

Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan

Communication Strategy and Plan

DRAFT

Introduction

The Localism Act was passed by Government in November 2011 and final regulations relating to the Act and regulating the process came into force in April 2012. The Act allows local areas to produce a spatial development plan for their area and, if adopted, future planning applications would have to have regard to the policies within this plan.

Higham Ferrers Town Council has decided that it requires a Neighbourhood Plan and wishes to have one in place as quickly as possible. Realistically, this may take between 12 and 18 months to achieve. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to:

- To create local planning policies for Higham Ferrers which development proposals need to adhere to;
- To protect against inappropriate and speculative development and to provide greater control over development;
- To bring forward action on facilities and improvements, which are needed by the town.

Purpose

Two-way communication with the local community during the Neighbourhood Plan is vital for its success and ultimate support through the referendum; therefore, it is important to develop a coherent strategy of how this will be achieved and plan out key stakeholder engagement.

This strategy sets a framework for communications to develop, promote, and support the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan. It gives direction to all media, online, internal, marketing, publications, and public relations communications activity undertaken on behalf of the Higham Ferrers Town Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

We will use the most appropriate channels of communications to reach our wide variety of stakeholders including residents, employees, businesses, community partners, and all levels of government. We will seek to provide communications services on the most cost – effective basis.

Communication only works when messages are clear and easy to understand and when it is a two - way process. It's not enough to talk – we also have to be able to listen. Therefore, this strategy will set out to ensure that key messages are developed throughout the various stages of the Neighbourhood Plan, are communicated as widely as possible, and stakeholders are provided with multiple methods of providing feedback.

Vision Statement

For the next 20 years the vision for Higham Ferrers is that the town will be:

A sustainable, vibrant, thriving community

Strongly based on its history with an emphasis on individuality and with growth that supports a market town heritage

A community which encourages attractive, high-quality development

Including new housing, commercial property, and community facilities within a compact market town environment.

A community that is inclusive

With safe access to its town centre and excellent links to adjacent housing estates, the surrounding countryside, and the regional transportation network.

An attractive town centre

With increased vitality and activity that attracts a variety of new businesses and supports existing businesses to create a thriving High Street and encourage tourism.

Objectives

The objectives of the Communication Strategy are to:

- Ensure that the implications of the development and adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan are understood by all stakeholders.
- Allow residents and other relevant stakeholders the opportunity to take part in defining the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan.
- Ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the Neighbourhood Plan *process* to include:
 - the roles and responsibilities of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group;
 - the process of creation of the Neighbourhood Plan;
 - the governance, approval, and acceptance of the Neighbourhood Plan;
 - the schedule for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Ensure appropriate consultation with and communication to all stakeholders, ensuring that:
 - Input into the development and approval of the Neighbourhood Plan has been included;
 - the current status of the Neighbourhood Plan is understood at all times;
 - appropriate approval is gained from key stakeholders;
- Ensure acceptance by East Northants Council (ENC) by providing, amongst other things:
 - A Consultation Statement setting out how consultation will be carried out;
 - A Statement of Community Involvement evidencing the engagement with the community.

Target Audience

It is essential in any communication strategy to identify the key stakeholders and to understand their interest, influence, attitudes, and behaviours. The aim is to provide sufficient information to be able to target audiences with specific messages, using the most appropriate communications methods.

Stakeholder(s)	Interest	Influence	Notes
Landowners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duchy of Lancaster • Local farmers • Developers • Local Authorities 	HIGH MED HIGH MED	HIGH MED LOW HIGH	Ian Smith, Smiths Gore, Nick Dart Bletsoes, Duchy
Politicians/Councillors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MP • MEP • East Northants Council • Northamptonshire County Council 	MED LOW HIGH HIGH	LOW LOW HIGH HIGH	Peter Bone, Conservative Derek Clark, UKIP Glenn Harwood, Pam Whiting, Anna Sauntson, Richard Gell Derek Lawson
Northamptonshire County Council Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police • Fire • Care • Library 	MED MED MED MED	MED MED LOW LOW	PCC A Simmonds, SCT Sgt P Holton Mrs L Curnutte
Residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <16 years old • 17 – 24 yrs • 25 – 44 yrs • 45 – 59 yrs • 60+ yrs 	LOW MED MED MED MED	LOW LOW LOW LOW LOW	Via School and Youth Groups Via College and Youth Groups
Economy, Education and Tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Retail • Schools and Colleges • Tourism 	MED MED MED HIGH	LOW LOW MED MED	Business Leaders Retail Leaders LEA, School Heads HF Tourism, ENC
Community Clubs and Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports • Business • Cultural • Heritage • Faith Based • Friends • Youth • Ramblers 	MED MED MED MED MED MED MED	LOW LOW LOW LOW LOW LOW LOW	See Directory, HFTC Website

<p>Neighbouring Towns/ Parishes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chelveston-cum-Caldecott Parish Council • Irtlingborough Town Council • Irchester Parish Council • Newton Bromswold Parish Council • Rushden Town Council • Stanwick Parish Council 	<p>MED MED LOW LOW MED MED</p>	<p>LOW LOW LOW MED LOW</p>	<p>Mark Hunter Angie Daly Nikki Daft Matt Clarke Vivienne Prodger Jenny Hodgson</p>
<p>Statutory Consultees:</p> <p>County</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northamptonshire County Council Highways Authority • Northamptonshire County Council, Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area • East Northamptonshire Council • East Northamptonshire Council Conservation Officer • East Northamptonshire Council Planning Teams <p>National/ Regional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England • Wildlife Trust • Environment Agency • English Heritage • Network Rail • Highways Agency • Marine Management Organisation • Telecommunications orgs (BT/Mobile operators) • Primary Care Trust • Electricity Companies • Gas Companies • Sewerage • Anglian Water • Voluntary Groups • Racial, ethnic or national groups • Groups representing disabled persons • Sports England • River Nene Regional Park • NHS Clinical Commissioning (GP) Group 	<p>HIGH</p>	<p>HIGH</p>	<p>Chris Wragg Heather Webb Pam Whiting/Sarah Hawkins/Karen Britton Lloyd Mills Francesca Barker Jennifer Moffat Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge Richard McGowan Carole Dehghani Steve Beard Michel Kerrou</p>

Interest = how much interest would they have in the Neighbourhood Plan and how much would they be affected by its adoption?

Influence = how much effect could they have on the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and the approval process?

Key Messages

The following are the key messages that need to be applied, consistently, throughout the communications activity. The aim is to have no more than five 'umbrella' messages that span the entire partnership, which can then be supplemented with versions tailored to different audiences, if necessary.

	Message
1	The Neighbourhood Plan will set out policies that will help to ensure a sustainable, vibrant, and thriving community for the foreseeable future.
2	The Neighbourhood Plan will help protect against inappropriate and unwanted development.
3	The Neighbourhood Plan will set out ways to encourage new business growth, leading to a thriving High Street and an increase in tourism.
4	The Neighbourhood Plan will help to ensure that only the highest quality housing, commercial properties, and community facilities are built.
5	The Neighbourhood Plan has been written by volunteers for the benefit of the whole community.

Communication Methods

Key Tools	Notes	Frequency	By Whom	Target Audience
Community Champions interacting with the neighbourhood	This is a key approach to ensure that the community engages and takes ownership of the process. The Community Champions should be volunteers who come from a wide cross-section of the community, if possible. Separate Business Community Champions may be needed to engage with local businesses	Throughout the process. Key events to be organised to enable two-way communication between Community Champions and members of the community.	Community Champions assisted by the Steering Group and Project Team	Local Residents Businesses Community Groups Police
E-mail/letter/meeting	Direct engagement with specific individuals, businesses or groups	As required	Steering Group (liaison with key stakeholders), and Project Manager.	East Northants Council Businesses Landowners Community Groups Police
Website	Ideally a separate site linked to HFTC website with links to social media and an interactive map with upload facilities for images. The website should feature forums to allow members of the public to provide feedback.	Updated regularly – at least monthly and immediately following any key events	Website administrator assisted by the Project Team	Local Residents
Social Media	To target a younger audience, use of social media sites must be considered; however, for these methods to be effective they must be regularly updated	Updated regularly – at least weekly and immediately following any key events	Social Media Account owner assisted by the Project Team	Local Residents

Key Tools	Notes	Frequency	By Whom	Target Audience
Community Events – face-to-face briefings/ workshops	These will complement work undertaken by Community Champions and will be at key points in the process. Workshops will allow face-to-face communication with stakeholders and allow collection of feedback.	3 key workshops during the planning process – to be added as milestone events on the project plan	Project Team with sign off from Steering Group	Local Residents
Networking Group		At key points	Project Team	Businesses Community Groups Police
Press Releases – Hecham Chronicle / Evening Telegraph / Nene Valley News	The use of press releases and information packs will allow regular progress updates and broadcast of key messages.	Regular – at least monthly	Project Manager	Local Residents
Survey/Questionnaires	These can be on specific issues e.g. Housing or general and can be inserted in magazines, put in the website or hand delivered	When necessary	Project Team with sign off from Steering Group	Local Residents
Notice Boards	Town Square and other Town Council buildings and offices	Monthly progress	Project Team	Local Residents
Posters	Can be distributed and put up in local shops and businesses	When necessary	Project Team	Local Residents
HFNP Minutes	Update reports to be submitted to the Steering Group and uploaded onto the town council website	When necessary	Project Manager	Local Residents
Status Reports/Briefings	Written formal reports on the status of the Neighbourhood Plan process	Planned meeting every 4-6 weeks	Steering Group (liaison with key stakeholders) and Project Manager	East Northants Council Duchy of Lancaster