

Neighbourhood Planning and Rural Communities

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Including Rural Services Network survey results

Revolution or evolution?

“New neighbourhood planning powers ... give local people a major say in helping to shape the look and feel of their areas.”

DCLG website

Village Design Statements

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graph TD; A[Village Design Statements] --> B[Parish Appraisals and Parish Plans]; B --> C[Market Town Health Checks and Action Plans]; C --> D[Community-Led Planning]; D --> E[Locality Plans, Place Plans and Sustainable Community Plans];
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Parish Appraisals and Parish Plans

Market Town Health Checks and Action Plans

Community-Led Planning

Locality Plans, Place Plans and Sustainable Community Plans

Design of online survey

- Sent to Community Group members of the RSN
- Conducted during November 2011
- 371 survey responses received by the deadline
- A good mix in terms of geography and size

To explore with rural community bodies:

- Whether NP proposals were seen as useful
- What aspects of them they liked or disliked
- What they would most like to do using NP

What we expected – a hypothesis

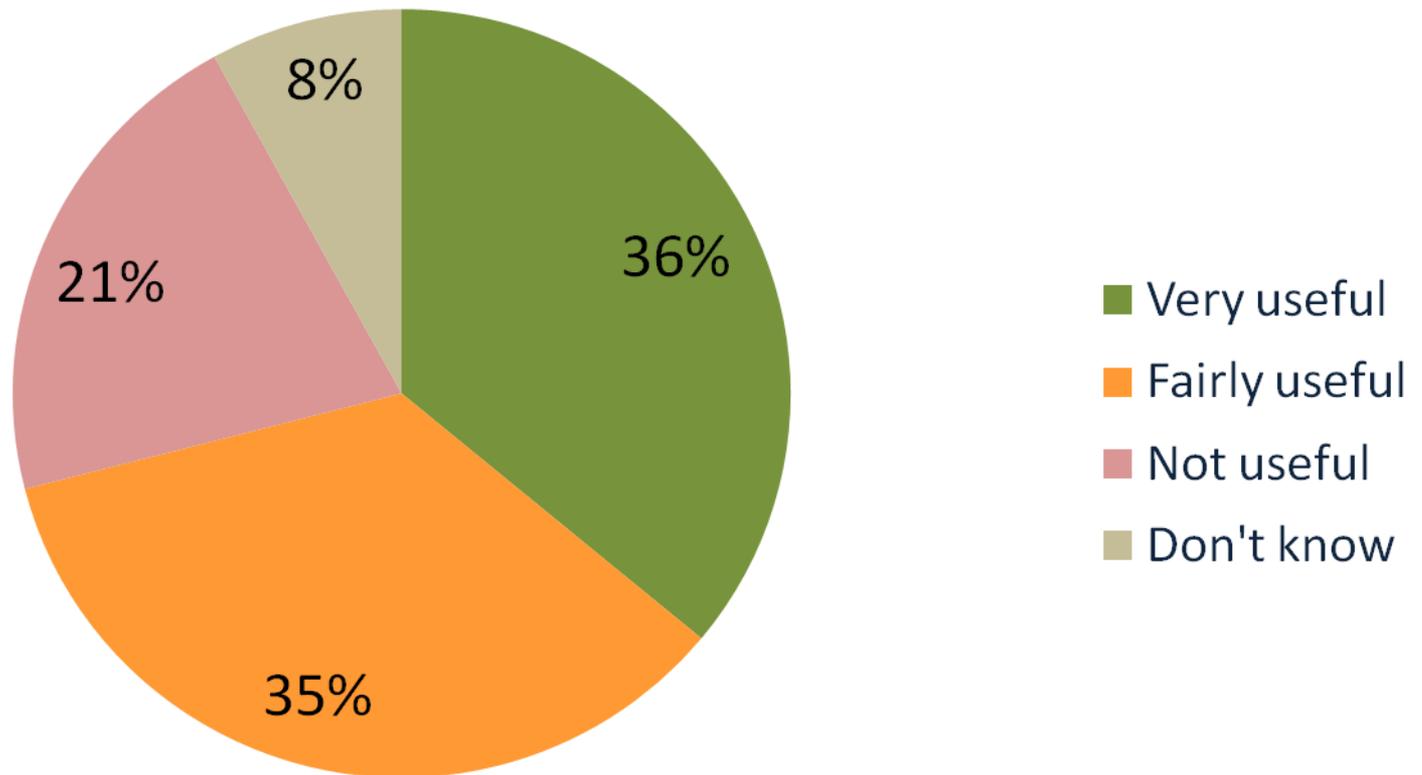
Rural advantages:

- Most areas have a parish or town council
- Widespread experience of community-led planning
- More geographically definable communities
- Typically score well on civic action + volunteering

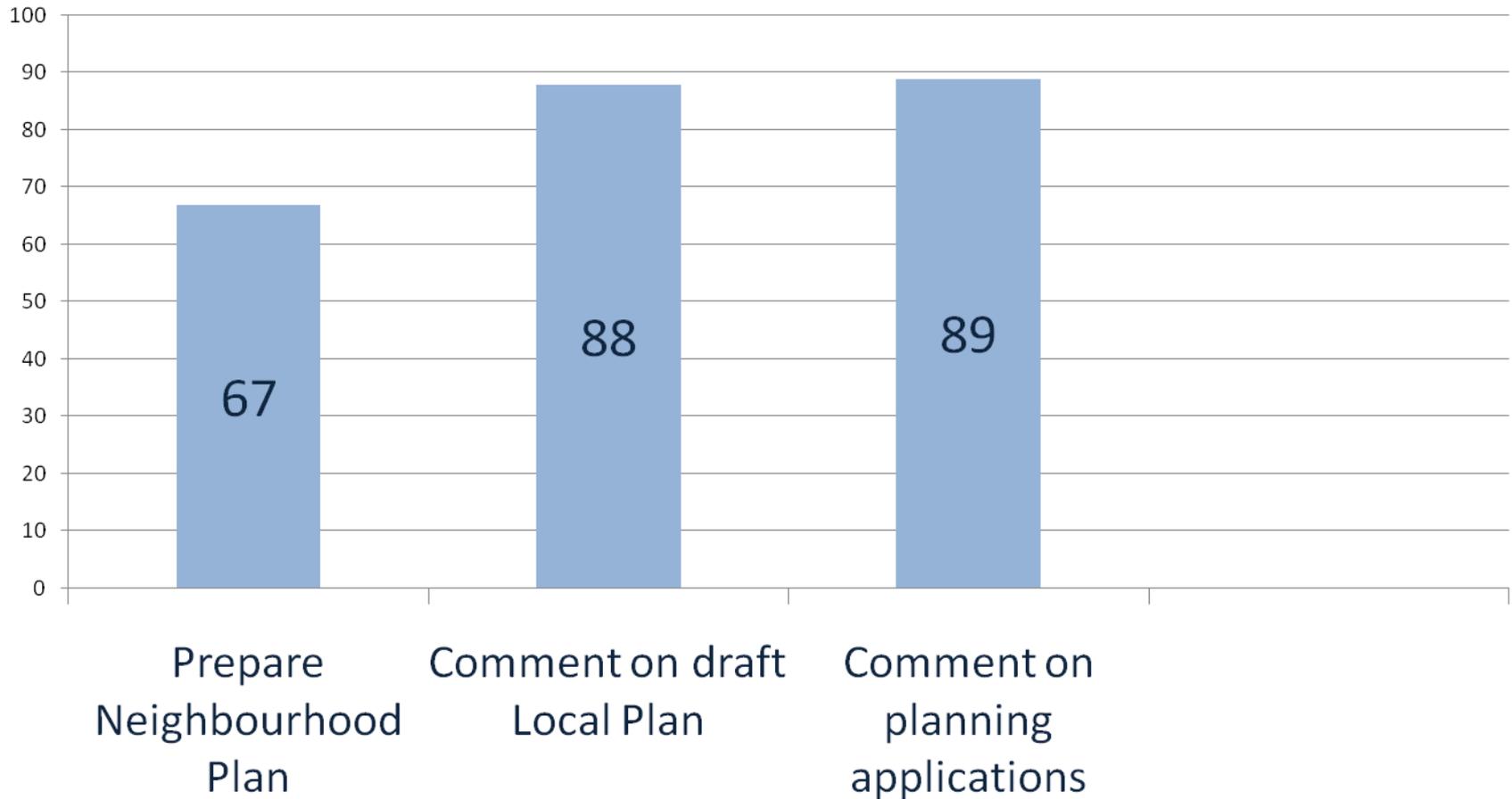
Rural disadvantages:

- Most parish councils have very limited resources
- Not all rural communities share the advantages

How useful do you think proposals for statutory NP will be for communities like your own?



Per cent who think it will be important for their community to do the following in future



Likes and dislikes

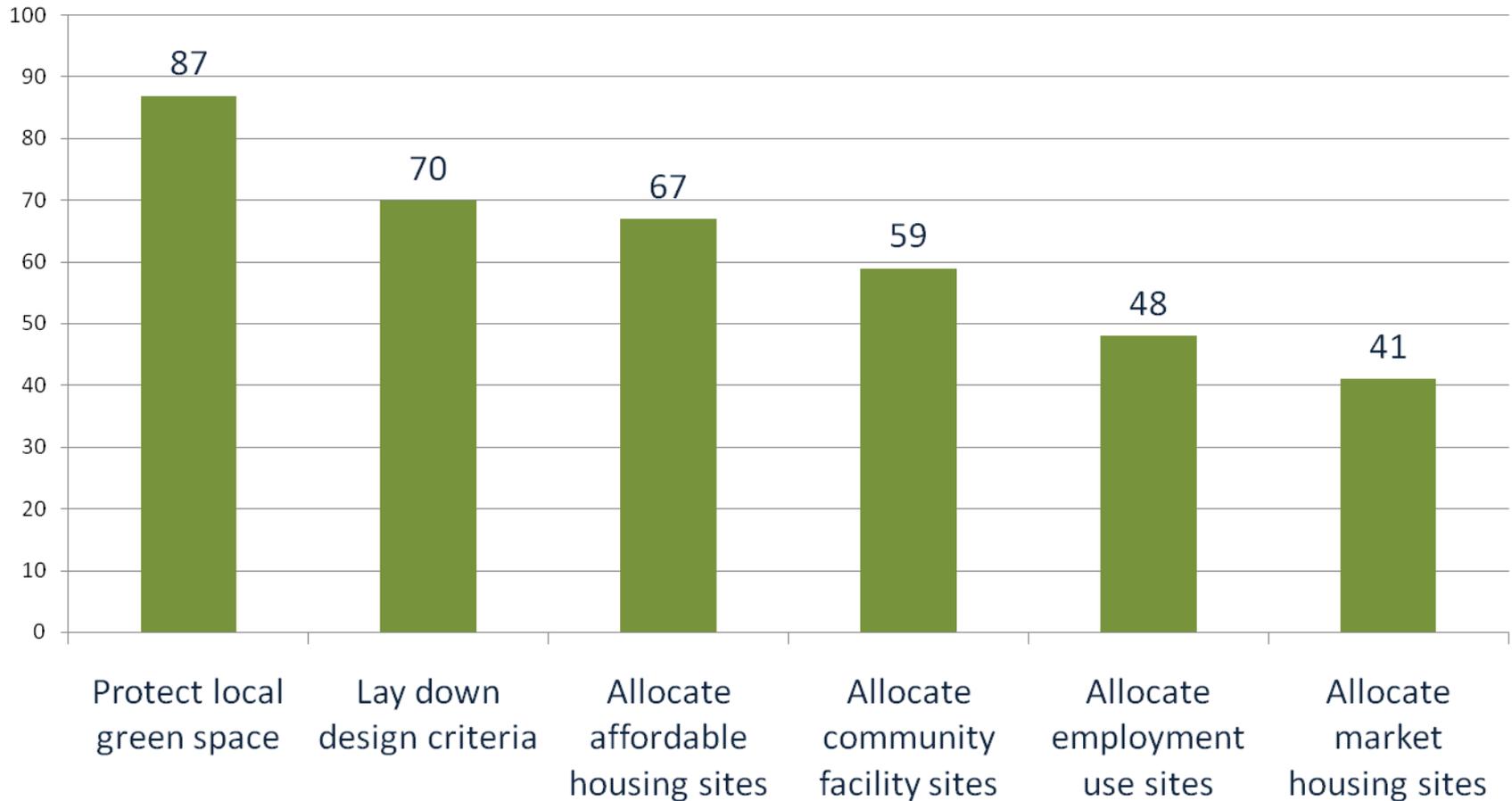
Likes:

- More opportunity for local people to have a say about their area
- Less chance that development will be imposed from outside

Dislikes:

- The expected cost of undertaking NP and lack of funding for it
- The expected workload associated with NP and its perceived complexity
- A view that principal authorities will be able to stop it happening

Per cent who would like to be able to do the following things in their area



Some survey conclusions

- There is a considerable degree of rural interest in neighbourhood planning
- It appears to tap into a sense of feeling distant from decision-making
- Larger rural communities are more likely to make use of it than smaller ones
- It is not true that NP is simply seen as a way to stop new development
- Its potential may go unrealised unless support and funding are (and remain) available

Other early indications

- i. North-south divide in the extent of interest in and use of NP
- ii. Many communities seeking detailed / watertight policies, with no get out clauses (typical of many planning policies)
- iii. Huge variation in the extent to which local planning authorities are prepared to support communities with NP
- iv. Interesting examples of clustered working on NP by local councils
- v. Government expectations about the timeframe for producing NPs were very optimistic
- vi. It may only be possible to conclude a NP once a Local Plan is in place
- vii. Producing statutory plan documents and policies is technical stuff; especially where sustainability appraisal applies
- viii. Neighbourhood planning is not for every community; parish planning, village design statements, etc still have a role

Do these messages ring true?
Are there lessons for elsewhere in the UK?

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