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Renaisi

Neighbourhood planning capacity building in deprived areas

Evaluation report
December 2015 -
June 2016

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of the *Neighbourhood Planning Capacity Building in Deprived Areas* project: a DCLG funded programme to support deprived urban areas to engage with neighbourhood planning.

The report outlines the journey of the six neighbourhoods involved and provides an analysis of the outcomes of the programme. It also provides recommendations for how to encourage a greater take up of neighbourhood planning in the future.

Background

Neighbourhood planning is one of the government's flagship policies for devolving power and decision making to local communities. The government wants communities to become more self-reliant and to take advantage of new powers that are available to them to improve their local areas, including through neighbourhood planning.

Although the take up of neighbourhood planning across England since the Localism Act came into force in 2011 has been good, it is by no means universal. There are parts of the country where take up is low, and urban areas in particular have been slow to take advantage of the opportunity.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) commissioned the *Neighbourhood Planning Capacity Building in Deprived Areas* project to build the capacity of community organisations in six of the country's most deprived areas so that they can advocate for neighbourhood planning and support communities to take up the opportunity.

The project fits into the neighbourhood planning mobilisation strategy which sets out a number of activities that will create a big 'push', resulting in many more communities becoming aware of neighbourhood planning and the benefits of taking it up. The aim is to create a pipeline of new communities coming forward to deliver neighbourhood planning in the future.

Objectives of the programme

The programme was designed to achieve four main objectives:

- To build the capacity of local voluntary and community organisations in six areas in the most deprived 20% of wards, on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 to enable them to raise awareness of neighbourhood planning within their local community through a greater understanding of the process and benefits of neighbourhood planning;
- To support the community organisations to deliver on-the-ground activities in their local communities, funded through small grants awarded to the organisations and designed to encourage local people to get involved;
- To inspire similar communities and enable them to take up neighbourhood planning through capturing and disseminating the learning from this project, through the production of legacy materials including training materials and case studies;
- In the long term, to increase the number of communities in deprived areas who are using neighbourhood planning to take control of how their area develops in the future. However, it is recognised that this outcome will take place beyond the end of this project.

Programme design and delivery

Renaisi worked in partnership with Tony Burton CBE, the Community Development Foundation (CDF) and a cohort of Renaisi associates who work as Big Local reps to design and deliver the programme. Delivery partners' lead roles and responsibilities are outlined below.

Service provider	Activity
Renaisi	Overall project management, quality assurance, and research and evaluation
Tony Burton CBE	Design of training programme and provision of neighbourhood planning expertise and support
Neighbourhood Facilitators	Recruit community organisations and deliver programme of training and capacity building
CDF	Grant management and due diligence of community organisations

A summary of the programme with key milestones is outlined below and are described in more detail in section 3 of the report.



Delivery roadmap
Building neighbourhood planning capacity in deprived areas



Date	Activity
Dec 2015	Six neighbourhoods identified amongst the most deprived 20% on the Index of Multiple Deprivation
Jan 2016	Six local community organisations selected within the identified neighbourhoods, spread across 6 regions
Jan 2016	Training plans developed and agreed with each area
Jan – March 2016	Training and capacity building delivered in each area
Jan - March 2016	'Getting Started' project plans completed by each organisation and engagement activities delivered
March 2016	Forward plans completed by each organisation setting out future mobilisation activities in their communities
March – June 2016	Links established between community organisations and other neighbourhood planning areas
May - June 2016	Production of legacy materials to inspire other areas to take up neighbourhood planning
June 2016	Production of evaluation report to capture the project and share learning and recommendations

Programme learning

The delivery of the programme varied in each of the neighbourhoods, in order to meet different needs and local contexts. Our report summarises the journey of each of the six community organisations and provides an analysis of the overall programme outcomes, including the impact on the knowledge and likelihood of the organisation leading on neighbourhood planning both before and after the training. It also provides some conclusions and recommendations for how to engage similar communities to take up neighbourhood planning in the future.

The report is structured as follows:

Section	
Section 1	Research and learning methodology
Section 2	Selection process and six pilot areas
Section 3	Approach to training and capacity building
Section 4	Area journeys
Section 5	Key programme outcomes
Section 6	Conclusions and recommendations
Section 7	Acknowledgements
Section 8	Appendix



Section 1: Research and learning methodology

Our approach

We used a mixed methods approach to capture learning from this project, with a focus on rich contextual information and immersive research methods. We drew insight from each area's approach and delivery through field observations, and the use of unstructured interviews and conversations with the local people involved. We also made use of some quantitative data analysis in order to complement these research findings.

The programme was delivered in a flexible and evolving way, in order to meet the different needs and ambitions of different areas, and to test different approaches. As it was not a fixed, rigidly defined intervention, we were not able to use rigorous statistical analysis techniques to assess its impact. Instead we used a light-touch collaborative approach to capture and record learning that provides some insight into the experiences of the different areas, and their advice for others who may consider developing a neighbourhood plan. The methods used are outlined in more detail below:

Research methods

Selection criteria: a key element of the brief was to work in the most deprived 20% of England, and in urban areas where there was no history of neighbourhood planning. Using GIS we plotted the most deprived, urban areas according to the IMD 2015 data and then cross-referenced with an open source map¹ showing Councils in England that had received expressions of interest from neighbourhood groups to engage in neighbourhood planning. This helped us to identify the gaps and produce a shortlist of areas where it was likely that no neighbourhood planning activity had taken place.

¹ <http://www.planningresource.co.uk/>

Local knowledge and neighbourhood-level data: when each area was confirmed, we used ward data mostly from the census 2011² to produce ‘area profiles’ which included information about population size, age, ethnicity, economic activity, tenure mix and land use.

These profiles were used by our facilitators as part of a scoping exercise to open up conversation with local community organisations and test their appetite and capacity to be involved. They were also used by our research and evaluation team to inform our approach, and provide context for project outcomes and learning. Facilitators also drew on their own local knowledge and contacts with local community organisations and agencies to supplement our source data.

Quantitative survey data: we administered a pre- and post- survey for all participants to complete:

- Before the training took place, to capture a baseline of participants’ prior knowledge and confidence;
- After the community activities were delivered, to assess how their knowledge and confidence had changed after the training and their experience of engaging others.

A total of 11 scale questions were asked, to assess participants’ knowledge of neighbourhood planning, their knowledge of their local area, and their confidence in taking action on neighbourhood planning.

Qualitative survey data: we collected qualitative feedback and information using the pre and post surveys. Questions included the local organisations or initiatives that individuals were involved in, their previous experience of similar planning or regeneration projects, and their perspectives on the most pressing needs in their area. This qualitative data was analysed to provide context for the quantitative data findings, to better target the programme design, and to capture advice and feedback on how to engage more urban deprived areas in neighbourhood planning in future. Pre and post surveys can be found in the Appendix.

Training plans and materials: each facilitator developed an individual training plan for each area, which was designed to meet local need as well as respect the individual circumstances and capacity of each community organisation. More information on our approach to training can be found in section 3, whilst individual training plans can be found in the Appendix. Facilitators also developed a range of training materials for their area, including presentations, hand-outs, information summaries and slides. These have been compiled and used to inform the legacy materials and recommendations in this report. All training materials can be found in the Appendix.

² <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/>

Field observations: a member of Renaisi's research and evaluation team was assigned to each area to conduct field observations and maintain contact and dialogue with each facilitator. Each team member spent approximately 1 day in each area undertaking unstructured interviews, recording people's stories, participating in area 'walkabouts' and observing and capturing people's responses, attitudes and behaviours. Photo evidence and video material was also captured for use in illustrative case studies and legacy materials.

Local area plans and reporting: community organisations, with the support of their facilitators, had to prepare two short action plans outlining how they were going to advocate for neighbourhood planning within their communities. These included a 'Getting Started' application, which detailed proposed on-the-ground engagement activities including use of a £2000 grant. And a Forward Plan, outlining whether/how the organisation was proposing to take its engagement with neighbourhood planning forward over the longer term. In general terms, the two reports have provided a good proxy for each organisation's overall journey on the programme - and have been useful to assess for variances in method and overall impact.

Facilitators' observations and insights: facilitators were asked to complete monthly progress reports, to capture the progress and ambitions of each of their areas on a regular basis. These have been used to chart the experience of each area through the programme, and have also informed the development of legacy materials and recommendations. Facilitators also compiled individual reports on community activities in each area, to summarise the programme of engagement that had taken place. We also conducted a Focus Group with facilitators towards the end of the programme, to develop our analysis and insights and help shape the recommendations in this report. We also used an online collaborative platform 'Basecamp' to encourage facilitators to share experiences, knowledge and best practice throughout the programme.

Limitations of research methods

The research and analysis presented in this report is intended to provide a rich insight into the experiences of the six pilot areas, and to inspire ideas for how to encourage more urban deprived areas to engage in neighbourhood planning in future. We have not used a traditional evaluation methodology, so we cannot produce conclusive or statistically significant evidence of the project's outcomes. However, by using a range of research methods we can contextualise and triangulate findings to provide a strong indication of what works in different contexts.

Section 2: Selection process and six pilot areas

We employed a two-stage selection process to identify our six pilot areas:

Phase 1: a methodological approach, as outlined earlier, **to identify 6 neighbourhoods** spread across 5 different regions across England.

The criteria we used included:

- Be within the 20% most deprived according to the most rest Index of Multiple Deprivation
- Not engaged in neighbourhood planning activities or in receipt of neighbourhood planning support
- Not in an area where there is a Town or Parish Council
- Preferably in areas that are urban in context

Following this exercise, a ‘long list’ was established to support facilitators to identify ‘opportunity’ areas, using their local insights, knowledge and networks.

The long list is outlined below:

London/South East/East	West Midlands	Yorkshire	North West	North East
-Wandsworth -Merton -Redbridge -Enfield -Barnet -Newham -Barking & Dagenham -Havering -Dartford -Thurrock -Basildon -Southend-On-Sea	-Northampton -Wellingborough -Redditch -Walsall -Sandwell -Dudley -Tamworth	-Grimsby -Lincoln -Rotherham -Barnsley -Scarborough	-Knowsley -Halton -Warrington -St Helens -Wigan -Bolton -Bury -Blackburn -Oldham -Tameside	-Sunderland -South Tyneside (and probably more but these are the most striking districts that met criteria 1 and 2)

Phase 2: a scoping exercise was then undertaken in each of the six neighbourhoods, which included conversations with local stakeholders, in order to identify prospective community organisations that could be involved. Facilitators identified a **long-list of 36 community organisations** who were then assessed for their ‘readiness, willingness and suitability’ to be involved. An assessment framework was established to determine their:

- Motivation and appetite to be involved in the programme
- Resources and capacity to be involved
- Involvement in wider neighbourhood programmes
- Local engagement and interest in spatial / planning issues
- History of community activism and engagement

A total of **six local community organisations** were then selected, as below. Some organisations that initially expressed an interest subsequently withdrew because of financial difficulties or concerns that they would be diverted from their core business. Others were signposted to the MyCommunityRights website so that they could engage with neighbourhood planning when it was a more convenient time for them to do so.

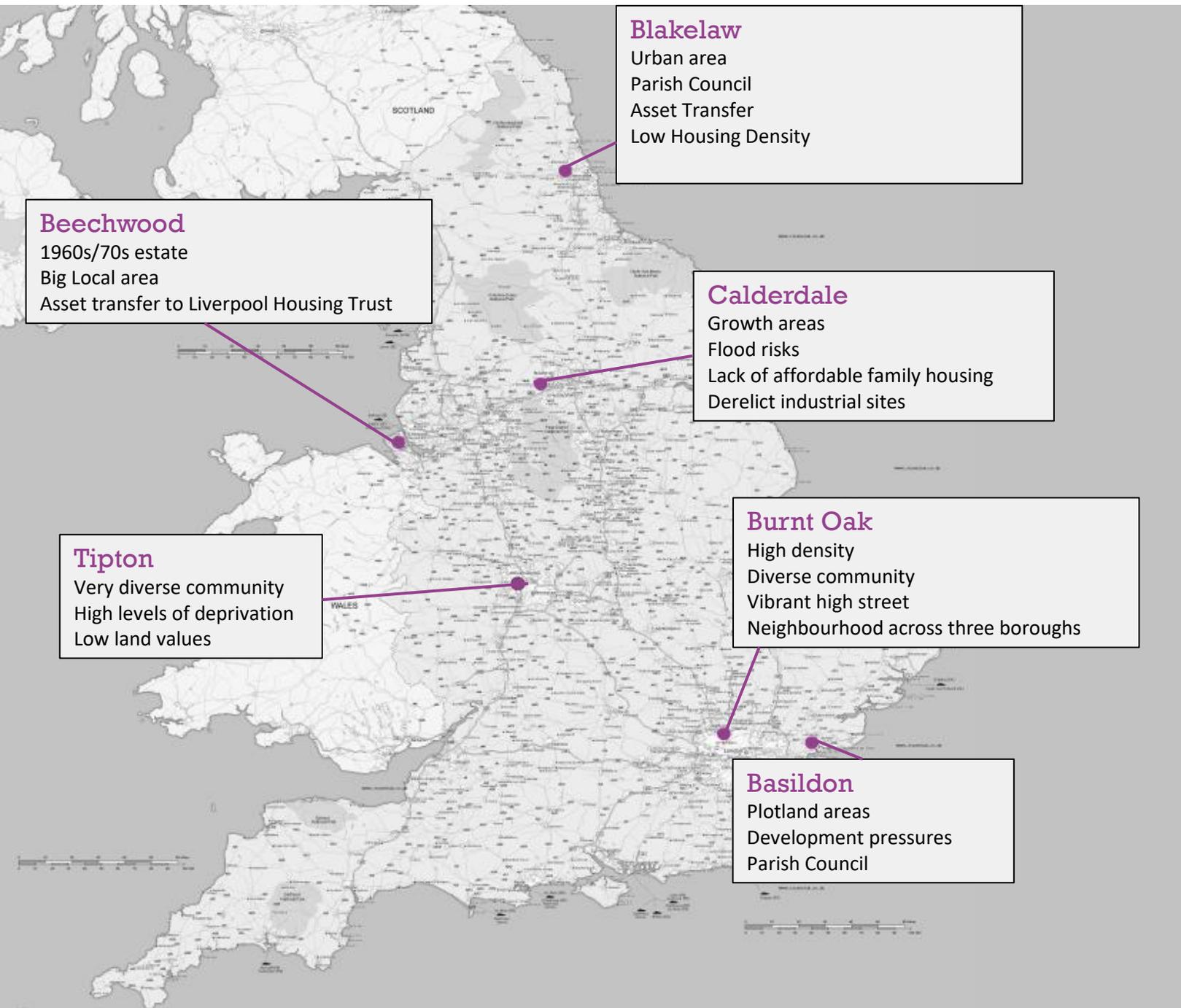
Region	Area	Name	Structure	Size
East England	Basildon	BBWCVS	CVS	8
London	Barnet	Love Burnt Oak	Community partnership	4 staff 12 volunteers
North West	Wirral	Beechwood	Community partnership	30
North East	Blakelaw	Blakelaw Ward Community Partnership	Charity	8 staff 7 volunteers
West Midlands	Tipton	Bangladeshi Women’s Association	Community partnership	18
Yorkshire & Humbs	Calderdale	Calderdale Community Foundation	Community Foundation	9

The 6 community organisations varied in terms of size, structure, aims and capacity but can broadly be classified into two types:

- **Umbrella / infrastructure organisations** working borough wide and providing support and services directly to members e.g. Calderdale Foundation and BBWCVS
- **Local community and voluntary organisations** which were much more neighbourhoods focussed, providing services to local people e.g. Love Burnt Oak, Beechwood Community Partnership, Blakelaw Ward Community Partnership and the Bangladeshi Women’s Association.

The **six neighbourhoods varied** in terms of different local contexts and drivers for neighbourhood planning - as illustrated on the map below (these are covered in more detail in sections 4 and 7).

This diversity highlights the challenge for us to explain the programme's outcomes with reference to any particular set of contextual factors, as described previously. Despite the fact that all of the areas were 'urban' and 'deprived' and that in every area we worked with a 'community organisation', the realities of the context on-the-ground varied considerably.



Section 3: Overview of training and capacity building

Facilitator support

Our training and capacity building programme was modelled on our experience of delivering the Big Local programme and using experienced, locally based facilitators to provide training, advice, guidance and encouragement to areas. The facilitators were the main point of contact for the community organisations and worked closely with each to help them make sense of neighbourhood planning, whilst also unlocking their capacity and leadership. Each area received approximately 25-35 days' worth of face-face, telephone and email support.

Training design workshop

A workshop with all facilitators and our neighbourhood planning advisor was held in early January to co-design and develop the programme of training. The workshop was structured as follows:

- A roundtable discussion on facilitators' experience and knowledge of neighbourhood planning;
- Overview of the programme, key milestones and timetable for delivery;
- A briefing on the core components of the proposed training programme;
- A discussion on the approach to designing individual training plans;
- Signposting to available resources, tools and materials

The main aim of the workshop was to agree the core components of the training programme, which would then be adapted and modified in discussion with each community organisation. The slides and materials from this workshop are included in the Appendix.

Development of local training plans

As there was no fixed approach to the individual training plans - we asked each facilitator to ensure the following sessions were included:

1. Know your neighbourhood
2. Introduction to neighbourhood planning and the process
3. Providing support and capacity building locally
4. Getting started: community engagement activities

We also required facilitators to include a ‘walkabout’ early on in their training plans to encourage people to actively engage with their local areas first, rather than the other way around. Information captured during the walkabouts would then be used to frame discussions about the potential role of a neighbourhood plan in each area. We also required facilitators to:

Connect neighbourhood planning to the local story – to help participants articulate and see the relevance of neighbourhood planning in ‘real terms’ (e.g. in protecting important parts of their heritage; in ensuring development mistakes of the past are not repeated; in addressing long-standing local issues such as the quality of the local High Street).

Develop the neighbourhood profile – to help participants compile some basic information on their area and start to "evidence base" for a neighbourhood plan. This also helped to build their skills in accessing and using different information sources in the local area (e.g. ward profiles) as online.

Adapt to local circumstances – to ensure training content was modified to suit the local area as well as accessible and appropriate for the intended participants. Individual training plans were then assessed by our neighbourhood planning advisor; adapted where necessary to ensure quality standards; and signed off centrally by the Renaisi team.

Delivery of local training plans

Individual training plans for each area can be found in the Appendix. Likewise the training delivered to each organisation is summarised in section 4 ‘area journeys’. However, in short, the training in each area was very similar. There were slight variations in terms of the length, number of sessions, and mix of people involved etc., but generally all followed the core programme, as outlined earlier.

Area	No. of training sessions	No. of area walkabouts	Involvement of LPA	Involvement of residents	Average no. of attendees
Beechwood	3	0	Y	Y	8-10
Blakelaw	5	2	Y	Y	12-15
Burnt Oak	3	1	N	Y	6
Tipton	3	1	Y	Y	20
Calderdale	3	1	Y	Y	5-8
Basildon	5	0	N	Y	5-7

The only notable ‘deviations’ to the core training programme were in Calderdale and Basildon. Both community organisations are ‘infrastructure’ organisations and therefore decided to market the training opportunity to local community and

voluntary groups directly. Two groups from both areas expressed an interest in neighbourhood planning and therefore additional training and support was made available to each.

On the whole training sessions were delivered over a relative short period of time and were fairly 'light touch'; no less than 1.5 hours but no more than 5 hours each, perhaps reflecting the limited capacity of community organisations and volunteers to get involved. They were also spread over a mix of weekdays/weekends and day/evenings. In Basildon, a whole day's training workshop was delivered which covered the entire programme, however take up was low.

Walkabouts were not undertaken in Beechwood or Basildon as participants had already undertaken similar exercises in their local area and so the focus of the sessions was much more on the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan and how it could help them to achieve the change they wanted.

The number of participants attending training in each area varied and also fluctuated between sessions - with people dropping in and dropping out at different times. However on average, across the six areas, a core group of about 6-8 were involved. This broadly included staff members, volunteers, trustees, residents as well as representatives from other local agencies and organisations.

Delivery of community activities

In addition to building the capacity of community organisations to engage with neighbourhood planning – the training also included support for each area to spread the learning and inspire others in their communities to get involved. Community organisations each submitted a Getting Starting project plan and application to Renaisi to access £2,000 to help with the delivery of local engagement activities. The type of activities delivered didn't vary significantly between areas but were clearly tailored to the specific circumstances of each area, eg. Bingo on the Beechwood Estate which has a significant proportion of elderly residents. The engagement activities are described in more detail in Section 4 but in summary include a mix of creative and more traditional forms of engagement, as below:

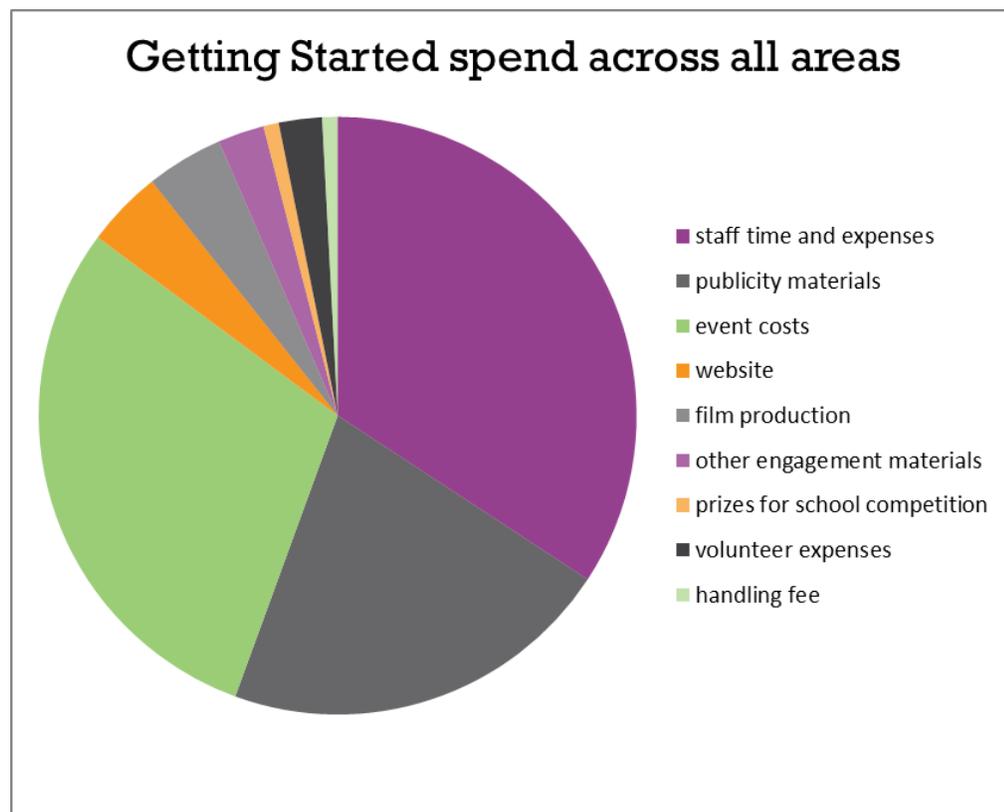
Type of engagement activity:

Social media	Flyers and posters	1-2-1 conversations
Film launch	Websites	School workshops
Community events	Bingo	Sports tournament
Door knocking	Press releases	Stakeholder presentations
Street interviews	Prizes/incentives	Community meetings

The engagement process in each area appears to have been very iterative and dynamic with groups consulting on a number of different aspects in parallel e.g. raising awareness, consulting on issues, negotiating 'notional' boundaries and recruiting to potential forums, all at the same time.

Interestingly most areas identified local events and activities that they could 'piggy back' onto – and so, prioritised taking the engagement 'to' people rather than the other way around. This is reflected in the Getting Started spend profile below, which shows that nearly 65% of the overall grant funding was used to pay for staff time and events.

A few areas adopted more innovative forms of engagement but in practice community organisations were constrained by the need to deliver and spend with the contract timescales and so harnessed local networks and channels. Further information on what each area did to mobilise communities is described in section 4.



Participant feedback

In the post-training survey, we asked respondents to tick those aspects of the training and capacity building programme that were most useful to them. Respondents could tick as many aspects as they liked. The results are summarised in the following table:

Programme element	Basildon	Beechwood	Blakelaw	Burnt Oak	Calderdale	Tipton	All pilots
Support from Facilitators	11	4	8	3	2	4	32
Training and opportunity to learn more about neighbourhood planning	19	4	8	3	2	4	40
Talking to others in your area about neighbourhood planning	13	3	9	2	2	5	34
Talking to others in your area about issues in your neighbourhood	11	3	9	3	2	6	34
Talking to other areas who have started neighbourhood planning	5	3	4	3	0	0	15
Materials and resources provided/signposted	14	4	6	1	2	1	28
£2000 community activities grant	15	4	4	2	2	1	28
Total	20	6	9	3	2	6	47

The training delivery and the opportunity to learn more about neighbourhood planning was a very popular feature of the programme, perhaps reflecting the fact that participants were largely unfamiliar with neighbourhood planning before embarking on the programme.

The support from facilitators was also highly rated. The **Basildon figure above slightly skews the overall picture** to give the impression that facilitator support was less valuable than the overall training. However pre and post surveys were only able to be collected after the first workshop in Basildon and so participants had received very little actual support or capacity building, at that point.

The opportunity to talk to others in the area was also rated positively, with an equal number of respondents valuing conversations about neighbourhood planning and about general issues in their area. The least useful aspect of the programme was talking to people in other areas who have already started neighbourhood planning, though this low response may have been skewed by a number of participants who had not yet accessed this opportunity, at the point of surveying.

Selection of participant quotes

Outlined below is a selection of participants' quotes collected during the pre and post surveys. They provide a useful overview of why people got involved, what they hoped to get out of the process, and what they found most useful.

Why did your organisation become involved in this project?

- *"To try and create a neighbourhood which meets not only local need, but the wider needs of Basildon with regard to housing, infrastructure and general improvement of our very small community"*
- *"We are passionate about improving the opportunities and outcomes for the community we serve."*
- *"To promote the community and help the citizens of the area, now and in the future."*
- *"We already have ideas how to improve our area, especially when we are located in the heart of Blakelaw"*
- *"We wanted to improve the look of our own street and make the area look nice for visitors."*
- *"To enhance our understanding of place and thereby increase our understanding of communities needs which links directly to our strategic grant making"*

What is your organisation hoping to get out of this project?

- *"A say in our local planning"*
- *"Greater knowledge and understanding of neighbourhood planning"*
- *"Improved quality of life for residents"*
- *"Community having their say"*
- *"Better control of resources within community"*
- *"Access to fresh thinking and ideas"*
- *"A bigger say in the direction of the area, for the benefit of the community."*
- *"To improve the look of our street and to encourage others to get involved and improve community spirit"*
- *"Learning to have a voice on how things can improve"*
- *"Knowledge and understanding and familiarity of neighbourhood planning issues"*
- *"To contribute to improving the lives of residents of the borough"*
- *"To improve the knowledge we have of the process and to find out if there are improvements in the process to make the aim easier and shorter to achieve"*

Is there anything else you found useful? (other than support from the facilitators and £2k grant)

- *“This area has complex local issues relating to travellers, drainage, highway access, footpath etc and highway congestion. This training helped clarify the process which is itself complex and typically the domain of professionals. Clarification and support from an outside body certainly helped reassure residents as to the possibilities and opportunities that can be achieved.”*
- *“Opportunity for grants”*
- *“It was delivered in such a way that everyone understand, and felt involved and to be able to make the decision to be part of the Neighbourhood plan.”*
- *“Working with agencies, partners and local residents to identify common ward issues. Sharing ideas and solutions.”*
- *“Having the facilitator was vital to the project”*
- *“My organisation the Community Foundation for Calderdale sees Neighbourhood Planning as a new way to provide insight into our understanding of local areas which will help inform us better with regard to aspects of our grant giving. So involvement in the training etc has greatly helped us see a way forward to support the local community in developing their Neighbourhood Plans”*
- *“Talking about the older times and how things have changed over the years”*

Is there anything else that would have been useful, but wasn't provided?

- *“I think that a more detailed roadmap on the steps needed to work towards producing a Neighbourhood plan would be helpful. There is some of this, but not enough detail for people to really get what is needed at each point.”*
- *“More time - it all felt a bit rushed”*
- *“It would have been useful to have more funding to spend on the event and to pay Love Burnt Oak staff to support this project”*
- *“Extra information for our age to read and more explanations of the language used as some words are new to our age.”*
- *“A trip to other Potential Neighbourhood Planning Areas. A seminar of other groups undertaking Neighbourhood Planning.”*

Is there anything that you or your organisation has done that you wouldn't have done otherwise?

- *“We are far more confident”*
- *“Yes, we feel that we are now able to engage the wider community to be involved.”*
- *“Went on a walkabout and learned a lot about our area”*
- *“The discussions re what Blakelaw needs as a community and how this can be developed. Discussed with community groups and other agencies - old age homes, CIU Club and Legion Club”*

- *“We met local authorities from different organisations, so will keep contact from now on”*
- *“More opportunity has been given for different groups and people in the local community to come together and plan for the future”*
- *“Despite regular meetings in the community already this gave us an opportunity to collaborate with partners and other residents to identify issues. We rarely conduct walkabouts in the ward with partners and residents.” (Comment from the police)*
- *“Gathering information about the local neighbourhood and getting people together from the local community in one room to discuss local issues.”*
- *“CFFC would not have considered Neighbourhood Planning without this project, so it has opened a new avenue of opportunities for us.”*
- *“A dedicated website on Neighbourhood Planning. Working towards setting up a Neighbourhood Forum. A diverse engagement of local people”*

What would your advice be to other similar areas that might be interested in doing a Neighbourhood Plan?

- *“Get on with it!”*
- *“It's all about communication and support”*
- *“It's time consuming, not simple or straightforward but could be considerably worthwhile”*
- *“Accept any training/help offered. So helpful!”*
- *“Research it. If the model fits, have a go.”*
- *“I would advise them that this is a good idea to ensure that you are part of decisions that would be made regarding your community in the future.”*
- *“Find out about it, research online, speak to other people in areas where plans have been developed”*
- *“Meet once a year (at least) for discussions with residents to talk possibilities and problems. Communications!!!”*
- *“The local knowledge of residents and those working in the community is vital in looking at implementing changes and this format of Neighbourhood Plan is ideal.”*
- *“Certainly try to go through the process as the exercise makes people work together”*
- *“It is an important measure that will benefit all communities.”*
- *“Try to get a few more residents interested from the start.”*
- *“To be prepared and find people who are dedicated to what might be a long process”*
- *“Ensure that you have wider support from local infrastructure organisations and buy in from local VCS and Council organisations.”*
- *“Make sure there are enough people from the actual community that you want to engage.”*

- *“Get involved. Have a voice. Express your views. Improve your local neighbourhood.”*

Final comments

- *“Very pleased that I attended the training, it was extremely helpful. The trainers were very informative.”*
- *“Good, knowledgeable and clearly described in layman’s terms by Jan Stobart”*
- *“A very worthwhile exercise!”*
- *“It was interesting to find out about what neighbourhood planning is. It is not what I expected.”*
- *“Hope a neighbourhood plan will benefit the area in the future and help towards funding”*
- *“I’ve been very impressed. I hope it works out. Regardless, it’s been a worthwhile enterprise.”*
- *“The overall experience was a fruitful one and it is worth pursuing.”*
- *“We will be supporting communities in Calderdale to develop neighbourhood planning, with officer support and potentially funding.”*
- *“The tutor could have been more in depth with his explanations.*
- *“As I don’t really understand the digital world well with my age, I didn’t understand much of the process of the planning but enjoyed talking about how the area has changed.”*
- *“It was good and I enjoyed a lot. I am very happy with the increased number of people coming to the jubilee park centre as a result of the Neighbourhood Planning Capacity Building Workshops. The centre is known much more to the local area than ever before.”*
- *“It has been a great experience so far involving and talking to local people of all ages to get involved in their local area. The training consultant was friendly and has given us in-depth understanding and knowledge of neighbourhood planning. Furthermore, the capacity building process has given our organisation the momentum and encouragement to continue to develop our approach/model of community led regeneration in Tipton.”*

Section 4: Area Journeys

Basildon, East of England



About the community organisation

In the early stages of this programme initial contact was made with the Basildon, Billericay and Wickford Council for Voluntary Services (hereafter referred to as BBWCVS). BBWCVS is an infrastructure support organisation for the local voluntary and community sector, which delivers a wide range of support services for local groups and organisations as well as having strong partnership links with Basildon Borough Council, Essex County Council and other statutory partners. It is a registered charity, formed in 1979 in order to strengthen and support local groups to serve the community more effectively.

BBWCVS has a track record of delivering a wide range of specific projects, including those with a focus on community-led development. For example, it has previously hosted four trainee Community Organisers and has employed a Community Development Worker (funded by the Fair Share Trust programme). Furthermore, it is currently the Locally Trusted Organisation for the Heart of Pitsea resident-led Big Local project. It has 8 members of staff who are experienced in supporting organisations to plan for the future of their communities, delivering projects that will improve the area and the quality of life for residents. However, whilst their community development and community-led planning work is well established, there has been very little emphasis on spatial planning in the area to date.

Motivation to get involved

Prior to 2016, Basildon Borough Council had not received any applications to approve a neighbourhood forum or to designate a neighbourhood area. There had been previous community-led planning activity in the district, but no real interest in taking forward a neighbourhood plan. However, after being contacted about this programme, BBWCVS saw an opportunity to raise awareness and generate interest in neighbourhood planning locally within Basildon, as well as to explore their options for providing a neighbourhood planning promotion and support service in the future.

Following an initial training session with BBWCVS, two communities came forward who wanted to progress a neighbourhood plan and who BBWCVS were subsequently able to support. These areas were Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet, and Hovefields and Honiley. Both of these areas have areas of original plot lands and sizable gypsy and traveller communities, and both were already considering the opportunities that neighbourhood planning could offer. However, the timing of this programme was extremely fortuitous, as both communities needed additional support to get started. Both communities have now achieved their initial ambition to apply for designation of their Neighbourhood Areas.

Hovefields and Honiley were primarily motivated by wanting to influence the use of land and type of development that goes ahead in their area. Residents recognise that improved infrastructure is needed, in particular drainage and mains sewage, and that

housing development is needed to make this a reality. However, there has been conflict with Basildon Council in the past about site allocations for development, and residents want a say in what eventual development goes ahead. There is also a feeling that a neighbourhood plan could unite both settled and traveller communities in designing a joint vision for the area.

The involvement of **Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet** was primarily motivated by a desire to preserve the character of their neighbourhood in the face of new development plans. Basildon Council has proposed a large site allocation for 2000 homes to the west of the villages that will effectively join them to neighbouring Pitsea and the rest of Basildon. Residents want to ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure to cope with an influx of new people, and also want to be able to positively shape the Council's proposals and maximise the benefits to local residents. Parish councillors would like, through a neighbourhood plan, to suggest alternative sites within the Parish which would maintain the gap between the villages and Pitsea and also generate greater community benefits.

Training and support

As a voluntary sector infrastructure organisation, BBWCVS wanted to provide support to help neighbourhood plans get underway in lots of different communities within Basildon district. Consequently, the intention was to run a one day workshop which was publicised widely to BBWCVS members and other local groups. This training was to spark initial interest in neighbourhood planning, and help to identify specific areas that could benefit from further in-depth training on the topic.

After this initial training session, two groups expressed an interest in taking their involvement in the programme further. These were Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet, as already mentioned, and the residents' association of Beechwood Village and Craylands. This group was soon forced to pull out because of capacity issues, and Hovefields and Honiley subsequently came forward as the second area to take this programme forward. Both Hovefields and Honiley, and Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet, were already interested in doing a neighbourhood plan. However, they lacked the support they needed to ground their ambitions in a strong plan and clear direction. Programme delivery was therefore targeted at supporting them with project planning; applying for grants and providing the technical support they needed to take their ambitions forward.

Designing training and capacity building

The training plan was initially proposed as two day-long workshops. The first was aimed at BBWCVS and a diverse group of their members. It was composed of several modules aiming to:

- Enable participants to better describe their areas, define boundaries and identify strengths and opportunities;
- Discuss what data can be useful in developing a neighbourhood plan, and how to best engage a community around neighbourhood planning;
- Provide an overview of neighbourhood planning and equip participants to assess whether it is an appropriate tool for change in a specific area.

The second workshop was designed to be delivered to any neighbourhood groups who then wanted to take neighbourhood planning forward. The main focus of this was:

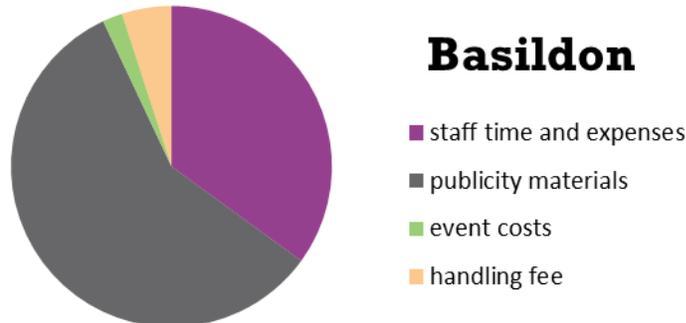
- To conduct a walkabout exercise to start working on the local profile of the area;
- Revisit the stages of neighbourhood planning, and start doing some project planning for community activities;
- To present neighbourhood planning support and grants available to neighbourhood groups.

Training Delivered

Following the initial workshop, the actual training that was delivered consisted of:

1. A session for **Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet** volunteer group, attended by 7 residents (including two parish councillors and the clerk). The intention had been to start work on an action plan and budget for neighbourhood planning, but it became obvious early on in the session that the majority of participants needed training on the basics of 'what is a neighbourhood plan' and what it can and cannot achieve first. The session became a condensed version of the initial training session instead.
2. A session for **Hovefields and Honiley neighbourhood group**, attended by 7 residents and the ward councillor. The training covered an understanding of the neighbourhood planning process, the support and funding available, and the next steps in taking forward their neighbourhood plan. Shortly after the training, the ground was advised by Basildon Council that their neighbourhood forum and area had been successfully designated.
3. A session for **BBWCVS**, attended by three members of staff and two trustees. The training covered an understanding of the neighbourhood planning process, and an exploration of their potential role in promoting and supporting neighbourhood planning in Basildon district. The lead staff member of BBWCVS later met with our facilitator, in order to discuss various challenges and a way forward.

Engaging their communities



Both areas had already undertaken some community engagement so the Getting Start grant was about building on previous activity. In Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet, for example, they produced a newsletter and other publicity material to help raise awareness and understanding of neighbourhood planning within the area. Hovefields and Honiley however chose to spend their Getting Started grant in setting up a website and using this to start raising awareness of neighbourhood planning in the area. BBWCVS also received some funding, which they are using to develop their services to promote neighbourhood planning and support local groups through the process.

Outcomes

A number of valuable learning points were made in the process of delivering the programme in Basildon, partly because the process and structure of training was different to the other five pilot areas. Two key points were:

Residents value the face-to-face meetings to help them understand neighbourhood planning, rather than reading about it on the internet: criticisms of the information available about neighbourhood planning are that it contains too much jargon, that it appears to be a process that needs to be undertaken by experts, and that it raises expectations by not clearly outlining the constraints. Despite already showing an initial interest in the opportunities that a neighbourhood plan could present, residents in both Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet and Hovefields and Honiley felt that there had been 'too much information' online and that it was difficult to know what was relevant, or what steps they needed to take to progress their ideas. Participants of this programme valued the simple explanations, and the delivery of information in bite sized chunks at an appropriate time; the volume of information requires a 'guide to the guides'.

Voluntary sector infrastructure organisations currently have no resources to promote neighbourhood planning: community groups that have already decided to do a neighbourhood plan could potentially access grant funding (through Locality or

others) to contract voluntary sector infrastructure organisation staff to support the initial stages of project planning and community engagement. However there are no funds to pay for promotion and training in neighbourhood planning which is what is needed to encourage new groups to come forward.

What next?

Both areas within Basildon are reasonably advanced in their neighbourhood planning process. **Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet** have a fully costed project plan and have confirmed the Neighbourhood Area with the local City Council. Their next step will be to create a Neighbourhood Forum to take the lead on a neighbourhood plan.



Hovefields and Honiley are slightly more advanced, having a designated Neighbourhood Area and Neighbourhood Forum, as well as having agreed the themes, aims and vision of their future neighbourhood plan. They are planning to apply for Locality funding to help them resource the next stage of their journey.



Blakelaw, North East



About the area

Blakelaw is a relatively large ward in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, with just under 12,000 residents. It is bordered by the A1 and sits in one of the most deprived areas of the city – the neighbouring ward, Cowgate, is the most deprived ward in Newcastle. Over a third of people in Blakelaw are economically inactive, with roughly 40% of those people being retired. It is also a relatively youthful area: about a quarter of residents are under the age of 18.

Blakelaw has a number of community owned assets that are well-used and valued by the local population. For example, the Blakelaw Ward Community Partnership (hereafter referred to as BWCP) runs and manages the Blakelaw community centre which is home to a library, local café and post office.

The area has relatively low housing density and a good amount of green space, but this is not generally well used. Blakelaw's shopping centre is used by people from a wider area of the city and also attracts some visitors into the ward. However it is in need of refurbishment.

Unusually for an urban area of this nature, Blakelaw has a Parish Council – the Blakelaw and North Fenham Community Council – which provides local residents with the opportunity to have some say in local decision-making.

About the community organisation

In Blakelaw, initial contact was made with BWCP rather than the Parish Council, as it was not apparent at the time that the area was parished. BWCP was set up in 2013 as part of the City Council's devolution agenda, with the initial aim of protecting community-based services.

Whilst the Partnership was initially steered by Ward Councillors, it is now a fully independent registered charity with a resident-controlled Board and resident chair. It has recently set up a trading company, and has signed a 99 year lease for the local Blakelaw Centre and library, which is a community hub providing a wide range of different services locally. Both of these were community asset transfers from the City Council.

BWCP works closely with the Blakelaw and North Fenham Parish Council. One Parish Councillor sits on the Partnership Board, and the two organisations have a good working relationship. The Council was approached to be involved in this programme before the first training session took place, and a number of Parish Councillors attended the training programme.

Invitations to attend the training programme were also sent to other local agencies and stakeholders, such as the police, which meant that the programme was delivered to a diverse group of people and organisations that had an interest in the area and not just members of BWCP and Parish Council.

Motivation to get involved

BWCP were initially interested in getting involved with the programme, because they were looking to expand their services in the local area and further consolidate their role in the community. However they were also interested in the potential of neighbourhood planning to help local residents gain more control over local developments and opportunities. The area has many urban green spaces, some of which are under pressure for development, and the Partnership was keen that local people have some influence and/or control over how these spaces are developed and managed in the future. It is unlikely that BBWCS would have engaged with neighbourhood planning without the impetus of this programme. There was clearly an appetite for 'something' and the enthusiasm of the different partners involved reflects this, but local residents and organisations were not previously aware that a neighbourhood plan could be a vehicle for their ambitions for the area.

Training and support

Participants felt that they all had a good understanding of the local area and the issues that were prevalent in the community, however it was unusual for them to work together and share insights. Similarly very few had any prior experience or knowledge of neighbourhood planning and confidence levels varied. As the group of participants was very diverse, comprising of local residents, partner agencies and employees of the City Council, it was felt important that the training should provide an accessible introduction into neighbourhood planning 'to level the playing' field and ensure that the knowledge and expertise of different participants was shared amongst the group.

Designing training and capacity building

Five training sessions were developed as part of the training plan:

- An introductory session to provide more information about the programme, and encourage a range of partners to be involved
- A walkabout in Blakelaw to begin identifying local issues
- An introduction to the key concepts of neighbourhood plan and the process
- A discussion to explore whether neighbourhood planning could work in Blakelaw including a guest speaker
- A final session to discuss next steps and plan for delivering community activities, using the £2000 grant

Delivery

The five sessions were delivered over January and February to a mix of local stakeholders including members of the Parish Council, the Blakelaw Partnership and representatives of local agencies including Newcastle City Council, the Police, the local primary school and Your Homes Newcastle (an ALMO – Arm’s Length Management Housing Organisation).

The initial plan was to conduct only one walkabout in the Blakelaw ward. The walkabout was highly successful and really enthused the group about the opportunities that neighbourhood planning could provide.

However a representative from the Council, who attended the sessions, explained that it was likely that Blakelaw ward would be split in two, with a more affluent area breaking off to merge with a neighbouring ward, and the remainder of Blakelaw combining with the Cowgate estate. Participants welcomed this news, as they felt that Cowgate had much in common with Blakelaw with many Cowgate residents already making use of Blakelaw’s assets such as the shopping precinct. Therefore a second walkabout was held in Cowgate, with the aim of generating some ideas about additional issues that a neighbourhood plan could address in this area if the boundary change went ahead.

The key themes identified during both walkabouts included: the improvement and use of open and green spaces; environmental concerns, including waste disposal; renovation of the shopping centre; business and community resources, and local transport links.

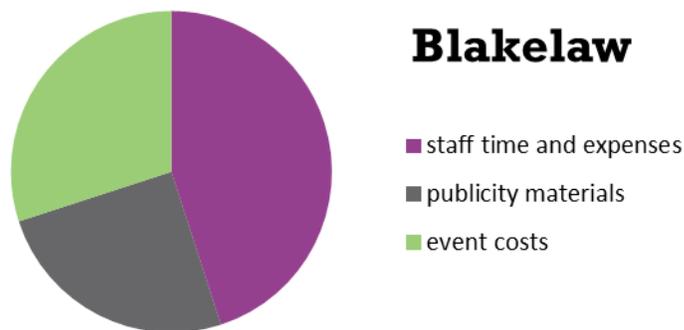
The group were accompanied by a representative of the City Council planning department on the first walkabout, who then circulated a table following the walkabout explaining which of the issues could be addressed through a neighbourhood plan. This simple summary was extremely helpful in communicating the limits of neighbourhood planning to the group, and helping them to understand what a plan could and could not achieve for their neighbourhood area.

Two main issues arose during discussions in the training sessions:

1. **The role of the Parish Council:** despite enthusiasm among partners and a commitment from BWCP to lead the process, members of the Parish Council had to be convinced. There were initially some mixed views amongst the councillors, with some enthusiastic advocates of neighbourhood planning and others questioning whether it was the right direction for Blakelaw to take. By the end of the training however, there was broad agreement that Blakelaw should pursue a neighbourhood plan as well as clarity on the Council’s role in supporting the process.

2. **Complex boundary issues:** the boundary review issue came to the fore early on in the training, however is still complex and unresolved. As a result of likely changes to the Blakelaw ward boundary and the desire of participants for a future neighbourhood plan to respect any new ward boundary, it was felt that it would be necessary to consult residents in Cowgate before agreeing where the new boundary should lie. An added complication exists as the jurisdiction of the Blakelaw Parish Council only partly corresponds with the newly proposed ward boundary, although there is no Parish Council in Cowgate itself.

Engaging their communities



The training programme sparked a lot of interest amongst participants but some, whilst very engaged and interested in the programme – were unsure whether it was the right course of action for their area. As a result, it was deemed important that community activities were tailored to gauging local interest in pursuing a neighbourhood plan. The group also wanted to gather as much input as possible into the local issues that the Plan could address.

Activities delivered as part of the Getting Started Plan included:

- A series of community meetings in two locations in the ward, to act as a platform for more local people and stakeholders to get involved
- A ward walkabout to engage more people and gather their views on the issues that needed to be addressed
- Street sessions to gather more views and to spread the word about neighbourhood planning
- Distribution of publicity materials to ensure residents were aware of the potential development of a neighbourhood plan

Many of the issues identified during the engagement activities were not strictly matters that could be addressed via a neighbourhood plan and so they decided to develop a community plan alongside it, in order to ensure that a more joined up, holistic approach to achieving improvements in their area could be achieved.

Outcomes

At the end of the fifth and final training session, the group made an in-principle decision that they wished to take forward the development of a neighbourhood plan for the area. Six members of the 'Steering Group' were nominated to become part of a 'Task Group' to lead on various aspects of the process. A Chair and Vice Chair were also voted for and appointed. The group has since applied for Locality funding.



What next?

The fledgling Steering Group has continued to meet after the end of the 'official' training programme, with some in-kind support from the facilitators. They have presented their work and progress to the Parish Council and a time-plan for delivery of a neighbourhood plan has been developed. The neighbourhood boundary has also been agreed by the Parish Council, BWCP and local elected members of the City Council, which reflects the new political ward boundary due to come into effect in 2018. The next priorities are to:

- Continue developing a positive relationship with the Local Authority, drawing on their expertise where necessary
- Develop clear reporting structures to the Parish Council, ensuring that the neighbourhood planning process is open and accountable.
- Produce a communications sub-plan to publicise the work of the neighbourhood group and engage residents in the process.

Beechwood, North West

Beechwood

1960s/70s estate
Big Local area
Asset transfer to Liverpool Housing Trust



About the area

Beechwood is a housing estate on the Wirral on the edge of the M53 motorway, and near to Bidston and Noctorum on the outskirts of Birkenhead. It is a 1960s/70s housing estate, previously called the Ford Estate, which has been characterised by a considerable amount of change in recent years. Of most significance to residents is an asset transfer of housing from the Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association to the Liverpool Housing Trust. This was made in 2015 and was strongly opposed by residents, who were concerned that the community's interests would be less well served. However, it has galvanised many in the community into taking a greater interest in planning issues. Perhaps most significantly, the Beechwood estate is part of a Big Local area which received a ten-year Lottery grant in 2012 to develop a community plan to improve their area.

About the community organisation

Beechwood Community Trust (hereafter referred to as BCT) was chosen as the lead community organisation for this project. It is a registered charity based in the heart of the estate, and its aims are to improve residents' wellbeing and resilience of the community on both the Beechwood and the neighbouring Ballantyne estate. BCT delivers a range of community services including a nursery, community space, youth services and learning, benefits advice and office space.

BCT is resident-led and has strong local connections, including good relationships with local councillors and council officers. The facilitator for this programme is also the Big Local rep for the area, and has been involved in brokering some of these relationships. The two chairs of BCT are instrumental in getting others in the area involved in local initiatives. There is a local community development worker funded by Big Local and employed by Community Action Wirral, who is a very important resource for the area. However they had some reservations about residents overcommitting their time and being diverted away from Big Local.

Motivation to get involved

BCT were very attracted by the opportunity to strengthen and complement work being undertaken as part Big Local in their area. For example, a neighbourhood plan could support the Big Local plan's stated ambition to improve local people's health and wellbeing by encouraging the development of new spaces for healthy activities.

"I attended three training sessions to be part of the project and spoken to many residents and community partners to become involved in the development of the project. All involved feel that this is a very exciting project for our Community"
Shelly, Beechwood resident

Additionally, there are a number of changes planned for the area, and residents are keen to ensure that existing infrastructure is protected and that any future investment and development meets local needs. They would like to have a say in the location of a potential new train station, and protect community spaces and assets, such as Beechwood Recreation Centre and the local library - which they fear may close. Residents also have a number of ideas to improve the built environment and make use of existing buildings, such as a new healthy living centre in the recreation centre site. They hope that a neighbourhood plan will strengthen their voice in negotiating with the council and other players to ensure their needs and desires are realised.

Training and support

Given their existing involvement in the Big Local programme, much of the early 'getting to know your area' work had already been undertaken by the community. An extensive area profile had already been developed, and participants were very confident that they understood the area's issues and opportunities. Therefore the priorities for the training were driven by the need to increase participants' knowledge of the neighbourhood planning process, and build their capacity to make an informed decision about whether to pursue a neighbourhood plan or not.

The training was designed in three sessions:

- An introduction to neighbourhood planning, taking participants through the stages of the process, and the support available both nationally and locally; and a reflection on existing knowledge of the neighbourhood and data available to inform the evidence base for a neighbourhood plan
- A session focused on data and information about the area, their use in the context of neighbourhood planning; early conversations on defining the neighbourhood boundary and the neighbourhood story; and a discussion on how local partners could supply more data to help inform a potential neighbourhood plan
- A session focused on community asset mapping; reflections on how a neighbourhood plan could help with some of the local issues; exercises covering the last stages of the journey, from writing the plan through to independent examination, referendum and adoption; and a general discussion on how to spread the message about neighbourhood planning to other residents

Delivery

During the training participants stressed the importance of finding community influencers to 'spread the word' about neighbourhood planning and to encourage a wider mix of people to get involved. The group were already persuaded of the need to do a neighbourhood plan and so the focus was on recruiting members to a fledgling neighbourhood forum. This included identifying people (and partner agencies) with an interest or experience in health, housing and transport, the key priorities for their Big Local plan. Consequently after the first session, participants undertook a skills analysis to help identify skills gaps and help inform an approach to recruiting new members. This proved to be a useful exercise and was successful at increasing attendance at subsequent training sessions.

Beechwood will be the sixth area in the Wirral undertaking neighbourhood planning activities and so participants saw the opportunity to learn from what others were doing, as part of the training sessions. Similarly a Q & A session with planning officers from the Council was also arranged for the last session, which gave residents the opportunity to both ask questions as well as start the process of building relationships and leveraging in support and expertise.

Engaging their community

Participants expressed a strong aspiration to develop a neighbourhood plan and so the focus of engagement activities was on recruiting new members to a neighbourhood forum, rather than on consulting about local issues or more generally raising awareness about neighbourhood planning and what it can or cannot do.

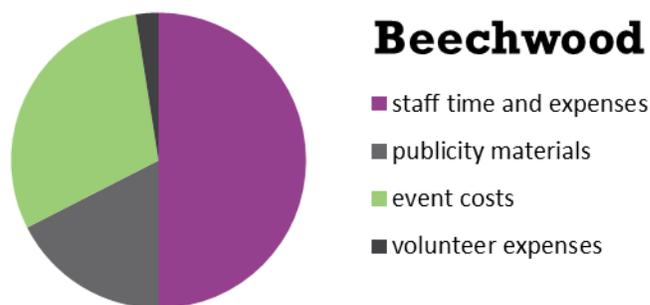


Figure x: breakdown of funding spend in Beechwood

Activities in the Getting Started plan therefore were designed to spread the word about neighbourhood planning to a more diverse group of people, and in particular to target individuals with particular specialisms needed for the development of the plan (e.g. health and housing representatives). It was felt that the principal and most

effective strategy for engaging local people on the Beechwood Estate was to co-opt ‘influential’ residents to help spread the word. This included community matriarchs, who were engaged by the facilitator at the local Bingo club; as well as head teachers of local schools. A statistical profile of the area showed that not everyone had online access and so the group decided to adopt a mix of different communications and engagement activities to reach people. This included:

- A social media campaign on the estate using Facebook and Twitter
- Leaflet distribution to all three junior schools in the area, to boost interest amongst parents
- Leaflet distribution to all families using the childcare facility at the BCT
- Posters, leaflets and face-to-face consultation with the Beechwood Youth Project
- Presentations to the Reminiscence Group to explain the opportunity to older people
- Face-to-face conversations with staff and volunteers at the BCT

Outcomes

The group in Beechwood has been very successful at reaching the community and recruiting influential members of the community. At an early stage, a decision was taken to form a fledgling Neighbourhood Forum, which is now committed to developing a neighbourhood plan. The group has elected an influential community leader – the pastor of Beechwood Chapel - to chair the Forum during the initial phase of the process, and they have been meeting regularly to keep up momentum on key aspects of the plan. This includes further consulting residents about the proposed neighbourhood boundary, as well as drafting an application for Locality funding.



What's next?

The fledging forum plans to:

- Continue to spread the word in order to recruit more people to the neighbourhood forum
- Meet a variety of stakeholders to get support and advice, including the Wirral Borough Council (as the local planning authority) and Liverpool Housing Trust
- Contact other neighbourhood planning areas in the Wirral
- Agree the area's boundary
- Application to Big Local for match funding
- Produce a robust vision for a future neighbourhood plan

Burnt Oak, London



About the area

Burnt Oak is a neighbourhood in the Edgware district of North London. It is part of the London borough of Barnet, but also straddles two other local authorities: Harrow and Brent. The area has a very rich history and like many other London neighbourhoods is very diverse with a high number of migrant families from Eastern Europe, South Asia and Africa. 56% of school children in Burnt Oak do not speak English as a first language.

The 2015 Index of Deprivation shows Barnet as a whole to be the 176th most deprived local authority out of the 354 for England and Wales. It has become less deprived in relation to England over the last three years; however some parts of the Burnt Oak ward are within the 10% most income deprived nationally.

The area has a very bustling high street with an eclectic mix of largely ethnic shops and businesses. In recent years however it has become a bit run down and neglected, with un-used and derelict spaces which attract anti-social behaviour. In 2015, the Council successfully applied for funding from the Greater London Authority's High Street Fund to help improve Burnt Oak Town Centre, which included setting up a town team and developing a town centre strategy to drive improvements.

About the community organisation

Love Burnt Oak (hereafter referred to as LBO) is a charity that was established in 2012 to bring together local people, businesses and services to improve outcomes and opportunities for local people. Located close to Burnt Oak tube station and the high street, LBO provides easy access to community facilities and local services for the Burnt Oak community. It is run by 4 staff and 12 volunteers.

The aim of LBO is to bring together local residents and providers of community and public services to address local issues and need in a more streamlined and cost effective way. This includes making better use of available resources and community assets to improve outcomes for local people. Some of their recent successes include developing a new partnership with over 30 local organisations from across the public, private, voluntary and community sector; and securing £18k from the London Borough of Barnet's Big Society Bank to deliver on its vision and build the capacity and support needed by smaller organisations in the community.

Motivation to get involved

Initially LBO had some reservations about being involved. As a very small organisation, the charity's trustees were concerned that it would divert the already limited resources away from LBO's core functions. However, with the funding available through the programme and the opportunity to help address local issues, particularly the high street - LBO's board were persuaded to get on-board.

Participants signed up for the training for a number of reasons. Everyone shared a desire to improve Burnt Oak, reverse a perceived decline and make it a better place to live. However, many also believed that Burnt Oak gets overlooked for council investment - perhaps as a product of its location across three council boundaries - and so saw the opportunity to take positive action in the interests of Burnt Oak. As people's knowledge of neighbourhood planning increased during the training and they became aware of the scope and influence of a neighbourhood plan, they became even more energised by the opportunity. It was perceived to devolve real power to local people, over Burnt Oak's future, which a number of residents feared was lacking.

"I was motivated by a general desire to improve the area – I've lived here for a long time and I've seen it slowly decline... and even when I first moved here it wasn't great. So I was hoping to see some sort of improvement locally and if necessary be involved in driving that forward"

Participant, Burnt Oak

Initially people raised concerns outside the immediate scope of a neighbourhood plan, such as anti-social behaviour, littering, community cohesion and safety etc. However after the initial session where people took part in a Placecheck walkabout, people's concerns began to crystallise into more physical issues like the lack of affordable housing or improvements to the High Street - such as use of derelict land, misuse of the pavement by local traders and encouragement of more diversity amongst local businesses. However, the unifying issue for most participants at the start was 'standing up to' the local authority, rather being galvanised by a single planning issue or issues.

Training and support

Three interactive training sessions were delivered in Burnt Oak. Membership of the sessions fluctuated with people dropping out due to other commitments. However by the third session a core group of six participants had emerged. This included a staff member and a trustee of LBO, the chair of a local community centre, a member of the Burnt Oak Residents Association (BORA), and the parish priest.

Designing training and capacity building

The focus of the training programme in Burnt Oak was to inspire people to think about the local issues that they would like to solve, if they could. Neighbourhood planning was then contextualised and positioned as a tool which could help them to achieve some of their aspirations.

Three training sessions were delivered:

- Encouraging participants to reflect on Burnt Oak as a neighbourhood, think about its positive and negative aspects and build a consensus on what they would like to change and preserve
- Comprehensive overview of neighbourhood planning, key steps of the process, what it can achieve, and the advantages of developing a neighbourhood plan; and practical considerations around developing a forum and the specific focus of a Burnt Oak neighbourhood plan
- Discussion on methods to raise awareness amongst local residents and businesses, how to get local people interested and involved, and which community activities could be delivered as part of the programme of activities

None of the participants had any prior knowledge of neighbourhood planning, with just one saying that they had heard of it before. Therefore, with new participants becoming involved in the second session, once word had spread following the first session - the structure of the training sessions flowed well, reducing the need for facilitator time to be spent bringing new participants up to speed.

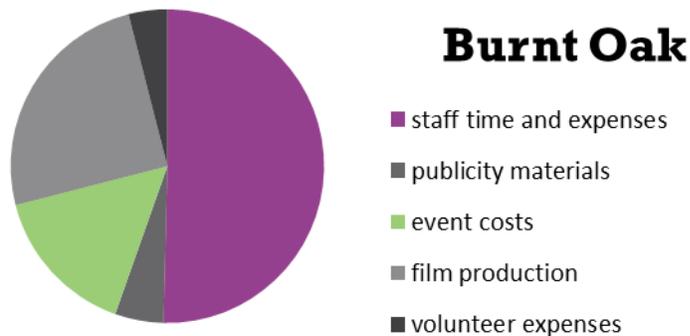
Delivery

The first training session addressed the distinctiveness of the Burnt Oak area. This was achieved through a walkabout and Placecheck that enabled participants to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in the area. The walkabout was hugely successful in getting people enthused about neighbourhood planning. It also worked well to build relationships between people, enabling them to share ideas of the different things they wanted to change or preserve.

The second session introduced the concept of neighbourhood planning and the steps involved in producing a plan. A representative of DCLG that had been through the early stages of setting up a Neighbourhood Forum in London, attended the second session and was able to answer participants' questions about the practicalities, which proved useful and underlines the value of peer learning. The final training session focused on recapping the learning so far and refining plans for 'Getting Started' activities. A professional from a local production company attended this session to discuss the production plan with the group. The idea of setting up a forum was also discussed by the group and they expressed an interest in meeting and hearing from the nearby Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum. However they later decided to postpone this until after the community engagement activity.

The group whilst small were very active, volunteering to take on various tasks such as completing the Getting Started plan and using Google's project management tool, Google Sheets, to co-ordinate their work. LBO produced the initial flyer and used their social media channels to advertise the training, however it was the local hairdresser, who whilst unable to attend the training herself - became an effective champion for the programme and signed people up to it.

Engaging their communities



As only a handful of residents participated in the training an early priority for 'Getting Started' was to further raise awareness of neighbourhood planning within the community and to gauge the levels of interest and support within the community for taking it forward. Inspired by their experience of sharing local knowledge and history during the walkabout the group decided to create a short film in which local people talk about Burnt Oak, what they like and dislike about it, and what they hope to change and preserve.

LBO 'premiered' the film at an event on the High Street. At the event residents were asked to indicate where they live on a map of the area, to say whether they felt they

lived in Burnt Oak or not. This helped define the boundaries of Burnt Oak and start to develop an evidence base for later on in the process, should they decide to pursue a neighbourhood plan. The event was held on a Saturday in order to take advantage of a high shopping footfall. 10,000 leaflets also were produced and distributed in the area to publicise the launch event and the film was also shared online.

Outcomes

Over 100 local people attended the event including the local MP and several local councillors. 66 people signed up to a mailing list for further information about neighbourhood planning and there was a high level of social media activity. Following the event, the group issued a press release about the film and their interest in doing a neighbourhood plan and also sent a questionnaire to people on the mailing list asking them if they'd like to get involved as well as identify any issues they would like to improve in the area. On 13 June, the group held a public meeting to explain neighbourhood planning and local progress to date. 20 local people attended and a consensus was reached to set up a Neighbourhood Forum.

“If we set up a Neighbourhood Forum, it’s about challenging the authorities and taking them to task, and saying, we’re the people, we’re living and working here, we care, and we’re able to come together as a community to make this work”

Participant, Burnt Oak



What next?

The group are in the process of setting up a Facebook page for the fledgling neighbourhood forum to act as single point of information for local people. They plan to officially launch the forum at an open community meeting in September 2016. The group has also approached the three councils (Barnet, Harrow and Brent) who have confirmed that they will be discussing how they can work with the forum for Burnt Oak at their next joint meeting. The group would also like to:

- Visit Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum and meet other residents involved in Neighbourhood Forums
- Apply for Locality funding so LBO have some resources to support the process of setting up the Forum. They are also considering setting the forum up as a legal entity that could receive funding directly
- Engage in the plans being drawn up by the Town Centre Team for improvements to the High Street

Calderdale, Yorkshire and Humberside



About the area

Calderdale is a metropolitan borough located in West Yorkshire, in the Leeds-Manchester corridor, with a population of approximately 200,000. Most of the area is semi-rural, with a number of small former industrial towns. Halifax, Hebden Bridge and Brighouse are the main population centres. The region was badly affected by the winter floods of 2015-16, which has helped place spatial planning at the top of everyone's agenda.

Calderdale includes a number of towns, two of which – Elland and Sowerby Bridge, both on the river Calder – were involved in the pilot programme. Both towns have pockets of deprivation, and are changing rapidly, with increasing numbers of people who work in Manchester and Leeds moving there. The hilly terrain makes new development challenging, so existing buildings, such as former industrial buildings, are being redeveloped as housing.

About the community organisation

The Community Foundation for Calderdale (hereafter referred to as CFFC) is an independent grant making philanthropic charity. Over the last 25 years it has distributed close to £20m to local causes and thousands of people in crisis. They conduct in depth research into the community's needs through their Vital Signs programme, which allows them to match their donors' resources and interests to very local issues. As well as supporting local groups and individuals through grants, the Community Foundation has also taken a leading role in campaigning and fundraising for support to help homeowners and businesses affected (now and in the future) by the areas' floods. The Community Foundation employs nine staff.

“Understanding places, what’s happening in terms of planning and use of available land will add more depth and dimension to our work. We are in a unique position to link communities’ concerns with a more strategic agenda, for instance, managing flood risk and making communities more resilient to these risks”

Rob Billson, grants manager, CFFC

Motivation to get involved

The motivation for CFFC to participate in the programme was tri-fold. Firstly, they saw an opportunity to explore links between neighbourhood planning and flood prevention in the area. Secondly, they were interested in understanding whether neighbourhood planning could be used as a tool to help address some of the area's socio economic challenges; and thirdly they saw an opportunity to increase their

support to grantees by building their capacity for neighbourhood planning, and in doing so enabling them to better understand and articulate their needs around the built environment in funding applications.

For residents - in addition to flooding concerns, the lack of land for development coupled with the movement of people to the area from Leeds and Manchester is an on-going challenge. Residents feel that local families lack affordable housing, and that local businesses are struggling. The hilly terrain means there is limited land for new development.

Training and support

At the time of the training the community was still reeling from the floods and so it was felt that the training should be very practical and focussed on what neighbourhood planning can and cannot achieve. The sessions were also designed as light versions or 'dry-runs' so that CFFC could easily deliver capacity building around neighbourhood planning to other groups in the future. The training was delivered to CFFC staff but also representatives from other voluntary and community groups in the area. In total, 12 people attended at least one of the training sessions, with two staff members from CFFC attending all three.

Designing training and capacity building

The training plan was divided in three modules:

- Introducing the programme and illustrating what neighbourhood planning can achieve, through the use of case studies. It included a talk by a neighbourhood planning consultant
- A community walkabout and 'Placecheck' exercise to both analyse the strengths, opportunities and issues in the area, as well as build the community organisation's capacity to conduct this type of exercise in the future
- Reviewing data about the area, exploring tools and engagement techniques and deciding on the next steps to engage more widely

“We have a lot of converted mills that are now ‘luxury flats,’ but a lot of them are empty because the rents are just too high for local people. A lot of the people who do live there are doing so because the homes are affordable compared to Leeds and Manchester, but they’re taking their money out of the area”.”

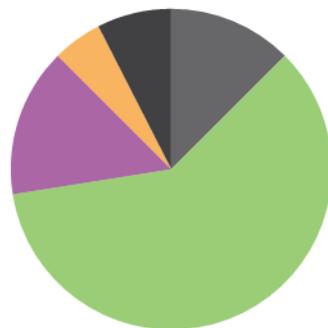
Participant, Sowerby Bridge

Delivery

Initially, CFFC considered four local areas as potential pilots for the programme: Todmorden, Elland, Halifax and Mixenden/Ovenden. However, most were already engaged in neighbourhood planning activities and so Elland became the only area involved from the original shortlist. However, Sowerby Bridge also 'signed up' after residents from the town attended the second training session.

Two representatives from Calderdale Council attended the first session, and were supportive throughout the programme, providing data and maps and offering their support to any group interested in neighbourhood planning. Their participation in the initial session was particularly useful, as they were able to provide an up-to-date and detailed picture of the council's progress towards preparation of their development plan, and what support they were able to give community groups in developing their plans. Similarly residents from Sowerby Bridge were encouraged to get involved by their local Community Organiser - who had an interest in neighbourhood planning but not detailed knowledge. The planned walkabout in Elland had to be cancelled because of the floods and so it was decided that this would be a good hook for the 'Getting Started' activities. The final training session focused on next steps and how both areas could take forward relationships local partners, facilitated by CFFC.

Engaging their communities



Calderdale

- publicity materials
- event costs
- other engagement materials
- prizes for school competition
- volunteer expenses

The training programme built the capacity of CFFC to support neighbourhood planning in a number of different localities in Calderdale, with walkabouts organised in Elland, Sowerby Bridge, Boothtown and Mixenden. Each of the walkabouts was publicised widely, amongst residents, businesses, local voluntary and community groups as well as the local council – although no businesses and only one councillor got involved. The walkabouts were designed to raise awareness and engage the wider community in the potential of a neighbourhood plan - however they also enabled CFFC to start building an evidence base.

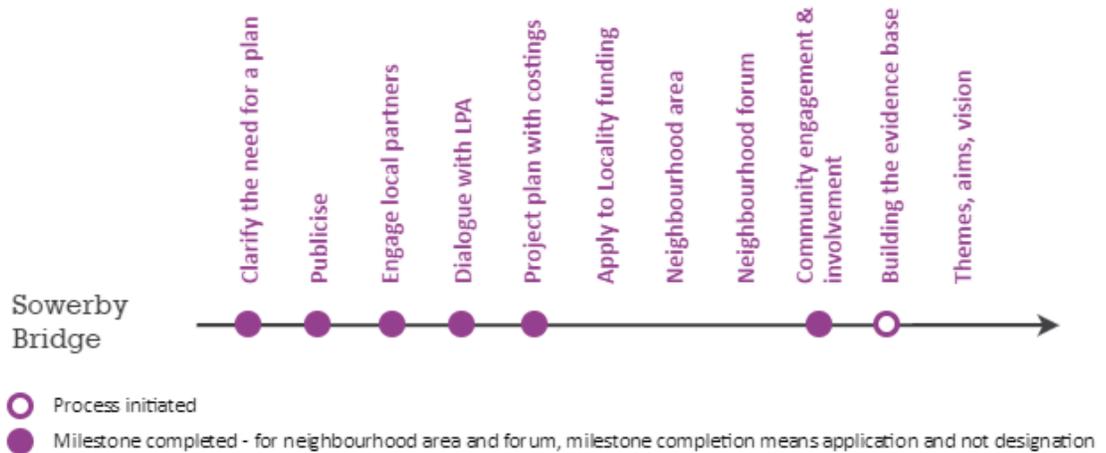
To define the neighbourhood boundaries, maps were also produced for each area with participants discussing where they think the neighbourhood plan boundary should be. Revised boundaries are now being drawn up and will be publicised on the Facebook page, and through partner networks - before being submitted to the council for their views.

All six primary schools in Elland and Sowerby Bridge were also approached to try and engage local children in shaping where they live. A workshop was run in one of the schools and some children used disposable cameras to take photos of the things they did and didn't like, where they live. Children also used a survey and questioned each other about their aspirations for the area.

Outcomes

Everyone who attended the walkabouts (as well as those who were invited but didn't attend) was asked about whether they would be interested in joining a neighbourhood forum. Almost everyone who attended the Sowerby Bridge event agreed they wanted to set up a Forum (about 15 in total) whereas in Elland it was agreed that there are some governance issues that need to be resolved - involving a proposed Town Board for Elland - before a decision on a Neighbourhood Plan, and a Forum, can be made. It is too early to say for Mixenden and Boothtown although further engagement activities are planned.





What next?

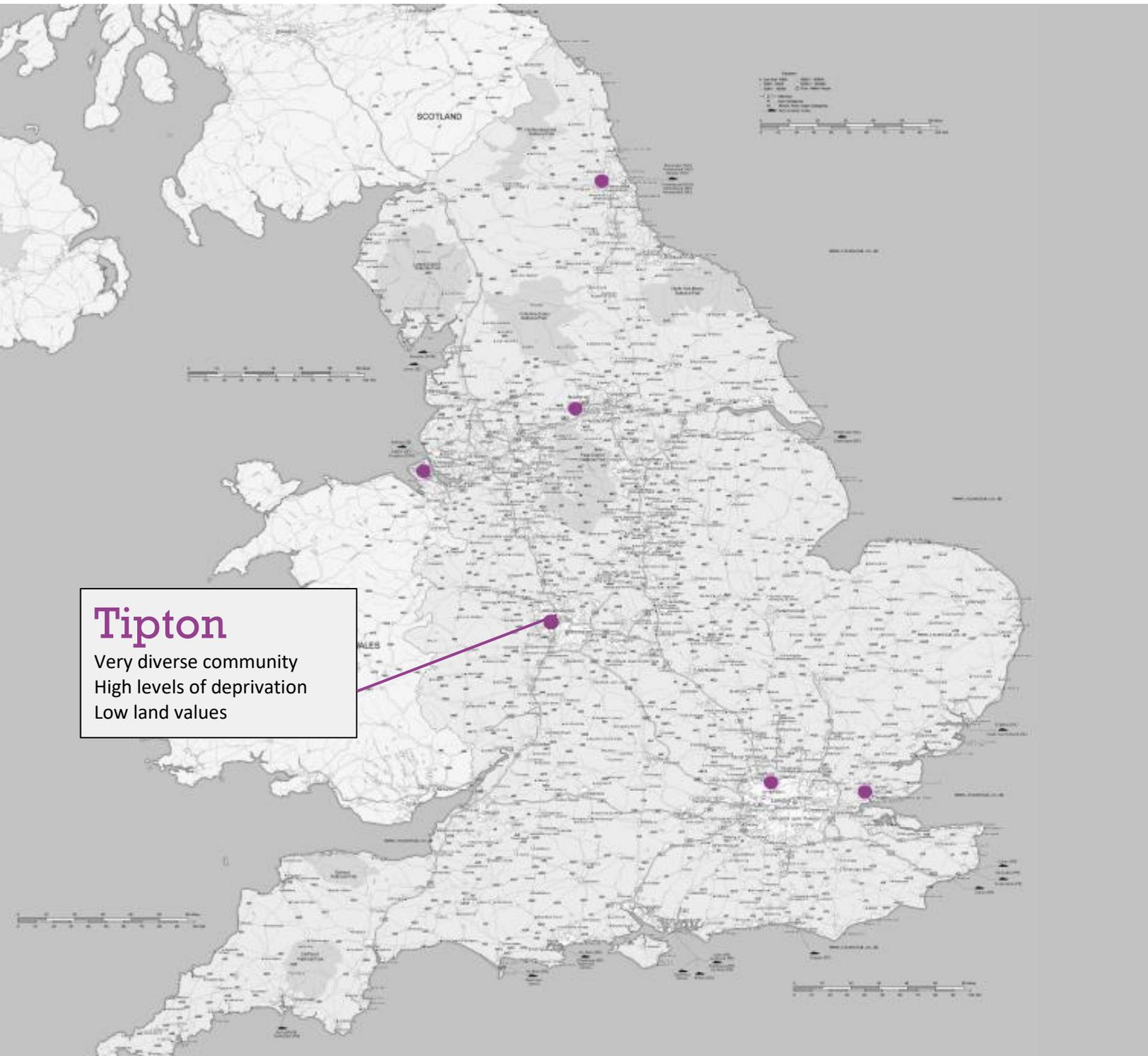
The walkabouts helped to spark lots of interest in the potential of a neighbourhood plan in Elland and Sowerby Bridge and both groups now want to build on their 'Getting Started' activities to take things forward. Some activities planned include:

- Building on the relationship with the local schools
- Prioritising engagement with local businesses
- Sending a list of questions to the council's planning team to get information on the development of the core strategy and allocation documents, as well as progress on the establishment of a community infrastructure levy framework
- Drafting a summary of what membership of a neighbourhood forum would entail
- Analysing expressions of interest to make sure the group is representative
- Analysing the crossover between the emerging issues identified and the Council's development plan

CFFC also intends to:

- Carry out a skills audit of the members of the Sowerby Bridge Forum, and identify the level of resources required to co-ordinate their work
- Draft an application to Locality to resource any capacity or gaps identified (e.g. someone to write planning policies, or advise on technical planning issues, or just to project manage the next few stages)
- Recruit volunteers, from the local community and beyond (e.g. planning and other students from the local university) to support the work of the Forum

Tipton, West Midlands



Tipton

Very diverse community
High levels of deprivation
Low land values

About the area

Tipton is a town in the borough of Sandwell, West Midlands. It is located about halfway between Birmingham and Wolverhampton. It was once one of the most heavily industrialised towns in the Black Country, with thousands of people employed in different sections of the town's industries. Most of its factories have since closed and it has gradually developed into a commuter town mostly occupied by people working in other parts of the region. Tipton has three wards: Great Bridge, Prices End and Tipton Green – and a population of around 38,000. The Jubilee neighbourhood is a very deprived area within the Great Bridge ward. It is characterised by low-rise, mixed tenure - predominantly social - housing and has few amenities other than a large park. The community is diverse with various BAME groups and a significant white British community – however there is little interaction between them. Unemployment in the area is very high with low educational attainment and a significant proportion of residents who don't speak English.

About the community organisation

The Bangladeshi Women's Association (hereafter referred to as BWA) is a community led charitable organisation, dedicated to improving the quality of life for residents of Tipton and the surrounding areas. It was established by a group of BAME women in 1985, who wanted to address the social economic needs of families in the area. Although their roots are in the Bangladeshi community, they aim to serve all residents in the area, and see their role as providing a bridge between public services and the community. The organisation employs 18 staff and they deliver a wide range of different projects including employment and training support services, a gardening club, crèche and apprenticeship programme. One of the organisation's key strengths is its roots into the local community and ability to work with some of the area's most hard-to-reach people.

Motivation to get involved

BWA was previously involved with 'First Steps', a DLCG funded programme that supported small community groups around the country to develop community led-action plans in response to local issues. BWA perceived the neighbourhood planning capacity building programme as an opportunity to build on this

“Where you live...even the buildings, the houses, it all impacts on people's lives and how they get out of poverty and getting jobs, and that's why we thought this would be a good idea ... and it will give people a sense of ownership and pride about the area”

Participant, BWA, Tipton

work. Similarly in 2012, BWA set up the Tipton Development Group, which is an informal network of public and community organisations with a vision to 'create thriving neighbourhoods' in Tipton and so saw an opportunity through neighbourhood planning, to help them achieve their ambitions for the area. This includes redeveloping brownfield sites for new social housing; improving the quality and diversity of the housing stock; protecting green spaces; and above all improving the overall physical appearance of the area.

Training and support

BWA already has a very good knowledge of the local area and so the priority for the training was on building their confidence and capacity to advocate for neighbourhood planning as well as understand how and if it could tackle some of the area's long standing issues.

Design of training and capacity building

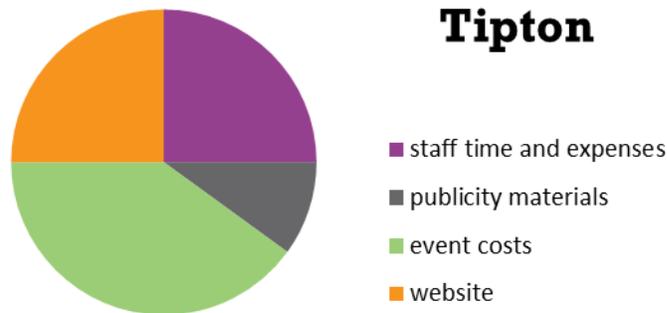
Three sessions were delivered:

- An introduction to neighbourhood planning, which included a short walkabout to energise local people and understand which issues could be addressed through a neighbourhood plan
- A creative and interactive session examining the area profile and local plan, and asset based activity to develop the 'neighbourhood story' and agree a potential boundary
- A review of the neighbourhood planning process and agreement on next steps and activities required to take things forward

Delivery

Each session was very well attended - averaging 20 per session - with participants including local residents, activists, staff from BWA and council officers. The walkabout resulted in a smaller area being considered for the neighbourhood plan - around 'Jubilee Park - rather than the Great Bridge ward itself, as it was felt that this was an area that needed the greatest improvement. The walkabout proved to be a useful exemplar for the BWA who now intend to engage more people in spatial issues using the Placecheck approach.

Engaging their communities



The 'Getting Started' activities were primarily designed to raise awareness of neighbourhood planning in the Jubilee neighbourhood and to empower residents to have some influence and take ownership of neighbourhood development in their local area. However BWA also wanted to kick start the process of recruiting to a neighbourhood forum at the same time and so organised the following activities:

- A 'neighbourhood planning' information day - using a local youth sports tournament as a platform to encourage young people to become members of the forum
- 200 door-to-door 'Jubilee Neighbourhood Plan' consultations, reaching out to the most vulnerable and isolated groups including pensioners and disabled residents
- Design and distribution of posters and information leaflets informing local residents about the neighbourhood planning process, and the opportunity for local residents and stakeholders to sign up to the forum
- Design of a website to update and inform residents of neighbourhood planning capacity building sessions as well as providing residents with an opportunity to feedback online and sign up to the forum
- Engagement with representatives of local authorities including Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, with the aim of sustaining statutory agency involvement in the neighbourhood planning process

Outcomes

The Tipton community decided to establish a neighbourhood forum, and on the 14 June the 'unofficial forum' was set up in conjunction with the Tipton Development Group. As well as developing a neighbourhood plan, the forum intends to establish a new 'Friends of Jubilee Park' group, as a mechanism for on-going consultation with the local community.



What next?

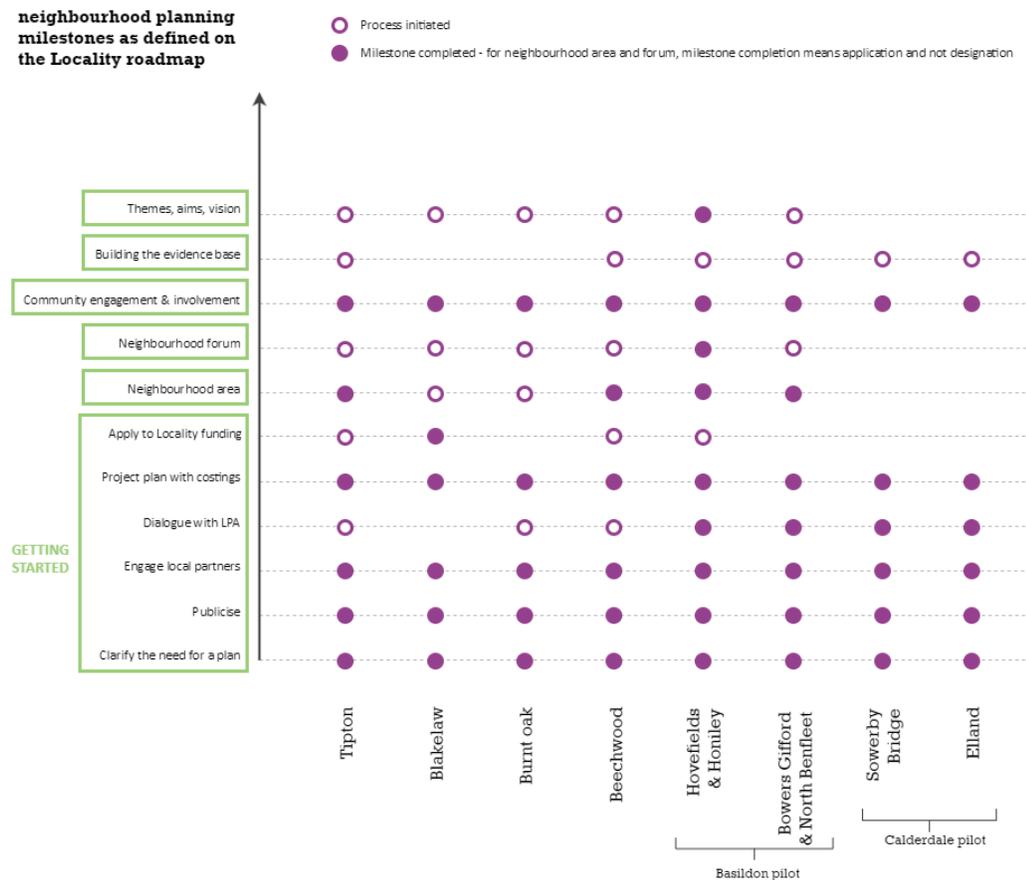
In the coming months the forum intends to:

- Increase membership and participation of the forum
- Engage local businesses in the potential of a neighbourhood plan
- Organise a series of walkabouts to engage more people
- Apply for funding (Locality, near neighbours, local area budget, Awards for All)
- Engage a specialist consultant to support the neighbourhood plan
- Liaise with Sandwell MBC as the planning authority

Section 5: Outcomes

This section explores the main outcomes of the programme. Drawing on quantitative analysis of pre- and post- survey data, we have measured the impact of the training on the ability of community organisations to lead neighbourhood planning in their areas. Similarly we have drawn from each area’s experience of getting started with neighbourhood planning to reflect on their progress and future ambitions.

In general terms, the programme has worked well. As outlined in the previous section, and illustrated below, each of the 6 areas have expressed an interest in developing a neighbourhood plan and are at various stages of either accessing support or undertaking wider engagement activity to garner support. Of the 8 groups (if we include both groups in Basildon and Calderdale) 4 have applied or are applying for funding; 6 have established or are establishing neighbourhood forums; and 6 have defined or are in the process of defining their boundaries. Whilst ‘definitive’ outcomes are beyond the term of this contract, all the data points to communities that are interested in taking control and making use of tools, like neighbourhood planning, to help create the change they desire in their local area. Some clear lessons



and insights have emerged, which have been used to inform our recommendations in section 6.

Survey data

Eleven scaled survey questions were asked of participants in the pre- and post-surveys in order to track changes in particular outcomes over time. The exact timing of the surveys varied in each area, but were mainly collected in January and May 2016 respectively.

The survey questions focused on three areas of interest: participants' knowledge of neighbourhood planning, their knowledge of their local area, and their confidence in taking action on neighbourhood planning in their area. Respondents were asked to rate themselves or their organisation on a scale of 0-4, where 0 meant 'not at all' and 4 was the highest rating.

A number of questions were asked within each area of interest:

Knowledge of Neighbourhood Planning

On a scale of 0 – 4 (with 4 being the highest and 0 being not at all) please rate your organisation's knowledge and understanding of the following:

1. What Neighbourhood Planning is
2. Why a community might want to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan
3. What your organisation needs to do to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan

Getting involved in your area

On a scale of 0 – 4 (with 4 being the highest and 0 being not at all) please rate the following:

4. How well do you think your organisation knows your local area?
5. How confident your organisation is in taking action on issues locally?
6. How confident your organisation is in its ability to influence local decisions?
7. How confident your organisation is in talking to others in your area about local issues?
8. How confident your organisation is in talking to others locally about Neighbourhood Planning?

Taking action on Neighbourhood Planning

On a scale of 0 – 4 please rate the following for how you feel today:

9. How confident your organisation is in being able to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan in your area?
10. How likely it is that your organisation will take action to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan in your area?
11. How likely it is that your organisation will talk to and encourage others to think about creating a Neighbourhood Plan in your area?

Limitations of outcome data

Respondents were asked to rate their *organisation's* knowledge and confidence in the first instance, rather than their own. This is because in most areas the training was originally targeted at a particular local community organisation, who would then act as an advocate for neighbourhood planning in their area.

In reality however, most organisations chose to open the training up to a variety of local agencies and groups, and a number of local residents attended who were not affiliated with any particular organisation. For this reason some of the survey respondents gave answers on behalf of an organisation, whereas others rated themselves, and we therefore do not have a perfectly standardised data set. However, individuals responded in the same way in both pre- and post- surveys, so we do have consistent data over time.

In Basildon, we took a different approach to training delivery compared to the other areas (see page 26). Several organisations were invited to attend one training session each, rather than a single organisation participating in a series of sessions. For this reason pre- and post- surveys were taken at the start and end of each training session, rather than over a longer period of time. This means we should exercise caution in comparing the results from Basildon to the other five areas.

There were also challenges with response rates to the outcomes survey. Response rates for the pre-survey were high - however in two areas responses to the post-survey were low, which has limited our ability to robustly assess change over time. In addition, due to the open and flexible nature of the programme, several respondents provided pre-survey responses before later dropping out, whereas other individuals provided a post-survey response when they had not been involved at the beginning of the programme.

This has meant that there are relatively few individuals who have provided both a pre- and post- survey response. As a result we have chosen to compare the average pre-scores with the average post-scores for the whole group in each area, rather than tracking individual changes, which makes the results less reliable. To counteract this issue we have provided an analysis of the 'matched' pre- and post- responses for individuals who completed both surveys, at a whole programme level (there were too few matched responses at an individual area level for the data to be meaningful).

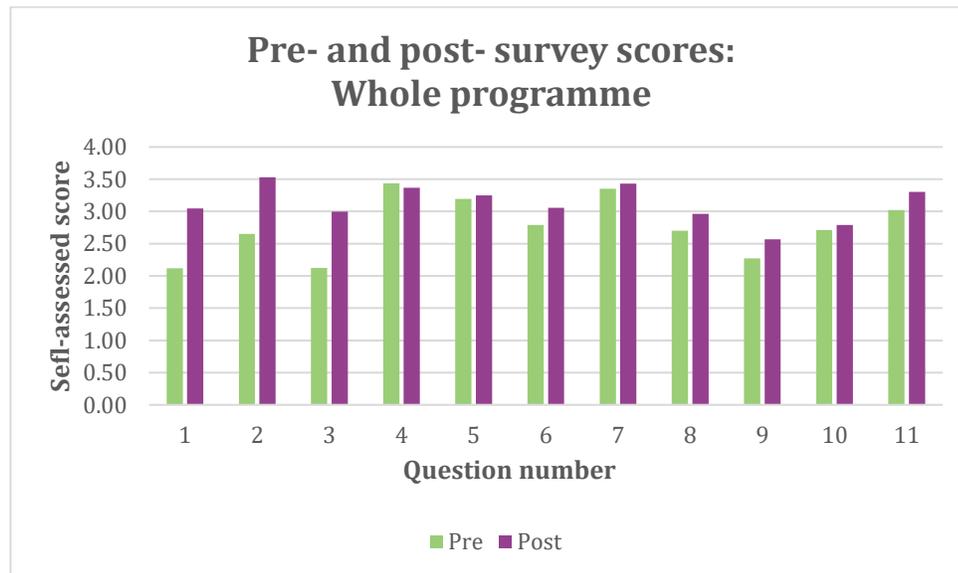
Finally, the surveys asked respondents to provide self-assessed scores, and it was not feasible to triangulate these ratings with a more objective assessment. Nonetheless, the data does show a consistent pattern in responses across most areas, which provides some quantitative evidence to support the findings of other research methods.

Analysis of outcome data

The following section provides a brief analysis of the outcomes data collected in the pre- and post- surveys. The data set is small overall and particularly at an area level, so we cannot draw any statistically significant or detailed conclusions from this data. However, it does give an indication of the types of changes that have occurred as a result of the programme.

Overall programme outcomes: Comparison of average pre- and post- scores

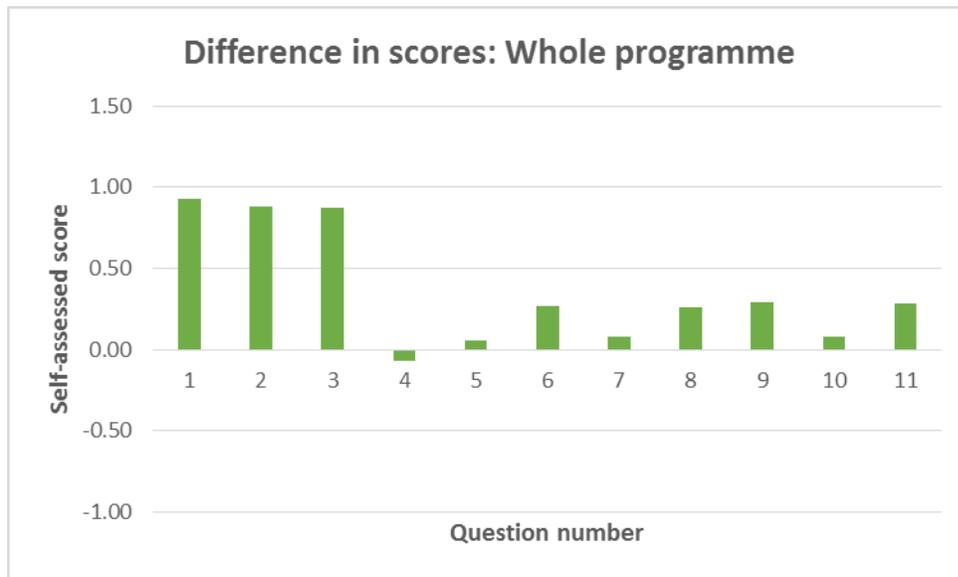
The following figure shows the unweighted average pre-survey score, and the unweighted average post-survey score, across each of the 11 survey questions. The unweighted averages were calculated by taking the average pre- and post- score in each area, and then taking an average of all 6 areas to create an unweighted average for the whole programme – disregarding the size of the response rate in each area. We chose to use unweighted averages because the size of the response rate in each area – related to the number of people involved in the programme – is irrelevant to the overall programme aim.



n=71 (pre); n=46 (post)

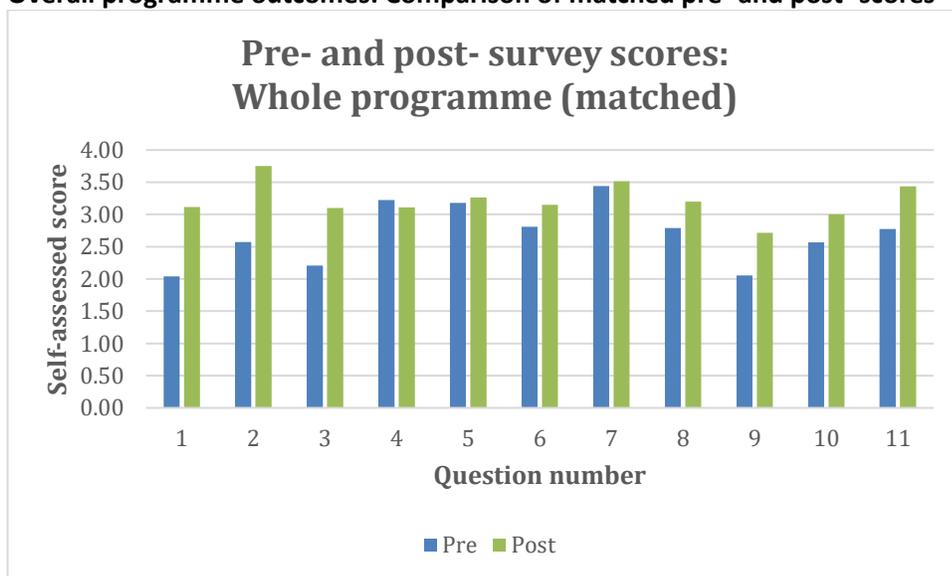
We achieved a higher than expected response rate for the pre-survey, although this dropped off considerably by the time of the post-survey. The figure above shows an increase in the average self-assessed score across every question asked, except one. The biggest change can be seen in the questions about respondents' knowledge of neighbourhood planning (questions 1-3), which saw a substantial increase in score of over 0.75 on a scale of 0-4. Changes in other scores were smaller, but nonetheless encouraging: an increase of 0.25 in the average score relating to confidence in being

able to prepare a neighbourhood plan, and a similar size of increase in the average score relating to likelihood of encouraging others to create a neighbourhood plan, for example. The only decrease in average score after the training programme was seen in question 4, 'How well do you think your organisation knows your local area', although the change is very small:



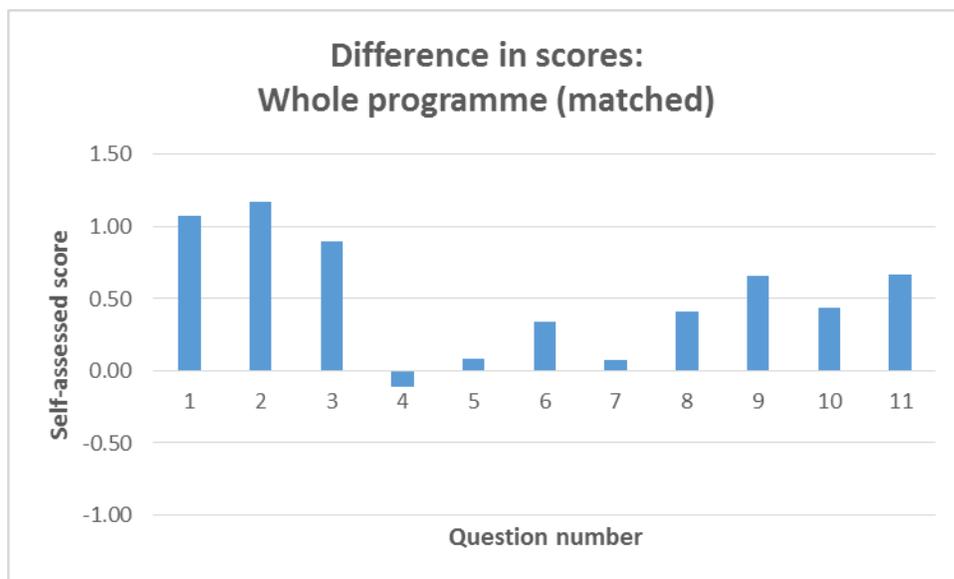
Of the total number of respondents, only 31 provided a response to both pre- and post- surveys. Analysis of these 31 matched responses (below) shows a similar pattern to the trends evident in the comparison of average pre- and post- scores.

Overall programme outcomes: Comparison of matched pre- and post- scores



n=31

Analysis of the change in scores reported by the 31 respondents who completed both a pre- and post- survey suggests that the programme was slightly more positive than the analysis of average scores (above) might indicate. The overall trend is similar, with a large increase in scores on the questions about knowledge of neighbourhood planning, little change in scores on the questions about taking action in the local area, and a modest increase in scores relating to the likelihood of taking action on neighbourhood planning in future. However, the change in scores relating to knowledge of neighbourhood planning is more pronounced, with an average change in score of more than 1 on the questions about what neighbourhood planning is, and why a community might want to prepare a neighbourhood plan. The change in scores relating to the likelihood of taking action on neighbourhood planning in future are also more positive, showing a change of more than 0.5 in confidence in being able to prepare a neighbourhood plan in the local area, as well as in the likelihood of encouraging others to get involved in neighbourhood planning.

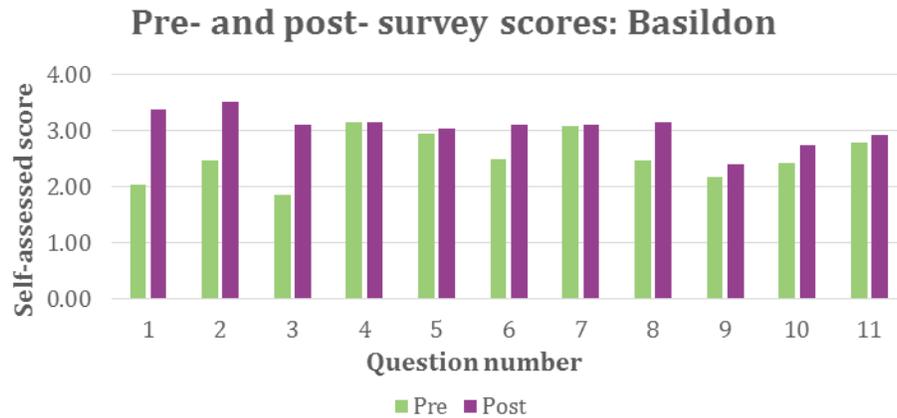


These findings may suggest that our analysis comparing the average pre- and average post- responses is an underestimate of the actual programme impact, and/or that the programme was more effective for individuals who were involved at the start and end of the training than it was for individuals who dropped in and out.

In the following sections we use a comparison of average pre- and post- scores only, as there is insufficient data to provide a meaningful analysis of matched scores at an area level.

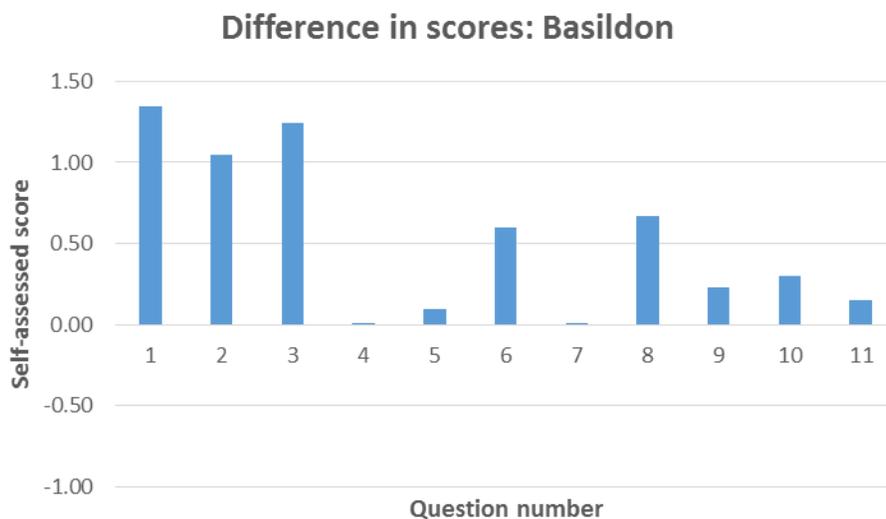
Outcomes by area: Comparison of average pre- and post- scores

Basildon



n = 23 (pre); *n*=20 (post)

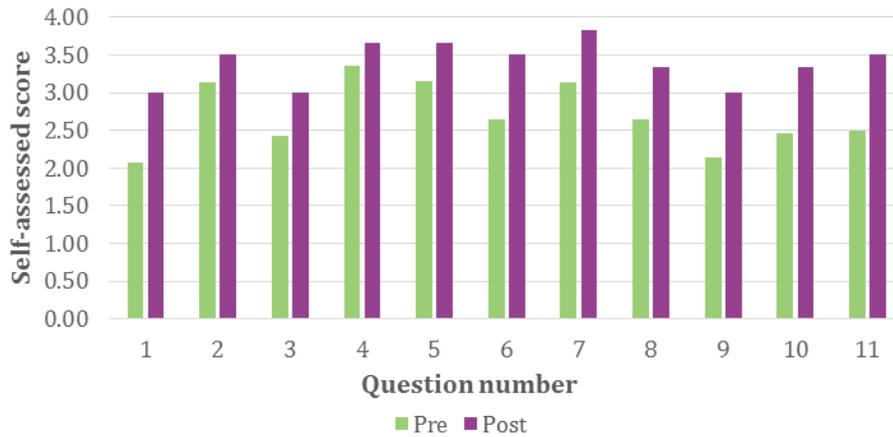
In Basildon four training sessions took place with different community organisations. It was not possible to collect post- survey data in one of these sessions, which is why there is a lower overall response rate for the post- survey. We were able to collect matched pre- and post- survey responses from a total of 18 individuals. The average participant self-assessed score was higher for all questions after receiving the training, with the largest increase being in their knowledge of neighbourhood planning (questions 1 – 3):



Organisations felt more confident talking to others in their area about neighbourhood planning (question 8), and there was a small increase in their confidence to take action on neighbourhood planning (questions 9 – 11). This pattern is very similar to that seen at a whole programme level.

Beechwood

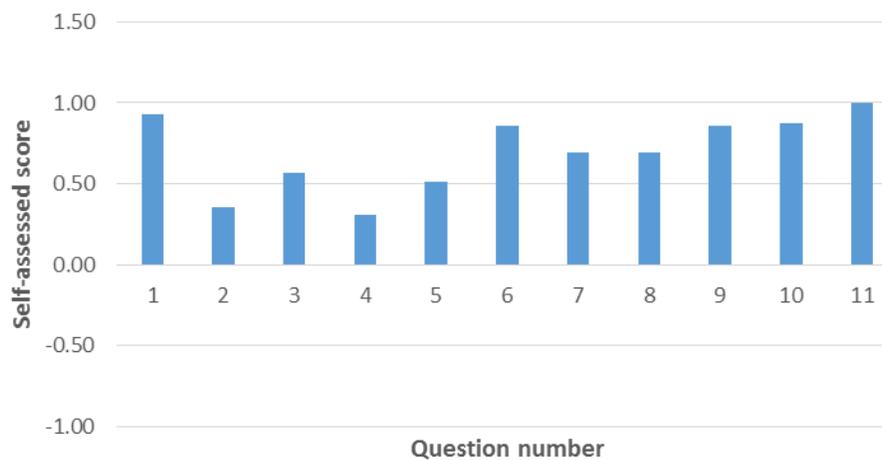
Pre- and post- survey scores: Beechwood



n=14 (pre); n=6 (post)

We were able to collect a total of 14 pre- and 6 post- survey responses in Beechwood. Five individuals completed both a pre- and post- survey. Again, the average self-assessed score after completing the training was higher than the average score before the training, across all 11 questions:

Difference in scores: Beechwood

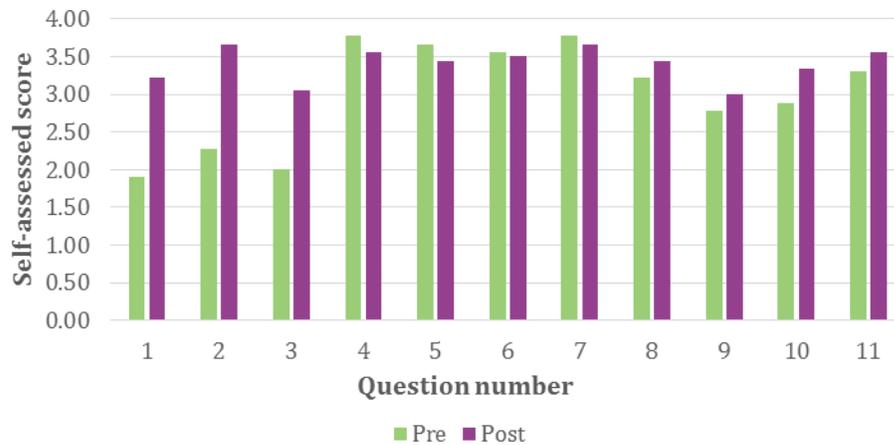


According to the survey data, of the six areas Beechwood saw the biggest increase in participants' knowledge and confidence, when the difference in scores across all questions are taken into account. There was an average increase in scores of at least 0.5 in 9 out of the 11 questions asked, a much higher number than all of the other

areas. The low post-survey response rate, however, means that these findings are tentative and should be treated with some caution.

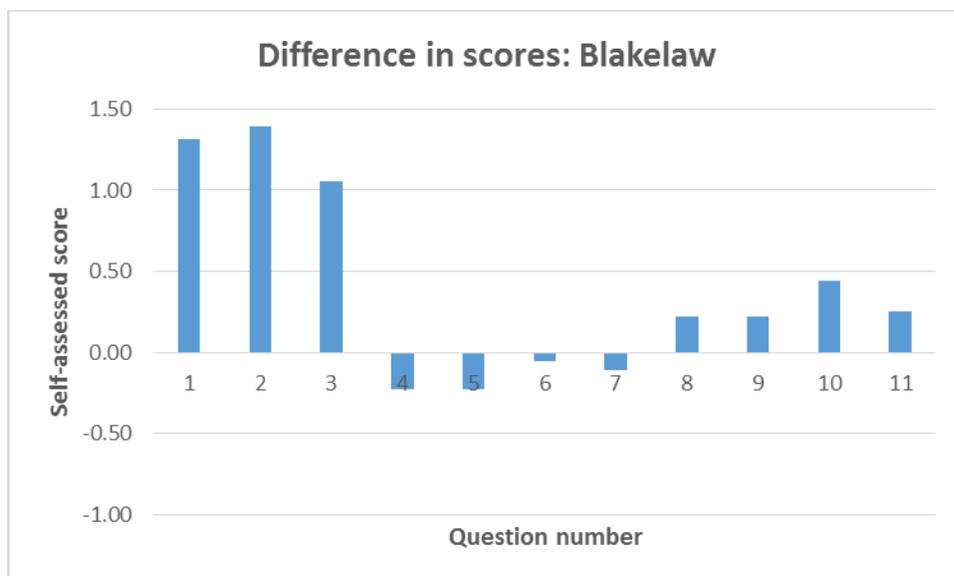
Blakelaw

Pre- and post- survey scores: Blakelaw



n=12 (pre); n=9 (post)

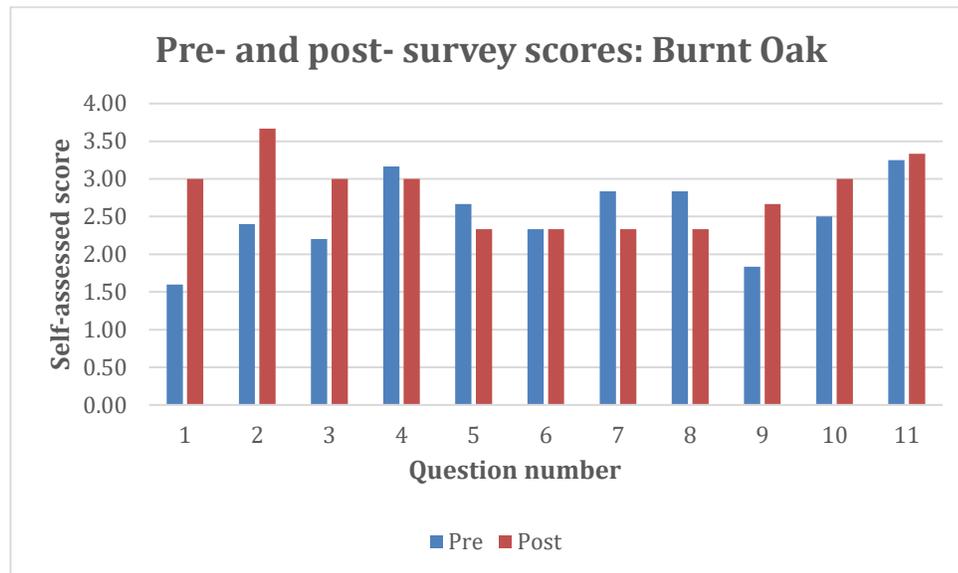
We were able to collect 12 pre- survey responses and 9 post- survey responses, however only 5 individuals completed both a pre- and post- survey. The results show a large increase in the average level of knowledge of neighbourhood planning after the training programme (questions 1-3), although the average confidence in getting involved in their local area decreased slightly (questions 4-7).



There was a small increase in the average score related to the likelihood that the area will take action on neighbourhood planning (questions 9-11). Given that the

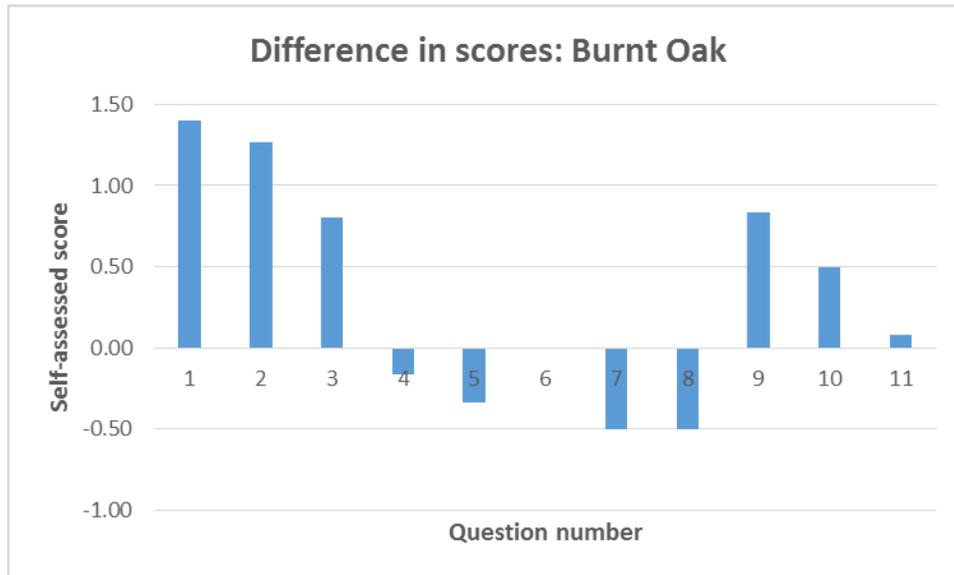
decreases in score seen for questions 4-7 are small, the overall trend is similar to that seen for the whole programme.

Burnt Oak

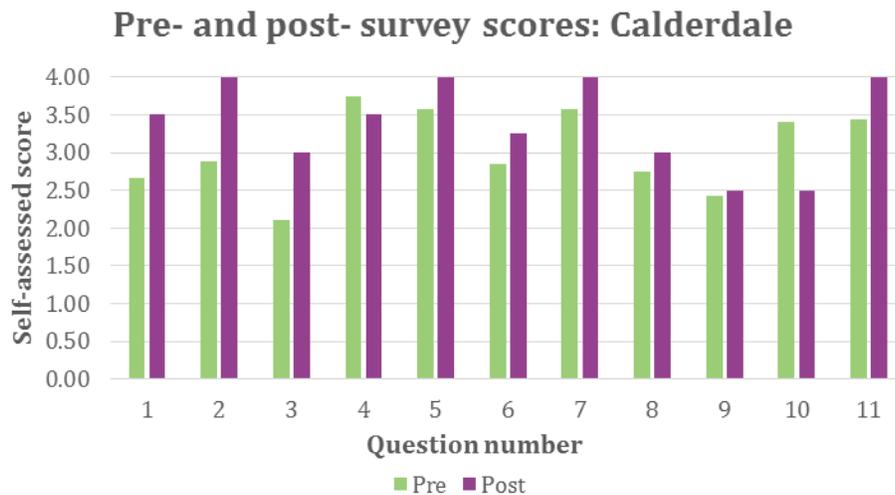


n=6 (pre); n=3 (post)

There was a low overall response rate in Burnt Oak and only one individual completed both a pre- and post- survey response. However, the results are similar to trends in other areas: after the training, there was a substantial increase in the average score relating to knowledge of neighbourhood planning (questions 1-3); a small decrease in the average score relating to taking action in the local area; and an increase in the average score relating to the likelihood of taking action on neighbourhood planning in future.



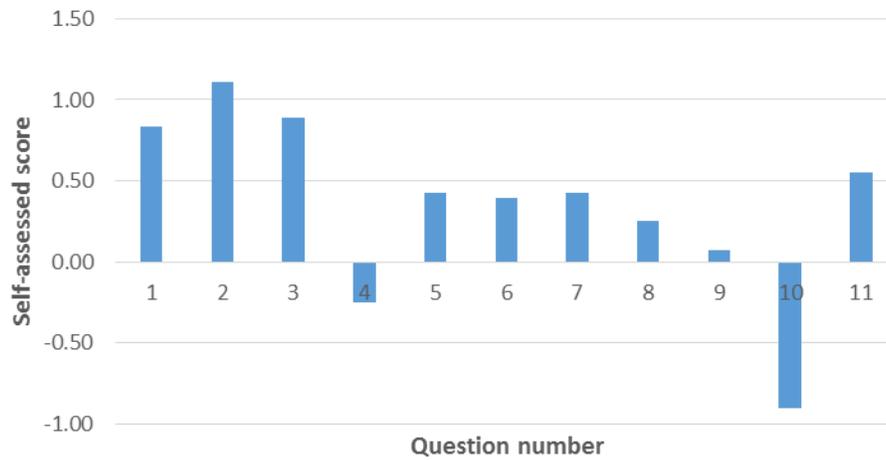
Calderdale



n=9 (pre); n=2 (post)

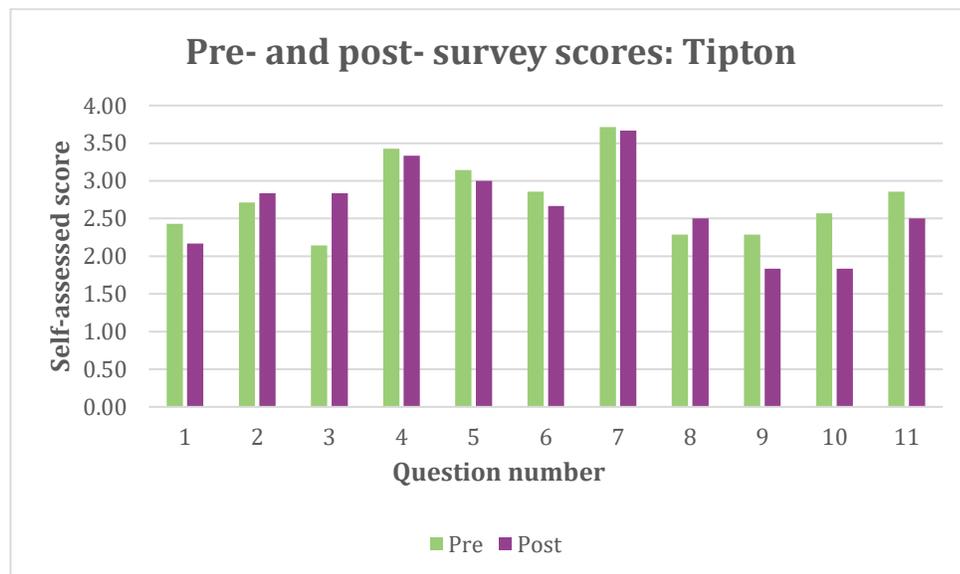
In Calderdale we were only able to collect two post-survey responses, with only one of these individuals having also completed a pre-survey. Despite the low post-response rate, the overall trend is similar to other areas, with the biggest increase in average scores seen in respondents' knowledge of neighbourhood planning, and a small increase in the average score related to taking action in the local area. However, unlike other areas, there was a substantial decrease in the average post-score for question 10 (How likely it is that your organisation will take action to prepare a neighbourhood plan in your area). This could suggest that there is less appetite for neighbourhood planning in Calderdale, but given the very low response rate, we cannot provide any conclusive evidence of this.

Difference in scores: Calderdale



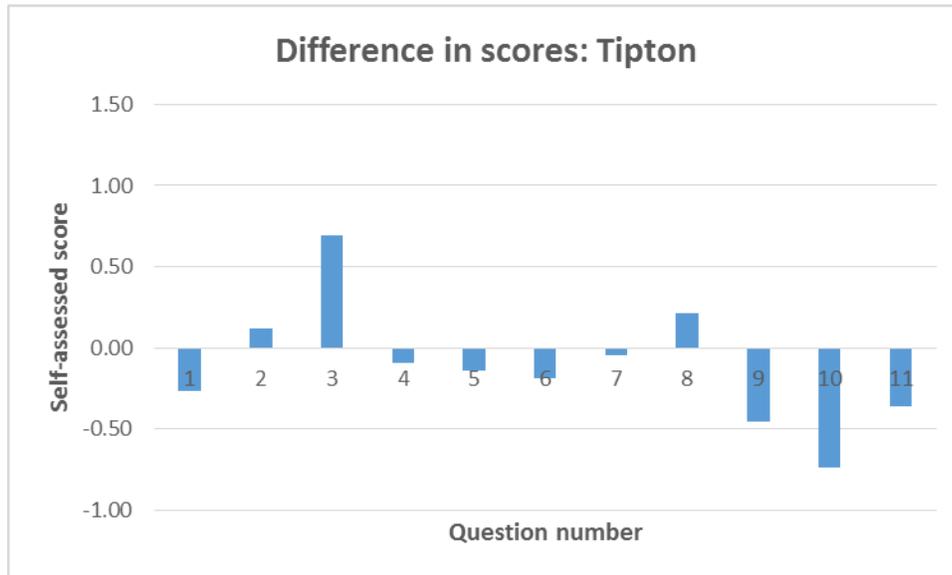
Question 10 aside, the findings are very similar to the trend evident in the whole programme analysis.

Tipton



n=7 (pre); n=6 (post)

Although Tipton achieved nearly the same number of post- as pre- survey responses, no single individual completed both surveys making the comparison of pre- and post-findings in Tipton the least reliable of all the areas. This perhaps explains in part why the trend of responses in Tipton differs to that in most other areas, and may be a factor in the high number of self-assessed scores which decreased after training (8 out of 11 questions).



Key findings

The data reveals a similar pattern in most of the six areas:

1. **On average, participants' knowledge of neighbourhood planning has increased substantially between the pre- and post- surveys.** This suggests that the programme has certainly helped participants to better understand what a neighbourhood plan is, what it can achieve and how to prepare one.
2. **On average, there has been little change in participants' knowledge of or involvement in their local area.** In three of the areas this decreased slightly between the pre- and post-surveys; in the other three areas it increased slightly, but in either case the change was much less substantial than the increase in knowledge of neighbourhood planning. This suggests that the programme may have had little impact on participants' confidence of working in their local area, and/or that changes in this outcome were largely modified by localised factors rather than the programme delivery itself.
3. **On average, participants felt that it was slightly more likely that they or their organisation would take action on neighbourhood planning** at the time of the post-survey, than they did at the time of the pre-survey. This finding is consistent in all areas with the exception of Tipton, and suggests that the programme overall may have helped participants to feel more confident or interested in developing a neighbourhood plan than they had felt previously.

The findings in some areas stand out as unusual:

- **Beechwood** saw the largest overall change in scores when all questions are taken into account, perhaps partly due to respondents' average scores being unusually low in the pre-survey.
- The increase in knowledge of neighbourhood planning was particularly high in **Blakelaw**, and after one of the four **Basildon** training sessions. Again, the pre-scores in these areas were low.
- **Tipton** saw very small, mostly negative, changes in scores across most questions, with the exception of two questions that had a change in score of 0.5 or more. The fact that no individuals provided both a pre- and post-survey response may partly explain the different outcomes evident here compared to the other areas.

Implications and analysis

We chose to use quantitative analysis techniques in order to provide some evidence which is flexible, varied and previously untested – especially given that we did not expect change to be linear. In particular, qualitative evidence suggests that individuals' confidence in their organisations' ability to take action on neighbourhood planning fluctuated greatly during the course of the programme, with initial enthusiasm replaced by the realisation of significant barriers, and then a slowly building confidence that barriers could be overcome.

Therefore the timing of the post-survey is likely to have had an impact on the change in programme participants' knowledge and confidence over time. However, we recognise that it is challenging to rely on fixed pre- and post- survey points in a programme degree of change in participants' scores in this area. Had we conducted the survey at a later date, it is possible that the outcome would have been very different.

Given issues with response rates and the flexible nature of the programme, this analysis is not intended to give the 'final say' on whether the programme has been effective or not. However, our quantitative survey findings do give some indication that positive outcomes may have been achieved, and they certainly reinforce the more qualitative information and insight gathered through the course of the programme.

In summary, based on our quantitative research findings, we suggest the following hypothesis:

1. **In order to be effective advocates for neighbourhood planning, organisations/individuals need to have a high pre-existing knowledge of their local area.** It is largely due to the fact that our participants had a high initial knowledge of their local area, that we saw very little change in outcomes across questions 4-8. Without a good pre-existing knowledge, educating people about neighbourhood planning is unlikely to help organisations or individuals to take action.
2. **The likelihood of an organisation or individual having confidence to take action on neighbourhood planning is likely to be a function of their level of knowledge of neighbourhood planning,** assuming that they have a high prior knowledge of their local area. In other words training people in an accessible, supported way appears to make them more likely to want to create a neighbourhood plan. With a bigger dataset than ours, it may be possible to be more precise about the nature of the relationship between these two factors.
3. **In selecting areas or organisations to target in future, it's advisable to ensure that groups' have extensive knowledge of their local area whilst also providing compelling, accessible and targeted information about neighbourhood planning.** This is likely to lead to an increase in confidence to take action on neighbourhood planning, although we cannot yet be certain as to whether increased confidence to act will in time lead to an increased likelihood of neighbourhood plans being undertaken and completed.

Section 6: Conclusions and recommendations

As indicated earlier, the research and analysis presented in this report is intended to provide a rich insight into the experiences of the six areas and to inspire ideas for how to engage more urban deprived areas in neighbourhood planning in the future. With such a small and diverse sample size we are unable to produce statistically reliable evidence of the projects outcomes. However, we are able to draw out some clear recommendations for how this work could be built upon in the future. In summary:

Stimulate the market
Identify opportunity areas
Align message to motive
More recognition for the challenges in urban areas
Properly resource community organisations
More face to face support and at the early stages
Harness community networks and other forms of social action
Join up at the neighbourhood and national level
Getting Started funds
Link spatial to social issues
Clear, time bound programme of activity and bite sized training
Iterative engagement
Improved digital support

1. Stimulate the market

In general terms, the Neighbourhood Planning Capacity Building in Deprived Urban Areas programme has worked well. It has raised the profile and potential of neighbourhood planning in each of the six areas and has increased the skills, knowledge and confidence of each of the community organisations that participated. Even though the outcomes are beyond this contract our data suggests that all six are

interested in using neighbourhood planning to take control of how their areas develop and are now at various stages of accessing support to enable this to happen.

None of the community organisations had prior knowledge of neighbourhood planning before being approached to participate in the programme which suggests that a targeted intervention to stimulate the market and provide practical support and guidance has yielded positive results. Similarly there was a strong view amongst participants that more could be done to raise awareness of the opportunity in the future, particularly through more locally-based channels and networks.

2. Identify ‘opportunity’ areas

Our experience suggests that neighbourhood planning might enjoy a greater take up in deprived, urban areas if certain ‘catalysts’ are present. All 6 of the areas were arguably ‘ready’ to embark on neighbourhood planning, which suggests a more strategic and targeted approach to identifying ‘opportunity areas’ might be advisable. Further research is merited in order to develop a robust methodological framework to identify areas with the most potential. In reflecting on our approach, we’d suggest the following local characteristics and contexts are important:

- **Complementary activity** e.g. Big Local, Community Organisers, First Steps, Community Land Trusts, Asset Transfers etc.
- **Supportive local authority** e.g. positive attitudes and behaviours of ward councillors and/or planning officers
- **Engagement in planning/spatial issues** e.g. evidence of a commenting on planning applications or opposition groups to local development, wider planning policy in development, history and heritage groups, ‘Friends of the Park’ etc.
- **Strong community sector** e.g. robust infrastructure or anchor organisations, history of community activism and volunteering
- **Other Neighbourhood / Community level place-making** – e.g. neighbourhood regeneration, opportunity area, town centre strategies, housing zones, estate renewal programmes, use of Assets of Community Value and other provisions of Localism Act etc.

3. Align message to motive

Participants reported a remarkably consistent set of motivations to engage in neighbourhood planning across all 6 areas. This suggests that deprived, urban communities may be more encouraged to take up the opportunity if guidance, support and promotional campaigns are clearly aligned to their needs and aspirations. These are summarised below in order of preference:

- **Housing and development** - control and influence over type, design, affordability, tenure and location of housing development. All 6 areas reported this as the most important factor, in particular the need to increase affordable housing and ensure the provision of supporting infrastructure and community facilities. Communities are not averse to development and growth but want to ensure better mixed communities with limits on 'luxury flats and gentrification'.
- **Power and influence** - the power of neighbourhood planning both as a statutory tool and as a vehicle to rebalance power away from local authorities were clear drivers for neighbourhood planning in all of our pilot areas. A sense that areas had been neglected and overlooked for investment and therefore a neighbourhood plan and/or forum could help to hold the local authority to account and ensure the community had some clout.
- **Green and open spaces** - the majority of our pilot areas wanted to vigorously protect their green assets for community use. Rightly or wrongly there is a perception, that in high growth areas and more built up environments, parks and open spaces are especially vulnerable and at risk of development.
- **Image and appearance** – all areas reported the need to significantly improve the appearance and management of the physical environment, such as improved shop frontages and signage, refurbished buildings, better pavements, street lighting etc. Similarly all areas want more control over the 'high street' e.g. fewer fast food and betting shops.
- **Social cohesion and sense of place** – the ability to work together and unite behind a shared vision for their area was a strong motivator for a number of our pilot areas. A view was shared that deprived urban communities may be more transient and fragmented, with lower levels of civic action and solidarity – particularly between established and newer communities such as those seen as 'gentrifiers' or 'migrant families' etc., and neighbourhood planning was a process that could help to recapture some community spirit and pride.
- **History and heritage** - sensitive development that recognises the character of an area including iconic buildings and other local features was also important to the majority of our pilot areas. The idea that a neighbourhood plan might help a community to retain and conserve the identity of its neighbourhood was a strong motivating factor.
- **Funding** – areas were also exercised by the idea of levering in additional investment and resources, either through development receipts such as CIL or more widely in advocating for a fairer share from their local authority.

Separately but importantly each of the 6 community organisations recruited through the programme reported an interest in neighbourhood planning because of perceived benefits to their respective organisations. Motives included an increase in profile and influence; an opportunity to access additional funding (both through this contract and wider sources e.g. Locality); an increased ability to meet local needs; as well as an opportunity to put their activities on a more sustainable footing.

As we report in section 5 below, community organisations are well positioned to lead neighbourhood planning, but they will need proper resourcing in order to ensure they can fulfil that role and responsibility.

4. Redistribute resources into deprived, urban areas

Aside from the positive motivations for engaging in neighbourhood planning a number of obstacles were also reported as likely to frustrate the take up in some deprived communities:

- a lack of skills, knowledge and capacity, particularly a deficit of the more technical or professional skill-sets that the neighbourhood planning process demands;
- a lack of available resources and support for communities without a Parish/Town Council or precept;
- more transient and less cohesive communities with perceived lower levels of civic pride, volunteering and social action;
- planning and land use change simply not being a priority in areas with more immediate and acute pressures e.g. unemployment, ill-health, crime, low aspiration;
- a culture of needing to 'ask permission' from the local authority, including a fear of sanctions or benefit withdrawal if people are not actively seeking work;
- questions over the legitimacy of participatory versus representative democracy, including conflicts and tensions that might arise over governance arrangements and/or boundaries;
- the complexity of some urban areas with higher proportions of brownfield or strategic industrial land, as well as, low or even negative land values

Given these barriers, participants highlighted the need for a more progressive allocation of resources and support to ensure that communities in more deprived areas are not unfairly disadvantaged from taking up the opportunity to progress a neighbourhood plan.

5. Empower and enable community organisations

It is clear that progress with neighbourhood planning is possible, even in areas at the higher end of the deprivation scale - so long as the supporting community infrastructure is in place. Moreover there is a strong appetite among local community and voluntary organisations to get involved, especially if they are properly resourced and supported to do so. Highly active, trusted by their

communities and able to spread the word quickly, all of the organisations we worked with saw themselves as natural catalysts for neighbourhood planning in their communities and these attributes make them stand out as appropriate ways of spreading the opportunities of neighbourhood planning by comparison with other channels.

Many local community groups have a good understanding of local issues and opportunities, can broker relationships, build capacity, and potentially 'pool' available resources – to maximise the opportunity. And importantly as has been shown, they can mobilise their networks to identify local people who may be interested in setting up a Neighbourhood Forum and support them to get started. However, it should also be noted that not every deprived urban area is likely to have supportive community infrastructure and so a more strategic and targeted selection process to assess their suitability, as suggested in section 2, and diagnose the best kind of support is highly recommended.

6. A funded programme of face-face support

In general terms, a **funded programme** of face to face support has been central to the progress reported by each of the 6 areas. The majority have indicated that their process might have stalled or not started at all if face to face support hadn't been in place. This is now becoming a real issue for areas who want to take neighbourhood planning forward. A major focus for our 'neighbourhood facilitators' therefore has been in supporting areas to identify alternative resources to continue their support and guidance e.g. through applications to Locality, Big Local or the local authority.

Our experience also suggests that the '**type of support**' offered to communities is important. A 'blended' approach which includes community development, neighbourhood regeneration, planning, local government and voluntary sector experience could be valuable in helping communities to really maximise the opportunity.

Arguably the 'neighbourhood facilitators' (or Big Local reps) are well positioned to provide this support and have demonstrated their ability to both help communities make sense of neighbourhood planning whilst also crucially unlocking their capacity and leadership.

Importantly they are also able to leverage their local contacts and networks and support areas to build positive, collaborative and co-operative relationships with other agencies in the area, particularly the local authority.

In all 6 areas it was clear that support from planning experts was not the priority consideration in taking up the opportunities provided by neighbourhood planning. In the longer term therefore, it is worth considering whether more of a focus on face to face support and developing the supply of people with the skills of the neighbourhood facilitators could be a different way of delivering neighbourhood planning support, and one which moves away from the current grant programme.

Having a **constructive relationship with the local authority** was also perceived as being particularly important in all 6 areas and could be the key to mobilising and keeping communities on track in the absence of any further funded programme of support.

Interestingly 4 out of the 6 pilot areas enjoyed good local authority support; however this might be more indicative of a targeted selection process rather than the wider landscape. Some areas reported a slight tension in agreeing core responsibilities and governance arrangements and suggested clearer guidance about the duty of support and what communities can expect. The Blakelaw Ward Community Ward Partnership, for example, is drawing up its own heads of terms with the local authority.

Whilst all 6 areas were considering or had made contact with **other neighbourhood planning groups**, there is no evidence to suggest that this has had any impact on their motivation or ability to undertake a neighbourhood plan. There was a view however that their input might have more value later on in the process - when communities have already identified issues they want to address and can target areas accordingly. The ability to network and exchange ideas and experience with other neighbourhood planners is likely to emerge as each of the areas progresses.

7. Bite-sized training

The training programme was also rated highly with all 6 areas reporting that this was the most valuable aspect of the programme - alongside the capacity building strand. Each community organisation reported an increase in their skills, knowledge and motivation to lead on neighbourhood planning as a result of the training. There is not enough data to assess whether the training might have had a greater impact, say if training was delivered over a longer period, with more people, and more detailed sessions etc., however some points are worthy of further consideration:

Contract timescales: on the whole training was delivered over a relatively short period. There were some concerns initially, from both facilitators and areas, that they might not be able to meet the contract timescales. However on reflection, facilitators have reported that it 'felt about right'. The feedback has been that

sustaining interest and involvement in a more extensive programme of training might prove difficult.

Open or closed: it was originally envisaged that training would be delivered to a community organisation in each of the 6 areas. They would then harness that knowledge and advocate for neighbourhood planning within their communities. In practice, the programme in all six areas was much more open than that, with both facilitators and community organisations opting to extend the opportunity to a variety of other local agencies and organisations, including local residents. This was in part because of the different types of community organisation involved (e.g. infrastructure orgs that provides a catalyst for other people to come forward in their area to take up the opportunity, such as BBWCVS, and those that want to take up the opportunity directly, such as Beechwood. Similarly it was also perceived to be a good opportunity to start building capacity and interest, as well as draw on wider skills and resources.

A focus on place: starting the training with a 'walkabout' that gets people out into their neighbourhood and talking about local issues and opportunities, appears to be a positive way to frame the discussion about the potential role of a neighbourhood plan, rather than the other way around. People want to know about and engage with the place where they live rather than start with a discussion about what planning can do for them. More 'classroom' based activity at the beginning might inhibit take up, especially in more disadvantaged communities where confidence levels may be low.

'Active' not 'passive': in the majority of our pilot areas an approach to training that builds capacity and empowers communities was undertaken. The focus was on developing 'active' rather than 'passive' participants; sharing tasks and responsibilities and designing sessions that were effectively light versions or 'dry runs' of tasks or processes that groups will have to do in more detail when developing a neighbourhood plan.

Finally facilitators reported the need to be **clear and honest about the benefits, scope and limits of Neighbourhood Planning** with communities. For example i) what a neighbourhood plan can and can't do so no false expectations arise and ii) the rigour and time commitment needed to navigate the process.

A few of the areas wanted to start the process after just one session and so a balance needs to be struck between exciting people about the possibilities whilst also ensuring they are not rushing into things without first being clear about the process and what it entails.

8. Link spatial to social

Unsurprisingly the vast majority of participants in our six areas reported ‘likes and dislikes’ and ‘things they’d like to see improve’ in their communities that were not strictly matters for a neighbourhood plan – such as littering, crime, jobs, education etc. This is likely to be the pattern across most disadvantaged areas where communities may be more preoccupied with the day-day rather than long term issues, and with social considerations rather than questions of land use and development.

Consequently one recommendation is to ensure the link between the spatial and social is more clearly defined so as to demonstrate where the value is in preparing a neighbourhood plan. In at least 2 of the pilot areas (Blakelaw and Tipton) the communities have decided that it will be a good idea to draw up a community-led plan in tandem with their neighbourhood plan so as to not lose sight of the issues that residents raised through the training and engagement programme. They see the exercise as enabling them to identify and address a wider range of issues, some of which may be achieved through a neighbourhood plan but equally some of which may be realised through influence and pressure that they may be able to exert through a Neighbourhood Forum.

9. Join up at the neighbourhood and national level

Whether by accident or design, all 6 of the pilot areas have endeavoured to link into other neighbourhood-level programmes and activities in their area. They see neighbourhood planning as a natural extension to some of this activity and another lever to help realise their ambitions for their areas.

This includes Big Local and Estate Renewal (Beechwood), Community Organising (Calderdale), Asset Transfer (Blakelaw), Local Plan Development (Basildon), High Street Development Plan (Burnt Oak) and Community Development Programme (Tipton).

In our view, this presents a significant opportunity and as recommended earlier suggests that a more targeted approach to both stimulating the market and identifying opportunity areas might yield very positive results. This could be done at a number of levels – supporting key networks of community groups and voluntary organisations to undertake mapping exercises for their areas is one option and a strategic conversation at a national level to assess “neighbourhood plan readiness” might be another; e.g. between DCLG, Locality, Big Local, Community Organisers, NCLTC and Power to Change.

There are also opportunities to tap into the intelligence of major funders of local community activity such as Big Lottery Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund. Sometimes

these programmes can ‘butt’ up against each other at a neighbourhood level resulting in more conflict than co-operation (e.g. with individuals acting as gatekeepers or not wanting to be diverted from their ‘core’ task, as was the case initially with Beechwood). However a ‘macro’ conversation with all significant stakeholders which is focussed on mapping synergies, exploring creative funding opportunities or areas for cross promotion and shared learning etc., could potentially deliver much more value for money and more effective outcomes.

10. Clear, time-bound programme

At the start of the programme both facilitators and community organisations had serious reservations about their ability to meet the contract timetable e.g. with less than three months to both design and deliver training and run their initial community engagement activities. However on reflection, having a clear time bound programme of activity with a forward plan has helped groups to stay focussed and on track. Some facilitators have suggested a longer time-frame (from between 8 -12 months) might help ensure communities are on a strong footing to take forward a neighbourhood plan. This would allow for the initial scoping exercise, designing and delivering training, capacity building, running engagement events, establishing the Forum and also designating the area; a broader range of activities than delivered through this programme.

Whilst there is a delicate balance to strike between building the capacity of a community to engage with neighbourhood planning and do it on their own terms and at their own pace – facilitators were also clear that it’s important to ensure that there is enough momentum and progress in the community to keep things moving forward. One option to manage this is to taper the level of support so that there is up front investment in the early ‘Getting Started phase e.g. 3-6 months and then an option to ‘dip in’ again 9-12 months later.

11. Iterative engagement

Neighbourhood planning is not a linear process and in our experience neither is the community engagement process. It is messy, iterative and opportunistic. Arguably all 6 of the pilot areas engaged beyond their Getting Started ‘brief’ and started consulting on boundaries and recruitment to potential forums, even before it was established that they’d like to prepare a neighbourhood plan.

As above it seems there is a delicate balance to be struck between not rushing through the process and ensuring that there is good local engagement, where people are clear on the process and how they can get involved. This will help to mitigate any conflict or tensions within the community as well as minimise the risks of a negative result at referendum, later on.

Another important lesson from this programme is to take the engagement 'to' local people rather than expect them to come to you. Most of the areas identified events and activities in their communities that they bolted onto, for example: bingo (Beechwood); sports tournament (Tipton); restaurant film launch (Burnt Oak); door knocking (Basildon) and primary school workshops (Calderdale) etc.

12. Getting Started Funds

The Getting Started funding wasn't rated as highly as the training and capacity building elements of the programme. Nonetheless community organisations and facilitators reported that without funding it would be difficult to mobilise communities in disadvantaged areas. Funds are needed to pay for venue hire, refreshments, promotional materials, staff time etc., and in the absence of a Parish/Town Council, this cost falls to community organisations who are already struggling to resource their work.

Equally there was a perception that the national 'Neighbourhood Planning' support infrastructure (both funding and support & guidance) is too technical and not targeted enough on building the confidence and capacity of communities to get involved from the beginning. One recommendation therefore is to consider the implications of reallocating some of the 'funding pot' into the 'earlier stages' of the process and model likely impact on both 'take up' as well as 'longer-term' outcomes. One interesting observation from this programme is that 3 out of the 6 areas have also applied, or are in the process of applying, to other local funding pots (excluding Locality grant) in order to resource their work e.g. Big Local (Beechwood) Flood Relief Grant (Calderdale) and Near Neighbours (Tipton). This reinforces the idea of 'opportunity areas' and communities being able to access and join up with other area based programmes and funds.

13. An effective digital solution

Both facilitators and participants reported the need for simple and clear guidance. This is particularly true for communities where there may be literacy or language issues, which serve as additional barriers to engagement. There was also agreement that resources which more directly reflect the particular motives and contexts of disadvantaged areas engaging in neighbourhood planning would be valuable e.g. in conflict resolution, navigating boundary issues, governance arrangements, gentrification, affordable housing etc.

However, overwhelmingly the impression that we have encountered is the need for a more intuitive, supportive and accessible online solution that enables people to find the information they need quickly. Currently, there is a risk of 'information overload', with nearly 70 case studies and several hundred resources on the

mycommunityrights.org.uk and ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk websites combined. However, since residents have a finite amount of time that they will be willing to contribute to the process, it is vital to ensure they are able to find the resources and information they need quickly and effectively. With this programme, the facilitators have been able to act as the 'filter' – making an assessment of residents' needs and then finding the appropriate case studies or templates. This has been beneficial but is possibly not the best long-term solution.

The current online offerings, such as mycommunityrights.org.uk, don't provide many features to support effective and intuitive search by users. There may even be a danger that they are causing users to disengage. For example, mycommunityrights.org.uk provides only the ability to search for keywords in its directory of case studies, with a drop-down menu of categories providing only one – 'neighbourhood planning' - and only the possibility to sort results alphabetically or by recency. Although it includes a 'refine' button, no ability to refine results is in fact evident. Similarly there is no ability to search for meaningful categories (such as urban or rural or issue-focused categories, location and so on).

An intuitive online directory of resources and case studies incorporating tools and functions to enable users to find what they need in a range of ways, and providing a good user experience, would vastly improve the current online information offer. Ideally, this should be developed by involving users in the design process to ensure that functionality is rooted in their needs and preferences for discovering key information. This would increase its likelihood of success, and greatly empower local people to get neighbourhood planning off the ground in their areas without need to first resort to external or funded support.

Finally neighbourhood planning for some can be a complex, intense and uncertain process - so wherever possible guidance, toolkits and templates should strive to give clarity, certainty and confidence to those considering embarking on the process. This is nowhere more evident than in communicating what a neighbourhood plan can and cannot achieve – which presents a real barrier for communities. There is no easy answer but perhaps some kind of diagnostic tool or 'triage' system might enable communities to better identify whether neighbourhood planning is indeed the right approach.

Section 7: Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and thank all those that have participated and been involved in the Capacity Building in Deprived Areas programme, including DCLG, Tony Burton CBE, the Community Development Foundation and Renaisi Associates: Paul Bragman, Simon Underwood, Pete Duncan, Jan Stobbart, Clare Babbs, Chris Allen and Tony Mullin. We would also like to thank all those that participated in the training and capacity building programme, whose time and consideration have made this evaluation possible.