



A personal view

By Catherine Howard, Partner, Planning, London

Nimbyism, Yimbyism and Localism – is there a difference?

Why a populist approach to planning is a mistake

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When asked to define populism in an episode of *The Rest is Politics*¹ earlier this year, Rory Stewart suggested:

"... it involves presenting yourself as speaking for the people against the elite, but the people that you're speaking for are always called the 'real people' and it's not all the people and often it's not even the majority of the people. It's a particular, often nationalist, nativist appeal to a section of the population that tries to represent themselves as if they're everybody and treat anyone who disagrees with them as though they are effete, out of touch, treacherous elites, and that gives them the legitimacy to challenge constitutions."

It is a fact that planning decisions made by local authorities, the Planning Inspectorate ("PINS") or the Secretary of State will not always reflect the vocal opinions of some local groups, even where they claim to speak for the whole community. This was always a strength not a weakness of the planning system. However, this principle is being eroded by populist rhetoric from government which is threatening the legitimacy of our whole system of development control.

"NIMBYISM"², in common parlance, used to be a way of dismissing the objections of local people to schemes they didn't like. It was understood that people near a proposed development site might be opposed due to fears (founded or unfounded) about temporary or permanent impacts. The purpose of the planning system was to take such concerns into account but to weigh up the impacts overall for the community and the nation when making local plans and taking decisions on planning applications.

In the past decade, however, much of what might have in the past been condemned or dismissed as NIMBYISM is now celebrated and encouraged by government as "localism".

This article looks at how this has happened, the inconsistent application of localism across the planning system, and why in my view we should be rowing back rather than further embracing a populist approach to planning.

¹ The Rest is Politics, podcast by Alasdair Campbell and Rory Stewart, 5 January 2023.

² "NIMBY" is an acronym for "not in my back yard".



With apologies to those well versed in how the planning system works, I start with a short summary of who makes planning decisions, and the legal bounds within which they can make them, taking account of vocal local opposition.

Local authority decisions and PINS inspector decisions will not always reflect vocal local opinions

The majority of planning applications in this country must be made to local authorities, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 regime. The views of particular groups of local residents (usually most vocal in opposition to development) may or may not prevail in a local authority's decision. Even if they do, that decision may be over-turned by PINS on appeal. This is a fundamental part of how the planning system works.

Broadly, all decisions on planning applications made by local authorities must be determined in accordance with the local development plan (a suite of documents setting out local planning policy – which must broadly align with national policy – and the specific zones where certain types of development would generally be supported) unless "material considerations"³ indicate otherwise. These "material considerations" would include the representations of local people insofar as they relate to matters relevant to planning. The courts have set out over the years the matters which can and cannot be considered to be material planning considerations. The impact on house prices, for example, cannot be taken into account as a material consideration.⁴

However, even if a matter is material, the "weight" to be accorded to it is a matter for the local authority's discretion. While the local authority's planning officer will write a report and recommendation, the application is decided by a planning committee of 10 or so locally elected councillors who vote on whether to grant or refuse it. Inevitably, local politics therefore comes into play in such decisions. This is considered an important part of local democracy, but local democracy is not sacrosanct, because if an application is refused the developer has a right to appeal to PINS (who hear and decide appeals on behalf of the Secretary of State)⁵. Sometimes councillors may refuse particular developments even if their planning officer recommends approval on objective planning grounds, and even if they are advised that the refusal is likely to be over-turned on appeal.

On appeal, a PINS inspector will reconsider the case (often via a hearing or inquiry) and make his or her own decision. It is perfectly lawful for the inspector, unfettered by local politics, to take a different view of the weight to be given to the various factors and therefore come to a different decision from the local authority. This may sometimes involve giving greater weight to relevant national policies over local impacts, or just weighing the various local impacts differently.

The system therefore tries to balance the rights of affected local people to have their views taken into account with:

- the wider national and local need for development recognised by policy;
- the fact that the silent majority may not engage with the process at all; and
- implicitly, a recognition that developers would not invest in some much-needed projects at all without knowing they had a right of appeal to an independent body.

Secretary of State decisions will not always reflect vocal local opinions

Consent for development can also be determined in certain cases by the Secretary of State him or herself, rather than being determined by local authorities or by PINS inspectors. Where the Secretary of State considers particular applications made to the local authority to be of "more than local importance", he or she can choose to make the decision, usually after asking PINS to hold an inquiry⁶. Equally, where an appeal to

³ Town and Country Planning Act 1990, section 70(2).

⁴ The reason being that the planning system is intended to promote the public good as a whole, recognising that sometimes this will mean detriment to individuals.

⁵ Town and Country Planning Act 1990, section 78.

⁶ Town and Country Planning Act 1990, section 77.



PINS against local refusal of an application is triggered by a developer, the Secretary of State can ask that after the appeal is heard the inspector sends his or her report to the Secretary of State for a decision (rather than leaving the decision to the PINS inspector)⁷. In both cases, the legal framework for the making of the Secretary of State's decision will be the same as for a decision made by the local authority or the PINS inspector – based upon the local development plan and material considerations.

There is also an entirely separate planning regime under the Planning Act 2008 for certain classes of infrastructure project (power stations, roads, airports, overhead electric lines etc) for which applications must be made not to the local authority but directly to the Secretary of State. For such "nationally significant infrastructure projects"⁸, PINS will hold a six-month examination in which local people and local authorities may participate, before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State on whether to grant or refuse consent.

The coalition government of 2010 perceives a problem requiring more "localism"

Broadly, the above approach to planning decision-making existed when David Cameron's coalition government came into power in 2010 and it exists in substantially the same form today. But from the Cameron government onwards it seems that politicians have felt increasingly dissatisfied with its relationship to local communities, and have been looking for ways to bring more "localism" into the system. Reforms to the planning system to introduce more "localism" were only a small part of implementing a wider devolution of powers which is part of Conservative ideology. The question is how well that works in practice for planning.

The first step was the Localism Act 2011. The "plain English guide" to the Act⁹ under the heading "Reform to make the planning system clearer, more democratic and more effective" explains the impetus behind the reforms as follows:

"The planning system helps decide who can build what, where and how. It makes sure that buildings and structures that the country needs (including homes, offices, schools, hospitals, roads, train lines, power stations, water pipes, reservoirs and more) get built in the right place and to the right standards. A good planning system is essential for the economy, environment and society.

There are, however, some significant flaws in the planning system that this Government inherited. Planning did not give members of the public enough influence over decisions that make a big difference to their lives. Too often, power was exercised by people who were not directly affected by the decisions they were taking. This meant, understandably, that people often resented what they saw as decisions and plans being foisted on them. The result was a confrontational and adversarial system where many applications end up being fought over.

The Localism Act contains provisions to make the planning system clearer, more democratic, and more effective."

This is an interesting statement and one worth considering if we want to understand what the perceived problem was that subsequent moves towards localism have sought to fix. They appear to be threefold:

- members of the public not having enough influence over decisions affecting them;
- planning powers being exercised by people not directly affected by their decisions; and
- both of the above leading to resentment and an adversarial system.

I will look at each of these in turn, and consider how effective changes brought in by the Localism Act 2011 and since have been at fixing them.

This article is not a politically driven critique of the particular governments and politicians who have sought to make the changes discussed. While localism may have begun as part of the Conservative ideology, the way in which populism has swept through so many aspects of society means, I suspect, that governments of other political parties may feel impelled towards some form of increased populism which will be badged as "localism". In particular, it is unclear whether Keir Starmer's commitment to enable communities to "Take

⁷ Commonly known as a "recovered" appeal.

⁸ Defined in Planning Act 2008, section 14.

⁹ "A plain English guide to the Localism Act", Department for Communities and Local Government, November 2011.



Back Control"¹⁰ would include a localist approach to planning. Certainly, a number of statements in Labour's report "A New Britain: Renewing our Democracy and Rebuilding our Economy" could be read as supporting this approach if they were applied to planning¹¹.

For the reasons set out, I believe this would be a misstep. The problems identified are largely illusory or an inevitable consequence of any planning system, and the changes put forward to date have generally not had the intended effect.

The desperate need to boost the UK's growth and prosperity, and to build the infrastructure needed to provide energy security, reach Net Zero and house our population, make it all the more important that politicians do not waste time tinkering with the system trying to achieve more localism. Political and legislative effort is much better placed in looking at more effective ways to facilitate the planning system.

Giving the public more influence over decisions affecting them

In principle, the idea of giving people affected by decisions more influence over them is hard to argue with. It seems fair and reasonable as a principle. It is therefore a great political soundbite. The trouble is how do you actually achieve that in practice? We accept that we cannot have a direct influence over all decisions made in the UK which affect us. We elect MPs and local councillors in the hope and expectation that they will take sensible decisions on our behalf. Even if we don't like those decisions, few people complain that they didn't get to directly influence them. So, the question is why should it be different for planning decisions and how could more direct influence be achieved if we think it is required?

The Localism Act 2011 implemented a few ideas. Regional strategies (including housing targets) were abolished. Obviously, the history of the planning system's relationship to housing is a huge topic in itself and it is beyond the scope of this article to comment on whether housing targets should be set nationally. The Act also brought in the idea of a "community right to build", some enhancements to the duty to consult before submitting a planning application, the strengthening of enforcement rules, some changes to the community infrastructure levy and the abolition of the independent Infrastructure Planning Commission (whose role had been to take decisions on nationally significant infrastructure applications) in favour of such decisions being made by the Secretary of State.

However, in terms of decision-making on planning applications (the focus of this article), the key change in the Localism Act 2011 was the introduction of the concept of "neighbourhood plans". A more recent variant of this idea, and the "community right to build"¹² (also brought in by the Act), is the concept of "street votes" proposed by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill currently making its way through Parliament. Both are discussed below.

Neighbourhood Plans – mostly NIMBYISM

The explanatory notes in the guide to the Localism Act 2011 suggest that such plans will "help people take advantage of the opportunity to exercise influence over decisions that make a big difference to their lives." The thinking behind such plans is said to be that:

¹⁰ Keir Starmer's New Year speech of 5 January 2023.

¹¹ See for example pages 69-70: "There is clearly an appetite for more local power and voice. Our underlying principle is that devolution in England should be built from the bottom up, responding to local demand and built from the bottom up, responding to local demand and built from local communities and councils, rather than imposed from the centre. This may mean it will take a variety of forms, not simply combined authorities and mayors, and that its development might be slower, but it will mean that it is more firmly grounded in local assent. The idea of taking decisions as locally as meaningfully possible – otherwise known as the principle of subsidiarity – should be more than a rhetorical flourish. It should be a constitutional principle to guide the devolution of power in practice. Indeed we support the idea of 'double devolution' – pushing power as close as possible to people and communities."

¹² The community right to build allows community groups to bring forward development proposals that are voted on by referendum to demonstrate "local support", rather than seeking planning permission. It is a similar process to neighbourhood plans, requiring confirmation by an independent examiner that certain minimum criteria are met. The January 2015 Sixth report of the Communities and Local Government Committee on Community Rights noted that: "The Community Right to Build is clearly not the most popular way of starting a community-led housing project. It has been described as complicated, adversarial and risky, and, based on funding applications, it appears that nine times as many groups opt to apply for planning permission as choose to use the Right to Build process. The referendum requirement also seems disproportionate to the scale of development. It is difficult to see any significant benefits to its retention in its current format."



"Instead of local people being told what to do, the Government thinks that local communities should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live. The Act introduces a new right for communities to draw up a neighbourhood plan.

Neighbourhood planning will allow communities, both residents, employees and business, to come together through a local parish council or neighbourhood forum and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like.

These plans can be very simple and concise, or go into considerable detail where people want. Local communities will be able to use neighbourhood planning to grant full or outline planning permission in areas where they most want to see new homes and businesses, making it easier and quicker for development to go ahead."

Many developers and local authorities were slow to realise the power of such neighbourhood plans, and were caught out as a result. In legal terms they form part of the "development plan"¹³ and so planning decisions must be taken in accordance with them, just as decisions must be taken in accordance with the local authority's local plan, subject to other material considerations.

Neighbourhood plans must be in "general conformity" with the strategic policies contained in the local authority's local plan for the area, and must be independently examined to check that this and other specified "basic conditions" are met. However, this still gives the promoters of the plan great latitude to devise their own policies – which become part of the development plan as soon as a referendum has been held on the plan (assuming half of those voting approve it). If the local authority doesn't like the neighbourhood plan policies, its only recourse is to update its own local plan,¹⁴ which is a laborious process involving gathering of information, consultation and formal examination of the plan, all of which can take years.

It would be wonderful to think that local people and businesses were coming together wanting to see new development in their area and seeking simply to plan "where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go", as the guide to the Localism Act 2011 suggests was the intention. Even better if such plans make it "easier and quicker for development to go ahead." The reality is that, with notable exceptions no doubt, more often than not such plans are used to cleverly block development. My favourite example is a neighbourhood plan which states that only development constituting "world class architecture" will be permitted in a certain area, and that no development above the level of the existing trees in the area will be permitted. A de facto ban on development. This should not come as a surprise. As with decisions on planning applications, those most motivated to engage with the system tend to be anti-development.

I recently spoke with a parish councillor who told me proudly their neighbourhood plan was motivated by having a couple of "unsuitable" housing developments proposed at the edge of their village which would have increased the total housing by 5%. Their plan instead proposed just a few houses as "infilling" in the village. Who knows if such infilling was viable or attractive for any developer to pursue, but that isn't something those voting through a neighbourhood plan have a duty to consider.

In truth, neighbourhood plans were not really needed if the intention was to support development and to bring it forward in a sustainable well-planned manner. The government's guidance on neighbourhood planning recognises as much, acknowledging that:

"Communities may decide that they could achieve the outcomes they want to see through other planning routes, such as incorporating their proposals for the neighbourhood into the local plan, or through other planning mechanisms such as Local Development Orders and supplementary planning documents or through pre-application consultation on development proposals."¹⁵

Did the Cameron government quietly intend neighbourhood plans to allow development to be impeded by those motivated enough to prepare such plans, or was it simply an unintended consequence?

Street votes – YIMBYISM

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill has once again brought ideas of localism to the fore. In a press release on 18 November 2022,¹⁶ the government stated that the Bill "will put power in the hands of local

¹³ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 section 38.

¹⁴ Section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan.

¹⁵ Guidance, Neighbourhood planning, updated 25 September 2020.

¹⁶ DLUHC Press release, "Plans to level up and build new homes tabled in Parliament", 18 November 2022.



people to bring forward development they want to see" and implements the government's "BIDEN" principles: the "D" signifying "a more Democratic system where communities have their say"; and the "N" signifying "creating better Neighbourhoods shaped by the people who live in them." It all sounds very familiar.

In terms of planning decision-making, the most headline grabbing change (seemingly by design, looking at the government press releases) is the introduction of street votes. Street votes were [proposed](#) by the Policy Exchange thinktank, with the backing of several architects and planners who advocated for the "densification" of urban areas, in part to reduce pressure to build on open fields. The thinktank said:¹⁷

"Residents of a street should be able to agree by a high majority on new strict rules for designs to make better use of their plots. A street of suburban bungalows, for example, could agree on the right to create Georgian-style terraces. In many cases, an adopted 'street plan' would greatly increase the value of residents' homes, giving them strong reasons to agree on it."

The policy document accompanying the Bill suggests residents on a street would be allowed to bring forward proposals to "extend or redevelop their properties in line with their design preferences".

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, has described street votes as one of a "mosaic of elements" that "help ... encourage communities to welcome more development".¹⁸

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will permit residents to propose development on their street, and then hold a referendum among the "immediate community" on whether it should be given planning permission in the form of a development order. An independent examiner must be satisfied that certain requirements, such as on design, have been met before a vote can take place. In essence, it seems a very similar process to the process for adopting neighbourhood plans – except in this case, to the extent it is used, it will have the effect of easing rather than impeding development (YIMBYISM¹⁹ rather than NIMBYISM).

The proposals are supported by the pro-development group, London YIMBY.²⁰ However, Hugh Ellis, Director of Policy of the Town and Country Planning Association, called the proposals "frankly nuts".²¹ Theresa May warned parliament of "unintended consequences". She said:²²

"I can well imagine a situation in which somebody persuades their neighbours in a street to agree to the sort of development that might enhance the value of their houses but which actually has a negative impact on the wider community and wider neighbourhood."

She makes a good point. We should surely be uncomfortable with house holders deciding as a group to change the character of their area in their personal interest without taking account of the wider public interest and opinions, which the planning system traditionally would.

In reality, I agree with those commentators who have suggested that street votes are unlikely to be used to any great extent, and largely serve a political positioning purpose, by providing the Conservatives with a policy to demonstrate their pro-development credentials, while allowing communities to retain control of the process²³.

However, what is worth paying attention to is the *principle* endorsed by government in both neighbourhood planning and street votes – the principle that small groups of residents should control development, at the expense of genuine planning of land use for the general good. For the reasons discussed I believe this not a helpful precedent, and is therefore one I hope will not be rolled out further as a purported means of enhancing the planning system.

¹⁷ Dr S. Hughes and B. Southwood, "Strong Suburbs – Enabling streets to control their own development", Policy Exchange, February 2021.

¹⁸ Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, Oral evidence: Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill, HC 309, Monday 13 June 2022.

¹⁹ "YIMBY" is an acronym for "yes, in my back yard".

²⁰ "What street votes would mean for councils and communities", Planning Resource, 23 June 2022.

²¹ "TCPA policy chief describes government's street vote proposals as 'frankly nuts'", Planning Resource, 25 November 2022.

²² Hansard, "Debate on the Address", Volume 714: debated on Tuesday 10 May 2022.

²³ Chris Ruffitt, founder & chief executive of public affairs firm Field Consulting, quoted in Planning Resource, 23 June 2022.



Planning powers to be exercised by people directly affected

The statement in the guidance to the Localism Act 2011 that "Too often, [planning] powers [have been] exercised by people ... not directly affected by the decisions they were taking" is an interesting one. Clearly, the suggestion cannot be that decisions on planning applications should actually be made by those individuals directly affected. That would be grounds for legal challenge. Councillors with a direct interest in a particular planning application must notify the planning committee of their interest and excuse themselves from voting on it.

As explained earlier, it is also a fundamental part of our planning system that:

- developers have a right of appeal to an (independent) PINS inspector if they are refused planning permission by the local authority; and
- some decisions, in relation to nationally significant infrastructure or other significant or controversial developments, are made by the Secretary of State, rather than by the local planning authority or by a PINS inspector.

No government has yet suggested that either of these rights, for planning decisions to be made at a level which takes out the local politics, should be removed.

However, in roundabout ways there have been some moves towards this, in particular some of those discussed in this article, including:

- enabling local residents to control and restrict development (by creating neighbourhood plans);
- enabling local residents to grant themselves what is in effect permitted development rights (through street votes), or approving specific development proposals via referendum rather than a planning application (community right to build);
- enabling local residents to veto certain types of development by imposing the test of "local support" or "local consent" (as suggested for fracking, investment zones and onshore wind²⁴); and
- leaving onshore wind development out of the scope of the national infrastructure planning system under the Planning Act 2008, knowing that – coupled with unhelpful caveats to national policy – this amounts to a ban without calling it such, because appealing a local authority refusal cannot circumvent the need for proven "local support" and investors won't invest in projects with that extra level of uncertainty.

In Michael Gove's Written Ministerial Statement on onshore wind of 6 December 2022,²⁵ which followed much fighting amongst Conservative MPs over onshore wind as the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill passed through Parliament, he stated:

"Decisions on onshore wind sites will continue to be made at a local level as these are best made by local representatives who know their areas best and are democratically accountable to the local community.

To deliver a more localist approach, and its commitments in the British Energy Security Strategy, the government will consult on proposed changes to national planning policy."

Politically, this may be the most comfortable position for the government to take on onshore wind. But if the government believes in these principles for onshore wind, why not for all development? Does Michael Gove believe that planning decisions should all be made at the local level because local authorities "know their areas best and are democratically accountable to the local community?" It is hard to see how he would justify this principle applying to onshore wind only. Yet if he really believes in this principle, and that a more "localist approach" of this sort embodies the "D" and the "N" of the government's BIDEN principles, then it would have far-reaching implications. Bluntly, there could be no justification for developers being allowed to appeal against local authority refusals of any development proposals, and no justification for applications for nationally significant infrastructure being granted by the Secretary of State. Furthermore, for a truly localist approach, the additional hurdle of "local support" or "local consent" required in respect of onshore wind should surely also apply to other developments.

²⁴ See C. Howard, "Local support and local consent – new and dangerous hurdles in the planning system" *Journal of Planning & Environment Law*, Issue 3 2023, pp 366-379.

²⁵ UK Parliament, "An Update on Levelling Up", Statement made on 6 December 2022, Statement UIN HCWS416.



It seems unlikely that Michael Gove intends to go this far, but he should be aware of the risk in wheeling out this localist rhetoric when it suits, for fear of it running away with itself.

An example of this can be seen in the comments of Sir Greg Knight (Conservative MP for East Yorkshire) in the Parliamentary debate on fracking in October 2022. In the context of government promises that "local consent" would be required and MPs efforts to get clarity on how that would be measured, Sir Greg suggested:²⁶

"Is the neatest way of assessing local consent to take away the right of appeal to a planning inspector in these matters, so that the decision of the local planning authority is deemed the expression of local consent and is the final decision?"

A similar ban on a developer's right to appeal local authority refusals has been put forward as part of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. It is proposed that section 78(4AA) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 be amended to prevent an appeal being made against the refusal of permission where the development is for wind energy on a site not previously developed for wind.

Such proposals, to ban appeals, are indeed the logical conclusion if one applies Mr Gove's principle of the importance of democratic accountability and personal knowledge of the area. PINS inspectors have neither. The Secretary of State, while democratically accountable at the national level, will not have personal local knowledge of the area – yet they are tasked by the Planning Act 2008 with deciding nationally significant infrastructure applications which often have huge local impacts. And proof of "local" support" via votes or otherwise is not (yet) required for such projects.

The government therefore needs to think carefully before trumpeting the importance of localism when it is expedient to do so, or it risks undermining the legitimacy of the whole basis of our planning system. Like it or not, a policy-based system which gives developers considering investment the comfort that they can ultimately navigate around local politics (or if you will, local democracy) is essential if government wants investment in UK infrastructure and a built environment that is properly planned at a national, regional and local level to meet the needs of society and all communities.

Creating a less adversarial system

To state the obvious, people will not always agree – either with each other, or with their national or local governments – about what development should go where.

The Cameron government's guide to the Localism Act 2011 claimed that the top-down approach to planning "meant, understandably, that people often resented what they saw as decisions and plans being foisted on them" and that "The result was a confrontational and adversarial system where many applications end up being fought over."

That is surely far too simplistic. The planning system must of course give people a fair opportunity to influence the development in their area. This opportunity exists at multiple levels – from the decisions they make as to who to vote into power in central government, to the representations they make in respect of draft local development plan policies (including, if they wish, creating Neighbourhood Plans), the representations they make in respect of particular planning applications, and engagement with pre-application consultations on such applications.

Given that ultimately there must be a "yes" or "no" to all development proposals, there will always be some people angered by the fact it didn't go their way. One could give local people a veto via some type of measure of "local support" or "local consent" (recognising all of the problems with this²⁷). In some circumstances, that might please a section of the population – some of those most directly affected or opposed in principle to a particular type of development. However, it is surely not the role of planning decision-makers simply to please those who engage in the process or currently live nearby. It is their role to do what is best for the area, its communities as a whole, and the nation in the long-term, including the interests of those who don't engage with the system, those who may not own a house in the area currently but need a home, and those who live at the other side of the country but need the benefit of national

²⁶ Hansard, "Ban on Fracking for Shale Gas Bill", Volume 720: debated on Wednesday 19 October 2022.

²⁷ See C. Howard, "Local support and local consent – new and dangerous hurdles in the planning system" *Journal of Planning & Environment Law*, Issue 3 2023, pp 366-379.



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infrastructure which is best sited within it. If we agree with these principles, we must accept that the planning system will involve conflict.

Conclusion

The planning system is inevitably adversarial in some cases, and we should not shrink from that or pretend that "localism" (in whatever form that takes) can make all local people happy with all planning decisions that affect them. Certainly, there are ways one could give local people more power to stop developments in their area. However, if any government wishes to support continued policy-driven growth and development, they must not undermine the tenets of the current system by trumpeting the merits of a localism-based system. To support localism meaningfully and consistently across all branches of the planning system would be catastrophic. There needs to be a healthy recognition of everyone's right to be a NIMBY, and the planning system's right to weigh such views against wider public interests and needs.

Catherine Howard, Partner, Herbert Smith Freehills

For further information, please contact



Catherine Howard
Partner, Planning, London
Herbert Smith Freehills
+44 20 7466 2858
catherine.howard@hsf.com

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