



Homes  
England

The Housing and Regeneration Agency

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

Homes England project case studies



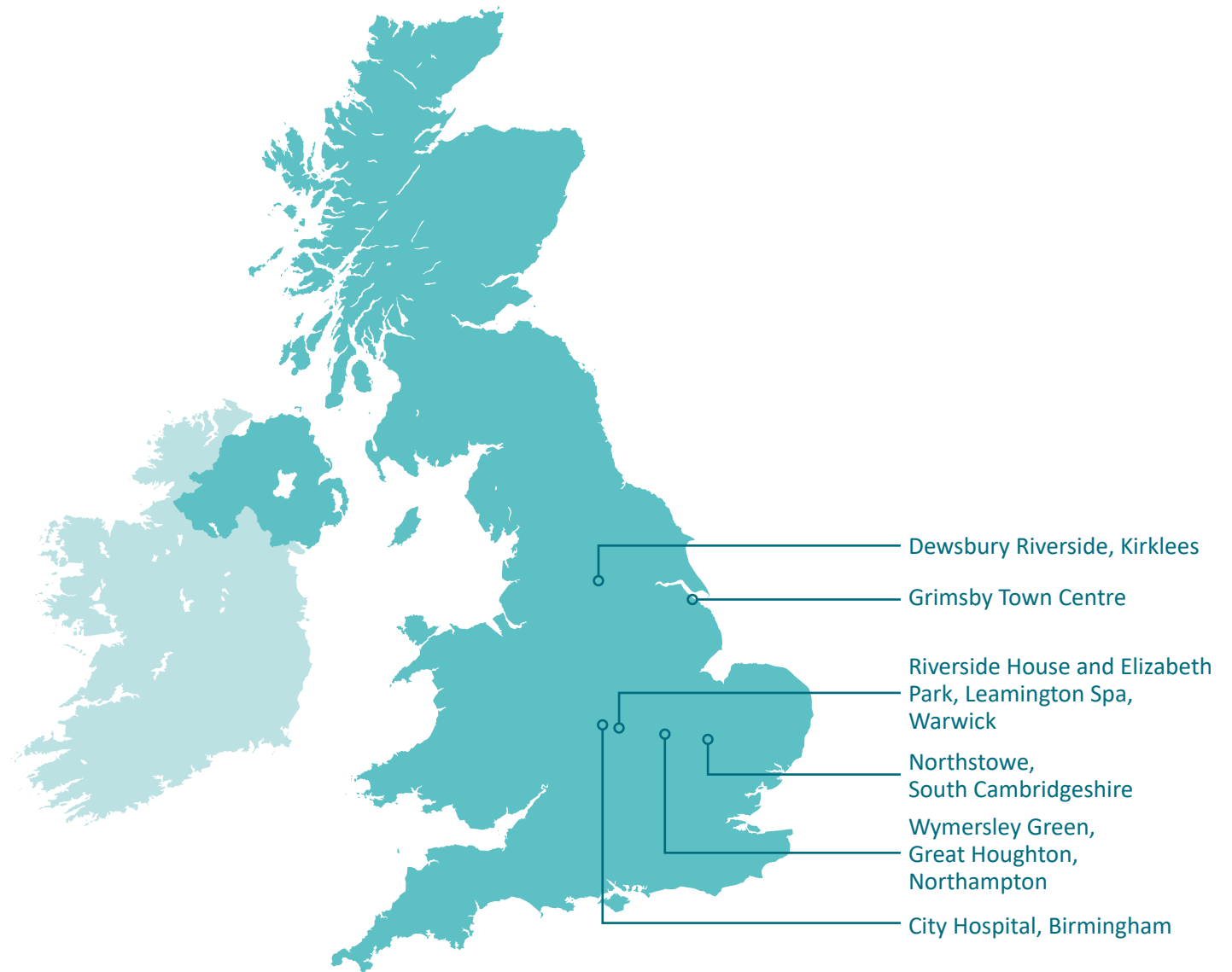
# Homes England case studies

## How we are approaching community engagement and delivering social value in our projects

Together with our partners, we are continuing to strengthen our approach to community engagement.

Our project case studies aim to share how we take a tailored approach to community engagement that reflects the local context, scale and type of development project, and stage within the planning, housing and regeneration process.

We aim to embed an outcomes-focused approach, supporting the delivery of locally relevant social value from the early stages of a project. We reflect on our own experiences to promote a culture of continuous learning.





## Case Study 1: **Northstowe, South Cambridgeshire**



Northstowe is the most significant new community in the UK for over 50 years. It is being developed as a green community with a third of the site being public open space and a dedicated public transport system at the heart of the town.

The town has a vital role in supporting growth in Cambridgeshire and the wider region, while having its own independent spirit.

The scheme is currently being delivered. Phase 1 features 1,500 homes, a new primary school, sports facilities and connections to the emerging town via road, cycle and walking and an amenity lake. It is almost complete - thousands of people already call Northstowe home.

Once complete, Northstowe will comprise:

- 10,000 new homes for a population of 30,000 people;
- 540 hectares of development land including new homes, lakes, parks, a town centre, schools, sports facilities, community facilities and business space; and
- A multi-year build-out programme with associated supply chain and employment.

## Approach to community engagement

The project team, comprising of Homes England, South Cambridgeshire District Council and the wider professional team, are currently taking a renewed approach to community engagement.

Our role in delivering Northstowe provides a good example of where we advocate delivery of locally relevant social value through our interventions. As well as the delivery of requirements relating to affordable housing and biodiversity net gain, we work with our partners to support activities which contribute to community enlivenment. This ranges from sponsoring local events on our land, community art projects, providing access to recreational facilities, and career events.

Homes England and project partners discussed why and how having a Community Engagement Strategy can create opportunities, focused on co-design and co-production, so that engagement and social value are being done with, and not to, the community.

The Community Engagement Strategy aims to ensure that local groups, residents and their representatives are fully understood and that the communities co-owns the need and methodology for development an agreed community engagement.

## Locally relevant social value priorities

The delivery of Northstowe is ongoing and will be delivered over a long timeframe. To date, we have achieved:

- Improved trust and better communication between and across the project partners
- A renewed sense of join-working for mutual benefit
- A working group is now in place with agreed terms of reference to inform and guide the strategy going forward with real purpose and energy
- An agreed, aligned approach to engagement and social value outcomes is now being progressed.





Image Courtesy: [www.googlemaps.co.uk](http://www.googlemaps.co.uk)

## Case Study 2: **Dewsbury Riverside, Kirklees**



Dewsbury Riverside is an allocated Sustainable Urban Extension located approximately 1.5 miles south of Dewsbury town centre in Kirklees, West Yorkshire.

Homes England is working collaboratively with Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

The allocation has potential to deliver approximately 2,500 new homes over a 15-20 year period, together with education and community facilities and green space. The ambition is for a well-connected, high-quality and sustainable community.

## Approach to community engagement

First, Homes England led an in-person workshop with council officers at Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council and the wider consultant team. The purpose of the workshop was to ascertain definitions and motivations for social value specific to Dewsbury Riverside and the local community.

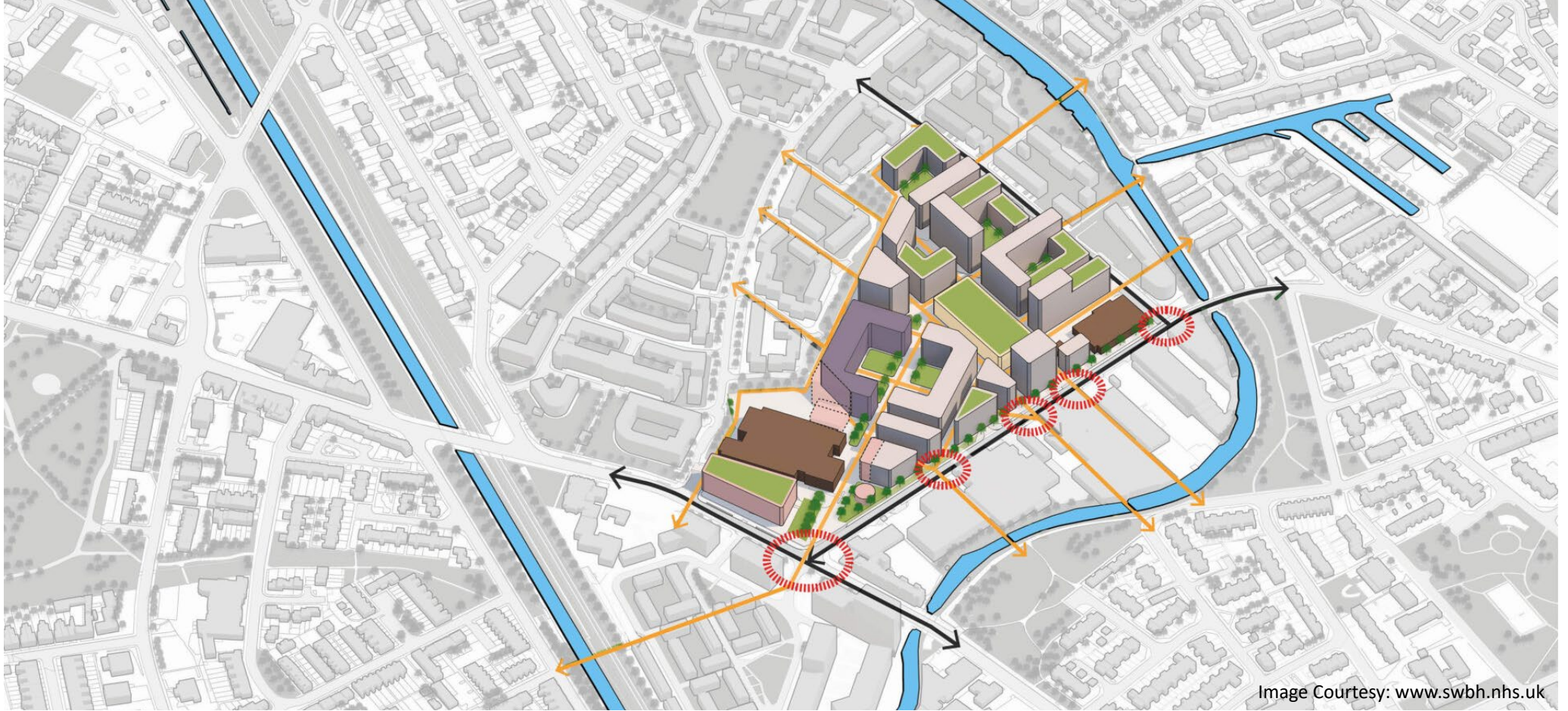
Engaging with the council early provided an important steer on the motivations for social value. It also put social value on the agenda from an early stage, ensuring that is considered throughout project development.

A consultant team has been commissioned to develop Place Based Indicators. This process has included engaging with local community groups which were identified by the council's Communities Team. This local knowledge was integral for connecting with communities.

Workshops and surveys were also undertaken with project partners and stakeholders.

## Locally relevant social value priorities

- Feedback from the community engagement highlighted the importance of local priorities including supporting bicycle routes, education services and ensuring that new homes reflect the preferences of the community.
- These priorities informed the creation of Place Based Indicators, and hyperlocal interventions which will help deliver social value outcomes.
- A clear series of next steps have been agreed. Community engagement and social value now has a clear workstream of activity, fully embedded into the wider project management and governance of the project.



### Case Study 3: **City Hospital Birmingham**

The site is located approximately 2km to the west of Birmingham city centre.

The site comprises the western park of Birmingham City Hospital and features a complex of hospital buildings that date back to the late 19th century, with significant adaptations and infilling in recent decades. There are significant areas of historical contamination associated with a former gas works in the north of the site.

Outline planning consent was granted in August 2024 by Birmingham City Council. The scheme will deliver approximately 750 new homes, including a mix of family homes and residential apartments. Significant new areas of open space will be provided, including a new canalside park.

## Approach to community engagement

The engagement programme was paused to enable the engagement strategy to be reviewed. Although some delays were incurred on the programme, the revised scope of work enabled the project team to engage the local community more effectively and better understand local priorities, which in turn informed the development proposals.

The process brought local community groups together to discuss and agree their priorities for the area. The focus group activity enabled the project team to create a set of locally owned Place-Based Indicators which reflect local needs.

The outcomes of community engagement discussions have influenced the project proposals. The outcomes have also informed the Statement of Community Involvement; discussions with the planning department regarding S.106 requirements; and Homes England's disposals strategy.

## Locally relevant social value priorities

- The community focus group considered that the City Hospital redevelopment project provides an opportunity to deliver a mix of homes that can address short-falls and meet local needs.
- A strong sense of uniqueness, identity and belonging was observed, but concerns were also raised about the sense or perception of safety near to the site. Opportunities for greater resident empowerment and influence of decision-making would be welcomed to give a better sense of care of ownership of spaces.
- The feedback resulted in a proposal to make improvements to an existing bridge and adjacent open spaces just outside of the site, rather than providing a new bridge link, which had been the original intention. These decisions will increase connectivity beyond the site boundary.
- The submitted planning application has reflected on these identified opportunities and will inform on-going discussions with the Local Planning Authority at Reserved Matters Stage.





Case Study 4:  
**Wymersley Green, Great Houghton, Northampton**



The development proposals at Land at Great Houghton Northampton are to support a residential-led scheme to adjoining the approved South of Brackmills Sustainable Urban Extension located directly to the west of the Site.

The proposals at Wymersley Green are for up to 650 new homes of a range of types and sizes, including affordable homes. The scheme has an opportunity for commercial and community uses as part of a potential neighbourhood centre. The proposals include green infrastructure including Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) required by policy; informal open space; allotments; play space including a new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and provision of infrastructure to access and serve the development. An outline planning application was submitted in December 2024.

## Approach to community engagement

The engagement process was designed and structured to ensure that the community and stakeholders were both informed about the evolving proposal and had opportunities to contribute and influence them.

An inclusive engagement approach was designed to gather community input and ensure diverse voices were heard. To support accessibility and inclusivity we offered a variety of activities at every stage including workshops by invitation, public drop-in sessions, online workshops, town hall meetings, a digital exhibition, leaflets, newsletters and an online survey.

In advance of engagement activity, a variety of publicity methods were used to promote awareness of events and to encourage participation including using social media, letter drops and advertisement via local media channels.

We also hosted engagement events in neighbouring areas to ensure a diverse range of perspectives were heard, reflecting the unique needs and priorities of each locality.

We regularly provided updates to the community on progress, to maintain engagement and build trust, even if project timelines or project elements were delayed.

## Locally relevant social value priorities

- The community expressed concerns about the potential for increased traffic. As a result, we ensured as part of the application proposals a key priority was to minimise traffic through Great Houghton.
- There are few shops in the local area, and this was identified as a local need during community engagement. We explored the opportunity to provide a small neighbourhood centre on the site, which was not a requirement under the allocation or policy and the submitted proposals include for the provision of a small neighbourhood centre.
- Concern around cycle speeds and National Cycle Network (NCN) routes through Great Houghton. In response, we explored opportunities to bring the NCN into the site and provide alternative offroad cycle routes as part of the scheme whilst maintaining good connectivity for cyclists.
- We included a bus loop as close as possible to Great Houghton, to allow new and existing residents to use the bus service, which they currently do not have in walking distance.
- A focus on preserving the village character of Great Houghton, through the creation of open space to serve new and existing residents and create a masterplan that acknowledges the existing character of adjacent neighbourhoods.
- One of the key pieces of feedback received during engagement was for a new site name, with a distinct identity and connection to the history of the local area. Having carefully considered this feedback, the site is now known as 'Wymersley Green'.



Case Study 5:

**Riverside House and Elizabeth Park, Leamington Spa, Warwick**

The redevelopment of Elizabeth Park and associated track facilities were delivered as part of a project for 72 homes on a local authority site in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

Elizabeth Park is located approximately 1km from the centre of Leamington Spa.

### Approach to community engagement

Community engagement exercises included one on-line event and two in-person events.

Promotional activity was focussed on stakeholders and local residents, those who had an interest in, or who would be affected by the proposals, as well as statutory consultees. Additional publicity was raised through direct leafletting and articles via the local planning authority.

A dedicated project website providing full information about the consultation and the site in general was open throughout the duration of the consultation until the submission of the planning application.

A number of proposals were put forward, including a fenced-off area for dogs; more sports pitches; a formal play area; and improved wetland. The public fed back what type of facilities that they would like to see.

### Locally relevant social value priorities

Social value will be delivered for the community through creation and improvement of new facilities that respond to the needs of local residents.

- We have delivered social value for the community through improved pathways and safer routes that better serve the community.
- A scheme focused on habitat creation - specifically wetland - to improve and enhance biodiversity.
- Specific areas for play and recreation that respond to local needs.
- A more cohesive park experience with facilities that complement rather than conflict with each other.



Case Study 6:  
**Grimsby Town Centre**

Grimsby Town Centre Living is a property-led residential regeneration project to kickstart Grimsby's town centre 'green' residential offer near Alexandra Dock.

The ambition is to adopt a housing-led approach to regeneration, which could deliver approximately 480 high-quality, low carbon homes in sustainable, waterside neighbourhoods. This development aims to better connect the existing town centre with the Alexandra Dock area.

## Approach to community engagement

The Homes England Community Engagement team has supported the project manager and other managers from different teams across Homes England in bringing together the relevant North East Lincolnshire Council officers.

Prior to the first workshop and site visit, the Homes England Community Engagement Team researched and produced a summary report of the key relevant policies and strategies published by the Council and Homes England.

The Community Engagement Team helped to bring together in one place the right people, the right teams and summarise the most relevant policies and approaches. This was helpful in building consensus between North East Lincolnshire Council and Homes England, and helped to ensure that the project focused on outcomes at this important early stage.

The intention was to develop an agreed starting point that could inform the project Business Case and future next steps for any planned engagement and social value activity.

A second workshop involved making suggestions for definitions, motivations, guiding principles and objectives for community engagement and social value.

A final report was produced which sets out the agreed next steps and actions.

## Locally relevant social value priorities

- A clear, agreed starting point for community engagement and social value, informed by an iterative and collaborative approach at this early stage.
- Agreement on a set of next steps for community engagement and social value.
- A Business Case that reinforces community engagement and social value outcomes. The Business Case included a referenced to the process undertaken to date, thereby ensuring that the wider project considers the agreed community engagement and social value priorities.