

How to PLAN for success

Housing delivery is firmly on the Government's agenda and this controversial topic is rarely out of the headlines of both national and local news, but who really decides where these houses will go?

Local Plans vs Neighbourhood Plans

The Government sets the housing target for each authority area, however the responsibility is passed to the Local Planning Authorities to prepare a Local Plan which determines where those houses will go. Every area in England and Wales is obligated to have an up to date Local Plan in place and this must be reviewed every five years.

Councils can choose to identify specific sites or allocate a number of homes to a specific village or town. Local Plans will also include policies which are used to manage the character and appearance of development. These will include policies for the biodiversity improvements, affordable housing, the size of homes to be built as well as specific energy and design requirements. All of which will influence the overall number, type and appearance of the homes which are built. Whilst Local Plans are evidence based documents, they are subject to consultation with local stakeholders which feeds into their drafting.

Local Plans are not the only Plan which will determine where housing will go or what it will look like; introduced through the Localism Act 2011, Neighbourhood Plans became part of the wider Local Plan. These Plans were introduced to allow communities to have more

influence and control over their area to ensure they get the right type of development for their neighbourhood. Whilst these Plans cannot be used to block development identified in the Local Plan, they are an extremely powerful tool when it comes to determining where development will go and potentially what it will look like.

These Plans identify a vision for the area and set objectives for the next 15 to 20 years. These are produced by an authorised local community organisation such as a parish or town council but can also be a separate Neighbourhood Plan Group. There is not the same requirement for these to be regularly updated, however they must be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan and are therefore often subject to review following the adoption of a new Local Plan.

Where a Local Plan seeks to allocate a housing figure to a settlement, a Neighbourhood Plan has the ability to identify where those houses will be built. It is important to note that these Plans can also protect land from development which is considered to be of particular importance to local communities. Local Green Space can be land which holds a particular local significance of which the definition is quite wide. However a site's recreational value is a common justification, its beauty, historic significance, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife are also potential valid reasons to seek its destination. It is important to note that for a site to qualify as a Local Green Space it does not require to be open to the

public or have permission from the landowner to be allocated. Once designated the land has a similar level of protection as Green Belt.

Who decides?

Neighbourhood Plans and Local Plans are both part of the overall Development Plan for an area once adopted and therefore both have the potential to determine where development will and will not go. To ensure the right promotion strategy for your land it is important to understand the timetable for the Council's Local Plan, the level of housing likely to be directed towards your town or village and whether a Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in your area. However, the important point to note is that both Plans are the subject of consultation; it is important to actively engage with the plan making process and ensure that the Council is aware of the availability of your site and that you can show its achievable and deliverable. The best way to do this is through the Council's call for sites process. A similar exercise is often completed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Our Planning system works best if development is properly planned for and therefore understanding how the Council's Local Plan intends to identify housing sites and the role that a Neighbourhood Plan could have in the selection of sites is vital to ensuring your site has the best chance of success.

Could your land have development potential?
Find out more about land promotion:

Victoria Groves

Associate Director, Planning, Catesby Estates plc

T: 01256 637914

E: victoriag@catesbyestates.co.uk

W: www.catesbyestates.co.uk

