

Neighbourhood planning

- Author of numerous Neighbourhood Planning outputs
- Including the 2020 INPE report for MHCLG / DLUHC
- Involved in advice to DLUHC on planning reform
- Might be interested in short piece in T&CP March/April 2022 →

levelling up neighbourhoods— back to the very local future?

The UK government's continuing attachment to 'the neighbourhood', exhibited again in the Levelling Up White Paper, calls for careful consideration of what is achievable at the neighbourhood scale and what levelled-up neighbourhoods might look like, say Gavin Parker, John Sturzaker and Matthew Wargent

The Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP), published by neighbourhoods might look like in the context of with varying degrees of depth. One topic that has gone somewhat under the radar in the ensuing analysis is the persistence of 'the neighbourhood' in central government's policy imagination, references to it recur over 50 times throughout the White Paper. The idea of planning at the neighbourhood scale, with its familiar and cosy connotations, remains an attractive evocation for government Ministers, coupling warm words about local control with the long-standing liberal suspicion of big government and big planning

Over the past decade, various tools have been deployed in an attempt to engage the neighbourhood in planning for place across the UK.2 Of course, attention has long been paid to the neighbourhood as an active scale for planning, stretching back over a century.3 Here, we are concerned with the implications for neighbourhood-scale planning in the context of planning reforms and the levelling-up agenda in the UK. As government renews its promises toward neighbourhoods—including a mooted review of neighbourhood governance what is needed now is a frank conversation about what is achievable and what levelled-up

wider efforts to rebalance the UK's economic

Emerging policy for a renewed emphasis on the very local

Whether one agrees with what has been proposed in 2022, or indeed in the Planning White Paper of 2020, there is clearly renewed interest from the UK government in the idea that neighbourhoods should play a more active part in shaping local priorities. It is well established in the academic literature that the neighbourhood concept does important work in creating spatially-bounded units and mobilising 'active citizens' who are supposedly ripe for partnership within the complex world of policy and place governance. This scale is also a convenient, if romanticised one through which to play on a sense of local identity and bridge the problematic gap between state and community.4

The Big Society agenda that spawned the post-2010 brand of localism built on New Labour's interest in the neighbourhood as an idea, as much as a geographic scale. 5 In now familiar rhetoric, this sought to provide 'genuine opportunities [for communities] to influence the future of the places where they live' Sue Brownill in this journal recently

Levelling up and neighbourhoods

- White paper Feb 2022
- Neighbourhoods mentioned x55 times
- Light on detail...but therefore scope to engage...

'There is an indication... that local agencies and planning authorities will need to be better at listening to communities and engaging with civil society to identify priorities, assets, and the policies and other actions needed to strengthen 'community infrastructure' (Parker, Sturzaker and Wargent, 2022: p100)

Neighbourhood Priority Statements

Levelling Up White Paper notes on NPS:

As well as giving neighbourhood plans greater weight in planning decisions, the Bill will increase the accessibility of neighbourhood planning by allowing parish councils and neighbourhood forums to produce a simpler 'neighbourhood priorities statement' which the local authority will be obliged to take into account when preparing its local plan.

Neighbourhood Priority Statements

- Where did this idea spring from?
 - Wider issues with lack of trust
 - Lack of integration between local plans and NDPs
 - Narrow focus of NDPs (i.e. land use planning and non-strat)
 - Recommendation #8 in 2020 INPE report and:

A common criticism was duplication of policies and MHCLG could find ways of better aligning / integrating Local Plans and NP processes – through clearer ongoing communications between LPAs and neighbourhood planning groups (Parker et al, 2020: p5)

Questions - NPS

- Who is eligible to produce a NPS Forum / Parish Council
- How will it be produced? (basis)
 - What forms of QA might be involved?...
- What will the scope be?
- When (i.e. stage of NP / Stage of LP)
- Format (i.e. to ease absorption by LPA)
- Function...
 - Difference between this and a 'local plan submission'?

Issues - NPS

- Legitimacy
- Scope
- Clarity
- Timing
- Transparency of action / response



NP:L and NPS

- Might be good to start shaping some 'straw man' NPSs?
 - See what they may look like...
 - Uncover issues and further questions for DLUHC
 - Act to pre-figure actual shape and characteristics of NPS...

- Recommend these 'straw men' NPS are done by Forums that have completed or near completion of a NDP.
- I recommend that NPs have a strong underpinning of community evidence else they be discounted (or ultimately removed as a tool)