

Existing Tools for Neighbourhood Planning

This note describes how neighbourhood planning can be undertaken within the existing planning system. It explains the ways local communities can get on with shaping their areas prior to the Localism Act coming into force in April 2012.

The note covers the broad range of options available to communities, besides those given under the Localism Act.

What is Neighbourhood Planning?

The Localism Act provides new powers for communities to produce statutory development plan documents in the form of:

- **Neighbourhood Plans**; and
- **Neighbourhood Development Orders**

Neighbourhood Plans set the criteria against which planning applications are assessed within a defined Neighbourhood Area; Neighbourhood Development Orders can be used to grant certain types of developments without the need for a planning application within a defined area.

Both are produced by members of the local community and are agreed through a referendum voted on by the people it will affect.

Non Statutory Options >

A wide range of non statutory options (i.e. those not governed by planning law) are currently available to enable communities to plan for their areas.

These include:

- Village Appraisals
- Village Design Statements
- Parish Plans
- Community led Planning/Community Action Plans
- Town Action Planning/Market Town Health Check

The advantage of non statutory options is that their scope can be wider than just those matters covered by planning law and are often seen as more 'complete'.

Statutory Options >

Statutory tools hold direct power over the planning system; a key benefit for local communities. Their powers include setting the criteria against which planning applications are assessed, allocating land for development and, in some cases, actually allowing (or restricting) certain types of development without the need for a planning application.

Types of document that can be produced under the existing system include:

- Area Action Plans
- Development Plan Documents
- Supplementary Planning Documents
- Local Development Orders
- Article 4 Directives

Such documents are normally produced by Planning Officers in consultation with the wider community. However, communities can take a more hands on role provided they have the support of their local authority to do so.

The above outlines the options that are currently available to communities under the existing planning system. Our subsequent notes on **statutory** and **non statutory tools** cover each of these options in further detail.

Planning Aid England provides free, confidential and independent advice on Neighbourhood Planning.

Call: 0330 123 9244 or

Email: advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

