

Background information on the consultation methodology of the South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan

I initiated the activities that led in time to the formation of the South Newnham Neighbourhood Forum and ultimately the drafting of the Neighbourhood Plan, and was the first Chair of the Forum. It all started early in 2016 when I attended a seminar given by the Prince's Foundation for Building Communities, which focussed on the Localism Act 2011, which gives communities the opportunity to create Neighbourhood Plans.

After speaking with several people active in the local Newnham area about this idea, we decided to gauge whether there was a desire and appetite in our community to engage in the project of a Neighbourhood Plan.

We started with a widely publicised event in the local Scout Hut, and invited residents (by posters, RA email lists and word of mouth); representatives of the local primary school, church and local Colleges (by email or personal visits). We did research to identify other Colleges and individuals and bodies owning property in the neighbourhood and contacted them by email letter. We had a very good turnout and the feeling of the event was very positive and encouraging.

From that early beginning, 35 people identified themselves as wishing to be part of a Neighbourhood Forum, which gave us a base working group to help with publicity and ideas to spread the word as effectively as possible. The Forum geographical area was discussed with the City Council and agreed through the usual procedures, a formal committee formed and officers elected.

The community-engagement process continued during 2016 and 2017, and included a two-day event run by the BIMBY team at Wolfson College; various drop-in and update meetings held at the local pub, the sports and social centre, and Wolfson College. All of these events were advertised by posters spread about the community, by email and by word of mouth.

In February 2018, a leaflet setting out seven headings summarising the feedback from the community workshops was dropped into every resident's letter box, sent by email to all the other contacts listed above, and advertised through RA newsletters and the local schools' e-newsletter to parents. Out of a total of 870+ leaflets distributed, 100 were returned with suggestions and comments; 97 of these answered "yes" to the question "Do the headings describe the aims you would support for your neighbourhood?" This excellent return-rate and the enthusiasm of the feedback encouraged the committee to go forward, and the material formed the basis of the 'vision' that informs the current South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan.

The task of writing the Neighbourhood Plan and keeping the community and other stakeholders updated began but was interrupted by Covid, when normal interaction was not possible. Once the Forum was able to operate normally again, work on the Neighbourhood Plan recommenced and the Forum arranged meetings and drop-in events so that residents and stakeholders were aware of what progress had been made and once again had the opportunity to give feedback.

New arrivals in the neighbourhood may not be aware of all of this history, though the NP currently is being widely advertised through the website, posters, Councillors' emails to the community, RA communications and word of mouth, as well as by the Council.

I support the South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan as I genuinely feel that it reflects the vast majority of views of the residents, businesses, and other stakeholders who participated in the process or commented on drafts, and I look forward to its being adopted.

Lynn Hieatt
Former Chair of the Forum committee
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