



Home Zones - Public Participation



INTRODUCTION

The success of a Home Zone can be judged by the extent to which the people who live there recognise the need for and accept it. Such acceptance largely depends upon effective community participation and involvement at all stages, from the original selection of the area through to implementation. The means that can be used to involve the community in developing a scheme are wide ranging, and there is no one approach that is most effective. A combination of methods is best used, that seeks to engage all sectors of the community, particularly groups that are often under-represented in the decision making processes. The nine Home Zone pilot schemes in England and Wales have used a range of approaches, some of which are mentioned as case studies in this leaflet.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Government has emphasized the importance of consulting with local people on transport proposals. Local authorities are required to consult widely on their Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and to demonstrate how they have involved the public in the production of the LTP. The Local Government Act 2000 reflected the Government's commitment to community involvement in planning. Section 4 of the Act requires local authorities to produce community strategies.

The introduction of Home Zone schemes should be consistent with a local authority's community strategy and its LTP. Projects should demonstrate active involvement from individual residents, owners, tenants, local community groups, residents' associations, businesses and the emergency services.

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Traffic Advisory Unit

BENEFIT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Whilst some people perceive the process of community involvement to be time consuming and resource intensive, there are many benefits to be gained from effective public participation. Their involvement can bring a range of benefits to the planning, design and implementation of a scheme. Key benefits are listed below.

- Effective public participation is central to “Best Value”. Involving users and demonstrating how participation has affected decision making is a key element in the accountability of a local authority and users' acceptance of schemes.
- Effective public participation supports a local authority's Equal Opportunity policies by ensuring that the views and needs of particular groups who often suffer social exclusion are identified and addressed.
- Public involvement encourages greater understanding and confidence in what the council is trying to do.
- Public involvement can create a greater ownership of a Home Zone scheme, and a sense of local identity with the project.
- Public involvement can add extra creativity by tapping local talent and imagination, that can be brought into the design of a Home Zone scheme.

If this process is carried out in a thorough manner, it can help to gain early approvals from the community and other interested parties, such as the emergency services, to a scheme design, which has the potential to reduce abortive work.

WHEN TO INVOLVE PEOPLE

The residents within the Home Zone area (and the immediate surrounding areas) need to be brought into any discussions at the very beginning of the planning and development of the Home Zone. Issues raised at this point should feed into the development of any outline designs, which should then be put forward for consultation and discussion with all relevant parties. Comments raised should be used to inform the final design that will be subject to statutory consultation. The process of participation should be agreed with residents and key stakeholders, including politicians, so that there is an understanding of how and when decisions will be taken. That way, false hopes can be minimised.

In new housing developments, it is not normally possible to identify prospective residents when the designs are being



Mapping the issues in Wiltshire

developed and approved. However, residents will need to be made aware that they are moving into a Home Zone, and that this will be an environment where the street provides space for communal activities. Indeed, in some developments there may be responsibilities associated with living in the Home Zone, such as a commitment to the maintenance of planted areas or other features.

Where residents of new developments can be identified in advance – for example in affordable social housing developments – a dialogue between them and the design team can be established. The design of the streets can then be produced in consultation with the new community.

APPROACHES TO PARTICIPATION

There is no one single approach: rather, a toolkit of measures is often required to ensure that all sectors of the community have an opportunity to be involved in participation. The choice of methods will depend on two key factors.

- The stage which the planning process has reached. In a project's initial stages, techniques that will raise awareness and seek opinion would be appropriate, for example leaflets and surveys. These can precede or pave the way for any statutory consultations that may be necessary, for example those required for a Traffic Regulation Order. When a project has reached implementation, providing regular progress updates and contact points for inquiries become vital.
- The capacity within the community to be involved in the development of the scheme. Some communities lack identifiable interest groups or have no direct experience of being involved in a project. When this occurs, a community identity needs to be established through project topic groups and awareness raising exercises dealing with decision-making processes.



Tower Hamlets

WHERE

To ensure that the whole community participates, it is important to select venues which will be local and accessible for all. These may include a school, local hall, community centre, in a park, or even on the street itself with a road closure permit.

How

Some of the most well used techniques that can involve the community are:

- **Visioning exercises** tend to be used at the initial stages of a project, when stakeholders and residents are asked to “visualise” their ideal neighbourhood and the features that would make up those neighbourhoods. They can create a real sense of involvement using the knowledge and understanding of local people.
- **Focus Groups** explore issues in depth, and bring together a cross-section of community interests. Experienced facilitators are needed to guide the discussions, which can be convened at any stage during the project.

Northmoor fun day



- **Household Surveys** may be used to determine views and issues at the start of the project, and also to monitor people's attitudes as the project progresses. They can be carried out by the project team or by the community themselves.
- **Exhibitions and leaflets** are used to inform the community, as well as to seek their views. They often form part of a “formal” consultation exercise that is a statutory requirement.



Residents and Engineers on a site walk-about

- **Fun Days, Mock-ups and Community Workshops** are useful, not only as a way of raising awareness of the project within the community, but also a means of engendering a community spirit. Some of the pilot Home Zones (e.g. Manchester and Ealing) have used fun days as part of their community participation techniques. Workshops can identify fresh skills, as well as seeking views on design proposals.
- **Topic Groups** often contribute local ideas throughout the life of the project. They can help to build consensus and seek local solutions to difficult issues. Can be set up by the residents to discuss particular elements of the project, such as design, information dissemination, parking and links to cycle routes.
- **Other useful established techniques**, for example “Planning for Real” and “Place Check”, where residents are actively involved in assessing their area and planning the layout of the proposals. On-site walk-about, (e.g. “Walking with Engineers”, Wiltshire County Council) are also useful tools in getting design engineers engaged with the local residents and stakeholders in describing proposals in situ.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED

In addition to any statutory consultee list that might exist within a local authority, certain groups should always be drawn into the planning and implementation process of a Home Zone. These groups have a particular perspective that could enhance a Home Zone design:

- **Residents:** It is vital that all residents within a Home Zone area have the opportunity to be involved in meetings, focus groups and events such as “fun days”. As residents become more involved in the Home Zone concept, a sense of social cohesion is likely to emerge across communities and neighbourhoods/estates. Residents in the immediate vicinity of the Home Zone should also be encouraged to participate in its development, as they may be affected by it.



Northmoor residents discussing the project



"Design a Sign", Wiltshire

- **Children and Schools:** Children can bring an entirely different perspective to a project. They give an insight into what is important for young people. They are key users of new facilities, and their wishes need to be addressed. Their direct involvement can also help them to develop a sense of ownership of the scheme. Their participation may be achieved through school activities linked to the Home Zone, or through youth groups or after school activity groups.
- **People with disabilities:** The needs of people with disabilities must be taken into account by local authorities in accordance with the 10 Year Plan, which states that “building in accessibility for disabled people in all new investment is a condition of public money being spent”.

- **Operational Services:** Operators responsible for services such as street cleaning, refuse collection and highway maintenance need to be involved, to ensure that designs being put forward are sustainable and workable. Utility companies also need to be drawn in, to identify any serious constraints on the detailed design of the Home Zone.
- **Police and Emergency Services:** Local police, fire and ambulance services need to be involved, informally as well as formally, so that the impact of the scheme on their operations and their use of the traffic network is understood.
- **Other Local authorities:** In two-tier local authority areas, the traffic authority should consult the authority responsible for air quality. Parish councils and town councils (and local businesses within and near the Home Zone) also need to be involved, to ensure full support for a scheme.
- **Businesses:** Local businesses within or near to a Home Zone should be engaged, to ensure their needs can be accommodated.

Having all these groups understand the objectives of the scheme from the outset will reduce the likelihood of any future objections to a scheme that already has the support of the community. However, to ensure the participation of all these groups in the process the timing and staging of events needs to be flexible. This will overcome the time constraints of the various groups.

UNDERSTANDING AND RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS

It is unlikely that everyone will support the proposals or the comments that others make. There may also be conflict between different interest groups that will need addressing. The key to consensus building is to raise awareness of the key issues and to be transparent in the decision making. Disagreement is often based on misinformation, so it is essential that as many people as possible are involved and kept up to date throughout the process.

CASE STUDY - NORTHMOOR, MANCHESTER

In this pilot Home Zone, consultation was carried out by the Manchester Methodist Housing Association. The initial stages involved raising awareness of what a Home Zone might comprise. The Children's Play Council/Transport 2000 video, "Home Zones: at home in my street", was used to initiate the discussion, and this was followed up by disseminating information through newsletters and leaflets, and with a Fun Day. The Fun Day took place in summer, with one of the streets closed for the day. A full scale mock up of possible elements to be included in the Home Zone was set out. Turf was laid on some of the street, trees were imported into the area, echelon parking arrangements were set out and trial patches of different surface textures and colours were provided for local residents to consider. A questionnaire was given out to all visitors to complete. Live music and refreshments were also provided. The day was a huge success, resulting in an award to the local housing association for their ability to involve the local people in the planning process.



Northmoor fun day

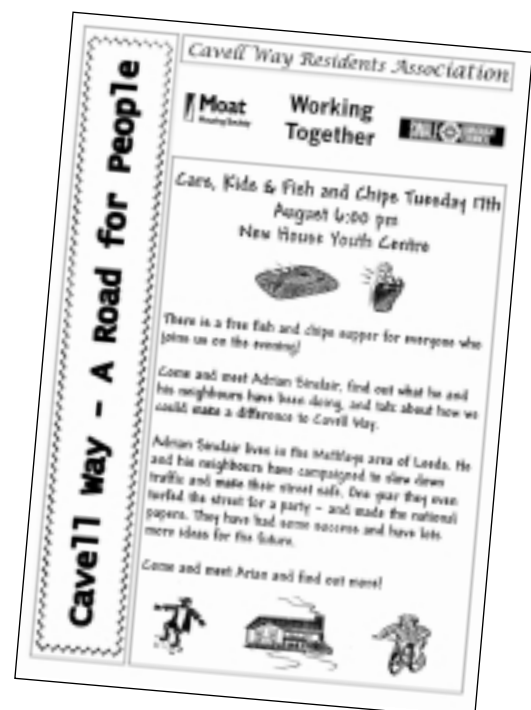
NORTHMOOR URBAN ARTS PROJECT

CASE STUDY - SITTINGBOURNE, KENT.

Cavell Way in Sittingbourne, Kent, took a very proactive approach to getting children fully involved in developing their Home Zone. The Council and the local housing association, Moat Housing Society, used interactive techniques to spark the young people's imagination. Sixty-five children took part in an exercise in which they built a model of their estate, and developed ideas for the scheme itself.



Northmoor Home Zone model



NORTHMOOR URBAN ARTS PROJECT

OTHER RESOURCES AND FEEDBACK

Communicating to particular groups, such as disabled people, older people, people from ethnic minorities and young people, may require particular skills. As with focus groups, the use of facilitators should be considered in such circumstances. Publications and leaflets need to cater for children, people with disabilities and people from ethnic minorities.

Using the local news media can be extremely effective and can help with consensus building, so care is needed to build a positive press image. Advertising or editorial space in local newspapers can be used to ensure that local events are publicised. They are also one way of relaying the outcomes of any meetings back to the community, which is often critical in keeping involvement and enthusiasm alive.

In developing and designing Home Zones, local authorities will need to allow adequate time and resources to ensure full community involvement in the process.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL READING:

A New Deal for Transport: Better For Everyone. The Government's White Paper on the Future of Transport. The Stationary Office. July 1998. ISBN 0-10-139502-7

Home Zones - A Planning and Design Handbook: Mike Biddulph, The Policy Press, 2001 ISBN 1 86134 371X

Modern Local Government - Guidance to Enhancing Public Participation, DETR 1998

Changing Places - Children's Participation in Environmental Planning, E Adams & S Ingham. 1998 ISBN 1 899783 008

Home Zone Design Guidelines, Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers, June 2002. ISBN 0-9542-875

Traffic Advisory Leaflet 3/94 - Fire and Ambulance Services - Traffic Calming, A Code of Practice

Traffic Advisory Leaflet 10/01 - Home Zones - Planning and Design

Home Zones guidance consultation. Scottish Executive 2002. ISBN 0-7559-0371-4

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.homezoneschallenge.com

www.homezonenews.org.uk

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Policy and technical enquiries should be addressed to:
Charging and Local Transport Division
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The Department for Transport sponsors a wide range of research into traffic management issues. The results published in Traffic Advisory Leaflets are applicable to England, Wales and Scotland. Attention is drawn to variations in statutory provisions or administrative practices between the countries.

The Traffic Advisory Unit (TAU) is a multi-disciplinary group working within the Department for Transport. The TAU seeks to promote the most effective traffic management and parking techniques for the benefit, safety and convenience of all road users.

Department for Transport

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