

I am here as the Chairman of the B&NES group within the Avon Local Councils Association, ALCA. In B&NES these town and parish councils make up 52% of the total electorate in B&NES.

Those of you who have parishes in your wards will know that for this first tier of government the main concerns seem to be the three P's, Parking, Poo and Planning. Having visited 22 councils in the last couple of months I can confirm that though Dog Poo and parking are discussed, but they are trivial compared to Planning. Planning affects everyone and it's a long term effect, what is built now is likely to be around for decades, so people really care, it can change lives and communities permanently. The councils I've visited recently aren't NYMBYs, they know development is vital, and because it matters so much to them they want to be informed and consulted properly but unfortunately their perception is that this is not happening, and this is one of the reasons why so many parishes are getting involved in Neighbourhood planning. Within this local authority there are 3 made plans, 1 that is having a referendum today, 16 more parishes are at some stage of the neighbourhood planning route and 2 more that are now seriously considering doing a neighbourhood plan. To save your fingers going at overtime that's 22 out of the eligible 47 councils.

But having a Neighbourhood Plan does not guarantee that the system will work better. In my parish, Clutton, one applicant this year paid for pre-application advice, but the officer never mentioned the Made Neighbourhood Plan, let alone the fact that 3 of the policies in it would affect his application. I am aware of other examples of this sort but this is not the time or place to mention them.

We know that the planning department has a heavy workload, but it must be very demoralising working in a department where over 50% of the area you are responsible for think you not doing as good a job as you could. Nor can it be as effective or efficient as it should be for the council tax payers of B&NES.

Although it's a political syllogism – something should be done to get this working better.

Rosemary Naish