

Today's webinar: Community energy and planning: From policy to project

- Chaired by: John Taylor, Head of Capacity Building & Strategic Development, Community Energy England
- Speakers: Neil Best (CSE) and John Malone (Empowered)
- Part of a series of webinars via Community Energy GO (communityenergygo.org.uk)

Event overview

- Introduction to Community Energy GO
- Presentations from Neil Best and John Malone
- Q&A for our speakers
- Next steps and feedback survey
- Finish at 2 pm

- CSE, Ashden and CEE
- Supports groups to turn their renewable energy idea into reality
- Provides expert advice, practical tools and hands-on support
- Read more & register your interest via the website: communityenergygo.org.uk



Community energy planning just got easier

Community Energy GO provides free guidance for local groups setting up renewable energy projects.

Today we will be hearing from:

- **Neil Best:** Senior Planner for Net Zero at the Centre for Sustainable Energy
- **John Malone:** Senior Development Manager at Empowered Projects



The Planning System

Objectives:

- **To manage land use and development** in the public interest.
- **To balance economic growth** with environmental protection and social wellbeing.
- **To ensure development is sustainable**, aligning with local and national planning policies.
- **To provide a democratic framework** for decision making, allowing public participation and accountability.

The purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development by managing the use and development of land in the long-term public interest.



The Planning System(s)

Some development is 'permitted development', for example, solar panels on domestic roofs under 50kW – they don't require planning permission

The 'Future Homes Standard' will require new homes to include rooftop solar PV (March 2027)

Generally, for schemes over 100MW (but doesn't include battery storage)

There are a series of legal regimes which make up what you may think of as the 'planning system':

- **Town and country planning regime.** Applies controls to development of land. The English system is framed by 1990 Town and Country Planning Act, with key additions (e.g. 2008 Planning Act, 2011 Localism Act).

- **Buildings regulations.** A separate framework based on the Building Act, focused on technical and safety standards of buildings.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning. Separate legislation introduced by the Planning Act 2008. Centralised, powerful legislation for large scale projects.

- **Marine planning regime.** Separate legal framework overseen by the Marine Management Organisation, with development rights for terrestrial water owned by the Crown Estate.

- Requires developers to submit a **planning application** to carry out development.
- System is **plan led** – decisions to grant planning permission are based upon policy in the local development plan and national policy.
- Local Authorities are responsible for preparation of local plans and planning applications (as the **Local Planning Authority**).

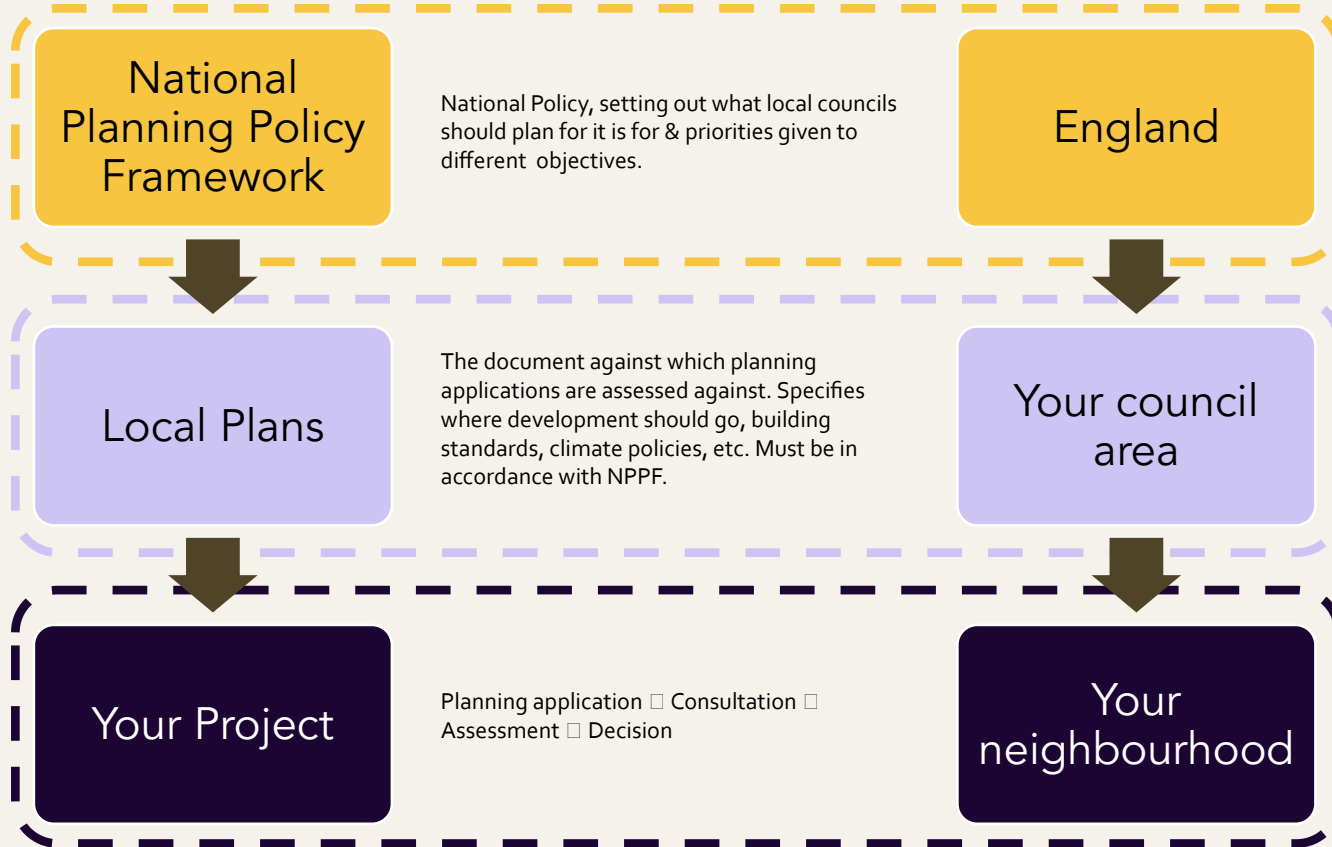
Government sets the **regulatory and policy framework for the control of development and plan making** through:

- **National Planning Policy Framework**
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- National Design Guide

There are several key actors:

- **Local authorities**
- **Planning Inspectorate**
- **Government Departments**
- **Statutory consultees**
- **Developer (which could be a community energy group)**

How does the planning system work?



Planning is a Plan Led System.

The first thing you should do is to understand the policy framework against which your project will be assessed.



What will your project be judged on?

Is this development acceptable, in this particular place, with these particular impacts and benefits?

Where is it? Is the site appropriate?

What are you proposing? Scale, layout, technology, access, infrastructure

What are the impacts? Landscape, ecology, heritage, noise, traffic, flooding, agriculture, etc

Can the impacts be avoided or mitigated? Mitigation measures

What are the benefits? Renewable energy, climate benefits, biodiversity, local benefits, etc

The Planners will ultimately weigh up the proposal's benefits and impacts before reaching a decision



A stronger policy footing

- NPPF is now clear that Local Authorities should “support the transition to clean power by **planning positively for the increased supply and use of renewable and low carbon energy** and electricity network infrastructure”.
- “**Substantial weight should be given to the contribution that small-scale and community-led renewable and low carbon energy projects can make** to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, along with their associated economic and social benefits”
- It doesn't give community energy projects a rubber stamp for approval – but it does give us a stronger national policy context supporting projects than in previous years



Tips for navigating planning

Practical Advice

- **Start early.** Planning can take longer than expected.
- **Work with professionals** (e.g., planning consultants, ecologists) where needed at the right time. This will come at a cost, but it's an absolute must. Work with a planning consultant who can coordinate everything (and make sure they are chartered with the RTPI).
- **Document everything.** Keep records of engagement, feedback, and decisions.
- **Expect to iterate.** It's rare to get everything right in one go.
- **Use your network.** Other community energy groups can share insights and lessons.
- **Learn from Experts.** Regen [Community Energy Planning Guidance](#) & [Guidance for Local Authority Planners](#)

Community energy & planning

John Malone





COMMUNITY SINGLE WIND
ARKWRIGHT
Site Location Plan

KEY

-  North
-  Wind turbine and temporary meteorological mast square, turbine foundation - dark grey inner circle area light grey outer circle
-  Access track
-  Substation
-  Hedgerow

Initial considerations

- Wind / Solar resource
- Land secured
- Access
- Grid capacity (offer)
- Early assessment / pre-feasibility
- Development funding



Early site assessment

- <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/home.htm>
- VoteWind.org
- RERAS – Renewable Energy Resource Assessments

LAND USE		TECHNICAL		HISTORIC				
ALC	RADAR Interference	Slope (degrees)	Wind Speed (m/s @ 50m)	Listed Buildings	Scheduled Monuments	National Parks & Gardens	Historic Landfill	Registered Battlefields
HABITATS				DESIGNATIONS				
Priority Habitats	Biosphere Reserves	Important Bird Areas	Ancient Woodland	National Landscapes	Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Greenbelt	Conservation Areas	RAMSAR Sites
DESIGNATIONS								
Special Areas of Conservation	Special Protection Areas	World Heritage Sites	RSPB Reserves	National Nature Reserves	Local Nature Reserves	Common Land	Public Right of Way	National Trails
HYDROLOGY				BUILT ENVIRONMENT				
Watercourses	Boreholes	Floodzone 2	Floodzone 3	Residential Buildings	National Grid Overhead lines	National Grid Underground Cables	Gas Pipelines	Railways



Planning considerations

- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Heritage/Archaeology
- Designations – Greenbelt, National Landscapes, etc
- Nearest properties – noise, shadow flicker
- Agricultural Land Classification
- Ecology – seasonal surveys
- Engage with Local Planning Authority
 - informal, pre-app
 - scoping & screening
 - full planning application
- Community engagement



Funding and support

- Feasibility funding
- Development funding
- Planning expertise
- Specialist consultants
- Scope:
 - Early feasibility
 - Key risks



Community engagement

- Community engagement plan
- Link to planning process
- Supporters
- Key contacts
- Parish Council
- Local planning authority
- Wider public engagement

Q&A

Please use the chat function or raise your hand.



Thank you and next steps

- Thank you!
- We will send slides and recording for this session
- Our next webinar: Shared Ownership, 5th November, 12:00-13:30
- Register your interest for support through Community Energy GO:
communityenergygo.org.uk/register-your-interest
- Feedback poll