community is quite clear about what it wants to achieve, and they need to work out whether the neighbourhood plan is the right mechanism for working out what they want to do'.

This is important. In many instances, neighbourhood planning will be the right approach. But sometimes it won't. Neighbourhood planning can, in some cases, be costly, time-consuming, and resource intensive. Depending on the nature of the plan being produced, it could require significant effort and commitment, as well as knowledge of the planning system. Indeed, given the referendum at the end of the process, there is no guarantee that the plan will be taken forward and adopted. One respondent suggest asking two questions at the start:

'(1) 'can we get what we want without a statutory NP?' (2) 'are we 100% sure we can win a referendum?'

The underlying message here is that if a neighbourhood plan is the right vehicle for the community to achieve their goals then it should focus on what the key issues are for the local area, how the plan can address those, and what skills and resources are available to help do that.

Signposting:

Shropshire Council has produced a Community-led Planning Guide which looks at the alternatives to preparing a neighbourhood plan and the questions you might want to consider before deciding which route to go down.

http://shropshire.gov.uk/planningpolicy.nsf/open/D49C58BDEF57B3AC80257ADA00554BF3

What are you trying to achieve?

If a neighbourhood plan is the right approach for you, then as one respondent said:

'it is an exciting area and can achieve a wide range of ambitions, many of which are beyond what we normally think of as being in the planning realm'.

However, it is a significant undertaking and requires a big commitment from all those involved. A recurring message from our research is the need to focus on what you are trying to address through the neighbourhood plan. One respondent told us:

'Don't go down the route of looking for evidence and then seeing what policies you can write... Look at the decisions that are being taken in your area and pull out the ones that you disagree with and then write policy that corrects those decisions'.

This will not be relevant to all – you might not disagree with an existing policy in the local plan for example, but you might want to make it locally relevant, influencing the mix and location of housing for example. Another respondent told us:

'Too many groups get involved with neighbourhood plans because they want to influence policy or stop development. Not enough have a clear objective or want to effect change themselves... Some have made life difficult for themselves by not determining their objectives early enough in the process and have gone off on several tangents to gather more evidence than is appropriate'.

We have seen a wide variety of types of neighbourhood plan emerging. Indeed, earlier research by DCLG has pointed to six different types of neighbourhood plan coming forward[28], including for example mini local plans, setting out comprehensive coverage of policy issues, single issue policy documents and neighbourhood development orders.

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[28] See DCLG presentation at Planning Aid for London Neighbourhood Planning Event, 9 May 2012: http://tinyurl.com/ckty6jx

There is no right or wrong approach, but there are programming, time and cost implications associated with these: the wider the coverage of the plan, the longer it is likely to take. Equally, those plans where there is little focus can take time to evolve. Again, this will have time and cost implications, and also potentially contribute to people losing interest in the process. The key message is to focus on what you want to do and why.

Plan the Plan

Some groups have started work on their neighbourhood plan without fully understanding what is involved, what the stages are and how long it should take. Respondents to our research have suggested that an important first step should be to 'plan the plan', with realistic timeframes established and resource requirements understood. This is particularly important where many people involved in the neighbourhood plan will be volunteering their own free time.

'Have realistic expectations. The length of time and level of consultation required cannot be underestimated'.

'It will be difficult to maintain the momentum of the wider community when it [the neighbourhood plan process] will take a few years'.

'Time needs to be managed. Groups should be mindful of administrative process'.

The project plan should build-in any statutory requirements and necessary regulatory processes, such as formal consultation and production of a sustainability appraisal, if relevant. The local authority may be able to help. Indeed, our research has shown that local authorities are spending large amounts of time helping communities develop their neighbourhood plans. As we note below, good working relationships can lead to better plan-making. Developing a programme with the local authority can help make sure the right resources and advice is provided at the right time.

Time spent up-front on the programme can help deliver the neighbourhood plan on time, identify who is responsible for different tasks, how those tasks should be approached, what the outputs from the tasks will be, when, and how they all come together. Where funding is limited, the programme can help avoid any unexpected costs or overruns.

Signposting:

The 'getting organised' section of Cornwall County Council's online neighbourhood planning guide provides advice on the timeframes and stages involved in preparing a plan as well as showing which tasks the community and local authority are responsible for.

http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=32700#Stage1

Is it enough to be in 'general conformity' with the Local Plan?

Preparing a neighbourhood plan that is in 'general conformity' with the strategic objectives of the Local Plan may satisfy the independent examiner and comply with the regulations, but it might not help deliver what you want it to. As one respondent said to us:

'The neighbourhood plan needs to be clearly understood and interpreted so that it can be implemented successfully.... The outcomes will need to be monitored over time so that the work of the community is not undermined in the future'.

Some of the emerging documents we have looked at contain policies that express the community's wishes for the area and read as objectives. It is of course good to have these recorded and embedded in the plan, but the more ambiguous the policy, the more it is open to interpretation and the less value it will have when determining planning applications.

The goal of the process should be to have a neighbourhood plan brought into legal force that truly can and does shape the future of the area. The challenge is to think about how objectives might be delivered. So policies, and any associated implementation or action plan, should help guide and steer what will happen and how your objectives will be achieved. Indeed, as another respondent told us:

'The whole point of the neighbourhood plan is not just to write a plan but to actually influence decision making'.

The practical consequences of the words used in policies need to be carefully considered, with suitable evidence also in place to back up the wording used. The use of the words 'must' and 'should' do something in policies can lead to very different responses. Where the neighbourhood plan presents policies, thought will need to be given to the wording of the policy and the supporting text justifying its inclusion.

A concern has been expressed during our work about the ability of parish councils and community groups to draft policies that can withstand scrutiny at appeal and examination. One local authority officer we spoke to who has worked extensively alongside the community to help write robust policies for the emerging neighbourhood plan commented that:

'It is too much to expect parish councils to write planning policy documents that will be used in legal situations'.

This won't be the case everywhere and may depend on the ambition and complexity of the policy issue. As more neighbourhood plans progress communities could also refer to these and see how policies are being framed. There may be elements in some of the more advanced plans – those in Thame and Upper Eden for example – that could be transferred and adapted for other areas.

Many communities have also been able to draw upon the skills, knowledge and expertise of people residing within the neighbourhood plan area to draft policies. Where they haven't (and to some extent, even where they have), support has been provided by the local authority. The development management team at the local authority could be asked to review emerging policies in the neighbourhood plan. They might be able to advise on how they would use the policies to determine planning applications and whether the policies are clear enough in delivering their intentions.

The message underpinning this is to focus on a few key issues where you would like to make a change, and focusing on having the right skills, knowledge and help in place at the right time to do this.

Signposting:

The Neighbourhood Planning Guidance produced by Broadland District Council provides some helpful steers on the link between visions, objectives, policies and implementation.

http://www.broadland.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplans/

Think about the 'basic conditions' from day one

When the neighbourhood plan is ready to be examined it needs to be accompanied by a 'basic conditions' statement. Before a neighbourhood plan can come into force it must meet certain basic conditions. The basic conditions statement will set out how the plan meets these. They are[29]:

- The plan has regard to national planning policies.

- The plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

- The plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

- The plan is compatible with European Union law and human rights obligations.

The independent examiner will consider whether the plan meets these conditions. It is helpful to think about these from the outset. This will help set the context for the plan and help ensure that any emerging ideas and policies align with and do not constrain any important strategic policies.

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[29] The legal source of the basic conditions is the Localism Act 2011, which inserted Schedules 4A and 4B into the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Schedule 4B relates to neighbourhood development orders. Schedule 4A relates to neighbourhood development plans and applies parts of Schedule 4B to Plans.

'It is clear to me that the reasoning behind the use of the concept of general conformity is to allow a degree of flexibility in drawing up neighbourhood plans and proposals. Without such a concept drawing up a neighbourhood plan to reflect local priorities and conditions would be a futile exercise'[30]

At the hearing of the Thame neighbourhood plan participants were asked to explain why they thought the proposed policies met the basic conditions or not. The participant representing Thame Council stated that thinking about the basic conditions was embedded into the production of the plan from day one. This helped identify any and all policy issues that might need considering in the Plan, particularly those where issues of general conformity might arise, and how the communities objectives could best be met. Early thinking about the basis conditions will help you avoid being tripped-up later in the process.

Work in partnership with the Local Authority

'Get your local planning authority on board up front as you are going to need a lot of information from them'.

Although neighbourhood planning is intended to be community-led, the local authority has a key role in the process: they need to agree the proposed neighbourhood area for plan-making purposes, they have a 'duty to support' communities through the plan-making process, and, if the neighbourhood plan is successfully adopted, it will be used by the local authority to inform planning decisions.

What the 'duty to support' means in practice is not really defined, and will vary from place to place, often depending on the availability of staff time and resources, both within the local authority and those preparing the neighbourhood plan. However, most of the neighbourhood plans we have looked at have benefited from help and input from the local authority: not in terms of influencing what the community want, but helping to facilitate the process.

Many local authorities have helped provide background information and evidence, mapping and graphics, attended meetings and workshops, reviewed and advised on emerging policy and the relationship with the local plan. This has also included appraising emerging neighbourhood plan policies to see whether they are in general conformity with the strategic policies within the local plan. Some local authorities have published lists of and links to background documents and information sources that community groups can use to inform the neighbourhood plan. Others have printed material for consultation events and helped facilitate those. The local authority can of course benefit from this too as some communities are now taking forward policy documents for areas which the local authority may have prepared.

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[30] Report by Examiner John Glester, December 2012, Upper Eden neighbourhood development plan, Examination proposal

All the community groups we have spoken to have acknowledged the help and assistance provided by the local authority, and many said this assistance has led to a better product. It is in the interest of both the local authority and the community to ensure that the neighbourhood plan is successful at examination. One respondent commented that:

'Neighbourhood planning is a shared process between the local community and the local planning authority. The results can be far greater than the sum of the parts if they [the local authority] can share resources and act as enablers'.

It does though require a collaborative approach to planning, with the roles of the community and local authority respected, with the level and type of assistance that can realistically be provided established at the outset and, as one respondent said to us, 'expectations managed'. Indeed, we know of one example where a 'Memorandum of Understanding' has been agreed between the community and the local authority. Developing good working relationships at the outset can lead to positive, proactive plan-making.

Use existing evidence

The neighbourhood plan should be supported by robust evidence that supports the policies and proposals in the plan. The local authority will have much evidence and information available that can be used to help inform the neighbourhood plan.

Through the production of local plans and core strategies, technical evidence relating to matters such as housing growth and need, land supply, economic growth, transport and infrastructure provision will have been prepared. Rather than starting again, you should use this as a basis for creating locally specific policies.

As an example, in some neighbourhood plans land is being identified for housing. The local authority will, through its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, have identified potential sites for housing and assessed their suitability for development in policy terms and also whether they can be realistically delivered. This should be used to inform the identification of sites in the neighbourhood plan. Reference to this information and any associated documents, such as environmental mapping should be used to help understand the development constraints and opportunities when identifying sites.

Much, if not all of the local authority's evidence will be publically available. They may be able to provide you with this information or provide pointers to it.

Share and exchange knowledge with your neighbouring areas

The research has highlighted that in some instances, rural communities feel isolated. This is not just in terms of geography, but access to information, skills, advice, and what the production of a neighbourhood plan entails.

Neighbourhood planning has been and continues to be a learning curve for communities and councils. But many of the challenges and issues faced, particularly in terms of process, are common to many areas. Some communities are grappling with the sustainability appraisal process, for example; others with how to get younger members of the community involved. Knowledge sharing and exchange can be invaluable here.

Signposting:

Leicestershire County Council has set up a neighbourhood planning network. This allows all Parish Councils, community groups, professionals and organisations working on neighbourhood plans in the county to come together, share views and exchange experiences. It is hosted by the Council and takes place on a quarterly basis. Each event has a theme, supplemented by topic papers prepared by the County.

http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/neighbourhoodplanning/npnetworking events.htm

Appendix A: Useful sources

A wealth of useful material is available for communities and Councils interested in preparing Neighbourhood Plans to refer to. These include introductions to Neighbourhood Planning, 'how to' guides, discussion groups and forums, and links to other plans and evidence being prepared by communities across the country. The list below is by no means definitive, but provides a helpful starting point for those wanting to find out more.

Selected rural neighbourhood plans

Provided below are links to a selection of some of the more advanced rural based neighbourhood planning frontrunners. Their inclusion on this list is not an endorsement of the plan, but rather to provide an opportunity to view the different types of plan that are coming forward, how different issues are being addressed, and policies framed.

Allendale Neighbourhood Plan (Northumberland):
http://www.allenvalleys.co.uk/front-runner-documents/

Cerne Valley Neighbourhood Plan (West Dorset):
https://sites.google.com/site/cernevalleynp/home-page

Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan (Norfolk):
http://www.cringlefordparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood.php

Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Plan (Blaby, Leicestershire):
http://www.leicestershireforums.org/bsouth/fossevillages.html

Lynton and Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan: 'The Lyn Plan' (Exmoor):
http://www.lynplan.org.uk/Lynton-and-Lynmouth-Plan/draft-lyn-plan

Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan (Shropshire):
http://www.wenlockplan.org/

Slaugham Parish Neighbourhood Plan (Mid-Sussex):
http://www.slaughampc.co.uk/NHPtheplan.html

Thame Neighbourhood Plan (South Oxfordshire):
http://www.thametowncouncil.gov.uk

Upper Eden Neighbourhood Plan (Cumbria):
http://uecp.org.uk/upper-eden-neighbourhood-development-plan/uendp-referedum-version/

The website of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan (Shropshire) provides a useful list of links to other parishes and groups preparing neighbourhood plans:
http://www.wenlockplan.org/links/other-neighbourhood-planning-frontrunners/

Similarly, a list of and links to many emerging neighbourhood plans can be found on the communityplanning.net website:
http://www.communityplanning.net/neighbourhoodplanning/frontrunners/frontrunners.php

Neighbourhood planning guides signposted in this report

Broadland District Council, Neighbourhood Planning Guidance, 2012:
http://www.broadland.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplans/

Cornwall County Council, online neighbourhood planning guide, 2012/13:
http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=32700#Stage1

Leicester and Leicestershire Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit, incorporating Community Top Tips, 2013 (forthcoming):
http://www.leics.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning

Shropshire Council, Community Led Planning Guide, 2012:
http://shropshire.gov.uk/planningpolicy.nsf/open/D49C58BDEF57B3AC80257ADA00554BF3

Rural planning issues

Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research and Land Use Consultants for Defra (2006) *The Extent and Impacts of Rural Housing Need*, Defra, December

Colin Buchanan, Gallent. N, and Robinson, S. for Defra (2010) *Research into Rural Housing Affordability: Final Report*, Defra

Commission for Rural Communities (2009) *Rural proofing guidance*, CRC, April

Commission for Rural Communities (2010) *State of the countryside 2010 summary report*, CRC, July

DCLG (2009) *The Government Response to the Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing*, DCLG, March

Defra and HCA (2010) *Rural Affordable Housing Project, Final Report*, HCA, July

Defra (undated) *Rural Economy Growth Review, Enabling Businesses to Grow and Diversify: Rural Growth Networks*, Defra

Defra (2012) *Rural Statement 2012*, Defra, September

HCA (2011) *Rural Masterplanning Fund: Lessons Learned*, HCA, August

The Rural Coalition (2009) *Prospectus: The future is rural too*, The Rural Coalition (ACRE, CPRE, CLA, LGA, RTPI, TCPA), Commission for Rural Communities and CABE, September

The Rural Coalition (2010) *The Rural Challenge: Achieving sustainable rural communities for the 21st century*, TCPA, August

Taylor, M. (2008) *Living Working Countryside: The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing*, DCLG, July

Government neighbourhood planning material

DCLG (2011) *An Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning*, DCLG, October

DCLG (2012) *Statutory Instruments 2012 No. 637, Town and Country Planning, England, The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012*, HM Government, March

DCLG (2012) *Statutory Instruments 2012 No. 2031, Town and Country Planning, England, The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012*, HM Government, August

DCLG (2012) *National Planning Policy Framework*, DCLG, March

DCLG (2012) *Notes on Neighbourhood Planning, Edition One*, DCLG, September

DCLG (2012) *Notes on Neighbourhood Planning, Edition Two*, DCLG, November

DCLG (2013) *Notes on Neighbourhood Planning, Edition Three*, DCLG, January

DCLG (2013) *Notes on Neighbourhood Planning, Edition Four*, DCLG, March

Online Government resources and information

DCLG, Planning and building:
https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/planning-and-building

DCLG, Neighbourhood Planning:
https://www.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning

Defra, Rural economy and communities:
http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/economy/

Selected neighbourhood planning 'guides', briefing notes and commentary

ACRE (2011) *ACRE Briefing: Neighbourhood Plans and the Localism Bill*, ACRE, June

ACRE (2011) *ACRE Localism Bill Commentary: Neighbourhood Planning*, ACRE, February

Action for Market Towns (AMT) (undated) *Neighbourhood Planning: including Neighbourhood Development Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders; Briefing*, AMT

CPRE and The Localism Network (undated) *Planning and Localism: Choices & choosing*, The Localism Network

CPRE (2012) *Planning Briefing 1: Development Plans*, CPRE, July

Eardley, A. And Vincent, P. (2011) *Making the most of Community Led Planning: a best practice guide for local authorities*, AMT with ACRE and DCLG

Land Use Consultants (2011) *How to shape where you live: a guide to neighbourhood planning*, CPRE with NALC, December

Locality (2012) *Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide*, Locality, November

Locality (2012) *Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide: Worksheets*, Locality, November

SKM Colin Buchanan with Urban Forum and The Young Foundation (2011) *Neighbourhood Planning: Questions and Answers*, Colin Buchanan, March

SKM Colin Buchanan (2011) *Briefing note for Local Authority Planners: Seven principles for a successful Neighbourhood Plan*, Colin Buchanan, February

TCPA (2011) *Your place, your plan*, TCPA, March

Urban Vision (2012) Building Community and Locality, *Quick Guide to Neighbourhood Planning*, Urban Vision, March

On-line discussion groups and forums

LinkedIn Neighbourhood Planning group:
http://lnkd.in/aVatYm

Locality neighbourhood planning knowledge hub:
http://planning.communityknowledgehub.org.uk/

Planning Aid England forum for neighbourhood planning:
http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/

Appendix B: Interview questions

The tables in this appendix present the questions asked during the early stages of the study, analysis of which, alongside the emerging neighbourhood plans, allowed a series of potential case studies to be identified. Three sets of questions are presented, relating to the people interviewed and their respective roles in the neighbourhood planning process:

a) The parish / town councils / community representative leading the plan.
b) Local planning authority officers within which the neighbourhood plan area is located.
c) Representatives from the groups providing support to communities on neighbourhood planning

Table 3: Questions asked of the parish / town councils / community representatives

Part 1: Contact Details
Neighbourhood Plan area:
Date of interview:
Interviewee:
Position / Representing:
Contact details:

Part 2: The Plan – Basic Details
In which frontrunner wave (1-5) was this plan awarded DCLG funding?
Has the neighbourhood plan been formally designated for plan making purposes? If so, when? If not, when will this application be made?
What is the current status of the plan? (e.g.: draft ready for submission, examination etc)
What is the format of the plan? (e.g.: is it a masterplan, is it providing policy guidance, is it allocating sites, is it focusing on one particular issue?)
Who is leading the plan? Is it the parish or town council, a specially established working group, or something else?

Part 3: The Plan – Rationale and approach (The rural agenda)
How would you characterise / describe your plan area?
Why did you apply to be a frontrunner?
Are there any particular rural issues you are seeking to address in the plan? And how? (list below used as prompts)
> *Rural / countryside character*
> *Overall housing growth*
> *Affordable housing need*
> *Accessibility (roads, public transport etc)*
> *Infrastructure (water, utilities etc)*
> *Social and community facilities (schools, post office, pubs, sports facilities etc)*
> *Employment / jobs*
> *Ageing population / changing demographic base*

Part 4: The Plan – Challenges and Issues

How and who are you engaging with in the wider community? What level of participation, interaction and response are you achieving?

Have there been any conflicts between the neighbourhood plan objectives and the strategic objectives in the local plan / core strategy?

What has been the biggest barrier or challenge faced in producing the plan (e.g.: skills, time, understanding of the planning process etc) and how has this been overcome?

What support is the local authority providing?

Have you received support from any of the DCLG funded organisations? If so, who, and what have they helped with?

What one piece of advice would you provide for other rural based neighbourhood plans?

Part 5: Other comments

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Table 4: Questions asked of local authority officers

Part 1: Contact details

Neighbourhood Plan area:

Date of interview:

Interviewee:

Position / Representing:

Contact details:

Part 2: Relationship between local plan and neighbourhood plan

How would you describe / characterise the plan area?

What do you see as the main planning issues for the neighbourhood plan to address in terms of the 'rural challenge' (eg: housing growth, affordable housing, accessibility, employment, demographics, facilities, rural character etc)

Is the neighbourhood plan providing for any growth over and above that in the local plan?

Have there been any conflicts between neighbourhood plan objectives and local plan objectives / policies that needed resolving?

Part 3: Your role

What support have you provided? (eg: provided evidence, advised on policy, facilitated events etc)

What challenges have you faced and how have these been resolved? (eg: funding, resources, time etc)

Part 4: Learning

What one piece of advice would you provide if another community in your area came forward with proposals to make a neighbourhood plan?

What one piece of advice would you give to another local planning authority?

Part 5: Other comments

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Table 5: Questions asked of the 'supporting communities' providers

Part 1: Contact details
Interviewee:
Position / Representing:
Contact details:
Date of interview:

Part 2: Your role
Have you helped / supported any of the rural neighbourhood planning frontrunners? If so, who? (if not, have you helped / supported any 'non-frontrunner' rural plans?)
What type and advice and support have you been providing? (eg: consultation, facilitation, technical advice, design input, plan and policy review)
What, if any, specific rural challenges have you been working with communities to help address, and how? (eg: affordable housing, housing supply, access, employment, infrastructure and services, socio-economics, design, rural and countryside character)
From your involvement, what challenges, if any, are rural communities facing in terms of plan preparation? (eg: consultation, resources, time, knowledge of the planning system and design etc)

Part 3: Learning
What one piece of advice would you provide to community groups / parish councils working on neighbourhood plans?
What one piece of advice would you give to local planning authorities?

Part 4: Other comments
Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Appendix C: Case study selection

The table below presents the long list of potential case study topics identified through the initial discussions with and review of the ten rural neighbourhood plans. A shortlist of seven was then agreed with Defra and DCLG.

Table 6: List of potential case study topics identified

Potential case study topic	Comment	Taken forward for further assessment
Dispersed housing strategy	The Upper Eden plan promotes a more dispersed pattern of development than in the local plan, allowing for small scale development in smaller villages, providing more opportunities for local people to access housing in the sparse rural area.	Yes: a good rural planning case study that seeks to address the 'sustainability trap'.
Allocating land for development	This can draw upon both the Thame and Much Wenlock plans, with reference to their relationship to their respective local plans / core strategies. In both instances, it is the neighbourhood plan that is identifying where housing (and employment) should be allocated rather than the local plans, and providing the detail as to the type and style of development. This route was followed as both wanted greater influence and control as to how much housing should be provided and where.	Yes: case study might also be of interest to a wider than rural audience.
Reusing redundant farm buildings	The Allendale and Upper Eden plans, amongst others, both include policies that allow for the reuse of redundant farm buildings (no longer suited to modern farming operations) for housing – and where policy has previously sought to retain these for employment uses.	No: although a rural issue, the subject is subject to national level policy and initiatives.
Housing for the elderly	Some of the plans reviewed are seeking to provide housing to allow people – more often than not the elderly – to downsize into smaller, more manageable units.	No: although a common theme across the neighbourhood plans, it is not clear how the policy will be implemented, minimising the usefulness of the case study for others.

Limiting second homes	This can draw upon the Lynton and Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan, where a 'permanent residence policy' has been developed that allows for open market housing to come forward, but which restricts the purchase of these for permanent occupancy only. This is important because there are a high proportion of second homes in the area, often empty throughout the year, which does little for the local economy, which drives up property values and which makes it more difficult for local people to access housing.	Yes: A very specific rural policy response.
Levering community facilities	Some of the neighbourhood plans reviewed are looking to allow small scale development in order to facilitate the delivery of new community facilities, such as parish halls.	No: This has an interesting rural angle, particularly in light of CIL announcements, but the neighbourhood plans this could draw upon are not very far progressed and at this point there would be little that could be drawn out of a case study.
Stimulating employment	Some of the plans reviewed are seeking to identify land for a range of employment types. Some area looking at different ways of using business space and allowing development to take place outside of development boundaries. Another is investigating what incentives could be put in place to help attract employment to the Parish.	No: This is a common theme across a number of the neighbourhood plans. However, at the time of writing, it is not clear how these policy objectives will be implemented, and thus how useful they will be to other communities.
Providing broadband	Most of the neighbourhood plans looked at are seeking to encourage the provision of broadband connections to help counteract issues of rural isolation, to encourage home working and strengthen the local economy.	No: although a rural issue, the subject is subject to national level policy and initiatives
Community transport provision	The idea of providing a community bus is being investigated in one of the neighbourhood plans reviewed, given currently poor local public	No: Although an important consideration, this isn't

	transport provision and low per capita income of the local population.	strictly a land use issue, and there is limited information available as to how this would be delivered.
Governance and cross boundary working	This can draw upon the Fosse Villages and Upper Eden Plans. These are both large, multi-parished areas, where governance structures and agreements needed to be established for the plan to progress. In the Fosse Villages, the parishes have a history of working together successfully.	Yes: A good example of communities working together, with neighbourhood and community transcending top down geography. This is more about process than policy, and may be of interest to a wider audience.
Community champions	This could draw upon the use of community champions in the Lynton and Lynmouth plan and the creation of Topic groups as part of the Thame Plan which were then used as a means to spread messages about the neighbourhood plan and generate interest and participation.	Yes: Again, this is more about process, and would be of interest to a wider audience, but good at demonstrating how to get the buy-in of the wider community.
Defining local housing need	This could draw upon several plans which are seeking to establish what is meant by 'local' and how new affordable housing should be made available for local people.	Yes: A regularly occurring issue across many of the plans and a good rural theme.
Local need assessment	Drawing on the Thame Neighbourhood Plan, which requires developers on sites of six plus units to submit a Thame specific housing needs assessment, showing how their proposals respond to and meet local housing need.	Yes: Closely linked to the above case study suggestion, ensuring local needs are considered as part of open market housing development. (NB: this and the case study above combined)
Protecting countryside character	Some of the plans reviewed are seeking to draw development boundaries around villages to restrict further encroachment into the countryside.	No: This approach reflects current practice in local plans.

Establishing local design policy	Following from the allocation of land (suggested case study 02), this can draw upon both Thame and Much Wenlock which seek to ensure development of allocated sites responds to the existing fabric of the town but which also respect and respond to countryside character. In Thame this is achieved through the inclusion of mini site design briefs. In Much Wenlock this is achieved by reference to an early design statement prepared by the Town Council.	No: Although showing how development could be shaped in order to respond to local character, and possibly of interest to a wider than rural audience, design guidance and advice is provided elsewhere.
Maximising the benefits of tourism	Some of the plans reviewed are seeking to develop policies that increase tourism and the benefits from this, such as employment and local job generation. This is also leading to considerations as to what infrastructure is needed to support this, such as bus provision for example	No: A very specific issue, but where limited information is currently available and where policy needs to be developed further.
Engaging with younger members of the community	This could draw upon the Fosse Villages Plan where a series of roadshows and meetings have been undertaken, including attending schools. Leicestershire County Council has also established a Neighbourhood Planning network, open to all communities in the area. As part of this, a future session is planned that will focus on how best to engage with the young and young adults.	Yes: Good example of process, recognising the need to engage with this group, but also addressing the fact that many rural areas have an ageing population.
Alternative approaches	As an alternative, or addition to any of the above, it might be interesting to look at different ways of doing things. The approach taken by the Kinnerley Parish Neighbourhood Plan in Shropshire has been to work closely with the local authority to embed their aspirations into the Local Plan. The work follows the ethos of neighbourhood planning in terms of being community led, but has not been subject to separate formal processes.	No: This is interesting, but not appropriate given focus on making neighbourhood planning work.

Appendix D: Acknowledgements

Project team

The research and case studies have been carried out by consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff (Jon Herbert and Alex Lloyd) on behalf of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Fiona Forgham, Karen Williams and Sam Rule) with support from the Department for Communities and Local Government (Mick Duggan, Gareth Bradford and Susan Peart).

Reference group

A wider reference group was established for the research, acting as peer reviewer and critical friend. The reference group included representatives from organisations providing neighbourhood planning support to communities, being: ACRE (Philip Vincent), Cabe at the Design Council (Nicola Mathers), CPRE (Alex Munro), Locality (Carole Reilly), Planning Aid England (Catherine Middleton) and The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment (Biljana Savic).