

Blackrod Neighbourhood Development Plan

Consultation Strategy

September 2016

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The local community must be consulted during the preparation of the plan. Once a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) has been prepared and before submitting it for independent examination, it must be publicised (Pre Submission Stage) and any comments received recorded in a Consultation Statement.
- 1.2 If the Inspector recommends that the NDP can proceed, it must then be approved by a public referendum before it can come into force. The referendum is a straightforward choice to either proceed with or reject the NDP. The NDP must gain at least a 50% yes vote. It will be essential to ensure that the community of Blackrod has been engaged from the beginning of the work on preparing the Plan and involved throughout the entire process. This will be a key factor in ensuring that the NDP is fit for purpose and accurately reflects the community's needs and aspirations, now, and going into the future.

2.0 The importance of successful community engagement

- 2.1 Successful community engagement will be important for a number of reasons:
1. There is a statutory requirement to consult the community and key stakeholders. If the NDP is to be found acceptable at the examination stage, we will need to demonstrate that we have complied with these requirements.
 2. People should have an opportunity to influence the content of the NDP right from the outset rather than being presented with a completed plan and being asked whether or not they agree with it.
 3. The plan needs to be informed by the community that it seeks to serve. Local people and organisations can assist greatly in helping draw up the evidence base and identify the key issues and objectives of the plan
 4. To be successful the NDP needs to draw on the ideas, skills and know-how of as wide a group of people as possible.
 5. The NDP needs to have 'buy-in' from the community and other stakeholders. If we do not secure this, we will not be able to bring about a deliverable plan. It could also face challenge.

3.0 Key principles of consultation

- 3.1 Our consultation strategy has been informed by the following key principles:

Don't 'reinvent the wheel' – Blackrod Town Council needs to draw on its experience of carrying out previous consultation exercises. Bolton Council has a great deal of practical experience of carrying out consultation on local planning and other documents. The principles of carrying out that process are set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. We will draw on that experience.

Genuine consultation - The purpose of undertaking community engagement is to inform the content of the plan. If the outcomes have already been determined, then community engagement is not going to be successful.

Front Loading - Consultation with key partners, statutory consultees and the local community should take place right from the beginning of the process and should inform each stage of it.

Engage the whole community - We need to ensure that we involve as many groups and individuals as possible. Particular attention needs to be given to involving 'hard to reach' groups, the elderly and young people, and ethnic minorities.

Publicity - We need to ensure that we publicise the proposed plan as widely as possible and as early as possible. We need to make sure that we use a wide range of methods and make any engagement informal, accessible and informative. We will put all the information relating to the plan on our website and keep our community advised.

4.0 Consultation methods

4.1 The range of consultation methods that we will use includes:

- Self-completion questionnaires
- on street face to face questionnaire
- website and online questionnaire
- social media, e.g. facebook, twitter etc
- public meetings
- focus groups
- stakeholder seminars
- open days
- drop in /road show events
- exhibitions
- in depth interviews / face to face, as necessary
- stakeholder meetings
- community meetings
- workshop or group events

4.2 In all cases a standardised method will be used to record consultation comments. Consultation comments will be recorded onto a master spreadsheet.

5.0 Who do we need to consult with?

5.1 There are three distinct strands to consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan:-

1. Identifying and working with **key local partners** - Individuals groups and organisations who have a particular involvement and interest in the area.
2. **Engaging with the community** throughout the process - ensuring that as wide a group of people as possible are involved and that they have every opportunity to influence the Plan.
3. Effectively carrying out the necessary '**statutory consultation**' - with groups and individuals in line with the requirements of 'The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012'.

6.0 Key Local Partners

6.1 Key partners will include:

- Bolton Council officers including all relevant departments, i.e Strategic Planning and Sustainable Development, Community Housing etc.
- Bolton Council ward councillors
- Bolton at Home
- Local businesses and major employers
- Bolton Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG).
- NHS Health and Social Care organisations

6.2 Consultation and engagement has already commenced. A Steering Group has been established. Other potential partners will be contacted and if appropriate, meetings arranged. Appropriate working arrangements will be established.

7.0 Topic Groups

7.1 Topic groups will be established to deal with the following topics:

- Housing
- Transport/Infrastructure
- Natural Environment
- Public Realm

- Community Facilities
- Economy & Employment and Town Centre & Retail
- Built Heritage
- Design Standards

7.2 The outcomes of the Topic group meetings will be recorded, in a standardised format and summarised in the regular monthly meeting Minutes which will be posted on the Neighbourhood Plan website.

8.0 Community Engagement

8.1 We will consult as widely as possible to engage with the entire community. We will also seek to engage with specific groups and organisations including:

- Community groups
- Sports clubs
- Local trusts and project groups
- Not-for-profit organisations representing specific groups (e.g. elderly, disabled, young people, faith groups and ethnic groups)
- Schools
- Local Institutions
- Workers, Employees and Businesses
- Visitors
- Neighbouring Parish and Town Councils

9.0 Statutory Consultees

9.1 The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations require that before submitting the Plan to Bolton Council, the Town Council must consult any 'consultation body' (statutory consultee) whose interests may be affected by the proposals for the neighbourhood plan. These statutory consultees are:-

- The Coal Authority
- The Homes and Communities Agency
- Natural England
- The Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited
- Highways England
- Entec on b/h the National Grid
- Primary Care Trust - Bolton Clinical Commissioning Group
- United Utilities – Sewerage and Water undertakers
- Lancashire County Council

- Chorley Council
- Adlington Town Council
- Westhoughton Town Council
- Horwich Town Council
- Haigh Parish Council
- SSA Planning
- Knight Frank

9.2 It may not be necessary to consult all of these bodies; it very much depends on the final nature of the NDP and the policies it contains.

10.0 Consultation to date

10.1 Bolton Council has designated a Neighbourhood Area for the Blackrod Neighbourhood Plan, following a period of publicity in May and June 2016.

11.0 The Statutory Process

11.1 The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended) set out the required consultation process. The provisions requiring action by the Town Council are summarised below:

Pre-submission consultation and publicity

Before submitting a plan proposal to Bolton Council, the Town Council must:

- (a) publicise, in a manner that is likely to bring it to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area:
 - (i) details of the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan;
 - (ii) details of where and when the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan may be inspected;
 - (iii) details of how to make representations; and
 - (iv) the date by which those representations must be received, being not less than 6 weeks from the date on which the draft proposal is first publicised;
- (b) consult any consultation body (see 'statutory consultees listed above) whose interests the Town Council body considers may be affected by the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan; and
- (c) send a copy of the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan to Bolton Council.

Plan proposals

When the plan proposal is submitted to Bolton Council it must include:

- (a) a map or statement which identifies the area to which the proposed neighbourhood development plan relates;
- (b) a consultation statement ;
- (c) the proposed neighbourhood development plan; and
- (d) a Basic Conditions Statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood development plan meets the requirements of paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act.
- (e) One of the following a) a statement of reasons for a determination under regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 that the proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects OR b) an environmental report in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 6.
- (f) Where appropriate, the information to enable appropriate environmental assessments if required e.g. that will enable the LPA to make an assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 where the plan proposal is likely to have significant effects on a European site or European offshore marine site or the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

12.0 Key Stages of Consultation

12.1 The following key stages have been identified. Details, timescales and actions are set out in the table below.

1. Undertake 1st community consultation
2. Agree Consultation Strategy
3. Identifying key local partners
4. Develop Working Arrangements with key local partners
5. Identify key partner aspirations
6. One to one meetings with key stakeholders
7. Undertake 2nd community consultation (on vision, objectives and plan themes).
8. Draft Consultation Statement
9. Undertake statutory 6 week pre-submission consultation (3rd Community Consultation)

10. Finalise Consultation Statement

Table1: Consultation Strategy - Key Stages

Stage	When	How	Comment
1st Community Consultation	To be agreed	See below	4 weeks
Agree Consultation Strategy	To be agreed	Written statement	
Develop consultation database	To be agreed	Input from Bolton Council and Steering Group	
Identifying key local partners	To be agreed	Liaison with Steering Group and Bolton Council	Draft list produced but will require comment and input from Steering Group
Develop Working Arrangements with key local partners	To be agreed	In discussion with Partners and Steering Group; inclusion in Topic Groups	
Identify key partner aspirations	To be agreed	In discussion with Partners; report back to Steering Group	
One to one meetings with key stakeholders	To be agreed	Meetings to be arranged; input from Town Clerk; report back to Steering Group	
Identify Topic Groups	To be agreed	In discussion with Steering Group	
Topic Group meetings	To be agreed	Meetings	
Undertake 2nd community consultation	To be agreed		Feed into draft plan
Undertake statutory pre-submission consultation (see below)	To be agreed	See below	6 weeks minimum
Audit Check	To be agreed	Written Statement	Check to ensure that the consultation arrangements meet statutory requirements.
Prepare/ update Consultation Statement	To be agreed	Written Statement	

Stage 1 Consultation

- 12.2 This will launch the Neighbourhood Plan and invite comments on the idea and potential scope of the plan. This will be used to inform the vision, objectives, and key issues to be addressed by the plan. A newsletter/flyer

will be used to seek comments. Comments will be able to be submitted on the website or dropped into Blackrod library.

Stage 2 – Community Consultation (on vision, objectives and plan themes)

12.3 This will invite comments on the vision, objectives and plan themes. It will feed into the preparation of the draft plan

12.4 The process to be followed is set out below:

1. Consult with Statutory Consultees - email
2. Consult with key partners and stakeholders - email
3. Consult with local businesses and other stakeholder groups
4. Community Engagement
 - Blackrod Town Council newsletter - Door to Door delivery
 - Awareness and “Have your Say” Flyer/s – Door to Door Delivery
 - Village Notice Boards – latest Flyer/s
 - Neighbourhood Plan Web Site
 - Neighbourhood Plan Facebook page
 - Link from Bolton Council website
 - Drop in/roadshow events - number and venues to be agreed
 - Permanent exhibition/Progress updates – a stand in Library foyer

Stage 3 - Pre-submission consultation

12.5 This will invite comments on the detailed Plan, its scope, policies etc.

12.6 The process to be followed is set out below:

1. Consult with Statutory Consultees - email
2. Consult with key partners and stakeholders - email
3. Community Engagement
 - Blackrod Town Council newsletter - Door to Door delivery
 - Awareness and “Have your Say” Flyer/s – Door to Door Delivery
 - Blackrod Town Council Web Site
 - Neighbourhood Plan website
 - Neighbourhood Plan Facebook page
 - Link from Bolton Council website
 - Drop in/roadshow events - number and venues to be agreed
 - Exhibition - venue to be agreed

Action Plan

- 12.5 For both consultation stages a detailed Action Plan will be produced setting out all actions, timescales and milestones to ensure that the process proceeds in a timely manner and that the consultation process meets statutory requirements. A draft Action Plan has been prepared as shown in Appendix 2.

APPENDIX 1:

Neighbourhood Area Designation - list of respondents and summary of comments

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Consultee	Summary of Comment	Council Response	Suggested Change
Natural England	No comment on the boundary of the area, but identifies a range of information for use in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.	Noted. Forward the range of information to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	None
Historic England	No comment on the boundary of the area, but identifies a range of information for use in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.	Noted. Forward the range of information to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	None
Network Rail	No comment on the boundary of the area, but would like to be kept informed as the plan is developed.	Noted.	None
Coal Authority	No specific comment, but identifies that Blackrod is an area where there has been past coal mining activity.	Noted.	None
Knight Frank	Wish to be kept informed as the Plan progresses.	Noted	None
Horwich Town Council	Acknowledge the boundary and express the view that this is a positive development.	Noted	None

APPENDIX 2: Draft Action Plan

Neighbourhood Plan Draft Action Plan

PROJECT PHASE	PROPOSED START DATE	PROPOSED END DATE	ACTUAL START DATE	ACTUAL END DATE	ANY COMMENTS
GETTING STARTED					
Clarify why a plan is needed	10/08/2015	09/10/2015	10/08/2015	29/03/2016	Delayed
Publicise the intention to produce a plan	08/09/2015	02/11/2015	05/01/2016	24/05/2016	Council Newsletter & Free Press
Identify and contact key local partners	07/04/2016	03/10/2016	07/04/2016	[Select Date]	
Speak to the Local Planning Authority	16/07/2015	17/07/2015	16/07/2015	17/07/2015	Ongoing involvement
NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA					
Consult on and determine Neighbourhood Area	29/03/2016	04/04/2016	04/04/2016	07/04/2016	Complete
Submit Neighbourhood Area application	07/04/2016	11/04/2016	07/04/2016	07/04/2016	Submitted to Bolton Council
Consultation on Neighbourhood Area	20/04/2016	20/05/2016	20/05/2016	20/06/2016	Delayed
Decision on Neighbourhood Area	20/05/2016	27/05/2016	20/06/2016	11/07/2016	Approved
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT					
Publicity	01/08/2016	01/12/2016	01/08/2016	[Select Date]	Continuous
Engage local partners	01/08/2016	29/09/2017	01/08/2016	[Select Date]	Continuous
Pre-submission consultation					

**INDEPENDENT
EXAMINATION**

Local planning
Authority appoints
examiner

Examination

Examiners report
published

REFERENDUM

Publication of pre-
Referendum
information and
documents

Referendum

Publication of
Referendum
decision

Neighbourhood plan
is 'made'