

SALTASH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE : SCOPING REPORT

INTRODUCTION. Before creating the questionnaire for the initial community engagement period for the Saltash Neighbourhood Plan it is appropriate to consider the purpose, scope and depth of the information the exercise is intended to investigate.

PURPOSE. What is the purpose of the community engagement? Essentially to introduce the Plan, discover what the local community consider are the issues that should be covered in the Plan, and to glean basic information as to how the community think those issues might best be dealt with, sufficient for working groups to take forward alongside other evidence to formulate strategies and proposals for the Plan. At this stage it needs to have a fairly broad perspective, and not get too deeply involved in fine detail.

PRESELECTED SCOPING. Early in the process with most neighbourhood plans, well before community engagement commences, there is likely to be a preselection or exclusion of certain themes which will influence the shape of the engagement. For example, this may be as a result of a council's desire to focus on tackling one or two priority issues (e.g. town centre regeneration) or because decisions are made not to cover certain issues so that they may be dealt with in higher level plans (e.g. housing allocations). The latter is the case with Saltash. As a result the scope of the questionnaire should exclude the issue of site selection for housing, but could reasonably include matters such as mix, tenure, densities, design etc.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. Given that neighbourhood plans are required to deliver 'sustainable development', it is logical that the questionnaire should include a line of enquiry focusing on that topic. Ideally this would explain what is meant by the term, and enquire of local people what they think it means for their town. It would also be a useful general way of encouraging respondents to think in a more considered, imaginative way for the rest of the questionnaire.

However, it begs the question, what do we mean by 'sustainable development'? We are pointed by DCLG guidance¹ to Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly which defined sustainable development the 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. We are also pointed to the UK Sustainable Development Strategy 'Securing the Future' which sets out five 'guiding principles': living within the planet's environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly. We are told that the most relevant for Planning are the environmental, economic and social principles. Since neighbourhood planning is all about community involvement and localism, it would be appropriate to include the fourth principle, 'promoting good governance' by explicitly seeking to make sure that all are involved in creating the Neighbourhood Plan

Interpreting this at a neighbourhood plan level can be difficult. Most people would recognise the concept of sustainability as being a matter of the environment and 'green-house gasses', but not of the economy or social matters, and certainly not about governance. For a Neighbourhood Plan

¹ National Planning Policy Framework 2012

questionnaire, the message about sustainable development to be got across needs to raise understanding that these wider issues are also involved. This could be achieved in an introductory questionnaire by asking respondents to prioritise from a range of future options that relate to the key guiding principles.

How might such questions be framed? A good clue comes from the concept of One Planet Living (OPL) (see <http://www.oneplanetliving.com/index.html>) which gives ten more detailed principles:

Zero carbon	Zero Waste	Sustainable transport	Sustainable materials	Local and sustainable food
Sustainable water	Land use and wildlife	Culture and community	Equity and local economy	Health and happiness

A question asking ‘what do you think are the most important benefits the Neighbourhood Plan should bring?’ may be a good start. The optional benefits could be, for example: ‘more green energy production’, ‘more green spaces and trees’, ‘land for recreation (allotments, playing fields)’, ‘safer walking routes’, ‘improved community spirit’, ‘more use of local materials and food’ etc. Using a ‘Likert Scale’ approach would allow prioritisation, and thus a more local interpretation of the balance of sustainability interests.

Supplementary questions on the availability and accessibility of key basic services would identify gaps in ‘quality of life’ provision.

PERCEPTIONS OF SALTASH. Another useful opener might be to ask respondents to think about how they would describe the town now, and how they would like the town to be described in 15 or 20 years’ time. This would provide information that can be used to build the overarching vision for the Plan. Each option would be captured in a single word or short phrase. The ‘now’ words could be selected deliberately to provoke a response. Examples: ‘lively’, ‘prosperous’, ‘tourist base’, ‘commuter town’, shopping complex’, ‘boring’, ‘modern’, ‘quiet’ etc.

ISSUES TO BE COVERED. The engagement work already carried out with several groups, and at some local events, provides some useful feedback as to what the main themes and issues are in the minds of those that took part. These exercises were mostly of the open-ended question 4-Square format, with respondents being asked to explain what they like, dislike, want, don’t want.

Open questions have the benefit of encouraging freedom of expression but are very hard to analyse as different people will use different words and phrases to express themselves, and key information can be lost amongst general phraseology.

However, by rewording the feedback from the initial consultation exercises so that the comments that were made are allocated to a limited number of common phrases, and then cleansing them of conjunctive words and phrases, and removing the definite article, it is possible to get a more explicit sense of respondent’s comments using a graphic word frequency analyser. Through this we can create an illustration which emphasises the frequency by which words and phrases appear in a body of text, by showing them in a proportionality larger font within a ‘word cloud’ or ‘wordle’

This is not a particular scientific analysis but does give a quick and sharp impression of what is most important in a response, the key messages as it were. It can also help pick out the different emphasis given through the differing perceptions of groups of people, whether they be defined by age, common interest or other parameter.

This information can be of assistance in scoping which themes should be covered.

Wordles for the 'I Want' and 'I Like' 4-Square responses and the May Fair'13 responses have been generated and are given in Appendix 1. In short, these indicate that residents value what they have, but fear for it, and want it protected, strengthened and maintained for the future.

From these it is suggested that the key themes are:

- **The reinforcement of neighbourhoods and community-feeling through better spatial planning**
- **Support and extension of the Town Centre and neighbourhood shopping opportunities**
- **Adding to the variety of leisure opportunities available locally, especially for younger people**
- **Enhancing employment opportunities locally**
- **Protection and extension of green spaces**

A draft questionnaire that brings these issues together is in development. Your comments please.

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Appendix 1.

SWRA Wants Wordle





Steering Group Wants Wordle



SSN&F Wants Wordle

A word cloud visualization of survey responses. The words are arranged in a horizontal, slightly curved shape. The largest and most prominent words are 'schools', 'seating', and 'young-people-civic-responsibilities'. Other visible words include 'station/building', 'Cheaper-parking', 'improved', 'local-decisions', 'litter-bin', 'Faith-groups', 'Fore-Street', 'More-police', 'dropped-kerbs', 'traffic-lights-Carkeel', 'More-shops', and 'community-hall'. The font size of each word corresponds to its frequency or importance in the data.

schools
seating
dropped-kerbs
station/building
young-people-civic-responsibilities
Cheaper-parking improved local-decisions
litter-bin Faith-groups More-police
Fore-Street
traffic-lights-Carkeel More-shops
community-hall

Good-pub-food
Improvements-to-Fore-Street No-littering
sense
Speciality-shops
of
station/building waterside
Better community Pedestrianisation
improved Farmers-Market

SWRA Likes Wordle



U3A Likes Wordle





SSN&F Likes Wordle



