

# The Challenge of Localism

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# LG Group

- The Local Government Group is made up of six organisations that work together to support, promote and improve local government.
  - Politically led & cross party
  - The Environment & Housing Programme Board has responsibility for LG Group activity in the area of the sustainability of the environment, including issues of planning, waste and housing.
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# Who are our members?

- 422 authorities in England and Wales:
  - County councils
  - Metropolitan District Councils
  - English unitary authorities
  - London boroughs
  - Shire District Councils
  - Welsh Unitary Authorities
  - Fire Authorities
  - Police authorities
  - National Park Authorities
  - Passenger Transport Authorities
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- Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) is part of the LGA, but retains full autonomy in dealing with Welsh affairs.
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# The LG Group believes:

- People should have the power to shape the places in which they live
  - Councils are uniquely positioned as the accountable public body to plan for their communities
  - Unlocking councils' potential to play a leadership role is critical to the delivery of housing and other development
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# Big Society

- Individuals taking on more responsibility for their areas
  - Community led planning process
  - Local authorities have been doing this for years. What will new approach require over and above existing practice?
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# Big Society

- Avoid costly duplication or wasted effort
  - There will need to be a balance – genuine engagement v time & resources
  - Democratically accountable local decision-making
  - Local elections demonstrate the power of local democracy to generate political pressure on specific issues
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# Big Society

- LG group support the principle behind community led planning, are keen to ensure that this genuinely works from the bottom up with local councils and communities collaborating and setting out their vision and plans
  - Strong local plans set out the needs of communities and local economies and provide certainty and clarity that the development industry need to invest in an area
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# Post RSS strategic working

- Responsibility and leadership from the bottom up for 'larger than local' planning
  - Local Enterprise Partnerships, flexible enough to suit other self-determined sub regional partnership arrangements
  - At the local level, maintain 'backwards compatibility' between present LDF and governments proposals
  - Work is already underway with PAS and POS on projects to share examples of collective, cross boundary plan-making and good local plans
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# Major infrastructure decision making

- Major Infrastructure Unit (successor IPC) should be limited to projects which are genuinely national in scale and informed by evidence and understanding of the impact on communities
  - Councils have a central role to play in working with developers to shape schemes, and their communities interests must be represented
  - Councils need to be adequately resourced to understand and assess the local and sub-regional impact of national schemes
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# National Planning Policy

- LG Group is keen to work with Government to overhaul 2,000 pages of planning rules
  - New framework should be clear, simple and limited to outcomes of national importance and priority. Process and local outcomes remain at the discretion of local communities
  - Support authorities to 'do things for themselves' without detailed government guidance
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# Council tax & business rate incentives

- Housing targets - financial / tax incentives
  - New Homes Bonus needs to be part of a wider package including developer contributions through s106 agreements, local development tariffs and central government capital investment
  - Distributional issues for the local government settlement particularly for two tier areas
  - Local housing needs are different in different areas of the country
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# Community Right to Build

An alternative model: within current planning system, councils could use a Local Development Order (LDO) to allow for community-led proposals to be classed as permitted development where they meet certain locally defined criteria. Councils already have the power to do this. Central government could require them to do so by stipulating in national planning policy that Local Planning Authorities put in place an LDO setting out their Community Right to build policy. This would be consistent with the recommendations of the Rural Coalition

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# Where central government can provide leadership

- Ensure councils have all the powers, levers and resources they need to plan together
  - Remove central prescription - a small set of focused national outcomes, with other planning policy determined locally
  - Restrict the ability of the planning inspectorate to overturn locally agreed plans and decisions
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# Where central government can provide leadership

- Give councils freedom to charge appropriate local fees to support an effective planning service
  - An effective and cohesive package of incentives for housing and development - this includes financial incentive and local tariffs
  - Amend village green legislation to remove minority group's ability to frustrate development – green space can be protected through the local plan
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# Where LG group can help

- The transition to a devolved regime is potentially the biggest devolutionary shift since the original Town and Country Planning Act in 1947 and will therefore require a strong level of sector led support.
  - The LG Group are developing new ways of supporting elected members dealing with planning to ensure they have the skills and capacity to deliver this enhanced strategic planning role. Details on this will be communicated shortly.
  - We are also working with the Planning Officers Society (POS) and Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and others within the sector to understand issues as they arise and provide advice to ensure that effective decision making can continue.
  - The intention is to help planners to keep planning going locally, and also demonstrate that local government is an influential and constructive partner that government should be engaging with.
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# Thank You

More information, including briefings, alerts and reports available at:

[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

keyword: planning

or email

[info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

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