

# Civic Societies and the Planning Process: Exploring the role of local civic societies in the English planning system

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## Page 1: Introduction

**This questionnaire has been prepared by researchers at the University of Reading, in co-operation with Civic Voice. Using your responses we aim to develop a detailed understanding of how civic societies engage with the planning process.**

More information about the purpose of the questionnaire, what is asked of civic societies and how any data is managed can be found on the Information Sheet, accessible via the following link:

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/at0evgg2lswdjb1/AADwiUHv8D-Dlfra\\_kTTX3cga?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/at0evgg2lswdjb1/AADwiUHv8D-Dlfra_kTTX3cga?dl=0)

**The completed questionnaire should only be submitted by either the Chair or Secretary of the Society. However, you may find it helpful to complete the questionnaire collaboratively, during one of the Society's meetings.** Participation is entirely voluntary and after submitting the questionnaire, you may withdraw from the project by contacting the Principal Investigator. You can also decline to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with (with the exception of the initial consent to participate, which is required).

The questionnaire has no time limit and only one questionnaire has to be undertaken per civic society. **If needed, responses to the questions can be saved and completed later by participants.** You can do this by clicking on the '*Finish later*' link at the bottom of each page, which will generate a unique link for you to return to the questionnaire later.

Under some questions you will find text in **bold**, which gives an additional instruction on how to answer the question. You may also find text in *italics* which is intended to give some additional guidance on how the question should be interpreted.

Please be assured that steps will be taken to ensure that participant societies are not individually identifiable in any of the outputs from the research and that subjective views expressed will be anonymised. The results will be used in the preparation of a range of outputs, including a detailed report of the results for Civic Voice.

**If you have any questions about the questionnaire or need any help with how to respond, please contact the lead researcher; Chris Maidment, by emailing [c.s.maidment@henley.reading.ac.uk](mailto:c.s.maidment@henley.reading.ac.uk).**

Please click on the 'Next' button to proceed to the 'Consent to Participate' page.

## Page 2: Consent to Participate

Before you proceed to the questionnaire itself we ask you to read the following statements about your participation in the research and consider whether you agree with them. If you are happy with the statements please answer the mandatory consent question at the bottom of the page.

1. I have read the accompanying Information Sheet relating to the project on: *Civic Societies & the Planning Process: Exploring the role of local civic societies in the English planning system*
2. I understand the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions I have had have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.
3. I understand what information will be collected about me, what it will be used for, who it may be shared with, how it will be kept safe, and my rights in relation to my data
4. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time, and that this will be without detriment.
5. I understand that the data collected from me in this study will be stored long term in anonymised form and used by members of the research team in the preparation of a range of outputs, for example, conference presentations, journal articles, reports and books.
6. This research has been reviewed in accordance with the procedures specified by the University Research Ethics Committee, and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct by the Head of Department.

1. Are you willing to participate in our research study? \* Required

- Yes  
 No

If yes, then please begin the questionnaire by clicking on the 'Next' button.

## Page 3: Introductory Questions

These questions will help us to understand the range of built environment issues that civic societies engage with, setting the context for exploring the involvement of civic societies in the formal planning system on the next page.

2. Which civic society are you answering the questionnaire on behalf of?

3. In your view, on a scale of 0-5, how involved\* is your civic society with the following\*\* (0-Not at all --- 5- Very active):

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Heritage conservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protecting community facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education and outreach on built environment issues (including publications)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highlighting priorities for improving transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highlighting priorities for regeneration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good quality urban design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promoting sustainable development and carbon emission reductions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensuring biodiversity protection and enhancement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promoting a vibrant high street/town centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\*By 'involved' we mean taking some sort of action, which could range from publicising issues, to holding events, to using Society resources to develop facilities and resources.

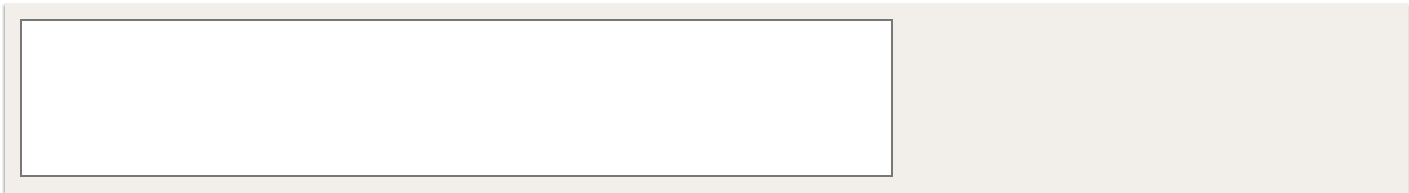
\*\*Planning decisions on particular development proposals and policy-making are deliberately excluded from this list as they are discussed in detail in the next part of the questionnaire. Here we are interested in your society's interests more broadly.

4. Are there any other aims related to promoting a high quality built environment that your society is involved with\*?

4.a. If yes, please briefly describe these aims.

\*As above, activities related specifically to the planning system are addressed in the next part of the questionnaire.

5. Reflecting on the above answers, has the society significantly changed its activities and campaigns over the last ten years? If so, how?



## Page 4: Involvement in the Planning System

Your answers to these questions will help us to understand how civic societies get involved in different aspects of the planning system, including how they interact with the Local Planning Authority.

6. Overall, what proportion of your society's work would you say is about working with the formal planning system **(Tick ONE Box)**?

- 0-20%
- 20-40%
- 40-60%
- 60-80%
- More than 80%

7. How many planning decisions were you involved\* with over the course of the past twelve months?

*\*By 'involved' we mean taking some sort of action, which could range from commenting on an application, to speaking to the local media, to engaging with the developer*

7.a. Is this typical of the long-run trend\*?

*\*In thinking about the long-run trend we suggest thinking about the last five years or so.*

8. In what ways has your civic society tried to influence specific development proposals in your area **(Tick ALL that apply)**?

- Discuss with local authority at the plan-making stage
- Development of site-specific policy
- Involvement in co-design of development
- Make comments on development proposals
- Attend and speak at planning committees
- Contact local councillor
- Mobilise community responses
- Purchase land in your local area to control development
- Take legal action through the courts as a last resort
- Other

8.a. If you selected 'Other', please specify:

9. How do you decide which planning applications to get involved with?

10. Please briefly describe the last three **significant** planning decisions that your society sought to influence?

	Brief description of development.	If possible, provide the planning application number.	At what stage of the development process did you intervene?
1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

11. Have there been any occasions when the Local Planning Authority has sought the Society's input directly regarding a development proposal?

11.a. If yes, can you tell us how you were brought into the process?

12. Do you get involved\* in the Local Plan process?

*\*By 'involved' we mean taking some sort of action, which could range from commenting on the documents, to speaking to the local media, to taking part in discussions*

12.a. If yes, how do you decide which aspects of the Local Plan to get involved with?

12.b. In what ways do you get involved in the Local Plan process **(Tick all that apply)**?

- Making written representations on consultation documents
- Attending public consultation events organised by the Local Planning Authority
- Attending invited consultation events organised by the Local Planning Authority
- Organising own community consultation events

- Organising own internal discussions within the Civic Society
- Engaging with media
- Other

12.b.i. If you selected 'Other', please specify:

13. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your relationship with your local planning authority?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very good

13.a. Please identify any key factors that have impacted this relationship.

13.b. Reflecting on the past three years, has your society's relationship with the Local Planning Authority changed significantly?

- Yes
- No

13.c. If your answer to Part B is 'yes' please can you explain why.

14. Reflecting on the above, which of the options below would be more important to give civic societies an effective voice in determining the outcomes of the planning system?

- Representations on individual development proposals/planning applications
- Formal status for civic societies at the Local Plan stage

14.a. Please explain your response below.

## Page 5: Relationship with the wider community

These questions address the relationship between the Civic Society and its wider community and should be answered with the Society's activities in relation to the formal planning system in mind.

15. If relevant, can you tell us briefly about up to three other groups or organisations\* that you have worked with in the last three years, with a common aim in mind.

	Name of organisation	Type of organisation	Aim of working together
1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

\*Examples of this could include working with other civic societies, residents' associations, neighbourhood forums, community groups, heritage societies, religious institutions etc.

16. On a scale of 1-5, how easy does your society find it to get individual members of your local community involved (1- Very Difficult --- 5- Very Easy):

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't do
In attending one-off events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In providing inputs to inform civic society thinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In sustained campaigning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In sustained long-term civic society positions (e.g. committee or working groups)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. Which of the methods below do you use to engage with members of your local community? (Tick ALL that apply):

- Posters/leaflets/flyers etc
- Regular newsletter
- Ad hoc workshops and exhibitions
- Regular community forums
- Social media
- Technical visualisations e.g. Geographical Information Systems, 3D Modelling
- Online webinars
- Other

17.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

18. Reflecting on the above answers, please suggest one solution that you think would help you better engage with members of your community.



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19. Reflecting on the ['Planning for the Future' White Paper](#) proposed reforms, do you think:

It will be easier for residents and community groups to influence the planning process	Please select ▼
More people will engage at the local plan stage	Please select ▼

19.a. Please explain your response below.

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## Page 6: Concluding Questions

These questions bring the questionnaire to a close and will help us to better understand civic societies' own reflections on their involvement with the planning system.

20. Reflecting on the above questions, from the following characteristics please rank the top three in terms of their importance to your society's effective engagement with the planning system (1- Most important --- 3- Least important):

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) in any single column.

	1	2	3
Input resulting from your society's engagement with local community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Positive relationship with other local groups and organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Positive relationship with developers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Positive relationship with the Local Planning Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Skill set of committee members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20.a. If you selected 'other' please specify:

20.b. For the factor that you ranked highest, please explain your ranking.

21. Thinking about your society's involvement with the planning system, what in your opinion, is your proudest achievement in the last five years as a society?

22. Thinking about your society's involvement with the planning system, do you have any regrets from the last five years?

23. Are there any further comments that you would like to make on the role of civic societies within the planning system?

24. To help our analysis, please tell us how this questionnaire was answered:

- Individually
- By two or more individuals outside of a committee meeting
- Collaboratively in a committee meeting

## Page 7: Thank you for your participation.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your answers are very important to us and will help us to develop an in-depth picture of how civic societies engage with the planning system.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire or the project, please contact the lead researcher; Chris Maidment, by emailing [c.s.maidment@henley.reading.ac.uk](mailto:c.s.maidment@henley.reading.ac.uk).

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### Key for selection options

**4 - Are there any other aims related to promoting a high quality built environment that your society is involved with\*?**

Yes

No

**7.a - Is this typical of the long-run trend\*?**

Yes

No

**11 - Have there been any occasions when the Local Planning Authority has sought the Society's input directly regarding a development proposal?**

Yes

No

**12 - Do you get involved\* in the Local Plan process?**

Yes

No

**19.1.a -**

Yes

No

Unsure

**19.2.a -**

Yes

No

Unsure

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