

Toolkit for sustainable rural communities



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What Prompted the Work?

- 2006 Seminar in Devon- Developing and Living in a Sustainable Village
 - Need to allow rural communities in Devon to thrive
 - Need for a more sophisticated approach to spatial planning for rural settlements
- Recognition that places with minimal services which are poorly served by public transport attract little investment – as a result their ability to evolve to meet changing conditions is constrained

Nationally:

- Move from assessing the suitability of settlements to host development towards considering what is needed to improve the sustainability of individual settlements, and so an area
- By placing sustainable communities at the heart of planning and policy but no consensus around how that should be applied to rural communities – although clear that it should be applied

Being sustainable means :

Healthy living within environmental limits in an economically successful but just society which benefits from and submits to good governance

- The toolkit began from the premise that no place is inherently unsustainable
- It is the way that we use places, and the manner in which they change in the future which will make them either more or less sustainable

What is the Toolkit?

- A means of reaching a common understanding about the performance of local settlements against a 'benchmark' of sustainability
- Robust and collaboratively generated local evidence base
- Framework for dialogue and assessing the likely impact of change, or lack of change on the future sustainability of place

When might you use it?

Policy imperative - to develop a robust local evidence base in respect of:

- Local Development Framework
- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Delivery Plans
- Comprehensive Area Assessments

Case specific response

- Scenario planning for specific change
- To assess impact of change
- Community Led Planning

Who can use the toolkit?

- Designed for use in rural villages and towns
($< 10\ 000$ population)
- Designed for Planners, LSPs, Service Providers
- Involvement of communities integral to successful application
- Communities could use independently

How does the toolkit work?

Overview

- Poses set of questions for each characteristic
- Research, respond, debate
- 2 stages – involve local authority and community
- Move to a judgement about performance

How does the toolkit work?

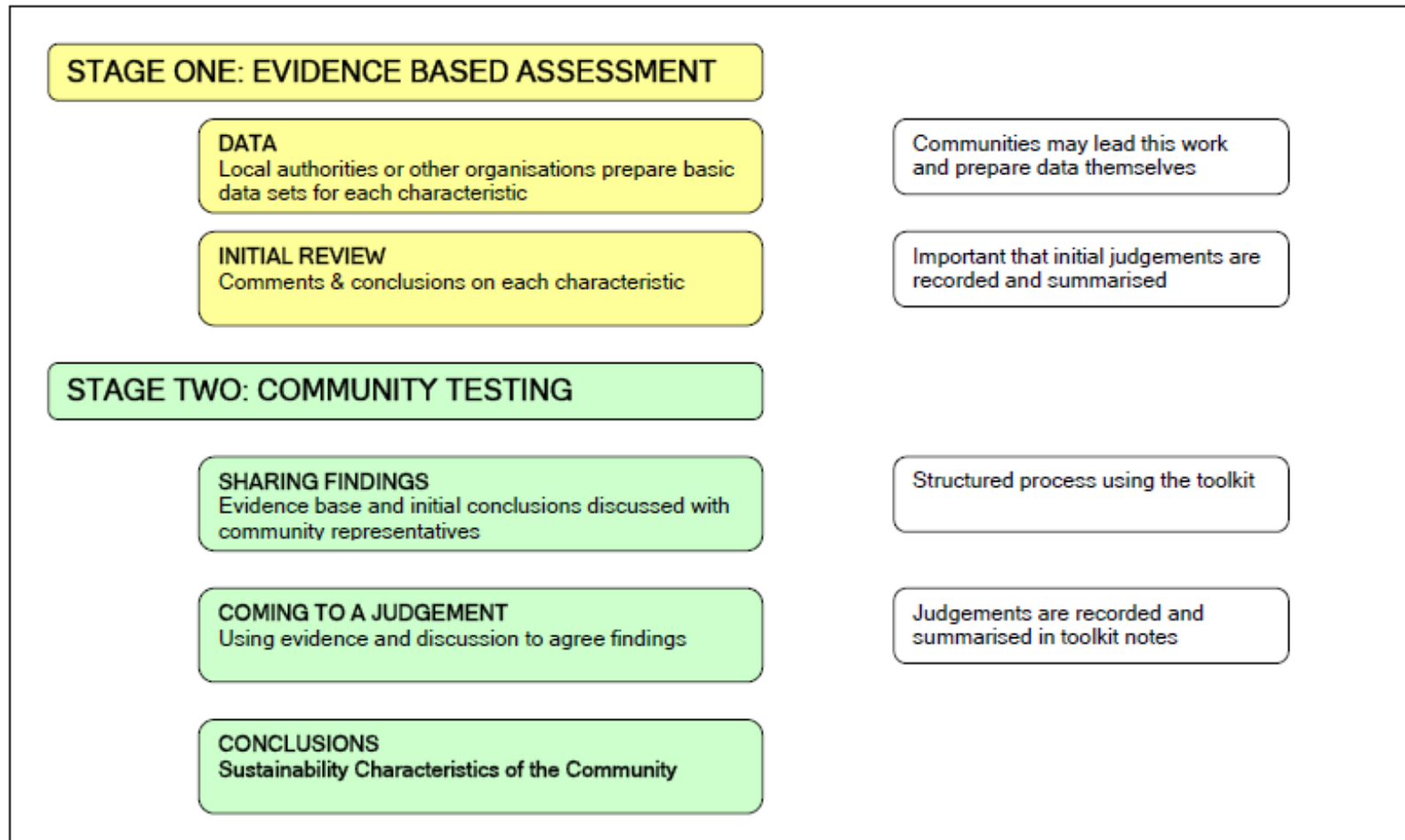
- Managed route to arrive at an informed judgement about the current sustainability of a town or village
- Uses the 8 characteristics of a sustainable community in the Bristol Accord as a 'line in the sand'
 - Active with a strong sense of community
 - Well run and well represented
 - Well connected
 - Well served
 - Environmentally sensitive
 - Well designed with appropriate housing and public spaces
 - Thriving with a successful local economy
 - Fair

How does the toolkit work?

- Context for the assessment is set by the purpose i.e. looking at relative performance within a 'peer group'
- Actions which take a community closer to the line improve sustainability, whilst actions which move it further away will diminish sustainability

How does the toolkit work?

Two Stage Process



How does the toolkit work?

Characteristic questions

Headline Statement A: Active with a strong sense of community					
Sustainable communities are active places where there are a range of events, clubs and societies (many/all of which are run by the local community). People living in sustainable communities identify with their place and believe that everyone in the community is important. They communicate effectively, and look out for and after one another, helping each to feel valued and keep safe.					
	Sources of Facts and Data	Stage One: Evidence based Assessment	+ ve / - ve	Stage Two: Community Testing	+ ve / - ve
A1: Shared Activities		<i>Provide your answers by responding to the prompts in the space below</i>		<i>Provide your answers by responding to the prompts in the space below</i>	
Does the community organise events and activities for itself and others?	<i>Population size and age breakdown. List of clubs, societies and events</i>	<i>Review the list of activities, comment on the range and type compared to the population profile</i>		Are there shared activities which create a strong sense of community?	
Do these activities appeal to / cater for all sections of the community or are there some groups (e.g. young adults) whose interests are less well catered for?	<i>As above</i>	<i>Comment on any obvious gaps in relation to the profile of the population</i>			
A2: Looking After Each Other					
How self reliant is the community? Do people help themselves and each other?	<i>% of the community providing unpaid care % of the community suffering from a limiting long term illness</i>	<i>Review the statistics and compare with district and regional averages. How does the provision of care and incidence of illness tally?</i>		How well do people look out for each other and help create a strong community?	
Are there any social enterprises or local organisations involved in delivering services or looking after vulnerable people?	<i>Local information, parish newsletters, notice boards etc.</i>	<i>Review organisations / businesses providing services locally; how does this compare with the possible need given the age profile and incidence of illness?</i>			

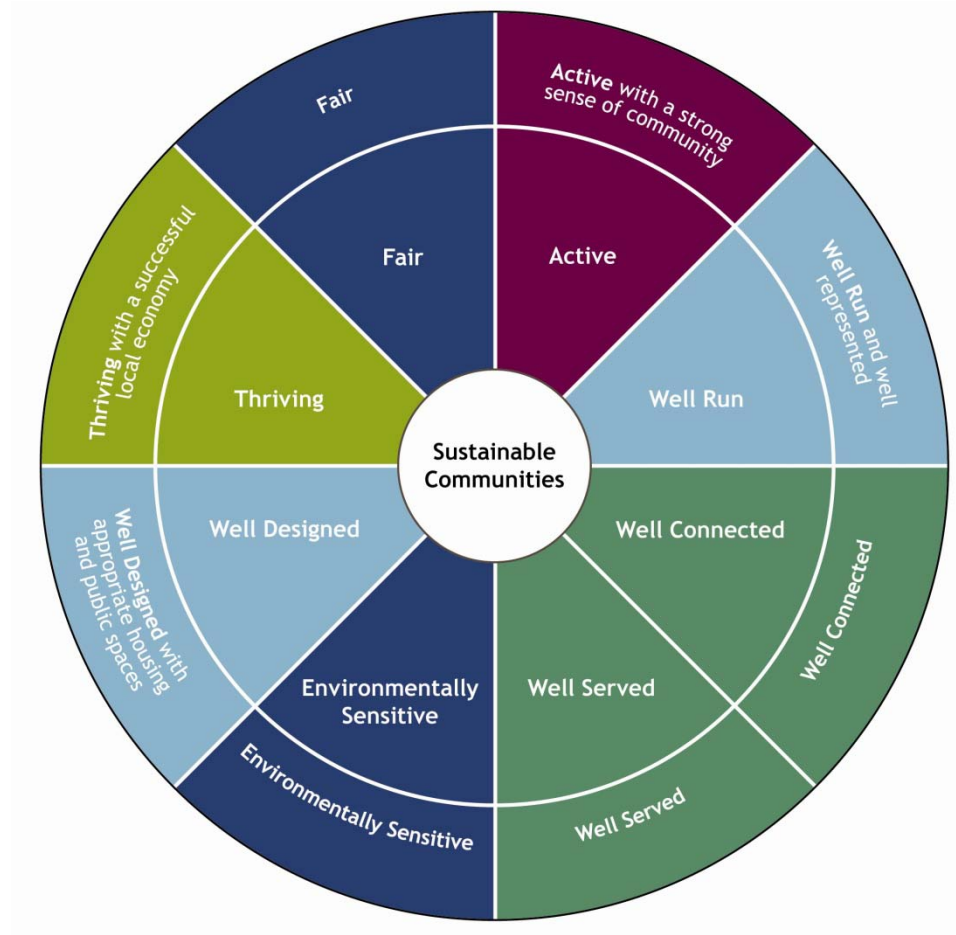
How does the toolkit work?

Coming to a joint judgement

- Review the information and answers against a characteristic
- Task is to decide on the 'performance score'
 - 1 strongly disagree with headline statement
 - 5 strongly agree with headline statement
 - Record decision on wheel using colours
 - Focus is on the judgement making process

How does the toolkit work?

Judgement wheel



Conclusion

- Toolkit is a means to an end
- Fit with DPD Community Involvement Requirements; potential for early community engagement (PPS12)
- Common evidence base with the Sustainable Community Strategy
- Potential for use in community led planning:
 - Contribution to parish planning/market town planning
 - Can be initiated by the community
 - Can be used to model development/change scenarios
- Evidence to underpin the Single Conversation

Further Information

- This afternoon's workshop!

- Toolkit website

www.ruraltoolkit.org.uk