

# **Engagement Strategy** **for the City Centre, Stafford Road Corridor and Bilston** **Corridor Area Action Plans**

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The AAP's will provide a deliverable regeneration strategy for these parts of the city. This will include allocating specific sites for housing, employment, open space, and new infrastructure. There will be a focus on implementation to show how and where these developments will be delivered, and to provide a mechanism for ensuring development of an appropriate scale, mix of uses and quality. In planning for future development in this way, the AAP's can strive to achieve the regeneration of the area which benefits the local community.

The production of AAP's must follow the Government's principles for community engagement to ensure the community can have their say in these important plans. Namely involvement should be:

- Appropriate to the level of planning;
- From the outset – leading to a sense of ownership of local policy decisions;
- Continuous – part of an ongoing programme, not a one-off event, with clearly articulated opportunities for continuing involvement;
- Transparent and accessible – using methods appropriate to the communities concerned; and
- Planned – an integral part of the process for making plans.

Engaging people in this process will help ensure that the AAP's have positive impacts in the areas and are produced with the broad consensus of the communities which they will impact on. Engagement and consultation is a key part of the evidence we collect as people will have knowledge about their local area. It also means that emerging Government policy on 'Localism' and the 'Big Society' is factored into the preparation of the plans. Engaging with key stakeholders will ensure the plans are deliverable.

### Engagement Strategy

This document puts forward a strategy for the effective and inclusive engagement of the wide range of stakeholders and local communities that have a stake in shaping and delivering these AAP's. It is intended to be a guide and indication of what engagement work the Council will be undertaking. It does not intend to repeat all the requirements and information from Government Guidance and local documents. It will be kept under review to ensure it remains up to date. The Council is looking to develop a partnership approach with the communities and stakeholders as we will all have to take ownership of the plans.

This strategy will follow the principles and advice contained in:

- PPS12, the 2008 Regulations and supporting Plan Making Manual
- Wolverhampton's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
- Wolverhampton's Community Engagement Strategy, and the Community Engagement Framework and Guidance.

## Aims

- To provide a clear statement setting out how engagement and consultation will be undertaken, which accords with legislative requirements and is responsive to local circumstances;
- To ensure that key stakeholders are identified and targeted, with a focus on ensuring the delivery of the AAP proposals , whilst also maintaining wider community engagement and influence;
- To ensure that all consultees are well informed throughout the AAP process;
- For the AAP to reflect the aspirations of the local community.

## Objectives

- To take a project management approach to managing consultation and ensure that engagement is embedded throughout the preparation of the AAP's;
- To produce an engagement plan to support the delivery of each stage of preparing the AAP's;
- To set up a process to identify the key stakeholders and communities in each AAP area who need to be involved;
- To establish clear opportunities for communities and stakeholders to inform plans;
- To ensure appropriate levels and methods of engagement are used, particularly to help avoid "consultation fatigue".

## **Part 2 – An Updated Consultation Approach**

The starting point for consultation on the LDF is PPS12 and the SCI. Since the SCI was adopted in 2007 the Government has issued a revised PPS12 and Regulations.

As a result of this, the most significant change is that certain stages of formal consultation have been removed, but with a continued emphasis on involving people throughout the process of preparing plans as the Council sees fit. Two key requirements from these changes are that:

- The LPA should work closely with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to take a strategic approach to community involvement. This will help remove duplication, combat consultation fatigue and make the most of opportunities to maximise the strengths of different resources and skills in the Council.
- Consultation during preparation of the AAP's should be proportionate to the scale of issues involved in the plan.

The Plan Making Manual (the online manual which supports PPS12), advises that it is helpful to undertake consultation on Options and to let the public know of this intention in advance in relation to commitments set out in the SCI. This also helps fulfil PPS12 requirements to keep the public aware of LDF timetables and work being undertaken. It also advises that, even where the letter of the SCI cannot be sensibly adhered to, it will be important to ensure appropriate community involvement throughout the plan making process.

The Council considers that the SCI remains valid, as the methods and approach are still relevant and up to date. Part 3 sets out the Council's approach to the stages of engagement through the production of the AAP's and highlights the links to the SCI.

## **Part 3 – Engagement Strategy**

### **Stages of Engagement**

The Council still intends to have 3 stages of formal engagement for each AAP, which will involve consultation with communities and key stakeholders:

- 1) Generation and clarification of Issues
- 2) Development and evaluation of Options
- 3) Publication and Submission of AAP's to the Secretary of State

Stages 1 and 2 above largely correspond with Stage 1 identified in the SCI on pages 15-16. Stage 3 relates to stage 3 in the SCI. Each stage will require its own appropriate level of engagement.

It is proposed that there will be publicised consultation periods during Stages 1 and 2, and statutory formal periods for consultation on the Publication document and Submission document at Stage 3. This will help focus discussions at key stages of plan preparation, and will be supported by ongoing engagement with key stakeholders and communities throughout the process, to tackle issues that arise and to assist in the development of meaningful and deliverable options.

Engagement at the examination stage, following Submission to the Secretary of State, will be as set out in the SCI. Further publicity will be required to inform consultees and the wider community of the outcome of the examination.

A detailed Engagement Plan will be published to support each stage of the production of each AAP. Consultation events will also be publicised.

The timescale for Stages 1 and 2 will extend from 2011 to early 2012, with Stage 3 envisaged to take place during 2012, as detailed below. This will be kept up to date and will be available on the LDF website. Resources have been put in place to ensure engagement and consultation can be delivered on time.

<b>AAP</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
Stafford Road Corridor	Issues Consultation	June - August 2009
	Options Consultation	Spring 2011
	Publication / Submission	Winter 2011/2
Bilston Corridor	Issues Consultation	Dec 2010 – Feb 2011
	Options Consultation	Summer 2011
	Publication / Submission	Spring 2012
City Centre	Issues Consultation	Spring 2011
	Options Consultation	Autumn 2011
	Publication / Submission	Spring 2012

## Engagement Principles

- 1) The AAPs will be delivered through a partnership approach between the City Council, local communities and key stakeholders. Working in partnership should ensure that communities do not get overwhelmed with numerous consultation events / activities. For example, the Council are working with the LSP to coordinate consultations on the revised Sustainable Community Strategy and the Area Action Plans.
- 2) A commitment to continuously engage people in a timely, effective and appropriate manner. We will respond to community requests to be involved in the preparation of the AAP's. Formal periods of consultation will last for at least 6 weeks.
- 3) To ensure local communities are involved from early on in the production of the AAPs. Opportunities will be taken to inform people about the AAP, but also to engage them to get involved and influence decisions on future development in their area. We will identify how we can best enable local communities to take part in the engagement activities.
- 4) People will be able to influence the details and delivery for each AAP, within the context of the policies in the Black Country Core Strategy. This will ensure there are opportunities for the development of, for example, new homes and employment opportunities. We will be clear at the outset about the purpose, boundaries, limitations and potential of the activity, using plain language where possible.
- 5) An inclusive approach, with a degree of focus needed in each AAP on particular interests. For example, the City Centre AAP will have a wide geographic interest and the views of visitors will need to be sought.
- 6) Key local communities, stakeholders and hard to reach groups for each AAP area will be identified and engaged where possible, including using the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships who cover the whole city. This will be a continuous process throughout the production of the AAPs to engage people. Establishing who the communities are will help us ensure consultation responses are as representative as possible.
- 7) Analysis, evaluation and feedback on consultations will be provided before progression to the following stage of plan preparation, in line with the SCI (page 14). Analysis of responses to date will help ensure that our consultation approach adapts and responds to the local circumstances in each AAP. This will ensure we are open, accountable and transparent about the consultation process and the decisions that are subsequently made.

## **Appendix – Specific Consultation Requirements**

The key engagement and consultation requirements for the preparation of the AAP's are set out below.

### **Stage 1 - Generation and Clarification of Issues**

#### Purpose

Aimed at initiating discussion about the matters relevant to the area, with a view to helping generate options at Stage 2.

#### Specific Consultation Requirements

- Notify each of the specific and general consultation bodies on the subject of the AAP and invite their views on what it ought to contain ('Regulation 25').
- Council must decide if it is appropriate to invite representations from residents and businesses, and if so, to make appropriate arrangements.
- Regulation requirements may be fulfilled by other activities undertaken by council and its partners, e.g. consultation on another document.
- Frontloading
  - Early and effective involvement of key stakeholders (emphasised in PPS12) and the community
  - Should involve the following from the outset:
    - National organisations
    - Government agencies
    - Regional organisations
    - Utilities companies
    - Developers
    - Local organisations
    - Local community groups

### **Stage 2 – Development and Evaluation of Options**

#### Purpose

To put forward realistic alternative options for development in the area, to help address the agreed issues and to ensure the final plan is the most appropriate when considered against the alternatives.

#### Specific Consultation Requirements

- Ensure specific requirements from regulations identified in Stage 1 are met as this stage provides another opportunity to meet them.
- Council must seek out and evaluate reasonable alternatives – this will help ensure the final plan is the most appropriate.
- Options must be realistic and deliverable.
- PPS12 advises on the need to involve the public in the process of refining and improving the options.

- Key role in demonstrating the soundness of the AAP - community engagement is crucial for this.

### **Stage 3 – Publication and Submission of AAP document to the Secretary of State**

In this stage there are two phases the AAP will go through before being examined by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. These phases are Publication and Submission.

#### **Publication**

##### Purpose

To gather representations on the soundness of the Publication AAP, that is proposed to be submitted to the Secretary of State.

##### Specific Consultation Requirements

- The Council must consider the plan sound at the time of publication.
- Number of requirements under Regulation 27, including:
  - Make copies of the AAP available in principal offices and on the Council website;
  - Send copies to the specific and general consultation bodies;
  - Make people aware of how they can make representations e.g. with a press notice;
  - Make supporting documents (e.g. evidence reports) and Sustainability Appraisal available.
- Need to consult for a minimum of 6 weeks.

#### **Submission**

##### Purpose

To formally submit the AAP to the Secretary of State to undertake an examination into its 'soundness'.

##### Specific Consultation Requirements

- Similar requirements to the Publication stage, with more details provided on who has been consulted and how they have been engaged (Regulation 30).