



Neighbourhood Planning National Association of Local Councils Report on Neighbourhood Plans



The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has recently commissioned and published a report on Neighbourhood Planning. This is a short article which looks at how the findings of the report relate to neighbourhood planning in Cornwall.

The report identifies some key barriers for neighbourhood planning. But are these an issue in Cornwall?

5 year land supply: The good news is, Cornwall Council can demonstrate a 5 year land supply and we believe that we will continue to do so when the more stringent delivery texts introduced by the revised NPPF come into force. So housing policies in neighbourhood plans and the Cornwall Local Plan can be given full weight in Cornwall.

Strategic Policies: Neighbourhood plans have never been able to override strategic policies. We are explicit about this in our guidance and can help you to add local detail to the strategic framework provided by the Cornwall Local Plan.

Keeping up to date with national and local strategic policy and policies ageing: This is a challenge all planning policy faces. When new ministerial statements are made or when national or local policy is updated, the most up to date policy always applies. This works in NDPs' favour, when they can supersede a non-strategic policy in a local plan document. We advise groups working on their NDPs to build in some flexibility to reduce the risks of their plan going out of date too quickly. The Cornwall Local Plan was adopted in November 2016 and its policies too will age, particularly when it is five years old in November 2021. The Council is just starting the process of deciding what it will need to review and when this will happen and we will keep NDP groups fully informed of any implications for their plans. We're also working with some of the groups whose NDPs were adopted early on, to consider whether to review their plans, and others will be able to learn from and follow this process.

Interpretation: Whenever a decision on an application is made, policies must be interpreted and the planning balance of considerations weighed up. We support NDP groups to write clear policies, so that the risk of misinterpretation is reduced. Please use our templates and talk to us about what you want to achieve. We are also looking at ways to bring NDP groups together with planning officers more often so they can explain what is most important to them – and have already done this with some of the groups with made plans.

Emerging plans: NDP designated areas are mapped as constraints, so that officers dealing with applications know that you have an NDP and what stage it has reached. There is a direct link from the electronic constraints map to your NDP webpages – please keep your information up to date so that officers can take it into account, giving appropriate weight following our [Weight of Emerging Neighbourhood Plans Guide](#)

Success at appeal: We have a good success rate for appeals involving a development boundary set by an NDP and in defending the principal residence condition. Where there are elements of interpretation, for example design policies, we have varying success, especially if the original policy does not identify the special quality of the area and say why harm would be caused to character, landscape or environment. We use these cases to illustrate the importance of creating clear, well evidenced, policies and to help groups write stronger policies.

Overall: understanding how the planning system works will help you get the most out your neighbourhood plan and manage the expectations of your community, so that you all know what powers are available to you and the scope of your neighbourhood plan. The neighbourhood planning team is here to help you with that and to support you to translate your aims and objectives into an effective planning document that is as strong as possible.