



Planning ahead: influencing local planning on housing and ageing

**A guide for local older people's
forums and groups**

Purpose

This guide aims to provide the lay person with a brief overview of the planning system and potential opportunities to influence the homes and neighbourhoods that are being planned and built, particularly regarding making good, inclusive places to live as people get older.

For Whom

This briefing is part of a series which offers practical information and advice for local older people's forums and groups who want to influence local policy, plans and actions in housing.

It draws on the experience of members of the older people's housing champions network and on a session held this year with Katy Lock, projects and policy manager at the *Town and Country Planning Association* (TCPA)



1 Introduction

This guide aims to provide the lay person with a brief overview of the planning system and potential opportunities to influence the homes and neighbourhoods that are being planned and built, particularly regarding making good, inclusive places to live as people get older.

At present every local planning authority area in England is expected to prepare a local plan. A *local plan* sets out local planning policies and identifies how land is used, determining what will be built where. It sets out the strategic priorities for development of an area and covers housing and commercial, public and private development, including transport infrastructure and the local environment.

Local plans are tools for guiding decisions about individual development proposals and, together with neighbourhood plans, are the starting point for considering whether planning applications can be approved.

The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) and the *National Planning Practice Guidance* offer guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers. These were updated by the Government in July and September 2018.

Alongside any local council housing strategies and policies, local plans determine the future needs and opportunities in their area covering housing and the local infrastructure. Local planning authorities are expected to ensure that the policies in their local plan recognise the diverse types of housing needed and, where appropriate, identify specific sites for all types of housing to meet their anticipated housing requirements. The NPPF advises local planning authorities to consider the needs of different groups such as older people. (Clause 61)

Local plans should be clear in setting out the strategic priorities for the area providing the strategic framework within which any neighbourhood plans are prepared to shape development at the community level. *Neighbourhood planning* gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and development and growth of their local area.

Developing a neighbourhood plan and/or influencing your local plan can be an important area for local older people's groups to consider, ensuring that local areas link housing, planning, health and ageing to address the needs of their local population as it ages.

2 Why is it important to consider influencing local plans

Our population is ageing. Over 70% of population growth between 2014 – 2039 will be in the over 60 age group. The links between good health, housing and neighbourhoods is critical. Most older people live in mainstream housing (96%) – yet 95% of homes lack even basic accessibility features. At present 2 million older people live in non-decent homes and there is a lack of provision for improving both the quality of existing homes and a lack of availability of suitable homes both mainstream and specialist.¹

There are around 1.8 million people with an accessible housing need in the UK including around 300,000 disabled adults that have an unmet need for accessible housing.²

There is a need to ensure that homes and neighbourhoods are suitable for all ages. Planning is an essential ingredient to ensure that local areas are assessing how their housing and neighbourhood plans are age friendly, accessible and meeting diverse needs.

3 The national framework for local planning

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework

The *National Planning and Policy Framework*, originally published in 2012 (which had its latest revision in July 2018), sets out the Government planning policies and the framework for local planning. It is supported by a myriad of planning and technical guidance. See also the *National Planning Practice Guidance* which was revised in September 2018.

The framework states that *'strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals...'*

The framework expects local planning authorities to work to a standard method in the national guidance identifying *'the size, type and tenure of homes for different groups in the community including but not limited to those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities ...etc...'* (Clause 61)

¹ Older people, housing, health and care infographic Care & Repair England 2016

² The Hidden housing market Habinteg and Papworth Trust 2016

It also has a social objective to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a *'sufficient number of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment with accessible accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support community's health, social and cultural wellbeing.'*
(Clause 8b)

3.2 The Housing White Paper and Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 – housing planning for older and disabled people.

The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 and measures in the Housing White Paper 2017 proposed to strengthen national policy so that planning authorities have a clear plan for addressing the housing requirements of groups such as older and disabled people ensuring a more consistent delivery of accessible housing.

The Act states that the Secretary of State will provide guidance to local planning authorities on how their local development documents should meet the housing needs of older and disabled people. This has yet to be published and is expected in late 2018.

3.3 Accessible housing – the national policy landscape

'Lifetime Homes' standards were developed by *Habinteg* and others to ensure that homes are accessible, adaptable and inclusive. They incorporate 16 design criteria that can be universally applied to new homes at minimal cost.³

Some local areas have adopted Lifetime Home Standards – London is probably the most well-known. Other authorities who had adopted the standard in a Habinteg survey in 2016⁴ were Reading, Wokingham, Sevenoaks, Leicester, Leeds, Peterborough and Eastleigh.

These standards were superseded by the *Nationally Described Space Standard* in 2015 in England and put in the *Building Regulations* for the first time. This was welcomed as signifying that access in housing matters, though only optional.

³ <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/>

⁴ <https://www.habinteg.org.uk/news/new-evidence-shows-councils-lack-plans-to-meet-accessible-housing-demand-1050>

4

Local and neighbourhood plans

4.1 Local plans

Local plans – will contain policies about:

- housing, including affordable homes;
- retail, leisure and other commercial development;
- infrastructure for transport, minerals, waste, energy, telecoms, water supply and sewage treatment;
- education, health, police and community facilities;
- energy, including from renewable sources;
- protection and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape, wildlife, open space, listed buildings and archaeology; and
- protection of homes and property from flooding from rivers and the sea.

All will be of interest to local older people's groups. They are the main consideration when deciding planning applications and set the framework through which local decisions are taken.

This can offer the opportunity to argue the case for accessible housing and neighbourhoods and/or the need for more housing suitable for older people – both mainstream and specialist.

You will find details of the status of your local plan on the local council website and can ask the Planning Department when it is due for preparation or revision. The Local Planning Department will identify the key issues the local plan should respond to by developing the 'evidence base'. Information on the evidence base for local planning will be available on the website or with the local planning authority.

These plans are monitored by the Planning Inspectorate.

Most councils will have developed methods for local consultation, so it would be useful to contact them to say you would like to be involved.

4.2 Neighbourhood plans

Neighbourhood plans – are ways in which local communities can shape development in their areas and will become part of the local plan. Whilst local plans will set out a vision for a whole area a neighbourhood plan is an optional document that can detail further developments for local communities.

They are developed by parish or town councils or via a neighbourhood or community forum established to lead on the development of the plan. The local planning authority will be involved in neighbourhood planning making decisions at key stages in the process which includes organising independent assessment of the plan and the ‘community referendum’ which is at the end of the process.

For specific material on accessibility issues refer to paragraph 3.3.

Further advice on developing a neighbourhood plan can be found at *My Community* website including case studies and how to access grants and further advice.

The Town and Country Planning Association also has guidance on getting involved in neighbourhood planning – *Your place Your plan*.

5 What housing issues might be addressed in planning to make difference locally

5.1 Lifetime/adaptable/accessible homes and neighbourhoods

The practice example on Page 10 identifies why inclusive design needs to be an integral part of local planning. Groups concerned about creating age friendly cities, towns and communities should look to engage with planners to argue the case. For further information see Habinteg’s work on *inclusion* which includes toolkits on accessible housing and the work on neighbourhoods and communities at Section 5.6.

5.2 Quality of and accessibility/suitability of existing housing

Whilst planners will focus on new homes the state and suitability of existing homes should also be considered in local plans and a vision developed to improve homes in all tenures and ensure systems are in place to help people repair, improve and adapt their homes for good ageing and wellbeing. See evidence at Care & Repair England’s website *Housing conditions* and *Adaptations*.

5.3 Age friendly new homes

There is a need to ensure that all new homes are age friendly not just specialist homes. Some local areas have established standards for new homes that meet accessibility and lifetime homes standards. Others need to be persuaded. With the expectation of housing growth there is never a better time to influence local plans in relation to new housing development. See Habinteg's work on [inclusion](#).

5.4 Specialist housing provision

For some areas there are shortages of homes both to rent and to buy including specialist homes for older people which can support their care as well as their housing needs. The Housing Learning and Improvement Network (Housing LIN) offers an [area](#) on their website on the planning background for specialist housing.

5.5 Linking housing with health and wellbeing

Whilst awaiting the Green Paper on adult social care, evidence is growing on the link between good housing and people's ongoing health and wellbeing. There is material available on the Government's [Homes for health webpage](#). There is also the Town and Country Planning Association guide [Creating Health Promoting Environments](#).

5.6 Developing neighbourhoods and communities and not just homes

For many older people's groups the challenge is to ensure that as areas build new homes and communities these are sustainable and create new communities for all including older people. The World Health Organisation has published information about creating [Age Friendly Cities and Communities](#) and a number of English local authorities have signed up to this programme. For further information see the Centre for Ageing Better's [network on age friendly communities](#) which includes resources and ideas.

There are guides which are relevant here using Garden City standards, from the Town and Country Planning Association [Homes for all](#) and [Design and Master planning](#) (p16).

6

Where to go for further advice and information

Royal Town Planning Institute is the planning body for spatial, sustainable and inclusive planning - an institute with over 25,000 members. It is a membership organisation and a Chartered Institute responsible for maintaining professional standards and accrediting courses nationally and internationally.

It offers advice on planning via the *Planning Aid* website, which is a body it funds to provide planning advice and support to help individuals and communities engage with the planning system and get involved in planning their local area. In London there is also *Planning Aid for London*.

Town and Country Planning Association campaigns for the reform of the UK's planning system to make it more responsive to people's needs and aspirations and to promote sustainable development. It offers membership, conferences, research reports, innovative training programmes and 'thought-leadership' across the planning and built environment sector including at community level. It offers knowledge and briefings across all planning areas and works in partnership with others to develop innovative projects that will empower people to have a say on decisions that affect them.

My Community supports groups and organisations running community-led projects and plans to build and strengthen communities across England. It offers advice on Neighbourhood Planning including on grants and advice available via *Locality* which also support community organisations.

7

A practice example: How a local Access Group influenced the High Peak Local Plan

The High Peak Local Plan was adopted on 14 April 2016 and sets out the Council's vision and strategy for the borough until 2031. The Timeline for production of the Local Plan was as follows:

Sept 2012	Consultation on options
Feb 2013	Preferred Options published
Dec 2013	Additional consultation (seeking views on potential changes to Preferred Options)
Dec 2013	Local Plan submitted to Secretary of State
Jan 2015	Examination in Public (by a Government Inspector)
Dec 2015	Consultation on main modifications
Mar 2016	Planning Inspector's report
Apr 2016	High Peak Local Plan adopted

High Peak Access (HPA) is a campaigning group that works to improve access to services and facilities in the High Peak. Joan Rutherford, who has written this practice piece, is the Treasurer of High Peak Access and an **Older People's Housing Champion** working with others across England on housing and related issues.

7.1 Comments on the Preferred Options

When the Preferred Options for the Local Plan were published, High Peak Access (HPA) decided (in April 2013) to comment. In the submission they said that:

'HPA believe that disabled people should, as far as possible, have the same opportunities as non-disabled people to access jobs, housing, shopping, parks, squares and open spaces and all the other services and facilities that the High Peak offers. To do this, it is essential that the design of all types of development is as accessible as possible.

Inclusive design can be of benefit to all sections of the population, including non-disabled people. It is particularly relevant to an ageing population.'

HPA noted that the Preferred Options document, as part of the draft Local Plan, contained only three specific references to designing for disabled people.

- The Council will be supportive of developments that achieve the Lifetime Homes standard;
- The Council will require all new residential development to address the housing needs of local people by... requiring dwellings, including small dwellings, to be designed to provide flexible accommodation which is capable of future adaptation to meet the criteria in Lifetime Homes or successor documents; and
- All development should be well designed... whilst also contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place. This will be achieved by... promoting developments that are accessible to all users.

7.2 HPA's specific requests

HPA, however, requested that:

- all new dwellings in High Peak should be designed to achieve disabled visitor access, that is, they should have an accessible living room and an accessible WC;
- a proportion of all new dwellings in High Peak should be built to the Lifetime Homes standard, to provide a range of types of accommodation for disabled people. The proportion should be specified; and
- these standards should be required for all new dwellings, unless the developer can demonstrate that there are site (or other) constraints that prevent their achievement.

HPA expressed the view that the requirement for inclusive design should be given greater prominence throughout the Local Plan otherwise there was a possibility that this would be overlooked at the stage when detailed proposals were considered. HPA therefore requested that reference be made in all relevant policies to ensure that the requirements of disabled people are considered.

HPA requested that appropriate wording be inserted into the following policies as part of the Local Plan:

Sustainable Development Principles (arguing that the population of older people in High Peak is projected to rise by 67% by 2033.) This highlights a greater need for accessible homes and services as the number of people with age related disability or mobility issues will also increase.

More reference should be made to this as a priority in relation to areas such as *New Employment Development; Change of Use of Existing Business Land and Premises; Promoting Peak District Tourism and Culture; New Housing Development; Retail and Town Centres; Primary Shopping Areas and frontages; Local Infrastructure Provision; Open Space and Recreation Facilities; Local Community Services and Facilities; Accessibility and Transport; and Strategic Development Sites.*

HPA argued that their suggested amendments would support the delivery of sustainable communities and contribute to achieving the wider social and economic objectives of the High Peak Local Plan.

7.3 The High Peak Local Plan examination

In February 2015, representatives from HPA gave evidence at the Examination in Public in Buxton. Their comments were reiterated urging the council to give greater prominence throughout the Local Plan to the requirement for inclusive design and stating that one 'bullet point' at the end of one list in a document of some 225 pages will not give disabled people confidence that their requirements are being treated as being as important as those of non-disabled people, and that they are welcome in the High Peak. It was felt that the amendments proposed would support the delivery of sustainable communities and contribute to achieving the wider social and economic objectives of the High Peak Local Plan.

7.4 The Inspector's report

The Planning Inspector issued his report in March 2016. He recommended several modifications to the draft Local plan to make the Plan 'sound and/or legally compliant and capable of adoption'. HPA were pleased to note that, although the Inspector did not take all their comments on board, he suggested the following modifications which are of great benefit to older and disabled people:

NB. **text** = delete; **bold text** = include/substitute

- Seeking to secure high quality, locally distinctive **and inclusive** design in all development and a high standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings, ensuring communities have a healthy, safe and attractive living environment **that can be accessed/used by everyone, including disabled people** and the risks from potential hazards are minimised.
- Promoting developments that are accessible to all users.
- Requiring the inclusive design of development, including buildings and the surrounding spaces, to ensure development can be accessed and used by everyone, including disabled people.
- In order to address the changes in population structure, new homes should seek to meet the criteria for Lifetime Homes or successor documents where possible, be designed to provide flexible, accessible accommodation that is capable of future adaptation to meet the differing and changing needs of households as they experience life events. Accordingly, new developments should aim to meet the needs of an ageing population by adhering to the optional technical standard for access, and the new nationally described space standard.
- Requiring Supporting dwellings, including small dwellings to be designed to provide flexible accommodation which is capable of future adaptation, to meet the criteria in Lifetime Homes or successor documents by seeking to achieve adequate internal space standards for the intended number of occupants in accordance with the Nationally Described Space Standard and delivered to meet the accessibility standards set out in the Optional Requirement M4(2) of Part M of the Building Regulations.

7.5 The adopted plan

High Peak Borough Council incorporated all the Inspector's proposed revisions into the *final Local Plan* which was adopted in April 2016.

7.6 The process

It takes time and energy. The documents are lengthy and somewhat dry. However, if you want to comment on proposals such as planning applications it is important to ensure that appropriate policies are included in the strategic documents so that they can be referred to in future representations.

7.7 Action to date

High Peak Access has provided training in inclusive design to members of High Peak and Derbyshire Dales Planning Committees and to High Peak Planners and Building Control officers, to ensure that they know the questions to ask of developers. They also have regular liaison meetings with High Peak planners. They are also sent links to planning applications of the types on which they have suggested that they might wish to comment.

7.8 Contact

High Peak Access at

Website <http://highpeakaccess.org.uk/>

Email: contact@highpeakaccess.org.uk

Care & Repair England

Care & Repair England is an independent charitable organisation which aims to improve older people's housing. It is a Registered Society with Charitable Status Reg No 25121R.

Head Office: Unit 9, The Renewal Trust Business Centre,
3 Hawksworth Street, Nottingham NG3 2EG

Website: www.careandrepair-england.org.uk

Email: info@careandrepair-england.org.uk

Twitter: @cr_england

Older People's Housing Champions

The Older People's Housing Champions is a network of older activists who support action by older people's groups to improve housing and related services for an ageing population across England.

Website: www.housingactionblog.wordpress.com

Email: housingchampionsnetwork@gmail.com

High Peak Access

High Peak Access (HPA) exists to promote access for all disabled people, living, working, or visiting the High Peak and surrounding areas; so that all members of society can participate in their community.

Website <http://highpeakaccess.org.uk/>

Email: contact@highpeakaccess.org.uk

Disclaimer

Care & Repair England has made every effort to ensure that the information and guidance in this publication were accurate when published but can take no responsibility for the subsequent use of this information, nor for any errors or omissions it may contain. To the extent permitted by law, Care & Repair England shall not be liable for any loss, damage or expense incurred by reliance on the information or any statement contained herein. Any References or third-party URLs are given for information and reference purposes only. Care & Repair England does not control or warrant the accuracy, relevance, availability, timeliness or completeness of the information contained on any third-party website. Inclusion of any third-party details or website is not intended to reflect their importance, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, products or services offered, nor the companies or organisations in question.



About Care & Repair England

Care & Repair England is an independent charitable organisation (Registered Society with Charitable Status Reg No 25121R) established in 1986 which aims to improve older people's housing. It aims to innovate, develop, promote and support practical housing initiatives and the related policy and practice which enable older people to live independently in their own homes for as long as they wish, particularly for older people living in poor or unsuitable private sector housing.

Care & Repair England
The Renewal Trust Business Centre
3 Hawksworth Street
Nottingham NG3 2EG

Tel: 0115 950 6500
email: info@careandrepair-england.org.uk
website: www.careandrepair-england.org.uk
twitter @cr_england

Copyright © Care & Repair England 2018. No part of the document, including any illustrations or diagrams, may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission.

Published 2018
Designed by The Design Box

Acknowledgement

Thanks are due to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for their support for this series of guides as part of a programme of work by Care & Repair England to enable more marginalised older people to influence decision making about housing and related services.

