

# Design Code Guidance Note Community Engagement Methods

September 2021



## Community Engagement Methods

A crucial part of the process of creating a Design Code is to involve your community. This is essentially their Design Code.

Engagement should not just be on the completed document but include:

- Decision on what parts of the parish should be covered by the Code and will there be specific areas types identified?
- Collating the characterisation background and context;
- Considering the content of the Code itself.

The key element for your Design Code is to be able to demonstrate that it is locally popular and supported. This is important if the Code is to be used as a material consideration within the planning decision making process and will reduce the local challenges to these decisions.

As you will be aware for the neighbourhood planning process, meaningful engagement should include local residents, groups, businesses, developers and a number of agencies.

Different ways of communication will suit different people, depending on circumstance; therefore a mixture of consultation methods is recommended. With the use of good communication, everyone can find the information they need and will know how to get involved if they choose to.

By engaging at key stages through the process, people are given the opportunity to influence decisions that directly affect them. It also gives you as the Parish Council who are ultimately creating the Code, a chance to access additional local knowledge and expertise.

As with your Neighbourhood Plan, it is important that the community understand the relevance of the Design Code.

- What is the Design Code?
- What is it aiming to do?
- What difference will it make?
- How can I get involved?
- Will my opinion count?

You will need engagement with members of the community on elements of the Code such as:

- Movement;
- Built Form;
- Identity;
- Nature and open spaces;
- Public spaces.

A number of guidance notes and worksheets have been produced to assist you parish council gather information to inform the Code. These can be found on the [Herefordshire Council website](#).

These should be used during the engagement phases to inform the final Code's content.

### Community Engagement methods

It is essential that the content of your Code represents the views of the wider community. You will need to be able to measure public opinion and support for the Code that you produce. Elements of design can be subjective and you will encounter a wide range of differing opinions.

You will need to consider how these will be captured, measured and informs the final decisions regarding the character of the parish and the Code itself.

It is suggested that you use a range of consultation methods and these could be different depending on what information you are aiming to gather or consult upon.

Your resulting Design Code will need to be popular locally and based on evidence. Unlike Neighbourhood Plans there are currently no suggestion that Design Codes themselves will need to be subject to an examination or referendum. However, if they are being produced as part of and concurrently with the Neighbourhood Plan process, then the public perception of the Code may influence the progress of the NDP itself.

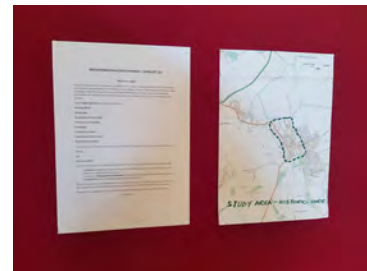
There are a significant range of engagement methods as highlighted below:

## Gathering data and opinions

### Exhibition

A display available for a specified length of time in a designated space for visitors to come and see when convenient for them. If the exhibition is manned, then it gives visitors the chance to ask questions.

This could be useful particularly for element of the Built Form and Identity sections of the Code.



### Paper survey

A printed survey that can be completed at face to face events, or posted through doors, or just made available to print from a website/email for those who prefer to complete a survey that way. Questions need to be framed in a manner which is easily understood, covers all possible options and avoids “leading” the respondent.

### Planning for Real

Provide a large scale map of area that can be pinned with suggestions from visitors. This is an Interactive means of prompting conversation and getting a visual representation of community views around place-shaping.

This is a technique many will have been familiar with as part of the production of their neighbourhood plans. This method can be particularly useful for the place-shaping elements of the Code such as public space, nature, movement



### Walking tour

Take a group on a tour of the local area in order to prompt discussion along the way. Provides the opportunity to make notes, sketches, take photos and talk informally to people in their own setting



This technique is particularly useful to introduce the community to the concept of the Design Code, as people have a detailed look at the environment around them, potentially seeing things that they have not noticed on a day to day basis. This is useful for the Built Form and Identity sections of the Code.



### **On street survey**

Offering passers-by the chance to take part in a survey completed by the questioner. A opportunity for face to face engagement and conversation with potential participants, who may not normally take the time under their own initiative.

### **Collating and analysing data**

#### **Forum/Focus Group**

Gather individuals specifically selected to represent different interest groups/stakeholders in a designated venue to give opportunity for topics on an agenda to be discussed and views to be offered.

#### **Workshop**

A group of individuals, who work together on an issue or task, based on a topic and provided with a facilitator to guide and help produce an end goal.

These techniques would aid the quantifying and qualifying of the discussions and data gathered as part of a walking tour, planning for real event or exhibition. This may assist the Code writers to measure the information assembled with specifically interested individuals.

### **Information sharing and awareness raising**

#### **School events**

An opportunity to gather the views of the younger members of the community. This could be a stand at the school fete, or a feature at an assembly, or even be a special class workshop arranged through the school.

#### **Community events**

Community fairs provide a fun occasion that will draw a crowd of all ages and backgrounds. It then provides an opportunity to inform and engage the people within a community at one event. They can create interest from media groups and lead to increased coverage of the issue.

#### **Meeting**

An open invitation to individuals to come at a set time to a designated venue and discuss topics around an agenda. It's an opportunity for questions to be asked and discuss ideas openly.

#### **Seminar**

One or more speakers giving a presentation, with an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and discuss.

## Newsletters/parish magazines

A cheap and effective way of keeping people informed if a publication is already in regular circulation. Updates can be given for forthcoming events and results during the stages of the Design Code preparation.

As highlighted previously, it is important that the whole community share the Design Code and that the resulting document is locally popular with a basis on sound and demonstrable evidence. The above are a range of methods to raise awareness and progress of your Code during its production.

## Online and digital engagement

The use of online and digital engagement has increased significantly since many neighbourhood plan consultations were first undertaken. There is a role of online engagement together with some of the more traditional face to face techniques highlighted above.

A combination of techniques will enable you to reach the maximum number of people with a range of methods to suit their lifestyles and ability to participate.

### Online survey

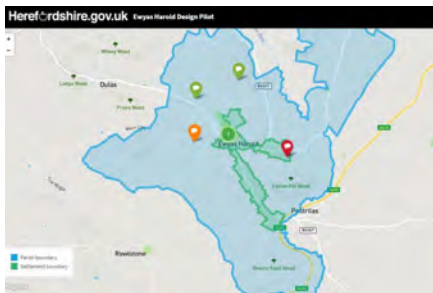
A survey made available where online facilities are available. Can be linked to a website, text, a social media post or email. People can participate without having to travel to meetings, it saves paper, enables people to focus on the issues that particularly interest them, and works well for people who feel intimidated by speaking in public.

### Social Media

A cost effective way of publicising concisely, which can link to further information on a separate website. Can also be used as a method of gaining opinion on something basic, by setting up a poll. Participants can place a vote, giving a quantifiable result.

### Online mapping exercise

Participants can pin their views to specific points on a map and answer questions about what they have pinned. Consultees also have the opportunity to see what others are commenting on in real time, rather than having to wait for results to be published.



For additional information regarding consultation and engagement, please go to [Neighbourhood Planning Best Practice Community Engagement Techniques Guidance Note](#).



