

Within this local authority there are 3 made Neighbourhood Plans, one that is having a referendum next week, plus another 16 parishes in various stages of neighbourhood planning, and two parishes that have asked me to speak to them about Neighbourhood Planning. To save your fingers going at overtime that's 22 out of the eligible 52 councils.

Doing a Neighbourhood Plan doesn't cost B&NES anything, in fact the support grants from DCLG means you actually make money out of them, but it is a huge investment of time and effort by the people doing them, so they have a real feeling of ownership once the plans are made.

I have recently polled 35 National Neighbourhood Planning Champions, from all over the country, and while B&NES scores well for the number of Neighbourhood Plan designations it has, it was by far and away the worst for compliance to made plans. So far policies in all three made plans in B&NES have been breached in recent decisions.

Within Clutton there have been 3 such applications. Two I can't discuss for legal reasons, but in the third the applicant & his agent paid for pre-application advice and the officer never mentioned the Neighbourhood Plan even though two of the policies affect his application.

PPG para 006 of The Neighbourhood planning section says:

"A neighbourhood plan attains the same legal status as the Local Plan once it has been agreed at a referendum and is made (brought into legal force) by the local planning authority. At this point it becomes part of the statutory development plan."

But The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, goes further as it says in section 38(5)

"if to any extent a policy contained in a development plan for an area conflicts with another policy in the development plan the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan".

I will continue to support local groups, for all the reasons stated in the Council Connect magazine, as I still believe that Neighbourhood Planning & localism are a good thing.

Finally I would like to congratulate Liz Richardson, as it was announced today that the Chew Valley NP has made it into the NALC Project of the Year Finalists list – so there is something of Neighbourhood Planning in B&NES to be proud about.