

# Sources of data and statistics

Putting the pieces together



The planning policies in your neighbourhood plan need to be informed by a clear understanding of your neighbourhood area. They need to be based on robust evidence and analysis of the key issues facing your area now and also an understanding of how these may change in the future.

Evidence can be both quantitative (facts and figures) and qualitative (e.g. consultation responses). You need to ensure that you collect sufficient relevant evidence to back up the choices you make in your neighbourhood plan. Local opinion expressed through consultation responses alone will not suffice.

This note provides an idea of the different sources of quantitative data (facts and figures) available that may be relevant to your neighbourhood plan. The data sources are presented by common neighbourhood plan 'topics'.

The note includes information on the type of information and data that may be available by topic. We have also categorised the information into the following:

- data: signposts you (via a hyperlink) to specific sources of data and statistics such as census data
- information from the local planning authority: provides a steer on sources of evidence and information that may be available from your local planning authority such as an assessment of housing need
- advice: signposts you to other guides that may help you to understand the evidence you may need e.g. a guide to working with landowners and developers explains the type of information that they may have that can help produce a neighbourhood plan. Signposts are also provided to other organisations and third parties who may have information to support the development of your neighbourhood plan e.g. Local Civic Societies and your Local Chamber of Commerce

The sources and types of information set out in the diagram are by no means exhaustive and should be used as a starting point to identify sources of evidence. Furthermore, they are not listed in order of importance. The particular evidence that you will require will depend on the issues your plan is seeking to address. You are advised to first [speak to your local planning authority](#). It may be able to provide a steer on the evidence you may need and also what is available.

It is recommended that you read the [How to gather and use evidence resource](#) alongside this note. This resource provides further information and top tips on how to gather and use evidence as well as explaining:

- what evidence is
- why evidence is important in policy development
- what different types of evidence can be used
- how to use evidence
- how to keep evidence proportionate



**Contact:**

Planning Aid England  
Royal Town Planning Institute  
41 Botolph Lane  
London EC3R 8DL  
Tel. 020 3206 1880  
E-mail: [info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

For further information please visit [rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid](http://rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid)

Registered Charity Number: 262865  
Scottish Registered Charity Number: SC 037841



## HERITAGE:

- **Data**
  - Historic England
  - The Heritage List
- **Information from local planning authority**
  - Townscape assessments
  - Conservation Areas and their character appraisals
  - Listed buildings and local heritage assets
- **Advice**
  - Design and Character Assessment
  - Local Civic Societies

## RETAIL:

- **Information from local planning authority**
  - Retail development needs assessment
  - Retail health check including vacancy rates
  - Town centre strategies / Area Action Plans
  - Retail Hierarchy

## EMPLOYMENT:

- **Data**
  - Census data - economic activity, occupation, industry, qualifications and students
- **Information from local planning authority**
  - Employment development needs assessment
  - Local authority assessment of employment sites
- **Advice**
  - Local Chamber of Commerce
  - Local Enterprise Partnership
  - Business Improvement District

## SOURCES OF DATA AND STATISTICS:

- **Office of National Statistics** (statistics related to economy, population and society)
- **NOMIS** (labour market statistics)
- **Evidencing Rural Needs** (cost involved)
- Local Plan and supporting evidence base (speak to your local planning authority)

## LANDSCAPE:

- **Data**
  - Grades of agricultural land
  - Natural England
  - Information on designated sites
  - Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside
  - Information on environmental designations
- **Information from local planning authority**
  - Green Belt
  - Existing settlement boundaries
  - Landscape character assessment

## BIODIVERSITY:

- **Data**
  - Natural England
  - Information on designated sites
  - Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside
  - Information on environmental designations
- **Information from local planning authority**
  - Local Biodiversity Action Plan

## HOUSING:

- **Data**
  - Household projects (local authority level)
  - Census data – housing mix, type and tenure.
- **Information from local planning authority**
  - Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
  - Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment
  - Affordable housing waiting list from housing team
  - Housing needs survey
  - Local Plan call for sites
- **Advice**
  - Working with landowners and developers