

GROUP A

How can Councillors and Councils assist citizens to take advantage of the planning provisions of the new Localism Bill?

- By influencing primary legislation (e.g. 'The Cambridge Amendment').
- By holding local information briefings on the Localism Bill/ Neighbourhood Plans.
- By concentrating on the Local Plan first and to encourage the community to include ideas at this stage - rather than creating Neighbourhood Plans.
- By providing open public access to the full 'evidence base' for the Local Plan.
- By consulting on and establishing a "Community Assets List".
- By providing a Neighbourhood Planning Officer in the Planning Department.
- By advocating the formation of community groups (e.g. 'Friends Of..' groups for open spaces, churchyards etc.).
- By ensuring engagement with more than the usual suspects and vested interests.
- By "building capacity" within the community.

Post-it Contributions

Cluster1

- Information about the Act – What a Neighbourhood Plan can and cannot do. Do you need one?
- Hold public meetings on developing the new Local Plan or creating a new Neighbourhood Plan.
- Take close soundings of each Parish Council with a view to incorporating potential Neighbourhood Plan provision in the Local Plan review.
- Encourage input to the Local Plan review.

Cluster 2

- Encourage full and open access to evidence base for Local Plan.
- Help with evidence base.
- Make over all our evidence base on for example village services/facilities available to all.
- Have a Neighbourhood Planning Officer position in the Planning Department.

Cluster 3

- Help draw-up Asset List – draw together disparate ideas of content.
- Facilitate list of assets by contacting community groups and creating an on-line list/portal.
- Consult regarding evidence base for community assets e.g. Pubs.
- Advocate forming a 'Friends of....' group for all open spaces.

- Protect Community Groups from vested interests – ‘watchdog’ role.

Cluster 4

- Make a pre-application ‘Statement of Community Involvement’ mandatory.
- Promoting the ‘Cambridge Amendment’ via national contacts.
- **Try and explore getting things about diversity of shopping into the Local Plan.**

GROUP B

How can Cambridge citizens take advantage of the planning provisions of the new Localism Bill?

Key points

1. Opportunity to help shape the quality and form of new developments
2. Focus for defining neighbourhoods and a vision for them
3. Different sectors of the community working together to shape the needs of the community; building effective alliances
4. Taking responsibility for running community assets and facilities including open spaces

Other points made

- If it works could see wider groupings of business and NGO's building alliances so more effective than before
- Opportunity to be proactive in planning and agreeing local needs and priorities
- Identify with a location, or against
- Provides a clear focus for the work of residents associations, establishing one if none exists
- Use localism to protect space by identifying areas where development is most appropriate
- Improve community spirit
- Enthuse a group with defined objectives
- Alternative not-for-profit businesses – social and community enterprises and voluntary organisations to co-operate
- Community development models – grass roots upwards planning, peer relationships, natural leaders, enabling and facilitation

What do you see are the obstacles and challenges?

Key points

1. Money, skills and time to prepare the plan; willingness and capabilities of volunteers
2. Lack of detail and confusion on what it really means – need greater information and understanding

3. How will it fit in with other aspects of the planning system – Local Plans, strategic planning, proposed National Planning Framework, etc?
4. Knowing what you are signing up to

Other points made

- Parish councillors and others will need training. Capacity issues
- Need to come up with a viable plan
- People won't bother/apathy
- People more interested in their own homes, rather than wider neighbourhood issues like demand for community space
- Getting over nimbyism/polarised views/activists
- Defining local neighbourhood areas so there are no forgotten areas
- Localism Bill does not deal with issues people are really concerned about e.g. transport, bin collections and dog mess
- Will there be 'one voice' in the neighbourhood (whatever that is)? Raises expectations
- May drown in paperwork
- Getting it built

What information, help and support will you need?

Key points

1. Clear succinct guidance on what is possible. Templates/standards for communities to use
2. Clear understanding on what is in the Local Plan/LDF, and synchronising with this
3. What comes first – Local Plan to provide framework or start with the neighbourhood plan? Bottom up or top down
4. Training, access to advice and facilitators
5. Sharing best practice
6. How do you define a neighbourhood?

Other points made

- Local authorities will need to work more effectively in an inter-disciplinary way
- Access to advice from planners on preparing the plan, together with a clear timetable
- Timetable of interactions between national, local and community plans
- More resources – money, time, people
- Example of sharing best practice: neighbourhood blog (Google 'thecovergroupblog.com')

GROUP D

How can Cambridge citizens take advantage of the planning provisions of the new Localism Bill ?

There was a heavy dose of skepticism in the group on what might be in the eventual Localism Act and whether it would make much real difference to planners.

THREE MAIN POINTS

- Potentially the opportunity for citizens to get together to push for low carbon developments e.g. group use of PVs. Also local power and internet.
- It might be possible to influence standards of design in new developments.
- The opportunity to buy community assets.

All Individual Points

- The right to be consulted by developers at an early stage.
- *It might be possible to use it to protect green spaces (though that sounds doubtful)*
- Opportunity to challenge /influence development plans
- *A more powerful voice in the planning process*
- Another route to talk to/influence local council – especially for special interest groups
- *Regenerate local services –schools, shops*
- Let local people decide what they want in return for development e.g. shopping, spots etc facilities
- *Not convinced there will be opportunities greater than those already available – always lots of routes to consult/influence*
- We are skeptical the bill will make any difference
- *Developments within the city that are ongoing can be monitored by local organizations and protests made*
- Some (but not much) say on the future shape of your neighbourhood
- *Influence /prompt debate on definition of “affordable housing” in new developments.*
- Protect independent trading
- *Too early to tell – expect more significant compromises in the bill*
- Cambridge city hasn't much scope for local schemes because the Local Plan is comprehensive – main function of local neighbourhoods is to monitor planning applications
- *Raising finance is difficult without relying on business*

What do you see as obstacles and challenges ?

THREE MAIN POINTS

- Planners will not evolve to be the community facilitators needed to make this work.
- Shortage of resources and finance
- Organization of community members depends on voluntary effort - people have limited time and energy so danger of unrepresentative groups dominating forums.

All Individual Points

- Bureaucratic and technical
- *Lack of resources- less community development staff, less funding in the third sector- therefore insufficient support for Neighbourhood plans*
- The need to overcome the planning process to achieve satisfactory outcomes
- *The planning system (and planners) is all about process and not outcomes – this won't change*
- Expensive
- *Neighbourhood Forums might not be representative/in-tune with wider public, esp. if not democratic. Could be hijacked by niche interests*
- Very difficult to secure evidence of local consensus (or even interest)
- *Finance*
- It is not the way to build communities – not organic but mechanistic
- *It will produce wars between different groups/communities*
- Members of existing interest groups may dominate and be unrepresentative of the majority (e.g. faith groups)
- *Getting people in the community involved*
- Good way to destroy communities
- *Help and support comes from councilors representatives and Area Committees but their influence over Local Govt decisions is fairly minimal*

What information, help and support will you need?

THREE MAIN POINTS

- Planners seeing their role as involvement in community development.
- Resources and finance from Central Govt
- Technical support for establishment of neighbourhood forums

All Individual Points

- Money
- *Money*
- Community Development staff
- *Technical expertise*
- Technical expertise
- *The willingness of planners to evolve*
- The willingness of central government to take some responsibility

- *Help in how to organize*
- Information distribution. Search for potential organizers. Harness local expertise.
- *Time*
- Help in presenting neighbourhood plans for examination
- *Local consensus*
- Help in developing arcane planning documents
- *Read G K Chesterton's "The Napoleon of Notting Hill"*

GROUP E

How can we take advantage of localism bill?

- Influence design
- Plan for additional development and limit inappropriate development
- Identify and preserve community assets and facilities e.g. even trees and open spaces
- Identify key issues that community prioritise and value
- Improve community relations/ inclusivity – engender a sense of community
- Encourage self-reliance and self-containment
- Improve identity with the place live in – a sense of ownership and pride
- Raise awareness of the future – more long term planning
- Create more efficient planning process through earlier involvement with the community

Obstacles and challenges

- Community have limited expertise in planning - ignorance of processes and the planning contexts
- Planning legislation is unclear and complex
- Government agenda is pro-development and growth so will be difficult for the community to change this mind set
- There is a suspicion that there may be a presumption in favour of building on the green belt
- It is easier to object to development than be proactive
- Localism agenda is essentially empty rhetoric and paying lip service to community needs – this is the concern that it might end up being so
- There are a number of vested interests – well-resourced actors who know how to work the planning system and can do defensive manoeuvres to get their way (eg Tesco's, land owners)
- Leadership fatigue will occur as well as apathy on part of participants especially those with limited time to be involved in community initiatives
- Financial constraints will limit what can be achieved

- Building a consensus among the community will be difficult to achieve and overcome different factions

How can we turn this into a positive – the help and support we need?

- Need to define our neighbourhoods and work at the appropriate scale
- Visits to other communities to create mutual learning – learning by doing/seeing
- Often rural parishes have worked effectively before as a community so urban neighbourhoods can learn from their experiences – galvanising action
- Need free professional advice and a tool kit with information and best practice examples etc
- Need financial resources – make money available “put your money where your mouth is, Cameron”
- Need appropriate tools to engage people – e.g. not every one has access to the internet so need to print out material too
- Establish and make accessible interest-group expertise (eg cycling campaign)
- Need a database of all the relevant community groups
- Need facilitators and local champions to help disenfranchised segments of the community become involved e.g. poor, sick old
- Schools could become the focus for community action – also educating the next generation to take on this cause and have roots and interests in the community
- Need to get the whole community to be proactive, with thinking and discussions happening in advance of plan making
- The community plan needs to be realistic and capture every ones views appropriately
- It is not to raise expectations but fulfil its promises with concrete change on the ground

GROUP F

How can Cambridge(shire) citizens take advantage of the planning provisions of the new Localism Bill?

Cluster 1(Supported by all)

- Get involved in the review of the Cambridge Local Plan or the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework.

- How will Local Planning Authorities engage with people at local level in the preparation of the strategic local plan?
- How can we input into the review of the Local Plan?

Cluster 2 (Supported by all)

- Get more involved in local planning issues.
- Become familiar with the provisions in the plans produced by local councils.
- Need for local authorities in partnership with other organisations to disseminate information more effectively to aid local people to become familiar with planning provisions.
- What tools and techniques can be used to encourage more people to get engaged in the planning process?

Cluster 3 (Supported by all)

- There are serious concerns and scepticism that the Localism Bill will not deliver on local expectations.
- Concern about the Government's presumption towards (any) development.

What do you see as the obstacles and challenges?

Cluster 1 (General support)

- How to engage people with the new complexity.
- To engage people and get enough people involved.
- People are not interested.
- Will people bother with the changes in the planning regime any more than with the current system?
- Lack of concern until people wake up – too late!
- The lack of a community's right to appeal against a development is an obstacle to people getting involved.
- A 'loaded' piece of legislation which will be exploited by well resourced developers and with no right of appeal available to local people.
- Non-acceptance of the new system.
- Understanding the limitations of 'Localism' but being creative enough to work effectively within these limitations.

Cluster 2 (General support)

- The amount of effort required.
- Cost and effort required.
- Apathy.
- Complexity – time and financial resources needed is huge.
- Resources: time, commitment, cost, effort.
- No Internet access for many.

- Doubts about the sufficiency of the resources that a Local planning Authority will have (make) available to support neighbourhood level planning initiatives.
- Producing neighbourhood plans!
- Raising finance within the (residential) community.
- Lack of clarity on a local authority's practical help in plan preparation.
- The likely inequality in take-up between the 'rich' and 'poor' neighbourhoods.

Cluster 3 (General acceptance)

- The current administrative boundaries of the City and South Cambs. – could make it difficult in reality to prepare a neighbourhood plan.
- What happens if a 'neighbourhood' crosses multiple councils?
- What is a 'neighbourhood' – a line on a plan?
- Geography and meaningful boundaries.

What information, help and support will you need?

Cluster 1 (All supported need for Plain English)

- Documentation such as ; 'how to guides', the evidence base and neighbourhood plans should be written in plain English and made available in mother tongue languages appropriate to a locality.

Cluster 2 (General acceptance)

- Expertise needs to be shared across Parish Council boundaries with help from South Cambs. Council.
- Pro bono planning advisory services need to be available.
- Need for a people's planning forum as in Bristol.
- Realisation by neighbourhood fora that 'the wheel does not need to be re-invented' and that it is important at the outset to look for examples of relevant practise and expertise from elsewhere.
- Resources; money and training.