

Glossary of planning terms for Neighbourhood Planners

Adoption – The final confirmation of a local plan by a local planning authority.

Advertisement consent – A type of consent required for certain kinds of advertisements, such as shop signs and hoardings. Some advertisements are allowed without the need for an application by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulation 2007.

Affordable housing – Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Annual monitoring report – A report that allows the Local Authority to assess the extent to which policies and proposals set out in all the local development documents are being achieved.

Appeal – The process by which a planning applicant can challenge a planning decision that has been refused or had conditions imposed.

Area action plan – A document forming part of the local plan containing proposals for a specific defined area.

Area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) – A formal designation of an area where planning control is based on the protection and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area.

Article 4 direction – A direction restricting permitted development rights within a specified area. They are often used in conservation areas to provide protection for things like windows, doors, chimneys, etc.

BANANA – An extreme kind of NIMBY - Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone.

Community Right to Build Order

within the community. These developments must meet minimum criteria and have local support demonstrated through a referendum.

Community Right to Challenge – Gives voluntary and community groups the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local service.

Compulsory purchase – A legal process initiated by a local authority to acquire privately owned land in order to implement public policy without the agreement of the owner.

Conditions – Planning conditions are provisions attached to the granting of planning permission.

Conformity – There is a requirement for neighbourhood plans to have appropriate regard to national policy and to be in conformity with local policy.

Conservation area – An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which are preserved and enhanced by local planning policies and guidance.

Conservation area consent – Consent needed for the demolition of unlisted buildings in a conservation area.

Consultation – A communication process with the local community that informs planning decision-making.

Core strategy – A development plan document forming part of a local authority's local plan, which sets out a vision and core policies for the development of an area.

Delivery vehicle – The means of making things happen. It could refer to a partnership or a community development trust or other arrangement designed to make projects happen.

Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
Now Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

Design and access statement – A short report accompanying a planning permission application. Describes design principles of a development such as layout, townscape characteristics, scale, landscape design and appearance.

Design Code - A design code provides detailed design guidance for a site or area they prescribe design requirements (or 'rules') that new development within the specified site or area should follow.

Development – Legal definition is “the carrying out of building, mining, engineering or other operations in, on, under or over land, and the making of any material change in the use of buildings or other land.”

Certificate of lawfulness – A certificate that can be obtained from the local planning authority to confirm that existing development is lawful.

Change of use – A material change in the use of land or buildings that is of significance for planning purposes e.g. from retail to residential.

Character appraisal – An appraisal, usually of the historic and architectural character of conservation areas.

Clone towns – A term coined by the New Economics Foundation in 2004 for towns whose high streets are dominated by chain stores and where the locally distinctive character of the centre has been adversely affected.

Community – A group of people that hold something in common. They could share a common place (e.g. individual neighbourhood) a common interest (e.g. interest in the environment) a common identity (e.g. age) or a common need (e.g. a particular service focus).

Community engagement and involvement – Involving the local community in the decisions that are made regarding their area.

Community infrastructure levy – Allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their areas. Money can be used to fund a wide range of

infrastructure such as transport schemes, schools and leisure centres.

Community plan – A plan produced by a local authority-led partnership to improve the quality of life of people living and working in an area. Community plans take a wide view and cover social and economic issues which development plans, including neighbourhood plans, do not normally address.

Community profiling – Gathering statistical data on the community, e.g. population size, income, which helps build up a ‘social profile’ of the community.

Community Right to Bid – Aims to give community groups the time to develop bids and raise money to buy public assets that come onto the open market.

Community Right to Build – Allows local people to drive forward new developments in their area where the benefits (e.g. profits from letting homes) could stay

Front loading – An approach to community engagement in which communities are consulted at the start of the planning process before any proposals have been produced.

General (Permitted Development) Order

The Town and Country Planning General (Permitted Development) Order is a statutory document that allows specified minor kinds of development (such as small house extensions) to be undertaken without formal planning permission.

General power of competence – A power conveyed by the Localism Act 2011 to give local authorities the ability to undertake any action in the best interest of their communities unless it is against the law.

Green belt – A designated band of land around urban areas, designed to contain urban sprawl.

Greenfield site – Land where there has been no previous development.

Green infrastructure – Landscape, biodiversity, trees, allotments, parks, open spaces and other natural assets.

Green space – Those parts of an area which are occupied by natural, designed or agricultural

landscape as opposed to built development; open space, parkland, woodland, sports fields, gardens, allotments, and the like.

Green travel plan – A package of actions produced by a workplace or an organization setting out how employees, users or visitors will travel to the place in question using options that are healthy, safe and sustainable, and reduce the use of the private car.

Highway authority – The body with legal responsibility for the management and maintenance of public roads. In the UK the highway authority is usually the county council or the unitary authority for a particular area, which can delegate some functions to the district council.

Historic parks and gardens register – The national register managed by English Heritage which provides a listing and classification system for historic parks and gardens.

Development brief – Guidance on how a site or area should be developed in terms of uses, design, linkages, conservation, etc.

Development management (previously known as development control) – The process of administering and making decisions on different kinds of planning application.

Development plan – A document setting out the local planning authority's policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the area.

Duty to co-operate – A requirement introduced by the Localism Act 2011 for local authorities to work together in dealing with cross-boundary issues such as public transport, housing allocations or large retail parks.

Economic development – Improvement of an area's economy through investment, development, job creation, and other measures.

Enforcement – Enforcement of planning control ensures that terms and conditions of planning decisions are carried out.

Enforcement notice – A legal notice served by the local planning authority requiring specified breaches of planning control to be corrected.

Environmental impact assessment – Evaluates the likely environmental impacts of the

development, together with an assessment of how these impacts could be reduced.

Enterprise zone – A defined area in which there are simplified planning controls and financial incentives aimed at attracting development.

Equalities impact assessment – For a neighbourhood plan, this would be an assessment of impacts against different characteristics protected by law (such as gender, ethnicity and disability). This can be useful in demonstrating that a plan does not breach human rights law.

Evidence base – The evidence upon which a development plan is based, principally the background facts and statistics about an area, and the views of stakeholders.

Flood plain – An area prone to flooding.

Local enterprise partnerships – A partnership between local authorities and businesses formed in 2011 to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within its local area.

Local list – A list produced by a local authority to identify buildings and structures of special local interest which are not included in the statutory list of listed buildings.

Local plan – The name for the collection of documents prepared by a local planning authority for the use and development of land and for changes to the transport system. Can contain documents such as development plans and statements of community involvement.

Local planning authority – Local government body responsible for formulating planning policies and controlling development; a district council, metropolitan council, a county council, a unitary authority or national park authority.

Local referendum – A direct vote in which communities will be asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal.

Local strategic partnership – Initiative in every local authority to develop partnership working between public agencies, voluntary groups and businesses and to more effectively deliver public services.

Local transport plan – Plans that set out a local

authority's policies on transport on a five-yearly basis.

Material considerations – Factors which are relevant in the making of planning decisions, such as sustainability, impact on residential amenity, design and traffic impacts.

Micro-generation – The small-scale generation of renewable energy usually consumed on the site where it is produced.

Minerals plan – A statement of the policy, advice and guidance provided by local authorities regarding the extraction of minerals.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – Government ministry that has responsibility for areas such as local government, housing, planning, community cohesion, empowerment and regeneration.

Housing associations – Not-for-profit organisations providing homes mainly to those in housing need.

Independent examination – An examination of a proposed neighbourhood plan, carried out by an independent person, set up to consider whether a neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions required.

Infrastructure – Basic services necessary for development to take place e.g. roads, electricity, water, education and health facilities.

Inquiry – A hearing by a planning inspector into a planning matter such as a local plan or appeal.

Judicial review – Legal challenge of a planning decision, to consider whether it has been made in a proper and lawful manner.

Legislation – The Acts of Parliament, regulations, and statutory instruments which provide the legal framework within which public law is administered.

Listed buildings – Any building or structure which is included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

Listed building consent – The formal approval which gives consent to carry out work affecting the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building.

Localism – Shifting power away from central government control to the local level. Making services more locally accountable, devolving more power to local communities, individuals and councils.

Local Development Framework (LDF) – Old name for local plans in metropolitan (single tier) areas.

Local authority – The administrative body that governs local services such as education, planning and social services.

Local Development Order – Local Development

Orders allow planning authorities to implement policies in their development plan by granting planning permission for a particular development or for a particular class of development.

Local green space – This is a formal designation that may be made by neighbourhood plans, to provide protection for green spaces valued by the local community.

Neighbourhood planning – A community-initiated process in which people get together through a local forum or parish or town council and produce a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order.

Nighttime economy – The network of economic activities which operate in cities and towns principally in the evenings and at night, such as theatres, restaurants, cinemas, nightclubs, and public houses.

NIMBY – 'Not in my back yard' – used when discussing planning issues. The term is used to define the opposition of residents who are against new developments that they believe will devalue their properties

Non-determination – When a planning application is submitted and the local authority fails to give a decision on it within the defined statutory period.

Operational development – The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on over, or under land; part of the statutory definition of development (the other part being material changes of use of buildings or land).

Permitted development – Certain minor building works that don't need planning permission e.g. a boundary wall below a certain height.

Policy – A concise statement of the principles that a particular kind of development proposal should satisfy in order to obtain planning permission.

Parish plan – A non-statutory plan produced by a parish council that sets out a vision for the future of a parish community and outlines how that can be achieved in an action plan.

Parking standards – The requirements of a local authority in respect of the level of car parking provided for different kinds of development.

Plan-led – A system of planning which is organised around the implementation of an adopted plan, as opposed to an ad hoc approach to planning in which each case is judged on its own merits.

Planning gain – The increase in value of land resulting from the granting of planning permission. This value mainly accrues to the owner of the land, but sometimes the local council negotiates with the developer to secure benefit to the public, either through section 106 planning obligations or the setting of a community infrastructure levy.

Mixed use – The development of a single building or site with two or more complementary uses.

Nationally significant infrastructure – Major infrastructure developments such as power plants, airports, railways, major roads, etc.

National park – An area of natural or semi-natural land designated in order to maintain the special ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic features of the area.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
– The government policy document first adopted in 2012 was updated in 2018. The NPPF introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It gives five guiding principles of sustainable development: living within the planet's means; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

Neighbourhood area – The local area in which a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order can be introduced.

Neighbourhood development order – An order introduced by a parish or town council, or a neighbourhood forum, as part of the neighbourhood planning process, which grants planning permission for a specific development or type of development.

Neighbourhood plan – A planning document created by a parish or town council or a neighbourhood forum, which sets out the vision for the neighbourhood area, and contains policies for the development and use of land in the area. Neighbourhood plans must be subjected to an independent examination to confirm that they meet legal requirements, and then to a local referendum. If approved by a majority vote of the local community, the neighbourhood plan will then form part of the statutory development plan.

Neighbourhood forum – Designated by the local authority in non-parished areas, an organisation established for the purpose of neighbourhood planning to further the social, economic and environmental well-being of the neighbourhood area. There can only be one forum in an area.

development orders are made by a referendum of the eligible voters within a neighbourhood area.

Regeneration – Upgrading an area through social, physical and economic improvements.

Retail – The process of selling single or small numbers of items directly and in person to customers. The use category defined as Class A1 in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

Rural – Areas of land which are generally not urbanised; usually with low population densities and a high proportion of land devoted to agriculture.

Scheduled ancient monument – A nationally important archaeological site, building or structure which is protected against unauthorised change by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Section 106 – see Planning obligation.

Sequential test – A principle for making a planning decision based on developing certain sites or types of land before others, for example, developing brownfield land before greenfield sites, or developing sites within town centres before sites outside town centres.

Setting – The immediate context in which a building is situated, for example, the setting of a listed building could include neighbouring land or development with which it is historically associated, or the surrounding townscape of which it forms a part.

SHLAA – This is Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, which is undertaken by the local planning authority to identify potential development sites for housing in their area.

SHMA – This is Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which is an evidence-based assessment of the housing market to establish housing need in an area. It is undertaken by the local planning authority.

SHELAA – This is Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment which is similar to a SHLAA, but also includes assessment of potential sites for employment development.

Significance – The qualities and characteristics which define the architectural or historic interest of a historic building or area. developer to secure benefit to the public, either through Section 106 planning obligations or the setting of a community infrastructure levy.

Planning inspectorate – The government body established to provide an independent judgement on planning decisions which are taken to appeal.

Planning (listed buildings and conservation areas) Act 1990 – The primary piece of legislation covering listed buildings and conservation areas.

Planning obligation – Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, secured by a local planning authority through negotiations with a developer to offset the public cost of permitting a development proposal. Sometimes developers can self-impose obligations to pre-empt objections to planning permission being granted. They cover things like highway improvements or open space provision.

Planning permission – Formal approval granted by a council allowing a proposed development to proceed.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
The government's PPG can be read alongside the NPPF and is intended as a guidebook for planners. It is not a single document but an online resource which is kept current through regular updates.

Presumption in favour of sustainable development

The concept introduced in 2012 by the UK government with the National Planning Policy Framework to be the 'golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking'. The National Planning Policy Framework gives five guiding principles of sustainable development: living within the planet's means; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

Public inquiry – See Inquiry.

Public open space – Open space to which the public has free access.

Public realm – Areas of space usually in town and city centres where the public can circulate freely, including streets, parks and public squares.

Qualifying body – Either a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum, which can initiate the process of neighbourhood planning. Referred to as a neighbourhood planning body throughout this guide.

Referendum – A vote by which the eligible population of an electoral area may decide on a matter of public policy. Neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood permission for many minor developments and highway works they carry out.

Strategic environmental assessment

Environmental assessment as applied to policies, plans and programmes. Has been in place since the European SEA directive (2001/42/EC).

Sustainability appraisal – An assessment of the environmental, social and economic impacts of a local plan from the outset of the preparation process to check that the plan accords with the principles of sustainable development.

Statutory development plan – Focus on land use development set within the context of wider social, economic and environmental trends and considerations. Reflects national planning policies to make provisions for the long-term use of land and buildings.

Strategic planning – The overall vision and policies for the planning system in an area. Lays out what an area wants development to accomplish.

Strategic policy – A policy that is essential for the delivery of a strategy, for example, the overall scale and distribution of housing and employment in an area.

Supplementary planning document – Provides detailed thematic or site-specific guidance explaining or supporting the policies in the local plan.

Sustainable development – An approach to development that aims to allow economic growth without damaging the environment or natural resources. Development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – Currently the main planning legislation for England and Wales is consolidated in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990; this is regarded as the ‘principal act’.

Townscape – The pattern and form of urban development; the configuration of built forms, streets and spaces.

Tenure – The terms and conditions under which land or property is held or occupied, e.g. five year leasehold, freehold owner occupation, etc.

Site allocation plan – A plan accompanying a planning policy document or statement which identifies sites within the plan area on which certain kinds of development are proposed, e.g. residential or retail development.

Site of special scientific interest – A protected area designated as being of special interest by virtue of its flora, fauna, geological or geomorphological features. Sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) are designated

under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 by the official nature conservation body for the particular part of the UK in question.

Social enterprise – A business that trades primarily to achieve social aims, whilst making a profit.

Soundness – The soundness of a statutory local planning document is determined by the planning inspector against three criteria: whether the plan is justified, whether it is effective, and whether it is consistent with national and local planning policy. Plans found to be unsound cannot be adopted by the local planning authority. It should be noted, neighbourhood plans are NOT required to meet these tests of soundness.

Space standards – Quantified dimensions set down by a local planning authority to determine whether a particular development proposal provides enough space around it so as not to affect the amenity of existing neighbouring developments. Space standards can also apply to garden areas.

Spatial planning – A wider view of planning, which involves co-ordination and integration across different sectors such as transport and industry. Brings together all policies and programmes which have an impact on the environment in which you work, live or play.

Stakeholders – People who have an interest in an organisation or process including residents, business owners and government.

Statement of community involvement – A formal statement of the process of community consultation undertaken in the preparation of a statutory plan.

Statutory undertaker – An agency or company with legal rights to carry out certain developments and highway works. Such bodies include utility companies, telecom companies, and nationalised companies. Statutory undertakers are exempt from planning

Use class – The legally defined category into which the use of a building or land falls (see Use classes order).

Use classes order – The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) is the statutory instrument that defines the

categories of use of buildings or land for the purposes of planning legislation. Planning permission must be obtained to change the use of a building or land to another use class.

Village design statement – A document that identifies and defines the distinctive characteristics of a locality, and provides design guidance to influence its future development and improve the physical qualities of the area. Village design statements have generally been produced for rural areas, often by parish councils.

World heritage site – A place that has been designated by UNESCO as being of outstanding cultural or physical importance to the common heritage of humanity.

Tenure blind – This means that affordable housing is treated in the same way as market housing, so that it is indistinguishable.

Tree preservation order – An order made by a local planning authority to protect a specific tree, a group of trees or woodland. Tree preservation orders (TPOs) prevent the felling, lopping, topping, uprooting or other deliberate damage of trees without the permission of the local planning authority.

Urban – Having the characteristics of a town or a city; an area dominated by built development.

Urban design – The design of towns and cities, including the physical characteristics of groups of buildings, streets and public spaces, whole neighbourhoods and districts, and even entire cities.

Urban fringe – The area on the edge of towns and cities where the urban form starts to fragment and the density of development reduces significantly.

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