

**London Assembly Planning Committee – 25 April 2019****Transcript of Item 6 – Neighbourhood Planning and London’s Communities**

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** We can now get on to the meat of the meeting, which is to discuss, as I said, neighbourhood planning and London’s communities. The way the meeting is going to go is we are going to start with a capture and ask some of our expert witnesses to tell us where we have got to with this. Then we are going to have presentations - and we are very pleased that the response has been so good - from six representatives from neighbourhood forums from across London. They are going to tell us about their neighbourhood plans and the process they are going through. Then, after that, we are going to come back to our panel and have comments on what they have heard and go into some of the findings and recommendations that we want to put forward. We will be using all this material and evidence as part of a report and it will be the third report we have written since neighbourhood planning was introduced in 2011 by the Localism Act.

I will ask the first few questions and then we will go forward with other Members. The first part is really to find out the state of play since we did our last report, which was in 2014. It is really finding out how things have evolved since then. What we found in 2014 was that at that stage - and remember it was only introduced in 2011 as a concept and so we are not looking at a very long time span, and you have to have a neighbourhood forum before that and so forming one and then having a neighbourhood plan - the interest in neighbourhood planning was limited in terms of the areas of London where it was being carried out and 78 were in preparation at that time. It would be good to know where we are now, which is five years on.

I want to introduce you, sorry. Before I do that, please will you introduce yourselves to all of us and to particularly those who are watching on the webcast? Just say who you are and one line about your title.

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen’s Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** My name is Henry Peterson. I chair a neighbourhood forum in North Kensington and I am Co-convener with Tony [Burton] of the London Network.

**Tony Burton (Convener, Neighbourhood Planners London):** I am Tony Burton. I am the Convener of Neighbourhood Planners London. We are the volunteer-run informal network of neighbourhood planners throughout the capital.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** On a voluntary basis?

**Tony Burton (Convener, Neighbourhood Planners London):** On an entirely voluntary basis, yes.

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** I am Emma Brunskill-Powell. I am a researcher at Publica and we are undertaking a study for Tony [Burton] and Henry [Peterson] looking at the potential for neighbourhood planning in areas experiencing quite high levels of socioeconomic deprivation.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Excellent.

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** I am Brian O'Donnell. I am Strategic Planning Manager at the London Borough of Camden and I also chair the London Boroughs Neighbourhood Plan Group.

**Sharon Hayward (Co-ordinator, London Tenants Federation):** I am Sharon Hayward. I am the Co-ordinator for the London Tenants Federation. We have had bits and pieces of grant funding from around 2014 to work with groups of tenants and other community groups in trying to influence local planning full stop. Some of those groups are in the process of developing neighbourhood plans.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Excellent. You can see we have a really good range of experts to advise us.

Tony [Burton], if you could start off, then I will move on to Emma [Brunskill-Powell]. Tell us very briefly where it has got to in terms of coverage. How many more plans are there in preparation? How many are adopted?

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** There are now 12 made plans. You make a neighbourhood plan rather than adopt one. With a fair wind we are hopeful that that will be 13 by the end of next month with Harlesden having its referendum at the end of May [2019]. It is important to recognise that there were only three made plans a couple of years ago. In terms of people getting to the end of the process, that is accelerating. There are around 80 designated and active forums throughout London.

There are more than 110 communities that have expressed an interest - that we are aware of - in neighbourhood planning but not all of those have got to the stage of being formally recognised or even applying. A large number of those are at the second stage of the neighbourhood plan and so they have been designated and are drawing up a draft plan. One of the issues I am sure we will come back to is how we can accelerate that process because a lot of them have been at that stage for rather too long.

The process is slow but steady in London, perhaps at risk of stalling as people do not get through the stages for reasons that we will come back to, I am sure. By comparison there are over 700 neighbourhood plans that have been made throughout England. That gives you a sense of the relative number, remembering that across much of the rest of England the majority of those have been prepared by parish or town councils, which are pre-existing bodies. In London, you have to establish a new organisation and a neighbourhood forum, and London is particularly complicated because of the nature of its demographics, the challenges of boundaries, the value of the land and sometimes the attitude of local authorities and indeed the Mayor.

It is important to recognise that neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood forums exist in all sorts of different parts of London.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That was going to be my next question. Whereabouts? What is the spread like now?

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** There is a very wide spread if you look at the actual totality, as far north as Hadley Wood, as far west as Ickenham, as far south as Cheam in Sutton and as far east as North Woolwich, but a concentration in Camden and Westminster, which far and away have more forums and more activity going on in them than anywhere else. All sorts of different places have had neighbourhood forums set up and are producing plans and, as I am sure Emma [Brunskill-Powell] will expand on, we are seeing them in areas that are relatively prosperous and areas that are not prosperous. It is clear that the approach is flexible enough and adaptable enough to the variety of circumstances that exist across London.

The question is why it is happening where it is happening. That is a question that will tease us for some time as to explaining the geography of what is happening where.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is interesting because our perception was that there were not many in outer London and there are, from what you are saying, or there are some.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** I am saying that they exist in outer London. The majority are in central London, however you want to design that, within zones 1 and 2, but they exist in the far north and the far west and almost as far south as you can go.

The east is quite interesting in that there is very little neighbourhood planning in any of the boroughs in the eastern 180 degrees of London. The outer London boroughs to the east are neighbourhood planning deserts in terms of the existence of designated forums.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Could you just name the boroughs where there is no neighbourhood planning?

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** Yes. There are nine: Barking and Dagenham, Bromley, Croydon, Harrow, Havering, Merton, Newham, Redbridge and the City of London. That is basically everything in the east, Merton and the City of London in the centre, and Harrow in the northwest.

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** If I could just postscript that, Newham does have --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Carpenters?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** Yes, but that comes under the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) rather than Newham, the actual borough. In terms of measuring these, we looked at those that do not have any designated neighbourhood forums rather than just full-on activity from the very earliest stages because that was proving to be very difficult to measure.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** We are hopeful that at least two of those will see something coming forward within the next 12 months, but others seem pretty dead in terms of the level of activity.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Maybe we will go on to Emma's findings at this stage. You have just done some research on this, have you not?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** What we found is that, as Tony [Burton] said, the spread is quite wide. There are some real challenges in terms of things like funding and in terms of the skills that are available in neighbourhoods. As Tony mentioned, what we are looking at is this double challenge of being an urban neighbourhood forum, which throws up a much more complex process than doing it in a rural village, plus looking at areas that have high levels of deprivation. The assumption that there will be planners and architects and people who can produce websites in the area and who have time and skills to offer on a voluntary basis is not always possible. There are challenges in terms of skills, challenges in terms of funding and challenges in terms of this non-parish status, which means that in some cases that I have been looking at as part of this study it has taken two years just to get the area designated. That adds a lot more potential for it to slow down and for it to stall in the process.

However, there are a lot of opportunities. For people who get into neighbourhood planning and who are motivated to start a neighbourhood plan, it is very much about the social aspects of it. A lot of people go into it with this idea of making things better for their community, which is really how neighbourhood planning should be. It should be this positive thing. It should be about making things better and improving. That is something that we find a lot in London. There is a reputation for neighbourhood planning being quite a not-in-my-backyard exercise, but I found in my work – and I am sure Tony [Burton] and Henry [Peterson] will agree in terms of the people they have worked with – that it is not usually a single issue, avoiding an estate being demolished, for example. It is about people saying, “Here is what we would like to see”. That is a really big part of it.

There are a couple of other big opportunities. It is a really good chance for communities to create a relationship with the local authority that is not antagonistic necessarily, a working relationship where they can give information about their local area, which can be very detailed and would be incredibly useful to a local authority. They can share that information and the local authority also has links to a community that can be a conduit in some senses.

There is a tension between the challenges and the opportunities, but overall what we found is that it is something that has a lot of scope if it is properly resourced and if it is well supported for the communities at least that we have spoken to.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That was good. Thank you. Tony, it might be helpful if you just took us through the stages you have to go through in order to get to the point where a plan is made, as you say.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** The first thing is that your local authority does need to agree to both the existence of a neighbourhood forum and the boundary. Those are often applications that go in simultaneously, although they do not have to.

**Tom Copley AM:** Sorry. Is there a template structure for a neighbourhood forum or does it vary from borough to borough in terms of how it has to be constituted?

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** There is a set of legal minimum requirements. That is what should be being set by the boroughs. A number of boroughs are asking a whole range of superfluous and additional questions, which is one of the issues about creating unnecessary obstacles to get to the process. The legislation sets out quite clearly what the minimum requirements are. There is guidance there and sensible guidelines about how you might think about a boundary, about this sort of size, although that can be quite variable. There are minimum requirements about the responsibilities of the forum in terms of its purpose and its constitution. It has to be open to anyone and ward councillors have to be invited if they want to be on it. There are some minimum standards and that are set there. That is a local authority process.

Once an application goes in, that has to be advertised and there is a time limit now within which a decision is meant to be made, although a number of local authorities have found loopholes that have rather delayed that process longer than it they should have done.

Once you are designated as a forum and as an area, it is in your hands as that forum to then move the process forward at the speed that you wish. It is entirely in your gift what you do. You need to produce a draft plan, which you need to consult on for a minimum of six weeks, and there is a set of formal consultees who need to be involved in that, but it is a wider public debate. Once you have done that, you need to finalise your plan

and submit it to the local authority. Alongside the plan, you need to provide a statement that you have met the basic conditions that the law requires you to meet, which we can expand on if helpful, and a consultation statement that shows that this is drawn out over an effective process of community engagement.

The local authority then consults on the plan. It then goes to an independent examiner, who is appointed by the local authority but with the agreement of the neighbourhood forum, and they have the plan and also have all the feedback on the local authority's consultation. They issue a report with recommendations. It is then for the local authority to decide what to take on board by way of recommendations. Most times people just take on board the recommendations and move on to the final stage, which is a referendum, which is the responsibility of the local authority. It gets funding from central Government to do it and a simple majority at that referendum means the plan is made.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It is quite an arduous process then, not for the faint-hearted.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** It is a serious process. There is a balance here. You can make this process as simple as you want it to be. You could have a plan with two or three policies that are really important to an area and you could do it quickly, but then it would be dealing with only a small number of issues, or you could try to be like almost a shadow authority and try to cover all the bases. You could push the boundaries with what you can achieve with planning or you could play safe. The more you push the boundaries, the more evidence you need to justify what you are doing. These are all choices that neighbourhood forums have. They will need help and support to be able to make those choices in as informed a way as possible. They really benefit from talking to people who have been down the road ahead of them so that they know where it is worth making the effort and where it is not.

It is really important in all these situations to be working out where they can add value because there is no point in a neighbourhood plan simply repeating what is already available in planning policy through the authority or through, indeed, the London Plan or national planning policy, but there are choices there. There is a requirement for process, but it is a judgement as to how much time and effort you want to put into it.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is really helpful. The only last bit before we bring in all our participants so that they can tell us about their experiences is about the funding and the technical support, just so we have a picture of that.

**Navin Shah AM:** How is this process communicated within the borough? How do people know that you can set up a forum and that this is the process? Part of that would also be funding and capacity building.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** Both of those issues are sometimes linked because getting the funding to promote the concept and the idea of neighbourhood planning is part of the issue.

At the moment, there is no mechanism to promote neighbourhood planning. It is entirely down to the goodwill or the intent of local councillors, local authorities, local community groups and pre-existing networks. One of the issues that we found at Neighbourhood Planners London is that there is no real appetite to be promoting in a positive way neighbourhood planning through boroughs and through councillor networks. There are of course exceptions as always, but generally you have to work quite hard to find out what is going on and what the process is, and you need to find someone who is going to be more friendly than your local authority will be when you ring them up and ask them about what neighbourhood planning is. Lots of boroughs have virtually nothing and some have nothing on their websites, as one example.

In terms of the funding and support that is available, there is currently a four-year programme. We are just into the second year. It is the second round of funding from central Government of £24.5 million over four years to support neighbourhood planning across England as a whole. London will get whatever share it gets but on the basis of what it asks for. That is available in grant. There are grants of up to £9,000 that are available to any neighbourhood forum that wishes to undertake a neighbourhood plan. Then there is additional funding of another £8,000 if you meet certain criteria. Those criteria being tightened up. Previously, all neighbourhood forums were eligible to get that additional funding and that is not now the case and that is a major problem in London. There is been a backward step in the new funding regime for London and that is one of the reasons we believe that a lot of neighbourhood forums are stalled at this stage. They were promised more money than they now have access to.

There is additionally technical support, which is provided by a single consultancy, Aecom, around a set of pre-agreed packages of support on issues that have already been defined for you. If what you are interested in fits into one of those packages, then you get some support. The feedback on the quality of support is quite variable and the Government has chosen not to, for example, fund character studies about why areas are different to other areas, whereas it did have that type of technical support under the previous programme and that was very popular. Therefore, to some extent, what you can get funding for and what you can get technical support for is dictated by government policy and that has become tighter and more directional under the new support programme than it was under the previous support programme.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Are there any other innovative sources of funding?

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** There are other sources of funding that are used variably by neighbourhood forums. Occasionally some will find board budgets where the councils operate that mechanism and so will find they are able to access funding through their ward councillors. Technically a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) you could use to support neighbourhood planning, but we are not aware of authorities taking that opportunity. There are options through the [National] Lottery. Some have used Awards for All under what is now the National Lottery Community Fund to support neighbourhood planning. There are a range of other community funding mechanisms, but everyone wants them and so there is heavy demand.

For some bodies, particularly where they have significant businesses in their area or are working collaboratively with businesses in a number of places, these are jointly prepared with local businesses. They have been able to access support through those local businesses either by literally rattling the tin and asking for cheques or through in-kind support, meeting rooms, photocopying, printing and all that kind of thing. There are those sources available, but it is down to the innovation and agility of local volunteers to try to find that.

I guess we would call ourselves a support mechanism. We are a bunch of volunteers. Hopefully we do something useful. People seem to keep coming back to our events. We are just an idea that has floated in London. We are unique. There is not an equivalent to us anywhere else in the country. We are doing this for the love of it.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Impressive. Emma, is there anything you want to add to that in terms of more sources of funding or others?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** Yes. Of the seven case studies that I looked at as part of this study, we have seen a couple of them trying to find support, whether it is in-kind support in terms of studies or, as Tony mentioned, printing and simply having a roof over your head.

Stratford and West Ham did a really interesting piece of work in terms of setting the boundaries. They used School 21, which is a high school in Stratford. The resource in this case was just people. Because they were using local high school students, they then had access to their parents and their parents became interested in it and their parents could feed in their insights into where the boundaries were. They tend to come from within, these kinds of innovations, but they are out there, and people are learning from them, for example, through Neighbourhood Planners London events.

Queen's Park is something of an anomaly because it is the only urban parish council. They fund their neighbourhood forum through the money that they have as a parish council, but they also received a Greater London Authority (GLA) grant for part of their engagement process.

Somers Town is another interesting example because they are surrounded by the Knowledge Quarter and they have all these historic housing estates. When I spoke to the chair of the neighbourhood forum, she was saying that sometimes they can feel like a goldfish bowl with students from the Bartlett [Faculty of the Built Environment] coming in all the time to look at these historic housing estates. She decided to turn that on its head and use the fact that people were interested in studying Somers Town to get University College London (UCL) and the Bartlett to spend a bit of time doing work that would serve the neighbourhood forum and so boosting that evidence base.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is interesting.

**Tom Copley AM:** I used to live in Somers Town.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** If it is OK with you, Members, it would be good now to hear from our six forum participants. Are you happy with that?

**Navin Shah AM:** Yes.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** First, we are going to hear from Roger Winfield, who is from the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum.

What you need to know is that I have given a set of issues and areas that we would like covered and everyone is going to endeavour to do that in five minutes.

**Roger Winfield (Chair, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning Forum):** Thank you for inviting me in this afternoon. My name is Roger Winfield and I chair the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum. As the Chair has indicated, this presentation is limited to dealing with the questions that the Committee has asked me to answer.

For those of you who do not know it, Kentish Town is a diverse inner-city neighbourhood within the London Borough of Camden containing a mix of housing: council, housing association, social, owned and privately rented. Its main centres are the high street, Kentish Town Road, and the so-called industry sites at Regis Road and the Murphy site.

Turning now to the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan, it was made or adopted - you have heard that discussion already - by Camden Council in September 2016 following a rather more successful 91% yes vote than that other referendum in June 2016. The whole process started with public meetings in 2012. Currently, 14 people - of whom six are women - are active in the Forum. Engagement with the community has been through public meetings, workshops, street displays, door-knocking, social media, the website and local groups.

Let me give you a couple of examples of the benefits of the process as I have seen them. It gives us a deeper understanding of the area and the community. Secondly, the Forum is playing a major part in helping to shape the Kentish Town of the future.

However, there have been challenges. One has been to reach all parts of the community. For a group of volunteers to run an unfunded statutory body and manage the large volume of work is a major challenge.

You have also asked specifically about Camden Council and Locality. The former Camden Council continues to be very helpful. Locality assisted in the preparation of a draft plan but there has been no involvement since.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Can you just explain? Sorry to interrupt. Locality is funded by the Government. Is that right?

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** It manages the grant programme on behalf of the Government.

**Roger Winfield (Chair, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning Forum):** That is right. Various other external organisations and individuals helped in the plan's preparation and, since then, external groups and individuals are represented in some of the Neighbourhood Forum working groups. We contribute ourselves to other groups.

You asked if the process of making the plan could have been made quicker. I doubt it - and this is a personal view - without limiting the community involvement in the process.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is interesting.

**Roger Winfield (Chair, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning Forum):** As to the future, the plan - this document - identifies 26 separate policies and these include, just to give you a taster, step-free access at the Underground and Overground stations and the protection of public houses.

The major policy is the potential development of the 14.3 hectares or 35.3 acres of the Regis Road and Murphy sites, on which I will elaborate. The main point we picked up from our community consultation was that the two sites are under-occupied in terms of capacity and density.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** These are industrial sites? Are they strategic industrial sites or locally designated?

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** Locally designated.



**Roger Winfield (Chair, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning Forum):** Thank you, Brian. The opportunity these sites offer is to re-provide existing employment space with buildings that suit the new economy. The minimum is to retain current employment floor space, but our hope is to increase this space and to increase employment numbers with greater density of buildings. The re-provision of the employment space creates the land for housing in Kentish Town where no other opportunity exists. Bringing new employment jobs into Kentish Town will have another benefit of bringing money into local shops and our high street.

Why preserve poor density and capacity in central areas? Redevelopment should be allowed, we argue, that preserves or increases new employment space that then leads to the freeing up of land for residential use, especially if this can be done with 50% affordable housing for local people.

Finally, the Kentish Town plan policy for Regis Road and the Murphy site is now incorporated in Camden Council's draft planning framework for Kentish Town, on which there has been and continues to be extensive consultation. Thank you for listening to me.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is very good. Excellent. That last bit is quite a win that you have that, is it not?

**Roger Winfield (Chair, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning Forum):** It is quite a win.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Just so that Members know, this is the only example of a plan that is made already, but what we are hearing is how it continues into the future. It would be good later if Brian O'Donnell, who must have been very involved in it, could tell us what the Camden thinks about the whole intensification really of the local CIL and the housing, too. Thank you very much.

**Roger Winfield (Chair, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning Forum):** I have printed out some expanded notes for the Committee and for the panel if you would like me to hand them out at some stage.

**Tom Copley AM:** Thank you.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is very good. Thank you. By the way, when we get to recommendations and so on, I do want you to pipe up from the side like a Greek chorus. Now we going to hear from Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum and Leao Neto.

**Leao Neto (Chair, Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum):** Thank you very much for the invitation and I will answer the question that I received, but before going anywhere will just say that I found the experience a very demanding experience. A community could not deliver a planning document without great support. I would like to encourage the Committee to support the communities that intend to engage with this process.

The Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan area largely sits within the London Borough of Brent, although a small part to the south is the responsibility of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC). There are two wards within the area, Harlesden and Kensal Green. Harlesden has a vibrant town centre with a wide variety of independent shops. The high street is very vibrant, catering for its ethnically diverse population. The buildings are mostly Victorian architecture. There are few pocket parks and a big beautiful park. It is a very densely developed area, where the population increased substantially - by about 50% - between 2001 and 2011, reaching 18,000 people. As you can imagine, there is huge pressure on resources, especially housing and land.

Can anything good come from housing? Well, deprivation leads to considerable social ills, but that contrasts with a strong sense of belonging in the community and community links. Churches are abundant and there are two Islamic community centres, but still tension gives the area a rough edge.

In planning terms, Harlesden has experienced a long field of decline. More recently, there has been a whiff of gentrification. The housing stock is generally good, and the town centre has been improved with the implementation of a new road scheme, including a shared surface for part of the high street, but there is potential for further improvement in the town centre. There is in Harlesden a rich heritage in the arts, music, etc, and as a shopping destination. Harlesden could benefit from the regeneration at Old Oak. The neighbourhood plan wants to promote the type of development that will meet the needs of the population there. That includes housing, community facilities, business space, green spaces, retail and leisure.

The Neighbourhood Forum builds on a history of strong community action. The Forum was supported by Lift, a community organisation, a local organisation that merged with Crisis, and now Crisis Skylight Brent helps by running the what we call the secretariat, the support for the Forum. The Methodist Church where I am the minister has been supporting the forum, too.

The planning document is ready after a long time. It has been externally examined and is going to be submitted to a referendum on 30 May [2019].

The Neighbourhood Forum's predecessor was the Town Centre Team. We in the Town Centre Team managed to get the changes to the road scheme before it folded up because of political difficulties. The energy from that experience was harnessed by a new leadership and the Neighbourhood Forum was created four or five years ago. The membership stands at 125 now. There is a good gender balance, although the ethnic mix could be better, although I am Brazilian, as you have noticed by my football skills. There are a good number of volunteers who help to run events. There has been engagement with schools and a design competition for banners leading from Willesden Junction Station to the town centre.

We have engaged the community in many ways, as the previous speaker said. In our case, we have involved community groups such as environmental groups and the churches together and also through social media.

The values coming out of the experience we had are community participation really, collaboration among the different agencies in the area and a framing process for the community. What we achieved above all was to put Harlesden on the map for the Council and the OPDC.

We are supporting the setting up of a community-led housing project. It is hoped that it will be what the Forum becomes after the referendum. Behind the housing plan, there is a great spirit of community co-operation and cohesion and a realisation that the environment in which we live can influence and change the way that we live our lives. Thank you.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Very good. Thank you very much indeed. Janiz Murray, is it the Greater Carpenters Estate or the Carpenters?

**Janiz Murray (Joint Secretary, Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Forum):** It is the Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Forum.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It is much bigger than the Carpenters Estate, is it not?

**Janiz Murray (Joint Secretary, Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Forum):** Yes. It does include some areas around it. I am Janiz Murray. I am joint secretary of the Carpenters Neighbourhood Forum.

The Greater Carpenters neighbourhood area is on the border of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and Stratford, but it is physically separated from it by railway lines. It is smaller than a ward with over 2,500 homes, low-rise and high-rise. Some of Carpenters Estate particularly has been there from the late 1960s and the other surrounding areas are new, and some are brand new. It is a mix of types of homes and tenures with freeholders, leaseholders, social and private renters. We are very near to Stratford Station with an ever-growing number of new private and student homes being built on the edges of our area, bringing with them quite a high level of transience, short-term private renting and some Airbnb.

We have a wealth of community assets, green and play spaces, a primary school, the Building Crafts College, an active community centre, public houses, a couple of local shops and a doctor surgery. Our Forum has been successful in gaining a listing of five Assets of Community Value (ACV) in its neighbourhood area. These are a range of existing businesses here, including construction, maintenance, refurbishment and artist studios. There are also training facilities in the Building Crafts College and the Carpenters and Dockland Centre.

One of your questions was about what stage we are at now. We have carried out consultation on our pre-submission neighbourhood plan. We have submitted our consultation statement and we are not far off submitting our plan ready for an examination.

However, we did not start off looking to develop a neighbourhood plan. Our origins were with the residents of my estate, Carpenters. We campaigned against Newham Council's plan to demolish our estate and to redevelop with UCL a new campus and later up to four times the number of houses that we have now. We set up our own action group at that stage to try to stop that happening. As social housing tenants, we first made contact with Sharon [Hayward] from the London Tenants Federation and then with Richard [Lee] from Just Space to help us look at alternatives to the demolition of our homes. With some funding from Loretta Lees [Professor of Human Geography, Leicester University], [formerly] a King's College academic, Sharon and Richard helped us to develop a bottom-up community plan that we might use to negotiate with the LLDC, which has become our local planning authority.

Even at this stage, we held meetings and walkabouts, organised consultations and eventually carried out a door-to-door survey, which was completed by more than half the residents on the estate, to make sure we had something better that the majority would support. We have engaged in trying to influence the LLDC's Local Plan and the LLDC told us that if we wanted to have that kind of detailed influence, we would need to develop a neighbourhood plan, and so we carried on from there. At this stage, we have 15 core members with around a third being women but our Neighbourhood Forum has over 170 members from the community, including the odd councillor. We used to have a London Assembly Member as well.

Over the years, including the early work in developing the community plan, there has been a huge amount of meetings, exhibitions, door-knocking, surveys and community events, between putting together letters notices and newsletters. None of this has been easy, as our key motivation has been saving our homes on the Carpenters Estate so that they might be refurbished rather than demolished and so that we can keep together our community, but that is not what Newham Council wants.

In fact, we have had problems engaging with Newham Council all the way through. Even the new Mayor now, Rohksana Fiaz, we still have not managed to engage with. I do not know if any of you can help us with that. Please let me know later.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** We will say something to Rohksana.

**Janiz Murray (Joint Secretary, Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Forum):** All right. We have had to focus hard on putting together something that our community wants in terms of additional homes and jobs, green and community infrastructure, as well as trying to convince people that it is worth doing when it is clear that they have no sympathy for the residents of Carpenters Estate and the new Neighbourhood Forum. However, we have had a lot of support not just from residents but from other tenant community sector groups, students, academics, Max Fordham and Locality, and through Locality also Aecom, Just Space, the London Tenants Federation and people from the local church and our community centre. Some funding came from Loretta Lees, some through London Tenants Federation grants, grants from Trust for London, UCL's Engineering Exchange and Locality. We would not have got this far without the extra support and funding in addition to the Locality funding.

The LLDC planning officers have been very helpful throughout the process, while Newham Council, as I said, is quite the opposite. Incredibly, we are among the good case studies in the London Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration, but Newham continues to operate as if we do not exist and as if they do not need to acknowledge us at all. That is it. Thank you.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Thank you very much for that.

**Janiz Murray (Joint Secretary, Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Forum):** That is all right. I have brought some of our work, starting from the community plan up to the draft neighbourhood plan now.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Excellent. That is great. Thank you for that. Now we will go to Lewisham and Stephen Kenny from Grove Park.

**Stephen Kenny (Chair, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum):** Thank you, everybody, for the invite. Yes, Grove Park is in Lewisham, but it is at the tail end of Lewisham, verging on the borders of Bromley, and so it is zone 4. It stretches over three wards. We have Grove Park, Downham and Whitefoot, which are some super-output wards and probably one of the highest of deprivation in England.

The area has had no investment for 30 years, which is why we started a neighbourhood plan. We had all the cuts and we had no public assets. There are roughly 20,000-plus residents. In the existing local Lewisham plan, it is described as an area of managed change. We refer to it as managed decline. We started the forum process in 2011 when we approached Lewisham Council to be a frontrunner because we were invited to. Lewisham Council at the time said no, which meant that we did not have access to the £50,000. Instead, we had access to £9,000 and that is a big difference in doing neighbourhood planning.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** We have not heard about that, have we, the £50,000 for frontrunners?

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** There was a very small number - about a dozen, I think - of frontrunners even before the legislation was introduced to try the idea out. We had an extra batch of money. Hackbridge is one that has just succeeded in getting its plan made. After that experiment, we were into the support programme that we have discussed.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Thanks. We will add that to the findings.

**Stephen Kenny (Chair, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum):** That got rejected twice. It went through two rounds. Why we started it, apart from the lack of investment, was we had a local pub that was designated to be demolished called the Baring Hall Hotel, which last year [2018] was listed Grade II as the second most important pub in England and has now reopened. Thanks to Richard [Lee] from Just Space, we gave evidence upstairs to amend the London Plan to protect pubs across London. That started back in 2009, but it still remains under threat despite its listing because it is not about change of use.

Has Lewisham [Council] been helpful? It took a year to respond to the pre-submission draft and that was not very helpful. It also removed half the ACV from the pub and we had to fight for that. It has taken so long to get to this point because we are always fighting for our assets. For example, we have had to fight for Grove Park Youth Club, which was cited for demolition for housing despite all the issues we have regarding youth. It turns out it is probably the last remaining piece of social architecture from the British modernist movement and we hope to have it reopened in October this year [2019]. That is, again, working with UCL and Just Space. We are eternally grateful to them.

In terms of sufficient funds, if you think of £50,000 at the beginning to £9,000 now and a local plan costs probably £100,000 to £200,000 maybe, how is that possible?

In terms of Locality, at the beginning you had three choices. You had the Prince's Foundation, you had Locality and you had Planning Aid. That got distilled to one group and one technical support package of Aecom. In terms of technical support, it is very nice on paper. However, we should not have to be chasing the consultants to finish the project. Some of those have taken seven or eight months to get through and so it has been incredibly frustrating.

In terms of how a process could be made quicker, councils could respond quickly instead of taking a year and public bodies like Transport for London (TfL) and Network Rail could respond in a timely manner. In our plan we have 11 sites for development and so it is not about just saving stuff. We are very proactive. With that in mind, as we were getting no funding for our development process, we applied for round one of the GLA's Good Growth Fund in November 2017 and we were awarded some funding and it was very positive. However, in the end result, we asked for strategic master planning and what we got was micro interventions. Any community can do micro interventions. What we need is strategic master planning for super-output areas.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** You got the money?

**Stephen Kenny (Chair, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum):** The GLA got the money because it was handed to them. They changed the brief and distilled it so far backwards that at one point I was considering whether to just abandon the whole project.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Did somebody feedback, then?

**Stephen Kenny (Chair, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum):** Yes, but it does not really matter, does it? Nothing changes. This is the problem.

In terms of major projects for us, we have a large housing development and an urban national park, which is a 35-acre stretch of green space. Some of it is under threat but most of it is not and it is about connecting that and then going back to the GLA and saying, "We want this designated as a metropolitan sink, as opposed to a bunch of local borough sinks", which in terms of strategic thinking is far more important for access to nature.

We have modelled it on the National Park System, which was about access to nature in 1920, and we in London are limited to nature. We have masses of high-rise buildings and we need those green spaces.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That was great. Thank you, Stephen.

**Stephen Kenny (Chair, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum):** I have one recommendation: that the GLA and we work together to work with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) because, unless we have strong planning policies in place, most of this is -- we should not have to be sitting here. That is your job as experts to make good local neighbourhood plans. If the planning policy was strong enough and robust enough, we should not be having to do this as volunteers.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Do you mean we would not need neighbourhood planning?

**Stephen Kenny (Chair, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum):** No, not if the planning system was working properly.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Interesting. OK. Now we are going to hear from another neighbourhood forum in Lewisham. Andrea [Carey Fuller]?

**Andrea Carey Fuller (Secretary/Co-ordinator, Deptford Neighbourhood Action):** Thank you. I am here to represent Deptford Neighbourhood Action (DNA). The name was created by another Andrea, our chair Andrea Hughes, because she wanted to Deptford to be in the local people's DNA in terms of that sense of ownership and collaboration. We started in 2015 talking about setting up an open forum because we wanted to make a positive difference. We wanted local people in the community to feel that they had a real say in what was happening around planning in that part of Lewisham because people in Deptford have historically always had this feeling and still have this feeling that they are dumped upon, that they do not ever have a say and that when they try to have a say their views are ignored. That is where we started from.

We have various objectives that are part of DNA, encouraging community engagement, community cohesion and active citizenship, improving the health of the local community, supporting local businesses, organisations, industries and market traders - we have a thriving traditional market, which urgently needs support, because otherwise it is going to die - promoting and developing places for creative communities to flourish, and promoting the Healthy Streets agenda. We wanted it to be more accessible, especially as we border the river. There is a small bit of river and half of that river area is taken up by Convoys Wharf, which is going to be the largest development in Deptford with 3,500 homes, 15% so-called affordable, but we know 'affordable' does not mean affordable in the sense that we want it to be affordable, i.e. the provision of quality social and affordable housing for people on low to middle incomes. We know it is going to end up being mainly shared ownership, which is not affordable.

Also, we want to protect and promote all forms of Deptford heritage and identities. Deptford is a fantastic, vibrant place. It has a wonderful heritage. It has the first royal dockyard, Convoys Wharf, which is why we applied to Locality to get a particular technical package called Design Codes so that we could try to get some sort of Deptford identity into this huge site, which probably takes up about a sixth of our neighbourhood plan area. Otherwise, it will end up being an enclave that will be all about society enrichment and it will not have any links to the existing estates and communities around it. That is one of the reasons we have the Design Codes package. We have had some fantastic collaboration from local artists and local people who are interested in finding a way to weave Deptford identity and heritage into Convoys Wharf.

There are 10 of us on the steering group. I am pleased to say that the majority are women. We have seven women and three men. We have people from different cultural backgrounds. UCL has engaged with us and has done two studies in parts of Deptford, not the whole of our neighbourhood planning area. We go from the Southwark border down to New Cross Station and along Deptford Broadway and so we take in the whole of Evelyn Ward, which is one of the most deprived wards in the country, a bit of New Cross Ward and a tiny bit of Brockley Ward.

UCL urban design and planning design has done lots of individual reports and these are all on display in the Pepys Resource Centre, which is a facility that we have managed to use to have the permanent display. One of the frustrations has been that we keep asking for a meanwhile use of one of the empty shops or offices in the high street, of which are about 15, so that we can engage with people who are shopping and things like that because a lot of our people come from poorer backgrounds, are living hand-to-mouth, are working and are too busy to engage on the neighbourhood forum on a regular basis, even though we go out to local assemblies, local community groups on estates and things like that.

We are at the stage where we are almost going to be launching our pre-submission plan, which is regulation 14. We have a draft neighbourhood plan at the moment, which we are trying to finalise before we go out to effective consultation on it. It is going to be about 75 pages because Deptford is a very complex area.

There is lots of heritage and character, as I have said. We had another package from Locality, which is a Heritage and Character Assessment, which has been fantastic. That does highlight the need to protect and preserve things like sight lines, for example, from Deptford High Street, which goes right up to Convoys Wharf. Then unfortunately, plot eight, one of the first development sites that has been put forward by Hutchison Whampoa, is going to effectively block the sight lines for local people to the river. There are lots of issues like that.

We are going to have probably about 25 different policies. We have been engaged with Just Space. We love the Community-Led Plan for London. If you have looked at the Raynsford Review of Planning [*Planning 2020*, November 2018], you will know that the planning system is currently broken. There is not truly effective community engagement.

We tried to work with Lewisham planning officers on a pilot at the start of our process to redesign the Tidemill Garden site, which you may have heard about because it has had a lot of national publicity. It would have been possible to have built around the wildlife garden, which the GLA, by the way, cited in its Greener City Fund as a place to children to play in nature and got funding under the Greener City Fund for that reason. It would have been good to do that, but unfortunately that did not happen. There are lots of areas like that that really need a neighbourhood forum and so there is no other form of direct democracy apart from neighbourhood planning.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is a great moment to end.

**Andrea Carey Fuller (Secretary/Co-ordinator, Deptford Neighbourhood Action):** OK. There is lots more to say.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I can tell. Thank you. It would be very good to have, if you have written it down, lots more. It would be good to have that.

**Andrea Carey Fuller (Secretary/Co-ordinator, Deptford Neighbourhood Action):** I will. I will produce something, and I will send it to you with lots of information and evidence.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** The idea is to use these as case studies in our report and so we want to do justice to all of you.

**Andrea Carey Fuller (Secretary/Co-ordinator, Deptford Neighbourhood Action):** All right. Thank you.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Finally, we are going to Tooting in Wandsworth. It is called Bec and Balham, is it?

**Jane Briginshaw (Co-Chair, Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum):** Tooting Bec and Broadway.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Tooting Bec. What is your Neighbourhood Forum called?

**Jane Briginshaw (Co-Chair, Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum):** It is called Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum. It does what it says on the tin. Yes, thank you very much, Nicky.

We are in Wandsworth. This is the area that we are talking about. We take in two council wards, Tooting and Graveney Wards, and then we touch on three others. We are probably a kilometre from top to bottom and we span two Tube stations, Tooting Bec and Tooting Broadway. We have four to five retail hubs with the biggest one being Tooting Broadway. We have a large area. We have 30,000 people that we are representing, and we do that because that is a cohesive place. That is why we chose that. We consulted a lot and that is what we came back with.

In terms of housing tenure, the top group is private rented. We have a lot of private rented accommodation, 37%, which is well above the Wandsworth average, and we have mortgaged and owned outright. We have a small amount of council social rented, which is well below the Wandsworth average, but that does not really mean that we do not have a need for social housing. We just do not have any.

We have a very densely populated area. There is a growing population of children. Many of our schools have a majority of black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils and above-average special educational needs.

The Forum was designated in April 2017, but we started the process - like many of the colleagues here - in 2015 and it was bringing together active community groups. It was from the start a type of network of networks. We started off because we wanted to see what good change there needed to be in Tooting. It really was a grouping of grassroots organisations. We did not have help. We really had little outside help and absolutely no involvement from the local authority and that has continued from 2015 to date. We bring together businesses. It is not same old, same old. It is really diverse. It is businesses and food kitchens. There is a history group, Summertown 182, which tells the story of the place through the 182 people who died in the First World War. There is a real diversity of groups. There is a Balham Tooting Community Association, which was set up in the wake of the 7/7 bombings. There are a lot of really established and rooted community organisations, retailers, Rotary groups, schools, local councillors, Members of Parliament (MPs), you name it. Faiths flourish in Tooting. We have 40% Christian, but we also have 20% Muslim, 8% Hindu and 23% of no faith. It is the diverse London that we recognise.



We came together, and we still come together a lot as a community and we eat together a lot. Tooting is very well known for its restaurants. There is a curry club that has 500 members. It took three years to visit all the restaurants. There are a lot.

People are absolutely the core of the vision for Tooting. Although we have very many people who are very well-qualified in the built environment, for us it is no place without people, and we wanted to build a massive legitimacy and so we did that. We asked four questions over four years in very many different ways, in very many different places, at community events, schools, businesses, online, you name it, and we had over 1,500 individual comments on these questions we asked.

One question we asked was: what do you love about Tooting? Can anyone hazard a guess what came back? Curry was number two. Of course, it was diversity and community and indeed restaurants and curry.

What do we need? We need more amenity space, more culture, more green space, more affordable housing. It is a densely populated area, as I said. You can see from this that it is bounded by green spaces, but the mass is dense.

People wanted to change the litter, the traffic, the walkability, the air quality, the affordable housing. They wanted more affordable housing and they wanted to change the character of it, what little we have.

In a funny sort of way, Tooting is flourishing in spite of our environment and we absolutely have no problem coming together as a community. This is just a snapshot of one of our chairs. We have a number of chairs. We called a meeting in response to the New Zealand atrocities and we had a huge visual at 12 hours' notice. We come together a lot as a community. We do not really have a problem with that.

However, in a funny sort of way, the process narrows us. We are broad, but what the planning process does --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** You are getting very close to the end, Jane.

**Jane Briginshaw (Co-Chair, Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum):** It is OK. I am coming to my finale. It pushes us to narrow and it pushes us to become unrepresentative. Where we were representative, and gender balanced, and age balanced, we have become less representative. People are happy to come together around tangible projects and we do. We have a project at the mosque. We have the Mini Holland. However, because people find themselves unreasonably contained by this planning process - and I agree with the colleague on the limitations of the planning process - it pushes us to be not strategic. It pushes us to be unfunded and it pushes us to be unprotected, all those things that we should be achieving through getting a neighbourhood plan.

In a funny sort of way, I slightly take issue to this business about not having professional skills. It is not that we do not understand. We really understand and a lot of people around the table and beyond understand. It is that we do not really accept the process is fit for our needs. We understand it very well and we find it limiting. We are limited in the type of projects we want to achieve and the type of work we want to achieve, and we find the process as a narrowing and a reducing.

It could be a lot better. It could be more flexible. Do not get me started on the funding - everybody else has covered that - and the resources. We do all this for free with no help whatsoever from Wandsworth Council. Indeed, we were £2,000 short and they could not find it in their budget, even though we had 10 meetings to get that £2,000 out of them. On that note, a challenge.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It is an interesting note to end on. Thank you. That was very helpful. What we are hearing is that with all that amount of community building, community development, community cohesion, the process is too limited to contain it. We really want to develop that. Maybe we will hear. We are going back now to our panel. We will come back to you and so be thinking about recommendations to the Government, to councils and to the Mayor about the process.

**Navin Shah AM:** From what we have heard here, I have few questions. This is about the process and how successful it has been. We have also heard about challenges. It is mainly to do with the level and quality of community engagement, how it was achieved and what good – or otherwise – it has done.

On the question of process, the first question is in the context of what we heard from the six participants. What is being achieved by neighbourhood planning?

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Could you take on board the limitation argument, too?

**Sharon Hayward (Co-ordinator, London Tenants Federation):** I guess what we have heard from the people here is about the huge amount of work and effort and energy to get their voices heard and to get things in place that they really want. I have some sympathy with Stephen's [Kenny] comment that if the planning process was better and more responsive, then maybe you would not need to be doing neighbourhood planning. At the same time, that is the place where we are, and unless communities can influence the planning policy of the various layers in London, then this is the best possible way for communities to have their voices heard and to be able to offer alternatives.

We are in a place with the London Plan where the numbers are increasing, and we are focused on numbers, and how that impacts particularly on poorer communities and becomes more and more difficult. I know there are some questions later on and we will talk about that more strategic place, but everybody around who has spoken needs congratulating on their efforts and time and energy to get as far as they have done despite, in some of the boroughs, some horrendously difficult challenges, I would say. I hope that we see more, really.

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** I would certainly agree that a lot of work is going on, a lot of community engagement, bringing the community together, which is one of the benefits of neighbourhood planning, notwithstanding producing a planning document. It is that community cohesion and it is that community working together. That has possibly been more of an achievement for neighbourhood planning in London than producing the 12 plans that have got through so far, but 12 plans have got through and more are coming through and they will influence developments within their area.

What neighbourhood planning does add, even notwithstanding all of the limitations, is it does allow communities to get down to a lower level of detail in terms of their local areas. A borough plan is never going to get into that level of detail across its whole borough. If you are talking about very fine-grained element, neighbourhood planning can bring that.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Sorry. There was a point made by Stephen [Kenny] about the NPPF and how if planning policy was right and local plans were right, then we would not have to do neighbourhood planning, but you are making another point, a different point. Are you making a point that even if you had all that, you would get something more from the neighbourhood planning process?

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):**

Yes, neighbourhood planning takes it down to it to a more detailed lower level than you are going to get from other levels of policy. A borough plan is never going to get into detail on all of its areas. Practically, it is just not going to happen.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is coming from - I will say it in front of you - a borough planning officer who really supports it?

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):**

Yes. Our policy applies across the whole borough, generally. We do get into some local areas, but we are not able to get into neighbourhood-level detail across the whole borough. That just is not possible for our plans to do. Neighbourhood planning does introduce that.

If the planning system was better, there may be less reason for some of the groups to start up because they feel that it is not working for them and so they are trying to influence it. I appreciate that. Councils have lots of issues with the planning system, too.

**Navin Shah AM:** We have heard from a couple of neighbourhood forum participants that councils have not been helpful at all right from the start. We heard that from the last colleague and there was a similar comment elsewhere as well. What do you say to that? How can we change that? This is about the culture of the council, in a sense, and how rigid their planning policy is or how rigid they are in terms of engaging constructively with the local communities.

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):**

Yes. I do not know the detail of what happens in each council. I do know that in general terms supporting neighbourhoods and doing neighbourhood planning can be a challenge for boroughs, too. In terms of resources, the councils receive some money from the Government, which essentially pays for our expenditure. The councils have to pay for certain consultation. We have to pay for the referendums. We have to pay for the examinations. The money we get from the Government gets sucked up in that. Any support that councils are providing for communities and neighbourhood planning essentially is because the council is subsidising that and paying for those staff resources. Some councils have very small planning policy teams and probably not very well-resourced planning policy teams, and they probably struggle to do the things they are supposed to do themselves without neighbourhood planning.

I do not know the situation in all of them and there may be cultural reasons. There may be objections to the concept of neighbourhood planning. I do not know, but certainly in resource terms it is challenging for councils. This is on top of their existing work and they do not get any extra money to pay for the staffing for that. In terms of looking for more council support, there is a resource issue there certainly and councils would need more resources to be able to give more support to communities.

We do our best within the resources we have in Camden. We are relatively well-off in terms of our planning policy team in terms of the size of the team, but we do find it difficult to support communities and manage our own work. It is only getting worse with our budgets being cut. Council budgets are being cut and planning has suffered more than most within council budgets in terms of the cuts that have happened over recent years.

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands**

**Neighbourhood Forum):** I would like to pick up on that point about why the pattern across London is as uneven as it is. As part of the work for Neighbourhood Planners London, I have done three desktop surveys of

how each London planning authority – including the Mayoral Development Corporations (MDCs) – has been approaching neighbourhood planning.

The first one was looking at neighbourhood CIL a few years ago. When the Government introduced neighbourhood CIL, which is a 15% element that is meant to go to local neighbourhoods, that was seen very much as a bribe to encourage neighbourhood planning and parishes get the cash in hand and can allocate it as they see fit. In London, the 15% neighbourhood element of CIL remains with the local authority and, if you look across London, a lot of authorities barely mention that fact and do not explain on their websites that neighbourhood CIL exists. Again, there are exceptions. Brent has a well-established process now of allocating large sums of neighbourhood CIL at Wembley and elsewhere. This is a resource and lots of community groups across London are unaware it exists. It can be used as revenue funding to support neighbourhood planning. Camden has dipped its toe in the water on that, but it is not happening elsewhere. That was the first one. As you do these surveys, you begin to realise that there is bit of a consistent pattern across London.

The second one was how local authorities deal with neighbourhood planning in their local plans. The bare minimum that an inspector will normally pick up on these days is that they have to say that the development plan for the area is made up of the London Plan, the Local Plan and any made neighbourhood plans. Some boroughs even manage to avoid saying that, and you can do a word search on their Local Plans and you will not find neighbourhood planning mentioned at all. Disappointingly, even in recent ones coming through the system, that is still happening. We had to remind the GLA planners that London now has a three-tier planning system and not a two-tier planning system. With reasonable grace they made the edits to the draft London Plan, but I had to go along to the examination-in-public (EiP) and again point out that the London Plan in its new form is not very good at explaining where neighbourhood planning fits in. It is not particularly encouraging or supportive and that is surprising if you look back at the Boris [Johnson MP, former Mayor of London] 2015 one, which was a little more warm towards neighbourhood planning and we neighbourhood planners across London wonder why that is.

The third one was Statements of Community Involvement (SCI). The Government has recognised that local authorities are not always being supportive and so, in characteristic Whitehall fashion, legislated in the 2017 Neighbourhood Planning Act to make it now a statutory requirement that when a borough produces its SCI, which remains a required document, it must have a section now saying what assistance and advice it will give to neighbourhood forums. Again, when you look across London, very few boroughs and planning authorities appear to pick this up. It was in the letter to chief planning officers. Nothing happened. Lambeth was an exception in going back and adding an addendum to its SCI. Even with the new SCIs coming through now, we have to chivy and remind them to include this section. Most then say, “Yes, we never realised that regulation was yet in force”. It has been in force since last July [2018].

With this pattern, you can begin to detect trends. Our colleague Graham [Pycock, Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London] has done a statistical analysis to see if there are any other patterns. Is it Labour authorities, Conservative authorities or Liberal Democrat authorities? Is that making a difference? There is no correlation. Is it deprived areas versus affluent areas? There is no correlation. You exhaust possible explanations for why this pattern has emerged and it does seem pretty clear that it is mainly cultural – in some cases political level – opposition to the concept of neighbourhood planning as taking away power, if you like, that the local authority should be implementing. In many cases, it is a level of officer resistance from directors downwards who do not like the idea of non-professionals getting involved and coming up with potential variations to their own planning policies. In some cases, it is just that the planning officers, who are, as Brian [O’Donnell] says, often hard-pressed and not huge in numbers, see it as a potential hindrance and not a help. A little bit later on

I would like to come back on how neighbourhood plans can in fact be a help rather than a hindrance. That is widely recognised in rural areas outside London and is only just beginning to be recognised inside London.

**Navin Shah AM:** Henry, does the neighbourhood planning process help build stronger communities and also more inclusive ones?

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** It is a very good educational process for people who want to get involved in how the planning system works or does not work or the results that they see creating harm in that area. The plan I did in North Kensington used conventional forms of community engagement, people coming along to a church hall to discuss different policies in the plan at each stage, but we would get audiences of 40 to 60, which is a lot more to be honest than the Kensington and Chelsea Council gets when it discusses its Local Plan chapters.

It does mean people learn about spatial planning. Not everybody can have what they want. There have to be trade-offs and compromises. They understand about viability studies. They understand you cannot simply say, "We would like this, that and the other". That is not going to happen unless you are working with the grain of the system. In that sense, it is good.

However, I would also accept what several of the witnesses have said. It can have the potential to be narrowing because at the end of the day your examiner will say, "You can only include stuff that deals with the planning and development of land because that is the Town and Country Planning Act limitation. If you want other ideas about projects and initiatives, you can include them, but they will have to be in an annex or they will have to be in a separate document. You cannot have policies around those things. You cannot have policies about changing bus timings and routes because that is not to do with the development of land". It is narrowing in that sense and, as one of the witnesses was very eloquently saying, it can limit the inclusivity and diversity of people who become involved because, in the end, you do come down with the more hardcore people who are prepared to spend the time getting stuck into planning issues *per se*. That can mean that other people drop out when they realise, "This is not going to help me get my particular project or initiative off the ground", because it is not a planning project at the end of the day.

We are seeing in Spitalfields at the moment, which is proposing a Queen's Park type of parish council in London, that is becoming an area of contention with people saying, "This is a middle-class articulate thing and it will only do the sort of things that that part of the community wants, and it is not for the rest of us". There is that risk.

**Navin Shah AM:** Sharon, from your experience and from your knowledge, do you reckon the process does help communities to be more inclusive and stronger, therefore adding value?

**Sharon Hayward (Co-ordinator, London Tenants Federation):** The work that we did with our Trust for London funding from 2014 was a bit wider to start off with, really. It was about bringing networks of community groups together that might be interested in the planning system full stop and focusing very much on the development of the Local Plans in both the LLDC and later the OPDC areas. That covers some of the issues across boundaries. Leao's [Neto] plan in Harlesden niches in a wee bit into the OPDC area. Are any of the others across borough boundaries? Not too many. A lot of them may be adjacent to some of the big opportunity areas that are cross-borough. There are lots of things that are impacting.

Our work, as I say, focuses first of all on trying to support groups that might want to be interested in planning policy full stop and groups that would not ordinarily engage. Groups that are from less well-off communities

were what we were focused on. That is where many of the large-scale developments are taking place in London anyway. It is where the MDCs are. They all have within them tightly packed neighbourhoods that are at the lower end of economic advantage, I would say. There are lots of bits and pieces of things that are in the mix there.

What we found in the work that we did around the LLDC area was that people were very much becoming focused around what was happening on the Carpenters Estate and wanted to provide support for that. That support network wanted to do that, and we went on to support that further. Having worked with Loretta Lees [Professor of Human Geography, University of Leicester] to get a bit of funding in, the notion was that there needs to be something bottom up rather than top down and so that was the work that we did initially. There was a huge amount of support for that in the first place, but I would agree that gradually, as the years have gone by, people have urgent issues that they want addressed, particularly in poorer communities, I would say. The planning process for that full stop takes a longer period of time. It is a long-term plan that says, "This is what is going to happen", and some people go, "We need this bit sorted out now".

There are problems with the processes of planning in lots and lots of different ways. The technicalities of that are very difficult for people. They go, "This is where we are happy to have a bit of development of some more homes, this is where we need to address issues of private housing, this is where we need to address issues of wanting more affordable housing". Those things are easy for people to pick up and talk about, but it is trying to then get it into a document that is quite technical and might answer a planning inspector's questions, and then say how this fits in with a Local Plan or the London Plan. All of those things become more and more difficult. At the early stages, you are right, are probably easier for people to engage, to do the door-knocking, to get people together. By the time you have to really get down to the technical detail then it is much, much more difficult.

**Tom Copley AM:** Can I just ask, on that, the neighbourhood plans are not allowed to conflict with the Local Plan but how is that managed? Do you get people wanting to put things in there that are in conflict? Do boroughs contest things that are put in and say, "Hang on there, this does conflict with our policies"? How is that process managed?

**Sharon Hayward (Co-ordinator, London Tenants Federation):** If we look at the Carpenters, there was a fair bit of conflict there because until the New London Development Corporation was in place, Newham had a local plan, and their Local Plan did not quite match with the influence that some of the community groups managed to have on the LLDC Local Plan, particularly around, for example, the Carpenters Estate or the greater Carpenters neighbourhood area. I suppose some of that is still there. I have not been out there for some time but there certainly was conflict there between Newham and the LLDC.

When the Carpenters group went along to get their neighbourhood forum designated, the leader of the Council in Newham went along and spoke against it. Sir Robin [Wales] went along and argued against the forum even being designated. You can imagine those tensions are really difficult for people. At the end of the day, as well trying to keep people involved sufficiently to say, "This could be a strong enough plan for you to be able to go through and to be able to have the support of the LLDC on this", the problem is that the local authority owns the land that part of the neighbourhood forum area holds.

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** It is not simply conflict; it is that you have to conform generally with the strategic policies in the plan. There is room for debate as to which policies are strategic.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** You have an example, do you not? I was very interested in -- wait a minute, it was the first example, Roger's [Winfield] example.

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** In Kentish Town, ours was similar. We had an area of an employment zone in this part of North Kensington and one of the main reasons we started doing a neighbourhood plan was that it was just sitting there with light industrial units from the 1980s not doing very much, just warehouses for antique dealers in Portobello. We said, "This street could be different. We want mixed use in this street". The Council said, "No, we have policy C05 that says B1 uses only in an employment zone, B1 or B8. That is it. You cannot have mixed use". This was four chunks of the street, which has been mixed use since the 19th century. We say that is a very old-fashioned way of thinking as a planner; you sit there, you colour bits in on a map and you say, "Only certain uses there". Move on.

One of those units turned very successfully into co-working space with several firms of architects and designers, so we use that as a bit of a model. The Director of Planning sent emails saying, "You cannot alter our policies. It cannot be done". We had to point him to the NPPF point him to national planning guidance and say, "That is for the examiner to decide, not you". The examiner at the end of the day accepted our evidence on vacancy levels, rents, and all the rest, and said, "Yes, fine, have mixed use in those 14 units".

The irony now is that the Council has come back to us two years on. Because of Grenfell they are in real problems on their housing numbers. They stopped all their big estate renewal schemes. They are now saying, "It is quite a good idea to have mixed use and housing about these light industrial units; how can we help you encourage that to happen?" So, we are now talking a design code for that street and they are very positive towards something that would not be in their Local Plan were it not for a neighbourhood plan persuading an examiner to go for it.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is quite interesting because it aligns with the draft London Plan as well. I was wondering, Brian, what was your experience then with Roger [Winfield] and the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum coming along and saying, "We want to intensify the employment here, but we want to build houses on the industrial site"? How did you respond to that?

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** We were thinking similar things at the same time and there was a developer who was interested in that area too, so there were a number of ideas coming together at that time. We were preparing our Local Plan in a similar time to the forum was producing their plan, so we were able to do the two things at once.

When the neighbourhood plan started we had two pieces of land which were in industrial designation. We changed the designation of one of those through the Local Plan, so it is now designated as a growth area for housing, employment-led mixed use and redevelopment. Where we were heading and where the forum were heading, we were basically heading in the same direction at around the same time, so we were able to work it out together. Now we are preparing a planning framework for the area where we are working with the forum.

The difficulty in what we were trying to do was with the GLA, who objected to our re-designation of the area as contrary to the London Plan. They objected to the first draft of our Local Plan. We did some extra evidence work, we negotiated with them, and by the time we submitted our plan they were supportive. What has come through the new London Plan is essentially in line with what we have done there in terms of saying, "Let us look at these industrial areas. Can they be intensified? Can they bring in other uses? Can they be more

productively used to meet the growth needs that London has?" It was certainly a more positive experience at Kentish Town than maybe Henry's [Peterson] experience.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** You are going to conform then with the "no net loss of industrial premises"?

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** We have to, do we not?

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** The thing is that these local strategic industrial locations have gone down from 25% in boroughs in the last few years to 14% of all the land in London. It is very, very worrying in a way.

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** Our policies will expect at least re-provision and ideally increase in floorspace, increase of industrial uses and retention of existing business as far as possible.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** You are, because you desperately need to. The waiting list now on the strategic industrial locations, because they are the only ones that have been protected to a certain extent, is huge.

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** Yes, we do appreciate that.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** We do fear for what is going to happen.

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** Yes, and we do appreciate the need for the industry as well but there are parts of London where the industry is very low density, it is not the most efficient use of land, and you can do better. You can deliver the employment and you can deliver the housing and you can deliver community uses, open space, lots of other things too.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Sure. It is what the London Plan is trying to set out, is it not, that in fact most industrial locations are very low density?

**Roger Winfield (Chair, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning Forum):** May I just intervene?

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Yes.

**Roger Winfield (Chair, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning Forum):** On this question of 'industrial', it is an expression that troubles me slightly. It sounds very 1970s to me.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Light industry.

**Roger Winfield (Chair, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning Forum):** Yes, but 'industrial' has pictures of smoking chimneys and people coming out of mines and so forth, where I refer specifically to the new economy. I know that the GLA are talking about employment rather than housing, or are you talking about something different when you refer to industrial?

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It is light industry often, most of it.



**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands**

**Neighbourhood Forum):** The uses that you are allowed within strategic industrial land are expensive these days and a lot of them are not metal-banging, noisy or creating fumes. They are logistics depots.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** No. Well, your service economy, a lot of it is very light industry. Andrea, do you want to come in?

**Andrea Carey Fuller (Secretary/Co-ordinator, Deptford Neighbourhood Action):** Just to very briefly say that in the last three years in our Local Plan area, we have lost 80,000 square metres of industrial space. Lewisham, as you know, has a very low gross domestic product (GDP) compared to other boroughs in London.

One of the things we have been trying to address through the neighbourhood plan, as well as introducing the sector economy, which is great - the GLA is supporting the sector economy - is a 'recycle, reuse, upcycle' type economy. We have been arguing that we really need small pieces of industrial land to establish local employment around things like recycling and reusing, for example food or waste recycling in Deptford local to all the estates. Also, we have interest from a local businesswoman who wants to set up a textile recycling unit, which would create 70 jobs in Deptford.

You have over 100,000 people every day leaving Lewisham to come in to other parts of London to work, and of course all of that money that they spend while they are working goes with them as well. That is another reason why Deptford and some of the other places around Lewisham were dying, the local shops are dying. There is not a holistic enough approach in planning, when planning applications come up, to look at the other aspects and not just, "Oh my god, we need homes", because the homes we are getting are certainly not the right homes. We had one social rent home last year in Lewisham, one, and 110 the year before. We know that we need about 1,700 a year. There are 13 developments around Deptford, that is how densified Deptford is becoming, and you look at how much housing has been provided in those and then you look at the proportion of housing that is meeting the assessed housing need and it is about, on average, 12% that you are getting out of those developments. It is not enough to make a difference. That is why it is all messed up.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is very helpful. A lot of these arguments have been rehearsed very well at the EiP of the London Plan but of course the new London Plan is trying very hard to get much more social housing in London.

**Navin Shah AM:** Chair, I have two further questions, which I will merge into one. Starting with Brian, how much is the lack of financial resources as well as technical support slowing down the whole process? Also, are there any other barriers which are promoting the neighbourhood planning?

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** Certainly, the resources and technical support are slowing down the process. We had experience in Camden of forums struggling because they have run out of funding, essentially. They cannot access more but they are not at the end of the process so there are things that they need to do but the money is not available. When they started out that money would have been available, but the goalposts have changed on the way through and that is causing problems.

One of the related concerns then is that, as well as just getting your plan through, it potentially affects the quality of the plans as well. The technical support is not there for things that people need. Tony [Burton] mentioned doing a character study where you can start explaining what it is about the character of your area

that is important so that planning decisions take that into account. If you cannot access the funding to do that, then that is a missed opportunity within your plan.

We are big believers in health checks for neighbourhood plans. Within the process of neighbourhood planning it is common to have a health check before you submit your plan to make sure that it is going to meet the requirements. In the past we have always had these with our plans. We have our first plan going through now that has not had a health check because the support is not available for that. There is an issue in terms of not just the resources to physically get it done but also in terms of the quality. The plans coming out at the end potentially will be affected as well. That is a concern.

**Jane Briginshaw (Co-Chair, Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum):** Can I say something about accessing the funding as well? Because of this new business about what you can spend it on, we have to contort ourselves. We want this character because it is fundamental to what our place is, so we have spent our first £9,000 on that, which should be on something else. Then to access the technical packages we have to do things that we would not particularly want to do. We do not particularly want to do design code and we really do not have the capacity to allocate for housing because we probably have no sites, but we are doing both. There is a sort of gateway process to access the technical support that will do the plan writing, which we do not particularly want to do.

If it had just been the other way around in the sequential, sensible way and in a way that creates great places for people, we would get what we want. But, as a result, we are having to go inside-out to get what we need and most people I do not think would really be able to manage that, knowing what they need. Because we have a lot of people who do, we have done this contorted process, but it is nuts, it is absolutely nuts. I do not know if I am making myself clear, but we are turning ourselves inside-out to get bits of funding here and there, in short.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** So, what you are saying is that the requirements, the technical support gateway, that they are like a straitjacket?

**Jane Briginshaw (Co-Chair, Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum):** You can only get the technical support if you are going to allocate for housing or you are doing design code or there are other things that we can possibly meet, but for us those are the two things. We have an area that does not have sites, so we cannot allocate for housing, and we have an area that probably would not naturally lend itself to a design code because we do not have much to design, and that is my background, so I know. But we will twist ourselves around to get a design code for the public realm to access the funding for someone to write the plan for us, the technical support to write the plan for us. We have gone inside-out.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I just wonder whether Tony wanted to comment on that.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** I recognise that completely. The criteria in the new support programme from the Government are much tighter and much more directional around particular issues that the Government is interested in --

**Jane Briginshaw (Co-Chair, Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum):** Like building homes.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** -- i.e. homes, design codes and whatever. It has shut down opportunities on certain things like character studies and you cannot access the grant simply through the complexity of being a neighbourhood forum. Rather than the mantra of the Localism Act that

neighbourhood planning was about putting power in the hands of people to do what they want for their area and we will provide the resources to enable that, it only goes so far. Now it is much more directed as to what you can get the money for.

As Brian [O'Donnell] has pointed out, some forums have been caught in the middle. They have moved the goalposts. They thought that they could plan and programme the development of their plan in the expectation they would get funding six months or nine months down the road to do whatever it is they needed to do, and that has just been taken away from them. At a minimum we need to put back the flexibility of the old support programme, and frankly that could have been more flexible. We could spend the £24.5 million much better to deliver neighbourhood planning. We could certainly deliver it better for urban areas.

**Jane Briginshaw (Co-Chair, Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum):** That is the point, is it not? It is fine for parish areas that have hundreds of sites. It is very proper that they should be allocating for housing. But for places in London that probably do not, that is not really our issue. It is to make the place better.

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** Just one more point about resourcing. There is no resources for neighbourhood forums once they have adopted their plan.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Sorry?

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** Once you have produced your plan, there is no resource. There is no support. Kentish Town have their plan and they are looking to input in to do various projects but there is no source of funding for that work.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** One of the things I wanted to say is that one of the limitations tends to be that people throw up all sorts of other things. I have done a neighbourhood plan myself when I was Chair for Planning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and one of the things was that people come up with all sorts of recommendations and ideas which do not fit into the plan, but a sympathetic local authority, or one that has the resources, might want to take up with those groups. You said it was an annex, just simply an annex, community projects?

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** Most say you can have a part two, if you like, which that is a separate document, but it does not include policies. It includes initiatives, projects, aspirations, whatever, but it is not part of the statutory neighbourhood plan.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Should there not be a parallel community project planning process?

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** It is interesting you say that, Nicky, because that was the original concept, but when the Localism Act was being thought through it became more focused on a rather more narrowly defined Town and Country Planning Act definition of 'development and change', once the civil servants got hold of it. But the real world keeps pushing against that.

The stuff that excites people is -- yes, they are interested in the development, but they are also interested in all the other things they want to do for their area which improve the quality of life in their area, managing change in their area. That is why you see bubbling through this process - despite rather than because of - a

whole bunch of other things, and then they find other ways to reflect those in the documents. Almost all neighbourhood plans have a list of projects - they all give it different names - of other things that people want to do for the area. Some of those are a lobbying tool on the local authority, "We want this", or, "We want that". Some have nothing to do with the local authority; they can get money or support from elsewhere.

A critical link here though is that the delivery of a lot of those is exactly what CIL should be about. A well-judged neighbourhood plan enables the development to take place in planning terms from which the value can be captured, which can then be invested in other forms of community infrastructure.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** So CIL should be used for that.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** CIL should be used. There should be a much clearer link to enable the delivery of a range of these other projects off the back of the development that is taking place in the area. If you do that, you will both incentivise more people to be involved in neighbourhood planning and you will get a much more rounded set of outcomes. That is precisely how it works wherever you have a parish or town council; it is a real shame that we cannot do it better in London.

Now, there is a legal barrier at the moment that you cannot physically give the money to a neighbourhood forum because they are not a public body, whereas a parish or town council is, but there could be stronger requirements to connect more clearly what is in a neighbourhood plan and the spend of the neighbourhood CIL, as Henry [Peterson] has said. But most boroughs, understandably on one level, are seeing this as money to spend on all the other things the boroughs want to spend the money on, as opposed to what the communities want to spend the money on.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Brian, you said there were no resources and so on. Let me just ask, some people have said to me, "Oh, Nicky, you do not really need neighbourhood plans, you just need a really good area action plan". Now, would an area action plan have money for community projects?

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** Area action plans are produced by councils rather than the community, so obviously that is a decision that you want to make about who is responsible for producing the plan.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** So it is not community-led?

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** It would not be community led; it would be led by the council. Similarly, any money and resources would only be available for any projects in that insofar as the council decided to spend it on that. There is no real difference in that sense.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** Some boroughs have chosen to use area action plans as a way of stopping a neighbourhood plan.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** Just to lead on from that discussion, why not parish councils? We have one, it seems to be working very fine and it is not a middle-class ghetto as everyone assumed. Queen's Park. It is a very mixed community and it seems to be functioning quite well. Why have we not chosen that?

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** We had thought about it for a bit of North Kensington, but again it is another

process you have to go through. As a neighbourhood forum you can miss some of the process in terms of triggering a referendum and so forth, but precepts, I think it will take a little longer to catch on in London. Queen's Park, as you say, I have followed closely. They have done the community council first, the neighbourhood plan to follow, which is a route that can be pursued.

**Stephen Kenny (Chair, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum):** It comes down to funding again because somebody asked us if we wanted to do a parish council and they said, "We will give you £10,000". That is not enough money for us to go through that whole process and get everyone geared up.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** My understanding of the process of parish council is that it is much quicker than doing a neighbourhood forum.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** You have to have a governance review.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** You have to have a governance review, but the council pays for that. You do not have to pay for it, you just need 10% of the ratepayers to sign a petition.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** I certainly have been in a number of conversations where that has been on the agenda. There is a difficulty in double-running the idea of parish and town council and the idea of a neighbourhood plan because that can be confusing to people when you are talking to them. I would anticipate we will see more coming forward in London. I think it is a natural endgame for a number of the more advanced places. The process could be simplified even more. You only jump one step at the moment. There also would need to have been a sort of support to enable it to happen.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** Some of the people that were commenting earlier were saying that some people lose a bit of interest during this. You must require an awful lot of stamina to go through this process to get a plan and some people drop off because they realise their project will not get off the ground, whereas with a parish of course they have remit to do all sorts of projects and they could do that.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** Yes, that is the carrot. It is whether it is enough of a carrot. It is sort of 'jam tomorrow' and it is a bit of a process to get to the jam. We will see more. We need more examples of where it is working for people to know about it. Just like neighbourhood planning when you see somebody else doing it, we need more spreading of the word through the delivery of it.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** Thank you for indulging me on that because it is something that I could spend ages talking about, but it is not what we are here for. Could I ask Ms Brunskill-Powell about some of the recommendations you might have to improve the process? We have heard some of them as a part of the discussions but perhaps you could summarise what your conclusions are to improve the process of producing a neighbourhood plan?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** The way that we did the report was to begin with a literature review, and then we interviewed and visited seven different case studies and we worked through these different themes that were coming up as we spoke to people. We collated these into a list of key findings and the recommendations come out of that, so there is a sort of distilling process. They addressed this double problem that these areas that experience socioeconomic disadvantage and that score highly in the indices of multiple deprivation have, as well as being in London where everything is just exponentially more complex. There are four areas where we make recommendations. The first is on improving the process of neighbourhood planning. The second is on what we are calling mainstreaming neighbourhood planning.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** When you say “improve the process”, how do you mean improve it? By what specific --

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** Within that sort of broad recommendation, it comes back to what we have all been discussing really, which is how to get social policies and things that are not, strictly speaking, planning issues into the neighbourhood plans in a way that gives them a bit of weight, so that people feel like those things are being included. As Tony [Burton] said, that is what people get up in the morning for. That is what gets people involved in neighbourhood planning. To then tell them halfway through, “No, none of these things that you are interested in are a planning issue or can be translated into a planning issue” -- and that is one of the big challenges, translating these two things into a format that fits within this slightly narrow sense of what a neighbourhood plan can do. It is really one for the national Government, thinking about how this flexibility can be built into it.

The second one is about milestone wins. We have talked a lot about the duration of neighbourhood planning. Of the 12 ones that are made in London, so quite a small sample, the average duration is 49 months, which is just over four years. When you look at the Locality roadmap, which is the toolkit they give you to guide you through the neighbourhood planning process - very comprehensive - they say that the time you should expect to spend on it is between 18 and 24 months. It is taking twice as long, over twice as long, in London. One of the ways to break up this time and to stop people dropping off would be to introduce milestone wins. This could be something like unlocking additional resources as you get through the plan. It could be having ways for the GLA and the Mayor’s funds and Good Growth Fund, for example, to elevate the projects that come up.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** Is there something specifically London that means it is 49 months rather than 24 months?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** This is from designation, so this does not include the potentially two years it could take you to get designated as a forum.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Four years after designation?

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** So, outside London, they are getting it in 18 to 24 months?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** We do not know how long it takes; this is how long we are being told that it should take.

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen’s Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** I think it is in London for all the reasons we have been discussing. Authorities do not even respond. We had to wait a year for a designation application just because they did not quite understand the system. We had six months of argument with the Planning Director as to whether you could vary a policy or not vary a policy. We had two years after our referendum where a landowner developer challenged the Council’s decision and that took two years to go through the High Court. It does not always take four years.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** Is that a cultural thing here? The only unique thing I can see about London is that the oldest form of local government in existence unreformed is the London borough, curiously enough; everything else has been reformed to death. It strikes me that the London boroughs are not used to having a tier of government underneath them, whereas counties and the districts are used to it.

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** It is a very different relationship. As I said earlier, in many districts they will see parishes and villages producing a neighbourhood plan as a positive because they know their Local Plan is falling out of date and they do not have policies for a lot of speculative developers buying up fields where they do not want housing. They are only too keen to work with parish councils, town councils, and say, "Get your neighbourhood plan in place".

That is why I think in London we need this attitudinal change, perhaps particularly in some of the huge regeneration areas like Old Oak, where for a whole host of reasons, as Sharon [Hayward] knows, the Local Plan has already taken four years, from Boris's [Johnson, former Mayor of London] vision to the EiP hearings the other week - and I am not sure the inspector is going to be very happy with everything in the plan and not require further major modifications - whereas the group of residents in the area could have all got together two or three years ago and said, "Why do you not designate the whole of Old Oak as a neighbourhood area? It is big, 280 hectares, but no bigger than some of the neighbourhood areas in London. We will work with you".

Potentially it could be a quick process. It could be a process of putting together a meanwhile set of site allocations, uses, activities, community facilities and even housing with a 10-year lifespan, self-build for all the construction workers on the station and at Heathrow, whereas I suspect we may now be heading into an area where not much will happen at Old Oak because the major landowner, Cargiant, has said, "We do not want to play anymore".

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** I think, "Watch this space", is what I would say.

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** Yes, watch this space, but it is an example of where attitudinal change by planners could help.

**Leao Neto (Chair, Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum):** Very quickly, just coming to the issue of the Old Oak and Park Royal Corporation, more of a question for the Committee I think, what is the relationship that the Committee intends, as was just hinted at, between the mayoral development areas and the existing neighbourhoods? We are thinking that we have a particular intention to link more clearly with housing and though we have very good relationship with the OPDC, our asks have not been replied to here.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** It is something we can probably take offline. The Assembly does have a history of being concerned about the democratic deficit in mayoral corporations, but it is probably not something that we need to go in here. Let us talk later. Could you carry on with your list, would you mind, sorry?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** Yes, of course. The third thing about improving the process is simplifying the routes into neighbourhood planning. The kinds of information that the Neighbourhood Forums have to give Locality for their first funding tranche is a lot of information for something that is not even a body yet, is not even an organisation, and for them to gather all of that information for free initially can be quite a lot of work. Removing some of these barriers to entry, simplifying them or even having initial grants for scoping the possibility of neighbourhood planning in an area would significantly reduce these barriers to entry. That is the first group of recommendations, which are really around the process.

Then mainstreaming neighbourhood planning. One of the key things is about sharing the information, widening access to neighbourhood forums to use the kinds of information, the kind of data and potentially the kinds of software, things like Commonplace, which local authorities have access to. It is thinking about how that can be shared in a way that allows forums to access it for datasets and survey information. But then also, the other way around, encouraging local authorities to think of neighbourhood forums' evidence bases, which they will have been gathering very diligently, as a potential resource for their own work, so having this mutual sharing. The reason we call it "mainstreaming" is because that should be ideally part of the way that people think about neighbourhood forums, as something that is an opportunity.

The final one is Tony's [Burton] point about CIL, finding ways to use that information in a way that can bring benefits like funding benefits. In their neighbourhood plans, people are setting out what they want and their evidence base. They have all this information out there.

The third one is a very obvious question of funding. Tony has touched on this, but it is about revisiting the criteria for additional funding for neighbourhood forums, and also thinking about tailored packages of support for urban areas because it is just much more complex. There is not a local field that can be built on and there is limited brownfield sites. That is just the nature of living in a city. It is about reinstating additional grant funding and providing supplementary grants for areas that score very highly in the indices of multiple deprivation because funding is limited, people cannot fund things out of their own purse and there is not necessarily somewhere they can meet. The people that we spoke to were talking about sitting in pubs for four-hour-long committee meetings, buying a half pint of Coke between them all so that they could stay there.

Then ring-fencing funding to spend on administrative support and communications. Even printing costs can be really strenuous when you have a £500 budget. There are the costs of getting people to go door to door and the costs of building a website, which is a really expensive endeavour if you do not happen to have someone who can do that for free. There are other things like project management which people do not really think about, but if people are undertaking a four-year-long project with all the management needs of a four-year-long project, with people coming in and out, having to look ahead and having to manage a budget which is shifting - as Brian [O'Donnell] mentioned, the goalposts shift - that is a really skilled thing to do. Having some funding to be able to do things like that would be really helpful.

Providing information on alternative funding sources. I spoke with people from Harlesden and they obviously have the Oak Foundation grant, which has been very helpful for them. Queen's Park had a small grant for a particular piece of engagement from the GLA. These alternative sources of funding are out there but people do not necessarily know that they are out there. Having some guidance and having someone who can say, "Here is what is available, here is how you fill in the forms, here is what would make it applicable to you", is another big funding recommendation.

Then the final one, which is really the biggest, is on capacity-building and support, and that really applies to everyone who is involved in the food chain of neighbourhood planning. That would be providing clarity over the duty to support neighbourhood planning for local authorities because it is not clear from "duty to support" exactly how it should be supported, setting out expected roles and responsibilities --

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** Sorry, the duty to support on behalf of the local authorities' duty to support?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** Yes.



**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** There is a legal duty to support but what that is is unspecified, except that it does not have to include money.

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** That is a piece of work that Henry [Peterson] has done for the NeighbourhoodPlanners.London website as well. He has talked about the extent to which local plans do express their support of neighbourhood forums. Thinking about having a dedicated point of contact within councils, one of the things that people were saying was, "We have been emailing this one person and then they left, and nobody told us, so I have just been sending all of these emails into cyberspace for six months", which can be incredibly frustrating and obviously contributes to the length of the process.

Providing capacity-building for neighbourhood forums in urban areas with high levels of deprivation, so additional technical support and things like networking events. What Neighbourhood Planners London do is they have an annual conference. That is a really good opportunity for people to get to meet each other. As a result of the Neighbourhood Planners conference this year we worked with Queen's Park and Queen's Park mentioned that they have set up a sort of mini networking support group between Westminster forums, of which there are many. They are now helping each other out. They only have one that has crossed the line. Mayfair is on its way there. In that way they can share what they have learned from dealing with Westminster as a local authority but also how to do neighbourhood planning in a dense urban context.

Thinking about funding a point person who can be a point of contact outside of the local authority but over the entire life of the neighbourhood planning process. There is a point that neighbourhood forums can see up to often, or the ones that I spoke to, and then beyond that it is quite difficult to see what is coming up next because, if you have not done it before, you do not necessarily know. The local authority could turn around and say, "No, you need to produce a memorandum of understanding". There is no sense of where they should be by when.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** There is no support anywhere for that? Would Locality do that or --

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** Locality produce a lot of guidance and toolkits but not so much in terms of the human resources. Obviously, Neighbourhood Planners London are a voluntary organisation. You will often take on technical consultants for particular pieces of work, for example writing policy, something that ordinary people might not necessarily know how to do. Having technical consultants helps very much with that part.

Then you will have Aecom to do this that and the other, sort of separate things. You might have somebody helping you produce your evidence base, but you do not necessarily have that long-term support so that you can go to them with questions over the life of the project and say, "Where will we be in six months' time? What should I tell people?" That kind of support would be really useful, particularly in terms of project management but also in terms of hiring appropriate consultants. If you do not have any planning background yourself, how do you know what to look for? Your budget is limited, and you do not want to waste it on hiring the wrong consultant for the wrong job.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** I am a bit confused as to what you are asking for there because we have talked about the need for funding in order to help manage and project-manage, but you are now talking about another post or another person. I do not quite get the distinction between them.

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** The project management is something of a red herring. The ring-fenced funding could be hiring somebody, it could be sending somebody on a course or it could be

project management software. It could be any of those things, whereas this point person does a number of different things, one of which might include project management. The emphasis I want to put on that point is about long-term support rather than just having people dip in and out. It is about a long-term advisory role.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** Most of these things are like what the Government support should do?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** Yes.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** Is there something specifically you think that the Mayor of London could do?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** This could be something that the Mayor of London could do because the issues in terms of duration do appear to be very much a London problem, having recognition that London is a very different context in which to do neighbourhood planning. Some of this additional support and advice, in whatever format that would take, could potentially come through the Mayor of London or through the GLA. If you had a cohort of people who understood how it works in London that could be something that the GLA could fund or support.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** What about the GLA in terms of helping to promote the idea of neighbourhood planning?

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** Peer-to-peer learning is a big one. Having the GLA engaged in even something like the annual conference that we just had for Neighbourhood Planners London would be really valuable because that could elevate the status of what is already happening, and that is a role that the GLA could do very well. There is already so much going on in terms of funding small projects, community-led projects, which the GLA does a lot of. Having that be linked to neighbourhood planning could be a really good chance to confer a sense of legitimacy and just heighten the visibility of it, really.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** We have tried for years to get the GLA officers in a room to talk to them, but only about two weeks ago was the first neighbourhood planning meeting I have been to where there has been a GLA officer in the room.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** We got that at the start, the whole neighbourhood process. They said a lot of stuff, the Mayor's staff.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** Then the other thing with the GLA is seeing it as something that is corporate. It is not just planning. It is really central to the housing team, it is really central to the regeneration team, it is really central to the Good Growth agenda, it is really central to development corporations and it is really central to TfL.

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** Social integration.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** All of those, and then the whole raft of things that the Mayor is trying to do around active citizens, community engagement and digital London. Of course, it is not a silver bullet but the answer to quite a lot of that is, "Here is a ready-made tool that people are trying to work with. Talk about it and legitimise it".

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** Being able to contact officers would be good in different parts of the GLA. There was not a lot about neighbourhood planning on the GLA website last time I looked.

**Jane Briginshaw (Co-Chair, Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum):** It is almost like unleashing the energy that is there, because at the moment it is actively suppressed whereas it could just be unleashed. People are desperate to try to do stuff, but they are being sat on, which is madness, really.

**Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair):** That moves us on to my final question in this part, which is about what more the boroughs could do. You have suggested some things, but I am also quite interested in this document, which came to us quite late from Graham Pycock [Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London] so we have only just had an opportunity to read a bit. It seems to indicate that it is about political will, not political policies but political will on the part of the local authority as to whether or not they would encourage neighbourhood planning. In dipping my toe into neighbourhood planning a little while ago, I was astonished by the lack of help from my local authority on it. What recommendations would you have for fixing this disparity in London between those who like neighbourhood planning and those who object to anything that is not in --

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** There is no single answer to that question, it is one that we are constantly thinking about.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I worked with all the other planners.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** Brian [O'Donnell] kindly invited us to the meeting that he convened, and they were lovely people. The neighbourhood planning officers in the boroughs were all lovely people. There were about 12, I think it was. Something like that.

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** It was about 16.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** Sorry, 16, and they are obviously 16 of the willing who tend to go to these things and all the rest of it. One of the challenges always is that we have to work with the slower shift as well as the people who have the resources, the wherewithal or the want. It has to be a mix of the carrot and the stick.

There were some really basic requirements and we flagged them, just not meeting the law or the regulations in terms of community involvement. If neighbourhood planning was part of the soundness test of local plans a few more local authorities would sit up and take notice, because something that mattered to them would be being judged on the basis of neighbourhood plans.

But regulation will only get you so far. We think there should be a bit more of it to concentrate the mind, but it is something much more visceral and cultural. It is a conspiracy of silence, really. You do see it, not just in officers but in elected members as well. Local ward councillors are brilliant at just diverting the conversation on to something else or saying, "Well it is all fine", pat, pat, "You do not really need to think about this here". The moment you start to do issues that cross ward boundaries or, heaven forbid, cross borough boundaries, - because Crystal Palace thinks it is Crystal Palace, not the edge of five boroughs, for example - they just sort of despair, they cannot get their head around it and therefore they are against it. London Councils is absent in this and we cannot get a response from London Councils. We have occasionally had a response from the GLA.

We can sort of be whingy or moany about this. I think we need more examples of where this is really helpful. If you are going to negotiate the kind of change you are going to need in the suburbs of London - whatever you think about housing numbers, there is going to be a lot of it - you are going to negotiate that with community consent. If you are going to sort out our high streets, then you are going to need to find places where businesses and shopkeepers come together with local people. If you are going to try to eke out more small sites, you will find that neighbourhood planning is often a flexible and a more effective way of finding those small sites than you are going to get from elsewhere. If you are going to convene the projects and the ideas around green space or around community assets, around all the other Good Growth agendas, neighbourhood planning is giving you a whole wish list of what it is that people want. Just take the opportunity and really see it as something that answers many of the challenges you are already facing as opposed to pushing it away.

**Tom Copley AM:** Final set of questions. I think the answer to the opening one is going to be yes. I have a feeling. I will start with Henry. Can neighbourhood planning add value to strategic and local plans?

**Henry Peterson (Chair, St Helen's Residents Association and the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum):** I was a little worried we might be running out of time. In the major regeneration areas, and not just the mayoral ones, there have been other biggish strategic regeneration areas where the response from local authorities is, "This stuff is too big for you to worry about". A pat on the head, as Tony says. That is a mistake because potentially it is a nimbler way of moving ahead in getting site allocation and planning policies into place. Area action plans and Supplementary Planning Guidance cannot create new policy, as I understand, whereas a neighbourhood plan is as solid as you can get in terms of material considerations to make planning decisions on.

It should not be taking four years in London. It could be done within, I reckon, 15 or 18 months if you have forum and local authority working together and wanting to get to the end of the process, rather than what is happening all the time now, which is either adversarial combat or just slow, delay, obfuscation, inertia. "The neighbourhood plan could be your friend" needs to be the message that a lot of London planning authorities begin to think about, but there has not been a great sign as yet.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Can I just ask the Committee, are you happy to just go on for a bit longer?

**Tom Copley AM:** Just a few more minutes, yes.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It would be good to because Andrea [Carey Fuller] has been putting up her hand. It would be good to get ideas for some of this from some of the representatives as well as the panel.

**Tom Copley AM:** Andrea, did you want to comment?

**Andrea Carey Fuller (Secretary/Co-ordinator, Deptford Neighbourhood Action):** Yes. I would like to turn it around a bit and say that if local authorities supported neighbourhood forums from the start, once they are designated, in terms of, for example, DNA's objectives, we are going out of our way to try to hold up and support a whole variety of policies that are currently being ignored because of the housing agenda. If, for example, Lewisham supported our policies - I told you what our objectives were at the start - we would get better community planning and better place-making, although I do not really like that term, and better holistic planning within our communities through that process.

We are always being told, “Until you go through referendum basically we are not going to take any notice of you. Until your plan is passed you can say what you want, you can come up with all this evidence, you can consult with all your communities, they can give their views, but, hey, you know what, we do not have to listen to you until you have gone to referendum”. It is not a very constructive way of working because all we have tried to do is to work with the local authority to help them do better. That was kind of our byline, helping Lewisham to do better. For example, the statement of community involvement. I spoke to our local planning officer, Chris Fraser, who is a really nice guy, he is lovely, and he said, “Yes, we are drawing that up”, and I said, “But this is a statement of community involvement, we would like to be part of that process of drawing it up and then also help you engage on that”, and he failed to see the irony of that happening.

In relation to Deptford, the Local Plans run for 15 years so it will go from 2020 to 2036. We are very keen to get more young people involved in that process because it is going to be the young people that are going to have the impacts of not just the neighbourhood plan but the London Plan, the Local Plans and obviously the national plans as well in their local area.

One of the ways that we are hoping that Lewisham will support us is Convoys Wharf. One of these section 106 agreements initially was for a community development trust to be set up. That might be an ideal vehicle to create some kind of monitoring or reviewing board for the neighbourhood plan that needs to be reviewed and monitored every five years, but you still have the issue about the long-term funding.

In terms of funding a resource for London neighbourhood forums, you already have an excellent network of neighbourhood planning for Londoners set up. If the GLA looks to fund that adequately, because everything they are doing is voluntary, you could have a resource centre for London neighbourhood forums to be able to get mentoring, help and support, and maybe physical help and support, whether it is with funding applications, filling in forms or applying through the whole nightmare of the Locality and Localism process. It is terrible. You apply for funds and you have to give them back.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Andrea, we have to allow other people to speak.

**Andrea Carey Fuller (Secretary/Co-ordinator, Deptford Neighbourhood Action):** I know, but that was just something --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is very helpful.

**Tom Copley AM:** I am going to move along the table because we are out of time. What is the value the neighbourhood plan can add to strategic and local plans? I am thinking particularly about the extent to which it can support the Mayor’s objectives in the London Plan. Tony, I will come to you and then I will come around to Sharon.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** I covered that a little bit in my polemic earlier. In an environment where there is going to be so much significant change going on, you are going to have to negotiate that change locally with consent. Neighbourhood plans are an on-the-shelf, ready-to-go, and proven. They are beyond prototype; they are proven as a mechanism both in terms of the densification of the suburbs or the small sites agenda, around what you can do in terms of bringing business and local communities together.

If you believe what you hear around Good Growth, estate regeneration and liveability agendas in London, all of those end with punch lines around, “We have to do it with community, we have to involve communities”, and

yet somehow neighbourhood planning does not feature in whatever the recommendation is and whatever the report is. Make it part of the agendas you are already running with and mainstream it into those across the suite of responsibilities that the Mayor has.

**Tom Copley AM:** Thank you.

**Jane Briginshaw (Co-Chair, Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum):** Can I just say something quickly on that? I think there is just a flip in thinking. Somebody talked about cultural thinking. What we are talking about is neighbourhood forums being allowed bits of funding. Really the Mayor should be paying us to do this stuff. You should be paying us to do it, not the other way around. Indeed, many people are professionals who are doing it for free. Our shortfall in funding was supported by the consultants who did it because they care about it, for free, from pitiful amounts of money. They are doing it for free.

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** Yes, it is ironic that the additional burdens money that goes to local authorities to support them. They get more money, the London boroughs, than the neighbourhood forums do to do neighbourhood planning through the Locality programme, and yet they are the local authorities and the neighbourhood forums are meant to be doing the neighbourhood planning. This is all wooden dollars in some ways that the pot needs to be bigger and it needs to be more flexible, but there is a disparity in that approach which just needs to be addressed.

**Jane Briginshaw (Co-Chair, Tooting Bec and Broadway Neighbourhood Forum):** The boroughs keep telling us how poorly funded they are, but they are much better funded than the people who are doing it for free, are they not?

**Tony Burton (Convenor, Neighbourhood Planners London):** Or they will spend £150,000 on an alternative project to the neighbourhood plan.

**Tom Copley AM:** Yes. Emma, I will come to you then.

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** The real tagline for this report in our findings is about capturing the value in the neighbourhood planning process. Having the neighbourhood plan, it has almost been shown to not be the be all and end all. What is coming out of the planning process is people making connections with the local authority, people coming up with these great grass roots projects, people having an evidence base and a mandate and a list of what people in the local area want. They understand their local area physically a lot better as well. No one is saying that neighbourhood forums should be master planning vast areas, that is not the point but there is no one who can better cover things like area characterisation or identifying small sites, small scale interventions and small scale social projects. That is really what we have all been chusing this afternoon.

One of the things that is a slight red herring is estate regeneration. If it is being done by the local authority, the way that the process works does not run parallel with the way a neighbourhood forum works. What we have found in the case studies was that neighbourhood forums can waste 18 months campaigning against an estate regeneration and not be doing their neighbourhood plan, and then it will still happen and then there will be resentment against the neighbourhood forum. There is a sense that if it is constantly about blocking development it can often be problematic. You can end up with something that is a bit stalled and you can end up with a bad relationship with the local authority.

I think maybe it is not such a useful tool unless it is something that is integrated into it. Say, for example, you start your estate regeneration planning with the neighbourhood plan in mind and the list of what residents want. That is when it is useful, but it is when you are starting to do it halfway it can cause so much tension and so many grievances that it can be a bit of a problem.

On high streets though, I think it can be really powerful. Queens Park is doing a lot of work on that, just thinking about what they want from their high street. A huge proportion of their draft neighbourhood plan is about the Harrow Road and about shopkeepers.

**Stephen Kenny (Chair, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum):** Going back to Andrew's [Boff] point about what can you actually do, as we go through the process there are obviously a number of planning applications going through while the neighbourhood plan is in draft form, or wherever it is, and what has come across our attention is the planning committees do not have the knowledge. There needs to be an evidence-based education for them so that they can make informed decisions especially after a general election when a planning committee member --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Very good point, yes.

**Stephen Kenny (Chair, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum):** -- with absolutely no knowledge whatsoever about planning, is being led by an officer whose mandate is about compensation and protecting the State, which is fair enough, but that is not a reason to dismiss a neighbourhood plan in the draft stage.

I think getting a pot of money to cover that kind of education, evidence-based education mind, is crucial as we move forward because these processes, if there are more and more plans coming up, committee members who are making those decisions -- I have seen 70 light industry spaces disappear through that process and that needs to stop.

**Tom Copley AM:** I think that is a very good point about training, you do get very little and immediately after the election you are straight in on to a planning committee. So, yes, a very good point.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Tom, can I just say, this point you made about micro things and not master planning, I notice that Steve [Kenny] wanted, the Good Growth Fund to help in Grove Park with master planning. I have had experience of working with residents, residents call me in to look at master planning, and have worked very collaboratively on that. So I am not sure. That is a point I just want to pick up, I think communities can be very helpful at working with local authorities on master planning through the neighbourhood plans and through some other process.

**Emma Brunskill-Powell (Researcher, Publica):** Yes. My point was more yes, they should be feeding into that kind of thing because they have that understanding but expecting them to come up with something like that on their own is --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Oh, no, not necessarily --

**Stephen Kenny (Chair, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum):** No, that was the whole point with the Growth Fund is you hire strategic planners to do the job, not to then be told, "Put some flowerpots there". I can do that. I cannot do the master planning which is why we are here applying for the Good Growth Fund. To then have it diluted, it was a waste of a year and a half and a waste of £10,000 flushed down the toilet.

You guys have ticked a box, you have worked the neighbourhood plan. We have got nothing. Now that is pretty poor.

**Brian O'Donnell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden):** It seems we are overrunning. I have not necessarily got anything new to add so I am happy to pass.

**Sharon Hayward (Co-ordinator, London Tenants Federation):** This crosses over into two questions because question 5 which was around what could the Mayor do and whether he should promote neighbourhood planning in opportunity and regeneration areas and then the benefit that communities, or people who are doing neighbourhood planning can do; both ways. We have a huge problem with these opportunity areas; there is no monitoring full stop of what is going on there. So that needs to be point number 1 that what is being delivered in opportunity areas full stop needs good monitoring, which was suggested at the EiP of the London Plan.

The benefit, if we look also around a lot of these opportunity areas, is that there are low-income communities around them. The impacts on low-income communities is generally poor not good. If you look at the Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum and the work that they have done in Harlesden, I am not saying Old Oak is not the same, but that kind of level of deprivation in Harlesden and what they are doing within their neighbourhood plan needs to be something that is taken on board to gradually and more organically grow into what is a large-scale development area; because at the moment you have this elephant of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation area that might have gold pavements around the edges with the high rise blocks up to God knows how much. Whereas it would be a much better area for everybody concerned if that kind of gradual moving on of what has already been done in one patch was moved on, that neighbourhood planning ethos of understanding the community and the particular grass roots needs would be hugely beneficial in any of those opportunity areas I would say.

Whether there is willingness by the Mayor to allow that to occur, I do not really know, nor some of the boroughs. With the boroughs, the boroughs could do a lot more including putting stuff on their websites about neighbourhood planning. That is missing in many areas. There is only one that I know of, in Ealing, where there is a voluntary sector network of groups who are involved in any way, shape or form in planning issues that comes together. They could encourage those within their boroughs. What else could they do? They could do many things, but they are just a couple of suggestions of what the boroughs could do; and the Mayor could support the boroughs or argue that the boroughs should do these kinds of things. He has power over them, does he not?

**Tom Copley AM:** He has influence he cannot always tell them what to do.

**Sharon Hayward (Co-ordinator, London Tenants Federation):** He could say, "The Mayor and the boroughs should --"

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** So, what I want just to finally say is that we have had an absolute wealth of information exchange and real experience coming to us. We have got the transcript. By the way this is being webcast you can all watch it again if you want to.

**Tom Copley AM:** Relive the experience.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I am very aware of the stamina of the people in this room. It has been really illuminating for us and we will be putting it all into a report. I would like to say to anyone or all of you but



especially to our representatives of the forums, if you have any ideas that you think you should have put forward, information you wanted to put forward, recommendations particularly. We really want your recommendations because all the way through you have been hinting at things, giving us recommendations, and not just at the end, and they have been captured.

So, I just want to say thank you all very much, it has resonated a lot with me because I set out on my planning career as chair of planning to do a neighbourhood plan in my own ward in the days when Jeremy Corbyn [MP, Leader of the Labour Party] influenced Haringey Council and set up a community development department which gave me, as a ward councillor, a community development officer to work on our plan with all the local schools, and also a planner. So, we had that resource --

**Navin Shah AM:** Those were the happy days.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** -- back then. Anyway, I am very grateful too to Brian for coming along and being the borough in this audience. I just want to say that it is very nice for me too because this is my swan song in a way, it is my last meeting as Chair of this Planning Committee. I am handing over to Andrew [Boff] for the next year. Thank you all very much for your participation.