

# EARTHSCAN

## BOOK REVIEW

Book	<i>The Community Planning Handbook</i>
Author/Editor	
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## Community responsibility

**'Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.'** 'Advice' 34

Yet, how often do we avoid local questions of town and country planning? Have you made an input to your Local Plan? Have you supported applications for what you considered good proposals, or just objected when something was proposed too close to you for comfort or the value of your home?

Nick Wates, who compiled and edited *The community planning handbook* knows your problems. He has produced a book that is amenable to negotiate, which can provide you, and your local group, with all the general principles, methods and scenarios for each kind of planning situation you are likely to encounter.

He ends with lots of appendices of useful formats, checklists, glossary, publications, films and contacts. It is all there, seemingly tailor-made to help you, Friend, to follow 'Advice' 34.

Planning has changed a lot since the 1960s, when I first entered the profession. Then the chief planning officer and his staff

could dictate what people would have, or just let them build any thing they liked. One of my chiefs redesigned almost every application on the back of recycled envelopes; then instructed me to 'negotiate on those lines'.

In the 70s and 80s it changed to a branch of politics. If you had position, finance, influence you could manipulate the system. Objection letters were put on the agenda, but the decision had often been taken previously behind closed doors.

Now real public participation is coming into the picture. Planners and committee really want to hear from you, not at the end of the planning process, in an adversarial environment, but at the beginning of the process, as part of the planning team.

If you do not participate, town and country planning will remain a political football for those with dubious and personal motives. Real, informed public involvement could rescue it and even make it a worthy profession once again. So please, Friends, read and use *The community planning handbook*.

*Martin Howard, Thaxted Monthly Meeting and a former member of the Royal Town Planning Institute*

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***The community planning handbook: how people can shape their cities, towns and villages in any part of the world by Nick Wates (Earthscan 2000, 240 pages, £14.95)***

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