

# Beer Neighbourhood Development Plan Communications Strategy

## Introduction

A Neighbourhood Development Plan<sup>1</sup> (NP) is a community-led framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. The foundation of a good neighbourhood plan is a robust programme of consultation and engagement. Effective community involvement is essential right from the beginning of the process. It will create a well informed plan and a sense of ownership. Getting the recognition, views, assistance and support of a whole range of other, interested bodies and parties is also essential if the plan is to have authority and credibility. A successful Communication Strategy is a prerequisite.

## Aims

The aims of the Communications Strategy are to achieve:-

- Better communication, leading to better feedback and decision-making
- Improved two-way information flow
- Better information and communication channels to enable community participation
- Increased awareness and understanding of the Neighbourhood Plan, its purpose and relevance

## Principles

Our Communications Strategy is based on four key principles:-

- *the right information,*
- *to the right people,*
- *in the right medium,*
- *at the right time*

These principles include a number of key factors:

- Communication must be meaningful and appropriate
- Information must be accessible
- Quality mediums and methods must be used whenever possible
- Communication channels must allow information to, through and across all levels
- Information must be relevant and in plain English
- Consideration needs to be given to the needs of people with disabilities and those whose first language is not English
- The process must be transparent

## Target Audiences

We want to reach everyone with a stake in the future of the area including people living, working or doing business here, those who deliver services to the local communities and people who have influence over the future of the area. We want to continue the dialogue with communities based on where they live and people in communities based on common interests. We want to communicate and listen to people who others have traditionally found hard to reach and hard to hear.

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<sup>1</sup> As introduced by the Localism Act 2011

## Messages

It is important that all our communications have as much impact as possible. To avoid dilution of the message or contradiction, the following will be the main messages that we will attempt to relay in our communications:

- The Neighbourhood Plan reflects community opinion
- The Neighbourhood Plan is a framework for the development of our area
- We want to hear your opinion
- We need the participation and support of the community and partners

The messages we send out should be:

- Short and to the point
- Not conflicting
- In plain English
- Focussing on involvement

## Tools and Activities

We shall use a variety of methods based on what reaches people most effectively and has most credibility. These include:

Consultation events
Direct mail
Council newspaper/magazine
Email lists
Events
Exhibition
Leaflets & flyers
Local radio
Minutes of meetings
Networking
Newsletter
Parish Council newsletters
Posters
Press releases
Social media
Stakeholders' and partners' outlets
Website

The messages will be relayed using different methods for different groups. A communications matrix has been developed as an integral part of our communications strategy.

## Resources

We shall make best use of the resources we have and strive to increase resources commensurate with the task. Our current resources, those that we have access to and can be applied to the task, are:

<b>List of Available Local Resources:</b>
Group members
Local councillors
Parish Council notice board
Community notice boards
Community networks
Parish newsletters
Local newspaper
Website
Facebook

## Timescales

Preparing a neighbourhood plan is a sequential process based upon an agreed project plan. The project plan identifies the following key communication points and the dates in which they should be carried out:

<b>Key Communication Point:</b>	<b>Target Date(s)</b>
Launching the NP	Aug – Sep 2014
Seeking information	Oct 2014
Establishing a shared Vision	Feb 2015
Sharing the draft plan	May – Jun 2015
Seeking approval (through referendum)	to be determined by EDDC

## Evaluation and Amendment

After the first 6 months the NP Group will carry out a communications audit to assess the effectiveness of the strategy with both 'internal' and 'external' audiences. We shall consider in particular, who has not responded or reacted to our communications? We shall discuss the evidence/results carefully and use them to amend and improve the Strategy going forward.

## Neighbourhood Planning - Communications Strategy Matrix

### How We Will Communicate:

Parish councillors in NP area	Meeting mins/reports and presentations
Other elected members (DC & MP)	Direct e/mail/reports and presentations
Parish Council	Meeting mins/reports and presentations
NP sub (thematic or task) groups	Meeting mins/reports and presentations
All residents in NP area	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters/letter
Young people in NP area	Consultation events – targeted
Community & voluntary groups active in NP area	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters/ Letter/ email
Elderly persons in NP area	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters
Persons with disabilities and special needs	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters
Schools and colleges serving NP area	Consultation events - targeted
All businesses/employers in NP area	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters/ Letter/ email
Retailers in NP area	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters/ Letter/ email
Service providers	Letter/ email /meeting
Statutory undertakers	Letter/ email /meeting
Major landowners	Letter/ email /meeting
Developers with interest in NP area	Letter/ email /meeting
District Council	Letter/ email /meeting
Neighbouring parish/town councils	Letter/ email