

HBF Planning Conference - 16 September 2015

Working with District Councils

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District Councils' Network
The one voice of district councils in the LGA

Close to people, focused on place



Working with District Councils

Context

Our challenges - delivering housing & sustainable communities

Some solutions - getting plans in place & delivering service

Case study - from Arun/ Coastal Sussex

Conclusions

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Context

- A Local Planning Authority & District perspective
- DCN
 - 200 District Councils
 - Special Interest Group within LGA
- Delivering growth
 - Demise of regional planning
 - Introduction of NPPF
 - Rise in neighbourhood planning
 - Significant adjustments
- We are in this together



Our challenges



Our challenges

- **Delivering growth**
 - We share objective of meeting housing needs
 - High quality places, cherishing the environment
 - With the right infrastructure
 - Sustainable development
 - Working with our communities
- **Delivering the right service**



Our challenges

delivering growth & implementing the NPPF



Duty to Cooperate and planning across LA boundaries

'Snakes and ladders' feature of plan-making system



Costs - the length of time preparing Local Plans - funding of LG/ planning

Our challenges

delivering growth & implementing the NPPF

Planning by Appeal and how NPPF 'presumption in favour' works



Planning
Inspectorate



Tension between strategic planning and 'localism'

Ballot box, local electorate and messaging from government



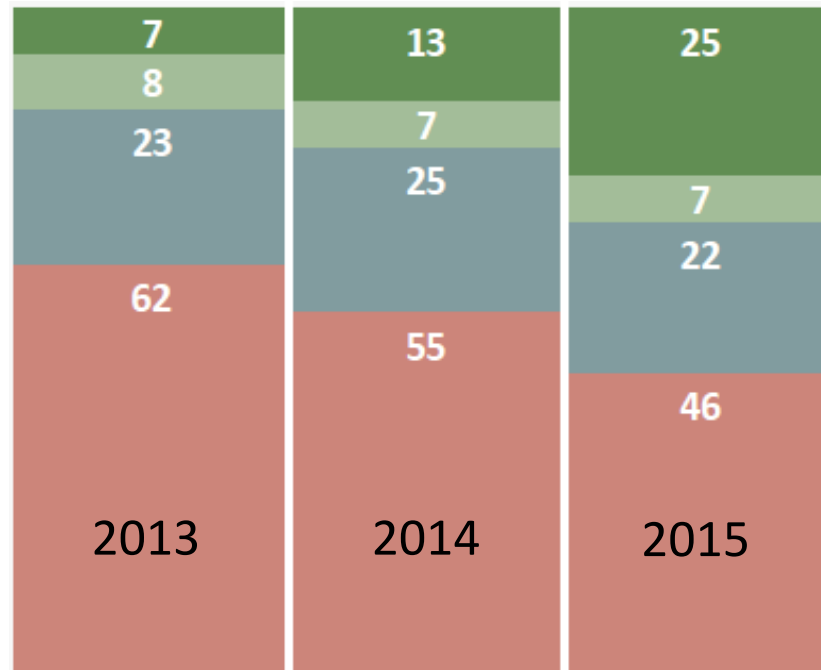
Our challenges – plan making

National Planning Policy Framework

“A Plan-led system”



...but progress has been slower than we need



Local Plan Found Sound/
Adopted Post-Final NPPF

Local Plan Found Sound/
Adopted Post-Draft NPPF

Local Plan Published/
Submitted for Examination

Pre-NPPF Local Plan or
No Local Plan

NLP/ TRIP report
March 2015



Some solutions





DCN positions

on improvements needed to the
planning system



We need (1)

- A period of relative stability
- A shift from 'planning by appeal'
- To support (and give time and space) to those responsibly agreeing local plans





DCN positions

on improvements needed to the
planning system



We need (2)

- Improvements to local planning regime - effective processes with incentives to do right thing
- Local democratic empowerment
- Consistency of messaging on balance between localism and strategic national priorities



Improving Local Plans & Strategic Planning - June 2015 Joint Position Statement



RTPI

mediation of space - making of place

Shared challenges & solutions - to improve and simplify the local planning process

- Reducing risks and costs - for developers and local and central government
- Incentivise plan-making
- Making plans shorter
- Cross-boundary strategic planning



Improving Local Plans & Strategic Planning

Reduce risks & costs

- Options for both
 - A Strategic Plan (stand-alone/ + local area plans)
 - A Staged Examination
- Enable PINS to find plans partially sound
- Give better 'window' for plan-making
 - with LPA local plan timing commitment
 - amended 'prematurity' & 5 yr land supply guidance

Provide plan-making Incentives

- Forging links with infrastructure funding via LEPs and emerging Devolution deals
- Rewards for planning delivery on plans
- Enabling strategic planning powers and devolving incentives

Improving Local Plans & Strategic Planning

Shorter Plans

- Reduce burden of evidence & review basis of 'proportionate' evidence *and*
- Enable PINS to provide early advise on level of evidence required
- Cross-sector working with DCLG to bring in a national 'set' of Devt Management Policies

Facilitate plan making & cross boundary planning

- Link Govt devolution & infrastructure offer to agreed joint plans on housing supply
- Promote strategic planning to embrace rigorous, inclusive & proportionate governance
- Facilitate complete coverage of strategic planning

Improving Local Plans and Strategic Planning

- our joint suggestions are about ...

- Offering
 - more choice on how to plan
 - better 'tools' & de-risking the process
 - more consistent strategic planning
- Complementing devolution, combined authorities etc. via local democracy and stronger links between LPAs & LEPs
- Shifting resource appeals > plan-making
- A less adversarial process
- Refinement rather than upheaval
- Delivering growth more effectively



Solutions - Proper resourcing of planning

- Development industry needs well resourced/ experienced/ responsive LA planning services
- How can we resource this?
 - Cost recovery - locally set planning fees
 - Linked performance regime
 - Retain and target incentives
 - De-risk local planning process
 - Greater certainty on infrastructure and its funding



Case study - Arun DC

- Arun Local Plan
 - Re-started in 2010
 - Cost to date - £1.4 million Pounds
 - Submitted Jan 2015 for examination (580 per annum)
 - Updated OAN following revised ONS figures in March 2015 ~ now (758 homes per annum)

= 12-18 months Suspension

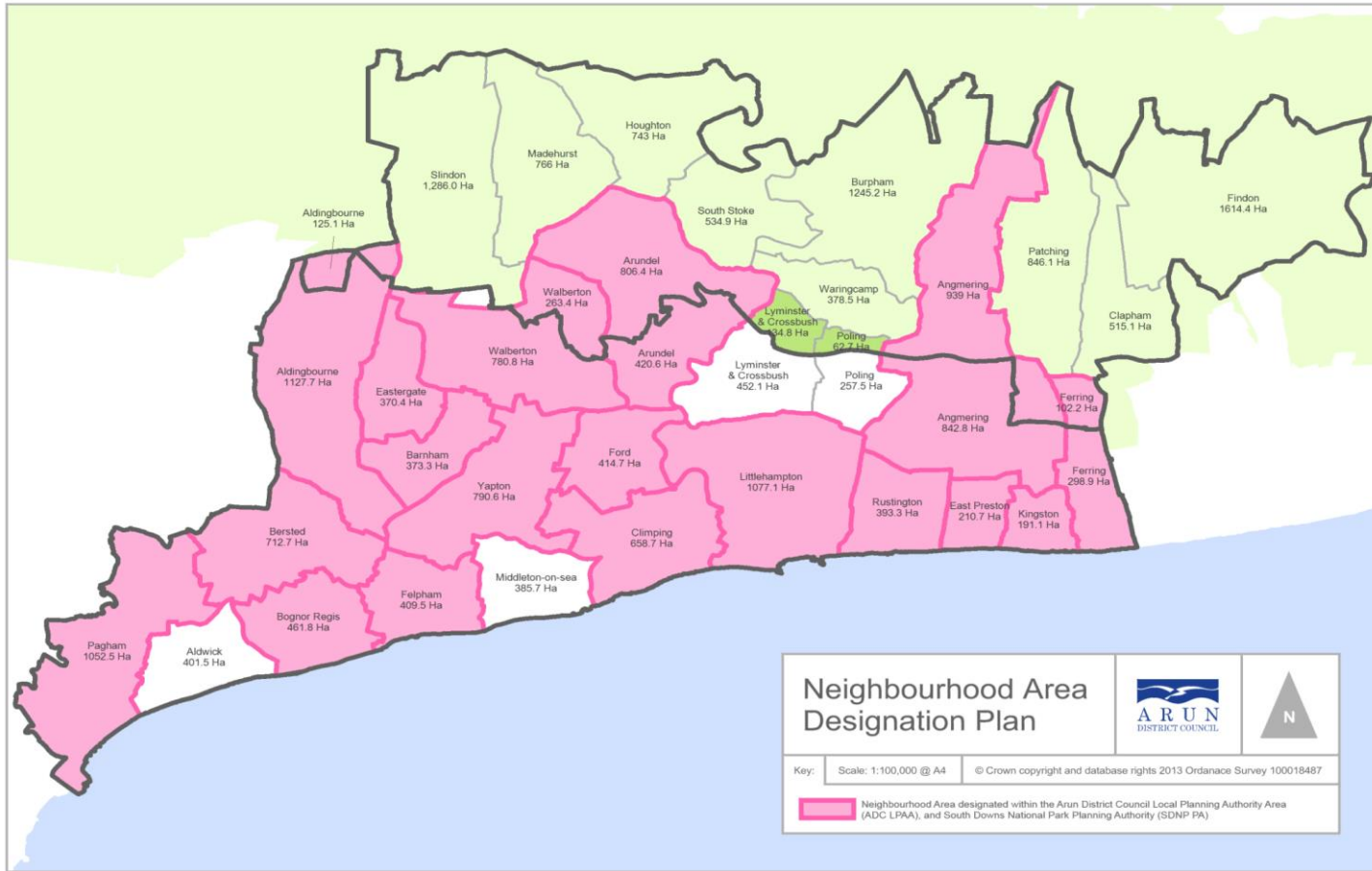


Case study

- Potential Impact
 - Lack of certainty – Not good for Homebuilders, residents, Councils, business
 - Increased cost (updating studies, delay)
 - New Plan will be out of sync with Neighbourhood Plans



Case study



Case study

- The positive – Duty to Cooperate
 - Councils working much more closely together on strategic planning.

Eg: Coastal West Sussex & Greater Brighton Strategic Planning Board

Outcome: Local Strategic Statement= Strategic objectives & spatial policies



Conclusions

- NPPF has brought about significant challenges
- System is not working as it should 3+ years on
- An improved box of tools is needed
- Refinement rather than major reform
- Positive planning and collaboration is in both public and private sector's interest
- LA Planning needs to be properly resourced (within a performance regime) if it is to deliver



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