

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is steadily growing in priority and is now a vital component in sustainable development. Brownfield site redevelopment projects are complex, involve a wide range of professional disciplines and often span a long time period. Such projects require active political support and an interface with many different stakeholders throughout the project's lifetime. Stakeholders include professionals, politicians, contractors, citizens, lobby groups and the press. It is no longer possible to assign the work of engaging with these interest groups without taking a professional approach.

There are both formal and informal frameworks for undertaking stakeholder engagement, which have been researched, and the latter developed, through the REVIT transnational working group.

Formal Frameworks for Stakeholder Engagement

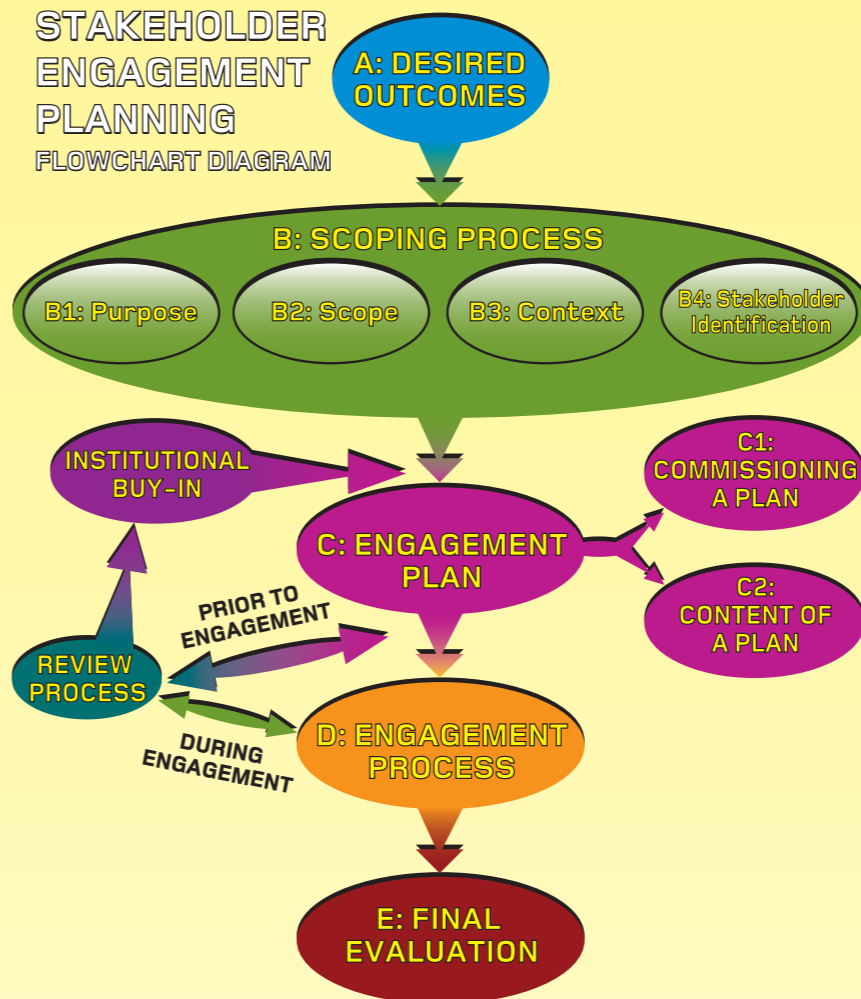
Partner countries operate their own, different and individual formal structures of citizen participation, including legislative, statutory and cultural frameworks. However they have one thing in common – all partner countries' national and local legislation on this subject sets formal parameters within which more informal methods of engagement operate.

Informal Frameworks for Stakeholder Engagement

It is important to develop a comprehensive and agreed Stakeholder Engagement Plan in addition to adhering to the formal frameworks, due to the complexity and size of brownfield sites. This "informal" framework should include clear aims and objectives, identification of stakeholders, funding for resources, outlines for key events, venues, processes and milestones. There

should also be a response strategy to ensure that there is clarity on what can and cannot be negotiated and that any commitments made can be honoured. Planning this response strategy should include agreement on the level of engagement, from simple information dissemination to potential empowerment.

The REVIT transnational working group has developed a Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit, which outlines a framework for this process. This has been designed for practitioners as a practical instrument to help in the process of planning and executing engagement exercises. The key elements of this process are shown in the following flow diagram:



The REVIT Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit is published in three languages: English, German and French. It is available in easy-to-use printed copies and in interactive electronic format that guides practitioners through the steps of writing an engagement plan.

The toolkit was developed through involvement of practitioners, both within the REVIT partnership and outside and with input from external experts. In addition, it was reviewed by external experts and piloted by practitioners not involved in the development of the toolkit. Within the partnership the toolkit was piloted on five different demonstration projects in Stuttgart, Medway and Torfaen, and these have been presented as case studies. The case studies underwent peer reviews and feedback from these reviews, together with feedback from external experts who were asked to review the toolkit, formed part of the review process for the toolkit itself, resulting in further improvements being made to the toolkit.

The Toolkit is included in the REVIT Compendium (see back cover of this brochure).



Using engagement techniques - Torfaen

Key elements of good stakeholder engagement in specific relation to brownfield site redevelopment

Brownfield site developments have specific characteristics that need to be considered when undertaking stakeholder engagement. These can affect elements of the engagement process.

The key differences from standard urban development projects are as follows:

Differences	Issues to Consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are often no current users of the site, which therefore limits the engagement methods used. However, the range of stakeholders may be wide due to the complex issues surrounding brownfield sites. Some stakeholders may associate the site and/or its existing buildings with historic connections, and related good or bad associations, so proposed change of use may be an emotive issue to them. There may be legal protection for some of the historic features of the site, involving statutory bodies among the stakeholders. A rich biodiversity often develops around derelict land/buildings, and it may be necessary to comply with nature conservation policies and regulations in planning its redevelopment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder Identification: It is likely that there will be a wide range of stakeholder groups. It is necessary to identify these and evaluate the extent to which they may be affected by, or can influence, the development process. This will ensure that all interests have been covered and appropriate methods of engagement selected.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brownfield redevelopment is often emotive and can thus become "political". Marginal brownfield sites frequently require multiple promoters, including banks, insurance companies, developers, investors and public funders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtaining Institutional Buy-in is vital for the success of the stakeholder engagement process. It is imperative to understand political motivation, potential support or opposition at the start of the project as well as reviewing and evaluating this throughout the lifetime of the development. Politicians should be kept regularly informed and, where possible, positively participate in the project. These important stakeholders require regular and accurate information, at the appropriate level of competence, to ensure that relatively complex and high risk developments do not falter and financial and political support is not withdrawn.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time, costs, personalities, new legislation and other unplanned events often have an impact on the initial aims, objectives and planned outcomes of a major redevelopment proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope: It is vital that the aims, objectives and planned outcomes of a redevelopment proposal are clearly set out at the beginning of a project; that they are communicated effectively to all stakeholders and that if and when circumstances change, this is also simultaneously communicated. This requires a fail-safe management system and an effective communication strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These projects can last in excess of 10 years. Relationships and trusts that are developed over a long period of time can quickly be lost when a key "player" moves on or is replaced. This could result in disillusionment amongst stakeholders who have previously been involved in ongoing engagement exercises and changing proposals for the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context: Be realistic in relation to the context of what has happened before and integrate this into the engagement plan. There may be a risk of consultation fatigue amongst some of the stakeholders, especially at the higher levels of engagement. A robust stakeholder engagement strategy should aim to be able to cope with adjusting to relationships that may need to be re-built.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brownfield sites generally have a poor image due to the risk or reality of soil contamination and health and safety issues. These could include chemicals, explosives, unstable land, asbestos, unsafe derelict buildings. Stakeholders who have a financial interest in the site face the often unknown risk of high remediation costs that could lead to the development having a lower potential value on the free market. As a result, potential developers often abandon or revise their plans after embarking on the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement Plan: A degree of marketing may be required in the engagement plan to "sell" the potential benefits of the site being developed and alter the image over a period of time. Allow for a long time period and anticipate different phases and stages of the engagement process throughout the life of the development. Ensure that the people drawing up the plan are aware of the complexities of the site.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the engagement plan throughout the process - this could take longer in the case of a brownfield site as it is often more complex and larger than standard urban development projects.

Costs versus Risks

Developer teams should understand that a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process could involve high resource costs due to the complexity of issues, long time periods and different phases of the engagement process through the life of the project. Clear terms of reference should be agreed along with desired outcomes, coupled with a realistic budget based

on prediction rather than a percentage. This process should be aligned to the other professional services being used to develop the site, such as engineers, architects etc., and trained, experienced practitioners should be used to manage the process. As with these services, a project plan, a clear brief and strategy and a project management approach should be taken, to integrate the process with all the other work that will be taking place.

Although they may seem high, costs incurred will be a small proportion of overall development costs. By investing in a well planned and executed stakeholder engagement process, the overall cost of a development could be reduced in the long term through identifying and reducing the risk of problems that could otherwise arise later. The value of a development can also be increased by engendering good relations with stakeholders. If done well, the process can aid in decision-making, building trust, improving image, building community cohesion, and lead to economic benefits to investors and other stakeholders.

However, if done badly, there is a risk that the desired outcomes will not be met, and the project may not be achieved as visualised by the development teams. Poor engagement with stakeholders can create an actively negative response in stakeholders, leading to refusal or delays of planning permission, legal liabilities, vandalism, raised insurance premiums, lack of patronage, anger and resentment, which can drive away developers and investors. The costs of this can be far-reaching in terms of time delays, increased bureaucracy and financial investment.

Recommendations and Conclusions:

- The legislative framework on stakeholder engagement provides room for informal and flexible methods of stakeholder engagement. A structured procedure including a clear brief and strategy following a project management approach should be followed in order to plan and execute a stakeholder engagement programme throughout the life of the project.
- It is important to identify and evaluate the stakeholders and select appropriate methods of engagement to suit the target groups and their abilities. Each engagement exercise should be planned according to the individual circumstances involved.
- It is vital to obtain Institutional Buy-in for the goals and content of the engagement process. This support from decision-makers at political and developer levels must begin as early as possible and continue throughout the life of the project.
- Sufficient budget and resources should be allocated in order to ensure that the stakeholder engagement process is implemented effectively. If you are going to do it at all, ensure that it is done properly!
- The REVIT Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit provides guidance on how best to plan, manage, implement and evaluate stakeholder engagement. Stuttgart's manual, REVIT Planning Workshop, demonstrates preparation, implementation and assessment of a public workshop during the planning process, ensuring support of decision makers at political and developer level.



Public meeting – Medway