

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING

*Councils will recall the CIL Briefing sent out earlier this year by NALC Legal Services, and in line with neighbourhood planning, All Things Neighbourhood Planning consider that Councils could and should go one step further and this article looks to explore health and wellbeing through neighbourhood planning.*

As Councils will know where a Neighbourhood Plan is in force, they will receive a greater share of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds. This additional funding places greater responsibility on the council to deliver infrastructure and facilities, and local councils may wish to consider how they can use this funding to improve the health of residents.

Through neighbourhood planning, local councils have the opportunity to create places which will enhance the health of the communities they serve. Neighbourhood Plans can address health and well-being in a wide variety of different ways - from tackling pollution, encouraging healthy eating, improving access to open space and the countryside, requiring new development to be designed to encourage healthy lifestyles, and improving local services and facilities. Health and wellbeing are not isolated issues and should be a central theme to any neighbourhood plan.

### Improving health and wellbeing through neighbourhood planning

Our environment greatly affects our health. At its most extreme, the World Health Organisation estimates that globally, 12.6 million people die each year as a result of living or working in an unhealthy environment<sup>1</sup>. In the UK, some of the nation's greatest health challenges, such as obesity, mental

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<sup>1</sup> WHO 2016, An estimated 12.6 million deaths each year are attributable to unhealthy environments, available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/15-03-2016-an-estimated-12-6-million-deaths-each-year-are-attributable-to-unhealthy-environments>

health issues, physical inactivity and the needs of an ageing population are influenced by the quality of our built and natural environment<sup>2</sup>.

To illustrate how communities can tackle issues of health and well-being through neighbourhood planning, this article draws on real examples from Neighbourhood Plans in force across the country.

### Minimising exposure to pollution

According to the nation's Clean Air Strategy, air pollution is the top environmental risk to human health in the UK<sup>3</sup>. Recognising the threat of air pollution, the *Godalming and Farncombe Neighbourhood Plan's* "Healthy Air" policy requires all development proposals to assess their impacts on air quality<sup>4</sup>.

Similarly, exposure to noise can impact on quality of life and give rise to adverse health effects by causing annoyance and sleep disturbance<sup>5</sup>. Addressing specific local concerns about noise levels, the *Lewes Neighbourhood Plan*<sup>6</sup> requires new developments to assess the effects of traffic noise.

### Healthy eating

The *Standish Neighbourhood Plan* identifies obesity as a local issue affecting resident's health. The plan seeks to instil healthy lifestyles in young people by controlling the number of hot food takeaways opening in the town, particularly in proximity of the secondary school.

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<sup>2</sup> Public Health England – Written Evidence (BEN0186), available at: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/built-environment-committee/built-environment/written/22901.html>

<sup>3</sup> Department for Food, Environment & Rural Affairs, Clean Air Strategy, available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/770715/clean-air-strategy-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/770715/clean-air-strategy-2019.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Godalming and Farncombe Neighbourhood Plan, available at: [https://www.waverley.gov.uk/info/200358/neighbourhood\\_plans/2164/godalming\\_and\\_farncombe\\_neighbourhood\\_plan\\_referendum](https://www.waverley.gov.uk/info/200358/neighbourhood_plans/2164/godalming_and_farncombe_neighbourhood_plan_referendum)

<sup>5</sup> DEFRA, Noise Policy Statement for England 2010, available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/69533/pb13750-noise-policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69533/pb13750-noise-policy.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Lewes Neighbourhood Plan, available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Lewes-Neighbourhood-Plan-Made-Plan.pdf>

Local food production is encouraged by the *Harvington Neighbourhood Plan*<sup>7</sup> which protects land in use for agriculture and horticulture, and includes a community project to analyse rare fruit trees in the area's many orchards, thereby preserving such crops for future generations.

## Access to open space and the countryside

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (2018) recognises that access to nature is important to both physical and mental health<sup>8</sup>. The *Pebworth Neighbourhood Plan*<sup>9</sup> supports the dual purposes that public rights of way and bridleways provide in enabling people to access the countryside by walking, cycling and horse-riding, and their benefits to flora and fauna in providing 'green corridors' between habitats.

To protect their parks, allotments and other publicly accessible green areas from the pressures of development, many, if not most, neighbourhood plans designate such areas as *Local Green Spaces* - granting protection equivalent to "green belt" status.

## Designing healthy developments

There are a range of nationally-recognised standards and toolkits which can be employed through neighbourhood plans to enhance the quality of new development - some of which have benefits to health and well-being.

To meet the needs of older people, people with limited mobility, and wheelchair users, the *Goring Neighbourhood Plan*<sup>10</sup> requires a proportion of

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<sup>7</sup> Harvington Neighbourhood Plan, available at:  
<https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/documents/10586/9654909/Harvington+NP+Referendum+Version+RFS-min.pdf/aa58df99-789b-e1e7-edb6-cc98eb0230dc>

<sup>8</sup> HM Government 2018, A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, available at:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Pebworth Neighbourhood Plan, available at:  
<https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/documents/10586/0/Pebworth+Parish+NP+Referendum+Version.pdf/879f1370-93f2-18d4-d99e-7d742d531b61>

<sup>10</sup> Goring Neighbourhood Plan, available at:  
<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/GNP%20Plan%20Document%20Referendum%20version%20compressed.pdf>

new homes to be accessible and adaptable, by meeting *optional technical housing standards* set out in Building Regulations<sup>11</sup>.

Responding to projected increases in the number of people suffering from dementia, the *Aylsham Neighbourhood Plan*<sup>12</sup> encourages new developments to be designed to be ‘dementia-friendly’, meeting the design principles set out in “At a Glance: a Checklist for Developing Dementia Friendly Communities”<sup>13</sup>.

Building for Life 12 is endorsed by the government’s national planning policies and sets out standards for the design of new developments<sup>14</sup>. Building for Life 12 promotes well-being by requiring new developments to create places within a development where people can meet each other, such as public spaces and community buildings. The *Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan*<sup>15</sup> requires new developments to be built to the Building for Life 12 standard.

Becoming a victim of crime, or living in fear of crime, will also affect people’s wellbeing. The *Rye Neighbourhood Plan* requires new developments to meet the “Secured by Design” standard, a police initiative to guide the design and specification of new homes to reduce opportunities for crime<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Building Regulations Part M4(2) & M4(3)

<sup>12</sup> Aylsham Neighbourhood Plan, available at:

[https://www.broadland.gov.uk/info/200164/neighbourhood\\_plans/376/aylsham\\_neighbourhood\\_plan](https://www.broadland.gov.uk/info/200164/neighbourhood_plans/376/aylsham_neighbourhood_plan)

<sup>13</sup> Housing LIN, At a Glance: a Checklist for Developing Dementia Friendly Communities, available at:

[https://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_assets/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/Viewpoints/Viewpoint25\\_AtAGlance.pdf](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/Viewpoint25_AtAGlance.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Design Council, Building for Life 12, available at:

<https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/building-life-12-third-edition>

<sup>15</sup> Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan, available at:

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-planning-in-mid-suffolk/stowupland-neighbourhood-plan/>

<sup>16</sup> Secured by Design, available at:

[https://www.securedbydesign.com/images/downloads/HOMES\\_BROCHURE\\_2019\\_NEW\\_version\\_2.pdf](https://www.securedbydesign.com/images/downloads/HOMES_BROCHURE_2019_NEW_version_2.pdf)

## Local services and facilities to improve health

Neighbourhood Plans can identify priority projects to be delivered in the area, or as part of a package of facilities to support major development. For example, the *Sutton Neighbourhood Plan*<sup>17</sup> requires its major site allocation to deliver expansion of local medical facilities, and provide specific sports and recreation facilities.

These are just a sample of some of the initiatives being used by local councils to meet their community health and wellbeing needs, and will hopefully provide 'food for thought' to other councils developing their plans.

To discover more about Neighbourhood Plans, or for further advice on writing or drafting a plan, visit [www.neighbourhood-planning.co.uk](http://www.neighbourhood-planning.co.uk)

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<sup>17</sup> Sutton Neighbourhood Plan, available at:  
<https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Made%20Sutton%20Neighbourhood%20Plan%20May%202019%20SMALL%20FILE.pdf>