



A Community Plan is...

- Produced by and for the community – No one is better positioned to understand the needs, issues and aspirations of a local community than the people who are part of it. A Community Led Plan puts you as a community at the driving seat.
- A shared vision for the whole community – A Community Led Plan results in a vision for your local area that can benefit everyone and includes an Action Plan to achieve it.
- A chance for everyone to have their say – A Community Led Plan is for everyone who has an interest in, and connection with your local community. It's not just for the people that live in your local area, but for anyone who works, or studies there, owns businesses locally and so on. Only by including everyone will your Plan have the backing of your community, gain acceptance with Local Authorities and partners, and achieve the actions that you set out to achieve.
- About place – We are all different, but what we share in common is the community we live in. Community Led Plans take this as a starting point for building community spirit and establishing actions that have the opportunity to benefit everyone.
- Grounded in thorough research produced by the community – A Community Led Plan is unique in that it is you, the community, who designs and undertakes the research in the needs and aspirations of your community. This evidence is essential for demonstrating the changes needed to improve the local area.
- Forward looking – A Community Led Plan is not just about the here and now, but a vision for what your community should be like in the future.
- SMART – Actions proposed should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed).
- About the communities taking action themselves – Many actions needed to improve the local area can be undertaken by your community. Evidence from the East of England has shown that rural communities were able to implement 47% of proposed action without help from external agencies.
- Making links with organisations that can help you – A Community Led Plan allows your community to lever support of your Parish/Town Council, Local Authorities and other service providers, to make sure that the actions you propose for your area can be turned into reality. Better still; the evidence that you generate can be used to inform the policies and strategies for your locality.

- A long-term endeavour – A Community Led Plan typically takes between 12 – 18 months to complete. It is recommended that you review your plan every 5 years to make sure it is up-to-date and still relevant.
- Part of a national movement – Community Led Plans are being produced all Over the UK and are part of a national movement that aims to empower communities and revitalise democracy.

A Community Led Plan is not...

- Something that is done 'to' a community – There are many other methods used to 'consult' or 'engage' communities. These have often involved local authorities going into communities and asking residents to comment on pre-conceived proposals for an area. However, these rarely provide the opportunity for communities to take forward issues of specific interest while a Community Led Plan does because it sets its own agenda.
- A one-off event – Often consultations are 'one off' events, in which communities are asked for their views about local development and then rarely hear anything more about it. A Community Led Plan is an ongoing project for the local area in which the community itself takes responsibility for making sure change happens.
- A 'wish list' - A Community Led Plan is not about producing a 'wish list' of actions that appear out of nowhere and never get acted upon. Action with Communities in Rural Kent can provide you with ideas for undertaking thorough research into the needs and aspirations of your community to ensure that you produce an Action Plan that is likely to affect change.
- Just a spatial planning document – Community Led Plans do not just focus on spatial planning related issues. They should be comprehensive in their coverage of all aspects of community life.
- A members only club – Sometimes community projects can get hijacked by a few people that wish to pursue their own personal agenda. The value of a Community Led Plan is that it provides a forum in which everyone can come together, express their views and make recommendations for the future.

The Time is Right because...

- The government has recently committed to an 'empowerment' agenda, which means that councils and their partners are expected to place community empowerment at the heart of everything they do. In fact, local councils have what is called a '*duty to involve*' citizens in order to become a more effective tier of government. Community Led Plans are recognised as an outstanding way of achieving this goal.
- All three main political parties share a belief in giving more say and power to local communities and recognise the benefits of Community Led Planning for this end; therefore, support levels will not change with the coming election.
- "A small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change a community. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." – Margaret Mead.