

Newcastle Gateshead Local Plan

Communications and Engagement Strategy

1. Background:

Newcastle and Gateshead Councils have agreed to delivering a joint legally compliant Local Plan for adoption.

This is defined by national planning guidance and will include:

- Make sure there is enough space for important things like homes (including affordable homes), jobs, shops, leisure, community facilities and other businesses.
- Make sure the right infrastructure is in place to support new development, such as healthcare, schools, green spaces, walking and cycling routes, public transport, and utilities like electricity, water and sewerage - so people can live safe, healthy and happy lives.
- Set clear overall policies to guide where and how development happens, how big it should be and what quality it should meet, while promoting equality, healthy communities, adapting to climate change, and protecting the environment and nature.
- Include policies to protect and improve the natural environment, buildings and heritage, including landscapes, green spaces and wildlife.
- Use up-to-date and reliable evidence to support all parts of the local plan.

Newcastle and Gateshead Councils have successfully delivered a joint Local Plan in previous years, and both councils have confirmed they will collaborate across various workstreams to bring this new joint plan to life. This includes working together on developing a robust communications and engagement plan.

2. Timeline:

The current high-level Local Plan timeframe is as follows:

- **Summer 2026** - Give formal notice of 30-month plan preparation period, publish timeline and run scoping consultation to engage with the public, statutory bodies and other stakeholders inviting feedback on matters including how to engage with them throughout the plan-making process and what the plan should contain.
- **February 2027 - Gateway 1** - consultation on plan content (vision, objectives, spatial options and evidence)
- **January 2028 - Gateway 2** - consultation on full draft plan
- **September 2028 - Gateway 3** - submission and examination

3. Communication and engagement approach:

This communications and engagement plan is designed to effectively inform and engage the public, stakeholders, and relevant parties about a proposed local plan for development

within a specific area, outlining how information will be disseminated, what key messages to convey, and which channels to use throughout the planning process, ensuring transparency and opportunities for feedback.

There will be a dedicated communications and engagement workstream with representatives from each council who will lead on this work. Decisions taken by this group will be fed back at the monthly Local Plan Board meeting attended by planners and senior officers for final agreement by everyone.

A bespoke branding and identity have been established for the NewcastleGateshead Local Plan which will be used on all assets as part of these three phased approaches, including the dedicated website.

All communications must be accessible to ensure it is in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Key to this will be a three-phased approach based around the scoping consultation, Gateway 1 and Gateway 2, with specific objectives, messages and ways of consulting for each, as detailed below – see section ‘Three phases of Consultation’ below.

Overall Communication objectives:

- **Raise awareness and understanding** of the NewcastleGateshead Local Plan, explaining what it is, how it’s created, and what it can and can’t achieve.
- **Be open about decisions**, including why difficult choices may need to be made and how they affect the area.
- **Engage stakeholders early** to test ideas and shape a shared vision that reflects local identity and inclusivity.
- **Emphasise local benefit**, making it clear the Local Plan is for local people while recognising the diversity of our communities and the need for accessible digital engagement.
- **Encourage meaningful participation** by showing why the Local Plan matters and how it will impact people’s everyday lives.
- **Provide clear, timely and accurate information** through a range of accessible channels.
- **Promote inclusive access to information**, ensuring everyone can engage in ways that suit their needs.
- **Be transparent about consultation**, clearly setting out its purpose, what we’re asking, and how people can take part.
- **Show how feedback makes a difference**, highlighting how consultation responses have influenced final decisions and proposals.

4. Overall Engagement objectives:

- **Use a wide range of engagement methods** to reach as many people as possible and ensure everyone has the opportunity to share their views.

- **Use clear, positive language** that highlights opportunities and encourages people to get involved.
- **Make engagement accessible and relevant to all**, including those who may not usually take part, by being creative and open to new approaches.
- **Focus on local conversations**, listening to neighbourhoods and strengthening connections with communities.
- **Take a coordinated approach**, working collaboratively across services and with partners to make the best use of resources.
- **Engage early and meaningfully**, giving people a real opportunity to influence decisions from the start.
- **Be transparent and responsive**, showing how feedback is being considered and how issues are being addressed.

5. Key messages

Key messages will allow us to communicate in a consistent and simple way which is inclusive and helps to increase engagement and understanding of the Plan. These will need to be reviewed throughout the process.

- **Clear plan for the future** - A long-term plan that sets out how Newcastle and Gateshead will grow, helping keep them great places to live and work.
- **Homes, jobs and infrastructure** - It will decide where new homes and jobs go, and make sure the right infrastructure (like schools, transport and community facilities) is in place.
- **Strong focus on community involvement** - Residents, businesses and communities will be involved throughout, with their views helping shape the plan.
- **Inclusive and fair growth** - The plan aims to meet the needs of diverse communities and create opportunities for everyone.
- **Ongoing engagement and feedback** - Early conversations have started, and there will be more chances to get involved, with feedback used at every stage.
- **Clear answers on development** - It will set out how much development is needed, where it will happen, when, and how it will be delivered.
- **Evidence-led decisions** - Decisions will be based on careful assessment of available land and supporting data.
- **Health and environment at the heart** - The plan will support healthier lifestyles, improve access to nature, and protect and enhance the environment.
- **Partnership working** - Councils and partners will work together to deliver better outcomes, including reducing inequalities and supporting communities.

6. Target audiences

For each three phases of consultation, our target audiences broadly fit into five categories, although for each phase our focus on each will vary – detailed below in Section 7.

- Community groups / communities of identity
- Local residents / wider community
- Young people (under 30's) to shape the future of where they want to live
- Political
- Statutory Bodies
- Planning Associates / Developers / landowners

Since our last local plan engagement activity, we have been working to identify and connect with new audiences. This includes targeted work with younger people and young families, amongst others. The Local Plan will directly impact their future, and we want to help them see why engaging with the process is important for them and what they can get out of taking part in the consultation.

7. Three phases of consultation:

7a. Scoping consultation: Summer 2026

- **Objective of this stage** – to gather initial views on the content of the Local Plan and how communities and stakeholders want to be involved.
- **Comms Activities:**
- At this scoping phase of consultation, the focus will be on those who we have already engaged with previously and whose details we currently hold on file - statutory bodies, planning associates, developers, landowners, engaged community groups etc.
- This will be through emails and direct communication, rather than using each council's wider reaching communication channels.
- All comms activities will direct the audience to the bespoke Newcastle Gateshead Local Plan website and to Common Place, where consultation questions will be hosted.
- Use of additional communication channels will be considered once the consultation is underway if it is considered necessary to increase participation, but it unlikely for this phase of consultation.

7b. Gateway 1 – early 2027

- **Objective of this stage** – Consultation on proposed local plan content and evidence (expected early 2027). This will look at the draft vision and objectives for the plan, the overall development strategy, and a summary of the evidence collected so far.

- **Key communication activity** (with dates and further details to be added as details confirmed):

Channel	Activity	Other information
Media	<p>Press release to launch consultation, key messages about plan and milestones.</p> <p>Media schedule produced, although this will be lighter than the media approach for Gateway 2</p> <p>Key press releases to also be published on news section of each council's website and the bespoke website</p>	Q&As / FAQs to be produced to help with potential media enquiries
Website / webpages	Newcastle Gateshead Local Plan bespoke site, both council's websites (planning pages), news pages and any other consultation channels	Newcastle's Let's Talk site
Social media	Social media schedule produced	Content and approach consistent with best practice for different channels
Video	To be used in its entirety on webpages and as cutaways for social media	Also used at engagement events
Council publications	<p>Gateshead – Gateshead News (and Gateshead Now email)</p> <p>Newcastle – Homes and People (YHN tenants)</p>	.
Community Mailing Lists	Local ward, interest groups and community centres.	Emails can be sent to raise general awareness of consultation and awareness of engagement sessions
Community Noticeboards	Nb Over 90 noticeboards located across Newcastle.	

Community Champions, or similar	Network of volunteers	Newsletter and emails are regularly sent to these groups
Elected members	Elected members to use their channels to promote consultation with their constituents	
Internal communication channels and colleague briefings	Article in internal (email) bulletins Focus sessions	
Public venues	Posters and other collateral displayed	Libraries, customer service centres, community centres etc
Consultation collateral	Display material (for example banner stands), posters, leaflets for the in-person consultation events	Available for all events
Partners	Use partners' channels to amplify message and reach	Produce list of partner channels

- **Key engagement activity** (with dates and further details to be added as details confirmed):

Audience	Channel	Other information
All elected members	Email / Face-to-face / Teams	Via email all Members received a briefing pack
Local MPs	Email / Face-to-face / Teams	Via email Local MPs received a briefing pack
Neighbouring local authorities	Email to those on planning database	
Regional groups / bodies	Email to those on planning database	Details to be added
Prescribed bodies	Email to those on planning database	Details to be added

Developers	Email to those on planning database Face-to-Face	Details to be added
Local businesses	Emails Existing business events Bespoke business events	Details to be added
Universities	Email to those on planning database Face-to-Face	

Community Engagement

Audience	Activity	Other information
Residents	<p>Local neighbourhood engagement</p> <p>Ward meetings</p> <p>Drop-In Events at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries and Leisure Centres • Customer Service Centres • Community Centres <p>Focused events arranged for the consultation – neighbourhood and more central locations</p>	<p>Focus on a geographical spread for neighbourhood events</p> <p>Focus on areas of higher footfall for focused events</p>
Communities of identity and / or seldom-heard groups	<p>Groups include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities • Ethnic minorities • Young people • Older people • People from geographical communities • Students • Digitally-excluded communities • This could be delivered by VCSE partners, with an existing relationship with the groups identified, on our behalf. 	<p>Creation of accessible materials and costs of translation and or printing of accessible materials will be required</p>

7c. Gateway 2 – Early 2028

Objective of this stage – Consultation on the full draft local plan (expected early 2028). This will be a chance to comment on the full draft plan before it is submitted for independent examination.

- **Key communication activity** (with dates and further details to be added as details confirmed):

Channel	Activity	Other information
Media	<p>Press release to launch consultation, key messages about plan and milestones.</p> <p>Media schedule produced, this will be more detailed and issue-based than the media approach for Gateway 1</p> <p>Key press releases to also be published on news section of each council's website and the bespoke website</p>	<p>Q&As / FAQs to be produced to help with potential media enquiries</p> <p>Contentious issues need to be identified, with agreed responses provided prior to launch of consultation</p>
Website / webpages	Newcastle Gateshead Local Plan bespoke site, both council's websites (planning pages), news pages and any other consultation channels	Newcastle's Let's Talk site
Social media	Social media schedule produced	Content and approach consistent with best practice for different channels
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Community Engagement

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	Focused events arranged for the consultation – neighbourhood and more central locations	Focus on areas of higher footfall for focused events
Communities of identity and / or seldom-heard groups	Groups include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities • Ethnic minorities • Young people • Older people • People from geographical communities • Students • Digitally-excluded communities • This could be delivered by VCSE partners, with an existing relationship with the groups identified, on our behalf. 	Creation of accessible materials and costs of translation and or printing of accessible materials will be required

7.d Gateway 3

Gateway 3 is the final stage in plan-preparation before independent examination. This stage is procedural, ensuring the local plan is ready for submission, evidence-based and legally sound.