

# NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING



*Confessions of an opium eater!*  
Experiences and Perspectives on  
forward planning for communities

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# Presentation Coverage

- Neighbourhood Planning – *the opportunity and what's in it for my community*
- The Process – *How do I get what I want legally?*
- The Approach in West Bergholt – *blundering around in the planning system and having interesting conversations with your residents!*
- Lessons learned – *you think you know what you are doing, think again!*
- *I may not cover what you are interested in – please interrupt me and ask, ultimately people are guided towards what they are truly striving for!*



# Neighbourhood Planning – *the opportunity and what's in it for my community*

- The Localism Act gives you the opportunity to plan for a locality or a Parish in much the same way as a District Council does – *you can now do this as a right enshrined in law*
- A move from reactionary planning to forward planning, your proposals not somebody else's!
- Its also your ideas on paper; your vision; where do you want to get to; by when; by what means
- A chance to talk to the community about just about anything – its not only about housing!





# Localism and Growth

*“Planning should be a positive process, where people come together and agree a vision for the future of the place where they live. It should also - crucially - be a system that delivers more growth. Our aim with the Localism Bill is not to prevent new building, but to promote it”*

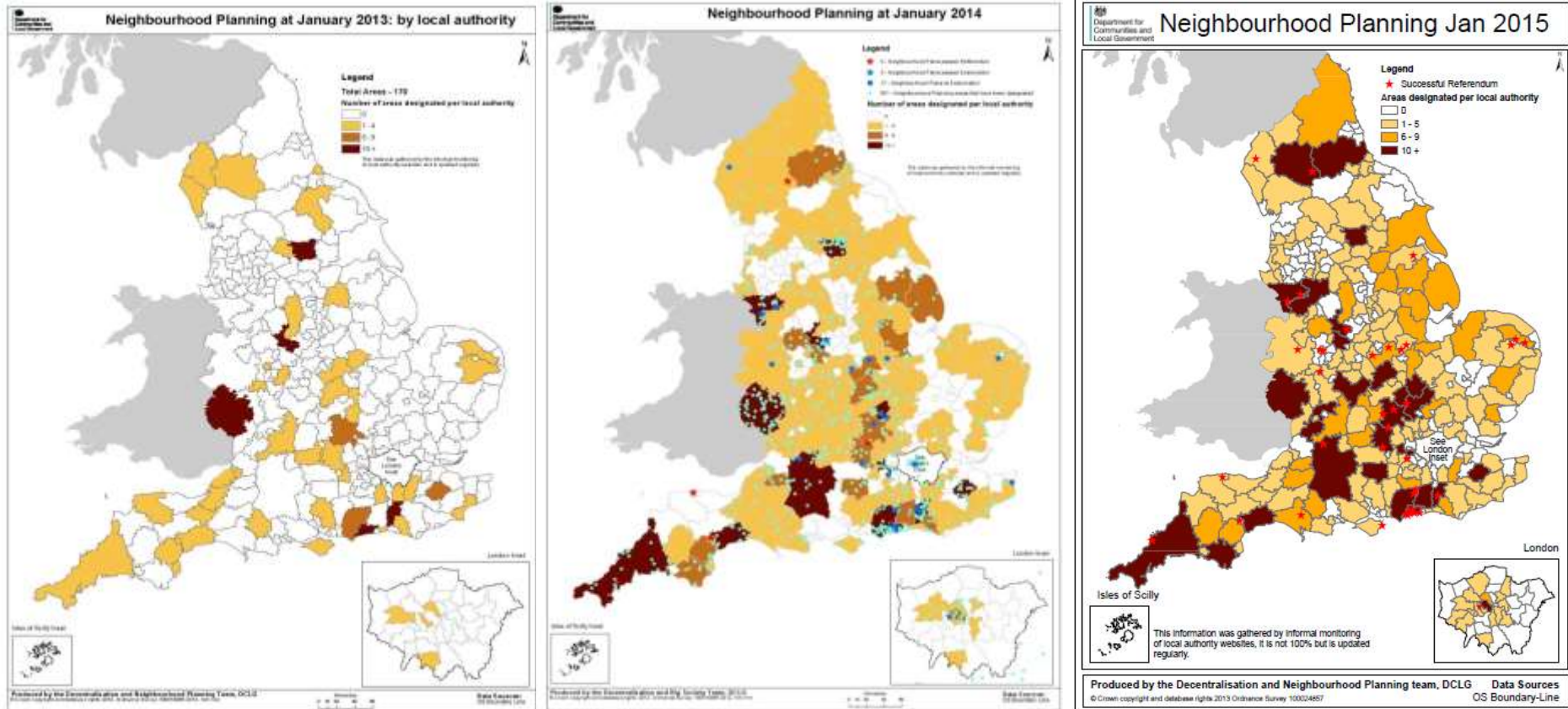
Greg Clark, Pro-localism and pro-development: A speech to the Adam Smith Institute, 2 February 2011

*“Neighbourhood plans are the key to unlocking more house-building (...) If you give people power, they will use it responsibly. If you explain to them what their community and their country needs, they will do their bit to make sure it is provided. And if you give them a stake in a future in which beautifully designed homes with easy access to green space are, once again affordable for working people on ordinary wages, they will do what it takes to bring that future about”*

Nick Boles, ‘Housing the next generation’ speech to Policy Exchange, 10 January 2013



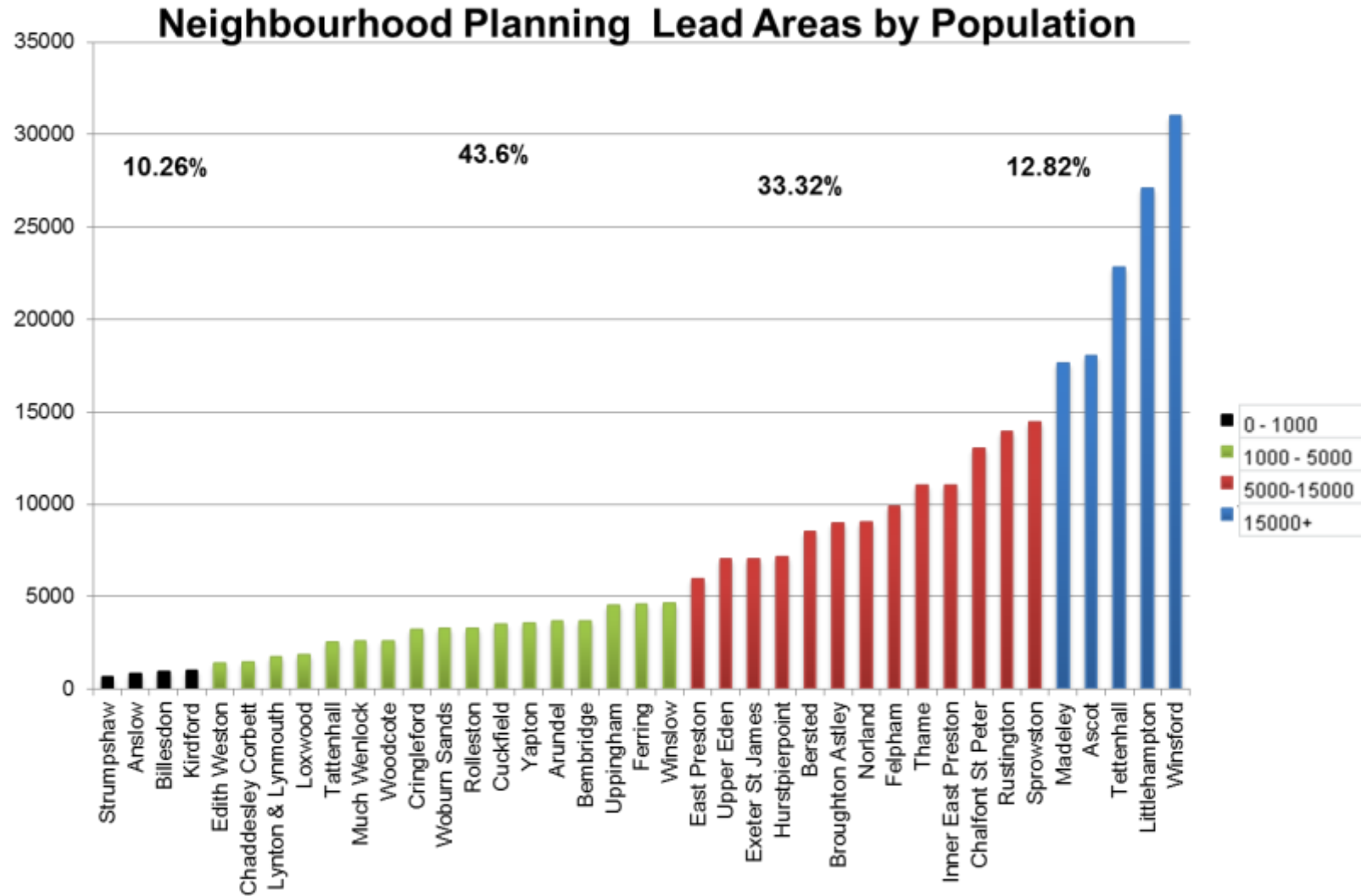
# A growing movement



This data was informally gathered from internet monitoring and is being constantly updated



# All shapes and sizes



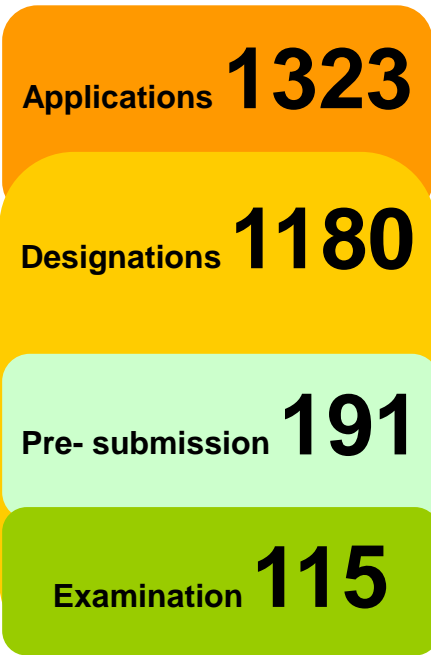




Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government



Average  
‘Yes’ vote  
87%  
Turnout 33%



Neighbourhood plans	At Examination	Passed Examination	Passed Referendum	MADE
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Total: 45 26 7 33

Neighbourhood  
Planning

From the Ground Up



Local Authorities

There are 336  
local planning authorities  
(not including county  
councils)

62%  
of Local Authorities contain  
designated neighbourhood  
planning areas

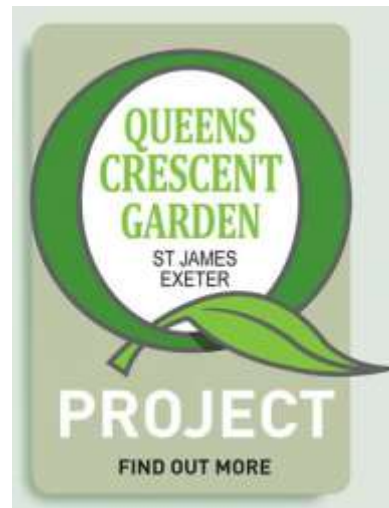


Department for  
Communities and  
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## The starting point....

This decision can also be seen as the green light for projects which have been proposed.

The Steering Group has been eager to make a start with Queens Crescent Garden, the top priority project, and plans are being made for the setting up of a Community Interest Company to assume responsibility for the development and future management of this community green space







Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# Neighbourhood planning review

*“ We have, I think, now reached the point where there has been enough experience of neighbourhood planning with enough different kinds of communities for us to learn lessons and to ask whether there is not a version of neighbourhood planning that might be more easily accessible and quicker for some communities. We are doing that work, and we are very keen to hear from any hon. Members and communities with their thoughts on how we can achieve that”.*

Nick Boles, Minister for Planning, 3 March 2014

# The Process – *How do I get what I want legally?*

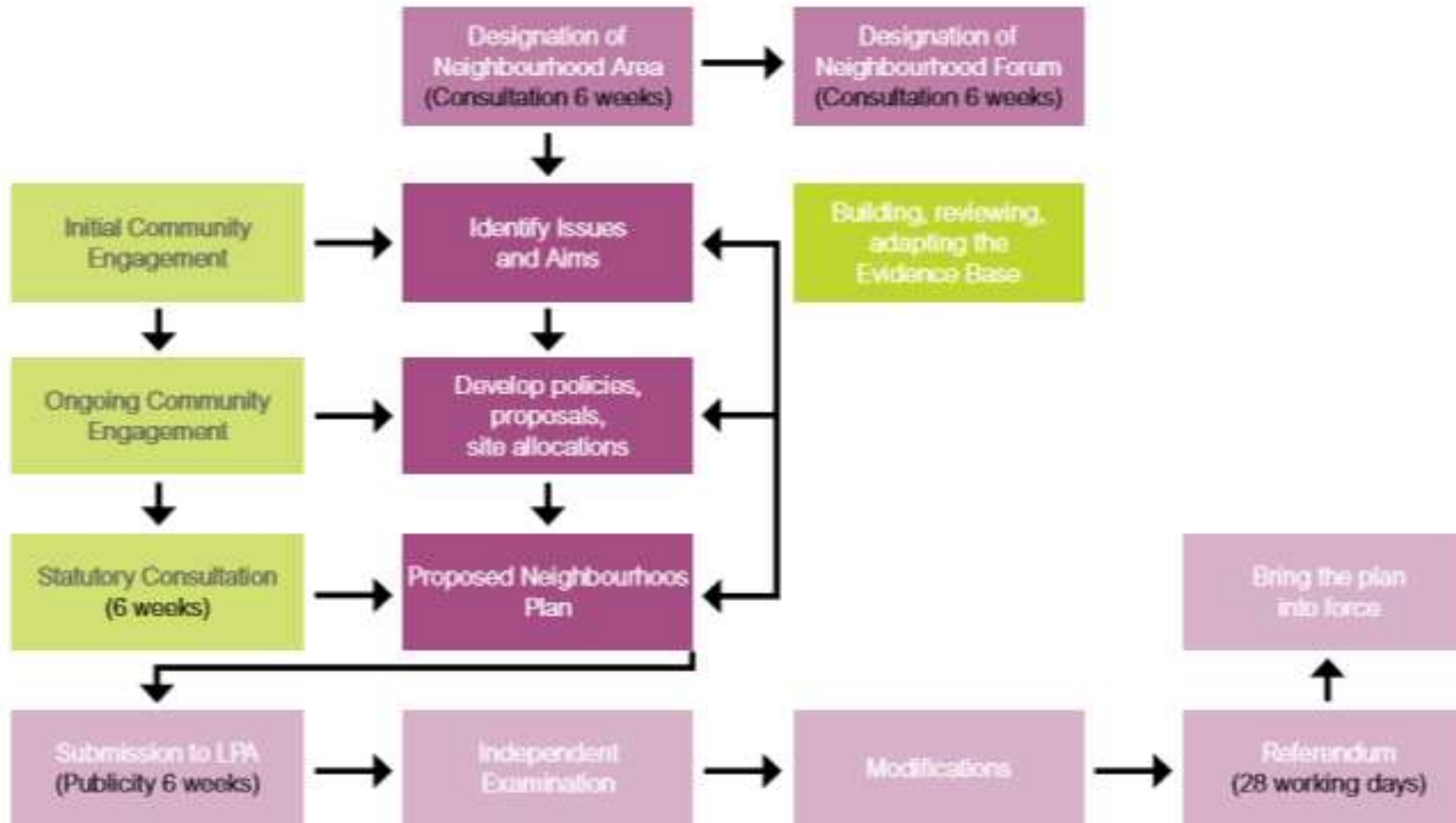
- The Act only gives you the opportunity – it hooks you into aspiration, it is a motivator and an enabler
- All Acts expect you to follow a logical procedure, there is normally any number of “statutory instruments” to take into consideration
- There is a process to follow but there is guidance to help
- There are legal aspects involved in making a sound plan which draw from the planning system



You will  
become  
a  
Planner!

# A simple Process?

Figure 1 Neighbourhood planning process (Source: Locality<sup>2</sup>)



There are lots of wonderful guides and toolkits available for all of these elements

# The Approach in West Bergholt – *blundering around in the planning system and having interesting conversations with your residents!*



- There is always a catalyst – possibly a threat or an ongoing opportunity. West Bergholt is not (yet) under threat
- So for us its an ongoing process an extension of what we can do
- Added incentive is the new Local Plan for Colchester



# West Bergholt, a journey through local planning



- **The Parish Plan**, project centred: Bergholt Youth Group, West Bergholt Sports Club, Village Design Statement, Broadband, Youth Shelter, Traffic and Safety Plan
- **The Village Design Statement**: Guide to good practice in design, development centred around planning applications, Policies of what is allowed and what isn't, feeds into CBC formal approval process
- **The Neighbourhood Plan**: Spatial plans, how much housing, employment, changes to other land uses eg sport/recreation, will contain maps, plans and policies



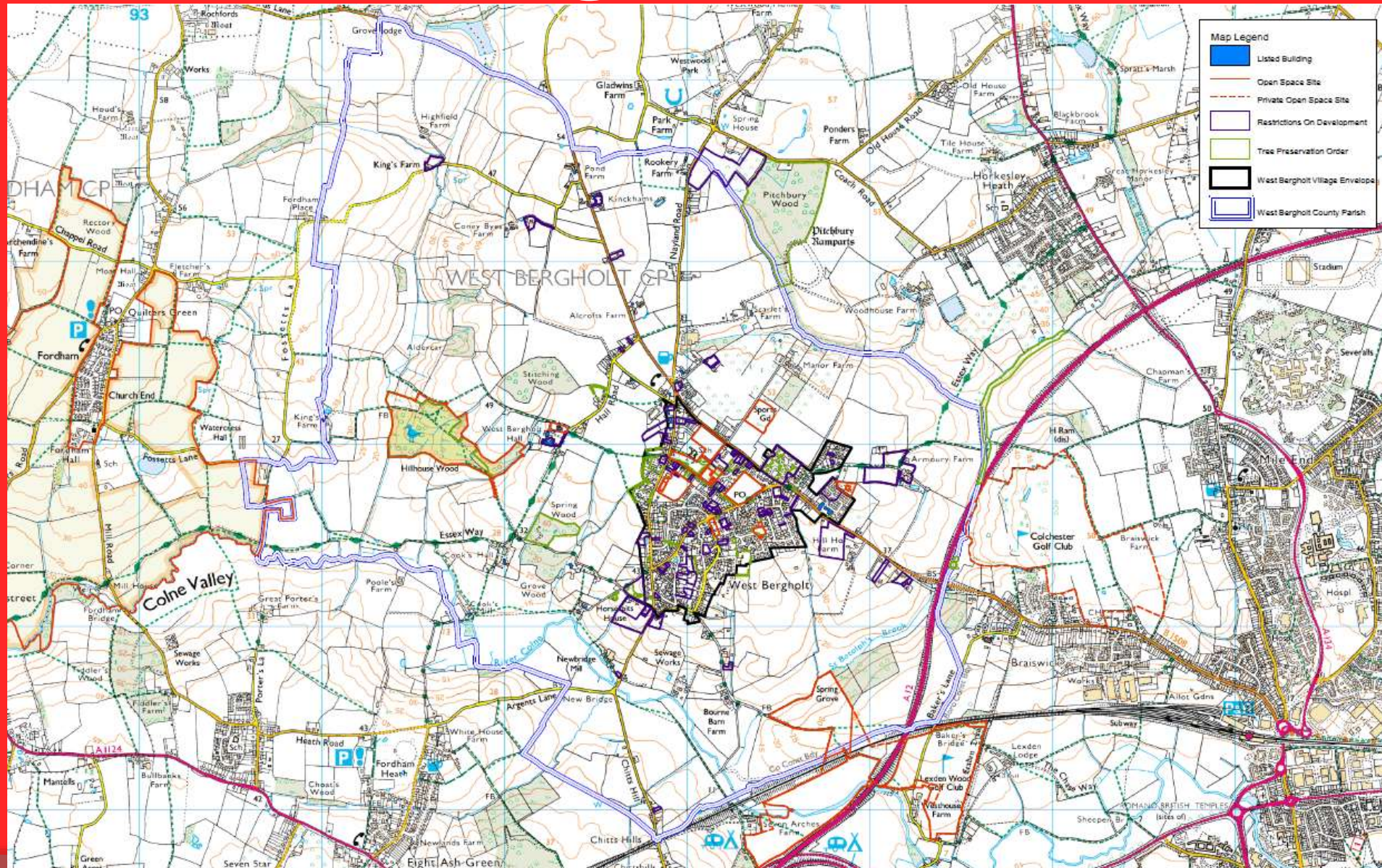
# West Bergholt's Approach to NP



- Area to be based on the Parish Area and topic areas as follows:
  - Community and Social
  - Environment
  - Transport & Highways
  - Planning and Housing
  - Amenities and Commerce
  - Sports & Recreation
  - Community Safety
  - Communications
- We have formally consulted on the area and this is confirmed as covering the WB Parish

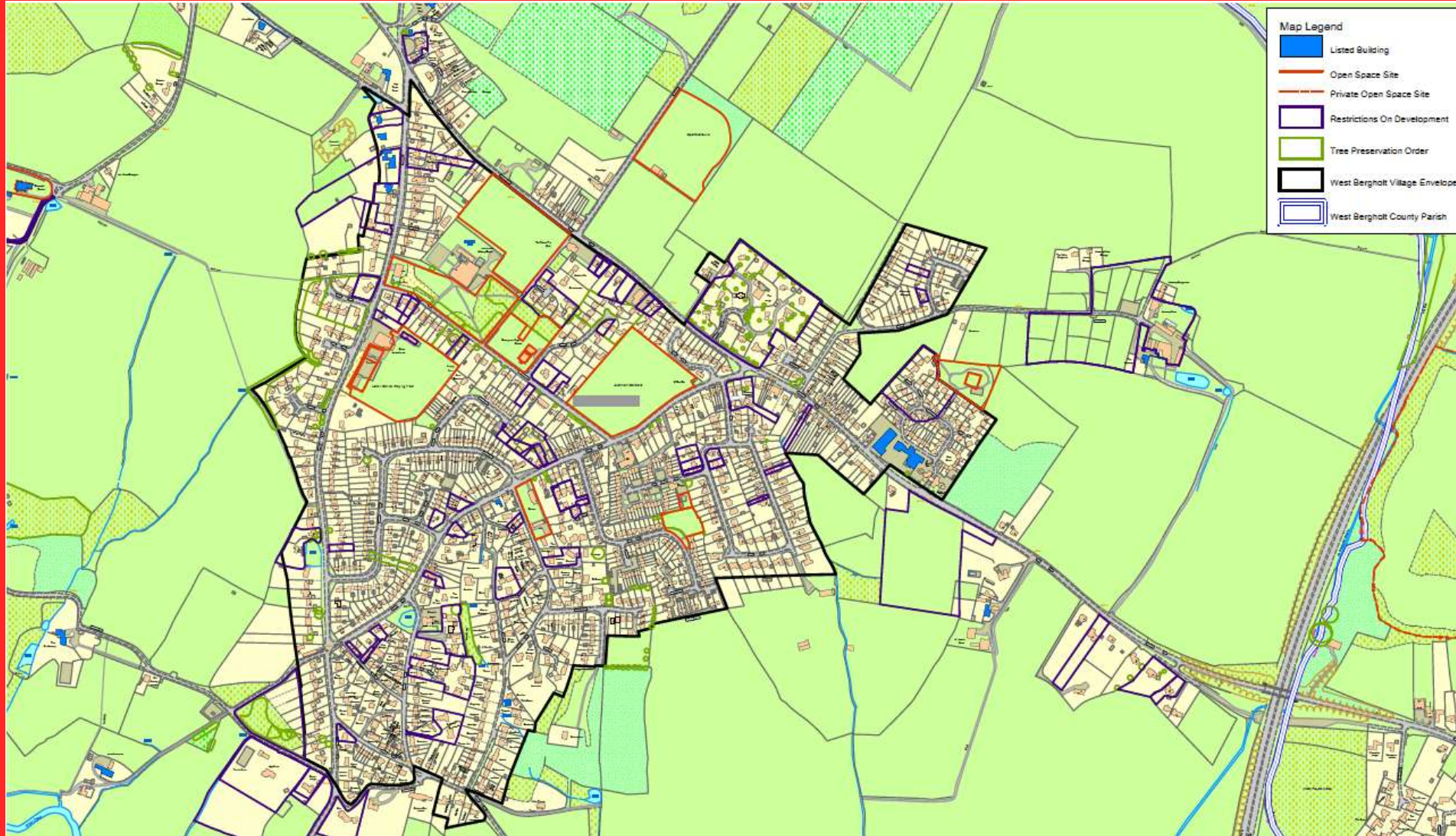


# West Bergholt NP area





# West Bergholt Village Envelope



# West Bergholt Timeline



2013

2013

2014

2015

2015-16

2016

2016-17

2016-17

## Activities

- Formed a (typically) 10 person strong steering group
- Held two extensive consultation exercises to form a community evidence base
- Have drawn in some funding of around £4,000
- Have engaged a Town and Country Planner
- Have a “link person” at CBC
- Have deliberately tried to “funnel” in towards the controversial land use areas

# Facets of our approach – spreading the word

## Community Engagement

- Workshops (for those who want to be “workshopped”!)
- Use of Village Bulletin
- Paper and electronic questionnaires
- Use of the website [www.westbergholt.net](http://www.westbergholt.net)
- A dedicated facebook page
- Focus at Annual Parish Meetings
- An exhibition
- Visiting clubs and societies
- Open-book approach to the Steering Group





# Facets of our Approach: what the Plan will contain



- Short document – 30 pages (but beware the appendices!)
- Vision and objectives
- Evidence – documented factual matters plus what people have told us
- A separate section on the land-use and housing aspects
- A project and community focus on other non-planning matters (which the inspector may pay little heed to!)

# Facets of our approach – the housing and planning matters



- The tricky bit!
- Engagement to date has sought to find out
  - Attitudes to expansion
  - Housing and dwelling preferences
  - Views on broad scenarios, prior to narrowing
- Also tried to explain the unexplainable
  - Village envelope
  - Natural and other constraints
  - Benthamite economics versus welfare economics



# Housing options

## ● Quite straightforward?

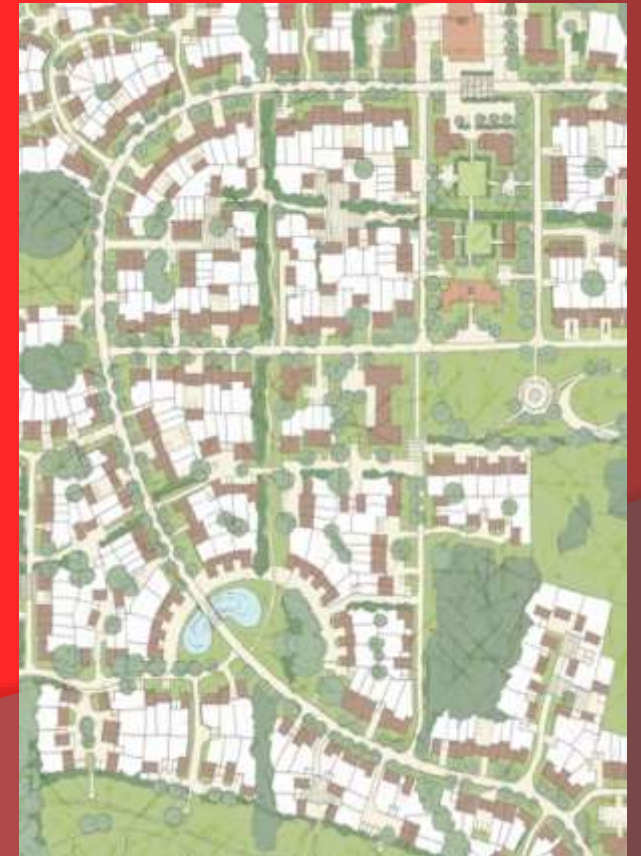
We would like you to consider the following options:

The development of up to 25 new dwellings within the existing village envelope, and one of the following options :

**Option 1** The development in an area outside the village envelope, a mixed development of up to **75** new houses, the type, style and number to meet the parish's needs.

**Option 2** The development of up to **125** new houses to be accommodated by extending the village envelope in several locations so to accommodate small areas of new housing, the type, style and number to meet the parish's needs.

**Option 3** up to **200** houses accommodated in one or two areas outside the village envelope, allowing developers to put forward their own plans for the type of dwellings they wish to provide to be accommodated by one or two larger extensions to the village envelope.

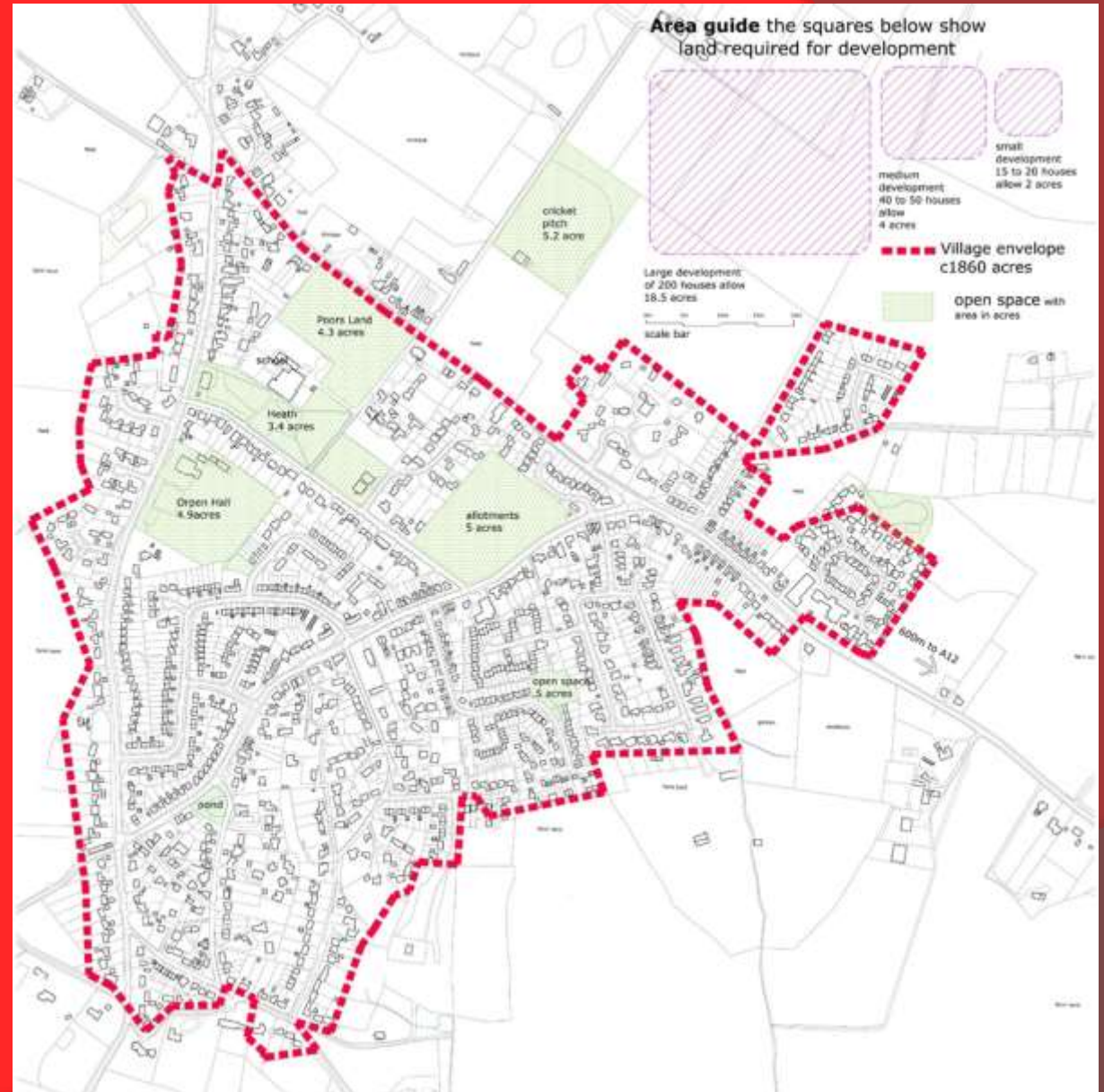




# Explaining the likely impact

In this consultation we are not asking you where housing should be located, this will be the subject of further consultation which will consider

- environmental designations
- accessibility to the highway network
- Provision of open space in new developments
- the need for a buffer zone between the village and the A12
- whether we are extending the village envelope or designating self contained areas



# Present status and a view to the remainder of the year

- Analysis of responses
- Engagement with statutory consultees (ie those who commented on the NP area or strategic and local partners)
- Discussions with CBC on housing options
- Autumn/Winter 2015 spatial consultation
- Publish the Plan in Spring 2016
- Statutory phases 2016-17 (or however long it takes!)





# Key Challenges Faced by Communities

- Setting up Forums
- Engaging hard to reach groups
- Understanding what land use planning policies are
- Project planning and Process
- Need for evidence
- Writing policy
- Resourcing



# Even More Challenges!

- SEA
- Engaging constructively
- Separating fact from opinion
- Supporting statements
- Engaging Consultants
- Staying engaged



Lessons learned – *you think you know what you are doing, think again!*

● Its constant

- repetition is important – you will despair at times!
- Planning is not well understood.
- Where you start from is not logical
- You are a salesman!
- Use every tool that works in your community, abandon those that don't work. Learn from each stage, try to target hard to reach groups
- Its not a popularity poll, you cannot please everyone
- Be aware of the pitfalls of social media
- Recycle good material to enable refreshed messages
- Engagement correlates with enthusiasm, enjoy it



# Lessons learned – *you think you know what you are doing, think again!*

## Processes

- Will nearly kill you.
  - You need to explain it to yourself, the whole NP group, and everybody else – endlessly. Some parts are relatively new
- But is logical and you need to stay with it
  - Decided what the focus is
  - if you are only interested in the housing aspects, leave it at that.
  - If it is broader it will take longer, take more people with you!
- Have a Plan B
  - If the spatial part fails us in WB we have a successor Parish Plan
  - Doing it to yourself is more painful than being done to
  - Localism is supported, but everyone likes to be able to appeal to a higher authority



# Lessons learned – *you think you know what you are doing, think again!*

## Resources

### Technical Matters

- Get help where needed, plenty of knowledgeable people out there – some need paying!

### Money and Resources

- Average costs around £15K. WB at £5K so far
- Bid for funds, the channels are nearly always open
- Refresh your Steering Group – people will leave and join anyway. Assess skills: some people are great at the “hands-on” activities, some better at writing!
- Engage the PC actively if it is mainly a community group

### Phone a friend or visit a website

- Try these: CBC, Planning Advisory Service; Planning Portal/DCLG, EALC/RCCE, My Community Network, NALC and CPRE





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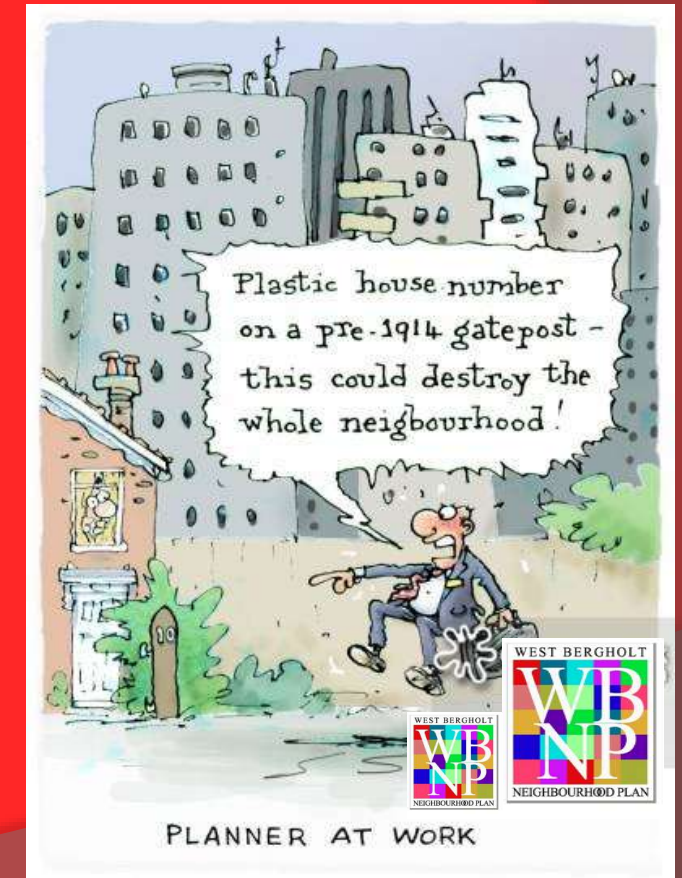
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# Concluding remarks

- A complex process
  - Neighbourhood Planning looks daunting at first sight
  - It's a Plan led approach and a bit top-down and dare I say it a bit technical and legal
  - Communities are not really set up to embrace this – and yet they are trying in large numbers
  - Forward Planning requires leadership. It also requires time and commitment
  - It is in addition to the day-job!
  - You have to be sure why you are doing one – its quite simply “the bigger picture”
- But
  - Its an insurance policy against uncertainty
  - It can bring a community together
  - It draws on skills and enthusiasm which are nearly always latent or untapped in communities
  - There is a sense of place and a focus on people which naturally encourages discussion
- In the final analysis, its not compulsory and like most direction of travel initiatives, its probably more about the journey than the destination



Thank You

Remember the adage:

“The Plan is nothing, Planning is  
everything”