

BLOCK 2:

Lesson 3: Planning process and documents

Informal planning

Informal planning is not definitively regulated by law. Its main aim is to achieve better design standards as well as development proposals. Most of informal planning is rather a continuous process in which procedural stages are not strictly chronological. The informal planning is strongly oriented on responding the local conditions and circumstances.

There are some tools developed within the informal planning, such as:

- Design Brief

A design brief sets out a vision for the development and describes the development opportunities as well as constraints. It outlines detailed technical and financial objectives of the project. It also gives a background information on broader objectives of project and partners involved. The site and its context are briefly described (such as site access and linkages to the surrounding areas, conditions and legal status of the building on the site, any relevant plans or images etc.). A design brief would normally describe a planning policy context as well (relation to national, regional, local planning documentation). The quality of information provided in a design brief may have a direct impact on the quality of the proposals received through a tendering process.

- Tender/Competition

If achieving the design quality is a material consideration, a tendering process can be applied. The potential approaches to the development of the site can be obtained and finally the best solution can be identified. The competition process may require two or more stages, depending on the size and complexity of the site and the detailing of the proposals. A phased approach can also save resources – most relevant professionals can be identified at each stage and only these shall usually be invited to take part in the following stages. The final goal is to select a winning proposal which best meets the project objectives.

- Design Guidance

Design guidance and site related design guidelines inform on how a development can be carried out in accordance with the design policies of relevant organisations. It aims to improve local standards of design and to assist the developers and other involved parties by clearly setting out the basic design principles that a planning authority expects to see. Various issues can be covered by design guidance, such as residential developments, house extensions, shop fronts, disabled access, advertisements, conservation areas etc. One of the common goals of design guidances is retaining local distinctiveness in the (re)development areas.

- Design Code

A design code is a set of illustrated design rules which guide and advise on physical development of a site. A set of design principles helps to deliver better quality of places and create a coherent sense of place with a variety of architectural styles across development area. The aim is to provide a clear statement on what constitutes acceptable design quality for a concrete site. Design codes consist of graphic as well as written components, which build upon a design vision such as a masterplan or other design or development framework for a site.

People who live and work in and around the areas to be redeveloped usually know the space well and may be committed to see it develop in a good way. Taking into account the dynamics of the local community, local attitudes, initiatives and customs can help to fully grasp the potential that one site holds. Involving the community in the planning process is not just about consulting local communities, but also about reaching the consensus about the future of the area. This can smooth the planning process and make it go faster.

As individuals and groups of people have different concerns, priorities and aspirations it is important to resolve the disparities among them. To succeed in this an appropriate approach to community engagement has to be implemented. The objectives of the engagement process have to be clear and the events have to be shaped according to the phase and stage of the development.

There are different ways of engaging local communities into the planning process. Some of them are based in the statutory process while some others are not required by law and are supplementing the statutory processes in order to achieve optimal results.

When community involvement is in question there are some guiding principles that shall be considered:

- an early start

Communities shall get involved at the earliest stages when they really have a chance to make a difference. If people do not have previous experiences within the planning processes they may need time to start identifying the issues and debating the options.

- right partners and clear objectives

It is important to clearly identify the key partners and the aims of their engagement activities. When appropriate not only the members of the local community shall be engaged but also the relevant stakeholders (such as road network authorities, environmental protection authorities etc.) shall be made part of the community engagement processes. The anticipated goals in a short and long term shall be clearly stated. They shall be realistic and doable so the actors can easily identify their role in the process.

- clear rules

The ground rules of the whole process shall be set up and agreed at the beginning and taken into consideration throughout the project. One of the important issues is to clearly state what the community is asked to participate with and how its input will be used (what is the extent of the community's influence)

- no overlapping

Before the local community is engaged into the process an overview of other community involvement processes in the area shall be obtained – in order to avoid overloading people which may turn them from the active engagement

- appropriate techniques

Once the clear objectives are set up and the boundaries of the discussed area are defined it is possible to select appropriate tools and techniques to manage the process. It is important to develop the appropriate method that will meet the needs of the various participants.

- feedback

It is important to enable the communities to see how the ideas are developing through the time and provide instant feedback. This is important to maintain good relations among the involved parties as well as it encourages constant active engagement. Clear, formal stages can help to assist this, if appropriate they can be based in the statutory process.

In the table below some methods and techniques to facilitate the community engagement process are listed.

name	short description	how to implement
briefing workshop	Simple, easy-to-organise working sessions held to establish a project agenda or brief. They can introduce people to the project, help establish the key issues, get people involved and motivated, identify useful talent and experience as well as next steps needed.	<p>Potential users of the project are invited to attend a workshop, usually lasting around 1.5 hours. Similar workshops may be held with different interest groups (eg: staff, leaders, young people, etc) or on different topics (eg: housing, jobs, open space, etc).</p> <p>The workshop is facilitated by one or more individuals who will have planned a format to suit the context</p> <p>A record is kept of those who attend, the points made and key issues identified.</p> <p>People's contributions are unattributable unless agreed otherwise.</p>
choice catalogues	Provide a way to make design choices within a predetermined structure. Particularly useful for helping people understand the range of options available and provide a way for making choices where large numbers of people are involved.	<p>Choice catalogues can be used to make design choices at a range of levels; from housing layouts to sanitary fittings.</p> <p>Options available are worked out by the experts in consultation with a small group of residents.</p> <p>The options are presented in the form of a simple menu made as visual as possible, using photographs or simple sketches. Choices can be costed using a simple points system if necessary.</p> <p>People make choices based on the catalogue. This may be done individually or in groups using workshop procedures.</p>
community planning event	Allow people to produce plans of action at carefully structured sessions at which all those affected work creatively together. They can be used at any stage of the development process and provide an alternative to reliance on bureaucratic planning.	<p>The nature of the community planning event is decided on and agreed by the main parties involved. There are many common types and the scope for inventing new formats is unlimited. Events may last for an afternoon, a weekend, a week or a month.</p> <p>Preparation takes place including arranging timetables, venues, publicity, equipment, technical support, background information.</p> <p>The event is held, often assisted by a facilitator or team of facilitators from elsewhere. Proposals for action result.</p> <p>The event is followed up to ensure that proposals are put into action.</p>
community planning forum	Open, multipurpose events lasting several hours. The three-stage format is designed to secure information, generate ideas and create interaction between interest groups with a minimum of advance planning.	<p>Community planning forums can be organised at any time but are particularly useful at an early stage in a participation or development process.</p> <p>Forums can be organised by any interested party and can be organised at short notice.</p> <p>The format combines interactive displays, an open forum, workshop groups and informal networking.</p> <p>Key ingredients are a leaflet advertising the event, a means of distributing it, a venue and a facilitator.</p>
design fest	Produce creative concepts for the future of an area by getting multidisciplinary design teams to develop and present their ideas in public. They are a good way to stimulate debate and develop imaginative solutions, particularly on controversial issues.	<p>Organisers decide on a theme that needs exploring and determine a brief. A specific, challenging site will normally be selected to focus creativity towards practical solutions.</p> <p>Multidisciplinary design teams are selected and briefed. The teams are likely to comprise architecture or planning students as well as practising professionals from a range of disciplines.</p> <p>The teams hold an intensive design workshop (or 'charrette') in public, coinciding with a public exhibition on the theme. The public are encouraged to respond to the theme and the team's ideas as they emerge and to develop their own.</p> <p>A high profile public symposium is held immediately after the workshops when the ideas generated are presented and debated by a prominent</p>

		<p>panel.</p> <p>The results are published and widely distributed.</p>
design games	<p>Highly visual way of allowing people to explore physical design options for a site or internal space. They are particularly useful for designing parks and room layouts and can also be used for land-use planning. They can be used in isolation or as part of a broader participation process.</p>	<p>A base map of a site or room is prepared.</p> <p>Cut-out pieces representing items that could be incorporated are made to the same scale. Materials for making pieces are kept at hand to allow new items to be made as desired.</p> <p>Individuals or groups move pieces around until they are happy with the design, which is then photographed.</p> <p>Layouts produced by different individuals or groups are discussed and analysed as a basis for drawing up sketch designs and costings.</p>
design workshops	<p>Hands-on sessions allowing small groups of professionals and non-professionals to work creatively together developing planning and design ideas. They are held as part of a planning day or other action planning event.</p>	<p>People work in groups around a table with plans or a flexible model. Different groups can deal with different areas or the same area at different scales. Groups can be allocated a topic such as transport, open spaces or housing. Groups can vary in size (8-10 is a good average to aim at).</p> <p>Everyone is encouraged to develop their ideas by drawing or making adjustments to the model. Each group usually needs a facilitator, a note-taker and a mapper (who marks points on a map or plan).</p> <p>A structured workshop procedure is often followed, especially if people have not worked together before.</p>
door knocking	<p>A basic, often overlooked way for beginning to build up a picture of the property, activities and people in an area prior to developing an engagement strategy for a planning initiative. Particularly useful for consultants or developers unfamiliar with the area.</p>	<p>A simple questionnaire is produced together with an introductory letter explaining who you are and why you are conducting the exercise.</p> <p>Doors to be knocked on are identified on a map. This may be all properties within a certain boundary or a sample selection of properties.</p> <p>Door knocking team members knock on doors and conduct semi structured interview with occupant if convenient. If not, or if nobody answers the door, the introductory letter is left together with a copy of the questionnaire.</p> <p>A report on the results is produced and used to decide on the next stage which might be a more rigorous survey or a community planning event of some kind.</p>
consulting draft plan	<p>A way to test whether draft plans have public support and to engage people in finalising them. It can help focus the design process and be an ideal opportunity to generate good ideas. The method can be used for building design, landscaping, or producing plans at all scales.</p>	<p>Draft plans are presented as clearly as possible using text and graphics.</p> <p>Suitable communication mediums are selected; this will often be a wall mounted exhibition, a printed brochure and a webpage equivalent.</p> <p>Feedback mechanisms are established; this will often be asking for responses to specific questions and an opportunity for open ended responses.</p> <p>A report is produced setting out the consultation results and the proposals are amended accordingly.</p> <p>Feedback is provided to those consulted with on how their input has affected the amended scheme.</p>
mapping	<p>An effective non-verbal way of finding out how people view their area. It is a good way to gather and present site-specific data, understand differences in perception and stimulate debate as a basis for joint planning.</p>	<p>Individuals or groups create physical maps of their neighbourhood or city using pen and paper, lines in the sand, cloth, chalk or other materials to hand.</p> <p>A framework or theme is normally provided to focus people's thoughts, eg places you visit frequently, landmarks, boundaries, places you dislike, things you would like to see.</p> <p>The maps are discussed and analysed as a basis for understanding differing viewpoints and planning what should be done.</p> <p>Records of maps and debates are made for future reference.</p>
neighbourhood planning office	<p>Provides an important local focal point for community planning activity and make it easier to follow up and sustain initiatives. Neighbourhood planning offices are particularly valuable in rundown areas or where there is a lot of building activity.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood offices should be in a prominent location, preferably with a shop frontage.</p> <p>They provide a working base for all professionals dealing with an area, a venue for meetings and workshops and a first point of contact for local people on planning and building issues.</p> <p>They should be staffed by people with project management skills able to take a pro-active role in pursuing improvement initiatives.</p>
online consultation	<p>Provides a channel of communication between a developer or government body that is accessible, convenient, interactive and auditable. Particularly useful for issues and projects that affect a large geographical area or large population such as major property developments and renewable energy projects.</p>	<p>Issues and proposals are presented online in a user-friendly, visual, interactive way.</p> <p>Visitors to the website are able to read and digest all information and proposals and then opt to make a response if they wish.</p>

	A good way to engage a broad audience in consultation, including people who do not typically get involved.	People wishing to respond register and provide some personal details so responses can be analysed. Participants are given the option to be kept up-to-date via email about the consultation and the project.
open space workshop	Provides a highly democratic framework for enabling any group of people to create their own programme of discussions on almost any theme without much preparation. They are particularly useful for dealing with general policy issues, for generating enthusiasm and for dealing with urgent issues needing quick action.	A theme, venue and time are determined and publicised by the organisers. Participants start by sitting in a circle and decide themselves on the issues to discuss, using a simple procedure (see workshop format in second tab) usually guided by a facilitator. Workshop sessions are self managed by the participants within a framework of simple principles and 'laws' (see third tab). Each workshop session develops a list of actions required and who should take them.
planning day	A good way for getting the key parties to work creatively together to devise and explore options for a site, neighbourhood or city. A prolonged version would be a planning weekend.	Participants will normally be personally invited by the event instigators. The aim is to have a cross-section of main stakeholders. A briefing pack is sent to all those attending. As well as setting out the aims of the day, the pack will contain background information about the area and the development process so that everyone starts the day with the maximum up-to-date knowledge. Workshop formats are designed to encourage the development of creative ideas. Facilitators will often be from outside the area to provide a measure of independence. A printed summary is produced as soon as possible afterwards and the proposals may be exhibited to a wider public.
planning for real	It uses simple models as a focus for people to put forward and prioritise ideas on how their area can be improved. It is a highly visible, hands-on community development and empowerment tool, which people of all abilities and backgrounds find easy and enjoyable to engage in.	A large 3-dimensional model of a neighbourhood is constructed, preferably by local people, using cardboard cut-outs for buildings pasted onto a base plan fixed to polystyrene or cardboard. The model is used at pre-advertised sessions held in various locations in the community. Participants place suggestion cards on the model indicating what they want to see happen and where (eg playground, parking, standpipe, tree, shopping). The cards are sorted and prioritised to establish an action plan which is followed up by working groups.
summarized from Community planning net at communityplanning.net		

Sources:

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