

My Community Rights

Community Right to Build

Step 1:

Establishing community support



Establishing Community Support

Early community engagement is necessary and important for several reasons:

- It is a statutory requirement (included in Localism Act)
- Early engagement is essential for developing consensus within the community and avoiding misconceptions
- It is part of developing the evidence base. It helps achieve better informed outcomes (community know their own place best)
- It leads to more realistic and deliverable plans/policies
- Public confidence and support need to be maintained
- It helps to avoid conflict, delay and cost at later stages
- It reduces the possibility of a 'no' vote in the local referendum if people are aware of the plan and have had the opportunity to participate in its production

Community engagement means different things to different people:

- **Information:** supporting all types of community engagement and keeping people informed about the proposal
- **Consultation:** used when there is a decision to make or when there are a number of choices about the details
- **Deciding together:** involving local people in deciding which options to choose
- **Acting together:** working together to make decisions and choices

In preparing a Community Right to Build Order it is critical that local people get involved, help to shape the proposal and give feedback on it. Sometimes it may be appropriate to inform or consult, while at other times it will be necessary to seek to involve communities and individuals in much greater depth.

When planning engagement consider:

- **Local Partnerships:** Key partners and stakeholders should be identified. These can provide easier access and support in involving minority groups, different communities, residents, the business community, hard-to-engage communities, etc.
- **Publicity and Awareness:** It is important to publicise the proposed development as widely as possible using different media right at the beginning of the process.
- **Visibility:** Make sure that those directly affected by the proposal (i.e. those people living within the defined community area) are aware of opportunities to get involved in shaping it.
- **Access and inclusion:** Involve communities that are commonly excluded and make sure you take into account participants' needs and overcome any difficulties so as to provide them with an opportunity to participate. Careful thought needs to be given to make events accessible, including location, timing, media, format, etc. Events should be informal and unthreatening – for example those running events should dress informally.

- **Targeting:** Whilst some people will naturally want to get involved with other people targeting will be necessary. This could include the elderly, young people, ethnic groups and other minority or hard-to-engage groups.
- **Be clear about the purpose:** Only use community engagement processes when there is a real opportunity for people to influence and change decisions. Be open and honest about your aims and what you hope to achieve.
- **Provide real opportunity for feedback:** Ensure that information obtained from community engagement activities is interpreted honestly and have a process to feed back to the people who took part.
- **Confidentiality:** Respect the rights of participants to decide how much to reveal about themselves.
- **Integrity:** Ensure that activities are voluntary and that participants can withdraw at any time. Ensure that the rights and dignity of all participants are respected at all times. Ensure that all activities, information and questions do not offend, cause distress or embarrassment to participants.
- **Capacity Building:** It will often be necessary to include capacity building (education/training) so that those participating in community engagement events are well informed about the plan and the issues it is dealing with.
- **Specialist advice and enabling:** It may be necessary for those leading and participating to bring in specialist advice and support.

Avoid Tokenism: The purpose of undertaking community engagement is to inform and involve. If the outcomes have already been determined, then community engagement is tokenistic (marketing).

Be Creative: Community engagement needs to engage people. It should be stimulating and enjoyable. Too often it is dull and inaccessible; have a look at: Creative Community Engagement (the Eden Project)