

Neighbourhood Planning



urban**design**london

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Introduction

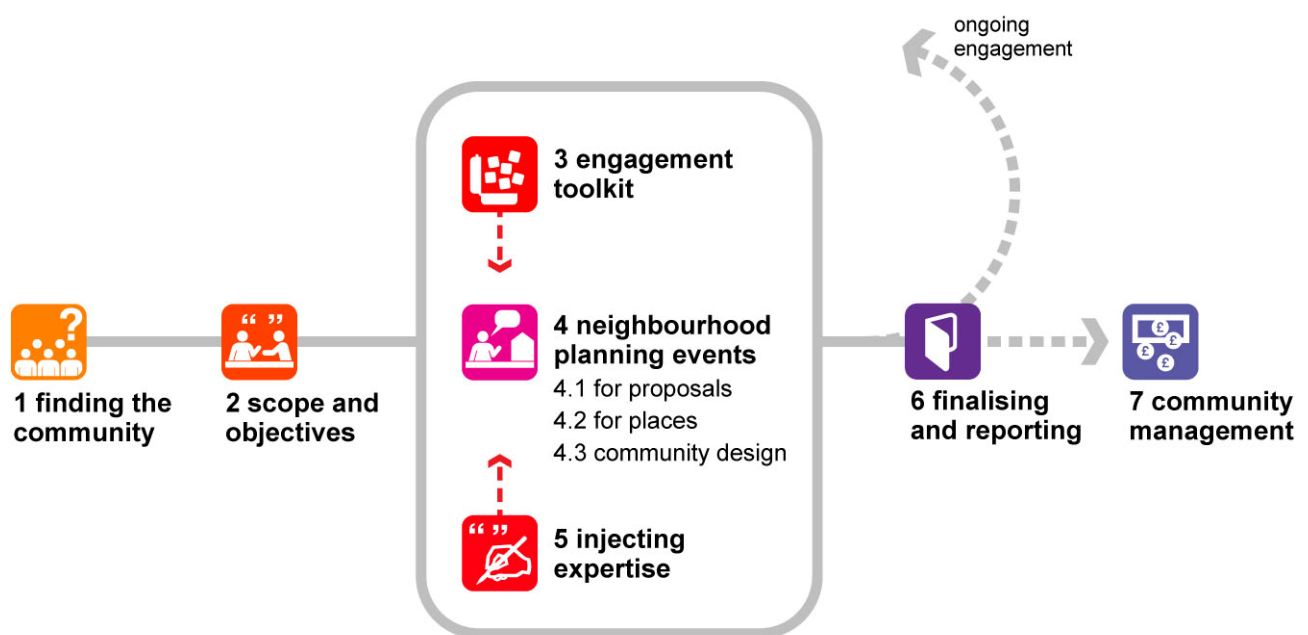
With the recent Localism Bill, there will be a greater emphasis on engagement between boroughs and communities in two key areas:

- Neighbourhood planning and the production of local plans, and
- Community involvement in planning application discussions.

There are a number of ways this engagement can take place, and often a mixture of methods might be used, depending on the scale of a project, what is being discussed, and the enthusiasm from the different parties.

This guide summarises some tried and tested methods, for communities and boroughs, and outlines some things to consider in the general process of engagement in planning and urban design.

Explanatory guides to the Localism Bill itself are available here:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill/>



This diagram illustrates a process for community engagement. The document is set out to reflect this and gives detail on a variety of engagement events.

Each situation requires its own process, and requires careful planning in order to ensure fruitful discussion and feedback. It is important to ensure the community is well represented and time should be taken to contact and involve the relevant groups and sections of the community.

Costs should be taken into consideration. Sometimes it is more suitable to undertake a short and well-funded process, rather than an under-funded longer event. A well prepared event can be a wise investment with significant sustained benefits in the long term, whereas attempting engagement on the cheap may not produce worthwhile results and risks damaging relationships that may be challenging and costly to repair in the long term.

Enthusiastic volunteers from a neighbourhood can improve the quality and organisation of an event, and make it less dependent on solely borough resources. However using professionals to connect with, articulate and interpret the voices of local communities in order to achieve clear outcomes is strongly advised. Professionals from a series of organisations and charities can support engagement and help deliver planning and urban design proposals.



1. Finding 'the community'

There may already be a number of active community groups in the local area and it is likely there will also be a fair amount of apathy. The creation or strengthening of community groups is a key element of most community planning. Effective groups can act as clients in championing the views of those affected by decisions and keep the momentum going, often for many years.

The Localism Bill allows the community to define itself and approach their borough as a neighbourhood forum. The local authority would recognise legitimate forums and agree a boundary for the neighbourhood. In some cases the borough may also initiate engagement, where no groups come forward.

It is important that the community groups involved in a process are as representative as possible of the end users of any initiative, and cover a wide range of interests and viewpoints.

As projects develop, the neighbourhood forum may need to become more formally organised with democratic voting procedures and, perhaps, legal status. For larger projects, several different groups may be useful at various times and specialist groups and working parties may be useful for specific issues.

Understanding the make-up of a neighbourhood

Planning departments have access to a wealth of demographic data which can be very useful in getting a thorough understanding of the local neighbourhood, to ensure any engagement is representative of everyone that will be affected by a project or plan. As well as the residents of an area, this may also include businesses, employees, commuters and shoppers from outside the area. Start by identifying as many groups as possible within the local community. Consider the lifestyles of these groups and what might be the best ways of engaging them.

Existing neighbourhood organisation

It is a good idea to consider what forms of community organisation already exist, and start by contacting leaders or representatives. Where groups are more formally constituted, it may be possible to involve a number of representatives on behalf of the rest of the group.

Professionals in institutions with regular contact with the public should have an understanding of the community. For example school teachers may have access to parents as well as children. Getting in contact with these individuals can prove very useful.

Other examples of neighbourhood organisation may include:

- Schools, crèches and playgroups, GPs, nurses, clinics, Saturday schools, libraries
- Park or public space users groups or friends of groups,
- Councillors or political parties
- Religious and faith groups
- Charity or campaign groups, such as local friends of the earth groups
- Voluntary clubs, including sports clubs, youth clubs, and gardening associations
- Local businesses forums and business improvement districts (to access employers as well as employees)
- Neighbourhood watch schemes
- Tenets and residents associations
- Community centres
- Local civic or conservation societies
- Social venues such as pubs or cafes, or other meeting places

Inherent neighbourhood organisation

In addition to the more formal kinds of neighbourhood organisation, it may be possible to tap into the inherent networks of neighbours and friendships in an area, simply by asking a few people who they might consider to be a 'pillar of the community'. Local shops may recognise long standing members of the community too. These individuals are likely to be well connected, trusted and recognised in the area. They may be key in encouraging and involving the rest of a neighbourhood. It may be possible to formalise the role of such individuals through a nominations and voting process .

Using the internet and local newspapers

The internet has become a resource for all kinds of communities to exchange opinions. There may already be existing websites or message boards set up by local people. Those who manage these sites are likely to be passionate about their local area, and part of inherent local networks, and can be another source for local knowledge. Local authorities can help advertise these local websites through conventional channels, such as libraries, or work with inherent neighbourhood organisation to help set them up, as a platform for future engagement and discussion.

Local newspapers often have a good sense of what is preoccupying a neighbourhood. They can be a useful source of information on the nature and needs of a neighbourhood, more than their potential to an effective tool for communication people.

Community Profiling

Members of the community can undertake "community profiling", as an initial activity in an engagement process. This involves building up a picture of the nature and needs of a community with the active participation of that community. It is useful in ensuring the local demography is understood by people in the area, and ensure people are working in a widely agreed context. Community profiling may include a series of charts and statistics, but may also include more detailed interviews, that may be more resource intensive to acquire if it were done by borough officers or consultants.

Timescales of urban change

The timescales in planning and urban design are often very long. Although this seems obvious, it is worth remembering that a plan is going to affect the lives of people in a decade's time. These people may be children today, or may not be living in the area yet, so an open mind to long term as well as short term changes should be encouraged.

Age groups

The needs and aspirations of different age groups will be quite different. Consulting a wide range of age groups should accommodate and incorporate all these views and needs, and may also add an unexpected richness and creativity to the process for other members of the community.

Cultural and ethnic groups

Certain groups in the community may be harder to reach due to cultural or language differences. Different methods or separate sessions in surroundings they feel comfortable with may be required to fully involve these groups. For example it may only be possible to reach some groups, by asking others in their community to carry out interviews in their own language, respecting their customs.

Transient residents

Transient residents such as students and migrants may be some of the most apathetic groups as they may not feel they belong to a local community. However they are important and engagement with these groups may need to be devised with specific methods that are kept short and relevant to them. For example, interactive maps or surveys may be most effective.



2. Agreeing Scope and Objectives

Once an appropriately representative neighbourhood forum has been identified and agreed, it is important to ensure a clear and succinct scope and set of objectives are agreed for a specific engagement process. For example the Localism Bill will expect neighbourhood plans to be in general conformity with adopted Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and the London Plan. Defining objectives at the outset means people are clear on what is possible, and avoids situations where people are unintentionally misled. In order to get the greatest level of participation and enthusiasm, it may be useful to agree a commitment that emerging opinions and ideas will be taken forward and adopted where possible.

Most of the following points should be agreed as part of an initial exercise:

- The policy context and scale of plan-making
- An understanding of funding and time constraints of the plan-making or building project to ensure realistic expectations.
- The purpose of engagement - a commitment to take ideas seriously.
- A commitment to continuity and engagement from all parties
- The process of engagement appropriate to the context and community desires.
- Timetable and responsibilities

The following workshops are helpful in agreeing scope and objectives and briefing others.

Process planning workshop

Process planning sessions allow local authority officers and key community representatives to determine the most suitable public participation process or engagement event for their particular situation. It is particularly useful to hold them at an early stage in a neighbourhood planning initiative and then at periodic intervals.

As many as possible of the key stakeholders are invited to ensure that the outcome is supported by all parties. Participants are introduced to the various options available and helped to design a process of their own, usually by an external facilitator, following a formal workshop format. Sessions are held periodically whenever there is a need to review the overall process.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/process_planning_session.php

Self-Structured workshop

Self-structured workshops provide a framework for any group of people to create their own agenda for discussion without much preparation. They are particularly useful for dealing with general policy issues, for generating enthusiasm and for dealing with urgent issues needing quick action.

Participants start by sitting in a circle and decide on the issues to discuss, using a simple procedure usually guided by a facilitator or chair. Workshop sessions are self managed by the participants within a framework of simple principles. Each workshop session develops a list of actions required and who should take them.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/open_space_workshop.php

Briefing workshop

Briefing workshops are often used after the scope and objectives have been broadly agreed by a smaller group, to introduce a larger group of people to the project agenda or brief; help establish the key issues; get people involved and motivated; identify useful talent and experience; identify the next steps needed. They typically take place at the beginning of a particular event and can act as a public launch.

Potential users of the project are invited to attend a workshop, usually lasting around 1.5 hours. Similar workshops may be held with different interest groups (eg: staff, leaders, young people, etc) or on different topics. The workshop is facilitated by one or more individuals who will have planned a format to suit the context. A record is kept of those who attend, the points made and key issues identified. People's contributions are unattributable unless agreed otherwise.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/briefing_workshop.php



3. Engagement Toolkit

There are a range of meeting and workshop formats, some of which may be familiar to those working on projects with multiple stakeholders. Most of these formats require very little adaptation to work with a larger and more diverse group of people.

There are also a number of more creative activities intended to encourage people to look carefully at an area, and get people to think about it from different perspectives and in different ways. They are often a way to tease out thoughts and opinions from people who may not be able to fully articulate them during more formal meetings. In this way they allow people without professional skills and vocabulary to engage in planning and urban design discussions on a more level playing field.

These creative activities and workshop formats form the basic components of local engagement events. They can be used independently, but are often combined within a larger organised event (see section 4).

They can be carried out without much cost where suitable accessible facilities and materials are readily available. It may be a good idea to have trained organisers and facilitators involved in these sessions, who can help draw out ideas and manage larger groups of people.

Editing a document



Much like 'track-changes' in a word document, participatory editing allows people to help shape reports. A draft is drawn up by writers, editors, and designers. Drafts are circulated, or displayed, for comment. Participants make comments on the draft with coloured pens or post-its. Editors go through the comments and produce a revised draft which is approved by the organisers. The process is repeated as necessary.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/participatory_editing.php

Prioritising issues options and actions



This is an important aspect of all decision-making and often needs to be done as a group activity if the results are to be generally agreed on. A graphic format such as a table is selected to allow the prioritising of options to be simply displayed. After discussion of the issues, participants make individual choices using stickers or cards. The results are analysed and provide the basis for decision-making or further discussion.

<http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/prioritising.php>

Video / audio soapbox



Video / audio soapboxes allow members of the public to broadcast their opinions in public places. They are particularly useful for generating public interest and debate for high profile events. The basic technology required is a video camera, a projection facility and a screen. These can be used independently or built into a special machine to make a prominent street feature. People are filmed making comments on an issue and these are projected for public viewing. This can be done simultaneously, or facilities can be included to allow for editing and captioning. Video tapes can be kept for future screenings and can be analysed as a survey of public opinion.

Photo survey

Photo surveys can fuel discussion of an existing neighbourhood. Participants go around their neighbourhood individually or in teams, taking photos of places and images according to a theme such as what they like or dislike about an area. The photos are sorted, selected and placed on large sheets of blank paper or maps. Photos can be grouped or cut up and comments may be added using Post-its or felt tips.

The completed sheets or maps are used as a basis for discussion, analysis and design. Comparing historic photos with ones from the same spot in the present day can be highly effective and thought provoking. It may also be useful to introduce photos from other places and make comparisons.

Going on a Walk

Organised walks involve direct inspection of the area being considered by teams of local people and technical experts. They are used to familiarise everyone with the physical environment and key issues at the start of many community planning processes, and to review progress at intervals.

A route is carefully planned to include key local features and issues. The route may be walked or toured by bus, boat or other forms of transport. It may include visits to buildings or facilities. The group make notes, sketches, take photos and talk informally to people in their own setting. They may check existing plans for accuracy. At the end of the trip a debriefing is held, and the notes and other materials compiled into a form useful to the next stage of the planning process.

Example: Rainham Public Realm Masterplan - Heritage Walk



Description: The masterplan consultation was based on the idea of a Heritage Walk, pointing out the key historic spaces and talking through the masterplan proposals on site. The event was held on two days, lasting 4 hours each. Meeting at the library to hear and see introductory information, the Heritage Walk followed a route picking out local points that had important influence on the masterplan. The walkers had a masterplan drawing to refer to while walking and help follow the route. The masterplan proposals were discussed informally. The pamphlets were free to take home and read more detail. They included tear off slips to return opinions to the library for collection. For the event, flags were fixed to several buildings of local interest, with information boards below.

Preparation: 2 weeks

Outputs: conversations, feedback forms, informed residents

Costs: approximately £2,000 of overall masterplanning budget

Choice catalogues

Choice catalogues provide a way to make design choices within a predetermined structure. They are useful for helping people understand the range of options and can work with large groups of people.

Options are worked out by professionals in consultation with a small group of people and then presented to the wider group in the form of a simple visual menu. Choices can be costed using a simple points system if necessary. The choices can be voted on collectively, or occasionally implemented to suit every individual in a housing estate for example.

Storytelling / Poetry / Theatre



Telling real or imaginary tales can be a way of exploring hidden perceptions of an area. They can be used to understand local values, standards, practices and relationships, and can be particularly valuable with children. Other creative methods include; devising poetry from small cut up words, and performing plays to characterise real life situations and stimulate debate.

Playing Games



Games are a good way to help people understand the planning process and other people's viewpoints. They are also an enjoyable way for people to work together. They are particularly useful at an early stage of any community planning activity to build relationships and prepare people for a specific challenge ahead.

Games are devised to mirror real life planning scenarios or to teach specific skills. They are mostly played in groups, usually helped by a facilitator or someone who has played them before. Many games involve role play or can be adapted from well-known board game formats. There is usually no specific output other than increased awareness, but they may produce preliminary spatial ideas (particularly through diagrammatic map based games) or an agenda for future initiatives that people think are needed.

Making Maps



Mapping is an effective way of finding out how people view their area. It is a good way to gather and present site-specific data, understand differences in perception and stimulate debate as a basis for joint planning.

Individuals or groups draw maps of their neighbourhood. A framework or theme is normally provided to focus people's thoughts, eg places you visit frequently, landmarks, boundaries, places you dislike, things you would like to see. The maps are discussed and analysed as a basis for understanding differing viewpoints and identifying what should be done. Records of these maps and debates should be saved for future reference.

Using Diagrams

Diagrams and charts are a highly effective visual way to collect, discuss and display information at all stages of the planning process. Creating diagrams can be the basis for individuals or groups to gather and analyse information. Fairly complex issues or processes can be represented simply if the right type of diagram is chosen. The diagrams provide a focus for discussing issues - and help stimulate creative thinking. They can be used for ordering and presenting information, prioritising issues, decision making and monitoring. Making diagrams can form part of a workshop or be undertaken as an activity in its own right. A group diagramming process is similar to a group mapping process.

Building and Using Models



Models are one of the most effective tools for getting people involved in planning and design. They are particularly useful for generating interest, presenting ideas and helping people think in three dimensions.

Models can be made from a variety of materials. They can be elaborate and realistic, or simple and illustrative. The choice will depend on the purpose of the model and the resources and time available. A simple model may be more useful if it is adaptable so that alternative proposals or options can easily be shown by moving parts around. The construction of models is highly educational and enjoyable and is often done in groups as part of the design process.

Representing Street Elevations

Sticking together photos of individual buildings can create a montage of the street elevation. These can also be used three-dimensionally in models showing both sides of a street or side streets. They can be useful for helping people understand the building fabric and devise improvements.

Simple instructions ask people to make comments on Post-it notes or cards and place them underneath the relevant section (what they like/don't like/would like to see). The build up of Post-it notes or cards generates a dialogue amongst participants and useful data for later discussion and analysis.

Interactive display or maps

Electronic maps allow people to explore an area and make comments at a desktop or touch screen computer. Aerial photography, maps, video clips, sounds, photos and 3-dimensional visualisations can all be incorporated to build up the sense of an area from a variety of perspectives. People can explore the map in libraries, cafes and cultural centres and add their own comments. The content can be continually adapted to provide an ongoing up-to-date information service and consultation process. They have immense potential to help people visualise proposals and make their views known.



4. Neighbourhood Planning Events

Neighbourhood engagement events can be broadly categorised into those intended to find out what people think of specific proposals (4.1), those intended to gather views on the future of a place (4.2), and those that help people to make more specific spatial proposals for an area (4.3).



4.1 Finding out what people think about proposals

Community consultation is often carried out on specific schemes by both the private sector and local authorities. Some methods may allow local residents to give feedback on a single plan or project, while others allow the local community to comment and vote on a predefined set of options. The latter may mean preferences are clearer, despite potentially abortive work in producing the options.

These consultation sessions tend to be open to the general public, and don't take a great deal of preparation other than ensuring knowledgeable people are present to explain displays and encourage people to comment. They have the potential to reach the greatest numbers of people, although there is often little effort to ensure representative views are collected. The feedback received from these events are also unlikely to give clear spatial outcomes. Instead they may provide general indications which may not be an entirely accurate reflection of local opinions.

As a result of the Localism Bill, we can expect a greater requirement for planning applications from private developers to consult residents in the early stages of design and pre-application discussions. Local authorities and neighbourhood forums should look carefully at these exercises and decide whether they provide an accurate representation of opinion.

Street stalls



Street stalls are interactive displays held in highly accessible public places. They make it possible to secure the views of larger numbers of people and facilitators are on hand to encourage people to make comments and engage in debate. They are particularly useful where the views of people using a particular street or public space are required, but do not necessarily catch a wide segment of the community.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/street_stall.php

Exhibition event with scheme display



Exhibition events allow large numbers of people to understand and input into development proposals. Those promoting development or planning initiatives can secure reactions in an informal and unstructured manner.

They can last up to several weeks and the venue can be arranged with a number of displays on the proposals and options using a variety of interactive display techniques. Drawings or models of a proposed scheme are placed on a table with the main elements identified on separate voting sheets around the edge. Votes can be recorded and more detailed comments can be made using post-it notes, either on the same tables or on separate displays. Organisers / designers should be present to deal with queries and engage in informal debate. Material collected will be analysed afterwards and used to further develop plans or proposals and inform the next stages of the process.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/open_house_event.php

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/table_scheme_display.php



4.2 Finding out what people think about a place

Neighbourhood forums can take an active role in shaping opinions, ideas, and actions through open discussions with a local authority. There are a number of larger events which may help to structure this discussion. They often involve bringing together a range of workshop formats and activity components described in section 3, and may take some time to organise depending on the scale and depth of dialogue desired.

These events tend to be more suited to dealing with general issues, as they tend not to produce clear spatial outcomes. It may be difficult to imagine how general visions will be translated into real proposals on specific sites and projects.

Neighbourhood / Street Audit

A community audit of a neighbourhood can be a relatively quick exercise, where tools such as a planned local walk or a photo survey can be used to draw out what people think works well about an area and where they would like to see change. This can be useful for a borough to understand the issues that need to be addressed through projects or plans. "Street Audits" are an example carried out by Living Streets, where a group of local people tie comment cards to elements of the public realm with red ribbons. By drawing public attention to these comments, the event encourages passers by to look and get involved in adding their own comments.

Planning day



Planning days are a good way for gathering key parties to work together to creatively devise and explore options for a site or neighbourhood.

Normally participants will be personally invited by the event instigators and a briefing pack will be sent to all those attending. As well as setting out the aims of the day, the pack will contain background information about the area and the development process so that everyone starts the day with up-to-date knowledge. Workshop formats can be used to encourage the development of creative ideas. Facilitators will often be from outside the area to provide a measure of independence. A printed summary is produced soon afterwards and proposals may be exhibited to a wider public.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/planning_day.php

Future search conference



Future search conferences are highly structured events, usually lasting 2.5 days, at which a cross-section of community members or 'stakeholders' create a shared vision for the future.

People representing the widest possible range of interests, or 'stakeholder' groups, are brought together in one room, usually for 2.5 days. The ideal number is considered to be 64 since this breaks down in to 8 groups of 8. For larger groups, conferences can be run in parallel. The agenda is: 'The Future of (the neighbourhood) 5 to 20 years on'. A structured 5-step procedure is adopted to encourage people to think globally, focus on the future, identify common ground and make public commitments to action. People carry out tasks individually, in small self-managed workshops and as a whole group, with the results recorded openly on flipcharts.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/future_search_conference.php

Planning weekend

Planning weekends are an elaborate but highly effective way of generating momentum for change and getting all parties involved in producing a plan of action for a site, neighbourhood or city.

Planning weekends comprise an intensive and carefully structured programme of activities usually lasting for 4 full days (Friday to Monday) but may be longer or shorter. The main workshop sessions are open to the general public. The weekends are facilitated by a multidisciplinary team which may comprise outsiders or locals, or a combination of the two. The end result is a set of proposals for action which is presented to the community on the last evening and produced in exhibition and print form following the weekend.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/planning_weekend.php



4.3 Community design events

Neighbourhood forums can initiate and be part of the actual planning and design process for their area. These events tend to be the most comprehensive and also gather views about an area. These events usually involve a higher degree of preparation and coordination but are often very effective ways for local people to be genuinely engaged in the production of a professional outcome.

Some of the events listed below allow people to closely brief design professionals who undertake a live design process where basic spatial moves can emerge within a compressed time period. These formats are effective ways of getting immediate and intense dialogue between professionals and local people. Professionals can help articulate local desires in spatial terms, while at the same time advising on whether they are likely to be achievable or not.

Other events encourage people to be more 'hands-on' in actually generating spatial design and ideas, beyond acting as real-time clients. The spatial outcomes may be fairly crude if there is little involvement from professionals, although these events can generate a greater sense of ownership over a process.

Public Ideas competition



Ideas competitions are a good way of stimulating creative thinking and generating interest and momentum by engaging with local skills and creativity. They can be set up to allow everyone a chance to put forward their ideas or can be exclusively for professionals.

A brief is produced, clearly setting out the task, entry format and deadline, judging procedure, eligibility and relevant background. Judging can be done by a representative panel or by using a public voting system. Alternatively different organisations or groups can give separate awards. Winning entries are widely publicised and published to secure momentum for implementation.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/ideas_competition.php

Live public design competition

Live design competitions can produce creative concepts for the future of an area by getting a number of multidisciplinary design teams to develop and present their ideas in public. They are a good way to stimulate debate and develop imaginative solutions, particularly on controversial issues.

Organisers decide on a theme and determine a brief. Multidisciplinary design teams are selected and briefed. The teams may comprise architecture or planning students as well as practising professionals from a range of disciplines. The teams hold an intensive design workshop in public, coinciding with a public exhibition on the theme. People are encouraged to respond to the theme and the team's ideas as they emerge and to develop their own ideas. A high profile public symposium is held immediately after the workshops when the ideas generated are presented and debated by a prominent panel. The results are published and widely distributed.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/design_fest.php

Charette

Charettes allow people to produce plans of action at carefully structured sessions at which all those affected work creatively together. They can be used at any stage of the development process and provide an alternative to reliance on bureaucratic planning.

The nature of the community planning event is decided on and agreed by the main parties involved. There are many common types and the scope for inventing new formats is unlimited. Events may last for an afternoon, a weekend, a week or a month. Preparation takes place including arranging timetables, venues, publicity, equipment, technical support, background information. The event is held, often assisted by a facilitator or team of facilitators from elsewhere. Proposals for action result. The event is followed up to ensure that proposals are put into action.

Example: Deptford Creekside Charette



Description: Deptford Creekside is a unique and complex area made up of over 53 separate freeholds, coupled with diverse natural and cultural resources. It also sits on the borough boundary of Lewisham and Greenwich. The Charrette provided an opportunity for a different approach to enable the existing cultures and economic activity to grow and thrive alongside the great pressure for development. It is intended that the process and outcomes will influence future planning decisions.

Employer: The Charrette was commissioned and planned by a local creative organisation and a steering group of local businesses, residents and professionals. They oversaw the planning, the pre-Charrette analysis and the baseline research. They also selected the design team through an openly advertised process.

Funding: The Charrette was funded by the City Growth Strategy, Design for London, developers, landowners and local institutions. The process cost £70,000, although part of this would have been used for baseline work as any masterplan project would.

Preparation: Planning and detailed research before the Charrette were very important to the success of the process. Comprehensive preparation preceded the design event during which the stakeholders are mapped and involved and a complete picture of the area's baseline data is assembled. A specialist planning consultant worked with the Charrette organising team to produce background documents covering every aspect of the Creek; from land ownership, to flood defence, and public transport routes. The preparation period lasted around 3 months

Event time: During the actual Charrette the design office was set up on site. The structure of the actual event enabled stakeholders and the design team to interact, review ideas in smaller and/or public meetings and develop alternative concepts. There were public meetings where the design team listened to stakeholders and then at subsequent meetings present their proposed design solutions back to the stakeholders. These short feedback loops are important to ensure the transparency of consultation. The Charette event lasted 1 week.

Outputs: At the end of the Charrette, the outcome was published with an action plan for its implementation.

Facilitator: The Creekside Charrette followed the National Charrette Institute process and was guided by Bill Lennertz. The Charrette stages have been developed in the USA over the past 20 years by the Institute on over 150 Charrettes. It is growing rapidly in popularity as a method to unlock longstanding deadlocks and avoid the costly cycle of consultation, conflict and subsequent reworking. More information can be found at www.charretteinstitute.org

Planning for real

Planning for Real uses simple models as a focus for people to put forward and prioritise ideas on how their area can be improved. It is a highly visible, hands-on community development and empowerment tool, which people of all abilities and backgrounds find easy and enjoyable to engage in.

A large 3-dimensional model of a neighbourhood is constructed, preferably by local people, using cardboard cut-outs for buildings pasted onto a base plan fixed to polystyrene or cardboard. The model is used at pre-advertised sessions held in various locations. Participants place suggestion cards on the model indicating what they want to see happen and where (eg playground, parking, tree, shopping). The cards are sorted and prioritised to establish an action plan which is followed up by working groups.

Example: Queensborough and Rushenden, Isle of Sheppey – Planning for Real



- Aims:** The purpose of the consultation exercise was to ensure that the communities of Queensborough and Rushenden were given a say about the future regeneration of the area. The "Planning for Real" approach was fully supported by SEEDA, the lead regeneration agency and the findings of the event were fed into the master plan.
- Employer:** Swale Borough Council (Community Development and Planning Departments) appointed Neighbourhood Initiatives to undertake a "PforR" consultation exercise in the communities.
- Event:** 25 Planning for Real events were held (attended by 29% of the population) which resulted in over 5,000 suggestions being placed on the model. The process has enabled residents to highlight their concerns about issues in their neighbourhood in an open, informal and anonymous manner.
- Outcomes:** The consultation process provided a mechanism for many people to become more active in the community. The Master Planning process will take over from the consultation and build on the momentum; it will be important for the community to know how the consultation results have linked into the future plans for the area. It will also be important to highlight the suggestions that cannot be achieved within the master plan and explain why this is not possible.
- Preparation:** 4 months

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/planning_for_real.php
<http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Methods/Planning+for+Real>

Design game

Design games are a highly visual way of allowing people to explore physical design options for a site or internal space. They are particularly useful for designing parks and room layouts and can also be used for land-use planning. They can be used in isolation or as part of a broader participation process.

A base map of a site is prepared. Cut-out pieces representing items that could be incorporated are made to the same scale. Materials for making pieces are kept at hand to allow new items to be made as desired. Individuals or groups move pieces around until they are happy with the design, which is then photographed. Layouts produced by different individuals or groups are discussed and analysed as a basis for drawing up draft plans.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/design_game.php

Design workshop



Design workshops are hands-on sessions allowing small groups of professionals and non-professionals to work creatively together developing planning and design ideas.

People work in groups around a table with plans or a flexible model. Different groups can deal with different areas or the same area at different scales. Groups can be allocated a topic such as transport, open spaces or housing. Groups can vary in size (8 - 10 is a good average to aim at). Everyone is encouraged to develop their ideas by drawing or making adjustments to

the model. Each group usually needs a facilitator, a note-taker and a mapper (who marks points on a map or plan). A structured workshop procedure is often followed, especially if people have not worked together before.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/design_workshop.php



5. Injecting Expertise

This section outlines the options for accessing and using expert advice and resources. It may be wise to include professionals in the organisation and facilitation of events described in section 4, as well as designers to ensure effective and achievable plans and provide advice on proposals by others. Other professional input may include property consultants to explain viability and development options. It may be worth investigating what services and organisations have the potential to offer support or may already be doing something similar. It is advisable for boroughs to support such organisations and charities for the benefit of local neighbourhoods in the long term.

Design assistance team

Assistance teams comprise a number of specialists from a variety of disciplines who take part in a neighbourhood planning event. They are particularly useful for providing a fresh and independent viewpoint. Assistance teams can be invited in by a neighbourhood forum or a borough and provided with a brief. This may be simply to listen and advise, or to produce a plan or report which articulates local desires. Some consultants may do this work at a lower fee, although this needs to be made clear at the beginning of their involvement. Urban Design London intends to provide a framework of professionals and consultants skilled in this field, and Design for London are looking to fund a choice of ways for communities to access expert help from April 2011.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/design_assistance_team.php

Design Surgeries

Design surgeries are an informal way to get expert advice on design and planning work. Surgeries are run by organisations such as Urban Design London, and are already used by boroughs and other public sector organisations such as Transport for London to improve the quality of their projects, or help assess the design quality of planning applications. Neighbourhood forums can request surgery sessions in the same way, to provide advice on projects being taken forward by them, or to assess the quality of schemes by others.

http://www.urbandesignlondon.com/?page_id=2223

University urban design studio

Urban design studios are special units attached to a university or other educational establishment which undertake urban design, planning, or architectural project work, usually in the immediate locality.

They will normally be independent units with access to all the resources of the establishment; staff, students, researchers, facilities and equipment. Relationships will be built up with local agencies and community organisations and a variety of project work, from masterplans to live construction projects can be carried out.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/urban_design_studio.php

Architecture Centres Network / Community design and technical aid centres

Community design centres are places where communities can get affordable technical help to plan and manage their environment. They are invaluable for helping local people design and implement environmental projects, particularly in poor communities.

Centres provide services to local groups and sometimes individuals. Services will normally be free unless groups are able to afford to pay for them or fees can be built into capital project bids. Centres will normally be independent charitable agencies funded by a mixture of public sector grants and private sponsors. Sometimes they are controlled by the groups to whom they provide services. Independent consultants may also provide the same service, subsidised by other work. Some of the more established examples in London include Fundamental Architectural Inclusion in Newham, the Building Exploratory in Hackney, and divisions of Open City and the Architecture Foundation, although there are a number of other specialist organisations such as the Glass house.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/community_design_centre.php

<http://www.fundamental.uk.net/>

<http://www.buildingexploratory.org.uk/>

<http://www.theglasshouse.org.uk/>

Neighbourhood planning office



Neighbourhood planning offices or shops provide an important local focal point and make it easier to follow up initiatives, disseminate information and create dialogue. They can be independent outfits or part of a local regeneration agency or community centre. Every neighbourhood could have one, but they are particularly valuable in areas where there is a lot of building activity and a series of events are intended.

Ideally, a shop premises in a prominent location with a large window is chosen, perhaps with offices behind or above. They may also be intended to be more temporary and a caravan or container converted into a design studio may be more appropriate. They provide a working base for all professionals working with a neighbourhood, a venue for meetings and workshops. They should be staffed by people with project management skills able to take a pro-active role in pursuing improvement initiatives. The office can also combine the sale of useful material on environmental improvement with displays and information on local initiatives and projects and act as a public face for a local regeneration agency or community centre.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/mobile_unit.php

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/environment_shop.php

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/neighbourhood_planning_office.ph

Professional bodies

Professional bodies such as the Royal Institute of Town Planners (RTPI) or the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) run schemes which provide free and independent advice to groups or individuals who cannot afford to employ a consultant. A well-known example is Planning Aid which operates across England, and has a regional division known as Planning Aid for London.

Such organisations give people the knowledge, skills and confidence to deal with the planning system and to become involved with wider issues, through a register of qualified professional planners prepared to volunteer their time. People needing help are put in touch with the nearest suitable volunteer on the register. The volunteer assists as much as possible, referring queries to the authorities or consultants if appropriate. The schemes may employ paid workers, establish telephone helplines, produce publications and become more pro-active in encouraging community participation.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/planning_aid_scheme.php

<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid>

<http://www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk>



6. Finalising a Phase and Reporting Back

The end of an engagement event is not the end of the relationship between a neighbourhood forum and a borough. However it is important to mark the close of certain engagement events to denote a new phase within the process, and agree the ways in which the process will continue.

Publication or formal exhibition

Many of the engagement events in section 4 have noted particular outputs. These often take the form of a printed report or publication, or an exhibition. They are intended to summarise:

- The process and engagement that has been undertaken
- The discussions and ideas that emerged.
- The ideas and actions that were agreed.
- The 'next steps' to carry out the actions.
- The proposed form of engagement and reporting during this phase.

Review session

Review sessions are a useful way of monitoring progress and maintaining momentum. They can be held weeks, months, or even years after a neighbourhood planning event.

All those involved in previous activity are invited back to a session, normally lasting one day. Invitations can also be sent to those who may wish to become involved in the future. A programme is designed to review progress, evaluate earlier initiatives and determine the next steps. A report of the session is written up and circulated.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/review_session.php

The process of neighbourhood engagement may continue in the following ways:

- **Further consultation and planning events**
- **Further refinement of a scheme design or spatial policy**
- **The application of a Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO), to establish parameters for acceptable development which will not need further planning permissions.**
- **The adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF), giving them legal status.**
- **Through planning applications**
- **Securing project implementation funding**

It is important to have regular updates of progress between neighbourhood forums and boroughs. This will demonstrate that reactions and ideas that came up in engagement events are being considered in the finalisation of site specific designs or adopted neighbourhood plans. Maintaining a contacts database will ensure key representatives are easy to contact for further engagement on the same scheme or initiative or on other projects.



7. Changing and Managing the Place

A neighbourhood forum should eventually be able to see positive changes to which they have been a part of steering and making happen. This can be achieved with regular ongoing feedback and engagement.

In areas where there is a high level of local interest, energised by various events and activity, there are several ways of giving a greater leadership role to local people. With a little professional advice and guidance, an enthusiastic community can take on the drafting of policy, deciding how borough funding should be used, or even commissioning development projects to benefit the community. At its most ambitious, this level of integration between communities and local authorities can save money and give a real sense of ownership for communities, and secure the highest aspirations of the government's localism bill.

Local design statement

Local design statements are a way for local people to provide guidelines for new development in their area. They can be incorporated in local planning policy and provide a valuable way for local people to make a positive input into the planning process at an early stage.

A local design statement is drawn up by a specially formed team of the neighbourhood forum, supported by local planners. The team secures the views of as many people as possible through publicity, holding workshops and circulating draft statements for comment. The statement will include guidance for future developers based on the character of the landscape setting, settlement patterns, building forms and transport networks. The statement can be adopted by the planning authority as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and can be used to approve or reject planning applications from developers.

http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/local_design_statement.php

Feasibility fund

Feasibility funds provide money to community organisations to commission professionals to carry out feasibility studies on possible projects. They are a highly effective way of kick-starting local initiatives, by getting projects to a stage where they can attract capital funding and support.

A fund is established by the borough, most likely drawing from section 106 or similar income. Sponsors might include companies, local authorities, government departments or charities. The scheme is advertised and community groups invited to apply for funding. Grants are awarded and feasibility studies undertaken. If projects succeed in attracting capital funding, the grant money is repaid to the organising body.

Development trust

Development trusts provide a mechanism for communities to undertake regeneration and development projects themselves. They make it possible to achieve the long-term sustained effort that is needed to evolve a community's own plans and put them into action.

Development trusts are community-based organisations working for the regeneration of their areas. They may undertake a specific project or a range of economic, environmental, cultural or social initiatives. Development trusts are independent bodies with management structures ensuring accountability to local people. They are not-for-profit bodies, often with charitable status, making it possible to attract resources from public, private and charitable sectors. Administrative structures are designed to allow development trusts to own and manage property, employ staff and develop efficient project management capability.

Development trusts are a large topic in their own right and can take many forms. They are often granted a physical asset such as buildings or land which is owned by the trust and used as equity.

The Development Trusts Association is made up of existing development trusts, such as the Westway Development Trust, and provides advice on setting up development trusts to local authorities and local communities.

*Further information: Development Trusts Association <http://www.dta.org.uk/>
http://www.communityfinance.salford.ac.uk/pdf/Urban_tools__complete.pdf*