

Planning for your Neighbourhood: Non Statutory Tools

Prior to the Localism Act coming into force in April 2012, there already exist a number of options for communities wanting to engage in some form of neighbourhood planning. Once the powers detailed in the Localism Act become available, the number of options will increase further with the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders.

This note explores those non statutory (not governed by planning law) options available to communities now under the current planning system.

What are Non Statutory Tools

Non statutory tools are produced by communities to create a vision for their area but are not governed by planning law.

Although they do not carry the same weight as statutory documents in determining planning applications, significant weight is given to those that have undergone considerable consultation and are based on a sound evidence base. In the absence of any planning policies, or where the policy is inconclusive, they can be a strong material consideration, especially when formulated on a robust evidence base.

Types of Non-Statutory Tools include:

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

Non statutory tools do not have to follow any statutory procedures and so can be much simpler for communities to produce.

Why use Non Statutory Tools?

Non statutory tools do not have to follow the rigorous procedures that statutory tools do and so can be simpler for communities to produce. Additionally, they do not have to be restricted to issues governed by planning law (e.g. settling the criteria for planning applications and designating land). They can be broader in terms of the issues covered and as such can be seen as a more 'complete' vision for the area.

Another benefit of these documents is that they can be converted into statutory documents by the Local Planning Authority or at least be used as part of the evidence base to inform a statutory document that is being produced.

How Can I Get Involved?

A number of organisations promote the production of non statutory tools, (including the tools listed here amongst others). If a Parish or Town Council exists in your area, it is advisable to contact them to discuss being involved in their Parish/Town Plan.

In rural areas, organisations such as ACRE, Rural Community Councils, NALC and Action for Market Towns will be able to offer advice on how to get involved. In urban areas you are advised to contact Planning Aid England or your local Council directly.

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

Call: 0330 123 9244 or

Email: advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

