



# Consultation and Communication Strategy

**New Local Plan Regulation 18**

**October 2023**



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## Introduction

This Consultation and Communication Strategy sets out how the Council will consult and engage with residents, stakeholders and the wider community during the Regulation 18 stage of the new Tower Hamlets Local Plan project.

### The draft Local Plan Regulation 18

The Local Plan is the council's key planning document, which sets out the guidance to help assess development in the borough and ensure planning decisions are made in accordance with national and regional guidance. Policies in the Local Plan will affect every community in the borough, so a key part of the plan-making process is to ensure that residents, stakeholders and the wider community are consulted on these policies and given the opportunity to provide feedback. The Local Plan policies take account of and reflect the needs of the local community and align with the objectives set out by the Council's Strategic Plan (2022-2026).

The Regulation 18 (Reg. 18) stage of the plan-making process is a statutory requirement. Reg 18 is the first opportunity for the council to present a draft of the new Local Plan (2023-38) to the public, consulting residents, stakeholders and the wider community on the draft policies and gather detailed feedback to help inform the final version. The consultation will take place over a six-week period.

This Consultation and Communication Strategy has been prepared to ensure that the Reg. 18 period of consultation allows for everyone in the diverse community of the borough to provide feedback on the draft Local Plan and have their say on the future of Tower Hamlets, so that the policies are representative of all the needs of the community; meeting priority 8 in the Council's Strategic plan "a council that listens and works for everyone." Consulting with our communities also ensures the council meets its legislative requirements as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. This strategy has also been developed in accordance with the Tower Hamlets Statement of Community Involvement (2019).

### Engagement to-date

The Tower Hamlets Plan-Making team have already conducted a first stage of early engagement between January and March 2023 to help inform the new draft policies in the Reg. 18 Local Plan. This engagement process ran for a period 6 weeks and included:

- Digital engagement methods:
  - o Details of the project and engagement on the Tower Hamlets website
  - o 'Let's Talk' Tower Hamlets consultation page

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- Interactive web-based ArcGIS StoryMap platform
- PDF engagement document showcasing proposed policy themes
- Google Forms survey
- Word document version of survey
- Social media
- Emails to mailing list and stakeholders, including residents, consultees, and councillors
- Public events:
  - 3 online webinars
  - 2 online drop-in sessions
  - 2 in-person drop-in sessions
  - 1 In-person public engagement session
- Flyers and posters at Idea Stores and libraries; flyers handed out on streets.

This early engagement process generated 6,000 website visits across the 'Let's Talk' and ArcGIS StoryMaps platform, 500 document downloads, approximately 115 attendees at events, 127 email submissions, 50 survey responses and 215 contributions on StoryMaps. Feedback from this process has been used to inform the contents of the Reg. 18 draft Local Plan, and this consultation strategy looks to build on the early engagement work that has been carried out so far.

## Consultation aims

This Consultation and Communication Strategy sets out the consultation methods and techniques that will be used to ensure meaningful, focused, inclusive and purposeful engagement. This strategy will ensure that the community and relevant stakeholders are identified, that communication is clear and accessible and engagement presents opportunities for a range of views and comments to be made across the six-week consultation phase.

The formal consultation aims to:

- present the Reg 18. draft Local Plan document to residents, stakeholders and the wider community;
- ensure that residents, stakeholders and the wider community are made aware of the work and have the opportunity to provide feedback;
- gather detailed feedback on the draft document to inform the final version;
- use digital, innovative, interactive engagement methods;
- be inclusive and engage with under-represented communities;
- be accessible to all, both in terms of outreach and language;
- ensure engagement is culturally appropriate and representative of all communities in the borough; and
- meet the legislative requirements set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and meet the requirements set out in the Tower Hamlets Statement of Community Involvement (2019), as outlined below.

### Statutory Consultation - Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires the council to consult the public and stakeholders on a draft document that sets out the intended subject of the new Local Plan and invite them to make representations on this. This process must be at least 6 weeks. After this, the Plan Making team must take into account any representations made during the consultation period before publishing a revised Submission Local Plan for further representations (Reg. 19) which is then submitted to the Secretary of State for examination (Reg. 22). Regulation 22 also requires a statement to be prepared setting out who has been invited to make representations under Regulation 18; a summary of how these bodies and persons were invited; the main issues raised; and how these issues have been addressed in the Local Plan.

### Statement of Community Involvement (2019)

The Council's Statement of Community Engagement reiterates the requirement for a minimum of six weeks public consultation at Regulation 18 stage.

The Statement of Community Involvement also sets out the key methods of consultation, in line with national requirements, that the project team will follow. All consultation materials will be made available at the Town Hall, on the Tower Hamlets website, and in local libraries. Consultations will be advertised through the local newspaper, the council's website and social media channels. In addition, all those who are on the planning policy database will be contacted with updates about consultations.

Where appropriate, additional tools and methods of consultation will be used such as working with established community groups, arranging public exhibitions and hosting interactive workshop sessions.

## Consultation messaging

In order to deliver an effective formal consultation programme, the council's Plan-Making and Communications teams will ensure that consistent messaging reaches all intended audiences.

- The Local Plan: a document which guides all development in the borough, it therefore affects the future of the borough and the lived experience of all residents and stakeholders.
- Regulation 18 document: a draft document. The Plan-Making team will listen to and use all feedback received to shape the final document accordingly.
- Programme: the review of the Local Plan is an extensive project as it goes through a series of iterations and statutory stages over a number of years. The timeline of this will be made clear in the consultation documents.
- Engagement & Consultation: at every milestone, there will be an opportunity for residents and stakeholders to engage with the document and have their say on its contents and provide feedback to shape the future of the borough.
- Access to information: throughout the Reg. 18 consultation period residents and stakeholders can stay informed via the dedicated project page on the Tower Hamlets Let's Talk Platform. Here will be information about our consultation events as well as links to all of our consultation resources. Tower Hamlets council social media will also be regularly updated to inform about consultation events and how to get involved, and information will be published in various residents newsletters.
- Contact us: residents and stakeholders can get in touch with the Plan-Making team via the [localplan@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localplan@towerhamlets.gov.uk) email address.

## Methods of consultation

### Publicity and outreach

To ensure that this formal consultation achieves its aims, the strategy has been put together to maximise the publicity and outreach generated during the consultation process to produce a high response rate and turnout, and maximise the quality of responses from stakeholders and the wider community, in a manner that is representative of the borough as a whole. A hyper-local campaign will be delivered to help increase involvement in the Local Plan consultation as residents and stakeholders will be able understand the direct impacts of the Local Plan on them, their communities and their local areas.

It is therefore important that this consultation strategy also considers how the under-represented communities in the borough will be contacted. The identified under-represented groups include:

- Elderly people
- Children/young families
- Youth and student groups
- People with English as a second language/non-English Speakers
- Faith and ethnic minority groups
- People with disabilities and mental health conditions
- People with less access to online resources

The following strategy breaks down the various methods that will be used to conduct this formal consultation process, ensuring that all residents, stakeholders and under-represented groups in the borough are made aware of the project and given the opportunity to engage and provide feedback.

Targeted outreach:

- Member bulletins will be used to ask Councillors to share information advertising the Reg. 18 consultation with the residents in their wards to encourage them to get involved, as well as to make the Councillors aware of the work themselves.
- Local underrepresented community groups will be contacted prior to launching the Reg. 18 consultation to invite them to participate in a dedicated workshop programme run by the Plan-Making team to consult members of their community group. The workshop programme will include a briefing session at the new Town Hall, equipping representatives from each community group with key knowledge, resources and support on the Local Plan policies themes. This is to enable them to run a session with their own groups, discussing and providing feedback on the policies, supported by the

Council where agreed upon, including the consideration of translation services. The representatives will then feedback their group's thoughts in a final session at the Town Hall, communicating feedback both in a verbal discussion with the Plan-Making team and via written feedback.

- Schools and youth groups in the borough will be asked to share the consultation information with their networks, for example by advertising the events and online resources in their weekly newsletters to families/students.
- For additional youth engagement, we will be running a consultation workshop as part of the Tower Hamlets Youth Council selection process. This will involve around 50-100 young people discussing and presenting their thoughts on the new Local Plan. These students will also be asked to promote the consultation material with their peers after the session, and we will also look to engage the Young Mayor team in circulating the consultation material.
- The Plan-Making team will also run a session as part of the 1st year Human Geography BA programme at Queen Mary University London, the borough's largest university, to engage the students with the new Local Plan and hear their thoughts and feedback on the proposed policies.
- For additional engagement with local businesses in the borough, the Plan-Making team will run a consultation workshop in collaboration with the Growth and Economic Development team, consulting local businesses on the new plan, ensuring they are aware of the work and its impacts and collecting their feedback.

#### Wider outreach:

- An email will be sent to all individuals and stakeholders on the strategic planning mailing list to notify and provide detail on the consultation, including a direct link to respond (i.e., through the project Let's Talk Page, ArcGIS StoryMaps Platform or Plan-Making team inbox).
- Emails and posters will also be used to promote the live consultation events occurring in-person or online throughout the consultation period.
- Emails will be sent to all the general and specific consultation bodies listed in Appendix A of the Statement of Community Involvement.
- A digital email banner with links to the project Let's Talk Page will be created and all council officers will be encouraged to use this in their signature throughout the consultation period.
- Posters with QR codes will be put up in busy areas such as Victoria Park, community centres, mosques and churches, tube stations, DLR stations, overground stations and using the Council's access to digital bus stop and phone box adverts.
- A5 flyers will be produced and shared with Tower Hamlets partners: Idea Stores; Children Centres; Community Groups and Housing Providers; to advertise the Local Plan consultation throughout their networks.

### Social Media:

- The formal consultation will be advertised on social media through various platforms including LinkedIn, Instagram, X (Twitter), and Facebook. Posts to advertise the consultation will be initially posted at the beginning of the consultation period and again as regular reminders throughout the six-week timeframe in particular to coincide with live consultation events.
- All social media posts will contain links to all online consultation resources, including the Let's Talk Platform, Survey and ArcGIS StoryMaps page.
- Video content will be utilised, interviewing members from key audience groups to advertise getting involved with the consultation process.
- We will use paid advertisements on social media to promote the consultation events and survey – these will be targeted to maximise their impact.
- Links to the Reg. 18 consultation page and ArcGIS StoryMaps page will be posted on various groups across LinkedIn and Facebook – this will help target under-represented groups where possible.

### Access to information:

- Printed copies of the draft Local Plan and other supporting documents will be placed in all libraries, Idea Stores and other community centres in the borough for inspection.
- The Plan-Making team will also put together concise 'fact sheets', based on each policy theme that will be used to summarise the early engagement feedback and demonstrate how the team has implemented early engagement into the new draft policies. These leaflets will encourage further engagement with the throughout this consultation and include a QR code to the Let's Talk Page for this project. They will be circulated online and as printed copies on display at key council and community facilities.
- Translated copies of consultation and engagement materials will be provided both in Bengali and Somali.
- Council partners such as Idea Stores and libraries will be contacted to make use of TV screens to advertise the consultation events and Let's Talk Page.

### Publications:

- The consultation will be advertised in the Tower Hamlets residents' e-newsletter, residents' Our East End newsletter, Bengali broadcasting services including television/radio and newsletter where possible, and planning specific newsletter to residents across the borough.

- QR codes will be utilised on newsletter material to provide easy access to the consultation Let's Talk Page where links to the feedback survey and StoryMaps platform will be provided.

## Online presence

### Website/Let's Talk:

- We will set up a webpage dedicated to the New Local Plan Reg. 18 Consultation on the Tower Hamlets Let's Talk platform. This webpage will provide information about the project including key dates, surveys, links, FAQs and contact details.

### ArcGIS StoryMaps:

- We will set up an Arc GIS StoryMaps page breaking down the Reg. 18 document into digestible theme-based sections, presented in an engaging digital format enabling interaction with various map and location-based features. This is intended to help engage the wider public in the Local Plan and break down barriers that the traditional methods of consultation may put up. There will be opportunities to provide feedback with a concise and relevant questionnaire at the end of each section of the StoryMap.

## Events

### 'In person' stakeholder workshop/drop-in sessions:

- The project team will host 'in-person' consultation sessions. This will ensure that those with limited access to online resources are able to provide feedback in person. These sessions will be organised by borough sub-area and by policy theme, in-order to allow residents and stakeholders to attend the session that is most relevant to them, and to allow the Plan-Making team to focus the session for more specific and targeted feedback.
- The 'in-person' sessions will be held at key locations in the borough, such as the Tower Hamlets Town Hall, Idea Stores and community centres. The sub-area focused sessions will be held in a location within the relevant sub-areas:
  1. City Fringe
  2. Central and Leaside
  3. Isle of Dogs and South Poplar

There will also be 3 theme-based sessions, held at the Town Hall. These sessions will group together some of the key themes of the Local Plan, as follows:

1. 'Clean and Green Future,' 'Biodiversity and Open Spaces,' 'Movement and Connectivity' and 'Reuse, Recycling and Waste.'

2. 'Town Centres,' 'Employment and Economic Growth,' and 'Community Facilities.'
  3. 'People, Places and Spaces,' and 'Homes for the Future.'
- There will also be the specific consultation events that have been arranged with underrepresented groups, the Youth Council, Queen Mary University London and local businesses as referenced in the 'targeted outreach' section of this strategy.
  - The 'in-person' consultation sessions will be advertised throughout the consultation period in the lead up to the date of the events with targeted emails, newsletter adverts, social media posts and posters, to ensure sufficient notice and reminders are provided to offer all residents and stakeholders the opportunity to engage.
  - The Mayor and Tower Hamlet's Councillors will be encouraged to advertise and promote the Reg. 18 Local Plan consultation at their drop-ins and surgeries, inviting the residents from their wards to make representations via the various consultation methods outlined in this strategy.
  - The Mayor and Councillors will be invited to attend each of the events held to provide any feedback, suggestions on the draft Local Plan and to represent their communities.

#### Online workshops:

- The project team will host online consultation sessions via Microsoft Teams. This will ensure that those who are unable to attend any of the in-person sessions are given opportunities to provide feedback through online sessions.
- The online sessions will be advertised in the lead up to the date of the events with targeted emails, social media posts and posters, to ensure sufficient notice and reminders are provided to offer all residents and stakeholders the opportunity to engage.
- The content of the online sessions will be the same as the 'in-person' session to ensure that no one misses out on any information and that everyone is given the chance to discuss and provide feedback on the same themes.

#### Virtual drop-in sessions:

- Virtual 'drop-in' sessions will be hosted via Microsoft Teams as well as the more structural workshop sessions, where LBTH officers will be available to answer any questions or queries and gather feedback.
- Details of the drop-in sessions will be circulated throughout the consultation period in the lead up to the date of the events with targeted emails, newsletter adverts, social media posts and posters, to ensure sufficient notice and reminders are provided to offer all residents and stakeholders the opportunity to engage.

- Online drop-in sessions aim to make engaging with the project as convenient as possible for those who may not be able to make any in-person events.

## Feedback mechanisms

### Online survey:

- A survey will be developed and made available on the council's Let's Talk platform.
- The survey will be geared at getting specific feedback about the draft document and policies, with targeted questions based on each section of the Reg. 18 Draft Local Plan.
- This will be open to anyone who wants to engage. The survey will be promoted via the identified outreach methods e.g. newsletters, social media, emails and posters.
- The project team will make sure that the survey is fully accessible.

### ArcGIS StoryMaps:

- Integrated into the ArcGIS StoryMaps platform at the end of each theme section will be questions taken from the survey, as a method of collecting relevant feedback in a digital and engaging way.
- Breaking the questions down to theme-based sections aims to make the experience more accessible, concise, user friendly and easier to digest.
- The aim of this is to encourage greater engagement and feedback collection from the wider public as well as stakeholders.

### QR Codes:

- All engagement material will feature scannable QR codes that take people to the Let's Talk Page, where links to both the survey and story maps platform will be made very clear.
- The Let's Talk Page will also advertise the other methods of feedback outlined below.

### Email responses:

- Residents and stakeholders contacted via the plan-making mailing list will be encouraged to give their feedback online via the survey or the ArcGIS StoryMaps platform, however more focused feedback will be welcomed via email submissions to the [localplan@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localplan@towerhamlets.gov.uk) email address.
- This email address will be made available on all engagement documents and social media posts to make providing feedback as accessible as possible.

In-person feedback:

- The members of the Plan-Making team will be present at all in-person events hosted directly by the team. Here feedback will be collected either through notetaking by a team member, or through “post-it note” participation by the community members and stakeholders present.
- Printed copies of the consultation survey will accompany the physical Local Plan documents that will be made available at all council Idea Stores. This is to ensure everyone can provide feedback on the document, including non-digitised residents.
- Where community groups have been consulted prior to the consultation period, and an in-person event has been decided as the most appropriate method of engagement, it may be the case that feedback is best collected by the community group leader and then passed on to the Plan-Making team. This will be decided at the co-design stage of the community group engagement process, and if this is the case the Plan-Making team will be actively involved to support this process, providing feedback templates where appropriate.

## Next steps

Once the Regulation 18 period concludes, the Plan-Making team will proceed to examine the feedback gathered during the consultation. In accordance with the project programme, the consultation for Regulation 19 will commence in summer 2024, offering residents and stakeholders a final opportunity to share their opinions on the Draft Local Plan prior to its submission to the Secretary of State for examination in public.

In the interim, residents and stakeholders can stay informed by visiting the 'Let's Talk' page dedicated to the project. For regular updates from the Plan-Making team, residents and stakeholders can also request to be added to the Local Plan mailing list by emailing the team at [localplan@towerhamlets.go.uk](mailto:localplan@towerhamlets.go.uk).

Any personal information collected throughout the different consultation stages will be managed in accordance with the council's privacy notice, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and privacy legislation in the UK.