

# COMMUNITY-LED PLANNING TOOLS



## Overview

The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights for communities, including planning tools that can be used to influence how their local area develops. These tools are neighbourhood development plans, neighbourhood development orders and community right to build orders. They are in addition to existing tools which include town or parish plans and village design statements.

This very brief guide provides an overview of a range of community-led planning tools that are available to help town and parish councils achieve their goals. It has been produced to highlight the possible options available which are explained more fully in the wide range of community-led planning resources freely available online. The use of the tools is not compulsory but if they are used they must be community-led.

## Picking the right tool for the job

The range of community-led planning tools available is wide. Picking the right one can seem a little daunting. If you are seeking to resolve a single issue, such as the provision of affordable housing, you may just want to explore the establishment of a community land trust. Alternatively, if you are seeking to tackle a broader range of issues you may want to consider the production of a parish plan or neighbourhood development plan. Or, if you are really adventurous, you may want to use some of the tools in combination.

## Community-Led Planning Tools

### Neighbourhood Development Plans

What is it?	A plan for the neighbourhood area (town or parish) which includes policies to help inform the determination of planning applications.
Benefits	Gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood. Provides an opportunity to shape and influence development in the area when planning applications are submitted. A plan once 'made' becomes part of the formal planning policy framework for Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

	<p>Areas with a neighbourhood plan in place receive more infrastructure funding arising from development in their area than those without a plan.</p> <p>Neighbourhood plans can also be used to advance non-planning projects.</p>
Implications	The preparation of a neighbourhood development plan is time and resource intensive. The community must follow a regulatory process and comply with statutory tests. They cannot be used to stop development.
Support Organisations	<p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils</p> <p>My Community</p>

### **Parish Plan / Community-Led Plan**

What is it?	A comprehensive plan for the area identifying community priorities and actions to address them.
Benefits	Enables communities to produce a comprehensive vision for their area, addressing all issues of interest to the community. Identifies 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. Could be a useful stepping stone to a neighbourhood plan or other community-led planning initiative.
Implications	The preparation of a parish plan is time and resource intensive although there is no formal process to follow. Unlike neighbourhood plans, parish plans do not become part of the formal planning policy framework for Babergh and Mid Suffolk and therefore have limited weight when planning applications are determined.
Support Organisations	<p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils</p> <p>Community Action Suffolk</p>

## Village Design Statements

What is it?	A document created by the community informing the design and appearance of new development in an area.
Benefits	Used to help inform the design and appearance of new development and are taken into account when planning applications are determined. They can be an important tool for setting out criteria for small changes, such as replacement windows or fences, where planning permission is not always required. They can be incorporated into a neighbourhood or parish plan.
Implications	Unlike neighbourhood plans, village design statements do not become part of the formal planning policy framework for Babergh and Mid Suffolk and therefore have limited weight when planning applications are determined.
Support Organisations	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

## Neighbourhood Development Orders

What is it?	Grants planning permission for specific types of development within a neighbourhood area.
Benefits	Enables communities to deliver small-scale, site specific, development proposals within a neighbourhood area without the need to make a planning application, such as affordable housing or a community building.
Implications	The preparation of a neighbourhood development order is time and resource intensive. The community must follow a regulatory process and comply with statutory tests.
Support Organisations	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils My Community

## Community Right to Build Orders

What is it?	A form of neighbourhood development order which grants planning permission for specific types of development within a neighbourhood area.
Benefits	Enables communities to deliver small-scale, site specific, development proposals within a neighbourhood area without the need to make a planning application, such as affordable housing or a community building.
Implications	The preparation of a community right to build order is time and resource intensive. The community must follow a regulatory process and comply with statutory tests.
Support Organisations	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils My Community

## Community Right to Bid (Assets of Community Value)

What is it?	Enables communities to nominate public or private community assets of value. In the event that the asset comes up for sale or lease the community group is given a period of time in which to acquire it.
Benefits	Gives some protection to valued community facilities by providing an extended window of opportunity for the community to purchase an asset, such as a public house, if it is offered for sale,.
Implications	Although an asset may be added to the list it does not mean that the community will definitely be able to buy it for community use; they will need to meet the asking price.  Not all nominated assets will be added to the list as certain tests must be fulfilled.
Support Organisations	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

## Community Land Trusts

What is it?	Community Land Trusts are organisations set up and run by local people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets that are important to the community.
Benefits	Enable communities to deliver their own services, such as housing, shops and community enterprises. Can be used in combination with some of the other community-led planning tools set out in this document. Potentially beneficial for the organisation to have charitable status.
Implications	Can be complex to set up. Resource intensive over a local period. Replicate in part the work of housing associations.
Support Organisations	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils National Community Land Trust Network

## Exceptions Housing

What is it?	Housing development targeted at meeting the needs of local people on land where development would not normally be permitted.
Benefits	Provides additional low-cost housing in areas where it is needed, targeted to local people. Less resource intensive for communities than a neighbourhood development or community right to build order. Can be completed in partnership with a registered housing association.
Implications	Sites should be well related to an existing settlement and the houses should be occupied by people having a local connection to the settlement. Able to deliver additional housing but cannot be used for other community development proposals.
Support Organisations	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Community Action Suffolk

## **Alternatively ... do nothing**

You may consider Babergh and Mid Suffolk's existing and emerging planning policies provide sufficient guidance for you and it is unnecessary to use any of the community-led planning tools outlined here. These policies shape the form and location of new development from large-scale housing and employment schemes to small-scale proposals such as house extensions and alterations. This will be up to you and your community to decide.

## **Further Information**

If you would like to discuss any of these community-led planning approaches in more detail please contact:

### **Babergh District Council**

✉ [communityplanning@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:communityplanning@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk)

🔗 <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/>

### **Mid Suffolk District Council**

✉ [communityplanning@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:communityplanning@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk)

🔗 <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/>

## **Other information sources**

### **Locality**

🔗 <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org>

### **My Community**

🔗 <http://mycommunity.org.uk/>

### **Royal Town Planning Institute**

🔗 <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/neighbourhood-planning/>

### **National Community Land Trust Network**

🔗 <http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/>

### **Community Action Suffolk**

🔗 <http://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/>