Neighbourhood Planning in England: Roots, Development and Potential

Nick Gallent

University College London

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Themes

1. Roots / drivers
2. The localism narrative
3. The neighbourhood / community planning narrative
4. Key features of 'Coalition Localism'
5. Key features of Neighbourhood Planning
6. Examples

1a. Roots / drivers: a changing society

- 'Detraditionalisation'
- Globalisation – the diffusion of ideas / cultures
- Social pluralism / individualism
- Questions of trust / allegiance

- Lead to questions of *governmentality*

1b. Roots / drivers: critiquing the 'system'

- Social problems as 'wicked problems'
- Social complexity
- Contested ideas of the 'public good'

- Leads to questions of scale and legitimacy

1c. Roots / drivers: crisis of legitimacy

- Crisis of representative democracy
- Crisis of scale and distance (of government, decision takers, regional planning etc)
- The 'democratic deficit'

1d. Roots / drivers - communitarianism

- The space between neo-liberalism and public intervention

- Community life as a producer of 'social goods'

- Production dependent on the store of social capital, and hence community capacity

1. Roots / drivers

Social change combines with critiques of top-down intervention in 'the system', and questions of legitimacy, to deliver *some* acceptance that *some* problems need local resolution;

Embrace communitarianism as route to resolution?

But it's an acceptance framed by hierarchical power, as government seeks to address the 'strategic dilemmas integral to governing'

2. The localism narrative

- Localism not invented by Eric Pickles
- Continuation of a theme and a trend
- **Social pluralism + rejection of systems approach + crisis of legitimacy + embracing of communitarianism = localism (in various guises)**
- Several episodes of 'normative' localism in England (framed extraction of 'social goods'?)

2. The localism narrative
Affecting public services

- <u>1990s</u>: 'local choice'
- <u>2000s</u>: 'community leadership' – and complexities of LSPs and community strategies
- <u>2010s</u>: 'control shift', localism and neighbourhood planning: new powers and responsibilities and...

…**'institutionalising' community-based planning**

3. Neighbourhood / Community Planning Narrative

3 episodes leading to that 'institutionalisation' (Parker, 2014):

1. Communities engaged in 'evidence gathering'
2. Communities encouraged to draw up 'informal' plans;
3. Communities (Neighbourhoods) encouraged to produce 'formal' plans.

3. N / CP Narrative: Evidence Gathering

- Parker (2014) says this began in 1995, spurred on by Rural White Paper of that year;

- Rural communities encouraged to conduct 'village appraisals' and analyse using dedicated appraisal software;

- Armed with evidence, volunteers encouraged to highlight service / planning challenges and lobby

3. N / CP Narrative: Evidence Gathering

- In fact, evidence gathering started in 1970s;
- A toolkit was pioneered in Gloucestershire (GLOSCAT);
- Lots of different evidence, from traffic to housing surveys, to service level assessments etc;
- They were community 'health checks', which highlighted a systematic gap in the understanding of village / neighbourhood needs

3. N / CP Narrative: Informal plans

- Could the evidence from 'appraisals' be 'tamed' and made useful for local planning?

- This was the aspiration of the 2000 Rural White Paper;

- Funding established for drawing up 'Parish Plans' from 2001; up to £5000 per parish group;

- Mixed bag of plans: some general in scope, some design focused (VDS)

3. N / CP Narrative: Informal plans

- A decade of 'parish planning' followed;
- Mixed quality plans;
- Mixed reception from local authorities;
- Rarely adopted as parts of local plans (VDS fared better);
- Too much 'ultra vires' content; meaning that formal 'adoption' not possible;
- But a potential was demonstrated.

3. N / CP Narrative: Informal plans

- The issue of *how to extract usable local data* from the plans became critical;

- Two schools of thought emerged:

1. They represent the hopes / aspirations of a community. They have intrinsic value and are a conduit for community energies. Leave them as they are and connect them to Community Strategies;

2. Formalise them, strip out the 'white noise', and connect them to local plans.

3. N / CP Narrative: Formal plans

- Parish plans had been most popular in the Tory heartlands of SE England;

- A real enthusiasm there for the plans to have direct planning impact;

- 'School of Thought' 2 won the day;

- Emergence of regularised '**Neighbourhood Development Plans**' (NDPs) as institutionalised (and framed) Community-based plans

4. Key Features of Localism

- 2010-2015 'Localism' comprises raft of measures, of which NDPs are one;

- Localisation of planning through RSS revocation;

- Return of power to 'town halls', largely through RSS revocation;

- Array of 'Community Rights' (**+NDOs**);

- Getting the planners 'off our backs', by extending permitted development rights

- **NDPs;**

4. Key Features of Localism
Dismantle regional machinery

	1998/9 — 2004	2004 — 2010	2010 — 2015
National	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (until May 2006)	Department for Communities and local Government	Department for Communities and local Government
	National Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs)	Gradually Planning Policy Statements (PPS) replaced Planning Policy Guidance(PPG)	National Planning Policy Framework 2012
Regional	Government Offices RDAs / RAs	Government Offices RDAs / RAs	Nil - after 2012
	REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE	REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIES	
County	County Councils	Nil	Nil
	STRUCTURE PLANS		
Local	Local Planning Authorities	Local Planning Authorities	Local Planning Authorities
	DEVELOPMENT PLANS	LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS	LOCAL PLANS
Parish / Community	Parish / Community Councils	Parish / Community Councils	Parish / Community Councils
	VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS / PARISH APPRAISALS / PARISH PLANS	VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS / PARISH APPRAISALS / PARISH PLANS	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS & ORDERS

4. Key Features of Localism
Community Rights

- **Right to Build (Order):** Build something for the community, no planning permission needed, just demonstrate that it complies with National Policy, vote on it, and build!

- (Use a **NDO** to set out what you intend to build)

- **Right to Bid**: Define something as a community asset (e.g. a pub or piece of land) and buy it;

- **Right to Challenge**: Think you could run a service better than the current (contracted) provider – go for it!

# 4. Key Features of Neighbourhood Planning

- The various rights, orders and NDPs are the toolbox for Neighbourhood Planning;

- But what about the **NDPs** themselves?

- Government says they enable residents to:

  – decide where new homes, shops and offices will go

  – decide what new buildings look like

  – decide what facilities, services and infrastructure is needed

  – grant planning permission for new buildings through a Neighbourhood Development Order.

4. Key features of Neighbourhood Planning

- The plans themselves look / feel like local plans
- Thematic policies, often drawn up by local consultants
- Siting of homes, urban design, services, employment sites etc
- 80 full drafts have been produced (April, 2014)
- 13 passed community referenda;
- LAs have a duty to support production and Parishes / Forums can get £7000 grant...

Example 1:
Eden District Council

- Classic rural authority

- Local Plan sets settlement hierarchy of key service centres

- No development elsewhere

- Rural communities want to meet local needs for housing and services...
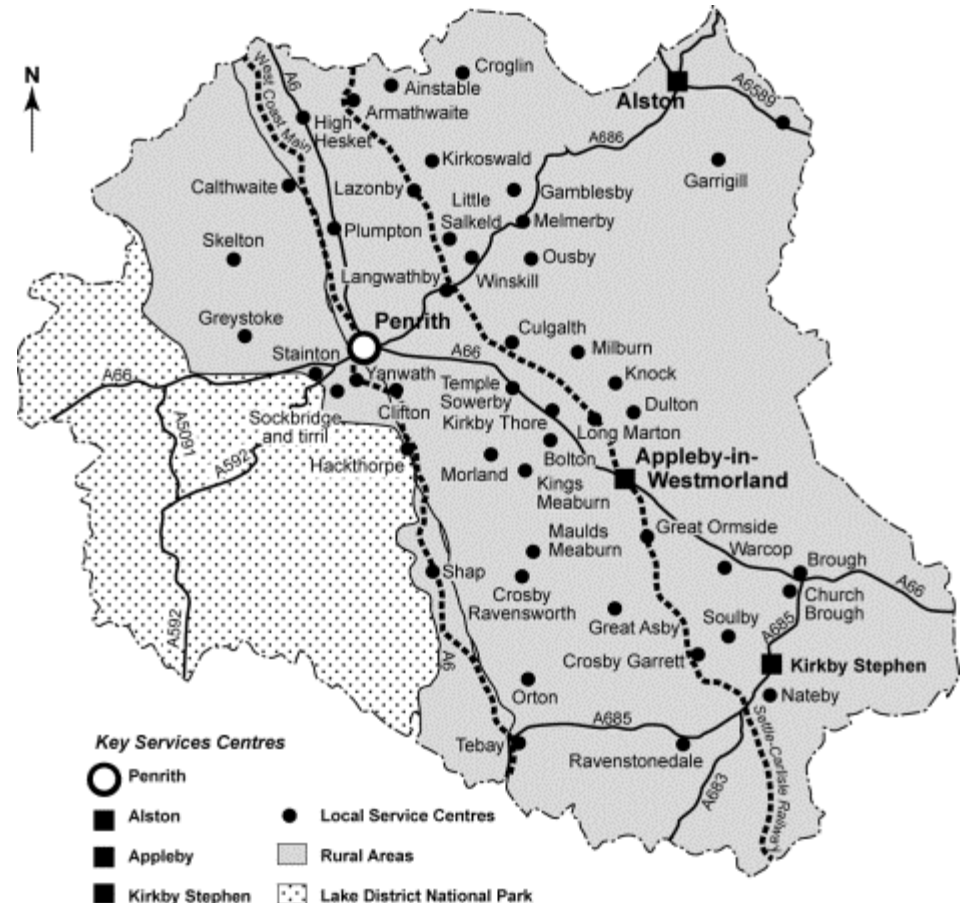
Example 1:
Upper Eden

- 'Upper Eden' is a fragment of the district comprising 17 parishes

- 'Upper Eden NDP' produced by a local consultant with steering group comprising reps from parishes

- Challenges housing constraint in / around small villages

Example 1:
Upper Eden

UPPER EDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN — 2012 2025

- Modifies several Eden District planning policies;
- Cites Taylor's 2008 'Sustainability Trap' and its adverse impacts on small rural communities;
- <u>UENDP1</u>: relaxes exceptions policy to allow single plot new builds or conversions, dropping local plan restrictions;
- <u>UENDP2</u>: allows conversion of farm buildings to residential use in support of farm incomes;
- <u>UENDP3</u>: Specifies that in named parishes, the majority of affordable should be suited to older households
- *Some potential controversy over how 'local' is defined*
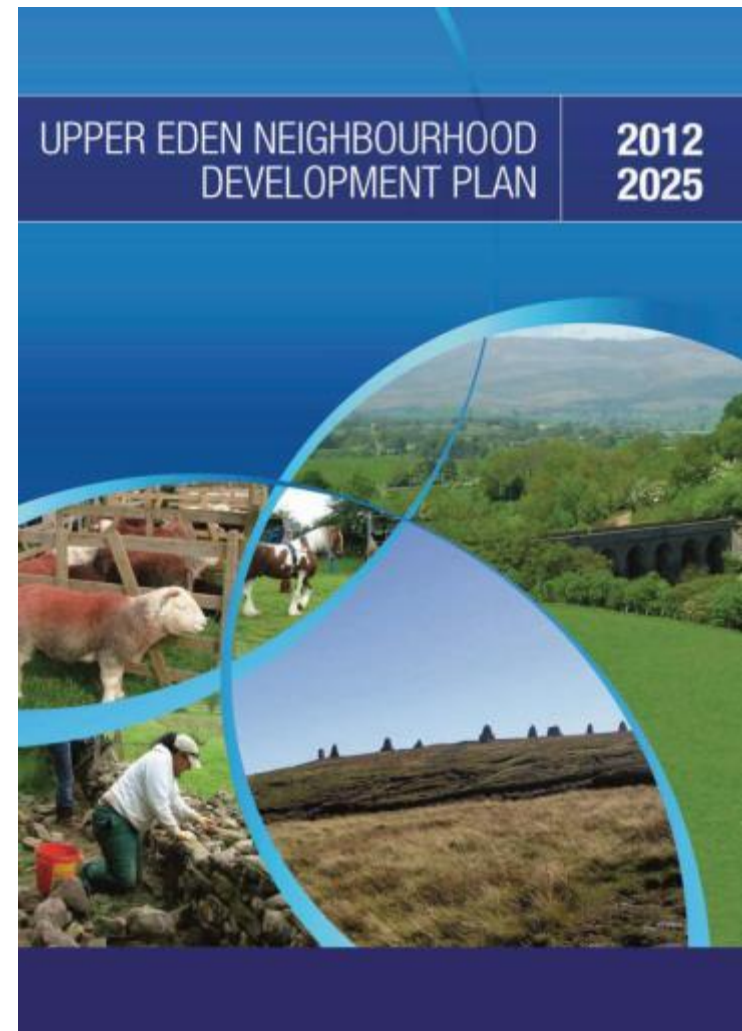
Example 2:
South Oxfordshire District Council

- District Council wanted to build 775 homes on a single site next to Thame (local plan allocation)
- Thame Town Council drew up a NDP with the help of Tibbalds;
- Went through the allocation process as a LA would;
- Suggested dispersion to 7 site + 3 reserves;
- Aimed to 'better integrate' housing

Site	Allocated housing numbers
Site C	187 homes
Site D	175 homes
Site F	203 homes
Park Meadow Cottage	12 homes
Jane Morbey Road	18 homes
Land at The Elms	45 homes
Lord Williams's Lower School Site	135 homes
Total	**775 homes**
Site F LWS Reserve	28 homes
Site F Reserve	50 homes
Site C Reserve	57 homes
Total Reserve	**135 homes**

Thame – main housing sites
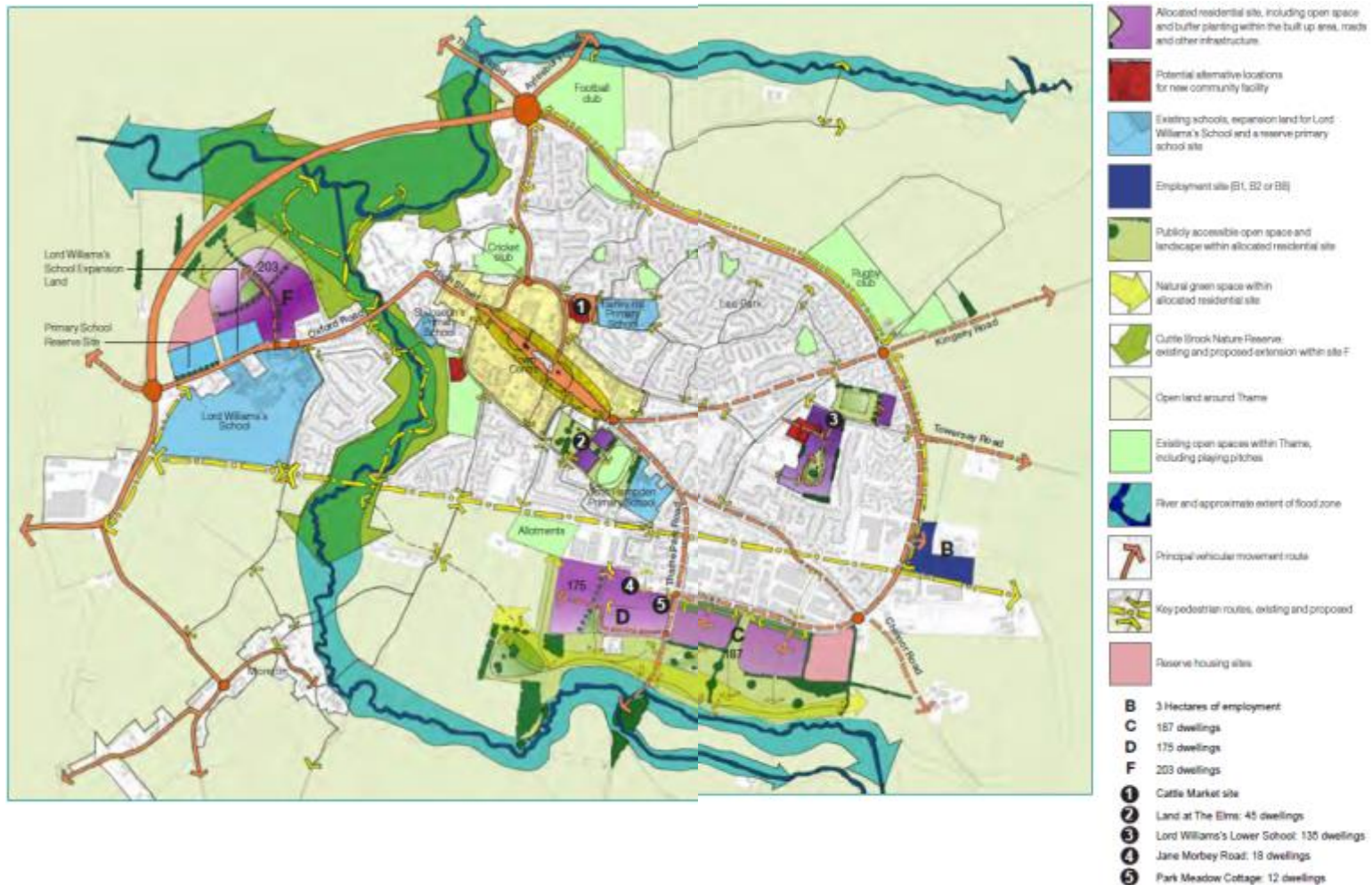
Example 2:
Thame Town Council

- Plan passed at referendum;

- Held up as an exemplar of Neighbourhood Planning;

- Community had wanted 'integration' of new housing, not the single bolt-on proposed in the Local Plan

- Got integration with 7 smaller sites

Thame Conservation Area

1. The Barn, Upper High Street
2. The Elms
3. The Poplars
4. War Memorial
5. Gallup Poll Garfield

Example 2:
Thame Town Council

- Consensus achieved, conflict gone?
- A group calling itself 'Save the Elms' has sprung it;
- 895 people have signed a petition to 'Save the Elms'
- Accuses the Council of 'slipping the site in';
- Various accusations of wrong-doing and could go to court...
- But the site was part of the plan in 2013 and got passed the local referendum...

▨	Thame Conservation Area
❶	The Barn, Upper High Street
❷	The Elms
❸	The Poplars
❹	War Memorial
❺	Gallup Poll Garfield

Concluding Remarks

- Localism as 'framed extraction of social goods'
- Social goods produced anyway...localism tries to capture and frame what's already present
- Communities have been doing a lot for themselves for years;
- Some have the capacity (the requisite 'social capital') to do a lot; some don't

Concluding Remarks

- Works really well for highly articulate communities, with good links and knowledge;

- Can accentuate disadvantage if certain kinds of communities cannot take advantage of the opportunities; and if usual public actors stand back to 'give space' to community groups;

- Also, doesn't eliminate conflict or automatically deliver consensus

- Referendum mechanism tries to deliver an outcome; still not about pleasing everyone; works with the majority view.

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