Witton Gilbert Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan

**ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

**1. Introduction**

Neighbourhood Planning is a new right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. A Neighbourhood Development Plan sets out the policies against which planning applications are assessed. Neighbourhood Development Plans will become part of the local development plan for the area, which means that the policies and proposals contained within them will be used in the determination of planning applications, including appeals. It must be stressed that the policies produced cannot block development that is part of the local development plan. What they can do is shape and influence where that development will go and what it will look like.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that:

“Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area, including those contained in any neighbourhood plans that have been made.”

 NPPF para 155

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf>

Witton Gilbert Parish Council will prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan Area, which was approved by Durham County Council. The engagement work will be planned and led by a sub group of the Parish Council & residents which will focus on communication and engagement.

This Strategy has been prepared to help guide the process of community and stakeholder engagement needed to produce an informed and relevant community-led Neighbourhood Plan for Witton Gilbert. Effective engagement with local residents, community groups, businesses, and service providers in Witton Gilbert and adjoining areas is a crucial aspect in creating a credible plan.

Witton Gilbert Parish Council shares Durham County Council’s aims of consultation outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement. (Does this Exist?????)

Through the Neighbourhood Planning process Witton Gilbert Parish Council will seek to:

* give those who want to, the opportunity to constructively contribute and participate in the local planning process
* front load the consultation process to enable comments to be made in the early stages before policies are drawn up, i.e. at the issues and options stage
* actively encourage participation from any groups who have in the past been under-represented in the local planning process e.g. young people and people from ethnic minority groups
* keep organisations and the public informed about the local planning process and provide feedback on how their comments have been considered
* raise awareness of the local planning process
* ensure corporate participation
* learn from the consultation process and to seek ways of improving it
* draw from the consultation process, views of other Council services and where possible outside organisations.

Community Engagement activity can take place on a number of different levels. These range from providing information to empowering individuals and groups to take decisions on relevant matters.

Inform: Provide information about processes, events, issues and proposals;

Consult: Obtain feedback and analysis on options and proposals;

Involve: Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure their issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered;

Collaborate: Create partnership with the community in each aspect of decision making including development of options and analysis of alternatives;

Empower: Final decisions on all matters lie with the community.

**2. Engagement methods**

Engagement activities seek to create opportunities to bring together the views of the community and other stakeholders who will have an interest in how the area might be protected, change or grow over time. The intention ultimately would be to develop a shared view about the range of issues affecting the area. These views along with evidence will be used to create a Neighbourhood Plan for Witton Gilbert.

There are several different methods of engagement that may be used to prepare the Witton Gilbert Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan. These may include but are not exclusive to:

* Interactive workshops
	+ Displays, Post it notes, photo survey, guided walks, mapping, model making
* Focus groups
	+ Topic specific (e.g. environment, housing, infrastructure),
* Surveys
	+ Online questionnaires, web polls, paper questionnaires
* Interviews
	+ Telephone, face to face, street
* Stalls at local fetes
	+ Displays, opportunity to comment, mini surveys
* Public meetings
* Internet
	+ Website, online surveys, social media
* Posters
	+ Throughout the Village
* Press releases
	+ Parish Council Newsletter, Local papers, Radio, letters to local stakeholders

**3. Witton Gilbert community profile:**

In order to successfully manage engagement it is important to be aware of the demographics of the community of Witton Gilbert.

This data shows us that the community is made up of:

**Gender:** Male 49%

Female 51%

**Age:** 0-9 yrs. 10.17%

 10-19 yrs. 9.71%

 20-29yrs. 11.90%

 30-44 yrs. 20.84%

 44-64 yrs. 27.41%

 65+ yrs. 19.97%

**Ethnicity** White 99.25%

 Mixed 0.12%

 Asian 0.41%

 Black 0.00%

 Chinese 0.09%

 Other 0.13%

The 2011 Census data will be used to update this data as it is made available.

Each engagement event carried out will be assessed against this data to see if the Neighbourhood Planning process is engaging with a wide section of the Witton Gilbert community. Where gaps are identified targeted consultation methods will be planned by the sub group.

**4. Stakeholders**

A list of stakeholders has been prepared to help promote the Neighbourhood Plan and to ensure wide community engagement is possible. This list will require regular review by the sub group to ensure it is comprehensive and up to date.

**5. Project Plan**

A detailed project plan will be prepared by the project planning sub group and the communication and engagement sub group of the Witton Gilbert Parish Council outlining engagement activity for the coming year. These activities will be reviewed periodically to ensure that a wide section of the community is proactively being engaged.

**6. Recording**

Data from all engagement will be recorded and collated. A summary from each engagement activity will be created. Key issues will be noted. These summaries will be used to help in the preparation of the Consultation Statement (do we require one) which will be submitted with the Draft Neighbourhood Plan along with a statement of how the plan meets Basic Conditions to the Independent Examiner.

**7. Feedback**

Regular community feedback will take place. . Detailed notes on the feedback methods to use will be added to this strategy following this engagement activity.

**8. Statutory Requirements**

Statutory requirements for Neighbourhood Plans are outlined in The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents/made>

The draft Neighbourhood Plan will require a 6 week consultation period planned.

The final draft Neighbourhood Plan will then be required to undergo a 6 week statutory consultation.

The Neighbourhood Plan will need to be submitted with a Consultation Statement that should include:

* Details of who was consulted about the plan
* Explain how they were consulted
* Summaries main issues and concerns raised
* How these issues and concerns have been considered and or addressed