

period, a site that already has planning permission but where nothing has happened counts towards the five-year land supply. I hope that that position is clear and that everyone in my hon. Friend's constituency understands that the requirement is to provide new sites to make up the total and not to find sites to replace those that already have planning permission and are still viable and likely to be delivered within five years.

Finally, my hon. Friend asked about neighbourhood planning, and it is welcome that so many communities in his area are considering it. I am pleased to say that, around the country, it is a brush fire that is beginning to gather some steam—I am not sure whether brush fires do gather steam, but I think my point is understood. More than 1,000 communities in England are working on neighbourhood plans. There have been 14 referendums on neighbourhood plans, all of which have received a yes vote, usually with substantial majorities in favour. They have probably been the single most successful extension of democratic participation in governing processes of the past few years, and they have succeeded because people feel strongly about the future of the places in which they live. If people are offered the chance to have an influence on that, even if they are not necessarily able to stop everything that they might want to stop, they will nevertheless seize the chance to ensure that development is the best that it possibly can be, is in the right places, is of the right character and improves the community for everyone, rather than just for those involved in development.

It is welcome that communities are getting involved. Although they may face some immediate, short-term battles over particular proposals, I encourage them to look beyond those battles—even if they sometimes lose, whether because a plan is not in place or for other reasons—and to focus on not only the next five years, but the next 15 years, which is the normal life of a neighbourhood plan. They will be able to shape those 15 years directly if they work on putting a neighbourhood plan in place, getting it through a referendum and getting it adopted. For the first time ever in the planning system, a neighbourhood document has equal statutory force alongside a local plan.

I am happy to confirm that the Department for Communities and Local Government provides quite substantial support, both financial and through expert officials, not only for a community undertaking a neighbourhood plan, which will have a support contract led by Locality and grants of up to £7,000, but also for local authorities, because they have to work closely with neighbourhood plan areas and organise examinations and referendums. To be clear, there is no reason why a local authority should not actively promote, engage and welcome as many communities that want to produce neighbourhood plans as possible. There is also no reason why any parish council or