

03 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

This chapter sets out the purpose, methodology, and programme of the consultation process

3.1 Purpose

Stakeholder involvement is an important part of the planning process, as established in Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12, 2008). Community engagement in particular provides a greater local knowledge and understanding of an area and generates empowerment and support for the proposals amongst locals when they are involved from the start. The level of stakeholder engagement undertaken in the current study exceeds the statutory requirements for consultation set out in PPS12 and the council's Statement of Community Involvement (September 2008). The innovative approach to engagement encouraged involvement through interactive techniques and capacity building to make sure that a cross section of community and interest groups were given the opportunity to make their voice heard and make a positive contribution to plans for the future of Faversham Creek.

The main objectives in the stakeholder engagement process were to:

- Bring stakeholders together to shape a cohesive vision for Faversham Creek;
- Empower stakeholders in the development of future plans for Faversham Creek;
- Build capacity and awareness to the principles underpinning the objectives of the AAP in order to ensure stakeholders are equipped with the knowledge to make informed contributions to the various topics that will be addressed in the AAP; and
- Promote and explain the purpose of the AAP to other Faversham stakeholders.

3.2 The 'CreekTeam' concept

The consultation process has been focussed through a stakeholder group specially constituted for this project – the 'CreekTeam'. The purpose of the Team is to encourage public, private and community groups to play an active role as community stakeholders, through building capacity and awareness that will leave a legacy of community empowerment. Once Urban Initiatives role is complete, it is intended that the CreekTeam will continue to act as local champions for the regeneration of the area. The CreekTeam had a particularly important role in establishing consensus around the aspirations, vision, themes, objectives and initial options. It allowed a number of local residents, businesses land owners and representatives of community groups and other service providers to be actively involved in the pre-production stage of the AAP, to highlight what issues should be addressed in the document, and to formulate the process and shape of initial options. Workshops on design, density and value, helped give the team the tools and confidence to make a more informed judgement on spatial configurations of AAP options. In doing this, it helped build up support for the project and establish confidence in the transparency of the process.



Members of the CreekTeam

3.3 Recruitment

Establishing who to consult was the first part of the community engagement process. The SCI requires that consultation should engage with the following groups:

- Local communities (identified by area or interest);
- Statutory consultees;
- Service providers;
- Other agencies (including national organisations, such as the RSPB, and local groups);
- Developers and landowners; and
- Businesses.

Each of these groups were targeted as part of the consultation process for the area, and representatives were invited to join the CreekTeam. In order to reach these groups the Council provided the contact details for many of the appropriate groups. In addition, the Faversham Creek Consortium (an existing stakeholder group representing creekside interests including navigation issues) facilitated access to interested and informed local communities, landowners and businesses to make sure the aspirations of as wide a group as possible had adequate representation in the consultation process

A matrix of all stakeholders who were invited to participate in the consultation is set out in Appendix A. In order to ensure all parties were given equal opportunity to participate, each was invited to every individual CreekTeam event regardless of whether or not they had attended the previous session(s). In addition, landowners were given two opportunities to have one-to-one sessions with the consultants. Additionally, a landowner lunch was held in November 2008 which was well attended and resulted an improved presence of landowners at the following two workshops. However, there were a number of landowners who could or have chosen not to participate in the AAP consultation process to date. Therefore a few sites have not been put forward as developable sites as part of the AAP.

A full list of participants in the CreekTeam is included as an appendix.

3.4 Programme

The overall objectives for the consultation process were:

- To bring together the local community around the Creek;
- To foster participation and co-operation;
- To help identify and create ownership and consensus around a single, innovative, and deliverable vision, objectives and options for the Faversham Creek Area Action Plan.

Consulting at the pre-production phase provides an important opportunity for stakeholders to get involved at the earliest stage and make sure that the overall vision for the area is right from the start. It also increases a sense of ownership over the vision and the likelihood of stakeholders working together to champion it in the future.

Three 'CreekTeam' workshops were held at this initial part of the consultation process for the AAP in order to begin to achieve these aims. In advance of these workshops, site visits and 'on site surgeries' were conducted with landowners and developers. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce the consultant team to the key stakeholders, familiarise them with the place and the issues, and discuss the consultation process with potential participants.

Workshop 1

Workshop 1 provided an opportunity to develop a draft vision for the area and identify a set of strategic objectives. The physical, policy and delivery context for Faversham (possible constraints and funding possibilities) was explained and they were introduced to best practice examples from elsewhere to create confidence and extend the pool of ideas. This was to ensure the vision developed would be realistic and deliverable. A 'Place Check' exercise was used to get hands-on information on the place qualities of the Creek and to help identify strengths and opportunities offered in Faversham Creek. The session also offered the opportunity to network and build up relationships between stakeholders groups.

Workshop 2

After the first weekend session a vision and themes for the Creek was drafted and widely consulted on. Prior to the second workshop, Swale Borough Council invited all landowners to a lunchtime meeting providing and up-date on the progress of the AAP process, and encouraging all landowners to take part in CreekTeam. The final wording on vision and themes were agreed at Workshop 2.

At Workshop 2 the CreekTeam also developed a list of key projects and activities that will support the delivery of the vision for the area. These were then used to guide the spatial development of options at the next Workshop.

Workshop 3

Again prior to Workshop 3, the Council held a number of meetings with individual landowners to further engage them with the process. Workshop 3 allowed the Team to develop options for the area. A 'Faversham Creek Game' was used to facilitate the decision-making process, and consider suitable future land uses for development sites identified by the Council in consultation with landowners.

The Creek Game also enabled testing of the impacts of land-use decisions made in the workshop. These included estimates of planning gain, wider community benefits and employment opportunities. In a parallel exercise, the CreekTeam developed alternative solutions to problems associated with access, routes and connections in the area. This exercise informed the options presented later in this document.

It is anticipated that the network of relationships between stakeholders groups that has been established in the consultation process will continue into the later stages of testing, design and delivery of the AAP document and associated development proposals. Furthermore, the CreekTeam is a group of informed and committed people who can significantly contribute to championing the regeneration for the area. The knowledge and skills gained may enable a continuation of the CreekTeam's role as a sounding board for ideas and proposals as they emerge.

Event	Description	Date and location
On-site surgery	One-to-one discussions with landowners and developers	15th March and 15th May 2008 at the Alexander Centre in Faversham
CreekTeam Workshop 1	Visioning session	13th-14th June 2008 at Abbey School, Faversham
Landowner Lunch	Up-date on AAP Process and Invitation to join the CreekTeam	21st November 2008 at the Guildhall in Faversham
CreekTeam Workshop 2	Agreement on vision/themes and top projects/activities	26th November 2008 at the Alexander Centre in Faversham
CreekTeam Workshop 3	Options development	28th February 2009 at the Alexander Centre in Faversham