# Your place, your plan

Town & Country Planning Association

tcpa

The co-operative

grabs
green and blue space adaptation for urban areas and eco towns

## *'Who is this leaflet for?'*

It's for anyone who wants to get involved in the new planning system. You might be part of a community group, a business, a local councillor or an individual.

## *'Why care about planning?'*

If you care about where you live, you should care about planning. **Planning is simply about where stuff goes.** It's about stopping the wrong things being built in the wrong places and making sure the right things are built in the right places.

**Houses, shops, markets, parks, community centres, energy plants – they all need planning to get them off the ground.**

Planning has been with us for generations, but even though it is important it can seem, well, a little dull. But the Government has just shaken up the planning system and wants to hand more power to local people through new 'Neighbourhood Plans'. Planning is about to get interesting.

**If you want a say in your community's future, you need to get to grips with what planning can do for you and your neighbourhood.**

This leaflet aims to get rid of some of the myths about planning... And to give you the confidence to get started.

There are many places to go for more detailed advice, and some of these are listed on pages 10 and 11.

## *Does planning have to be off-putting?'*

All the jargon around planning can be a real turn-off. It can make you feel like you're working with flat-pack furniture instructions... in Icelandic. **Don't let it put you off. You don't need to learn a new language.** At its heart, planning is about colouring in maps to create a picture of your future – but these maps have real legal force.

## *'How much legal power does planning have?'*

Your local councillors approve or reject planning applications at a planning committee. Councillors are local people, just like you. They are elected to represent you and your neighbourhood.

But they must base their decision on the bigger picture within your Local Plan – otherwise they are acting illegally. Planning lays down a strong vision for what your town or village will look like for many decades to come.

## *'Why can't I just wait until I hear about a planning application?'*

Because when a notice appears on a lamp-post it may already be too late for you to have a big influence.

The real power behind planning is the Local Plan – and local people now have much stronger rights to help create that Plan. If you get the right plan for your area, you can help to steer development to where it is needed and stop bad planning applications being made in the first place.

## ‘So what’s different about Neighbourhood Plans?’

There has always been informal community planning – you may have been involved in making a Parish Plan, for example.

But it’s all been a bit patchy. Good local councils have helped people to draw up Local Plans. Others have created their Local Plans with very little input from local people, and their Plans are not always easy to understand. Now people can draw up Neighbourhood Plans for their local area, and these Plans will be part of the Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans will have a proper legal status.

## ‘So I’m half-interested. Go ahead, inspire me...’

Let’s say you want more green open space or space for local food production. Maybe you want to tackle a local flooding problem. A Neighbourhood Plan can help to bring the right people together to get the things you want, like space for new allotments.

Maybe you want safer routes for kids and need a way of planning some new cycle routes. Maybe your community wants to reap the benefits of local renewable energy production – if so, community planning can help work out the best place to locate your new community business.

Maybe you want it all... in which case community planning can help to get your vision organised to make the most of what you have. You’ll still have to get the money to make it happen, but you’re more likely to get it if you have a vision which makes sense and which your community supports.

## ‘So can we put anything in a Neighbourhood Plan?’

Almost anything that uses land and needs planning permission can go into a Neighbourhood Plan.

There are a few exceptions that the Government has a separate system for – mainly major national projects. Your Neighbourhood Plan also has to be broadly in line with your council’s other priorities.

In law, planning has to make sure that we don’t stop our children from having good health and a decent quality of life in the future. In planning-speak this is called sustainable development.

So Neighbourhood Plans are about everyone’s lives now and in the future, and not just those who can make money out of land.

## ‘What does a Neighbourhood Plan look like?’

There’s no mystery – they are simply a few pieces of paper containing maps and lists. They include practical things that will make a difference to people’s lives in the future, like:

- new pedestrian walkways;
- affordable housing for young people;
- a new shopping area;
- the site of a new school;
- a new park or play area;
- where new allotments go;
- wildlife and landscape areas.

## *'So how do I get involved?'*

There are two ways – and you can do both or just one.

The *first* way is more traditional – to work with your local council on their Local Plan (called a Local Development Framework, or LDF, in planning-speak). You have a legal right to do this.

- *The 'pros':* The Local Plan deals with all the planning issues across a whole council area rather than just a small patch of it. So it's where the big decisions are made every three years or so on housing, roads and waste, for example.
- *The 'cons':* It can be a formal process. You will have to read the council's draft Plan. Every Local Plan has a public inquiry. If you disagree with the council's Plan or want to add your own ideas, you will need to make your points 'in writing', and you have a right to appear at the public inquiry held to discuss the Plan.

The *second* way is what this leaflet is all about – neighbourhood planning. The Government's Localism Bill will create new powers for local people to create their own Neighbourhood Plans. These Plans will become part of your council's Local Plan and will have legal force.

## *'Who's in charge of getting local people to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan?'*

It depends where you live. If you have a Parish or Town Council, they act as your local representatives and are responsible for preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.

In larger towns or cities without a Parish Council, the Government wants to create new Neighbourhood Forums of local people.

## ‘How can I kick-start a Neighbourhood Plan?’

Find out what is going on in your area. It may be that no-one has started a Neighbourhood Plan. It’s possible that no-one has even heard of it.

Or you might find that your Parish Council or a local community group are already busy with a Neighbourhood Plan. If so, get involved.

Ring or e-mail your local council. Start by contacting your local councillor. You can also ask to speak to the planning officer who covers your local area. Both the councillor and planner will be able to help you.

Depending on where you live, you might have up to three councils: parish; district or borough; and city or county. They all have some involvement in planning. It may take a bit of effort to find the right person to help you, but it will be worth it.

## ‘Is it going to cost me anything?’

Creating a Neighbourhood Plan will take up some of your time and might cost the Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum some cash. Although making a Neighbourhood Plan involves getting over a few hurdles, you can get advice from your local council. If you think it’s not for you, then get people involved in something less formal like a statement setting out your vision, which can still really communicate community ideas about your future.

# Tips for drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan

## *Talk to your council*

**They have a duty to help local people draw up a Neighbourhood Plan and advise you on any legal or environmental issues. That's what they are there for. And they may have some money to help you cover costs too.**

## *Include everyone*

**For every local person who will happily give you their opinion (whether you asked for it or not) there are a hundred who won't. Special efforts may be needed to get the views of young people, ethnic minorities or the elderly.**

## *Be open and honest*

**Tell people how *important* the Plan is, but also tell them what it *can't* do. Make sure anyone involved in the Plan is upfront if they might benefit from it personally.**

## *Work in partnership*

**Draw up a list of groups and people you need to work with you. Think about including local councillors, schools, community groups, business leaders, and the local media.**

## *Use your local knowledge and common sense*

**The whole point of Neighbourhood Plans is that they are put together by people who know a place well and care about it. So if you're looking at a site for a new GP surgery *you'll* know whether it's near a bus route, for example. It can be that simple.**

## Look to the future

**The best places to live are those where decades ago people planned for the future. Imagine how people in your area might live fifty years from now, and what they would like you to preserve.**

## Consider climate change

**How can your Plan help to prevent climate change? For example, can it include renewable energy? And think about what to do about the *effects* of climate change too – such as how more parks or gardens could help to reduce the risk of flooding.**

## Be positive

**At some point Victor Meldrew or one of his grumpy chums might appear. Community action can attract negativity from residents, councils or property developers. Challenge them to get involved and come up with a better idea.**

## Be realistic

**Your Neighbourhood Plan needs to be drawn up using your council's Local Plan as a guide. Again, your local councillor and planner can help you with this.**

## Forget the jargon

**There's no need to swallow a planning manual. Your Neighbourhood Plan simply needs to be easy to read and have clear objectives.**

## Have fun

**If you can keep everyone enthusiastic and on-track, you'll end up with a Plan that everyone can understand and be proud of.**

# Further information

**You can get more detailed information about planning from these organisations (a large-print version of this leaflet is available online at http://www.tcpa.org.uk):**

**Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)**
**http://www.acre.org.uk/**
- Organisation helping rural communities to participate in and contribute to the well-being of their local area through community- led planning.

**Action for Market Towns (AMT)**
**http://towns.org.uk/2010/06/17/amt-town-action-planning/**
- Membership group offering small towns, local authorities and others information, best practice advice, and national representation. Its *Town Action Planning* handbook provides a step-by-step guide to making a community-led plan for a small town.

**APaNGO (Advocacy, Participation and NGOs in Planning) project**
**http://www.apango.eu/**
- One of the first of the European Commission's action research projects on constructive community engagement in planning and development, aiming to help deliver better outcomes.

**Barrier Busting**
**http://barrierbusting.communities.gov.uk/**
- Government website designed to help local people who are trying to achieve things in their area but are frustrated by bureaucracy, regulations or a lack of information.

**Big Society Network**
**http://thebigsociety.co.uk/**
- National network aiming to develop and showcase new ideas to help people create projects in their neighbourhoods.

**BioRegional**
**http://www.bioregional.com/**
- Entrepreneurial charity which initiates and delivers practical solutions designed to help us to live using only a fair share of the Earth's resources.

**Building a Picture of Community Cohesion**
**http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/**
- Guide for local councils and their partners, setting out indicators that can be used to help build community cohesion.

**Civic Voice**
**http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/**
- National charity for the civic movement in England. Aims to make places more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive and to promote civic pride.

**Community Development Exchange**
**http://www.cdx.org.uk/**
- Organisation working to influence policy and develop the skills of those working with communities by acting as an information exchange and as a voice for community development.

**Community Matters**
**http://www.communitymatters.org.uk**
- Charitable federation for community associations offering publications on setting up and running community organisations and buildings.

**Community Planning**
**http://www.communityplanning.net/**
- Website providing easily accessible 'how to' guidance on community planning and best practice.

**Department for Communities and Local Government**
**http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/**
- Government department, providing the latest information about policy and programmes for planning, building and the environment.

**Development Trusts Association**
**http://www.dta.org.uk**
- Network of community enterprise practitioners, offering help to people setting up development trusts and helping existing trusts to learn from each other.

**DirectGov**
**http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm**
- Government website for citizens offering information on public services.

**Energy for All**
**http://www.energy4all.co.uk/**
- Organisation with expertise in community-owned (co-operative) renewable energy schemes, working primarily with community groups and landowners.

**Environment Agency**
**http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/**
- Government agency set up to protect and improve the environment.

**Ethical Property Foundation**
**http://www.ethicalproperty.org.uk**
- Organisation offering independent, ethical advice and training to help charities and voluntary groups to rent, buy, let or manage their property.

**Friends of the Earth**
**http://www.foe.co.uk**
- Environmental organisation with a network of campaigning local groups, working in over 220 communities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**The Glass-House Community Led Design**
**http://www.theglasshouse.org.uk**
- National charity working to empower communities through the design and regeneration process, to help them make better buildings and neighbourhoods.

**GRaBS (Green and Blue Space Adaptation for Urban Areas and Eco Towns) project**
**http://www.grabs-eu.org/**
- European Commission project and a network of leading organisations working to exchange knowledge and experience and promote best practice on how to integrate climate change adaptation into planning and development.

**London Sustainability Exchange**
**http://www.lsx.org.uk/resources/HCA_tool_page3248.aspx**
- Charity offering a tool for designing and delivering projects that improve quality of life in London.

**Planning Aid**
**http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid/**
- An independent source of professional advice and information available to those who cannot afford to pay professional fees. Its volunteer planners can help groups to get involved in the planning of an area and to prepare their own plans.

**Planning Aid for London**
**http://www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk/**
- Charity offering free or affordable independent town planning advice to anyone in the Greater London region. Its staff and volunteer planners can help with community visioning exercises and can provide advice on consultation strategies.

**Planning for Real**
**http://www.planningforreal.org.uk/**
- Community planning model, using interactive, hands-on tools and techniques, that helps people to shape the places in which they live. Planning for Real® is part of the Accord Group.

**Shelter**
**http://shelter.org.uk/Homeless-Charity**
- National charity working to alleviate distress caused by homelessness and bad housing.

**Sustain**
**http://www.sustainweb.org/**
- Alliance for better food and farming, advocating food and agriculture policies and practices to enhance health and welfare, improve the environment, enrich society and culture, and promote equity.

**Sustainable Development Commission *The Future is Local* report**
**http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/the-future-is-local.html**
- Report on an integrated, area-based approach to retrofitting buildings and upgrading community infrastructure.

***Your Place, Your Plan***
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## The TCPA

The Town and Country Planning Association is an independent charity working to improve the art and science of town and country planning. The TCPA puts social justice and the environment at the heart of policy debate and inspires government, industry and campaigners to take a fresh perspective on major issues, including planning policy, housing, regeneration and climate change.

The TCPA's objectives are:

- To secure a decent, well designed home for everyone, in a human-scale environment combining the best features of town and country.
- To empower people and communities to influence decisions that affect them.
- To improve the planning system in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.