

How to write a consultation statement

Putting the pieces together



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1. Introduction

This resource will focus on how to write a consultation statement. It will explain:

- what a consultation statement is
- what information it should include
- how it should be structured
- how to write the consultation statement

If you are new to neighbourhood planning you are encouraged to read the [Locality Roadmap](#) which explains the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan. It will provide useful context to this resource which focuses on the 'how'.

2. What is a consultation statement?

When submitting your neighbourhood plan to your local planning authority, the legislation requires you to submit a number of other documents to accompany it. One of these is a "consultation statement".

You must include the following information in your consultation statement:

- details of who was consulted on the proposed neighbourhood plan (including any of the [consultation bodies](#))
- an explanation of how they were consulted
- a summary of the main issues and concerns raised through consultation
- a description of how these issues were considered, and where relevant, addressed in the neighbourhood plan proposal.

The consultation statement is your opportunity to explain and demonstrate how engagement with your community and others has shaped the development of your neighbourhood plan. The consultation statement should include and summarise all the statutory (i.e. the pre-submission publicity and consultation period) and non-statutory consultation that has taken place with the community, organisations and other relevant bodies to develop your plan.

3. How should your consultation statement be structured?

There is no set structure for a consultation statement but we recommend that it should be a logical and concise document. We have produced a resource on [Approaches to writing a consultation statement](#) that provides a steer on how you may wish to structure your consultation statement and the information that may be relevant to each chapter.



4. How do you write a consultation statement?

This section offers advice on how to prepare a consultation statement.

- Keep it **short and focused**. The legislation requires you to present a 'summary' of the main issues and concerns raised. You may find it easier to summarise each stage of your consultation (from deciding on the extent of your neighbourhood area all the way through to pre-submission consultation and publicity) or to present information by topic (e.g. housing, retail and employment). Many groups use a series of bullet points to detail who they consulted, how and when.
- Record details of **all the consultation activities** that you have held, not just at the pre-submission publicity and consultation stage. Effective engagement with the wider community and others is required throughout the process. It should help shape the direction of the plan (from decisions on the extent of the area boundary, identification of the issues to address, the development of the vision and objectives, through to formal consultation and publicity).
- You should **keep records and evidence** of the number of people attending consultation events, meetings and awareness raising activities as you go along, as well as a record of the type of event. The records and evidence can include copies of leaflets; photographs of events; minutes of steering group meetings; questionnaires and survey results. Keeping this information will help you when writing the consultation statement as you will have all the information you require and a portfolio of evidence. You may wish to take this one step further and start writing parts of the consultation statement shortly after an event or an activity. This will save you time in the long run and allow you to record information accurately while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Demonstrate **how consultation was undertaken during the preparation of your plan**. The legislation requires that before submitting your neighbourhood plan to your local planning authority you publicise your plan to those who live, work and carry out business within the neighbourhood area and invite representations (comments). You must allow people at least six weeks to respond. You must also consult any of the [consultation bodies](#) whose interest you consider may be affected by your neighbourhood plan. You need to be able to demonstrate that you have done this and explain the methods you used. Providing copies of the materials used dates and summaries of events and any questionnaires (as well as any consultation strategy you may have produced) will help to demonstrate this point.
- It is also important that you can demonstrate that you **reached (or sought to reach) a wide cross-section of the population**. You may have used different approaches to target specific interest groups. For example, the distribution of a business survey to capture the views of businesses; meetings with landowners and developers; and events in schools to engage with young people. These approaches should be set out in your consultation statement together with an explanation of why you adopted a particular approach.



- Highlight any **interesting/innovative methods** you have used. This is often best achieved by using photographs. For example, the Old Market Quarter Neighbourhood Forum used a [wish cart](#) to gather views of the wider community. [Tattenhall Parish Council](#) held a 'rave' to engage with the 16-21 age group (a condition of entry to the event was to complete a questionnaire). Tattenhall Neighbourhood Forum produced a [video](#), as background information during their pre-submission consultation and publicity period, to explain their neighbourhood plan and how it had been produced. The Lawrence Weston Neighbourhood Forum has also produced a [video](#) explaining how and why they produced their plan.
- **Include photographs, images and diagrams.** These can be an effective way of capturing the results of your consultation events. For example, a photograph of people's ideas written on post it notes will help the reader of your consultation statement understand how you developed your vision more effectively than a description of the process.
- Ensure you **clearly record how you considered issues that were raised** during any consultation activity and, where relevant, how you have addressed these in your plan. Many groups have presented this information in a table and used the following headings:
 - comment number
 - name
 - issue / comment
 - reference in draft plan (e.g. page number, theme, policy number)
 - response (e.g. comment noted, whether you consider the plan should be amended in light of the comment) and any amendments made to the neighbourhood plan in response.
- Make **effective use of appendices.** This can be a good way to direct people to further background information and to copies of the materials you used to publicise your plan. If you do decide to use appendices then make sure you guide the reader by including a cross-reference to the relevant appendix in the text. Consider using electronic links to background material where possible as this will help to reduce the size of your document.

You may wish to consider including the following in appendices:

- a detailed list of all the consultation events, including an overview of the event, number of attendees and key outcomes
- copies of questionnaires, surveys and details of any engagement techniques
- copies of leaflets and other publicity material e.g. posters
- copies of newspaper cuttings and press coverage of your plan
- photographs of engagement events
- a list of the [consultation bodies](#) you consulted during the [pre-submission consultation and publicity period](#). Details of those you did not consult and an explanation of the reasons why



- a record of all the comments you received during the pre-submission consultation and publicity period.
- **Have a look at examples of other groups' consultation statements** as there are various approaches you can use to structure yours. There are a number of websites dedicated to neighbourhood planning including the [Community Knowledge Hub](#) and the [Forum for Neighbourhood Planning](#) where you can find a wealth of information and resources and links to 'made' plans.

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