

Stevington
Neighbourhood Development Plan
Consultation Statement



February 2020

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Introduction

This Consultation Statement summarises the community engagement programme and the Regulation 14 consultation activities that were undertaken for the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan (Consultation Draft December 2019). It shows how the requirements of Regulations 14 and 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 have been satisfied.

The Consultation took place between 9th December 2019 to 27th January 2020.

The Stevington Neighbourhood Plan was formally signed-off by Stevington Parish Council at their bi-monthly meeting on 11th March 2020.

Summary of Community Engagement

The strategy for community engagement

Throughout the preparation of the plan we have regularly consulted and engaged with our whole community.

Since the launch events in May 2015 we have:

- Organised and widely publicised three interactive launch events held around the Parish
- Provided regular updates in the Stevington Magazine which is published 4 times a year
- Launched a dedicated website in 2015 specifically for the neighbourhood plan
- Published regular updates on the website throughout the plan creation process
- Produced additional information leaflet newsletters in May 2015 & November 2015
- Completed a community engagement exercise regarding the draft policies in November 2015
- Produced and distributed a Parish wide questionnaire in January 2016 including an online version
- Provided full updates at the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 Parish Council Annual Meetings
- Provided interim updates as a standing agenda item for bi-monthly Parish Council meetings
- Completed a full document ‘**soft launch**’ consultation exercise in October 2018
- Completed a full document consultation exercise from April to July 2019
- Completed the Statutory 6-week consultation (Reg14) in December 2019/January 2020.

The opinions and comments arising from community engagement exercises help form the basis on which this plan was written. Likewise, the policies are formed both on community engagement and based on a clear planning rationale, underpinned by relevant data/evidence.

Initial Engagement

Three separate launch events were scheduled in different locations within the village in order to maximise the opportunity of the whole community to participate. The events were widely publicised in advance and were very well attended.

The purpose of the events was to provide information on the Neighbourhood Plan process itself, explain why the Parish Council felt it important that the Parish adopt such a plan but most importantly to engage with the community to identify the key issues and concerns they may have and the areas or topics that they felt were the most important to them.

Feedback was recorded via an exit questionnaire, through comments boxes placed around each venue, an interactive Parish map and the ability to add comments to the information boards directly.

A second follow-up event was then arranged, using a similar format, where the initial findings of the working group were displayed and the community asked to identify the level of importance they would attach to each main topic identified from the first engagement events. This was done both **interactively using a priority ‘dot’ system but also via comments cards and a verbal feedback question and answers session.**

Main Issues & Priorities Identified

The main feedback from the engagement events was as follows:

- Residents agreed that Stevington was a desirable place to live because of its tranquil rural location but were concerned that over development may lead to the loss of that special quality
- Residents understand the need for and are supportive of small scale appropriate development, especially of smaller housing that would be affordable to first time buyers and young families
- Respondents were also concerned at the lack of smaller or more elderly focused housing within **the village, the desire to remain within the village but to be able ‘downsize’ was a common theme** from retiree residents and those approaching retirement

- Villagers value the expansive natural corridors and open green space around village for recreational purposes and for their visual amenity, there was very strong support for retaining and **enhancing Stevington's rural amenity**
- There was concern of the urbanisation of local villages such as Bromham which have been increasingly impacted by urban creep with the distinctions between Bedford, Biddenham and Bromham now becoming almost completely blurred. There was strong support not to allow this to happen to Stevington
- The form of the current Village settlement pattern is recognised as being historic and provides a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stevington Parish and should be retained
- It was felt that garden space was an important element of rural living and a healthy lifestyle
- Residents felt it was important that new development did not impact on neighbours in terms of access, overlook, light and privacy
- There was strong support for the conversion of redundant permanent agricultural buildings to residential property
- Many residents questioned the viability of development within the Parish, and the wider rural area, given the narrowness of the road network around Stevington. There was considerable concern that no development should add to the vehicle congestion and parking issues experienced in Silver Street in particular
- Residents acknowledged that the Parish has a significant number of listed and historic structures and expressed a strong desire to protect and enhance these assets and their settings
- Community facilities were acknowledged as being critical to the health and prosperity of the village and support was very strong to protect, retain and enhance these as part of the plan process
- Good design was a key consideration for many respondents who were keen to ensure that new development was complementary to its surroundings and was proportionate in size, scale and finish to near neighbours
- The windmill was identified as the predominate symbol for the village and as such should have specific protection to ensure that it remains as a working example **of the village's heritage**.

Having established the wishes and aspirations of the residents of Stevington Parish the working group started work on the Neighbourhood Development Plan document.

Target Audience

All residents in the village, local businesses and key stakeholders, landowners, adjacent parish council and any interested parties.

Outcomes/Feedback

Feedback was provided on the outcomes of community engagement both in the Village magazine and dedicated Neighbourhood Plan website. The feedback was discussed at the regular Working Group meetings and incorporated into the plan, as appropriate.

Further development in the village was probably the greatest concern. There were many issues around this, increasing traffic volumes, on street parking, drainage and services being overstretched, loss of green spaces and urban creep all being highlighted.

Other issues raised were around traffic both in terms of speed and parking constraints, safety due to the very narrow roads and minimal footpaths and how future development might impact.

Pre-submission Consultation (Regulation 14)

The original public consultation of the Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan was triggered on Tuesday 23rd April 2019 and ran for thirteen weeks ending on Wednesday 10th July 2019. (The consultation was extended by the Parish Council at the request of a small number of residents who requested additional time to review supporting documents provided to them on request).

A second consultation phase was run from 9th December 2019 to 27th January 2020 after a significant review of the Local Green Spaces section of the plan based on feedback from initial correspondents and advice received from other local NDP working groups who had completed the Inspection phase. Although the initial consultation was deemed to have met the Regulation 14 requirement the Parish Council felt that the changes made to the Local Green Space section warranted a second consultation to be run in interests of absolute clarity.

The consultations started by the publication of the dates for the proposed consultation period and an article in Stevington Magazine explaining the process and how to comment back to the Parish Council. The magazine is delivered to every resident and business within the Parish giving it a circulation of approx. 300 copies.

All adjacent Parish Councils, LPAs, statutory bodies, non-statutory bodies, previous respondents, landowners etc. were emailed with details of the consultation.

Publicity for the both Plans included a large banner strategically placed on the main roadway into the village, in Park Road, posters were placed in key areas throughout the Parish and a leaflet drop to every residence and business was delivered over the weekend 21st & 22nd April 2019 and 8th & 9th December 2019.

The Plan was made available to view at key locations throughout the village including:

- Community Shop, Church Room, Church Road
- The Royal George, Silver Street
- The Red Lion, Park Road
- The Village Hall, Court Lane
- The Baptist Hall, West End
- Bromham Public Library, Springfield Drive, Bromham.

Comments cards and boxes were provided at each venue for the duration of the consultation periods, additional copies were held by the PC members who shared them as needed or could be requested directly from the Parish Clerk.

The Plan was also made available for viewing via the dedicated website, an electronic copy was offered for delivery via email if required. Comments were invited via the website and via a dedicated email address feedback@stevington.com.

Comments were accepted by email, by post, or dropped into the various comments boxes situated around the Parish. All the comments were recorded and then analysed with an initial category recommendation based on the content as either needing a review, edit, task, option or none. (Full details on the approach taken for the review are documented on the support document SNDP Consultation Responses - Feb2020)

Where more than one response has raised an identical comment, or covering the same topic, then a response was provided on the first comment only and then the comment number only referenced in any subsequent comment(s).

All the comments were carefully reviewed by the Parish Council, the primary areas of concern from the initial consultation phase were around the Local Green Spaces and some wording within the Policies. After consultation with our Planning consultant and feedback from a local working group on their approach the Local Green Space section was significantly revised and all Policy wordings checked for conformity to NPPF and the new Local Plan.

With respect to Green Spaces, there were two objections to one of the proposed spaces (Site D) and this space was reviewed again against the criteria and the original decision was found to be sound.

Conclusions

- The Parish Council took some months looking at all the issues to ensure that where we can they are covered in our plan. Our policies are designed to mitigate these issues, improve facilities and protect the environment in the interest of the whole village. To further support these policies we have appended policy interpretation sections to each policy to help aid our LPA in understanding the local purpose of each.
- With regard to Green Spaces, there were two objections to one of the proposed spaces and this proposed Green Space was reviewed again against the criteria. It was concluded that the original decision to designate this space was sound so the space would remain in the plan.
- The Parish **Council's aim is to protect and improve the village community and the landscape within** which it sits for all residents. We will continue to aim for this whilst acknowledging that sometimes compromises have to be made.