



# **STATE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING IN LONDON - 2022**



**A report from  
Neighbourhood Planners.London  
June 2022**

## OVERVIEW

Neighbourhood planning has celebrated its first ten years and the benefits are increasingly clear. It is gaining more support through the Government's planning reforms and public policy is backing community engagement in plan-making more than ever. Communities in all parts of the capital have taken the opportunity to designate neighbourhood forums and develop neighbourhood plans for their area. London is nevertheless a complex and challenging place to neighbourhood plan. Neighbourhood Planners.London is a volunteer-led initiative to support it.

This is our second review of the state of neighbourhood planning in London. It covers the period to 31 March 2022 and records change in the three years since our [State of Neighbourhood Planning in London – 2019](#) report. The overall picture is that neighbourhood planning continues to make steady progress despite the impact of the pandemic and the inability to hold referendums. London has 67 neighbourhood forums and 26 made neighbourhood plans (including Crofton Park and Honor Oak Park which went to a successful referendum on 5 May 2022). Neighbourhood plans are now firmly established as part of the day to day decision making on new development across London.

Despite this steady progress volunteer neighbourhood planners continue to face significant challenges and there are worrying trends. The total number of new forums being designated has been overtaken by the numbers lapsing and at least 15 forums have not renewed their five year term<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Mill Hill (Barnet); Hill View (Bexley); Church Row and Perrins Walk (Brent); Somers Town (Camden); West Ealing Centre (Ealing); Chatsworth Road (Hackney); Butts Farm (Hounslow); Corbett Estate (Lewisham); Bankside

Some of the most advanced neighbourhood forums, including Mill Hill and Deptford, were blocked even after producing draft plans when their five year terms came up for renewal. Wimbledon's application to establish a forum and area was refused despite 1,100 representations in support. No new forums have been designated since February 2020. Three quarters of London's planning authorities do not yet have a completed neighbourhood plan. At 64 months the average time taken between designation and referendum is growing and the two most recent plans for Queens Park and Crofton Park & Honor Oak Park have both taken nearly eight years.

Neighbourhood Planners.London has continued to publish research. Our [Designation Decisions – London's neighbourhood planning experience](#) (2021) highlighted unhelpful blockages to new forums being set up and provided more evidence of how some boroughs continue to resist neighbourhood planning. At the most basic level the number of London planning authorities with information about neighbourhood planning on their websites has improved but gaps remain. In 2016, more than one fifth of London's local planning authorities carried no information about neighbourhood planning on their websites. Today, there are still two London boroughs (Barking & Dagenham and Havering) with no online information. These are two of the nine neighbourhood planning deserts – eight boroughs and the City of London – with no designated forums. Bexley's only forum (Hill View) has lapsed and Redbridge has designated its first in South Woodford. We have also drawn attention to eleven

(Southwark); Deptford (Lewisham); Elephant and Walworth (Southwark); East Shoreditch (Hackney/Tower Hamlets); Limehouse (Tower Hamlets); Tooting Bec and Broadway (Wandsworth); Churchill Gardens Estate (Westminster)



orphan neighbourhood areas which have been designated without an accompanying neighbourhood forum to develop a plan.

The GLA's Planning Committee undertook a helpful review of neighbourhood planning with our support in 2020. It concluded the Mayor should *"explicitly support neighbourhood planning and convene volunteer neighbour planners with local boroughs to develop a programme for accelerating the delivery of neighbourhood plans"*. The Mayor responded to say he *"would be happy to host a Neighbourhood Planning event"*. A mayoral election and nearly two years later we are still to see any progress.

This 2022 review includes new information on the financial support available for neighbourhood planning. Worryingly, we show that local planning authorities receive over 56% more funding than the neighbourhood forums who actually undertake the bulk of the work in producing neighbourhood plans. Since 2012-13 London's local planning authorities have received £1.52m from central Government to support neighbourhood planning. By contrast London's neighbourhood forums have received just £970,366. Camden (£220k) and Westminster (£310k) alone have received more than half the funding of all neighbourhood forums.

The Government is reviewing the way that planning works across England. Neighbourhood plans will be retained and encouraged more in towns and cities. The Government has committed to *"strengthening neighbourhood planning"* through the Queen's Speech and new measures feature in its legislative programme. It has also provided neighbourhood forums with more automatic grant funding. There are plans to complement neighbourhood plans with a new Neighbourhood Priorities Statement that local planning authorities must address when preparing a Local Plan.

London's communities have demonstrated the benefits of neighbourhood planning and look forward to ever stronger support from national and local government and the Mayor of London to address the issues we raise in this review and help neighbourhood planning in London to realise its potential.



26

Number of made neighbourhood plans

+14

Change since 2019

67

Number of neighbourhood forums

-2

Change since 2019

23

Number of local planning authorities  
without a made neighbourhood plan

-3

Change since 2019

64 months

Average duration from designation to  
referendum

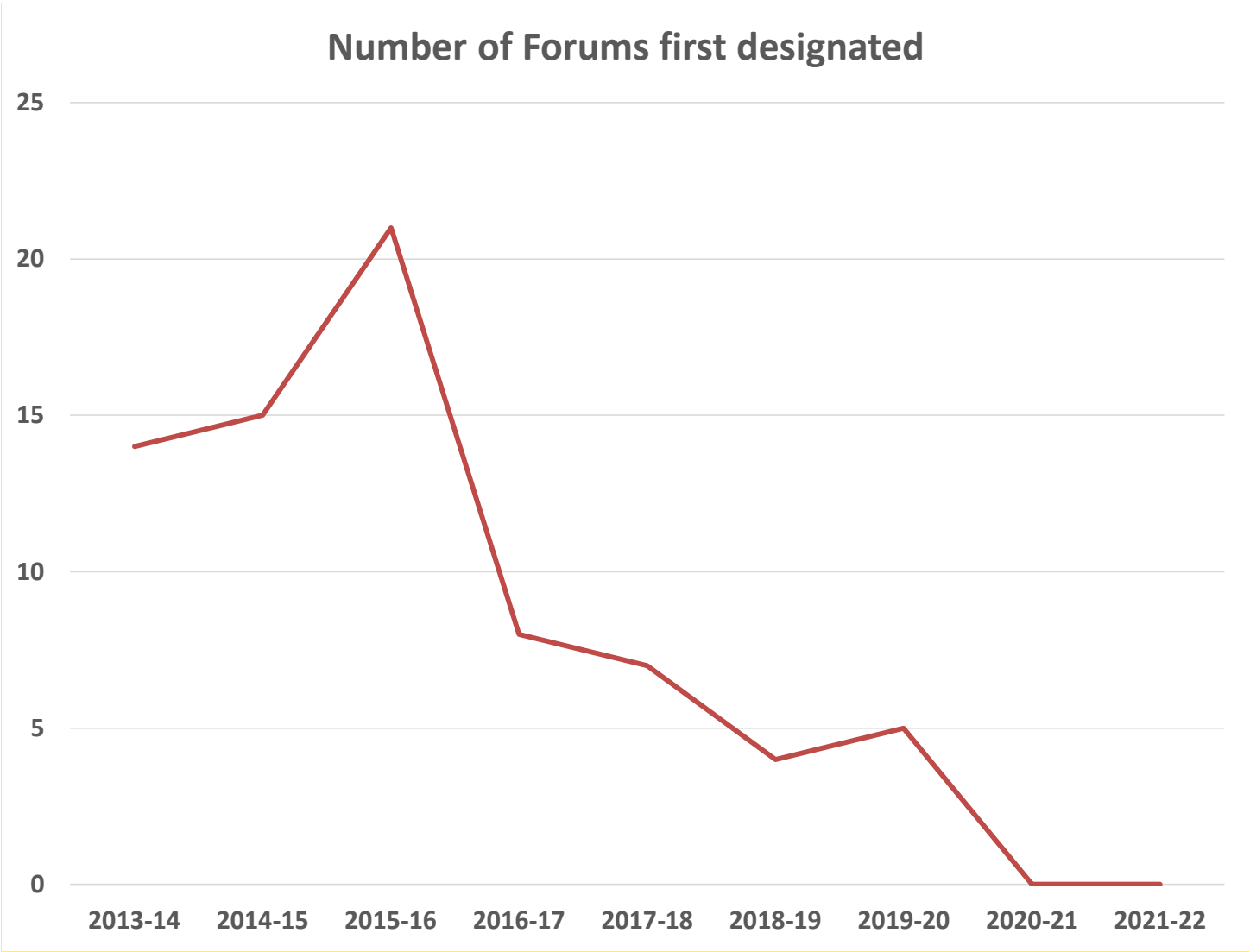
+15

Change since 2019



## Neighbourhood planning “deserts” with no designated neighbourhood forum



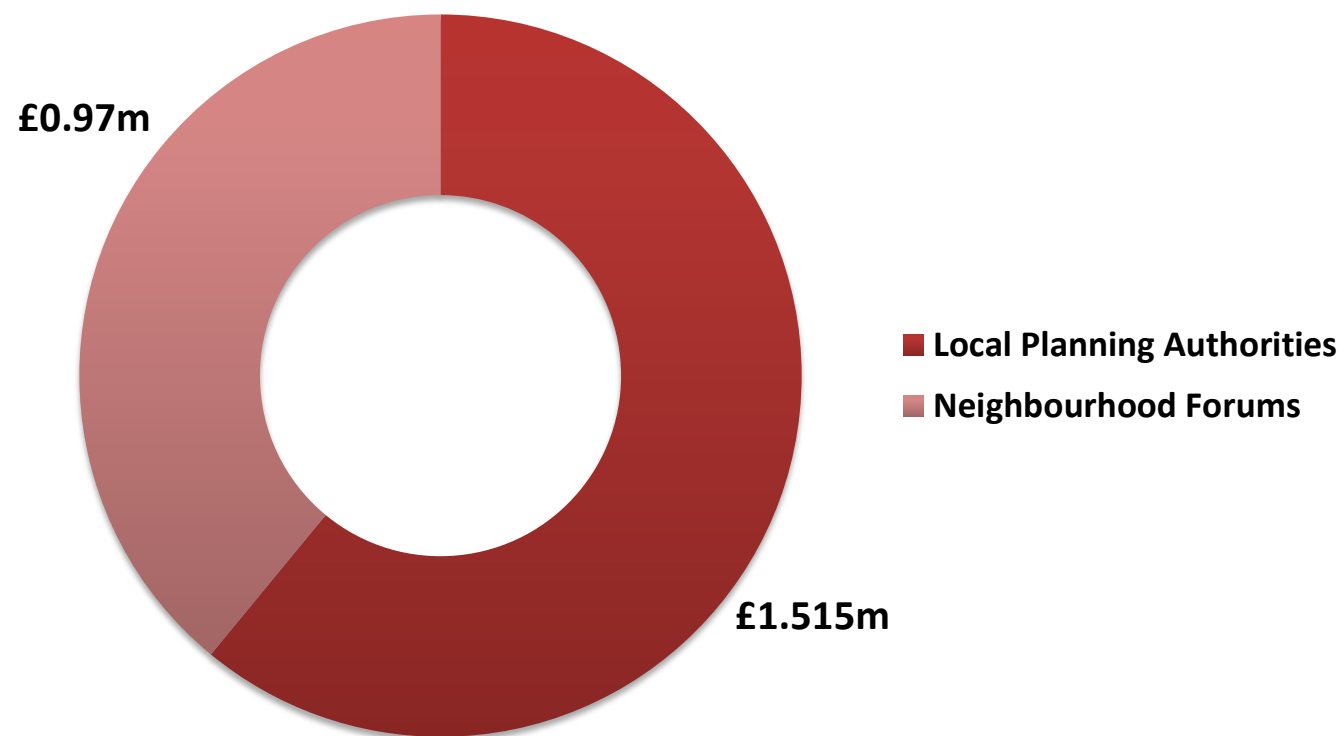




Neighbourhood plans completed

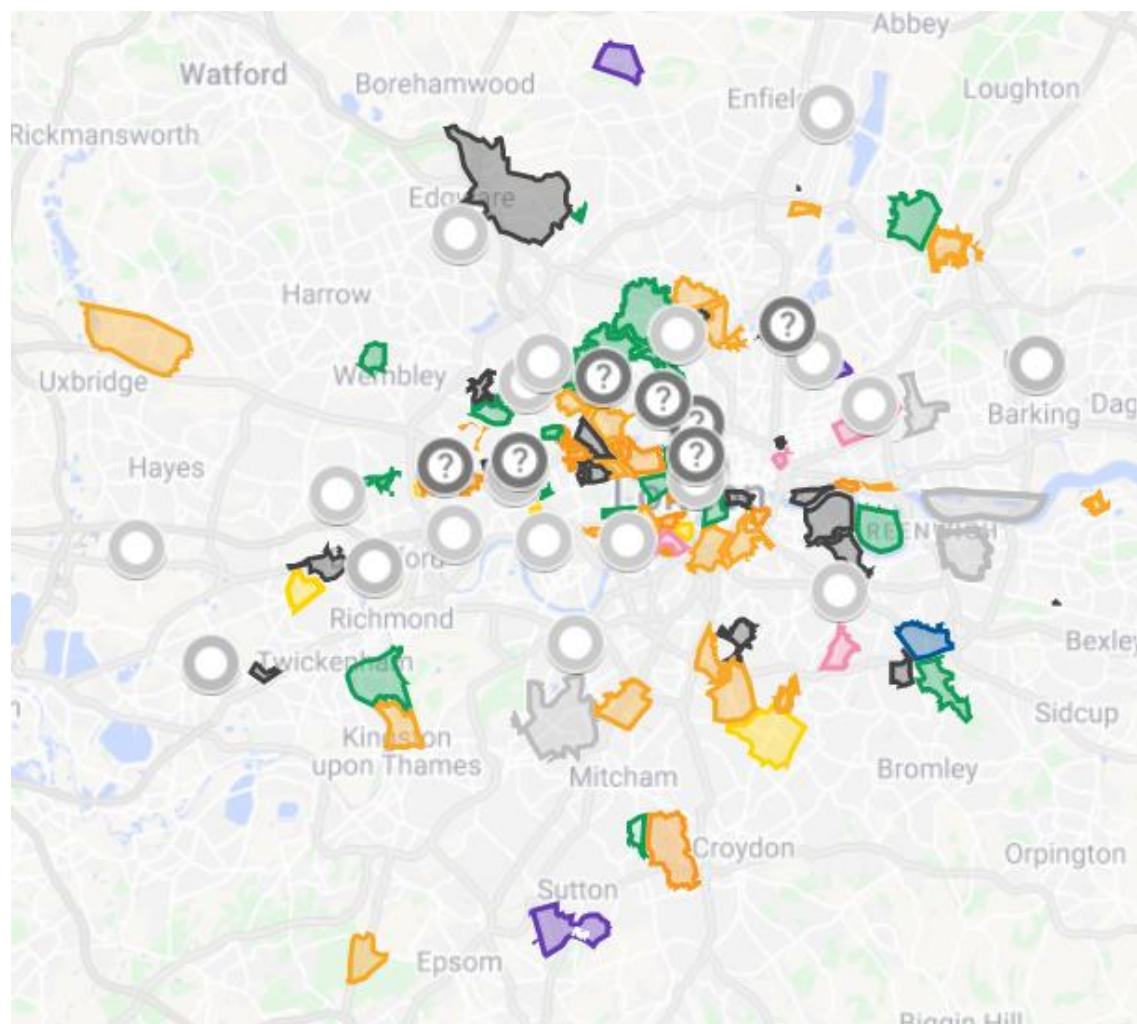


## Funding support from Government 2013/14 - 2021/22





## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNERS.LONDON MAP



Extract from Neighbourhood Planners.London map (<https://www.neighbourhoodplanners.london/map>)



## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- I. **Communities** – Continue to exercise your rights to neighbourhood plan and support the neighbourhood planning community in London
- II. **Boroughs** – Recognise and support the vital role of volunteer-led neighbourhood planning as part of London's development plan framework and in planning decisions
- III. **Mayor** – Show strong leadership in supporting the strategic role of neighbourhood planning in securing “Good Growth” in the capital
- IV. **Government** - Refresh the neighbourhood planning support programme to strengthen and expand the advice and funding available, especially to neighbourhood forums
- V. **Government** – Give neighbourhood forums the same control over spending the local element of the Infrastructure Levy as town and parish councils
- VI. **Government** - Provide stronger legal safeguards for neighbourhood forums to progress through the different stages of plan preparation, including designation



## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

*"By making it easier to develop Neighbourhood Plans we wish to encourage their continued use and indeed to help spread their use further, particularly in towns and cities."*

Planning for the Future White Paper, August 2020

*"Neighbourhood planning clearly provides benefits to communities and the built environment where conditions are supportive"*

Impacts of Neighbourhood Planning in England, Final report to MHCLG, University of Reading, October 2020

*"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. Taking advantage of the knowledge and experience of local people will help to shape London's growth, creating a thriving city that works better for all Londoners."*

The London Plan, March 2021, paragraph 1.1.5

*"I am keen to get communities involved much earlier on and shape the areas where they live....Neighbourhood planning will remain and on a statutory basis"*

Stuart Andrew MP, Minister for Housing & Planning, March 2022

*"Improve the planning system to give communities a louder voice.....Strengthening neighbourhood planning"*

Queen's Speech briefing notes, May 2022



## Neighbourhood Planners.London

Neighbourhood Planners.London exists to support neighbourhood planners in London and raise the profile of neighbourhood planning in the capital.

We're a voluntary initiative in response to direct experience of the first wave of neighbourhood planning in London. The benefits of neighbourhood planners getting together, sharing experience and know-how and providing a voice for neighbourhood planning are apparent in the growing movement across the capital.



[www.neighbourhoodplanners.london](http://www.neighbourhoodplanners.london)



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