

Community-led Planning Tools - Definitions

Community Infrastructure/Asset Audit

A Community Infrastructure Audit is a process of mapping where participants make a map/inventory of the community's resources, whether that is the built environment or the skills and talents of individuals, associations and organisations. This process will enable the community to look at the resources available, the use of buildings and other assets, and what actions might be required to enhance the provision of local infrastructure.

Community Land Trust

Community Land Trusts (CLT) empower local communities to come together to solve the challenges facing them. They are a form of community-led housing, set up and run by the community to develop and manage homes as well as other assets. CLTs act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring that it remains genuinely affordable for local people, remaining so for future generations.

In addition, often communities set up CLTs to address other challenges, such as purchasing the local pub when it's threatened with closure or running a community shop

Community Planning Statement

A Community Planning Statement is a brief, informal document which sets out the vision and aspirations for how a community sees itself developing over the next few years. It is quick and relatively simple to produce but, in common with other community-led plans, will involve engagement with the community to understand local views, needs and opinions.

The statement might set out the community's views on where it feels development should occur, what type, scale and character of development might be most appropriate, what the local infrastructure requirements are, which areas need protecting etc.

It is an 'unofficial' and non-statutory form of community-led plan (not having the same weight as a Neighbourhood Plan, for example) but it can be used as an informed consultation response in the development of the emerging local plan for the area, as well as empowering the community to start identifying its aspirations for the future.

Community Right to Build Order

Communities can now decide what should be built in their neighbourhood and where. A Community Right to Build Order (CRtBO) allows communities to achieve automatic planning permission for community buildings such as halls, community centres or sports halls, and even homes.

A CRtBO is a type of Neighbourhood Development Order and forms one of the tools introduced in the Localism Act 2011. It can be used to grant outline or full planning permission for specific development which complies with the order.

This allows certain community organisations to bring forward smaller-scale development on a specific site, without the need for planning permission. This gives communities the freedom to develop, for instance, small-scale housing and other facilities that they want.

Any benefit from this development stays within the community to be used for the community's benefit, for example, to maintain affordable housing stock or to provide and maintain local facilities such as playgrounds and village halls.

CRtBOs are subject to a limited number of exclusions, such as proposals needing to fall below certain thresholds so that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required. Proposals are subject to testing by an independent person and a community referendum.

Neighbourhood Development Order

A Neighbourhood Development Order can grant planning permission for specific types of development in a specific neighbourhood area. This could be either a particular development or a particular class of development (for example retail or housing). A Neighbourhood Development Order can therefore apply to a specific site, sites, or wider geographical area.

It could be useful for NDOs to be linked to a Neighbourhood Plan for the area. For example, the plan could identify the need for a new village shop and a broad location. The NDO could then apply a planning permission to a particular site or existing building where the shop will be built.

Alternatively, an NDO could automatically grant permission for a specific type of development in a certain area (e.g. refurbishment of shop fronts using traditional materials, within a conservation area).

NDOs can grant planning permission, therefore getting rid of the need for a standard planning application to the local planning authority. However, the NDO will have to meet some minimum standards and be approved by an examiner and then the community in a referendum before it can come into force.

Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their area and shape its development and growth. Communities are able to choose where they want new development to be located and what type of development it should be, what new development should look like, what infrastructure should be provided, which areas should be protected etc.

A Neighbourhood Plan typically comprises a vision for the neighborhood, a set of objectives intended to achieve that vision, and (crucially) a series of land use policies that will help to deliver the aspirations.

Following extensive consultation, an independent examination and a (successful) referendum within the community, a Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the statutory development plan and the policies contained within are then used in the determination of planning applications.

Parish/Town Plan

A Parish Plan is a document that reflects the views of the community as a whole on a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues relating to the parish, and contains an action plan which identifies practical steps that can be taken to help the community address these issues and achieve its vision for the future.

The plan can identify non-planning goals and projects which communities can tackle on their own, often more quickly than development focused ones which must follow a formal process.

These can also be a useful stepping stone to a Neighbourhood Plan or other community-led planning initiative.

Parish Plans have no formal weight in the planning system.

Rural Exception Site

A Rural exception site is a small site used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households with a proven housing need who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

Village Design Statement

A Village Design Statement is a form of planning guidance to inform the design of new development. Their aim is to encourage developers and householders to design new buildings or extensions (and other elements such as fences and outbuildings) so that they are in keeping with existing local character. They do not detail what type of development should take place in a village or the state of local services.

Communities can preserve the unique visual character of their village and surrounding area with a VDS. Village Design Statements are a tool to ensure that new development in your village respects the distinctive visual character of the place.

Village Design Statements can potentially be adopted by local planning authorities as Supplementary Planning Documents. These offer further detailed guidance to what is already within Local Plan documents, but they do not have the same weight as a Local Plan.