
Engaging with the community before you apply for planning permission

This is an advisory document that should be viewed in the context of:

- national, regional and local planning policy and guidance
 - our statement of community involvement (SCI), which is currently under review.
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Our role in facilitating public engagement

We are committed to facilitating public engagement in the development of new planning policy and in determining planning applications.

We aim to offer a wide range of opportunities to get the community involved in the production of new planning policy documents. We will set out clear standards with the community and other stakeholders about consulting on planning applications, as set out in our [statement of community involvement \(SCI\)](#).

In accordance with the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) paragraphs 39–46, we encourage pre-application discussions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application process for all parties.

Why community engagement is important

Community involvement is a key component of the planning process.

Before you submit your planning application, we encourage you to engage with:

- neighbours
- the local community
- statutory and non-statutory consultees, where appropriate.

This will give you an opportunity to:

- identify potential concerns early on
- capture local knowledge and ideas
- reduce or remove delays at planning application stage.

How much engagement you should do

The amount of meaningful engagement you do with third parties and the community will depend on the scale and complexity of the proposed scheme.

Depending on the scale of the proposed development and the issues involved, your pre-application engagement could include:

- discussions with statutory consultees, neighbours, councillors, local amenity societies and constituted community organisations and residents associations
- public meetings
- exhibitions
- workshops
- publishing a website.

We recommend that you plan your pre-application activity over a 12 week period or more. This is in line with our [compact with the local voluntary and community sector](#).

Reporting on your engagement

Any pre-application engagement activities you do should form part of, and be reported in, any subsequent planning application you submit.

Engagement for major developments

If you are preparing major or high-profile planning applications that may be of significant interest to the local community, you should do a pre-application consultation to inform your proposals.

Pre-application activities will help you:

- capture the views of the community, key stakeholders and the Council
- positively shape emerging major development proposals
- enable a more efficient planning application process.

These activities could include:

- submitting a pre-application enquiry to the Council
- talking directly with, or submitting appropriate enquiries to, relevant statutory consultees and following their advice to minimise technical objections
- preparing a consultation strategy for the proposal in consultation with planning officers as part of pre-application discussions, and taking into account our SCI
- consulting the local community on the overall and specific aspects of the proposal, in accordance with the consultation strategy
- considering the consultation responses received and submit, at planning application stage, a consultation statement summarising the type and extent of consultation carried out, the key issues raised and how the scheme addresses these issues.

Engagement tips

- We recommend you continue to engage the community during the planning application process and the build stage.
- You should be realistic with the community. Do not raise expectations beyond what can be reasonably delivered.
- Clearly communicate your timeline for the development and be transparent about any changes or setback in timescales.

Large or complex development proposals

We expect developers to engage with the community and ward members about proposed large or complex schemes. The type of pre-application consultation that is appropriate will vary depending on the proposed scheme.

If you are proposing a large or complex development, the NPPF recommends you should consider a [planning performance agreement \(PPA\)](#) as this could achieve a faster and more effective application process (paragraph 46 of the revised NPPF, 2018).

A PPA is a framework in which parties come together voluntarily to agree how they

are going to take a development proposal through the planning process. It allows the parties to work in a constructive, collaborative and open manner to deliver high-quality sustainable development based on:

- a clear vision and development objectives
- an agreed project plan and work programme.

Get more advice

If you use our [pre-application advice service](#), our planning officers can give you more advice on community engagement.