Raising the Bar:
Early Community Engagement Guidance for Applicants

THE BRIGHTER BOROUGH
Wandsworth

Contents

1. Glossary

1.0.1 **Collaborative design/co-design:** various groups and interests come together as part of a design process that responds to their individual and collective needs and aspirations.

1.0.2 **Consultation:** asking for feedback or opinions on a proposal.

1.0.3 **Communications:** messaging for information sharing purposes, including leaflets, flyers, websites, information boards and reporting about activities.

1.0.4 **Engagement:** umbrella term used to describe many ways of communicating or collaborating with the community or other groups.

1.0.5 **Placemaking:** processes or projects that aim to improve the quality of places in permanent (e.g. design of new housing or public spaces) or temporary ways (e.g. festivals, pop up shops), and lead to places that are inviting, inclusive and bring opportunity to the people who live, work and play there.

1.0.6 **Participatory design:** local people and organisations are actively engaged and invited to participate in a design process being led by a client, such as a local authority or developer.

1.0.7 **Stakeholders:** people, groups or organisations who have a stake or interest in a place. This includes residents, visitors, businesses, workers, community groups.

2. Overview

2.0.1   The purpose of this document is to set out guidance for applicants to engage with the community on development schemes. The aim is to avoid a tick box approach by ensuring effective engagement and collaboration happens early, is consistent and supports the delivery of high-quality places across Wandsworth by connecting to the design and decision-making process.

2.0.2   This guidance note is for applicants and developers of major schemes (10+ dwellings), ideally prior to Pre-Application discussion. It is not intended to provide a detailed checklist for every scheme. It is intended to outline the Council's expectations and encourage applicants and developers to prioritise a design process that works with, and not against, the community.

2.0.3   The guidance builds on the statutory legislation requirements set out in documents including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Wandsworth Council's Adopted Local Plan 2023, Wandsworth Design Review Panel guidance, and other relevant Council guidance including Wandsworth Arts and Cultural Strategy 2021-2031. Raising the Bar has been prepared in accordance with and is in support of the Council's Developer Protocol 2023.

2.0.4   People have the right to be involved in decisions about their places. Good quality, effective and consistent engagement can lead to better design outcomes, ensure shared facilities are needed and will be well used and build buy-in from local people, which can lead to fewer objections and a smoother development process once a scheme comes to site.

3. What is good quality engagement?

Flexible	Consistent	Transparent
There is no 'one' community	Early site and stakeholder mapping	Purpose and objectives are how outputs will be used is clear
Understand and overcome barriers to participation	Building relationships	Decision making process is communicated
Mixed methods and approaches	Realistic timelines	No confusing langauage
Welcoming and inclusive	Activities are ongoing from an early stage, not bunched at milestones	Offers to community are genuine

Fig 1:   Key themes – flexible, consistent, transparent

3.1   Key principles

3.1.1   Early engagement is the difference in approach between **engage, deliberate, decide** and **decide, announce, defend**.

In general, best practice engagement should:

– **Start early** in the process (ideally before pre-application stage) and run consistently throughout all phases of a project, not just be concentrated around key milestones.

– **Take time** to understand the area and build relationships with community stakeholders, not just target a small or unrepresentative group.

– **Be welcoming and inclusive** through accessible language, diverse representation, and support to allow people to participate.

– **Involve local people in a design process** by connecting activities to outcomes and involving end users from an early stage, rather than seeking to retroactively justify or consult on a developed design.

– **Support and aim to empower** local people to have influence in their areas, not view engagement as a tick-box exercise.

- **Listen to and learn from the community** in a two-way process of knowledge sharing, not just a one-way request for feedback.

- **Be genuine** the purpose, objectives and how outputs will be used is clear and offers to the community are accurate.

3.2 Consultation, collaboration or communication?

3.2.1 There are many words used to describe ways of working with the community, often broadly defined as 'engagement'. One key distinction is the amount of decision-making power that is shared through the process. These differences can also be understood through the impact of the activities on the design process – for example, informing people about a scheme or sending a survey has a lower-impact compared with holding a series of design workshops.

	Participation goal	Promise to the public	Example	
Empower	Devolving or taking joint responsibility for decision-making.	We will support you to make decisions and implement what you decide.	A paid community panel with decision-making powers, estate ballots.	
Collaborate or co-create	Working in partnership to help shape outcomes.	We will look to you for advice and guidance to create solutions.	Stakeholder panel or working group, regular co-creation workshops	
Involve	Ensuring aspirations and concerns are fully understood.	We will make sure your concerns and aspirations are reflected in the proposals.	A programme of design workshops, events and meetings	
Consult	Seeking feedback and views.	We will listen to and take account of your opinions.	Questionnaire or digital survey, drop-in events.	
Inform	Sharing information about the plans or project.	We will keep you informed about our process and help you understand the opportunities and solutions.	General communications including leaflets, flyers, newsletters, website, social media.	

Fig 2: The impact of engagement and collaboration processes on decision making.

3.3 Starting early and being consistent

3.3.1 Good quality engagement that builds relationships with the community takes time. Project programmes should be designed with engagement in mind, not be rushed or front loaded. Activities should not only be concentrated around key milestones, but should continue throughout the design, development and delivery phases on a project and be connected to decision-making.

	Outcome	Engagement Impact
1. Project scoping	📍 Early site including review of existing facilities and open spaces 📍 Mapping routes and movement 📊 Data baseline including demographic information 📋 Create stakeholder list including businesses and community groups 💬 Initial pre-application discussion with WBC's Development Management team	
2. Project preparation	📋 Engagement lead appointed 📋 Early engagement strategy developed with WBC 🔔 Project communication begins 👥 Establish community steering group	**Inform**
🔄 **Project Evaluation point: ask for feedback**		
3. Early engagement and concept design	📐 Early engagement activities that feed into design process 👥 Ongoing community steering group meetings 🔔 Ongoing project communication 🏙 Attend Design Review Panel 💭 Consultation on concept design 💬 Ongoing pre-application meetings with WBC	**Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower**
4. Preparation for planning submission	📐 Feedback from consultation incorporated into designs 👥 Ongoing community steering group meetings 📁 Prepare Design & Access Statement 📁 Prepare Statement of Community Involvement 🔔 Ongoing project communication 💬 Ongoing pre-application meetings with WBC	
🔄 **Project Evaluation point: ask for feedback**		
🎯 **Milestone:** submission of planning application		
5. Statutory planning consultation	📤 Statutory consultation led by WBC 📋 Publication of full planning application pack on Planning Portal 📋 Relevant supporting reports and surveys made publicly available 🔔 Ongoing project communication	**Inform Collaborate**
6. Detailed design & delivery	👥 Ongoing community steering group meetings 📐 Ongoing events and workshops 🔔 Ongoing project communication	**Inform Consult Involve Collaborate**

Fig 3:   Example project timeline

4.   Who is 'the community?'

4.3.1   There is no one 'community'. Each place is made up of a diverse range of individuals, groups, businesses, and service providers who have an interest in a place or will be affected by a scheme or development. Often, they are referred to as stakeholders. As well as landowners, applicants / developers and a Local Authority, stakeholders include:

- Current or future residents / occupants / end users.

- Local business owners and employees.

- Community groups, local amenity societies or voluntary sector organisations.

- Faith groups.

- Sports teams, groups and leisure or activity clubs.

- Users and providers of community facilities such as day centres and youth clubs.

- Users and providers of parks, open spaces and play spaces.

- Users and providers of education, healthcare and other services.

- Users and providers of cultural and heritage venues or amenities such as artists' studios, music venues or historic buildings.

- Local visitors.

- Artists and cultural practitioners.

- Community leaders and organisers.

- Ward councillors.

Note: this is not a complete list or target, as each site will be unique.

4.3.2   Applicants should look beyond the immediate site boundary as part of a detailed mapping exercise to understand how the area is currently being used and by whom. Applicants should reach out to many different stakeholders, not just focus on a small number of groups who are not necessarily representative.

Scenario 1: A large site located near a town centre is proposed for redevelopment. An initial meeting will be held to convene a stakeholder panel.

🔴 A list of well-known established community groups and amenity societies is produced. The area is very diverse, but this is not reflected by the list of attendees.

🟢 A mapping exercise of the wider area is completed through several site visits and conversations with local people. Many people who do not have an online presence or are not part of a formal community group are identified and invited to the meeting.

4.1 Understanding systematic differences

4.1.1 Planning is a complex system that requests managed input from the community and other stakeholders at specific points in the process, for limited windows of time. Building trust through clarity and realistic project timelines is key.

4.1.2 Design and development teams, as well as Local Authorities, are paid professionals with decision-making power and oversight of the process. Community stakeholders do not often have this oversight or control of decision making. Often, local people are made aware of development schemes relatively late in the process when key policy is in place and decisions have already been made. Engaging can be challenging, time consuming and feel ineffective, which discourages participation.

4.1.3 Good engagement teams should acknowledge this difference and aim to bridge the gap, enabling stakeholders to have their voice heard. An engaged and passionate group of local people are an asset to the design and development process.

4.2 On 'hard to reach'

4.2.1 This term refers to groups of people who are typically underrepresented in public life and are less likely to respond or have the capacity to engage with traditional consultations. Often it refers to people with protected characteristics, those who are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, or young people. This term should be avoided as it places the responsibility on the community for not engaging, rather than on the professionals who should be working to reach out and provide alternative methods. Instead, be specific about the groups you are referring to.

4.2.2 Applicants should first aim to understand the demographics of the area and complete a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise. This includes

identifying any potential needs of protected groups and identifying barriers to access, such as requiring information in another language, or time constraints. Applicants should support people to be able to contribute fully by acknowledging and reducing barriers to access.

4.3 Working with established groups and organisations

4.3.1   There are many organisations and groups in the borough who hold an in-depth knowledge of the planning process and the local context, who will be identified as stakeholders. This includes local charities or special interest groups, amenity societies, trusts or advocacy organisations and service providers. These groups will be identified during the stakeholder mapping phase of creating an engagement strategy.

4.3.2   Where requests for information or feedback are sought, make sure to approach groups with fair warning and appropriate time to respond; make sure requests or opportunities for input are clear; and that adequate context about the scheme and any relevant planning policy information is provided. To avoid a one-way relationship, make it clear how their input has been valued and/ or implemented and ensure that communication is consistent throughout the process.

5. Developing an engagement strategy

5.1 Why create an engagement strategy?

5.1.1   Setting out what you want to achieve and how it will be delivered in advance, before key decisions have been made, means engagement is less likely to be an afterthought or used to justify decisions that have already been made. It will also help to ensure all communications are accurate and transparent from the outset. The starting point for any process should be listening and seeking to understand, not propose. Engagement activities and project communication should be balanced across a whole project timeline, not bunched around key project milestones.

5.1.2   Not everyone will want to take the opportunity to participate in a process – some people would prefer to provide feedback at a later stage when the outcome is clearer. Planning and communicating this in advance ensures it is clear for participants how and when they can get involved.

5.2 Defining an engagement approach

5.2.1   Defining an approach means deciding on the level of decision-making that is appropriate for the project. Here are some considerations:

A. **Who might be impacted by the scheme?** Consider the wider effects for different groups and audiences.

B. **Is it clear who needs to be involved in the design process?** Identify the mixed group of 'stakeholders' for the project [see the list in 4.3.1].

C. **Where are the opportunities for influence?** How will the identified stakeholders help to shape the project. It should be clear how decisions are made and by who. An end-user might expect more collaboration and influence that a general audience who could expect to be informed [see Figure 2].

D. **Which activities will provide the required opportunities for influence?** Ensure the programme is mixed, tailored to different audiences and makes it clear to participants how they input will be valued [see the list in 5.4.1].

E. **How will the design or project team be involved in engagement activities?** Outcomes should connect to the design process and changes should be clearly communicated to participants. If the project team will be delivering the engagement programme, they should have the necessary skills and experience.

5.2.2   Co-design or collaborative design is a process that can provide excellent outcomes that should be aspired to. It requires specialist skills and a full commitment from all project partners and the design team (for example, developers and Local Authorities) to share decision-making and work together openly. This approach may work well for elements of a scheme, such as the design of a community space or public garden. For most schemes, a mixed approach is required as not all methods will be appropriate.

5.2.3   Applicants should be ambitious about the opportunities and transparent about the limitations for engagement. Over-promising and under-delivering raises expectations and creates disappointment. It is best to use accurate language that reflects the opportunities on offer.

Scenario 2: Participants are invited to participate in an engagement process.

🔴 Participants are invited to participate in a collaborative process to empower them to influence change in their area.

Participants are sent a survey and asked for feedback on developed designs. Minor changes are made to the scheme, which participants are informed of once the planning application has been submitted.

🟢 Participants are told they will be consulted on plans for the scheme at three milestones. They are told there will be a public meeting share their concerns and that their input will be implemented where possible.

Progress is shared throughout the design process, and residents are kept informed about how their feedback has influenced design

5.3 Methods and activities

5.3.1 Once an approach has been agreed, there are many kinds of activities that can be used to interest and involve people. We are looking to move beyond 'tick box' methods and encourage applicants to be innovative, build trust, unlock local knowledge and create an exchange of ideas. For example:

A. **Keep people informed**
There are lots of ways to share project updates and help people visualise proposals. Traditionally this can be done with a project website, flyers, emails and exhibition boards, but forward-thinking approaches are also encouraged. It is important project updates are consistent and timelines are communicated clearly with key decision points for the past and future.

B. **Relationship building**
Events and activities suited to different audiences are always good to build into a strategy. For example, this could include youth club visits, coffee mornings or activities for parents. Connecting with existing events in the area and maintaining a presence on site is key, particularly for people who are less digitally connected.

C. **Use of interactive digital methods**
These include digital mapping or interactive surveys, 3D visualisations or collecting and sharing data.

D. **Meeting ward councillors**
Meeting with ward councillors can help to make community connections and share information about the scheme. Note that meetings are subject to the agreement of ward councillors, and they are not obliged to meet and discuss all development proposals. Reasonable notice should be given.

E. **Hold early public meetings**
Public meetings are a good way to begin the conversation and allow the public to ask questions. Meetings should be publicised at least 3 to 4 weeks in advance and held in an appropriate venue or online.

F. **Regularly involve identified stakeholders**
Applicants should commit to involving key stakeholders on a more regular basis, throughout the process. This is most appropriate where individuals or groups will be the end-users of a scheme or have been asked to provide detailed comments.

G. **Co-design workshops / targeted workshops at key milestones**
Sessions could be general or focused on a specific part of a scheme, for example, landscaping or play spaces. Good designers should be experienced in collaborating and working with others to build better outcomes through a collaborative process.

H. **Establish a community panel or steering group**
Depending on the project governance, a panel could have decision-making

power, be a sounding board or act as a co-client. A managed recruitment process with training and support provided will always be most effective. Groups should be representative of the area and mixed in age, gender and other protected characteristics. For longer-term projects, paying London Living Wage may be appropriate.

I. **Thinking outside the box**
There are lots of ways for applicants to explore places and get people involved. Applicants might consider appointing artists or local partners to explore creative approaches or themes like the heritage of the area to make the most of unique parts of the site and bring new audiences.

5.4 Understanding barriers to participation

5.4.1 Many people feel shut out of decisions about change in their area and feel unheard, particularly in conversations around housing. Not everyone will want to participate and those that do will approach the process with their own experiences and expectations. The priority should always be to make efforts to understand and overcome barriers to participation and be honest about the scope for change and influence. Some consideration:

A. **Time & location of events**
When scheduling events, applicants should be aware of the needs of their target audiences, including access requirements, caring responsibilities and work patterns. Where possible, there should always be a full range of time, location (including online) and date options to allow people to participate. Where an event takes place after school hours, consider running an activity for young people to enable parents/carers to engage without distraction. Try and use a well-known venue within the area where you might attract passers-by, for example a library or leisure centre.

B. **'Everyone is welcome'**
This does not necessarily mean everyone will feel comfortable attending if reasonable adjustments have not been made. 'We have designed this with you in mind' can be much more effective. Is there step free access, accessible toilets or changing facilities? Are you expecting people to come to you, or are you offering to go to them? Will participants be expected to speak out in front of a large audience, or will there be other ways to participate?

C. **Compensation**
Depending on the amount of time people are being asked to participate, in some cases it may be appropriate to offer expenses or compensation for attendance. This could take place at an individual level through payment or vouchers, or at a community level, through funding and opportunities.

D. **An open-minded approach**
    Everyone, regardless of their stance on a development project, should be heard and able to contribute to the process. A negative or unsupportive stance does not equal ungenuine or unproductive.

E. **Listening and learning**
    Acknowledging power dynamics and approaching people from a place of understanding is critical. Is everyone in the delivery team showing empathy and understanding? Are open questions being asked as part of the process or does it feel closed off and restrictive?

6. Delivery of engagement programmes

6.4.1   The delivery and design team should include skilled facilitators with knowledge and experience of how to work with communities. Activities should be designed with inclusiveness and access in mind. Skilled facilitators understand that the goal of an engagement process is not to get total agreement or bow to pressure, but to work towards a shared point understanding that includes compromise.

6.1   Building a project delivery team

6.1.1   Applicants should ensure design and delivery teams are balanced and have the necessary skills to deliver a quality process. Programmes or activities delivered by mixed teams or in partnership with local stakeholders or specialist organisations will be supported. When building a team, consider:

- **Team skills**
  Does the team have the required skills to deliver a high-quality, design-led engagement programme? For example: experience of collaborative design processes, project evaluation, visual and digital communication skills, working with diverse communities, or workshop facilitation.

- **Timeline**
  Is the engagement programme realistic? Appropriate time should be given to build relationships, give sufficient notice before events and time to feed engagement outcomes back into the design process.

- **Representation**
  Is the team representative of the community they seek to work with? How can equality, diversity and inclusion be embedded into the process by sharing opportunities within the community?

- **Inclusion**
  Does the team have the skills to assess the social, accessibility and health impacts of the proposed scheme?

If the answer to any of the above points is no, consider broadening the team by appointing specialist consultants.

Scenario 3: A scheme for a secondary school with additional public facilities is proposed. The applicant does not have in-house engagement skills, so they want to hire a consultant.

🔴 Engagement consultants have been appointed late to the process, after key design decisions have been made. The timeline has been condensed to fit the applicant's desired planning submission in 3 months' time.

Consultants can only deliver a basic programme. Event turn out and survey responses are low, as there is not time to build relationships or give notice.

🟢 The consultant brief is detailed, specific to the area and asks for new ideas. They are brought to the scheme early, before decisions have been made, so the timeline is realistic and allows for a 6-month engagement programme.

The consultants have creative skills and experience working with young people. Activities gather meaningful insight which clearly impacts the design.

6.2   Planning and publicising events

Scenario 4: A community event has been planned for a mid-sized residential scheme.

🔴 One drop-in event on a Saturday afternoon is publicised in a letter to all residents with two weeks' notice.

Attendance is minimal, as many residents work on Saturdays and awareness of the project is low. Several people get in touch afterwards to say that they didn't know the event was happening and are unhappy they couldn't attend.

🟢 Time is spent in the area listening to residents before anything is proposed. People are asked how and when they would like to take part.

A mix of in-person and online events are held on different days and times. They are advertised well in advance and shared by word of mouth, posters and WhatsApp groups. Young people are offered a voucher to take part.

6.3   Building consensus

6.3.1   Involving people in a design process means committing to bring them along on the journey and work with them as collaborators, where possible. However, planning and development is a balancing act. Sometimes unpopular decisions will be made that comply with planning policy. This approach is not always clear

to the community. Transparent communication is important, as well as being realistic about the red lines and constraints.

6.3.2   Compromise is part of a collaboration. This means committing to the process and not making key decisions based on a small number or responses or limited consultation methods. The rationale behind design decisions should be clearly communicated by the design team.

Scenario 5: Parts of housing estate has been chosen for infill development. There are concerns around loss of parking and general disruption.

🔴 Residents were informed about the scheme, which was very unpopular. A group came to the drop in event and were frustrated about the loss of parking, which dominated the event.

Over half of responses to the estate-wide survey were from people who objected to loss of parking. The car-free part of the scheme was dropped due to pressure.

🟢 Residents were informed early about the scheme, which was very unpopular. Several community meetings are held to listen to resident concerns and explain some of the additional benefits that could be achieved.

Residents were invited to work with the landscape designer and given the power to vote on their favourite elements for the public play area and community garden.

Consultant reports were made public and shared with a summary. The scheme is still unpopular, but further information was provided about accessible parking spaces and through discussion with residents, parking permits were introduced to free up spaces on the estate.

6.4 Listening and learning

6.4.1   Every process will grow and adapt over the duration of a project and timelines are often adjusted. Building feedback points in throughout is important to make sure people feel heard and able to contribute. For example:

– **Monitoring**
Use anonymous feedback forms throughout the process to monitor how things are going – be prepared to adapt and implement improvements that show you are listening. For example, 'you said – we did'.

– **Transparency**
  Be honest with people about what is working and what could have gone differently.

– **Communication**
  Tell people how their input has shaped the project through regular email or website updates.

– **Care**
  Concerns from local stakeholders should be heard and addressed without judgement and with empathy.

6.5   Communicating effectively

6.5.1   Language around planning and design can be complex and hard to understand. All communication, both visual and written, should be clear and accessible. Use plain English and avoid acronyms where possible. Where specific planning terminology is required, provide explanations.

6.5.2   All project messaging should be factual and realistic. The way land is categorised in planning terms does not always correspond to the way it is experienced by people. For example, sites for 'development opportunity' may be loved and well-used by the community in ways that are not valued or reflected in planning terminology.

6.6   Supporting access

6.6.1   Consider the demographics of the area – if there is a large community with a first language other than English, translating key planning documents without the public having to request them is essential.

6.6.2   Design of any material should be inclusive and consider access needs, for example dyslexia. Avoid low contrast text and background colours and ensure text is a suitable font and size.

6.6.3   Not everyone has access to internet connected devices. A variety of methods for people to get in touch should be provided. A named contact, not a generic email address, should always be provided where possible.

# 7.	What we expect from applicants

7.6.1	Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have understood the key principles of this document to move beyond a tick-box engagement process. Applicants will need to work with the Council from an early stage to ensure plans for engagement and collaboration is well balanced and leaves appropriate time to connect all outcomes to a design and decision-making process. See Table 1 for our expectations depending on the scale and impact of your project.

Impact on decison making from high to low →				
Scale or impact of project *Note: officers will use judgement when determining appropriate categories*	**Non-major development** Less than 1,000m2 additional floorspace or 10 new dwellings **To include:** • Small sites development	**Non-major development** Less than 1,000m2 additional floorspace or 10+ new dwellings **To include:** • Schemes with a significant impact on the wider area • Public realm • Change of use proposals • HMOs	**Major development** Over 1,000m2 additional floorspace or 10-24 new dwellings **To include:** • Site allocations • Mixed use developments • Brownfield developments	**Major development** Over 1,000m2 additional floorspace or 25+ new dwellings **To include:** • Strategic projects that meet the threshold for Design Review Panel • Schemes with an existing community of residents • Developments that feature: • Community facilities • Public realm
Expected impact of engagement process. *Note: a mixed approach is required*	**Inform**	**Inform / Consult / Involve**	**Inform / Consult Involve /Collaborate**	**Inform / Consult / Involve / Collaborate / Empower**
Appropriate actions:				
Keep people informed	●	●	●	●
Interactive digital		●	●	●
Meet Ward Councillors*		●	●	●
Hold early public meetings		●	●	●
Regularly involve identified stakeholders			●	●
Design workshops at key milestones			●	●
Establish community panel or steering group				●
Local champions/ community connectors				●
What we expect from applicants:				
Attend pre-app meetings		●	●	●
Provide early engagement strategy during pre-app			●	●
Provide stakeholder list/matrix during pre-app			●	●
Attend Design Review Panel			●	●
Share consultation data		●	●	●
What applicants can expect from us:				
Ongoing monitoring & reporting		●	●	●
Support tailoring your engagement strategy		●	●	●
Publishing relevant documents on our website			●	●

*Meetings are subject to the agreement of the Ward Councillor. Note Ward Councillors are not obliged to meet to discuss all development proposals. Meetings are at the discretion of Officers and individual Ward Councillors.

Table 1: Early engagement expectations for applicants. *Note: definitions for appropriate can be found in paragraph 23. Officers will use judgement when determining appropriate categories.*

7.1 Before the pre-application process

7.1.1 Advice should be sought from the council should begin as early as possible before any design proposals are produced to ensure the engagement strategy has been appropriately considered and can be implemented.

7.2 During the pre-application process

7.2.1 Applicants will need to:

– Attend Pre-Application meetings with the Council.

– Provide an early engagement strategy and stakeholder list for review by the Council during Pre-Application discussions.

– Report on the progress of activities and show how feedback has been incorporated into the design process.

– Engage with the Design Review Panel process where appropriate.

– Share consultation data with the Council.

7.3 Creating an engagement strategy

7.3.1 Once an approach is agreed, an engagement strategy that is specific to the scheme should be produced and shared with officers during Pre-Application discussion. The strategy should identify:

A. The project stakeholders, representative of the demographics of the area [see section 4.3.1].

B. The expected impact of the engagement process [see table 1].

C. A programme of activities and events to achieve the engagement impact [see section 5.3].

D. Barriers to participation and the steps that will be taken to enable greater levels of participation [see section 5.4].

E. Who will be delivering the programme and how the outcomes from these activities will connect to the design process [see section 6.1].

F. How participants can provide feedback about their experiences
    [see section 6.4].

G. How news about the project will be communicated
    [see section 6.5].

H. How activities will monitored and what a successful outcome looks like

Note: an engagement strategy template is available in appendix 1.

7.4 As part of the Planning Performance Agreement

7.4.1   Applicants should ensure they have built a design and delivery team with the necessary experience and skills to deliver on the agreed engagement approach. Where appropriate, this includes appointing specialist consultants, such as inclusive design and collaborative design consultants, to be agreed as part of the Planning Performance Agreement.

7.4.2   A site-specific engagement strategy should be produced and agreed as part of the Planning Performance Agreement and discussed during pre-application discussions.

7.4.3   Applications will be assessed by Wandsworth Council and feedback will be provided for a fixed fee, including on the site-specific engagement strategy. Fees / officer rates are set annually by the Council and will be incorporated in PPAs to reflect the officer time required to review and provide feedback on engagement strategies. Time should therefore be allocated in the pre-application process to allow for the engagement strategy to be reviewed.

7.4.4   Applicants will also have to provide evidence that they have considered diversity, inclusion, access and social value in any procurement processes or created wider public benefit, for example through the appointment of local people or businesses as part of the strategy.

7.5 As part of the Statement of Community Involvement

7.5.1   Where an applicant has undertaken engagement activities prior to submitting a planning application, a Statement of Community Involvement must be submitted in accordance with our Local Validation Checklist. The SCI should report factually on the engagement approach that was taken for the scheme and set out:

– **The engagement approach taken for the scheme**, why it was appropriate for the site and how it has been achieved.

– **A summary of activities undertaken**, including reporting on outcomes and feedback from participants to indicate the approach taken was inclusive and justified. Numerical data about attendees should be included but does not necessarily indicate success. Instead, reporting should be balanced and in-depth, focusing on qualitative data to show the impact of activities and how outcomes have led into a design process.

– **A detailed project timeline** showing when activities were undertaken in connection with relevant project milestones.

– **A full schedule of comments received** showing the rationale for where action was taken to amend and address concerns. If no action was taken, the decision not to amend should be similarly justified.

7.5.2   Records of pre-application advice and outcomes from Design Review Panels should not be included in the applicant's Statement of Community Involvement.

7.6   Beyond the submission of a planning application

7.6.1   As indicated above, it is important that activities continue throughout the duration of the project, after formal submission of a planning application. The principles set out in this guidance should continue to be followed.

7.6.2   Planning applications for the approval of Reserved Matters following Outline approval, which are common for larger master planning schemes or urban regeneration projects, should be submitted with an up-to-date Statement of Community Involvement, outlining engagement undertaken since Outline approval. Conditions that require discharge, for example a landscape strategy, should also be informed by engagement work done to date and further engagement if necessary.

7.6.3   Applicants should be transparent as to what point in the planning application process stakeholders can engage with specific aspects of a development proposal to avoid stakeholders being told it is 'too early' or 'too late' to provide input and should use the submission of subsequent Reserved Matters or Condition Discharge application(s) as an opportunity for meaningful ongoing engagement.

8. Monitoring and enforcement

8.6.1   The outcome and impact of engagement activities for major schemes will be reported as part of the Council's Planning Applications Committee process and in Design and Access Statements. Outcomes will also be monitored and reported as part of Section 106 agreements, as appropriate.

8.6.2   As part of our internal information and monitoring processes, data will be recorded about engagement activities for major schemes.

8.6.3   Data about engagement for major schemes will also be recorded as part of our internal information and monitoring processes. This Guidance will be monitored and review on an annual basis to ensure it is effective and is responding to local expectations.

9. Policy context

9.6.1   Underpinned by a clear direction in the Local Plan; The London Plan; the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a clear mandate to prioritise a collaborative approach that centres placemaking, design-quality and local knowledge.

- The Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 – for planning applications.

- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 (as amended) – for listed building consents.

- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)

- The Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

- Localism Act 2011 (as amended)

- The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012

- Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017

- Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

- Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

10. References and further reading

Wandsworth Council's Developer Protocol 2023:
[Link to website](#)

RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stage of Works Engagement overlay, 2024:
[PDF download](#)

Future of London Co-production Toolkit:
[PDF download](#)

Grosvenor Youth Empowerment Toolkit:
[Link to website](#)

The Glass-House Community Led Design Resources:
[Link to website](#)

Making the case for co-production, Future of London:
[PDF download](#)