

National  
Planning Forum  
26 September 2018



Sue Manns Associates

Community  
Engagement

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# RTPI evidence to Skeffington Committee

*“ planning is unpopular with many members of the public..... This ‘we’ and ‘they’ attitude, ‘we’ being the public at the mercy of ‘they’ the planners is all too prevalent, and is indicative of the extent to which public participation in the sense of full public involvement in, and responsibility for, is not being achieved at present.”*

The implication was that through ‘proper’ participation, the public antagonism to planning, and its manifestation in the lodging of objections, would fade away.



# Skeffington Report 1969

Recommended greater  
involvement of the public in  
planning

*“We see the process of giving  
information and opportunities  
for participation as one which  
leads to greater understanding  
and co-operation rather than to  
a crescendo of dispute.”*

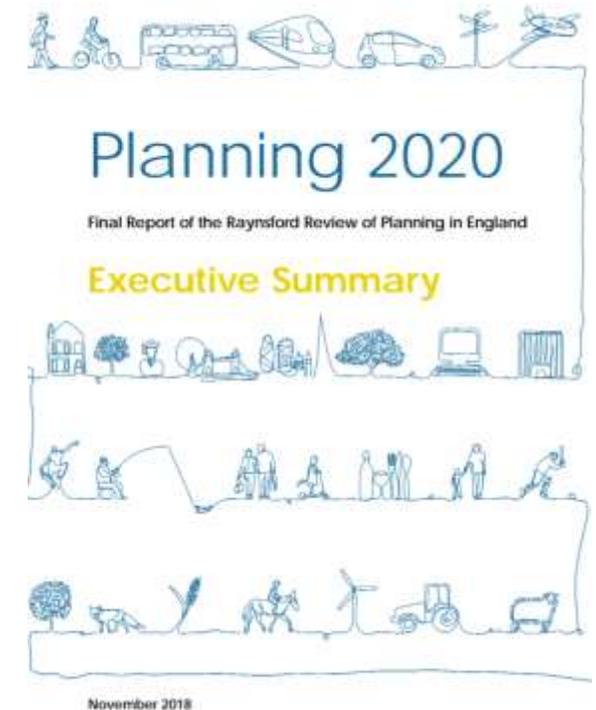
How are we doing?



- Civic Voice - civic societies see planning as dominated by central government and developers at the expense of communities and local government.
- Building Better Building Beautiful Commission (2019) - there is *“falling public confidence in the engagement and planning process”*
- *Raynsford Review (2018) “..... a sense of anger about and mistrust of the planning system, which is plainly a barrier to meaningful debate about the future of communities. ... the perception that such consultation did not lead to any real tangible change for the better.*
- British Social Attitudes Survey (NatCen) - 45% of people are opposed to more homes being built in their area, and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> to 1/2 of opponents would continue to oppose all new housing development regardless of any mitigation secured by the local authority (more than half in the South of England).

# 2019

## A lack of public faith in planning?



# 2019 - Opposition to new development across the world

- People do not like change, fear of impact on lives
- Responses not based on logic
- Past experience, perception of impact and place attachment
- Often do not have evidence and pushed for 'quick' response
- Subsequently hard to change position



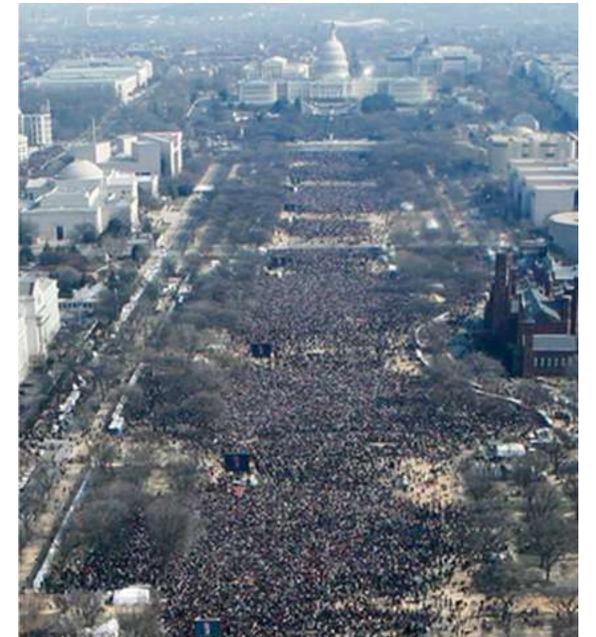
# Is it possible to have a shared community view?

People do not “all share the same views” or live same lifestyle – even if they live in the same household

People’s views change over lifetime

Consultation can be divisive within communities and families

We need to hear all voices – not just those who shout loudest



Who gets involved in  
planning in 2019?

Hansard poll:

22% of the public are  
prepared to engage in public  
consultation





Sheffield City Council  
Search consultations

Consultation Hub · Find Consultations · We Asked, You Said, We Did · Mailing List Signup

### The Sheffield Plan: Our City, Our Future - Citywide Options for Growth to 2034 (November 2015)

**Feedback Updated 18 Apr 2018**

**We Asked**

We consulted on the 1st stage of making the Sheffield Plan, the City-wide Options for Growth to 2034, from 11 November 2015 to 15 January 2016.

**You Said**

Summaries of the responses received on the Citywide Options for Growth document are now available.

The 'Executive Summary of the Responses on the City-wide Options' presents

**Closed 15 Jan 2016**  
Opened 11 Nov 2015

**Contact**  
Simon Vincent  
Forward and Area Planning  
01142733259  
[sim.vincent@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:sim.vincent@sheffield.gov.uk)

## DRAFT READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2013

May 2017

[www.reading.gov.uk](http://www.reading.gov.uk)

**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

# Comparators



Consultation Institute:

Healthcare consultations that achieve higher than a 1% response rate are considered 'good'.

The average response rate for UK public consultations stands at 0.7%.

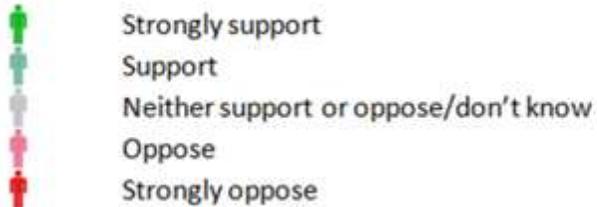
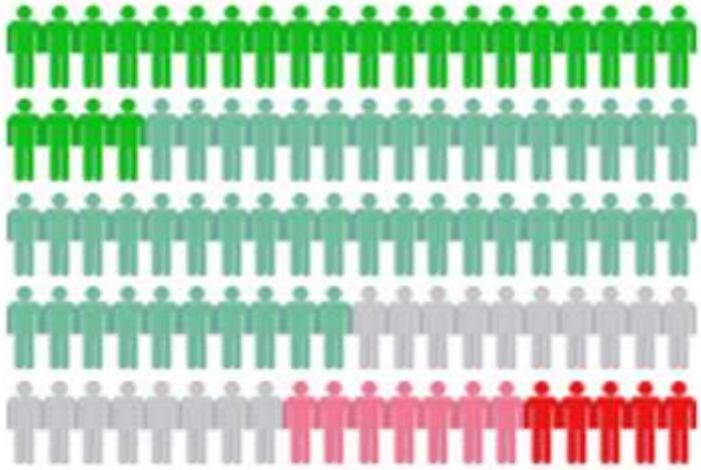
'Votes':

Local election 2017 average 35%

General election 2017 - 68.8%



Do you support or oppose onshore wind?



Source: Department of Energy & Climate Change Public Attitudes Tracking Survey, Wave 9, 29 April 2014

Levels of engagement generally declining, except for affluent areas

Silent majority now between 97% and 99.9%

Neighbourhood planning bucks the trend – but issues of exclusion

Engagement is a factor of an individual's strength of personal feeling vs time required vs perceived ability to secure change

GOOD DECISIONS are those taken in the light of fair and balanced responses, coming from a range of voices

Impact of non-response bias on outcomes depends upon the extent to which the responses are representative of wider views.

**We make decisions based upon responses, but how representative are the views of those who get involved and how do we improve the balance?**



So, with my eyes,  
I see

**THIS**

**WHO KNOWS?**

But if I borrowed  
**YOUR** eyes,  
I might see

**THIS**





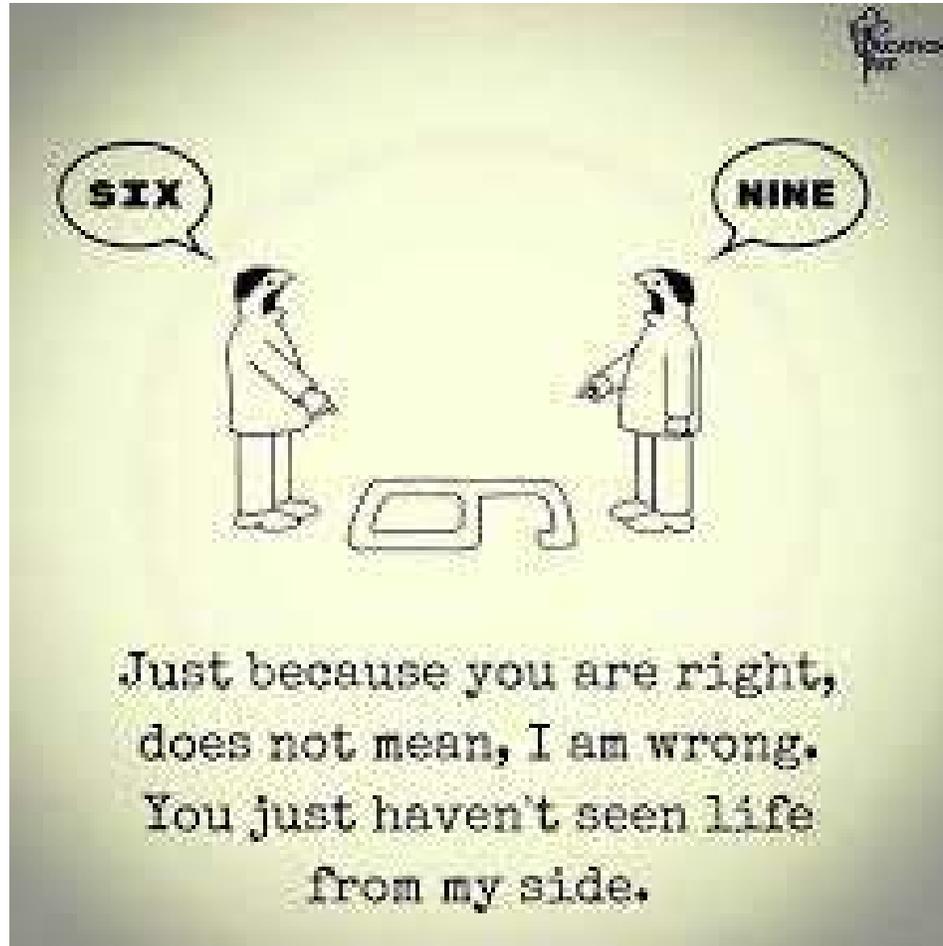
**A different view from above**



**Did these residents appreciate the size and scale of this development?**

# How many consultations consider construction impacts – but can be 10 years





**We all use spaces and places – but we all do it differently**





# Some food for thought

## Survey August 2019

- Have you ever responded to a planning consultation –
  - 60% yes : 40% no
- Did you object or support –
  - 50% object : 50% support
- Respondent profile (where age given) –
  - 60% over 55 years!
- Do you think that new development can make a positive contribution to the place that you live in? –
  - 100% yes
- Do you feel that local objections to new development can be overcome if a development is of a high standard of design and makes a positive contribution to the future of an area?
  - 100% yes
- Do you feel that those who take decisions on planning applications and the location of new development share your views on what is good design and what is needed for the future of your area?
  - 80% no : 20% yes



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# Community Noticeboard

## Some of the challenges of engagement in 2019

- 
- How do we engage more effectively?
  - How do we reach out beyond the 'usual suspects'?
  - How do we make best use of new technology?
  - How do we balance consultation against time pressures? Resources - good consultation can be costly and takes time - so we need to make it work

Raynsford - Recommendations for action included:

*a significant new approach to helping communities to engage in the planning process, with a focus on engaging groups who do not currently have a voice, such as children and young people;*

*a new professional culture and skills set directed at engaging communities.*



## The CARE Model



Consultation that is real and meaningful – ensure resources (time and money) are in place to deliver



Accessible to all – uses different approaches to reach different groups – monitor engagement



Relevant –sufficient information and evidence enable people to explore the impacts on them (new technology to show impacts on places they use)



Exciting - 3D and interactive displays (eg explore design changes, traffic movements in 'simulation').



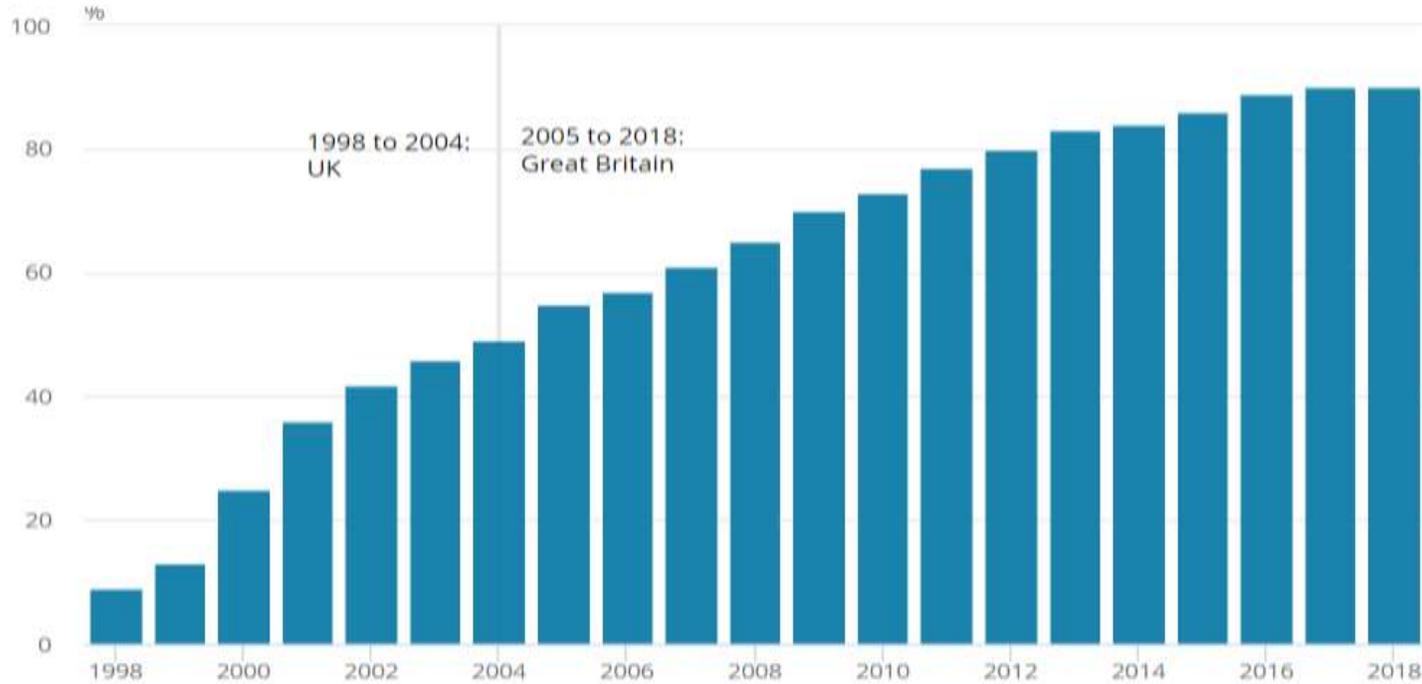
## More images – less words

- 5 million adults are lacking basic reading, writing and numeracy skills essential to everyday life (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2016)
- 29% of 16-18 year olds, are at the lowest level of numeracy (level 1 or below), compared to 26% of 55-65 year olds.



## Use of the Internet (OII research Sept 2019)

**Figure 1: Households with internet access in Great Britain, 1998 to 2018**



Source: Office for National Statistics

- Virtually everyone under 50 is on-line
- Almost 20% do not use the internet
- 10% because of privacy worries
- 40% earning less than £12.5K
- 70% uncomfortable with data tracking
- 11% got abusive emails



# Social media use UK 2019

**UK February 2019** – c 45m social media users (67% of population)



## Different platforms attract different users

**Mobile social media users** - c 39m (social networking where individuals with similar interests converse and connect with one another through their mobile phone and/or tablet.)

### FACEBOOK

c 40m users (13+ yrs), 43% female and 57% male. Of all internet users 83% of females & 75% of males use Facebook. Used by 62% of online users aged 65+, 72% aged 50-64, 84% aged 30-49 and 88% aged 18-29. Av engagement rate on Facebook post is 3.8%.

### YOUTUBE

c 37m users, 54% female, but age demographics fairly evenly split

### TWITTER

c 13.6m users, 60% male, 45% aged 16-22 yrs use 'Twitter'.

### INSTAGRAM

c 24m users, 90% of users under 35s

### SNAPCHAT

c 16.2m users, slightly more popular in urban areas than rural, 50% under 25 yrs and 23% still at school

### LINKED IN

c 27m profiles in UK, 60% male: 40% female, 61% of users age 30–64yrs. Over 50% earning £45k+ are on the site vs 22% earning up to £14k. 21% active once a day, 63% once a week or less.

### TIKTOK

Usage growing fast especially amongst teenagers



## Some challenges

- Social media and the internet are powerful tools – accessible to the majority and available 24/7
- Enables use of interactive new technology and better communication – can make engagement interesting, relevant and exciting
- Information and mis-information can be shared
- Discussion will occur ‘on-line’, but how can this be captured?
- Campaigners use social media to inform, mobilise or bring about direct action.

# The morally outraged

- Dialogue is difficult - will not 'convert' or 'persuade'
- It is a 'way of life' – part of a community, social group
- They are often afraid of 'engaging' – if swayed will become an 'outsider'
- Most refocus their campaigns over lifetime
- Listen to their views – they have a right to be heard
- Do not dismiss their comments
- Respect their commitment and treat them with respect
- We need them .....



## A key challenge: changing the culture

We have a responsibility  
to tackle the growth of  
aggressive behaviour and  
an intolerance of the  
views of others

- Shouting, screaming, foul language, abuse
- Intimidatory behaviour
- Threats .... “We know where you live”
- Damage to property
- Emotional behaviour
- May be subtle or obvious – effect the same - humans do not want to be outsiders

**This is behaviour aimed at excluding others from sharing their views and has become ‘acceptable’**

**It impacts on the community and it impacts on planners and those undertaking consultation and should not be tolerated**



# Consultation responses – we need balanced and representative views from all sections of our communities

- The current imbalance matters and it matters deeply
- The absence of key sections of society matters
- Lack of balance can affect the quality of decisions that are taken on the future of our environment, the spaces and places where we all live and work.
- New technology and social media offers a chance to widen and embrace engagement
- How would new housing areas, streets, public places and transport infrastructure look or feel if our communities more voices were heard?





## Some final thoughts

### Effective engagement:

We know what it is and why it is important. **The** principles and good practice well known but need to be more universally applied.

### Need to more resources to support better engagement:

RTPI Resourcing Planning (July 2019) recommended government set up a fund to support community participation processes designed to inform plan making.

### Role of digital technology and social media:

An opportunity to communicate in different ways to different groups, widening engagement. Another tool in the toolkit which needs to be properly used to be effective.

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