



## Community Engagement Network Event

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### Pre-application community consultation: getting the benefits

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017

#### Speaker summaries

##### **Pre-application community consultation: a local perspective?**

**Gary Collins**, Bristol City Council & **Alison Bromilow**, Neighbourhood Planning Network

Gary and Alison introduced the approach to pre-application community consultation in Bristol from the perspective of the local planning authority and community organiser.

Gary explained how Bristol City Council (BCC) had developed its approach to pre-application community consultation through an exploration of effective working practices with developers during a period of constrained resources. The Council realised that an effective pre-application strategy must include a three way conversation between the community, developer and local planning authority since it would provide the planning and development process with greater certainty and allow risks to be managed by being more transparent, requiring fewer changes to schemes later on, saving time and costs.

BCC has now developed a range of planning policy tools that set the ground rules for community engagement which the Council and the local community expect. Gary explained that the Council also has regular engagement meetings with the Neighbourhood Planning Network (NPN) and representatives of defined areas of Bristol. It also undertakes internal meetings with its development management officers to learn from and improve engagement practices. Bristol City Council also facilitates engagement meetings between the NPN and developers and encourages NPN and area representative involvement in Ward Member briefing sessions.

Gary set out how community involvement is now a material consideration in England for planning decisions; developments that demonstrate good community engagement should be considered more favourably. In Bristol, Gary explained too that the developer's approach to community engagement is also set out in the planning committee report and could be countersigned by the NPN if it had its support.

Alison explained that the NPN was run by volunteers and works by linking up and maintaining a list of active groups and contacts in Bristol, which developers can use

to contact them about proposals. Community groups can also pass on their issues through NPN to the case officer at BCC. Alison stressed that the NPN does not speak for them but takes on the administration role. NPN had also worked with BCC to revise and improve the Council's statement of community involvement.

Alison stressed that good community engagement could bring benefits in terms of limiting potential conflicts and tensions, provide a better understanding of the decision-making process all round, allow greater openness and transparency of the decision-making process and provide a greater likelihood of positive outcomes. Simply using a public exhibition before a submitting a planning application without any prior engagement with the community was a lost opportunity.

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Bristol City Council and Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network provided links to relevant documents and websites after the event. They can be accessed below:

BCC Statement of Community Involvement:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/34540/Statement+of+community+involvement/8e887825-6a46-4368-8bb3-d5ce6c9125b2>

Guidelines for pre-application community involvement:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33928/Guidelines+for+planning+pre-application+community+involvement/3226f218-09e6-4f18-88af-58e4964dc7bc>

The Bristol Planning Protocol

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33928/The+Bristol+Planning+Protocol.pdf/02986b3f-cca4-4f25-8ee5-b44292bc93ed>

BCC pre-app advice webpage

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regulations/planning-advice-and-guidance>

Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network website

<http://www.bristolnbn.net/>