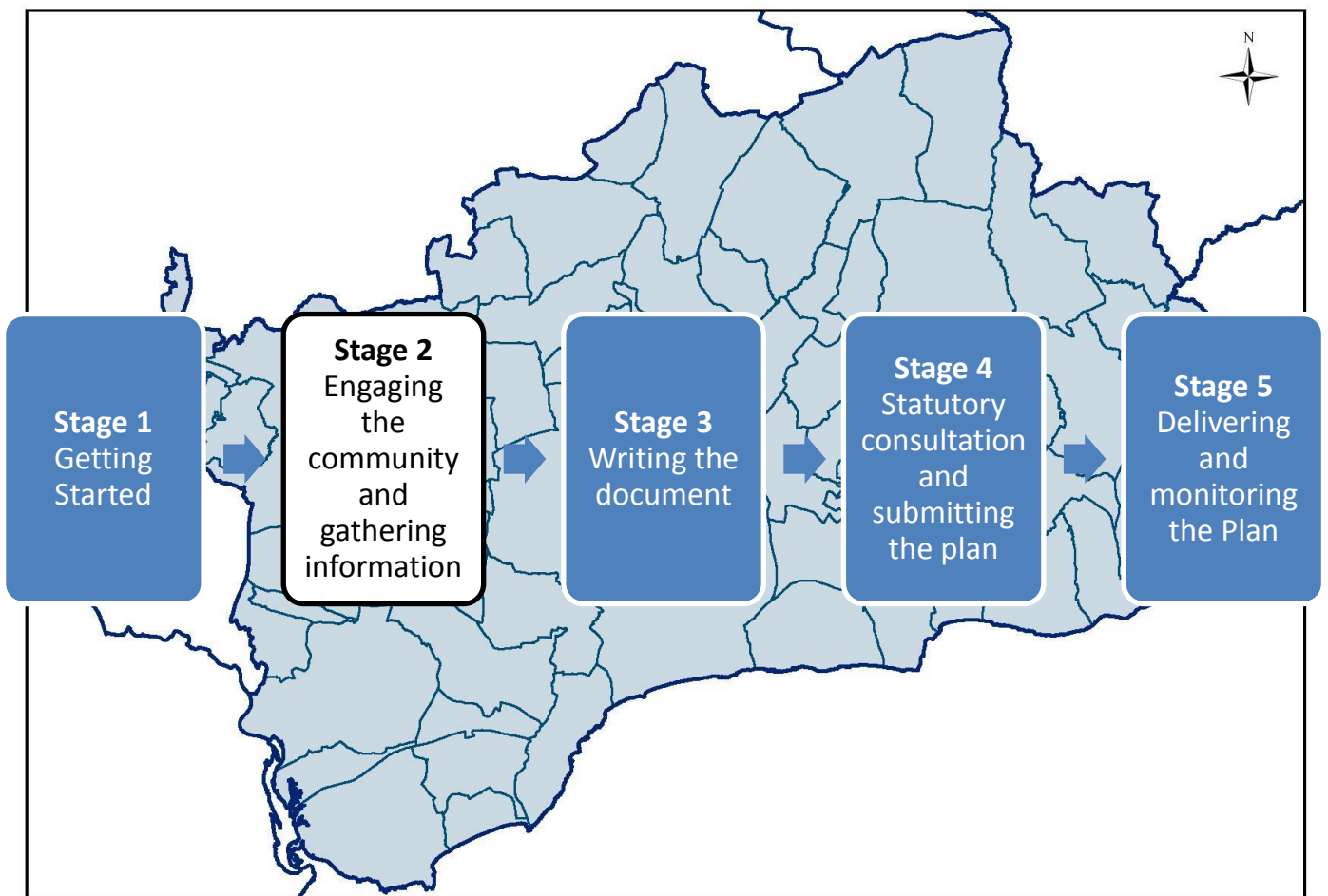


Neighbourhood Planning Guidance

# *Writing the Consultation Statement*

August 2019



As part of your Neighbourhood Plan submission you will need to submit a consultation statement to demonstrate how you have engaged with your community and how this influenced the production of your Plan. When writing the consultation statement, bear in mind that the Neighbourhood Planning Guidance states “A qualifying body should be inclusive and open in the preparation of its neighbourhood plan and ensure that the wider community:

- is kept fully informed of what is being proposed
- is able to make their views known throughout the process
- has opportunities to be actively involved in shaping the emerging neighbourhood plan
- is made aware of how their views have informed the draft neighbourhood plan.”

The examiner will use the consultation statement to assess the effectiveness of the engagement you have undertaken, check that everyone has been made aware of the process and had a reasonable opportunity to participate and make their views known. He will be looking for a clear audit trail of all decisions made- checking that the Plan has been informed by the consultation, has taken account of representations and revised accordingly, and that policies and proposals reflect community aspirations.

This guidance is intended to help you to produce your statement and comply with the neighbourhood planning regulations.

### **Top Tip!**

It is much easier to write a consultation statement if you record everything you do, when you do it, rather than trying to remember what was done at the end of the process. Keep copies of your press releases, posters and consultation material, as well as the responses you received and any changes you made to the Plan to reflect them.

### **What should we include?**

Your consultation statement should include details of:

- **how** you consulted
- **when** you consulted (the date and the stage of the process)
- **who** you consulted (including any statutory consultees known as ‘consultation bodies’- see appendix 1 and our guide on the pre-submission consultation)
- **what** you did to encourage responses from minority/special needs groups
- a summary of the **main issues raised**
- and **how you have addressed** those issues in your Neighbourhood Plan

(This is detailed in Neighbourhood Planning Regulation 15 (2))

It will be much easier for you to produce this statement if a record is kept throughout the consultation process. The consultation statement should be a comprehensive summary of what you have done, so that an examiner can see that everyone has had an opportunity to know about the Plan and be involved, and that their responses have genuinely influenced the Plan content- it should not include every document you have produced and received!

Do remember to keep copies of all material and all responses in case the examiner needs to see them. Also keep copies of other documents your Plan is mentioned in, for instance press

articles or letters to the Editor. If you see material relating to your Plan online, you should also print a copy for your records.

## **Explain how you consulted**

### **Top Tip!**

You can demonstrate to an examiner that every resident and/or business has been informed of the process if you sent information or questionnaires to every property, but this can also be shown by local newspapers or parish newsletters with a wide distribution so make sure you advertise in them or issue regular press releases!

'Hard to reach' residents may not be involved due to health, language or other barriers. If you can't involve them individually, make sure you consult with representative groups or organisations so that you can show you have taken their concerns and issues into account.

You must explain to the examiner how consultation was undertaken at each stage of Plan production and how this reached the whole community. If you didn't contact every household and business premises, with a questionnaire for example, you should explain how people would know about the process. If you have consulted local groups or organisations then explain who they represent. On certain issues, it may be desirable to demonstrate that local groups speak on behalf of a large section of the community.

You can include records and copies of posters, adverts and questionnaires in an appendix to the consultation statement to demonstrate how you told the community about an event or consultation period. It is not necessary to include reams of completed questionnaires or similar, instead include a summary of the analysis in the appendix and keep the originals in a file in case the examiner asks to see them. You could include a summary list of event attendees or survey respondents (including age and location if you have them) to demonstrate that all members of the community have been involved.

You should include the minutes of your steering group and Parish Council Development Plan to support what you are saying, particularly with regard to demonstrating that changes have resulted from consultation.

## **How should we structure the Consultation Statement?**

There is no set format for the consultation statement although we suggest a possible layout below. You could write a separate report for each event or a summary statement with a separate chapter or appendix for each one. It is good practice to also record the dates of the event, details of the venue, details of advertisement and how you have ensured that hard to reach groups have been involved.

### **Top Tips!**

Make sure you clearly date the Consultation Statement and include dates of the consultation undertaken at each stage of the process

Ensure the process is logical and Plan content is clearly supported by the work you have undertaken (eg. Policies haven't 'appeared' part way through the process with no obvious justification...)

Constantly bear in mind the points in 'what should we include'- this is the crux of the requirements!

## Example layout of a Consultation Statement

This layout is based on three main stages of consultation, with various events/activities supporting each stage. As such, a separate template recording the issues raised at each event would be completed (and attached in the appendices) and a summary of the events and the outcomes included in the relevant section of the consultation statement.

Suggested Section Title	Possible Content
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief introduction to the parish/neighbourhood area</li> <li>• Explain purpose of consultation statement and need to meet the regulations</li> <li>• Provide an overview of the consultation strategy and brief explanation of the reasons for choosing your approach</li> </ul>
<b>2. Early Community Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is where you set out a summary of the initial consultation which you undertook and explain how it helped to shape your vision and objectives (if you have them)</li> <li>• In this model a template would be completed for each consultation event and appended to this statement. A summary of the consultation would appear in this section (or sections 3 or 4 depending on the stage of the process)</li> <li>• This stage provides an initial steer as to the main issues which should be addressed in the Plan</li> <li>• If you consulted any statutory bodies or other organisations, summarise their initial comments</li> </ul>
<b>3. Consultation on the Draft Plan or Draft Options</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At this stage you could be consulting on alternative options or policies to assess which should be included in your Plan, or you may have had a clear steer from initial consultation and produced a draft Plan which sets out your preferred options or policies.</li> <li>• You should explain how these options or policies were arrived at and how they were informed by consultation. It is very important that you demonstrate that you were unbiased and inclusive.</li> <li>• You should explain what alternatives were considered (this could include alternative sites, policy approaches or options).</li> <li>• You should then explain what respondents said during the consultation, and what changes were made as a result.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Pre Submission consultation process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the statutory consultation on the Plan which you intend to submit for referendum.</li> <li>• Set out or append the statutory 'consultation bodies' who you consulted (see appendix 1 for the excerpt of the regulations which applies)</li> <li>• Explain why you had to make any further changes and, if you haven't but respondents requested them, explain why they weren't necessary</li> </ul>

<b>5. Conclusion</b>	Conclude that everyone with an interest in your neighbourhood has had an opportunity to be involved in the process in a way which suits them
<p><b>Example Appendices</b></p> <p><b>A - Terms of reference, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee</b></p> <p><b>B - Designation of Plan area, July 2013</b></p> <p><b>C – Consultation Strategy September 2013</b></p> <p><b>D – Questionnaire for village survey and analysis January 2014</b></p> <p><b>E – Consultation with hard to reach groups and individuals January 2014</b></p> <p><b>F - Consultation on sustainability objectives March 2014</b></p> <p><b>G – Focus Group sessions on specific topics, notes of discussion and analysis of feedback forms April 2014</b></p> <p><b>Approach to landowners, Oct 2012</b></p> <p><b>H - Housing Needs Survey, Affordable housing/local connection report and note April 2014</b></p> <p><b>I- Response to ‘A vision for Happy Town’ discussion paper</b></p> <p><b>J– Exhibition on draft Plan setting out preferred options and Feedback Sep 2014</b></p> <p><b>K - Consultation with young people Oct 2014</b></p> <p><b>L - Letter to local businesses, clubs and societies, Oct 2014</b></p> <p><b>M – Pre-sub consultation Information leaflet and survey to residents Nov 2011</b></p> <p><b>N - Poster about Pre Sub consultation, Aug 2013</b></p> <p><b>O- Email to local councillors about Pre Sub consultation, Aug 2013</b></p> <p><b>P - Regulation 14 Schedule of Representations, Oct 2013</b></p>	<p>This is a typical (if somewhat lengthy) list of appendices, but it will vary depending on what exactly you did.</p> <p>The templates which were completed for each event would be attached in the relevant appendix eg D, E,</p>

**For further information and advice please contact the Neighbourhood Planning Team, Planning Policy, EDDC, Blackdown House, Border Road, Heathpark Ind. Estate, Honiton, EX14 1EJ.**

**01395 571543 or email [planningpolicy@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@eastdevon.gov.uk)**

## Template for recording issues raised at consultation events

Delete the blue advisory text in your completed version- this is for guidance only. Complete one form for each event.

### Neighbourhood Development Plan for your Parish

Event title .....

Event date ..... or consultation period from ..... to .....

Venue/s .....

#### Details of consultation event:

You could include the format, what information was provided and who responded. Also advise whether special needs

Eg. An exhibition was held in the village hall whilst a car boot sale and farmers market operated in the car park. Our event benefitted from the additional visitors to these events. The exhibition featured 10 display panels, showing maps of the parish, aerial photographs, constraints and opportunities along with the analysis of responses to the previous consultation. The analysis was presented as a written summary of responses to each question and also displayed on graphs and charts. Suggested policies relating to the questionnaire results were displayed at the end of the exhibition panels and attendees were invited to comment on their appropriateness. A colouring competition was run for children who attended the event and refreshments were offered throughout.

Attendance was steady throughout the morning but very quiet in the afternoon (when the other events had finished). We encouraged all attendees to complete forms and most did (with the exception of some tourists who felt their views wouldn't be relevant)

#### How were attendees notified

Posters advertising the exhibition were put on the website, lamp posts and on noticeboards (map attached) and an advert appeared in the local newsletter (circulated to all houses). A press release in the Midweek Herald promoting the farmer's market also mentioned the exhibition.

How many people attended .....

Summary of the issue raised in the comments received Ensure you keep the original responses until after the examination	No. Of comments relating to this issue	How the issue has been addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan
The pie charts only reflect the % of people who responded to the question- not the total number of questionnaire respondents	2	Future consultations will include the % of people who didn't answer the question
More dog bins are required in the High Street	1	This is not a land use planning matter but we will record it as a 'community action' for the Town Council to act on
The design policy (D1) should refer to wooden window frames being required in new buildings in the Conservation Area	1	The policy (D1) was amended to require wooden windows within the conservation area
Support the design policy (D1)	1	Welcome support, however the policy has been amended so will need further consultation



## **APPENDIX 1- Consultation Bodies**

The consultation bodies are set out below in Schedule 1 to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

To clarify this, we have produced a guidance note on conducting the pre-submission consultation, which gives a detailed explanation of the process, along with contact details (where we hold them).

### **SCHEDULE 1- Consultation Bodies**

#### **Neighbourhood development plans**

1. For the purposes of regulations 14 and 16, a “consultation body” means—
  - (a) where the local planning authority is a London borough council, the Mayor of London;
  - (b) a local planning authority, county council or parish council any part of whose area is in or adjoins the area of the local planning authority;
  - (c) the Coal Authority;
  - (d) the Homes and Communities Agency;
  - (e) Natural England;
  - (f) the Environment Agency;
  - (g) the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (known as English Heritage);
  - (h) Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (company number 2904587);
  - (i) a strategic highways company any part of whose area is in or adjoins the neighbourhood area;
  - (ia) where the Secretary of State is the highway authority for any road in the area of a local planning authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the neighbourhood area, the Secretary of State for Transport;
  - (j) the Marine Management Organisation;
  - (k) any person—
    - (i) to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under section 106(3)(a) of the Communications Act 2003; and
    - (ii) who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the area of the local planning authority;
  - (l) where it exercises functions in any part of the neighbourhood area—
    - (i) a clinical commissioning group established under section 14D of the National Health Service Act 2006;
    - (ia) the National Health Service Commissioning Board;



- (ii) a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 6(1)(b) and (c) of the Electricity Act 1989;
- (iii) a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986;
- (iv) a sewerage undertaker; and
- (v) a water undertaker;
- (m) voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit all or any part of the neighbourhood area;
- (n) bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the neighbourhood area;
- (o) bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the neighbourhood area;
- (p) bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the neighbourhood area; and
- (q) bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the neighbourhood area.

### **Neighbourhood development orders and community right to build orders**

2.—(1) For the purposes of regulations 21 and 23, a “consultation body” means—

- (a) any person referred to in paragraph 1(k) and (l);
- (b) where the neighbourhood area to which the neighbourhood development order or community right to build order relates consists of or includes the whole or any part of the area of a parish council, that parish council;
- (c) any parish council or, in the case of a neighbourhood development order (but not a community right to build order), a neighbourhood forum for an area which adjoins the neighbourhood area; and
- (d) where the development to be authorised under the proposed neighbourhood development order or community right to build order falls within any category set out in the following Table, the person mentioned in the Table in relation to each of those categories.