

Masham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Community Engagement Strategy (February 2020)

1. Introduction

- This engagement strategy has been prepared to help guide the process of community and stakeholder involvement that is needed to produce an appropriate community-led Neighbourhood Development Plan for the Masham Parish Council Area.
- The strategy sets out a range of activities and actions that will be necessary to gather information from the community in and around the area and to seek community support for the developed policy outcomes.
- Effective engagement with local residents, businesses, community groups and service providers in Masham and adjoining areas is a crucial aspect in creating a well-informed plan and a sense of community ownership.

2. The Neighbourhood Plan

- The Localism Act 2011 introduced statutory Neighbourhood Planning in England. This is intended to give communities more of a say in the development of their local area, within certain limits, if they draw up a Neighbourhood Plan that is adopted and supported by local residents.
- Neighbourhood Plans allow local people to get the right type of development for their area by prioritising where new homes, shops and business are built and what such building should look like. Such a plan will not allow us to prevent developments as it must take into account the local planning authority's assessment of housing and other development needs in the area.
- Harrogate Borough Council's local plan allocates specific sites to deliver around 110 new homes; a further site for 80 homes was removed during the plan's examination. The plan also supports in-fill development within the town's development limit. The villages and hamlets in the parish council area are treated as open countryside.
- Masham Parish Council is the body that is ultimately responsible for preparing the plan. They have designated the authority for gathering the necessary evidence and drawing up the draft plan to the Masham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.
- A formal application to create a Neighbourhood Plan for the Masham Parish Area was submitted to Harrogate BC in early summer 2018. Harrogate BC approved this application and the area was formally designated on 10th August 2018.

3. Plan Preparation

- The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is responsible for the preparation of the plan. They meet on a regular basis to discuss progress and the minutes from each of their meetings can be accessed and read on the Masham Parish Council website under the Neighbourhood Plan tab. Membership of the group is not closed and new volunteers would be welcomed.

- It is important that we ensure extensive, appropriate and well-planned engagement at each stage of the plan making process. The way in which this process is led will need to secure confidence from the community of Masham and those organisations and businesses that operate within our area.
- Support for the eventual policies and plan will be more certain by operating in a transparent way throughout the plan preparation process. The steering group will seek to do this by following these principles:
 - Being open and honest with the community. Being clear about what can be influenced and what cannot. By using accurate and unbiased information.
 - Listening to the community's views and enabling local residents to play an effective role in shaping their local area.
 - By engaging with as many people in the process as possible.
 - Creating a record of engagement activities to share with residents and businesses whilst respecting confidentiality if requested.
 - By keeping in touch with the community on a regular basis throughout this process and providing feedback on progress.

4. The Objectives of this Strategy

- This engagement strategy is a way of explaining the steps we intend to take, from the start to the end of the development process.
- It describes the processes and methods that may be employed in community engagement activity and lays out a set of commitments to the community.
- It will form part of the consultation statement that has to be submitted as part of the completed Neighbourhood Plan.
- It is important that we seek to engage with a diverse mix of individuals when seeking views from the community. In order to achieve this we may seek to group residents and businesses into stakeholder groups. Such groups may include the following example categories:
 - School children (aged 5 – 16)
 - Young people (aged 16 – 30)
 - Families with young children
 - Single parent families
 - Older groups
 - People with physical or learning needs
 - Local businesses
 - People employed in the area but not currently living within it
- Other bodies that we will need to communicate with are likely to include:
 - Harrogate Borough Council
 - Environment Agency
 - Yorkshire Water
 - North Yorkshire Highways Department
 - North Yorkshire Education Department
 - Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Beauty
 - Police and Fire Service
 - Utility providers

- Masham Doctor's Practise and Surgery
- Adjoining parish councils and their residents

5. Engagement Methods

- These are some of the ways that we will aim to communicate with everyone in the area during the formation of the Neighbourhood Plan:
 - Posters, fliers, banners around the area and at key community events
 - Newsletters and leaflets
 - Website updates on Masham Parish Council; Neighbourhood Plan section
 - E Mail and social media including Twitter and Facebook
 - Public meetings with briefings and presentations
 - Questionnaires and surveys
 - Stakeholder groups and focus groups
 - Written correspondence
 - Verbal consultation and face to face meetings
 - Structured workshops
 - Feedback opportunities
 - Final referendum prior to adoption
- The methods of communication chosen will be influenced by the questions that are seeking to be addressed. At each point in the development process we will need to understand the following concepts:
 - What are we seeking views upon?
 - From which sector of the population are we requiring responses from?
 - Which communication method would they find easy to engage with?
 - What further information are they likely to require in order to respond?
 - How will responses be recorded?
 - What resources are required and are they available?
 - How much time is available?
 - Which venues will provide the best possible response?

6. Feedback to the Community

- We will aim to look at all engagement and consultation responses and where possible will act on the suggestions.
- Following questionnaires, workshops and other forms of engagement we will make findings available on our website.
- After a formal consultation on the plan we will summarise the comments received in a consultation statement that will be made available on our website and part of the final Neighbourhood Plan.