Welcome to Neighbourhood Planning

The Localism Act 2011 introduced statutory Neighbourhood Planning in England. It enables communities to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan for their area and is intended to give communities more of a say in the development of their local area (within certain limits and parameters). These plans will be used to decide the future of the places where you live and work giving opportunities to:

- choose where you want new homes, shops and offices to be built
- have your say on what new buildings should look like
- grant planning permission for the new buildings you want to see go ahead.

The National Planning Policy Framework states:

“Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area, including those contained in any neighbourhood plans that have been made.”

What is a Community Engagement Strategy?

A community engagement strategy guides you and your partners on how you will engage with your communities, interested people and organisations in the development of your plan. Your community engagement strategy will set out how you involve the community and other interested individuals and groups as you prepare planning policies, allocate sites for development and consider non-planning projects that your neighbourhood plan could include in Chobham.

Preparing your Community Engagement Strategy

On the following pages is an example, a draft or a template for a community engagement strategy. It is far better that the group making the plan prepares its engagement strategy within the local context and includes a local flavour within its engagement strategy. The following template is an example of how the engagement strategy for Chobham could be laid out and there is no doubt that your group will adapt this strategy to reflect Chobham’s aspirations for an inclusive plan. The strategy will help your group see the fundamental parts to a Community Engagement Strategy in the context of preparing your neighbourhood plan.
The Community Engagement Strategy

1. What is your strategy about?

Community engagement is vital to make sure that Chobham is the best it can be. To get involved in making Chobham a better place you need to allow the community to let you know what they think about your plan. To do this you need consistent good quality, coordinated engagement by all the people who could be influenced or impacted by your plan. The voluntary, community, business and public sectors may all need to be included in your strategy. If your Neighbourhood Plan is looking at developing sites you will also need to engage with Landowners.

[ Example ]

The Chobham Community Engagement Strategy

This strategy outlines how we will work together to inform, consult and involve local people in The development of a neighbourhood plan for Chobham. It is for everybody who has a role to play or who wants to get involved in influencing Chobham’s future and having a say in the shape, size, scale and location of new development in Chobham.

This strategy sets out our community engagement values and standards. It is divided into three main sections:

The Community Engagement Strategy

Visions and values – our commitment to involving you

Involving you – standards, types of community engagement, how to include everybody and how decisions are made

We want you to have a say in our neighbourhood plan and to have an impact on the development of your local area.

2. What is Community Engagement?

A community is a group of people who have things in common. Communities can be defined by location (such as a street or a neighbourhood), race, ethnicity, age, occupation, a shared interest (such as local businesses or hobbies) or affinity (such as religion, faith or belief) or other common bonds. Being able to engage with these different groups may mean designing different ways in which these groups could take part in the planning, development and delivery of your neighbourhood plan. You may wish to show in your Community Engagement Strategy that you will do more than simply “inform” people and “consult” people but you will also “involve”,...
The Chobham Neighbourhood Plan will seek to:

- **INFORM YOU** - Providing appropriate information about our neighbourhood plan and the policies and developments that might affect or interest you.

- **CONSULT YOU** - Providing opportunities for you to have your say about our plan through consultations, surveys, workshops and conversations. Acting on the feedback we receive and showing how it has influenced the decisions made.

- **INVOLVE YOU** - Providing opportunities to get involved, over and above informing and consulting, to give you a greater influence over the making of a plan for the area.

- **COLLABORATE** – Creating partnerships with the community in each aspect of decision making including development of options and analysis of alternatives

- **EMPOWER** – More decisions on matters within the Neighbourhood Plan lie with the community

Everyone should be involved in making Chobham a great place to live, work and play. If you live in Chobham, you will have knowledge about the area and how it can be improved. If you are a local group or business you will have information and ideas that can help shape the future of the area. By taking part in our neighbourhood plan you can make sure that decisions being made are the best for you and Chobham.

**Who is this Strategy for?**

This strategy is for anyone who is interested in getting involved in improving Chobham’s future. This includes private organisations, voluntary and community groups, residents, workers, students and any individual with an interest in how their environment and community could change over time.

3. **Explaining your vision for the area**

Every Neighbourhood Plan will need a strong vision in order for it to move forward and for you to include more people in the process the community need to be aware and on board with the direction your plan is aiming to move in. In the next section you could include your Neighbourhood Plan vision and also show how the neighbourhood planning group will go about achieving the vision in your Community Engagement Strategy through using different skills.
Visions and Values for the Chobham Neighbourhood Plan

Our Vision

The Chobham Neighbourhood Plan group, in consultation with interested parties agreed a vision for Chobham to 2028: “You would insert your vision for Chobham here…”

To achieve our vision, effective community involvement must be provided on the development of our neighbourhood plan and be targeted at the right people at the right time in an accessible way. The Chobham Neighbourhood Planning group is committed to involve, collaborate with and empower the communities of Chobham and we will follow the principles set out in the following table.

| Be open and honest with the community | • Let people know why we are engaging and use the right methods that are proportionate to the significance of the issues to engage local people  
• Be clear about what can be influenced and what can't  
• Use honest, accurate and unbiased information |
| Listen to the communities views | • Listen and respond to individuals and communities, enabling and empowering residents to play an effective role in shaping their local area. |
| Include as many people in the process | • Undertake fair and impartial engagement to a high standard to ensure that communities are offered equal opportunities to participate in issues that may affect them and make a difference. |
| Work together collaboratively with communities | • Act together when appropriate with a consistent approach to community engagement.  
• Create a record of engagement activities to provide an overview of what consultation has and will be undertaken, and use the findings where applicable to avoid consultation overload.  
• Share knowledge and information openly with the community, whilst respecting confidentiality and use what we have learnt from contact with local people to better understand and engage with the communities |
| Keep in touch with the community | • Provide feedback and demonstrate the changes that are made as a result of engagement. |
4. Including the Values

It is good practice to also include some of the personal and social values that you will aim to stick to in the development of your plan and shows people that you are aiming to make your plan in the best interests of the people who live, work and play in the neighbourhood.

Some common values that you could consider including in your Community Engagement strategy are listed below as an example and there will be many more you will consider as a group.

[Example]

Chobham’s Values for preparing its Neighbourhood Plan

- DEMOCRACY
- RESPECT
- HONESTY
- INCLUSIVENESS
- TRANSPARENCY

5. How you will involve your Community

The next stage of your Community Engagement strategy will be to work out and show how you are going to involve your community under the different forms of engagement.

- INFORM
- CONSULT
- INVOLVE
- COLLABORATE
- EMPOWER

It is good practice at this stage to develop and try a range of activities that you feel will work best to help communities get involved in the development of your plan depending on the particular group. You may have already started to inform, consult and even involve communities in your plan through questionnaires, surveys, drop-in sessions or conversations. This is all valuable involvement and will have its strengths and weaknesses in helping you prepare your plan. It should also be recorded as what has already been undertaken and how it worked or could be improved. This section of your Community Engagement strategy will help you see where the gaps in involvement are and help you think of other ways to include people in the development of your neighbourhood plan.
## How we will aim to include you in our Neighbourhood Plan for Chobham

### Informing you about the neighbourhood plan so you know what is going on and when

- Posters, postcards, fliers, banners, advertising and publications.
- Local newspaper press releases, publications, radio and TV interviews.
- Newsletters, letters, leaflets or summaries.
- Information stalls/open days/road shows/exhibitions.
- Public and specific meetings, presentations, briefings.
- Website updates.
- Email, texts alerts, Twitter, webpage subscription, Facebook, MySpace, podcasts, aural cd’s.

### Consulting you about the neighbourhood plan allowing you to have your say or have an opinion about how the neighbourhood or how the plan will affect you and for your views to be taken and acted upon

- Questionnaires and surveys, structure feedback form, polls, surveys.
- Online surveys and e-consultation (via the internet).
- Face to face interviews/telephone interviews/video soapbox.
- Residents’, citizens’, user panels and community groups.
- Discussion/focus groups/forums/e-forum.
- Written consultation through letter or email.
- Consultation events/workshops/road shows/world café/ exhibitions/general events/festivals/shows/video cube.
- Online consultation, discussion groups and blogs.
- Public, neighbourhood or specific meetings or surgeries.
- Documents or information available in offices, public buildings or online.
- Verbal consultation with community representative acting as a scribe.
| Involving you in the neighbourhood plan so you can influence, directly participate, design and be part of the development of the plan | Activity weeks.  
Structured Workshops  
Public or specific targeted discussion meetings with interested parties  
Public or stakeholder workshops to identify issues and shape options,  
Planning For Real events.  
Public visioning events, ideas competitions, interactive displays.  
Consensus conference (questioning experts before making recommendations).  
Online discussion forums.  
Review sessions.  
Participatory appraisal (undertake own assessment, analysis and planning).  
Co-production.  
Schools workshops  
Local Business Breakfasts  
Pub Quizzes  
Community development and capacity building events.  
Comments and complaints.  
Interaction with Members of the Local Planning Authority, Councillors, Parish Councillors and employees. |
|---|---|
| Collaborating and Empowering you in the Neighbourhood plan so it is not just an involvement exercise but galvanises and builds relationships with communities and enables people to become more educated to make a decision about planning in their neighbourhood. | Throughout the development of the plan there will be opportunities for the Chobham Neighbourhood planning group to collaborate with other organisations in a shared learning environment  
Liaising with Neighbourhood Planning groups that are further down the line than Chobham to learn from experience  
Creating good practice or case studies to help others preparing neighbourhood plans  
Test out new ways of engaging to see if different methods work  
Ensure the process of making the plan |
6. Who should be involved in your Community Engagement?

The more people you can involve in your neighbourhood plan the better. Identifying who the community is sometimes however a difficult process but is a fundamental step before working out how to engage with them.

There are many groups, organisations and individuals that represent different interests in the neighbourhood. The contacts to be considered depend upon the subject matter but can include those with an interest in environmental or health matters, geographical areas such as housing estates or streets or those with an interest in designated land such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, voluntary groups or faith groups, community groups, youth or later life groups, business forums, civic societies etc.

Community Mapping for your Neighbourhood Plan

Community Mapping is about “linking faces to spaces and places” and working out just who lives, works and plays in the neighbourhood and how they use the neighbourhood. Some people may represent a community that come in and out of the neighbourhood for work or education for example. Some communities may use specific facilities in the neighbourhood such as the community centre, the church, the mosque or the local supermarket. Identifying who the communities are and how they use the facilities in the neighbourhood is one way to begin mapping the people who will need to be involved in your plan.

For further information on Community Mapping please contact Planning Aid England

When undertaking an engagement exercise it is good practice to identify a few criteria before embarking on an activity. This helps justify your engagement and makes it easier to report on as the plan develops. Your engagement strategy could include the process you aim to undertake before an engagement exercise

[Example]

Before undertaking any engagement the Chobham Neighbourhood Planning group will consider the following criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who to Engage?</th>
<th>Why are we engaging?</th>
<th>Timing of Involvement</th>
<th>How will we Engage?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g. Who will be directly affected by the plan?</td>
<td>e.g. Be clear why people are involved in this activity and what they can and can’t influence</td>
<td>e.g. Focus on early involvement when people can influence the process.</td>
<td>e.g. Involvement should be at an appropriate scale depending on the impact the policy will have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Engaging with “harder to reach” groups

There are some people in the community that rarely get involved with what is happening in their neighbourhood. These may be people who do not know about what’s happening, are not confident or able to get involved, may not wish or have the time to be involved or may be happy with the decisions being made. These people are sometimes called ‘seldom heard’ or ‘hard to reach’ or ‘hard to hear’ groups.

It will be good practice to acknowledge in your Community Engagement strategy that you are aware of these groups and could seek advice from organisations like Planning Aid England or other support organisations like Locality to establish advice on working with such a group if and when you identify a group in the development of your plan or feel that part of your plan may have an impact on such a group.

Harder to reach groups for example could include:-

- Older People
- Younger People
- Homeless People
- People with disabilities
- Working People
- Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people
- Black and Minority Ethnic groups

8. Recording your Community Engagement

It will be important to record your different methods of Community Engagement throughout the life of the plan and including a section in your strategy will help the community see how you plan to capture all of the information.

[Example]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Stage</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Who With</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Issues/Concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>All Households in Parish</td>
<td>2 weeks in March</td>
<td>40% response rate. May need to try another approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Development</td>
<td>Interactive Business Breakfast</td>
<td>Local Businesses</td>
<td>14 May</td>
<td>7 local business representative attended</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Feedback and Decision making

It is good practice to include a section in your community engagement strategy that allows the community to understand how their involvement through your engagement activities will be including in the progress of your neighbourhood plan both formally and informally. Letting people know where they can see the results of any engagement events or how to get hold of information that has been recorded through engagement will be important in the plan process being transparent. There is a level of proportionality to advise at this stage too as it would be difficult to feedback to the local community on every single aspect of the plans preparation.

[Example]

Providing feedback on the Chobham Neighbourhood Plan

- We will aim to look at all engagement and consultation responses. Where we can act on suggestions, within reason we will do so. If not, we will aim to explain why.

- Where possible we will aim to keep those who have responded informed of subsequent consultations as the plan progresses to help build momentum towards referendum.

- After a formal consultation on the plan we will summarise the comments received in a consultation statement that will be made available on our website and as part of the plan.

- Following questionnaires, workshops and other forms of engagement we will make the findings available on our website and where possible send a website link directly to participants.

10. Statutory Requirements

Statutory requirements for Neighbourhood Development Plans are outlined in The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

[link]

Before submitting your draft plan to the local authority you will have to

- Publicise it to those who live, work or carry out business in the area explaining where and what the plan is all about and how people can comment on the draft plan
- Consult with any statutory bodies like English Heritage or the Environment Agency or even neighbouring areas the plan may affect
- Send a copy of the proposals to the local authority
- There will be a 6 weeks to receive comments on the draft plan
The final draft Neighbourhood Development Plan will then be required to undergo a 6 week statutory consultation.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan will need to be submitted with a Basic Conditions statement and a Consultation Statement that should include:

- Details of who was consulted about the plan
- Explain how they were consulted
- Summaries main issues and concerns raised
- How these issues and concerns have been considered and or addressed

Being able to rely on your Community Engagement Strategy and the actions you have followed in the preparation of your plan will help make the consultation statement seem far more real.

For Further information on Neighbourhood Planning or to discuss elements of this guide please contact your local Planning Aid England Advisor.

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