

Earlestown - Town Centre Regeneration

Consultation and Engagement Strategy

Overview

St Helens Borough Council has formed a 20-year partnership with the English Cities Fund (ECF) that will see a variety of sites across the borough benefit from redevelopment, with an initial focus on plans to transform St Helens and Earlestown town centres. Lexington have been commissioned by ECF to prepare a strategy for engagement and consultation regarding the emerging Draft Masterplan Development Frameworks for each town centre, as well as the associated Phase 1 planning applications.

This document details the recommended strategy for public consultation and stakeholder engagement, alongside the indicative timescales for when this activity will take place.

Consultation Notification

Digital will be the primary method for general awareness raising and notification of the respective consultations. Hard copy leafleting is not supported for this purpose having regard to the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration and its associated environmental objectives, having particular regard to the borough-wide nature of the consultations.

The methods of awareness raising and consultation notification are prescribed (in summary) as:

- **Social media advertising** – To notify all residents, businesses and stakeholders within the Borough of the consultations, a series of Facebook and Instagram pages will be created for each consultation, with appropriate adverts stemming from each page.
- **Stakeholder social media posts** – Stakeholders will be encouraged to publish posts advertising both consultations via their own established channels such as St Helens RLFC, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, St Helens Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- **Press activity** – Press releases shall be issued to key publications and reference both consultations, with briefing opportunities provided to radio and TV channels.
- **Physical posters** – Posters are to be provided in a range public spaces and venues such as post offices, libraries, shops, bus stops, doctors surgeries, etc. These posters will contain QR codes, allowing easy access to the consultation websites.
- **Digital advertising** – Content will be displayed on the Council's variable message signs that are located at strategic locations in the borough and other buildings. We will also engage with partners to promote in their premises where available.

- **Written letters and engagement meetings** will be issued to and held with those stakeholder groups that are directly affected by the Draft Masterplan Development Framework proposals. This includes groups such as existing market traders, businesses where their premises are specifically identified for redevelopment, bus and taxi operators affected by the proposed transport proposals, etc.
- **Project websites** will act as the hub for each consultation, with a dedicated website per project. Details of the websites will be published on all other communications materials. The websites are under construction and will be accessible from www.earlestown.co.uk
- **Physical events** will be held in the town centre to provide an opportunity for residents, as well as those who visit, work and play in Earlestown and Newton Willow to speak to the development team directly. A series of smaller pop-up events will run outside the town centre to engage a wider audience. Further details of the physical events are provided below and continue to develop.

Social Media Advertising

Adverts for both consultations are to be distributed across the entirety of the Borough. Lexington will lead on the content, comment management and the launch of all social media advertising. This will be predominantly via Facebook, as well as Instagram.

Consultations will launch on 1 November 2021 and run for a 6-week period of time. Ahead of the consultation launch, Lexington will prepare a bespoke social media advertising strategy that will include content for sign-off by Council Officers and ECF, together with a protocol for Councillors to assist responses to any comments received on the adverts ahead of the consultation going live.

Project Websites

The project website will act as the main hub for the consultations and include important information regarding the Draft Masterplan Development Frameworks, Phase 1 planning applications and ways to provide feedback. The town centre regeneration project will have its own website, that will link to the other town centre plans. The website is under construction so not yet active but will be accessible from www.earlestown.co.uk

The websites will include several pages, for example:

- **Welcome Page** – Including introductions to the proposals, the consultation, and key CGIs. This is the page residents will land-on should they visit the address listed on all material or click the social media adverts.
- **Our Vision** – a page dedicated to the overall concept and vision for the proposals.
- **Development Framework** – Key information about the development framework, as well as a link to a PDF of the document which will be hosted on the site. This will also include imagery and information specifically related to the detail of the Masterplan.
- **Virtual Exhibition** – Links to the virtual exhibition room, which will include PDFs of the exhibition boards.
- **Phase 1 Application** – Information about how the Phase 1 planning application feeds into the programme.

- **FAQs** – Responses to common questions that will be asked during the consultation period.
- **Your Views** – Information about the consultation, ways to provide feedback, and links to a feedback form. This page will also include details of an email address, dedicated Community Information Line and written address.
- **About Us** – Details of ECF and its partnership with St Helens Council.

Physical Exhibitions

A week-long period of public exhibitions will be held in each town centre. These events will be held in a vacant unit or other suitable venue within the following weeks:

- **w/c 22 November** – Public events in Earlestown town centre

During the events, a series of exhibition boards will be displayed to provide more detail about each proposal. The content within the series of boards will include:

- **Welcome board** – Detailing the purpose of the consultation and encouraging attendees to provide feedback.
- **Our Vision** – A focus on the wider strategic vision for the town centre.
- **The Story So Far** – Background about how we reached this point, how the draft Development Masterplan Development Framework and the Phase 1 planning application sit together and the anticipated timescales moving forwards
- **The Masterplan** – Imagery and information specifically related to the detail of the Masterplan proposals.
- **Phase 1 Planning Application** – Information about how the Phase 1 application feeds into the programme.
- **Your Views** – Information about the consultation, ways to provide feedback, and links to a feedback form

Print outs will be available of the Draft Masterplan Development Framework documents and large prints of the CGIs. A fly through is also being prepared which will be displayed during the sessions.

To engage with as wide an audience as possible, interactive games will be hosted at the events to entice passers-by to enter the unit, read the information available and report their feedback.

In addition to the weeklong events:

- **Pop up Roadshow** – there will be a series of pop-up sessions outside of the town centres to engage a wider audience. This will include neighbourhood centres, leisure centres and libraries.
- **Christmas Lights Switch on** – a trailer will be hired to visit Earlestown town centre on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 November, and during the Christmas lights switch on events in both locations. The information displayed during these mobile sessions will be the same as at the weeklong static events in the retail units.

Feedback Mechanisms

During the consultation period feedback will be invited on the Draft Masterplan Development Framework and the Phase 1 planning application.

There will be several ways to provide feedback, including:

- Via a dedicated feedback form available on each consultation website
- Via the same form which will be available at the exhibitions and venues
- Via a dedicated email address
- Via telephone or post

In addition, those visiting the website will also be given an opportunity to visit an interactive page that will allow users to drop pins on parts of the town centre whereby they have very specific comments.

All of the feedback submitted in the various different ways will be managed and collated by Lexington. Lexington will produce a Statement of Community Involvement following the end of the consultation. This document will outline the consultation methodology, the feedback that has been received, as well as the partnerships response to this feedback. It will be hosted on the consultation websites once the consultations have ended, to provide all parties with a transparent overview about the consultation processes.

All persons or organisations who engaged in the consultation process will be notified when the Phase 1 applications are being submitted, to ensure that those who have indicated an interest in the plans are kept informed of progress.

Media Engagement

A series of press releases will be prepared throughout the lifetime of the programme. This includes at the point of the consultation launch, and when the feedback has been analysed. St Helens Council will liaise with the local media, whilst Lexington will lead on engagement with the trade press.

Stakeholder Engagement

A series of stakeholder engagement meetings or webinars will be undertaken throughout the consultation period. Examples of the groups that will be engaged include: all Councillors, owners of all property impacted by the plans, businesses occupying the property impacted by the plans, the Business Forum group, the Youth Council, disability groups, MPs and the Town Deal Board.

Timetable of Activity

Date	Activity
Tuesday 12 th October	Cabinet reports published. Engagement with the press and pre-launch stakeholder activity
Wednesday 20 October	Cabinet meeting to endorse consultation process.

Monday 1 November	Consultation launch and websites go live.
Monday 15 November – Sunday 21 November	Earlestown town centre unit or temporary facility 9 – 5pm with some extended opening times across the week TBC.
Sunday 28 November	Staffed trailer event in Earlestown town centre between 4pm and 7pm during Christmas light switch on
Pop up events across the borough	When opportunities identified
Monday 13 December	Consultation ends