

Glossary of Planning Terminology – Reviewable

There are various technical terms used in documents and in the planning process.

This glossary provides definitions to a range of such terms the list is not exhaustive.

Adoption	The final confirmation of a local plan by a local planning authority.
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 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.
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.
Assets of Community Value & Right to Bid	Nominate places and spaces in your community that are important to local people as Assets of Community Value and if they come up for sale, your community has the opportunity to bid for them.
Biodiversity	The degree of variation of life forms within a particular ecosystem. Biodiversity is a measure of the health of an ecosystem. Human activity generally tends to reduce biodiversity, so special measures often need to be taken to offset the impact of development on natural habitats
Brownfield land	Land that has been previously developed.
Building for life	A technique for assessing the quality of housing proposals using 20 criteria including sustainability, urban design and social/community factors.
Buildings at risk	A term used to describe historic buildings that are vacant and/or in poor condition. Some local authorities have buildings at risk surveys.
Call in	A discretionary power of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to 'call in' certain planning applications and subject them to a public inquiry if the granting of planning permission may substantially conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework or with adopted local planning policy.
Case law	Decisions by the courts on the interpretation of legislation.

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.
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.
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.
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.
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."
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.
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.
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.
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.
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 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.

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. Note: NDPG to obtain a 'local' list (contact ESBC)
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 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.
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 revised in July 2018 intended to make national planning policy and guidance less complex and more accessible.
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 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.
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.
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.
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/consent	Formal approval granted by a council allowing a proposed development to proceed.
Outline planning consent	NDPG to identify correct definition
Detailed planning consent/reserved matters	NDPG to identify correct definition
Presumption in favour of sustainable development	The concept introduced in 2012 by the UK government with the NPPF to be the 'golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking'. The NPPF 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. Note: The NPPF was revised in July 2018 and February 2019 and there are now more specific/clear exemptions to this presumption.
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.
Referendum	A vote by which the eligible population of an electoral area may decide on a matter of public policy. Neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood 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.
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.
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.
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.
Strategic planning	The overall vision and policies for the planning system in an area. Lays out what an area wants development to accomplish.
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'.
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.
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.
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