

# LONDON ASSEMBLY

## Neighbourhood planning – progress and insights



**Planning Committee**  
March 2020

Holding the Mayor to  
account and  
investigating issues that  
matter to Londoners

**LONDON**ASSEMBLY

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The Planning Committee's role is to scrutinise the detail of the London Plan, the Mayor's use of his planning powers and the strategic planning challenges facing London.

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# Nicky Gavron AM

Deputy Chair, London Assembly Planning Committee



Neighbourhood Forums in London confound expectations. This report marks the third time that the London Assembly has investigated Neighbourhood Planning in the capital. Previously, there has been an assumption that Neighbourhood Planning is the preserve of relatively affluent neighbourhoods, but our evidence this time shows that is no longer the case. From Tooting to Stratford, from Deptford to Harlesden, Neighbourhood Forums have sprung up across London, reflecting the desire of communities of all backgrounds to take more

control over their future.

Even though Neighbourhood Planning has been around now for more than eight years, many people are still in the dark about how it works, what its purpose is and what it can do. Our findings show that there are many challenges and obstacles community groups face in planning for their areas.

The take up of Neighbourhood Planning has been lower in London than the rest of the country, demonstrating the specific barriers faced in a city with a hugely diverse and often transient population, and where the pressure of development on the planning system is so large. Other areas of England have parish council structures which make Neighbourhood Planning more straightforward, and the Government should look to re-instate additional grant funding for Neighbourhood Forums in London.

Currently, debate around the planning system is highly charged – in London in particular, with perceived winners and losers. All too often, existing communities feel that planning is something that is done to them, rather than with or by them. If we are to build and grow a sustainable city for the future, we need to ensure that communities are empowered to control their destinies, rather than missing out on the benefits that growth can provide. We heard from many representatives that successful Neighbourhood Planning:

- drives community engagement and bolsters cohesion
- is a very important conduit between city government, local government and the communities that they serve;
- is an effective tool to realise the Mayor's goal of building strong and inclusive communities.

Above all, we recognise the passion, dedication and creativity of everyone involved in Neighbourhood Planning in London, and it has been so heartening to hear from people from all walks of life who care and think so much about the future of their community and neighbours.

But they are all crying out for more support, from all levels of Government, without which the strengths and potential of the process will not be realised. Greater funding to support detailed work that reflects the level of outreach needed and the realities of London life; knowledge and awareness from local authorities so that hurdles can be overcome; allyship and resources from the Mayor and City Hall in recognition that Neighbourhood Planning has a key role to play in the sustainable growth of our city.

# Summary

This report looks at progress in neighbourhood planning and discusses key themes that emerged from discussions at the Planning Committee’s meeting on 25 April 2019, and makes recommendations to the Mayor, local authorities and the Government. This meeting involved several experts engaged in neighbourhood planning as well as six representatives of organisations who have participated in neighbourhood planning in London.

This meeting, investigation and report are timely: the committee was held during the Examination in Public of the Mayor’s new London Plan, and this report takes into account subsequent relevant changes made to the draft plan as a result of issues raised by community and neighbourhood groups throughout the examination process. Our report is now being published to tie in with the adoption of the new plan. The Planning Inspectors, who were appointed by Government to conduct the Examination in Public, specifically noted that London has three distinct statutory tiers of plan-making – regional, local and neighbourhood – and the role that neighbourhood planning can play in complementing a more strategic spatial development framework for the city.

## Background on neighbourhood planning

### *Introduction of neighbourhood plans*

In May 2010, the then government announced, ‘the time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today’,<sup>1</sup> and subsequently introduced the Localism Act 2011. Among other wider aims, this Act set out to give communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.

The Localism Act introduced ‘a new right for communities to draw up a neighbourhood plan’<sup>2</sup>. This means that communities in England are not legally required to produce a plan, but it gives them the choice whether to produce one or not. Given this voluntary nature of neighbourhood planning, without resourcing to ensure that *all* communities have the time and means to participate and create a plan, access to this right could be unequal, and reserved for only select communities with existing knowledge and funding to draw up their own plan.

### *What is neighbourhood planning?*

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<sup>1</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid



Neighbourhood planning aims to allow communities to come together and draw up a planning document that becomes part of the statutory local framework about land use, for example where new houses, businesses and shops should go.

At the start of the neighbourhood planning process, the neighbourhood area and forum must first be designated by the local planning authority. This defines the boundaries of the area that can be subject to the plan and provides the forum with responsibility to continue the planning process. There are multiple stages to complete when preparing the plan to ensure it meets the necessary conditions, with community engagement and consultation necessary throughout.<sup>3</sup>

A neighbourhood plan must be examined by an independent examiner and pass a referendum from voters in the area before it can be 'made'<sup>4</sup> by the local planning authority. There are narrow circumstances in which the local authority is not required to make the neighbourhood plan at this stage<sup>5</sup>. In London, neighbourhood plans sit alongside the relevant borough plan(s) and the London Plan, which are more strategic in nature.

See Appendix 3 for a description of each stage in the neighbourhood planning process.

A neighbourhood plan can:

- Decide where and what type of development should happen in the neighbourhood.
- Promote more development than is set out in the borough plan.
- Include policies, e.g. design standards, which take precedence over policies in the borough plan.

A neighbourhood plan cannot:

- Conflict with the strategic policies in the borough plan.
- Be used to prevent development that is included in the borough plan.
- Be prepared by a body other than a parish or town council or a neighbourhood forum.

Typical things that a neighbourhood plan might include:

- The development of housing and bringing vacant or derelict housing back into use.
- Provision for businesses to set up or expand their premises.
- Transport and access (including roads, cycling and walking).
- The development of schools, places of worship, health facilities, and leisure facilities.
- The restriction of certain types of development and change of use.
- The design of buildings.
- Protection and creation of open space, play areas, parks, gardens.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/NP\\_Roadmap\\_online\\_full.pdf](https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/NP_Roadmap_online_full.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>A 'made' plan is one brought into force as part of the development plan for the area alongside the local plan [https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/NP\\_Roadmap\\_online\\_full.pdf](https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/NP_Roadmap_online_full.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>Where it considers that the making of the neighbourhood plan or Order would breach, or otherwise be incompatible with, any EU or human rights obligations. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#key-stages-in-neighbourhood-planning>

- Protection of important buildings and historic assets.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Financial support for neighbourhood planning*

In 2018, the government made a £23 million fund to continue supporting the development of neighbourhood planning until 2022, delivered in the form of grants by Locality.<sup>78</sup> There are two types of grant funding available:

- Basic grant funding of up to £9,000
- Additional grant funding of up to £8,000

Prior to 2018, the basic grant funding was still £9,000 but the additional grant funding was £6,000 and designed to target deprived areas<sup>9</sup>. The additional grant funding no longer has that purpose and instead requires one of the following five conditions (see Appendix 4 for more detail on funding conditions):

- Allocating sites for housing
- Including design codes in your plan
- A designated business neighbourhood plan
- A cluster of three or more parishes writing a single plan
- A Neighbourhood Area with a population of over 25,000<sup>10</sup>

Importantly, neighbourhood forums were automatically eligible for the additional grant funding in the previous neighbourhood planning support programme, but this has not been the case since 2018. This has a major impact on London because its neighbourhood plans need to be delivered by neighbourhood forums with the sole exception of Queens Park where a parish council has been established.

#### *Previous Planning Committee investigations into neighbourhood planning*

The Planning Committee has published two previous reports on neighbourhood planning:

- 2012 – Beyond consultation; the role of neighbourhood plans in supporting local involvement in planning.<sup>11</sup>
- 2014 – Localism in London; what’s the story?<sup>12</sup>.
- 2012 Beyond consultation; the role of neighbourhood plans in supporting local involvement in planning – findings and recommendations<sup>13</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.planninghelp.cpre.org.uk/improve-where-you-live/shape-your-local-area/neighbourhood-plans/some-general-principles-for-neighbourhood-plans>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-commits-to-further-support-for-neighbourhood-planning>

<sup>8</sup> Locality is a ‘national membership network supporting local community organisations to be strong and successful’ <https://locality.org.uk/about/>

<sup>9</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/530332/160309\\_LA\\_Funding\\_neighbourhood\\_planning\\_16-17\\_-\\_Chief\\_Planner\\_letter\\_-\\_amended.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/530332/160309_LA_Funding_neighbourhood_planning_16-17_-_Chief_Planner_letter_-_amended.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/grant-funding/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s8691/Appendix%20%20-%20Beyond%20Consultation.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s43257/15-01-22-Appendix%201-Final-Localism-Report.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s8691/Appendix%20%20-%20Beyond%20Consultation.pdf>

This report closely followed the introduction of the Localism Act 2011. It considered the potential benefit from the Act and whether it was likely to deliver its objectives, with reference to ‘vanguard’ case studies of neighbourhood forums that had already entered the process.

The 2012 report was mostly forward looking, identifying three areas of potential concern that could hamper the progress of neighbourhood planning in London:

- What is a neighbourhood? Defining the term in London is particularly challenging because one borough could have multiple neighbourhoods, or neighbourhoods could span across borough boundaries.
- How can neighbourhood planning influence the wider planning framework, given that framework’s complexity and the powerful interests involved?
- How can the neighbourhood group build their skills and resources? Where can they find support?

From the outset, the Committee saw benefit in neighbourhood plans, supporting their role in giving communities a greater sense of ownership over decisions that impact them.

Most recommendations were directed to the then Mayor, calling on him to be supportive of neighbourhood planning in general, coordinative ways, such as producing and sharing best practice and guidance. Recommendations did not call on the Mayor to provide additional financial support. See Appendix 2 for the full list of recommendations.

The current Mayor does not provide London specific guidance on neighbourhood planning or share best practice. Both Mayoral Development Corporations (the London Legacy Development Corporation and the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation) have a responsibility to support neighbourhood planning within their boundaries in the same way a London borough does.

#### *2014 – Localism in London; what’s the story? – findings<sup>14</sup>*

This report assessed the progress made in London since introduction of the Localism Act 2011. The Committee confirmed its view that neighbourhood planning could benefit London and had the potential to give people real influence, but did not make any recommendations.

The Committee found that progress in neighbourhood planning was too slow:

- Interest in the process of neighbourhood planning was limited, with only 78 of London’s 1,200 neighbourhoods<sup>15</sup> expressing any interest in the process and many of these still not with designated neighbourhood forums.
- Only one neighbourhood plan had been made and was influencing the development of a local area.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s43257/15-01-22-Appendix%201-Final-Localism-Report.pdf>

<sup>15</sup>The London Plan at that time identified 1,200 neighbourhoods in relation to local shopping areas

- Areas of higher social and economic characteristics were over-represented, with almost half of the activity taking place in just two relatively affluent boroughs: Westminster and Camden (although the latter includes the Somers Town neighbourhood forum, in a more deprived area). More affluent communities had greater access to professional expertise to drive the formation of neighbourhood forums having an advantage over those with less capacity or history of community organisation.
- Financial considerations and the budget pressures on local authorities may have been slowing down the progress of neighbourhood planning in London.
- Greater promotion for neighbourhood planning in London's opportunity areas needs to further the aims of localism and regeneration and boost a sense of legitimacy and support in these areas.
- Government reforms to speed up the process were urgently needed.

## Progress since 2014 (previous Committee report)

On 25 April 2019, the Committee held a meeting to understand progress of implementing neighbourhood planning in London since the Committee last reviewed the issue in November 2014.

The Committee heard that there had been minimal progress:

- As of April, there were 12 made neighbourhood plans in London. A thirteenth was confirmed on 30 May 2019, two further plans were made in October 2019 and another in February 2020 bringing the total number of made neighbourhood plans in London to 16.
- There were 78 designated neighbourhood forums in London<sup>16</sup>.
- More than 110 communities had expressed an interest in developing a neighbourhood plan.

The Committee heard that activity is still concentrated in a few areas:

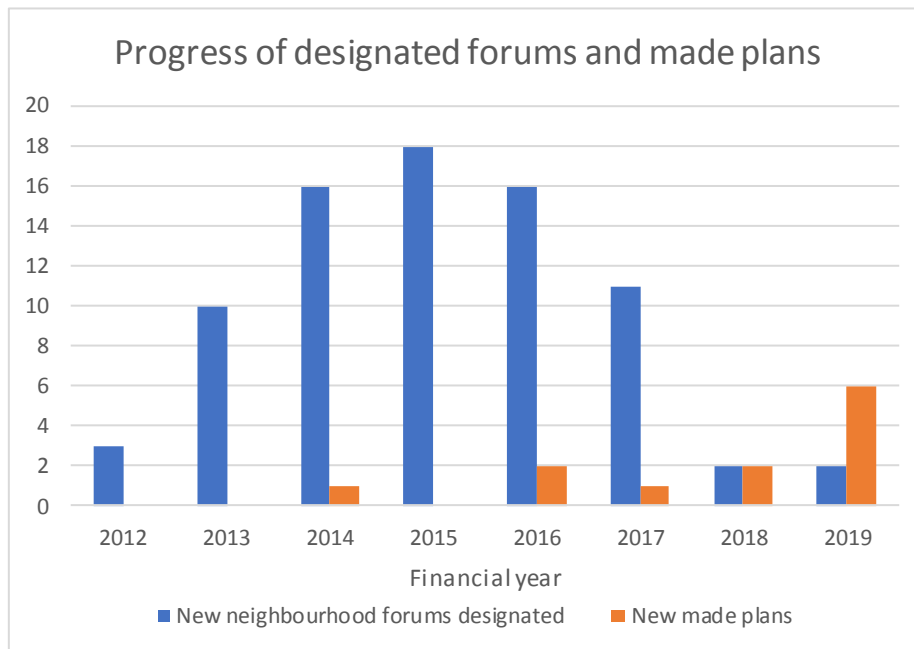
- Four of the 15 plans are in Camden.
- Most London boroughs have no plans (24 of the 33 boroughs).
- 9 London boroughs are neighbourhood planning 'deserts' and have no designated neighbourhood forums.
- In contrast to what the Committee heard in 2014, there appears to be no correlation between the number of plans and the socio-economic position of the area.<sup>17</sup>

The number of neighbourhood plans per year has increased, with eight plans made in 2019, the most of any year (Figure 1). However, the number of new neighbourhood forums designated has declined from a high of 18 in 2015, to only 2 in 2019 (Figure 1).

<sup>16</sup> By the end of the 2019 financial year using Neighbourhood Planners.London data

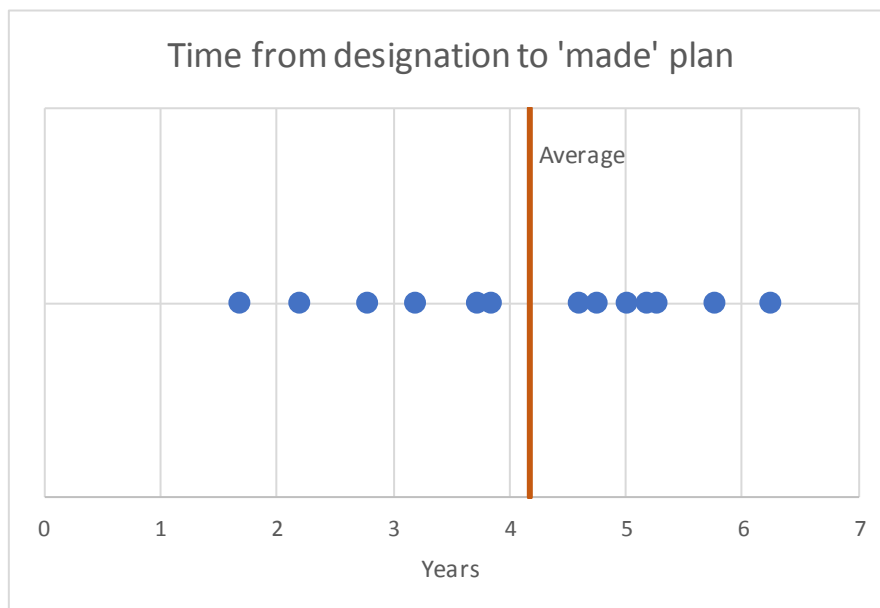
<sup>17</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/b18470/Minutes%20-%20Transcript%20of%20Item%206%20-> p. 20

**Figure 1**



The time taken from designation to a made plan has varied considerably between the 13 made plans (Figure 2). The average is a little over four years, but five of the plans took over five years. This suggests that the peak of new neighbourhood forums designated around 2015 could continue to deliver made plans over the next few years. However, with only two new designated neighbourhood forums in 2018 and 2019, it is becoming likely that the pipeline for plans will run out leaving much of London without any new plans.

**Figure 2**



### *London is a case apart*

London is severely lagging behind the country as a whole in terms of implementing neighbourhood plans. Over 700 neighbourhood plans have been made in England – compared to 16 in London. This amounts to fewer than 2 per cent of made plans being in London despite the capital having 16 per cent of England's population.

In considering this progress it is important to recognise the challenges facing London.

The vast majority of neighbourhood plans across the rest of England are prepared by already established parish or town councils.<sup>18</sup> With the exception of Queens Park, these are absent in London (and, with a handful of exceptions, from most urban areas in England). In London, a new neighbourhood forum must first establish itself and get officially designated by the local planning authority before it begins preparing the plan.

Part of this difference can also be attributed to London's local government structure, with boroughs sitting between neighbourhood forums and the Greater London Authority. London is the only part of the country with a three-tier development plan system. This can create new challenges when forming the neighbourhood forum and area, and during ongoing plan development. The complexity of London's neighbourhoods means that in London, each borough will contain within it multiple different neighbourhoods, and neighbourhoods can often span borough boundaries.

The cultural and demographic diversity of London also provides significant challenges for neighbourhood planning. London in general has a higher proportion of renters than the rest of the country, which often creates a more transient population, making it more difficult for people to be involved in plan making that takes four years or longer. However, it is notable that neighbourhood forums have been designated and neighbourhood plans completed in a wide variety of different locations, geographically and economically.

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<sup>18</sup> Tony Burton (Convenor of the Neighbourhood Planners.London), p. 2

## Case studies – how is the process playing out in practice?<sup>19</sup>

At its meeting, the Committee heard evidence from six representatives from neighbourhood forums who are at various stages in the preparation process for making neighbourhood plans:

- **Stephen Kenny** (Grove Park)
- **Roger Winfield** (Kentish Town)
- **Leao Neto** (Harlesden)
- **Janiz Murray** (Greater Carpenters)
- **Andrea Carey Fuller** (Deptford)
- **Jane Briginshaw** (Tooting Bec and Broadway)

Forum representatives were asked to elaborate on the following questions:

- The size of the area and the community profile it represents
- The stage the plan was at, and how long it took to establish the forum
- The origin of the plan and if there was a prime mover, or whether it grew out of people coalescing around a specific planning issue
- How many people are actively involved in the forum and its diversity
- The level of community engagement achieved and how it was done

Along with the representatives from forums, the Committee had guests with a wide understanding of neighbourhood planning across London:

- **Tony Burton** (Convenor of the Neighbourhood Planners.London). Neighbourhood Planners.London is a volunteer-run informal network of neighbourhood planners throughout London
- **Henry Peterson** (Chair St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum and Co-convenor of Neighbourhood Planners.London)
- **Emma Brunskill-Powell** (Researcher at Publica). Publica undertook a study for Neighbourhood Planners.London looking at the potential for neighbourhood planning in areas experiencing higher levels of socioeconomic deprivation
- **Brian O'Donnell** (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden)
- **Sharon Hayward** (Co-coordinator, London Tenants Federation)

The groups reported on a wide variety of experiences and progress. Some were positive, others less so. This section outlines some of the key findings.

### *Initial motivations and formation*

Creating a neighbourhood forum and defining the neighbourhood plan area are the first stages towards making a plan. These stages can be a greater hurdle in London. Tony Burton: 'In London, you have to establish a new organisation and a neighbourhood forum, and London is

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/b18470/Minutes%20-%20Transcript%20of%20Item%206%20-%20Neighbourhood%20Planning%20and%20Londons%20Communities%20Thursday%2025-Apr-20.pdf?T=9>

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.<sup>20</sup> Emma Brunskill-Powell: 'There are...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.'<sup>21</sup>

A number of themes emerged from the case studies to explain how and why forums overcame the initial hurdle of establishing and designating the forum and neighbourhood plan area.

**Diversity and community.** Several forum representatives spoke of the diversity in their neighbourhoods and the importance of respecting and representing it, whether across religious, ethnic, socio-economic, or other grounds. Jane Briginshaw, highlighted that after asking what people most loved about Tooting, diversity and community was the top response,<sup>22</sup> and Andrea Carey Fuller explained that community engagement and cohesion were core objectives of her forum.<sup>23</sup>

**Growing from existing community groups.** Some forums already had the beginnings of coordination or existing networks to draw from. For example, the Tooting Bec and Broadway forum included representatives from local businesses, food kitchens and a local history group that tells the story of 182 people who died in the first world war<sup>24</sup>. The Harlesden forum grew from the Town Centre Team that was established to make changes to a road scheme.<sup>25</sup>

**Being highly motivated.** Some forum representatives spoke of a specific spark, such as protecting an area of their neighbourhood. For example, the Greater Carpenters forum started from an action group with the objective of preserving the Carpenters estate. After consulting with the community and the London Legacy Development Corporation<sup>26</sup>, it discovered that developing a neighbourhood plan would be the best avenue for influence.<sup>27</sup> Other examples included the protection of local pubs<sup>28</sup> or views of significant or attractive sites, such as the river.<sup>29</sup>

Other key motivations included:

- Addressing decline and neglect – Stephen Kenny identified that Grove Park 'has had no investment for 30 years'<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Tony Burton (Convenor of the Neighbourhood Planners.London), p. 2

<sup>21</sup> Emma Brunskill-Powell (Strategic Planning and Implementation Manager, London Borough of Camden), p. 3

<sup>22</sup> Jane Briginshaw (Tooting Bec and Broadway), p.17

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Carey (Deptford), p.14

<sup>24</sup> Jane Briginshaw (Tooting Bec and Broadway), p. 16

<sup>25</sup> Leao Neto (Harlesden), p.10

<sup>26</sup> A Mayoral Development Corporation formed to deliver legacy promises made in the original London 2012 Games bid. <https://www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/our-story/the-legacy-corporation>

<sup>27</sup> Janiz Murray (Greater Carpenters), p. 11

<sup>28</sup> Roger Winfield (Kentish Town), p. 8

<sup>29</sup> Andrea Carey Fuller (Deptford), p.15

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Kenny (Grove Park), p. 12



- A sense that the ‘planning system [outside of neighbourhood planning] is currently broken. There is not truly effective community engagement.’<sup>31</sup>

### *Benefits of neighbourhood planning*

The core objective when establishing neighbourhood planning through the Localism Act 2011 was to provide people at a local level with the opportunity to ‘influence the future of the places they live’, rather than being ‘told what to do’.<sup>32</sup> Two related benefits emerged from the discussions.

**Neighbourhood planning brings communities closer together.**<sup>33</sup> While most of the forums were already motivated by a strong sense of community when initially forming, this grew in strength as they worked together to deliver a neighbourhood plan. Leao Neto identified community participation as the key value from the experience, enabling them to ‘put Harlesden on the map’ for the Council. The Harlesden forum is now continuing action for the community by supporting the establishment of a community-led housing project. Brian O’Donnell expressed the view that the community cohesion built was possibly even more valuable than the 12 plans.

**Detailed local knowledge improves planning.** Many forum representatives emphasised their intentions to develop and bring prosperity to their neighbourhoods, with Stephen Kenny highlighting that ‘it is not about just saving stuff’.<sup>34</sup> Roger Winfield and Henry Peterson both provided examples of where their local knowledge had led to identifying under-occupied sites (in terms of capacity and density). Henry Peterson’s St Quintin and Woodlands forum transformed light industrial units that were ‘not doing very much’ into more productive co-working spaces.<sup>35</sup> Emma Brunskill-Powell reiterated that her research had revealed this benefit, saying of forums that ‘there is no one who can better cover things like area characterisation or identifying small sites, small-scale interventions and small-scale social projects’.<sup>36</sup>

### *Challenges and frustrations with neighbourhood planning*

#### **Funding conditions are too rigid, and availability of additional funding is variable.**

Jane Briginshaw said the new criteria made it harder to secure grant funding, ‘Because of this new business about what you can spend it on, we have to contort ourselves’<sup>37</sup> (see Appendix 4 for more detail on funding conditions). Some forums also successfully secured funding beyond the government grants (between £9,000 and £17,000). For example, the Greater Carpenters forum secured grants from Trust for London, Loretta Lees, London Tenants Federation and UCL’s Engineering Exchange.<sup>38</sup> However, availability of additional funding can vary, and the

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<sup>31</sup> Andrea Carey Fuller (Deptford), p. 15

<sup>32</sup> P. 12 Localism Act guide

<sup>33</sup> Brian O’Donnell, p. 18

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Kenny (Grove Park), p.13

<sup>35</sup> Henry Peterson, p. 23

<sup>36</sup> Emma Brunskill-Powell, p. 38

<sup>37</sup> Jane Briginshaw (Tooting Bec and Broadway), p. 26

<sup>38</sup> Janiz Murray (Greater Carpenters), p. 12

process of seeking it can be time consuming. Jane Briginshaw had ten meetings with Wandsworth Council to seek the £2,000 shortfall that her forum needed but had no success.<sup>39</sup>

**The neighbourhood planning process is demanding and requires multiple forms of support.** All forum representatives shared this sentiment, referring not only to funding, but services, meeting rooms, or other in-kind resources. Most could leverage existing community networks for assistance, for example, the Harlesden forum had a local organisation providing secretariat services. Tony Burton: '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.'<sup>40</sup> If what you are interested in fits into one of those packages, then you get some support. 'Jane Briginshaw criticised the inflexibility of technical support 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.'<sup>41</sup>

**Neighbourhood forums cannot easily access the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).** The CIL is a charge on new infrastructure development, intended to help address demands that development places on an area. In most of England, the local parishes can decide how to spend a portion of the CIL, receiving 25 per cent if they have a neighbourhood plan and up to 15 per cent if they do not, incentivising the parish to produce a plan.<sup>42</sup> In London, while the same portion of the levy must be spent in the neighbourhood it is collected, and the community must be consulted, the neighbourhood forum is not guaranteed direct control over how it is spent.<sup>43</sup> Henry Peterson raised that the CIL is not working as intended in London, where the: '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.'<sup>44</sup>

**Representing the breadth of a community is time consuming and intensive.** Forums took their responsibility of representing their community seriously, using a variety of methods to reach people, including meetings, exhibitions, door-knocking and surveys. Andrea Carey Fuller sought to use empty shops or offices on the high street to reach people, in particular those from more disadvantaged backgrounds who may be too busy to engage. This was unsuccessful, but she was able to put designs and reports on display at the local Pepys Resources Centre.<sup>45</sup> Jane Briginshaw said that they wanted to build 'massive legitimacy' through people, and began the process by asking questions of the community at events, schools, online, and through business, getting over 1,500 individual responses. However, she was concerned that the 'narrow' process and funding limitations 'pushed us to become unrepresentative'.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Jane Briginshaw (Tooting Bec and Broadway), p.17

<sup>40</sup> Tony Burton, p. 6

<sup>41</sup> Jane Briginshaw (Tooting Bec and Broadway), p. 26

<sup>42</sup> [https://mycommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Community-Infrastructure-Levy\\_NP\\_MyC.pdf](https://mycommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Community-Infrastructure-Levy_NP_MyC.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/unlocking-potential-commu-f1d.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Henry Peterson, p. 20

<sup>45</sup> Andrea Carey Fuller (Deptford), p.15

<sup>46</sup> Jane Briginshaw (Tooting Bec and Broadway), p. 17

Roger Winfield expressed the view that it would be hard to make the process quicker without limiting community involvement.<sup>47</sup>

**Council support varies.** Most guests spoke negatively of their relationship with the local council. Stephen Kenny stated that Lewisham Council had prevented the Grove Park forum from accessing an additional £50,000 from being a 'frontrunner'<sup>4849</sup>. Jane Briginshaw said her forum received 'no help whatsoever from Wandsworth Council',<sup>50</sup> and Janiz Murray said there were 'problems engaging with Newham all the way through'.<sup>51</sup> Tony Burton was concerned that promotion of neighbourhood planning relied too heavily on local authorities, who have 'no real appetite to be promoting in a positive way neighbourhood planning'.<sup>52</sup>

**Councils are limited by funds and planning officers may not have the necessary knowledge.** Brian O'Donnell emphasised the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with forums in Camden. He explained that one reason for limited support from some Councils is that they often have limited resources themselves, with small planning policy teams, and that support they provide to neighbourhood planning draws resources away from other areas. Councils receive no dedicated funding for Neighbourhood Planning yet are liable for the costs of running referendums and examinations of the plans.<sup>53</sup> In addition to limited funding, Stephen Kenny said, '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 with absolutely no knowledge whatsoever about planning, is being led by an officer whose mandate is about compensation...'

**A strong relationship with the local council can be an opportunity.** The fact that Camden Council is supportive of neighbourhood planning could explain why a third of neighbourhood plans are in that borough, and Roger Winfield confirmed that from his forum's perspective, Camden had been 'very helpful'.<sup>54</sup> Henry Peterson explained that eventually the Kensington and Chelsea Council came to value the work of neighbourhood planning, later seeing its mixed housing developments as a success and offering to 'help' and 'encourage that to happen'.<sup>55</sup> Emma Brunskill-Powell thought that forums could be 'incredibly useful' to local authorities, and act as a 'conduit' between them and their communities.<sup>56</sup>

**Limiting neighbourhood planning to land use misses an opportunity.** Jane Briginshaw explained that the remit of neighbourhood planning limited the types of projects and work they

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<sup>47</sup> Roger Winfield, p. 8

<sup>48</sup> Stephen Kenny (Grove Park), p.12

<sup>49</sup> A small number of forums received additional funding to be 'frontrunners' to encourage early designation of forums and neighbourhood planning progress. This is no longer available.

<sup>50</sup> Jane Briginshaw (tooting Bec and Broadway) p.17

<sup>51</sup> Janiz Murray (Greater Carpenters), p. 11

<sup>52</sup> Tony Burton, p. 5

<sup>53</sup> Brian O'Donnell, p.19

<sup>54</sup> Roger Winfield (Kentish Town), p. 8

<sup>55</sup> Henry Peterson, p.23

<sup>56</sup> Emma Brunskill-Powell, p. 4

wanted to achieve, which in some instances could also put people off getting involved<sup>57</sup>. Henry Peterson explained that ideas about projects and initiatives could be included as an annex or a separate document, but that plans could not have policies around issues like bus timings, events, or social policies, which may be complementary to policies on land use. This demonstrates the importance of neighbourhood planning linking in with other areas of local government policy and activity, such as regeneration, culture and transport. This would potentially achieve better outcomes for communities. Emma Brunskill-Powell agreed that a key challenge to improving the neighbourhood planning process was finding a way to give social policies 'a bit of weight' and fitting them within the current 'narrow' sense of what a neighbourhood plan could do.<sup>58</sup> This is particularly important in terms of regeneration and in areas undergoing change, as – explained above – the act of coming together as a neighbourhood forum helps engender community cohesion and empowers the community to be invested in that change.

*Is neighbourhood planning the best way to capture local voices?*

Stephen Kenny had the view that if the planning policy was 'strong' and 'robust' enough, forums should not have to be doing that work as volunteers.<sup>59</sup> Sharon Hayward had 'sympathy' for this view but thought that within the current system, using neighbourhood planning was the 'best way possible for communities to have their voices heard and to be able to offer alternatives'.<sup>60</sup> Brian O'Donnell raised that there are also unique benefits from neighbourhood planning, regardless of how well central planning aims to reach communities and capture their views. The benefits he listed were similar to those mentioned above, that is about the process itself bringing communities closer together.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Jane Briginshaw (Tooting Bec and Broadway), p. 17

<sup>58</sup> Emma Brunskill-Powell, p.30

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Kenny, p.14

<sup>60</sup> Sharon Hayward, p.18

<sup>61</sup> Brian O'Donnell, p. 18

## Where is neighbourhood planning heading?

Findings from the Committee meeting reaffirmed the importance of capturing the views of people within communities as part of the planning process, enabling them to shape their own areas. Committee guests expressed strong support for neighbourhood planning as a means of achieving this.

However, the diminishing pipeline of forums and areas being designated indicates that the number of made plans will start falling, possibly leaving much of London without any neighbourhood plans in the near future.

*Neighbourhood Planners.London has produced detailed recommendations to get more plans*

With funding support from Trust for London, Neighbourhood Planners.London commissioned Publica to investigate the potential of neighbourhood planning in London, particularly in areas experiencing high levels of deprivation. The investigation included seven case studies of forums across London, and interviews with local authorities.

The 2019 Neighbourhood Planners.London report<sup>62</sup> included a detailed prescription for where and how to overcome the barriers currently limiting neighbourhood planning progress. The full set of recommendations is included in Appendix 1. Recommendations were grouped into the following areas:

- **Improvements to the process of neighbourhood planning.** For example, introducing milestone wins over the course of the project to maintain momentum or unlock additional resources.
- **Mainstreaming neighbourhood planning.** For example, considering emerging neighbourhood plans and their priorities in local plans and making explicit that the integration of neighbourhood plans is part of the soundness test of local plans.
- **Funding.** The overarching recommendation calls for more funding, with recommendations specifying a range of ways this could be provided, such as grants, technical support packages, and ringfenced funding for support and communications.
- **Capacity-building and support.** For example, providing more clarity over the 'duty to support' neighbourhood planning for local authorities, or facilitating mutual support and peer-to-peer learning between local authorities.

The Neighbourhood Planners.London recommendations (see Appendix 1) are generally consistent with issues and suggestions raised by forum representatives in the Committee meeting and should be considered by the Mayor and boroughs as well as central Government. Ultimately, more support is needed to increase the level of neighbourhood planning and meet

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<sup>62</sup> [https://140d5992-3079-4eb8-bf8d-7a7c1aa9d1df.filesusr.com/ugd/95f6a3\\_b02c020c0242437a8a5a096b77325c88.pdf](https://140d5992-3079-4eb8-bf8d-7a7c1aa9d1df.filesusr.com/ugd/95f6a3_b02c020c0242437a8a5a096b77325c88.pdf)

the core objectives of dispersing power and influence more widely.<sup>63</sup> Whether this support is provided by local councils or a third party sharing their expertise and navigating forums through the process, or in the form of more generous grants to forums, it will come at a cost. Additional funding could be provided by central government, the Mayor, or local councils.

#### *The Mayor has a role to play*

The Committee heard that most local councils are already financially stretched, and pressure to resource support for neighbourhood planning appears to be hampering what would ideally be a strong, collaborative relationship between the local council and forums.

The government introduced the Localism Act 2011, where it framed neighbourhood planning as a right. By framing it as a right, the government should ensure all neighbourhoods have the capacity to develop a plan – even if they decide not to.

However, given that neighbourhood planning progress is so much slower in London relative to the rest of England, it is appropriate for the Mayor to provide further support.

#### *The new London Plan barely references neighbourhood planning*

The Mayor's new London Plan includes the policy: GG1 Building strong and inclusive communities. In the introductory section to this policy, the Mayor makes a supportive reference to neighbourhood plans:

*“Early engagement with local people leads to better planning proposals, with Neighbourhood Plans providing a particularly good opportunity for communities to shape growth in their areas”<sup>64</sup>*

The policy goes on to list things that those ‘involved in planning and development’ must do. Whilst this list includes positive and sensible requirements, for example to ‘provide access to good quality community spaces’, there is no specific mention of the importance of neighbourhood planning as a means of achieving such outcomes.

The previous London Plan was more explicit about the benefits of Neighbourhood Planning. The Further Alterations to the London Plan (2015) Policy 7.1 G said:

*“Boroughs should work with and support their local communities to set goals or priorities for their neighbourhoods and strategies for achieving them through neighbourhood planning mechanisms.”*

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<sup>63</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf)

<sup>64</sup> [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/draft\\_london\\_plan\\_-\\_showing\\_minor\\_suggested\\_changes\\_july\\_2018.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/draft_london_plan_-_showing_minor_suggested_changes_july_2018.pdf)

While the supporting text went further with how Neighbourhood Planning could be used:

*“Neighbourhood plans are one mechanism for both the boroughs and community-led groups to agree on local priorities, including those for investments through the Community Infrastructure Levy”*

It also says:

*“Following the NPPF, the Mayor will consider how best to promote community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy being taken forward through neighbourhood planning.”<sup>65</sup>*

That similar policies and statements were not included in the new London Plan seems to be an oversight; the Mayor should look to improve the standing of Neighbourhood Planning and set out how it can contribute to his Good Growth priorities.

*Areas that the London Plan could draw the connection to neighbourhood planning*

Policies SD1 and SD10 of the new London Plan present a good opportunity to place a greater emphasis on Neighbourhood Planning, particularly as a tool through which communities can better shape areas that are going through change.

SD1 says, “ensure planning frameworks are informed by public and stakeholder engagement and collaboration at an early stage and throughout their development” and SD10 says,

*“Development Plans, Opportunity Area Planning Frameworks and development proposals should contribute to regeneration by tackling inequalities and the environmental, economic and social barriers that affect the lives of people in the area, especially in Strategic and Local Areas for Regeneration.”*

What the Committee heard from Harlesden and Kentish Town was that Neighbourhood Planning *does* allow for communities to take some element of control over wider socio-economic forces that are reshaping their areas. Given the emphasis the new London Plan puts on Good Growth, community consultation and cohesion, future revisions should put this role for Neighbourhood Planning into the strategic framework for London.

Evidence presented to the Committee made it clear that neighbourhood forums in London found the process rewarding even if the originally desired outputs did not come to fruition. The Mayor can look to neighbourhood planning not just as part of overall spatial development frameworks, but as a tool through which to drive community engagement and bolster cohesion.

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<sup>65</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/past-versions-and-alterations-london-plan/further-alterations-london-plan-falp>

Neighbourhood planning could also help at the site allocation stage, for both large and small sites. In the case of small sites, the local knowledge held within communities could assist with identifying potential sites that could potentially benefit the local area. This could then help drive London Plan Small Sites policy). For large sites, neighbourhood planning could improve engagement with the local community and gain buy-in for greater density. For example, St Ann's Redevelopment Trust (StART) in Haringey, who were key part of the engagement, were content with greater density if it was carried out in partnership with the local community.

In response to the 2019 report by Neighbourhood Planners.London, the Mayor said:

*"The Mayor welcomes the potential that Neighbourhood Plans can play not only in optimising housing delivery, especially through the identification of small sites as set out in Policy H2 of the draft new London Plan in order to contribute to the borough's new housing target, but also as a vehicle to help deliver the Mayor's overall aim of Good Growth through building strong and inclusive communities and empowering local people to help shape the growth and development in their areas."*<sup>66</sup>

However, the small sites policy has no mention of neighbourhood planning. It remains unclear whether the Mayor is concerned about the slow progress of neighbourhood planning, despite his statement that it is a 'particularly good opportunity for communities to shape growth in their areas'; or, whether he intends to implement new ways of providing communities with the opportunity to shape growth in their areas.

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<sup>66</sup> <https://mailchi.mp/4e3a89921c1f/neighbourhood-plannerslondon-bulletin>



# Recommendations

The Committee retains its view that neighbourhood planning makes a valuable contribution to communities and should be encouraged in London and that, despite the progress reported above, renewed pressure is required to encourage activity – especially in the nine boroughs that can be described as ‘neighbourhood planning deserts’.<sup>67</sup>

## To the Mayor

### Recommendation 1

The Mayor should state whether he supports neighbourhood planning as the primary means of capturing community views and enabling communities to shape growth in their areas.

### Recommendation 2

Publish an annual report on the contribution of neighbourhood planning to the delivery of Mayoral priorities, including the London Plan, Good Growth strategies and Mayoral Development Corporations.

### Recommendation 3

Convene London’s volunteer neighbourhood planners with London boroughs in a symposium to develop a programme for accelerating the delivery of neighbourhood plans and supporting peer-to-peer learning between neighbourhood forums.

### Recommendation 4

The Mayor and GLA should engage with neighbourhood planning through the culture, environment, regeneration, transport, communities and social integration teams, not just the planning teams, as a means of improving local areas and meeting strategic priorities.

### Recommendation 5

Support action in the nine boroughs that can be described as ‘neighbourhood planning deserts’ – this could be carried out by ‘Public Practice’, the

<sup>67</sup> Tony Burton (Convenor of the Neighbourhood Planners London), p. 3

<b>To the Mayor</b>	not-for-profit social enterprise that the Mayor has supported.
	<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>Ensure projects identified by neighbourhood forums are considered equally against other proposals for grants from the Good Growth Fund and Citizen-Led Engagement Programme.</p>
	<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>Use part of the Homebuilding Capacity Fund to help London Boroughs carry out outreach and liaison with neighbourhood forums to speed up the process of neighbourhood planning, and use ‘Public Practice’ to build capacity in local planning departments for Neighbourhood Planning.</p>
	<p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p> <p>Provide a response to the recommendations of Neighbourhood Planners.London’s report on “Neighbourhood Planning in London”.</p>
	<p><b>Recommendation 9</b></p> <p>When coming to revise or alter the new London Plan after adoption, reintroduce policy and text from the Further Alterations to the London Plan (2015) that explicitly set out how Neighbourhood Planning can support local priorities, renewable energy schemes and the Mayor’s Good Growth objectives (in particular, policies SD1 and SD10).</p>

## To the Mayor

### Recommendation 10

Provide funding and capacity-building to empower neighbourhoods and local communities to shape their future, and if appropriate, to stimulate a Neighbourhood Planning process to help deliver new London Plan policy SD10, in relation to Strategic and Local Regeneration, which says “the Mayor will provide leadership and support for regeneration through this Plan and his other strategies and programmes”.

### Recommendation 11

Report back to the GLA Planning Committee by the end of the financial year 2020/2021 on progress with implementing these recommendations in the next Mayoralty.

### Recommendation 12

The Committee will write to London Councils ask how Local Planning Authorities in London advertise neighbourhood planning to local communities, whether they have a dedicated member of staff for it, and whether they provide training to officers and councillors (especially those involved in plan making and planning decisions) about neighbourhood planning.

## Action by London Boroughs

### Recommendation 13

Provide clarity over the ‘duty to support’ neighbourhood planning and provide a dedicated point of contact for neighbourhood planning within the planning team.

### Recommendation 14

Provide timely support and clear advice at each stage of the neighbourhood planning process where the local planning authority has a decision-making role, including avoiding placing additional

**Action by Central Government**

requirements on neighbourhood forums not required by legislation.

**Recommendation 15**

Boroughs should ensure that the spending of the 25% share of local CIL is aligned with the projects and priorities identified in made neighbourhood plans, and those generated through the neighbourhood planning process.

**Recommendation 16**

Revise the Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme to ensure neighbourhood forums automatically qualify for additional grant support.

**Recommendation 16**

Revise the Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme to ensure neighbourhood forums automatically qualify for additional grant support.

**Recommendation 17**

Provide grant support to neighbourhood forums for delivery as well as preparation of their neighbourhood plan.

**Recommendation 18**

Provide Technical Support through the Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme that recognises the particular circumstances faced by London's communities in preparing a neighbourhood plan.

**Recommendation 19**

Publish a breakdown of the funding provided to local planning authorities for neighbourhood planning as an "additional burden" and that provided to neighbourhood forums under the

Neighbourhood Planning Support grant for each local planning authority area.

**Recommendation 20**

Address the recommendations in Neighbourhood Planners.London’s “Neighbourhood Planning in London” which have been endorsed by this report.

## Appendix 1:

### Neighbourhood Planners London recommendations

These recommendations are drawn from the key findings and address the role and potential for neighbourhood planning in areas with high levels of deprivation in London and the special challenges which disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods face. They also consider the different organisations and government bodies which could deliver each recommendation.

#### *Improving the process of neighbourhood planning*

1. Consider making provision for neighbourhood plans that are led by their social policies and projects, rather than planning projects alone (central government)
2. Introduce milestone 'wins' over the course of the project to counter loss of momentum and to provide the potential to unlock additional resources. This might include supporting and elevating projects identified by neighbourhood forums through grant funds, such as:
  - The Good Growth Fund, supporting growth and community development (Mayor of London)
  - Citizen-Led Engagement Programme grants, facilitating community-led research (Mayor of London, GLA, central government)
  - Community Infrastructure Levy (local authorities)
3. Simplify routes into the neighbourhood planning process for forums, for example making the process of applying for initial funding more straightforward, to remove barriers to entry (Locality, local authorities)

#### *Mainstreaming neighbourhood planning*

4. Widen access for neighbourhood forums and their technical consultants to digital and mapping tools used by local authorities. This could include software i.e. Commonplace, or digitised data sets to inform evidence bases (central government, local authorities)
5. Consider emerging neighbourhood plans and their priorities in local plans and make explicit that the integration of neighbourhood plans is part of the soundness test of local plans. Local plans should be supportive of neighbourhood plans and leave space for neighbourhood plans to add detail for their areas (local authorities, Planning Inspectorate)
6. Collaborate with neighbourhood forums to make stronger connections between neighbourhood planning and Community Infrastructure Levy priorities (local authorities)

## *Funding*

7. Revisit the criteria for additional funding for neighbourhood forums, and consider tailored packages of support for urban areas with high levels of deprivation, including:
  - Re-instating additional grant funding for neighbourhood forums
  - Providing supplementary grants for areas which score highly in the indices of multiple deprivation as the current additional grants are difficult for London forums to access
  - Providing additional technical support packages tailored to urban areas with high levels of socio-economic deprivation (central government)
8. Provide ringfenced funding for neighbourhood forums to spend on administrative support and communications. This might include project management, technology, planning, and community engagement (central government)
9. Provide information for neighbourhood forums on alternative funding sources and develop networks for corporate sponsorship and other support (Neighbourhood Planners London)

## *Capacity-building and support*

10. Provide clarity over the 'duty to support' neighbourhood planning for local authorities, setting out expected roles and responsibilities in a guidance document that has statutory weight. This should include assigning a dedicated point of contact for neighbourhood planning within the planning team, and ensuring that if this changes, neighbourhood forums are notified (central government, local authorities)
11. Provide additional capacity-building for neighbourhood forums in urban areas with high levels of deprivation, for example through entitlement to access additional technical support and networking events (Neighbourhood Planners London, GLA, central government, Locality)
12. Consider funding a point person over the life of the neighbourhood planning process for forums across groups of around three boroughs. This individual could offer advice on hiring appropriate consultants, project-management support and check in to ensure momentum is retained. They could also mediate relationships with local authorities and consultants where these are difficult (Neighbourhood Planners London, funded by GLA or central government)
13. Fund and prioritise peer-to-peer learning between neighbourhood forums across London, which is very effective but rare, particularly supporting small, workshop style events. Feedback from participants in this study indicates that a small workshop is a very helpful format (Neighbourhood Planners London, GLA)
14. Facilitate mutual support and peer-to-peer learning between local authorities, potentially by formalising the existing knowledge-sharing groups through London Councils (local authorities, London Councils) Explore ways to link local skills with neighbourhood forums in a way that can deliver professional accreditation or other benefits for volunteers. The Skills for Londoners fund could support local further/higher education organisations to facilitate these skill exchanges (central government, GLA)

15. Support peer-to-peer learning, facilitated by Neighbourhood Planners London's existing networks, to develop a team or pipeline of skilled consultants experienced in supporting neighbourhood forums in London. This group could offer tailored and long-term support to forums (Neighbourhood Planners London, London Councils, GLA, central government).



## Appendix 2:

### Planning Committee recommendations from 2012<sup>68</sup>

#### *Recommendation 1*

The Mayor should produce best practice guidance based on the results of the early front-runner schemes and other neighbourhood planning initiatives in London that highlight the range of ways to define a neighbourhood and set out how difficulties have been dealt with in different locations.

#### *Recommendation 2*

The Mayor should look to include neighbourhood planning in future OAPFs and clarify how neighbourhood level planning issues can usefully be considered within OAPFs in his Draft SPG, providing advice to local authorities and communities in that regard.

#### *Recommendation 3*

As neighbourhood planning places additional demands upon stretched local authority resources, we recommend that the Local Government Association review the role of local councillors in neighbourhood planning and set out some guidelines on what role councillors can, as a minimum, be expected to play.

#### *Recommendation 4*

Local authorities and neighbourhood forums should seek an open dialogue on how the government grants for front runner schemes and other neighbourhood planning initiatives are best spent, and what additional funding or support can be provided.

#### *Recommendation 5*

London Boroughs should also consider reviewing how they can adjust their current structure and approach to support neighbourhood planning, given the constraints of resources and workload. Once the impact and results from examples become evident – for example, the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea’s new planning team structure – these could be used as best practice.

#### *Recommendation 6*

We recommend that all groups and forums should assess their own strengths and weaknesses against a number of factors including leadership skills, planning knowledge, access to information and communication skills.

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<sup>68</sup>[Beyond consultation; the role of neighbourhood plans in supporting local involvement in planning, 2012](#)

*Recommendation 7*

The Mayor should support existing networks of community and voluntary organisations, boroughs and other interested parties in setting up a neighbourhood planning network to support and encourage exploratory work. A scoping meeting to discuss steps forward should take place after the Mayoral election.

## Appendix 3:

### A summary of the key stages in neighbourhood planning

#### *Step 1: Designating neighbourhood area and if appropriate neighbourhood forum*

- Relevant body (parish/town council, prospective neighbourhood forum or community organisation) submits an application to the local planning authority to designate a neighbourhood area
- local planning authority publicises and consults on the area application for minimum 6 weeks (except for where a local planning authority is required to designate the whole of a parish.)
- local planning authority designates a neighbourhood area within the statutory timescales
- In an area without a town or parish council a prospective neighbourhood forum submits an application to be the designated neighbourhood forum for a neighbourhood area
- local planning authority publicises and consults on the forum application for minimum 6 weeks
- local planning authority takes decision on whether to designate the neighbourhood forum

#### *Step 2: Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan or Order*

Qualifying body develops proposals (advised or assisted by the local planning authority)

- gather baseline information and evidence
- engage and consult those living and working in the neighbourhood area and those with an interest in or affected by the proposals (e.g. service providers)
- talk to landowners and the development industry
- identify and assess options
- determine whether a plan or an Order is likely to have significant environmental effect
- start to prepare proposals documents e.g. basic conditions statement

#### *Step 3: Pre-submission publicity and consultation*

The qualifying body:

- publicises the draft plan or Order and invites representations
- consults the consultation bodies as appropriate
- sends a copy of the draft plan or Order to the local planning authority
- where European Obligations apply, complies with relevant publicity and consultation requirements
- considers consultation responses and amends plan/Order if appropriate
- prepares consultation statement and other proposal documents

*Step 4: Submission of a neighbourhood plan or Order proposal to the local planning authority*

- Qualifying body submits the plan or Order proposal to the local planning authority
- Local planning authority checks that submitted proposal complies with all relevant legislation
- If the local planning authority finds that the plan or order meets the legal requirements it:
  - publicises the proposal for minimum 6 weeks and invites representations
  - notifies consultation bodies referred to in the consultation statement
  - appoints an independent examiner (with the agreement of the qualifying body)

*Step 5: Independent Examination*

- local planning authority sends plan/Order proposal and representation to the independent examiner
- independent examiner undertakes examination
- independent examiner issues a report to the local planning authority and qualifying body
- local planning authority publishes report
- local planning authority considers report and reaches own view (except in respect of community right to build orders and proposals for modifications of neighbourhood plans where the modifications do not change the nature of the plan, where the report is binding)
- local planning authority takes the decision on whether to send the plan/Order to referendum

*Steps 6 and 7: Referendum and bringing the neighbourhood plan or Order into force*

- relevant council publishes information statement
- relevant council publishes notice of referendum/s
- polling takes place (in a business area an additional referendum is held)
- results declared
- should more than half of those voting vote in favour of the neighbourhood plan, the plan comes into force as part of the statutory development plan for the area
- should more than half of those voting vote in favour of the Order, the Order only has legal effect once it is made by the local planning authority
- there are narrow circumstances where the local planning authority is not required to make the neighbourhood plan or Order. These are where it considers that the making of the neighbourhood plan or Order would breach, or otherwise be incompatible with, any EU or human rights obligations (see section 61E(8) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Act as amended).

- in respect of proposals for modifications of neighbourhood plans where the modifications do not change the nature of the plan and meet the basic conditions, a referendum is not required. The local planning authority is required to make the modified neighbourhood plan<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#key-stages-in-neighbourhood-planning>

## Appendix 4:

### Grant funding and technical support for neighbourhood plans

There are two types of grant funding available to support the development of neighbourhood plans administered by Locality.

#### *Basic grant funding*

All groups undertaking a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order are eligible to apply for up to £9,000 in basic grant. There is also the option to apply for technical support. Technical support includes professional support and advice on technical or process issues. It is available for eligible groups facing more complex issues in developing their neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order.

Technical support is awarded as a technical work package, not a financial grant. Grant funding is not needed to purchase technical support, groups can apply for both grant funding, and technical support in the same application. Technical support funding is available to groups that wish to:

- Allocate sites for housing
- Intending to include design codes in the plan
- Planning to use a neighbourhood development order
- Need help to get designated officially as a forum.

All applications for technical support are presented to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to decide.

#### *Additional grant funding*

In addition to the basic grant, groups meeting the eligibility criteria can apply for a grant of up to £8,000.

Eligibility for additional grant funding applies for groups that wish to:

- Allocate sites for housing
- Include design codes in the plan
- Produce a designated business neighbourhood plan
- Produce a Neighbourhood Area with a population of over 25,000

Applicants for additional grant funding are still able to apply for technical support along with grant funding.

### *Volunteer support*

The Royal Town Planning Institute also offers volunteer support that includes delivering training on neighbourhood planning to individuals, communities and Councillors as well as discrete opportunities for bespoke support to communities developing a neighbourhood plan, such as supporting consultation or community engagement activity or providing technical advice.



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