

## TOOL 19 – HOW TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING COMMITTEE?

### 1. What Is Neighbourhood or Settlement Planning?

Settlement planning is a process that enables local communities to guide the development of their areas. It was first introduced in the United Kingdom through the Localism Act of 2011. According to this Act, communities can create so-called neighbourhood plans that serve as guidelines for further planning. Neighbourhood plans become an integral part of higher-level plans, and the policies they contain are used to develop the concept for urban planning. These plans allow communities to approve or steer planning according to their needs and priorities, but they cannot block the development directions set by higher-level plans.

### 2. What Are the Benefits for the Community of Developing a Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood planning allows the local community to play a more significant role in shaping the area where they live and work, especially during the preparatory phase. It provides communities with an opportunity to define a clear and positive vision for the development of their area over the coming decades (10, 15, or 20 years). This vision can focus on meeting specific local needs and interests of residents.

### 3. How to Organize a Neighbourhood Planning Committee?

This tool brings people together into formal but temporary groups to address complex and challenging public-interest issues. Participants explore the problem, discuss different perspectives, and make joint decisions.

Participants often face a high degree of uncertainty regarding possible solutions, and opinions may become polarized (for example, on topics such as population growth, development impact, or sustainability). The goal of this method is to find common ground for action, especially in cases where a simple solution is not possible. This process involves the presence of a facilitator, usually a neutral person, who guides the discussion. The tool is often used to collect public opinions on specific topics, which are then presented to decision-makers through a report.

- Identify and gather participants who accurately reflect the local population.
- Organize an initial session that clearly defines the topic while building trust among participants and between participants and the facilitator.
- Conduct facilitated discussions on the topic, asking participants concrete, pre-prepared questions.
  - o a. For larger groups, divide participants into representative or intentionally homogeneous subgroups.
  - o b. Focus on decision-making and concrete conclusions.
  - o c. Record key observations and conclusions during the discussion.
- Synthesize the results and prepare a report with conclusions.

### 4. Why Use Neighbourhood Planning Committees?

- Increases the legitimacy of decisions.
- May lead to results that are more relevant to the local population.

**Infrastructure:**

- Tables and chairs
- Background materials
- Flipcharts and markers, or other materials for recording discussions.
- Audio or video recording.

**Accessibility:**

This activity is not suitable for online engagement as it relies on group discussion and requires the physical presence of participants.