



Homes
England

Homes England Advice Notes: Why community engagement matters and how we can deliver locally relevant social value

Advice Note 1: Establishing a clear starting point for community engagement



About the Homes England Community Engagement Advice Notes

Homes England is committed to community engagement

Homes England knows how important it is to effectively engage with, and listen to, communities.

At Homes England, we aim to capture locally relevant ideas and suggestions that reflect opportunities for transformation and regeneration within communities. By engaging meaningfully with local communities and stakeholders, we can identify what matters most to them. This knowledge enables us to shape projects that deliver lasting social value outcomes, benefiting the community both now and in the future.

We consider supporting other public sector bodies in defining their approach to community engagement and social value as a key part of our role. The Community Engagement Advice Notes have been created by Homes England to share ideas and suggestions with local government and their partners.

The advice notes aim to promote meaningful community engagement and support the understanding and delivery of 'locally relevant social value', linked to the planning, housing and regeneration development process.

There are two advice notes:

Advice Note 1: Establishing a clear starting point for community engagement

Advice Note 1 provides guidance on motivations, principles and definitions for community engagement and locally relevant social value.

Advice Note 2: Using community engagement to understand and deliver 'locally relevant' social value outcomes

Advice Note 2 provides some guidance around the practical application of how to approach the delivery of locally relevant social value throughout the planning and regeneration process, through meaningful community engagement.

Why community engagement matters

Homes England considers community engagement to be critical to maximising social outcomes on our projects. In 2023, we launched our Strategic Plan 2023-28 which puts communities at the heart of our mission:



“ We know that engagement with communities is critical to designing places that meet peoples’ needs. We expect our partners to ensure that people can influence housing and regeneration activities in the places where they live. We will also encourage the development of effective plans for the long-term stewardship of places to ensure their continued success.



Homes England Strategic Plan 2023-28

What is meant by locally relevant social value?

At Homes England we use the term 'locally relevant social value'.

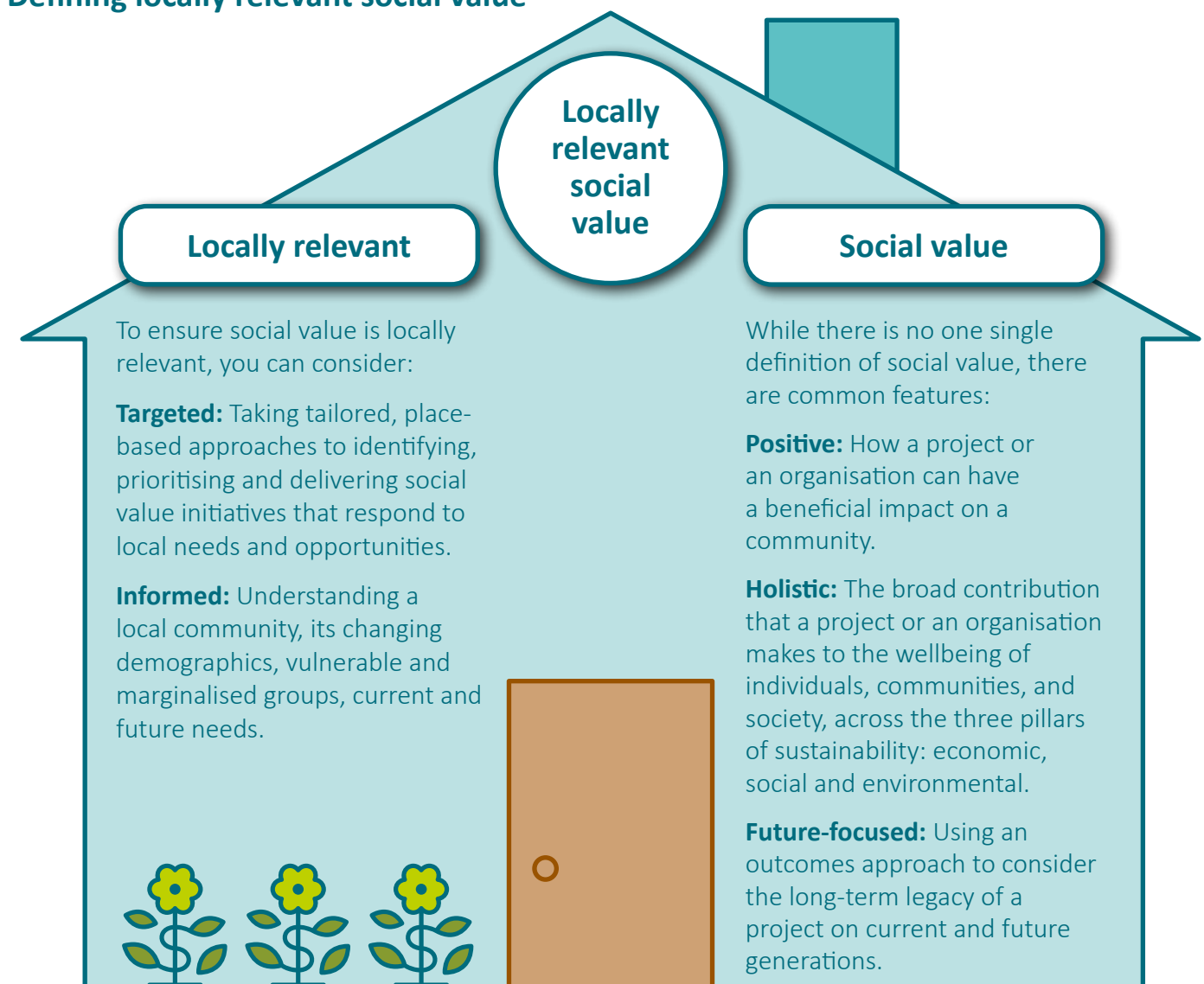
Locally relevant social value is about understanding how to deliver a lasting positive outcome that is meaningful to the specific context of a place and its community.

Planning, housing and regeneration schemes provide opportunities to create places that improve lives. The way that we design and deliver a scheme can affect the way that people interact with the space and each other.

By creating places with the needs of the local community in mind, we can design resilient communities that improve quality of life for many, while designing communities for a healthier, fairer future for generations to come.

The identification of locally relevant social value opportunities can help projects and proposals to become more outcomes-focused. Opportunities should be feasible, proportionate and aligned with your organisational strategic objectives, while also tailored to respond to local needs.

Defining locally relevant social value



Why is it important to engage local communities to generate locally relevant social value in planning, housing and regeneration?

It is the diverse communities that live, work, visit and invest in a place that makes it unique. By undertaking meaningful engagement, we can identify what matters most to local people and places.

This knowledge can be used to help shape a project and deliver lasting social value outcomes that benefit the community.

At Homes England, we consider community engagement as a two-way dialogue. We define 'community engagement' as:



“ Actively listening and engaging with people living, working, visiting and investing in an area so as to inform and shape our ideas, support long term transformation and empower communities. ”

Whilst the Planning Act (2008) requires public consultation to be undertaken as part of the planning application process, evidenced in a local planning authority's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), there are many wider benefits to engaging communities throughout the planning and regeneration process.

Effective, inclusive and timely engagement processes allow for the participation of communities and collaboration with trusted local partners and stakeholders to inform decision-making from the outset. This early and informed involvement of affected communities helps build trust through transparent planning processes, while delivering better project outcomes informed by local knowledge and perspectives.

Being proactive and informed helps identify opportunities to manage impacts and maximise benefits with communities, inherently de-risking projects. Early engagement provides deeper insights into local needs, allowing us to anticipate and address challenges proactively, reducing conflicts and delays.



“ Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community. ”

National Planning Policy Framework, 2024

Effective early and ongoing engagement can help foster a sense of stewardship among local communities, enabling them to support and sustain the project's outcomes. This leads to lasting and meaningful impacts, with the community remaining actively involved and invested in the project's success beyond its official completion.

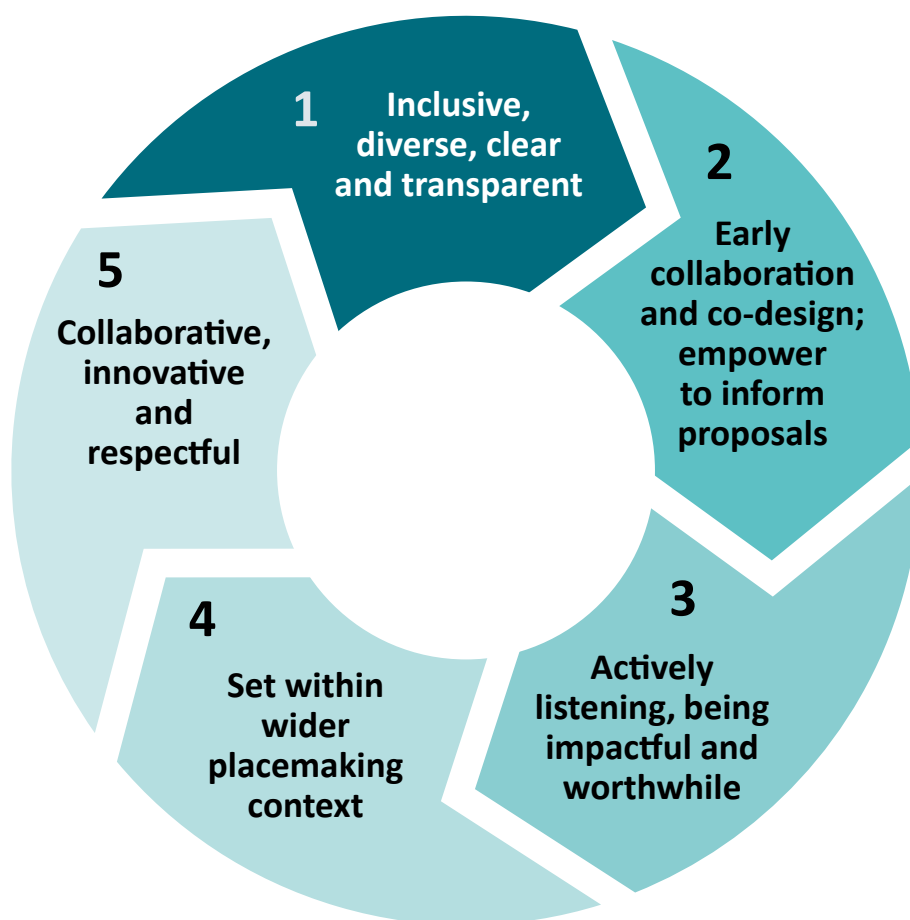
Guiding principles for community engagement

Establishing a set of guiding principles can help guide and maintain a consistent approach to community engagement aligned with your organisation's strategic objectives. At Homes England, our community engagement guiding principles reflect our values, mission and objectives.

These are shown in the diagram below.

At Homes England, our motivations for engaging communities are:

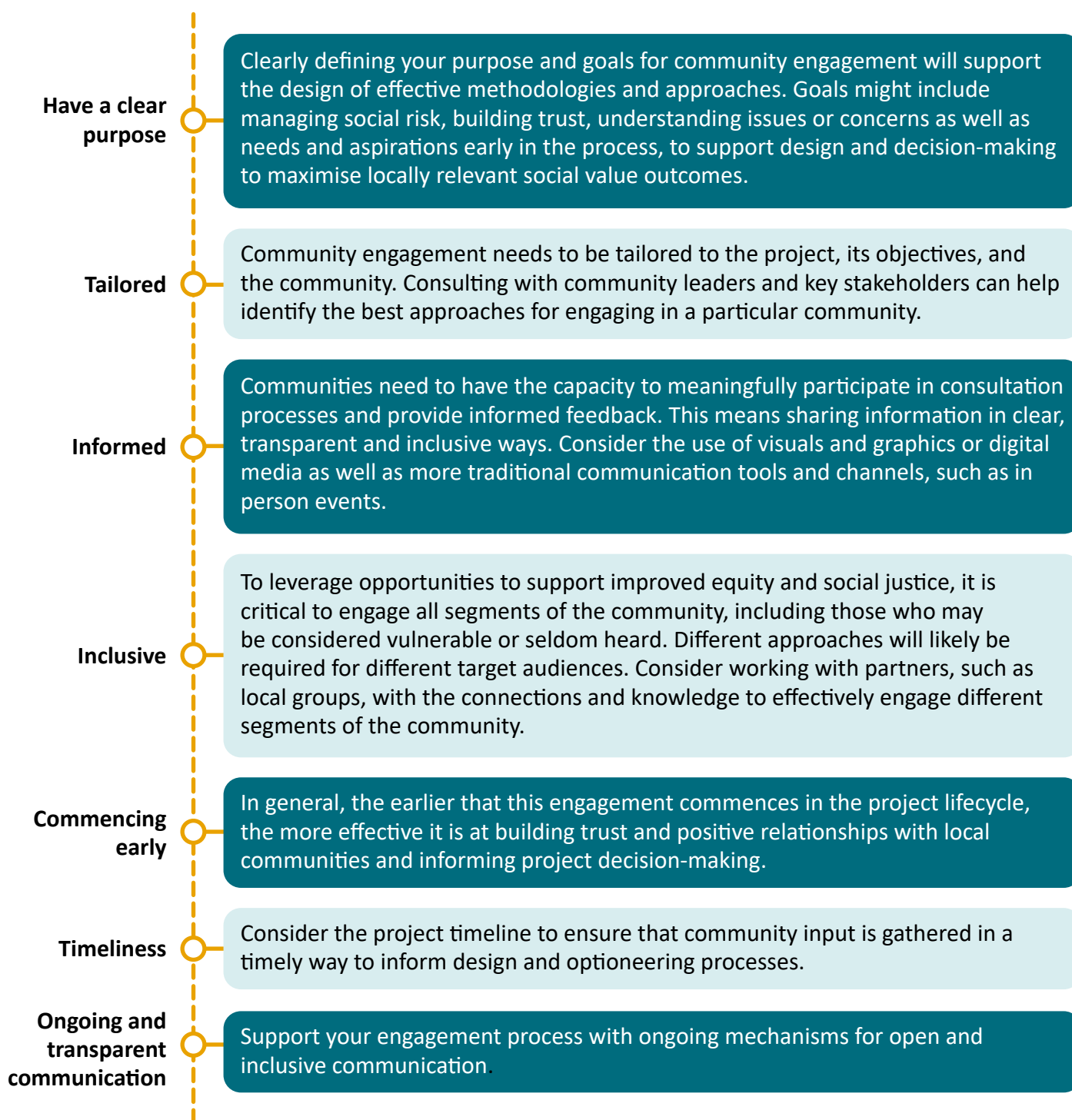
- Empowering people and local groups to participate in the planning and regeneration process
- Supporting key aspects of the Homes England Strategic Plan 2023-28
- Achieving better quality project proposals and planning consents
- Unlocking opportunities to support social and economic equity
- Understanding place and community priorities to deliver locally relevant social value and regeneration
- Collaborating to attract additional investment and funding opportunities
- Empowering people and local groups to participate in the planning and regeneration process.
- Leaving an impactful legacy; building our reputation via people and place
- Helping to increase local support for proposals
- Helping to generate development value



What does great community engagement look like in the planning, housing and regeneration sector?

To effectively support the generation of locally relevant social value, community engagement needs to be well-designed and tailored to the audience. This means understanding the communities that are affected by or interested in the project and developing tailored approaches to effectively engage with them.

No two projects are the same, but having a set of key principles, such as the ones below, will help inform your planning for a great community engagement process:



About Homes England

Homes England is the Government's housing and regeneration agency.

Homes England is committed to effective community engagement in our projects. In 2023, we launched our Strategic Plan 2023-28 which puts communities at the heart of our mission:

"We drive regeneration and housing delivery to create high-quality homes and thriving places. This will support greater social justice, and the creation of places people are proud to call home...."

You can read about our strategic objectives in our strategic plan online. Go to [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk) and search for 'Homes England strategic plan'

The Homes England Community Engagement Team

The Homes England Community Engagement Team supports colleagues and partners to embed best practice approaches to community engagement.

From the outset, we work with partners and local communities to articulate the vision and ambition for the homes and places we enable. We complete regular project reviews and help teams to establish criteria for measuring success to demonstrate the impact of our approach.

The Community Engagement Team has produced the Community Engagement Advice Notes. To view these online go to [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk) and search for 'Housing information hub'.

Get in touch to find out about:

- The Homes England Sustainability and Design Outcomes Engagement Tool
- Ideas to develop Place Based Indicators that reflect local context and community
- Advice for commissioning consultants to develop a community engagement strategy
- Advice on how community engagement informs the Visioning process as part of developing a masterplan