

## Evidence Collection

### Introduction

Your Place Plan will need to be backed up by proportionate evidence. This will be used to explain the reasons behind the content of your plan. Your evidence base should be made up of two main elements:

- **Community Views:** Evidence of the views of the local community and others who have a stake in the future of the area (for example, local businesses and employers).
- **Research/fact finding:** Background facts that inform the objectives of the plan.

It will be important to record the process of collecting the evidence (for example a list of consultation events or meetings, detailing when they were held, who attended etc.), as well as listing what evidence has been collected and presenting the findings. *See the Community Involvement Toolkit for more detail.*

If your community is aiming for your Place Plan to become Supplementary Planning Guidance you will need to discuss evidence collection with your local authority. You need to make sure your evidence meets the standards required for local authority adoption.

### What is the evidence for?

The evidence informs your plan and underpins its objectives. To use just one example, if one of your objectives is to *'protect existing community facilities'* then you will need evidence to help to:

- **Set the scene:** For example, by cataloguing current provision of community facilities, setting out what is there now and, to some extent, how well or not any facility is used. Community and planning authority views on current provision and gaps will also inform this.
- **Identify what you need to include in the plan:** The first step above will set out what you've got to address and what you are trying to do. Highlight what your community wants to protect, and indicate gaps in provision that community have identified.
- **Identify who is going to help:** A range of service providers will be able to assist with the delivery of your plan objectives, including the development industry, statutory agencies (for example, Sport Wales) and other bodies which hold useful evidence (for example, One Voice Wales) and perhaps even grant giving bodies.

## How

### Step 1: Review the evidence you have already

Before collecting new evidence it is worth auditing your existing local evidence, for example, material prepared as part of a Design Statement or Community Plan process, or information gathered by local groups such as historical societies or wildlife groups.

In addition, your local authority will almost certainly have a lot of evidence relevant to your area. Much of this should be readily available on their website as evidence base to the Local Development Plan.

Census data and all sorts of open source environmental data can be found online.

### Step 2: Identify Gaps and Priorities

Following your review, you should have a better idea about the key evidence gaps. For example, if your Steering Group is interested in including particular topics in your Place Plan you may well need additional evidence in these areas.

Once you have created a list of areas where you need further evidence, these should be prioritised, e.g. some may be critical, some may be time sensitive (ecology surveys can only be undertaken April-October). In addition, some evidence can be gathered by local people and other evidence may require more specialist input or advice.

### Step 3: Collect and Assemble Evidence

There are usually two sorts of evidence to collect:

- **Views, opinions, aspirations:** This is relatively easy to obtain. You can use a survey, run an open event, send round a newsletter and so forth. *See the Community Involvement Toolkit.*
- **Facts and Figures:** This is always more challenging and demands real care. Your work to establish local opinions may suggest a need for more open spaces but it may simply be that the current ones are poorly used. It may suggest safety problems at a road junction but are there actual, recorded examples of problems? Some of the other toolkits provide guidance on robust ways of collecting evidence on such issues but this is where help from your local authority on what to find out and how to find it is crucial.

And finally, remember that every proposal, idea or project on your Place Plan needs evidence to back it up!

**Further information**

Your Local Planning Authority should be the first point of contact in the evidence gathering process.

Planning Aid England have put together some advice on the topic of how to gather and use evidence in Neighbourhood Planning:

[https://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/storage/resources/documents/How\\_to\\_gather\\_and\\_use\\_evidence.pdf](https://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/storage/resources/documents/How_to_gather_and_use_evidence.pdf)