



## Background Paper: Context for the AGM Motion 2 – A formal role for civic societies

**Introduction and Context** To inform Civic Voice's motion reading the motion 'Formal Status in Planning', this paper sets out a timeframe and background as to how the idea has developed.

### Timeline

**April 2010:** Civic Voice established

**April 2014:** 78% of respondents to a Civic Voice membership survey (211 responses) state that they 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' with the statement that the Government was reducing the voice of communities in the planning system.

**Feb 2015:** We partner with JTP to produce Collaborative Planning for All and campaign for the Government to strengthen policy to require collaborative, Charette based planning for major developments and in preparing Local Plans.

[http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Collaborative\\_planning\\_1.pdf](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Collaborative_planning_1.pdf)

**April 2015:** 232 civic societies in England take part in a detailed nationwide survey from which the Civic Voice policy committee prioritise the views of the movement into a three-point manifesto. [http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Manifesto\\_online\\_1.pdf](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Manifesto_online_1.pdf)

We call on Government to strengthen the provisions in the NPPF and 'call for community 'participation not consultation'. We say we need to go beyond simple consultation.

**April 2019:** Civic Voice research reveals that 70% of Civic Societies wanted more *influence* in the planning system.

**June - Sept 2019:** Civic Voice submits a Freedom of Information request to every council in England to ask for information regarding their Statement of Community Involvement.

**July 2019:** Government publishes a draft Communities Framework setting out an ambition for a planning system centred on community involvement with statutory rights to become involved at every stage from plan-making to planning application:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/819477/MHCLG\\_Communities\\_Framework\\_Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819477/MHCLG_Communities_Framework_Accessible.pdf)

**October 2019:** Updated Planning Practice Guidance published. Government names Civic Societies in official guidance for the first time. '*Community panels or forums can be set up by local planning authorities or third sector organisations, such as civic societies, to represent the views of local communities by scrutinising plans, policies or applications (Paragraph: 022):* <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/design>

**December 2019:** Civic Voice manifesto 2020-23 calls on the Government to follow through on commitments and '*To give community representatives a meaningful voice at every stage of the planning process, including introducing a 'pre-application community consultation' stage and a limited community right of appeal:*

[http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Manifesto\\_FINAL\\_Screen\\_version.pdf](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Manifesto_FINAL_Screen_version.pdf)



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**June 2020:** Civic Voice Briefing to Regional forum highlights the stages that Civic Societies could have a formal role

[http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Regional\\_Network\\_June\\_2021\\_Slides.pdf](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Regional_Network_June_2021_Slides.pdf)

**June 2020:** Online discussion on the issue. Ian Harvey facilitated a conversation with civic societies considering the question as to whether Civic Voice should campaign for the Civic Society movement to have a more formal role in the planning system?:

<https://vimeo.com/465268058>

**August 2020:** Planning White Paper published:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

**September-October 2020:** Civic Voice survey reveals that 77% of our members state that the main stage in which they engage with the planning system is the statutory consultation period for individual planning applications. In the same survey, 82.39% of members support the idea of Civic Societies having a more formal role in the planning system.

**October 2020:** Civic Voice Planning White Paper consultation response submitted. In our response we stated: *'To demonstrate its commitment to 'best in class' engagement, we call on the Government to adopt the proposal in the Government's Communities Framework published in July 2019 to 'strengthen community involvement in local placemaking... through a planning system centred on community involvement with statutory rights to become involved at every stage from plan-making to planning application.'*

The response also noted: *'We would like to explore further how civic societies could have a more formal role in the new system to help deepen meaningful engagement with the broader community in helping to shape their local area.'*

**November 2020:** Civic Voice Trustee David Evans sets out his personal thoughts on a potential Statutory Role for civic societies:

<https://civicvoiceblog.wordpress.com/2020/11/05/civic-societies-as-statutory-consultees-some-thoughts-from-david-evans/>

**December 2020:** A Civic Voice end of year survey identifies a decrease in the number of groups supporting the idea with 72.09% of members now supporting the idea of Civic Societies having a more formal role in the planning system.

**April 2021:** Civic Voice's Director shares his personal thoughts on the potential idea of a formal voice for civic societies in the reformed planning system:

<https://civicvoiceblog.wordpress.com/2021/04/30/planning-is-changing-how-will-communities-fit-into-this-new-system-could-a-formal-voice-for-civic-societies-be-the-answer/>

**September 2021:** Civic Voice board agree to put a motion to the membership to formally consider the motion and policy of a 'Formal Status in the Planning System'

Civic Voice publish a background paper on Civic Society participation in Local Plans.