

A Quick Guide to the Localism Bill Neighbourhood Plans

Note: These Royal Town Planning Institute Guides are to the Localism Bill as it stands at the time of writing. The relevant parts of the Bill may change in its passage through Parliament. Check at www.parliament.uk

- There will still be local plans and there will be new statutory Neighbourhood Plans.
- There will also be statutory Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders (these are not dealt with in these notes).
- Designated bodies such as Town and Parish Councils and proposed Neighbourhood Forums will be allowed to prepare Neighbourhood Plans.
- Where there is no Parish Council, any group of people living in a neighbourhood will be allowed to apply to the local planning authority to be designated as a 'Neighbourhood Forum' in order for them to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.
- The current criteria for a Neighbourhood Forum is it should have a minimum of 3 people who live in the neighbourhood, is open to all and has a constitution. (These criteria may change to raise the minimum number to 21 and to include workers in the area and local Councillors.)
- Neighbourhood Forums should have the purpose of furthering the social, economic and environmental well-being of individuals living, or wanting to live, in the area.
- Where there is no Parish or Town Council, the local authority will adjudicate on the boundary of the plan that a Neighbourhood Forum wants to prepare.
- It is recognised that not all areas will want to do a Neighbourhood Plan. In this case, the Local Plan will still provide policy for the area.
- A local authority will have a duty to provide support to neighbourhoods undertaking planning – but this does not have to include financial support.
- The local plan will take on a strategic role and will contain e.g. housing numbers, main transport routes etc. For example, the Neighbourhood Plan will have to incorporate the Local Plan's housing targets for the area as a minimum, but may propose additional development.
- Neighbourhood Plans will undergo an independent examination – undertaken by an examiner who is agreed by the Forum and the Council. This will be more of a paper exercise than an inquiry - checking whether the Neighbourhood Plan conforms with:
 - The strategic content of the local plan
 - The National Planning Framework or other national guidance, including a proposed 'presumption in favour of sustainable development';
 - European Directives;
 - National and international designations (e.g. Listed Buildings, Green Belts);
 - Neighbouring neighbourhood plans.
- Subject to passing the independent examination, the plan will be put to a local referendum and will be 'approved' if more than 50 per cent of those voting vote in favour of it.
- If the referendum is positive, then the local authority will have to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan.

Further advice should be sought before making any significant decisions based on the material on this Guide.

Position at 1st May 2011