

WHOLE SETTLEMENT STRATEGY PROJECT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Outline of the process

The draft Whole Settlement Strategies for North Norfolk's seven towns are the result of an extensive process of public participation. A three-stage process was devised to ensure that as many people as possible with an interest in the future of the town were involved in the preparation of each strategy.

Stage 1: Stakeholder workshop

A stakeholder workshop was held at a convenient venue with representatives coming from a cross-section of groups: commercial businesses, community organisations, special interest groups, sporting, religious and educational interests and members of town councils, neighbouring parish councils, the County Council and District Councils. Around a hundred individuals were invited to each event and the eventual number of participants ranged from forty to sixty. Each event was chaired by a member of the Local Plan Review Working Party and facilitated by environmental management consultant Kathy Kennedy.

The aims of the workshops were:

- to develop an understanding of the role, function and catchment of each town;
- to appreciate the participant's aspirations and their views on the town's needs;
- to identify issues that the strategy needs to address; and
- to identify the topics that need to be addressed and/or participants who should be involved in follow-up 'targeted sessions'.

The workshops were structured to elicit a general impression of people's perceptions of the town and focused on the following broad themes:

- ❑ a place to live - housing needs
- ❑ community facilities, services and infrastructure
- ❑ a place to work, shop and do business
- ❑ the natural environment of the town and its hinterland

These workshops were generally very well received, with almost all attendees stating on the feedback form for each event that they found it useful.

Stage 2: Targeted sessions

In each town it was considered necessary to hold specific events to establish the issues relevant to young people. There were also key issues such as the future of the Hospital in Cromer, car parking in Holt and future plans for the Quay in Wells-next-the-Sea that needed to be followed up.

A variety of approaches were adopted for the targeted sessions for young people, working in co-operation with local high schools and focusing on specific issues. Workshops were held with members of the School Councils at Cromer High School, North Walsham High School and Sheringham High School (one for residents of the Sheringham area and one for the Holt area) and standing interactive exhibitions were held at Alderman Peel High School in Wells and at Stalham High School. Forward Planning staff ran each workshop session with the assistance of headteachers and between sixteen and twenty-five students from each year group took part. The exhibitions were erected in central, accessible areas in each school and left for approximately a week. The students seemed to take an active interest in the project and each event was very productive.

In Fakenham an extensive survey of young people had been undertaken by local youth leaders and the results of this were used to establish issues relevant to young people in the town. It is hoped that a specific event can be arranged at a later date to get feedback from local young people in Fakenham in developing the final outcome.

Stage 3: Interactive exhibition

An 'interactive' exhibition was designed to get feedback from a wider range of people who use each town. These were held in accessible central locations on Saturday in each town (and additionally on Market day in North Walsham and Fakenham). The exhibitions were publicised by articles in the local press, by notifying all the workshop invitees and by posters around the town. Forward Planning staff were on hand at each venue to provide guidance, and answer questions.

The aim of each event was to give members of the public the opportunity to:

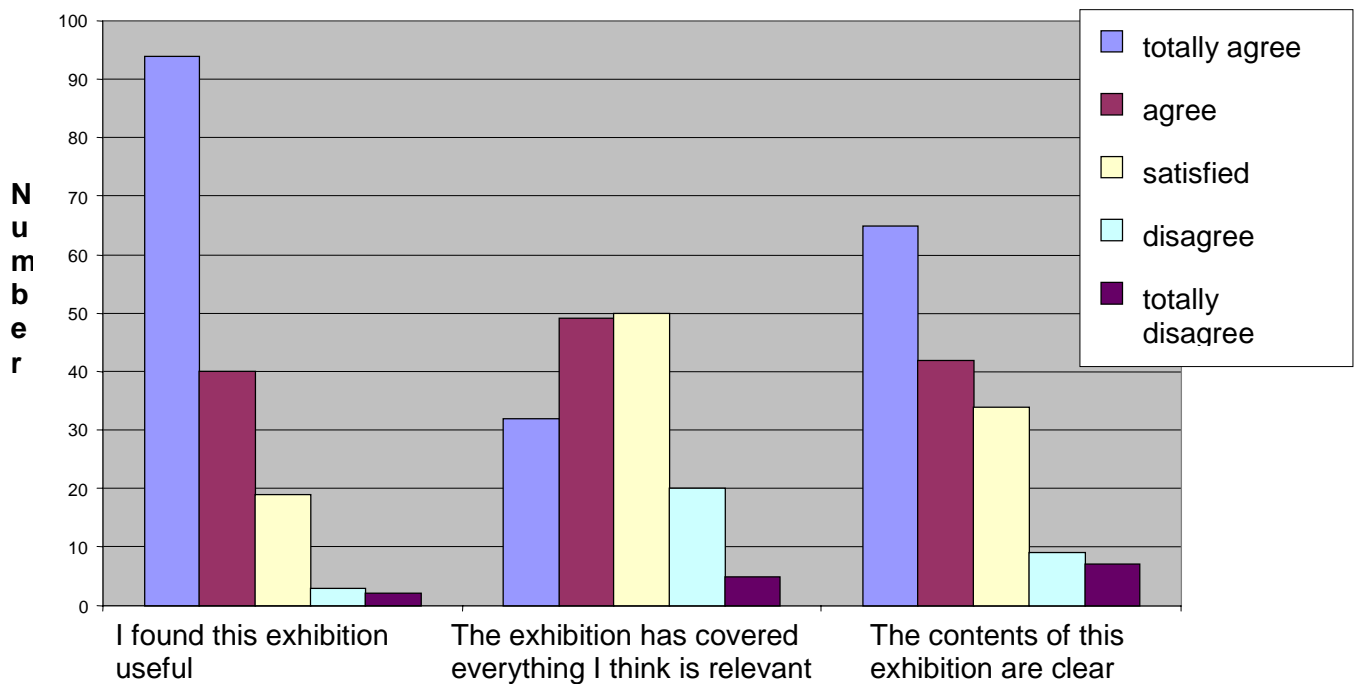
- comment on the issues developed at the workshop;
- add any further issues of their own;
- prioritise options for tackling these issues; and
- feed in their own aspirations for the future direction of the town.

Feedback was captured by the use of different coloured sticky dots to agree or disagree with statements and choose options, post-it notes and a flip-chart to add comments and a pro forma for private comments and feedback on the exhibition.

The exhibitions were attended by between 150 and 230 people. A great deal of interest was expressed in the project and many people stayed for well over half an hour. Feedback was generally very positive with a large number of dots used and very many additional comments and suggestions made.

The graph below illustrates that on the whole the exhibitions were very well received. The majority of those visiting each exhibition thought that it was useful and that the contents were clear. Fewer people considered that the exhibition covered issues relevant to them, which may be explained by the fact that it only covered land-use issues and not issues that may be of wider public interest and may be included, for instance, in the Community Strategy or regeneration strategy.

Exhibition Feedback - All Towns



Overview

Overall the public participation exercise proved to be very successful in engaging a wide range of people and allowing a variety of issues, including certain contentious issues, to be aired in a non-confrontational manner. It provided a valuable insight into the needs of each town, from a variety of viewpoints, highlighting a number of specific issues and problems and identifying solutions. The process was successful in yielding the aims and objectives that met with general public support and are thus recommended to become the framework for the Local Plan strategy for each town.