

**News from the 'Hood - early  
experiences of working with  
Parish Councils and Forums on  
Neighbourhood Plans**

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After over 30 years, in local authorities in the East Midlands and most recently The National Forest Company, I established *Clive Keble Consulting* in April 2011.

I am currently providing planning support to two communities in East Staffordshire who are preparing Neighbourhood Plans and I am an active Planning Aid volunteer, specialising in Neighbourhood Planning

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# News from the 'Hood

Localism

Neighbourhood Planning

Tensions & Barriers

Opportunities

NB These are my own informal views

# Localism 1

Conservative pre-election Green Paper:

*“The creation of an Open Source planning system means that local people in each neighbourhood – a term we use to include villages, towns, estates, wards or other relevant local areas – will be able to **specify what kind of development and use of land** they want to see in their area....”*

# Localism 2

- David Cameron - Big Society, not Big Government -  
*“We’re giving local **people more power over what happens in their neighbourhood – so communities can come together...and take control over the look and feel of new developments in their area**”* *The Sun (!) Oct 2010*
- *“When people know that they will get proper support to cope with the demands of new development; **when they have a proper say over what new homes will look like; and when they can influence where those homes go, they have reasons to say “yes” to growth.**”* Greg Clark – Minister for Decentralisation (Nov. 2010)

*my emphasis*

# Neighbourhood Planning 1

- Neighbourhood Plans
- Neighbourhood Development Orders
- Community Right to Build Orders

*I will focus on NP's, but the approach may also be applicable to others*

*Challenge – people may want to use the process to stop, rather than to improve the appearance and functioning of development.*

# Neighbourhood Planning 2

## The NP process;

- 1 Agreeing the neighbourhood
- 2 Consult
- 3 Preparing the plan
- 4 Independent check
- 5 Community referendum
- 6 Neighbourhood Plan is made

# Stages for an NP

- 1 Create an NP Group**
- 2 Agree area & issues**
- 3 What's in/What's out?**
- 4 Make the Plan**





# Neighbourhood Planning 3

## An NP is a Real Planning Document

- Carries legal weight
- Planning applications assessed against them
- Appeals determined against them

# Neighbourhood Planning 4

## And so...

- In April 2012 the Localism Act came into force and communities became able to prepare Neighbourhood Plans
- The National Planning Policy Framework (**NPPF**) has been in place since March 2012
- Following over 200 “Frontrunner” groups there are **now around 550 NP’s** being considered or prepared.

# A Vision

**A recent LGC, PAS and Solace briefing note states;**

*“Think about the appetite in your communities for getting involved in planning. The opportunity here is for **empowerment and revitalisation** of neighbourhoods through plans that genuinely reflect local issues....This is an opportunity for an **improved relationship with local communities** that may feel more involved in the future of their area through the council’s support”.*

# NPPF Advice

## on Neighbourhood Plans...

49. Neighbourhood plans give communities **direct power** to plan the areas in which they live.

50. This provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they **get the right types of development** for their community.

51. Neighbourhood plans will be able to **shape and direct development** in their area, **subject to** the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

# Tensions and Barriers

IT'S EASIER IF WE ALL PULL TOGETHER



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# Tensions and Barriers 1

*Technocracy - "Government by technicians, engineers & planners"*

Planners/Planning Aid do we bring Our System to their processes and impose technocracy?

Yes, I know that NP's ultimately need to be sound, in conformity etc.

People need a bottom up approach not the evidence base requirement that strangled LDF's.

A learning process/opportunity for Planners

# Tensions and Barriers 2

Turf wars – not just restricted to City ‘Hoods - *"a bitter struggle for territory, power, control, or rights"*

In rural areas, which have seen multiple regeneration programmes over the years, is there competition for influence and funding between voluntary sector and community organisations and councils?

# Tensions and Barriers 3

*It takes two to Tango or two to make an argument?*

Does a two tier system have an impact?

Are the Counties remote from NP's (even though transport, education and land ownership make them essential participants)?

NB amount of NPs in Cheshire West – 17



# Tensions and Barriers 4

A Right Pickle(s) - “*Eric Pickles* is famous as the *divisive* leader”

Do party politics affect take up? – if the LPA does not promote and enable NP’s do communities take options up e.g. contrast Derbyshire & Notts. with East Staffs and Cheshire West.

# Tensions and Barriers 5

*Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth – JFK*

However, NP's need to conform with the NPPF and the Local Plan

If is difficult to make progress with NP's unless there is an up to date local plan – (ESBC & SBC).

# Tensions and Barriers 6

*“The capacity of human beings to bore each other seems to be vastly greater than that of other animals”* H L Mancken – satirist

The limits of capacity for NP's

- of communities, PC's and Forums
- of local planning authorities
- of consultees

# Opportunities 1

## Funding

*“Cause I don't care too much for money” (L&M)*

- Frontrunner funding
- Neighbourhood Planning Fund
- Enhanced Community Infrastructure Levy
- A Platform to engage in S106 Agreements
- New homes bonus

# Opportunities 2

## Help is at hand

“Help me if you can, I’m feeling down...”

There is a lot of help out there

- CLG
- PAS
- Locality/Planning Aid

# Opportunities 3

## Working together

*“Come together right now” Lennon & McCartney*

- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Bring people and new partners together
- Involve businesses and developers

# Opportunities 4

## Seeing a bigger picture

The NP process will identify non-planning issues - community support could create opportunities for

- Lottery, (Big Local, HLF & Big Lottery)
- Other local authority programmes
- EC Funds (ERDP & LEADER)
- Charitable trusts
- Local business involvement and sponsorship

# Conclusions

Neighbourhood Planning and Neighbourhood Plans are a good thing.

Be aware of the tensions and barriers, and work out ways to address these in order to exploit the undoubted opportunities that are present.

Planning/planners to see the merits of simplicity



# A reminder of what not to do

To avoid this situation



“Excellent! So that’s all agreed, then! All we need do now is draft the consultation document.”

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**Thank you**