



POLICY 1120

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

OBERON COUNCIL'S ROADMAP TO SUSTAINABLE ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement
Framework & Strategy
June 2022 – Policy 1120



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Roadmap to sustainable engagement

Oberon Council previously embarked on a new and exciting path of community engagement with the introduction of a Community Engagement Framework and Strategy which assisted Oberon Council to transition to a new future strategic direction. To achieve this, Oberon Council has established a road map which includes a number of phases, each building and enhancing community participation.

Oberon Council has a long history of engaging with our community. This is evident in the quality delivery of services, facilities and infrastructure across the region. Oberon Council wants to continue to build collaborative relationships that recognise and value continuous improvement to ensure the long-term vision and sustainability for Oberon.

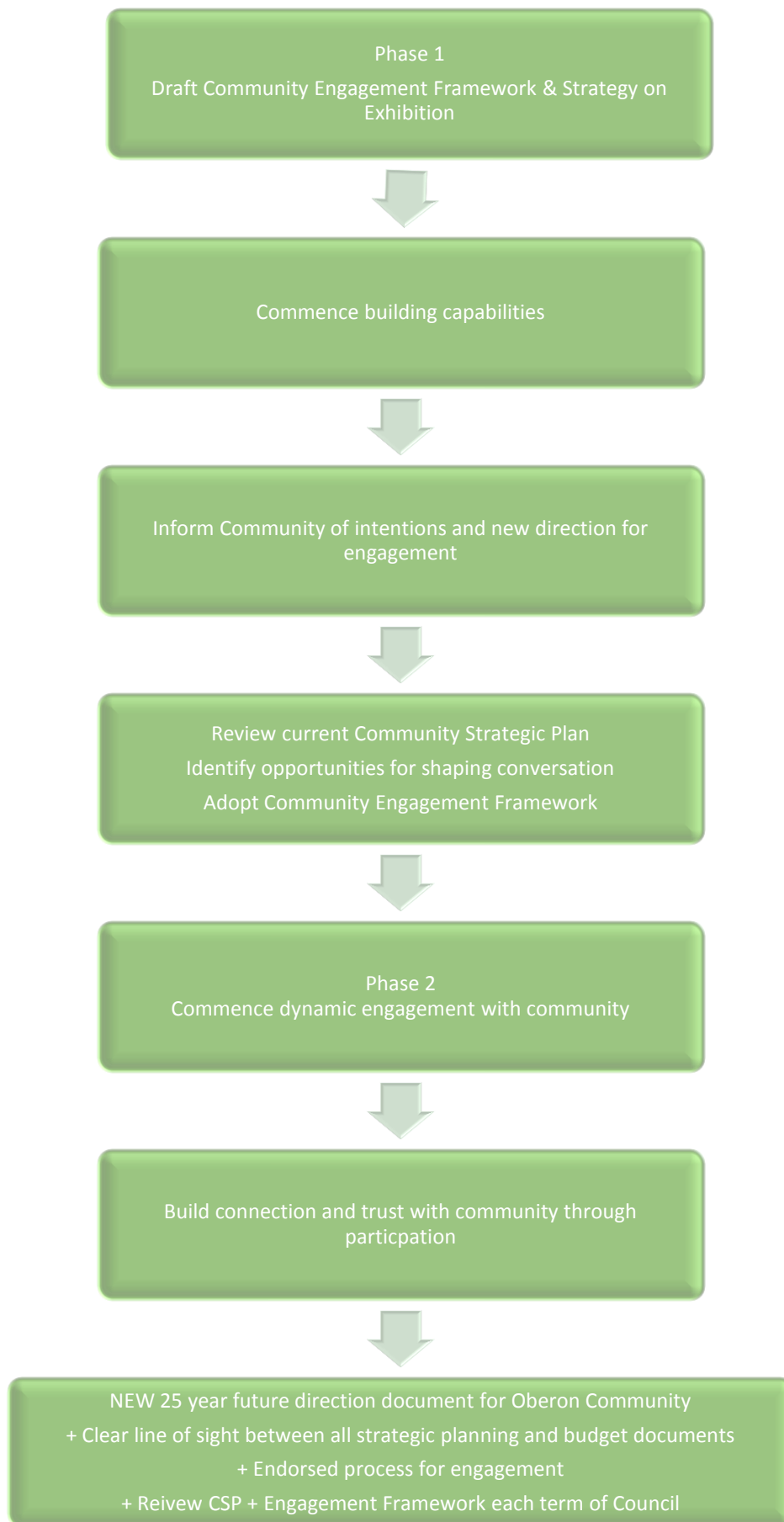
Community engagement is an evolving field of practice - one that needs to remain contemporary and agile as community needs change throughout a lifetime. Community engagement is a core function of council, strengthened recently in amendments made to the NSW Local Government Act by the Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act 2016. There are new provisions for engagement:

402A Community engagement strategy

A council must establish and implement a strategy (called its community engagement strategy) for engagement with the local community when developing its plans, policies and programs and for the purpose of determining its activities (other than routine administrative matters).

This amendment to the Act is yet to be proclaimed however this Oberon Engagement Framework and Strategy is written to comply with these changes. If any further amendment or change to relevant acts are introduced this framework and strategy will be reviewed to ensure compliance.

The diagram on the next page graphically depicts the key steps to establishing the foundation for long term sustainable engagement that is contextually sensitive and appropriate to the Oberon Community.



2. WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is the process by which the Oberon community can participate in and inform, influence and shape decision making that impacts our community. Effective community engagement is underpinned by social justice principles of access, equity, rights and participation to ensure all parts of the community have an equal opportunity for input.

In addition, Oberon Council is committed to the following underpinning principles that will shape and guide the community engagement framework practices:

PLANNED

Oberon Council will carefully consider and plan community engagement to ensure quality outcomes and meaningful engagement is achieved.

CONSISTENCY

Whilst processes may be tailored to suit the project / program, the council will ensure a consistent approach to providing information and feedback.

RESPECT

Council values all contributions and will treat participants with respect

INCLUSIVE

Stakeholders will be identified and creative methods of engagement will be delivered to maximise the value and range of feedback from our constituents and stakeholders.

The benefits of effective community engagement include:

BETTER OUTCOMES

- ✓ Input from diverse views achieving better outcomes that the community feel connected to.

INCREASED COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION

- ✓ developing on-going community partnerships, shared vision and responsibility

HIGHER LEVELS OF TRUST

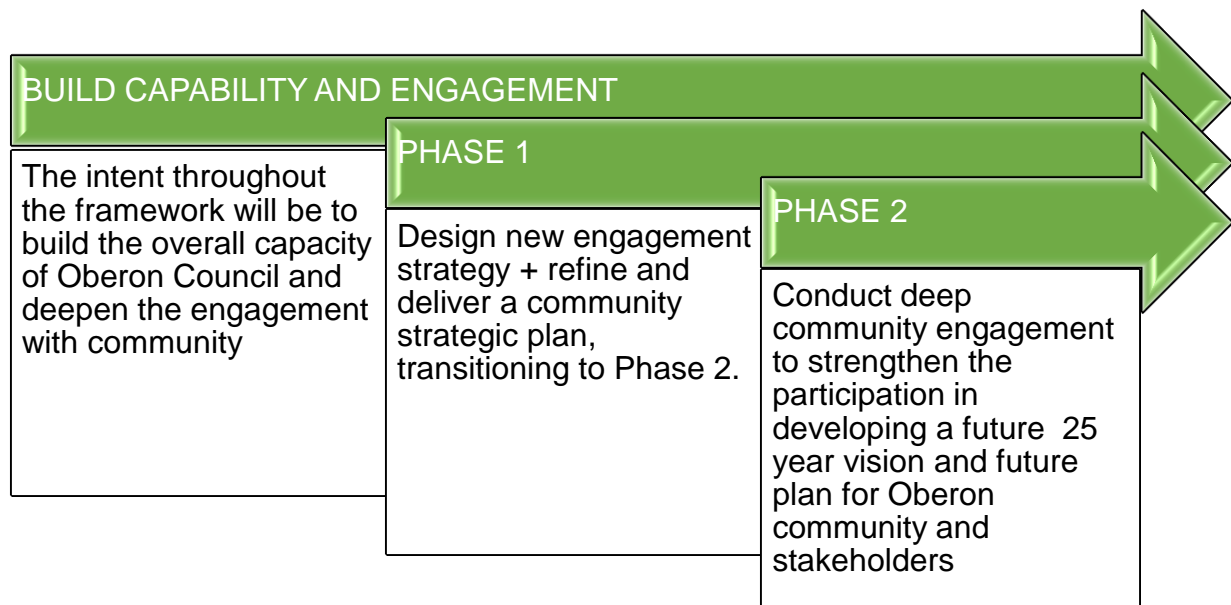
- ✓ Through transparency and participation in decision making.

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- ✓ clear direction for staff and community on how to conduct meaningful and appropriate levels of engagement. Identifying and confirming community views on local priorities, opportunities and challenges.

3. THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the Community Engagement Framework (CEF) is to provide a clear and concise outline of Oberon Councils commitment to public participation and what to expect across the range of Council activities. The framework has an underpinning objective of building Oberon Council's capability (internally and externally) to strengthen the community engagement processes and practices. The phased approach in the diagram below is designed to build and broaden engagement with the overall objective of achieving a new 25 year vision for Oberon.



This Framework and Strategy is informed by the internationally recognised “*Public Participation Spectrum*” developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) which outlines five levels of public participation. The recommended levels of participation coincide with the level of public impact from a project moving from inform through to higher levels of engagement – collaborate & empower. It is important to note that within a local government context and associated legislative framework the empower level can be difficult to achieve.

The level of impact is determined by how many people a decision will affect. For example- a rate increase will impact all rate payers therefore the level of engagement needs to be greater than that of a localised project.

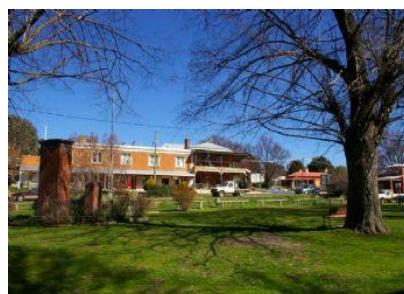
INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT

Lower Impact

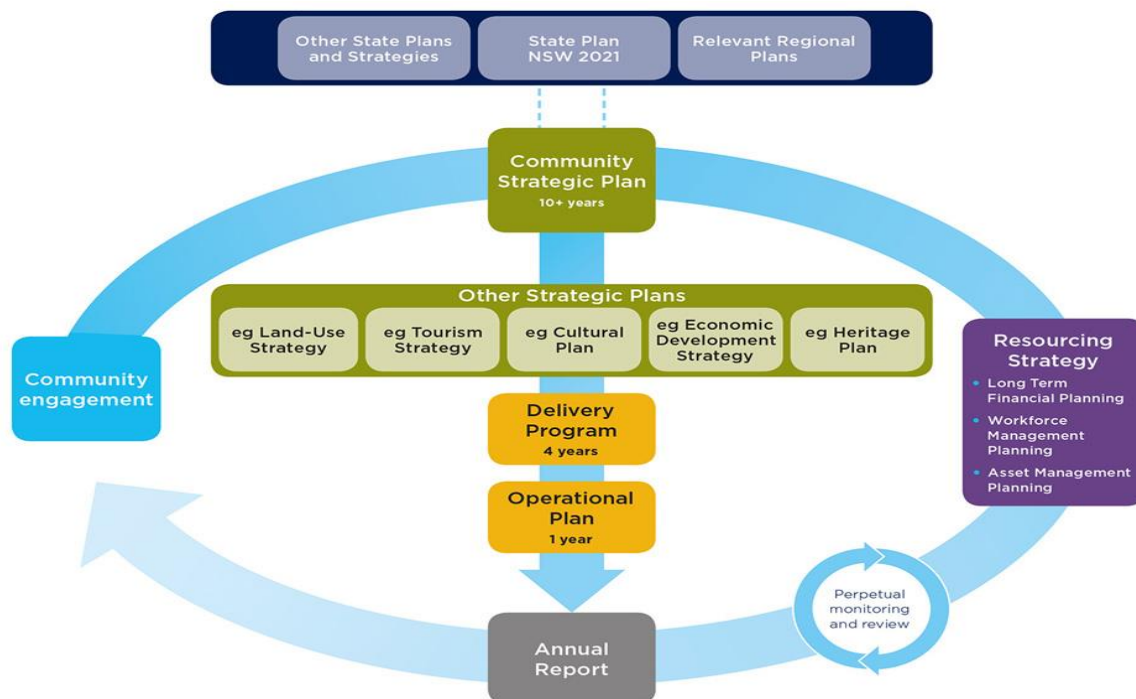
Higher Impact

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal –	Provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner	To obtain public feedback on decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure public's concerns and aspirations consistently understood	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision making process.	Place final decision in the hands of the public
Promise from Council	The council will keep the community informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns. Provide feedback	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the decision made	We will work together with you in the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide
Examples of Engagement methodologies	Social media campaign Website Inclusion in newsletter Special newsletter Displays	Focus groups World café style open house Reference or leaders groups Surveys	Workshops Polling	Participatory decision making Advisory boards / committees	Citizen jury Voting – elections

(Source – based on IAP2)



4. INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK



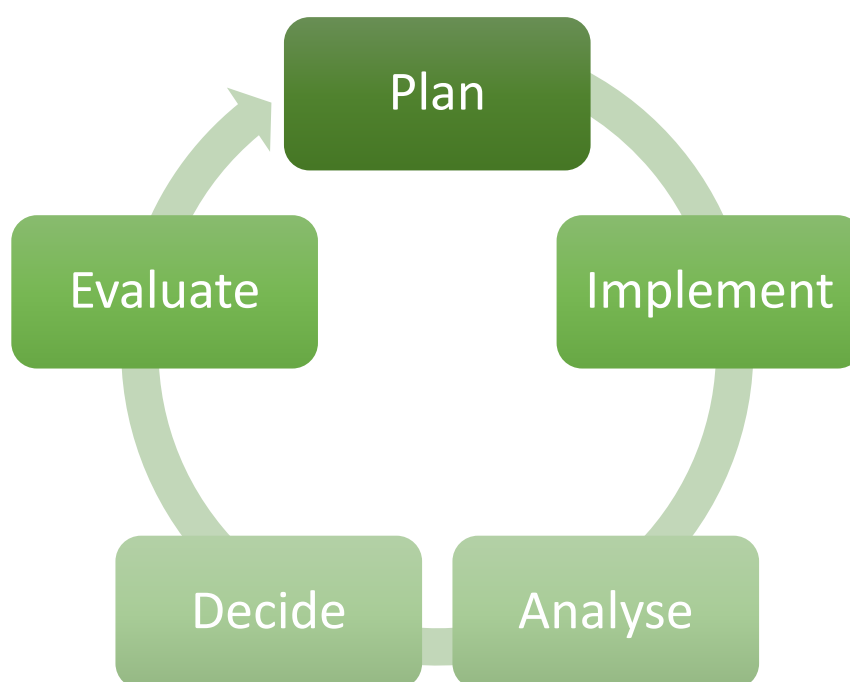
The Local Government Act sets out requirements for all Councils to implement the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework. The intent of this framework allows councils to build plans of appropriate size, scale and content for their communities. It sets future direction and outlines how Council will achieve the strategies and actions from the future plans.

The most important thing is that the Community Strategic Plan, and the implementation structures that support it, are fit for purpose and appropriate to their communities. In this case – that they fit the needs and purpose of the Oberon LGA.

This proposed Community Engagement Framework and Strategy is a key element of the IP&R framework. It is only with robust, transparent and well considered community input and engagement that the vision for the future of the Oberon council area can be designed.

Whilst the Engagement strategies outlined for the review of the current Community Strategic Plan (Section 9) the overall intent of the community engagement framework is that it sets out the way in which council will engage with community in any matters relating to them.

5. THE PROCESS OF ENGAGEMENT








PLAN	<p>Carefully plan your strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Know your project and the level of impact and links to other projects & programs. – Determine level of participation – Determine who should be involved in engagement internally – Identify stakeholders – Develop engagement strategy – timeframes, resources – Consider all statutory requirements and legalities that impact project
IMPLEMENT	<p>Deliver engagement program</p> <p>Be adaptive if strategy methodologies are not meeting expectations</p>
ANALYSE	<p>Collect and collate data gathered through implementation</p> <p>Analysis input, assess themes</p> <p>Determine if sufficient data has been gathered to inform decision</p> <p>Capture in outcomes report / paper</p>
DECIDE	<p>Prepare decision paper / report for council (including feedback on process undertaken and outcomes)</p> <p>Inform all participants of decision and next steps (including when council will consider)</p>
EVALUATE	<p>Debrief in process, discuss learnings or areas for improvement, capture wrap up and learnings for next program</p>

6. ABOUT OBERON & OUR COMMUNITY

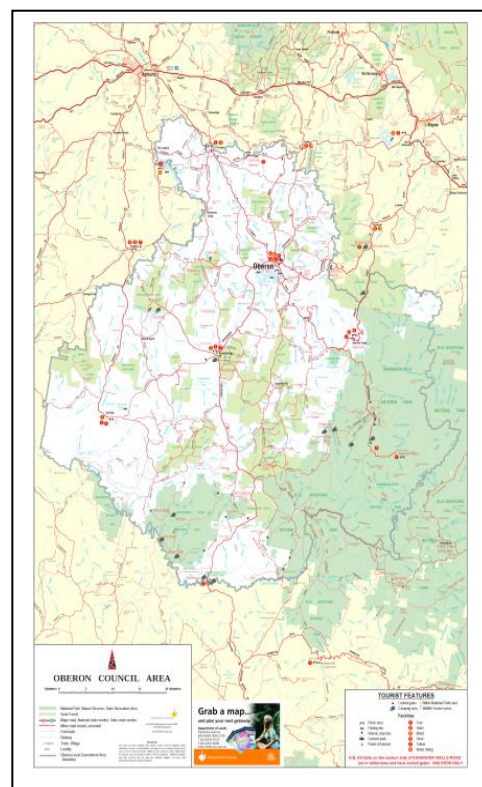
The Oberon Local Government Area (LGA) is located adjacent to the Blue Mountains of New South Wales on the Great Dividing Range, 196 km west (two-hour drive) of Sydney. Much of the area is considered to be sub-alpine with the Oberon township 1,113 metres above sea level.

Within the LGA is the town of Oberon and the villages of Black Springs, Burraga, Edith, Mount David, O'Connell, and Shooters Hill. The LGA neighbours include Bathurst Regional, Blue Mountains City, Upper Lachlan Shire, Lithgow City and Wollondilly Shire.

The total land area of the LGA is 3660 square km. This area includes the Kanangra-Boyd National Park, which is approximately 180,000 hectares, and the Jenolan Caves Reserve which is World Heritage listed and a major attraction for visitors to the area.

 PEOPLE	The Oberon Local Government Area has a population of 5301. This is comprised of 52% male/48% female and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 3.4% of the population	
	Children up to 15 years of age	17.5%
	People over the age of 65 years	22.1%
 FAMILIES	There are 1345 families in Oberon – of this 37.5% are couple families with children, 46.9% are couple families without children and 15.3% were one parent families.	
 HOUSEHOLD INCOME	The median weekly personal income for people aged 15 years or older is \$611. The median household income is \$1239 per week.	
 EDUCATION	In Oberon people over the age of 15 11.9% have completed Year 12 level, 18.4% have completed to certificate III or IV level and 6.5% have completed to Diploma level.	
 INDUSTRIES AND EMPLOYMENT	Of the 2384 people who report being in the labour force 59.5% are employed full time, 29.1% work part time and 5.7% are unemployed. The most common industries are cattle and sheep farming (7.7%) log sawmilling (4.9%), Road Freight (3.1%) and government (3.4%)	

(Source: 2016 ABS Census Data)



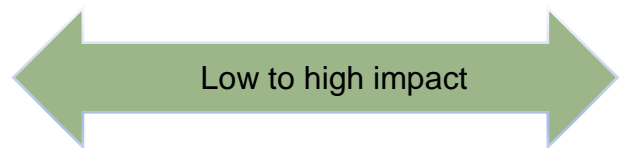
7. HOW WE WILL ENGAGE OUR COMMUNITY

Oberon Council will endeavour to use the appropriate methods of engagement in their engagement design to ensure the people most impacted by a decision have the information they need to be able to inform and influence the outcome. A combination of the following methods can be used depending on the project or purpose for engaging.

Methods will include -

- ✓ Formal submission and Public Exhibition Processes
- ✓ Letter box drops
- ✓ Social media – giving due consideration to the percentage of users with the region
- ✓ Advertising – this may be linked to promotional material about local events or on rate notices
- ✓ Regular newsletters
- ✓ e-newsletter
- ✓ Print media in local paper(s)
- ✓ Attendance at local group meetings – for example the local social, sports, interest groups
- ✓ Collaborate with the schools and their events
- ✓ Posters
- ✓ Webpage
- ✓ Drop in sessions or pop up sessions in local towns and villages
- ✓ Workshops
- ✓ Displays
- ✓ Meetings
- ✓ Focus groups

The matrix outlined below shows the spectrum of engagement and how the above tools / methods may be tailored depending on the purpose for the engagement. Budgets and resources are key considerations for Council when determining their strategies.



METHODS	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Formal submission and Public Exhibition Processes	✓				
Letter box drops	✓				
Social media – however consideration will be given to the percentage of users with the region	✓	✓	✓		
Advertising – this may be linked to promotional material about local events or on rate notices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regular newsletters	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
e-newsletter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Print media in local paper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Attend local group meetings – e.g. local social, sports, interest groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Collaborate with the schools and their events	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Webpage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Drop in sessions or pop up sessions in local towns and villages	✓	✓	✓		
Workshops	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Displays	✓				
Special Meetings	✓	✓	✓		
Focus groups		✓		✓	✓

8. EVALUATION OF ENGAGEMENT

Successful engagement for Oberon council will be characterised by:

- ✓ Good planning of the engagement processes
- ✓ A clear purpose that is communicated to all
- ✓ Relevant target audiences are identified and input is positive
- ✓ Effective two-way communication with clear and relevant information
- ✓ Transparency of both the engagement and decision-making processes
- ✓ Shared values
- ✓ Multiple options to participate in the engagement processes
- ✓ Feedback is given on the outcomes of the engagement processes and on how these influenced the decision-making process
- ✓ Timely engagement that enables fair and reasonable opportunity for the community to give input to the engagement processes

The Engagement Framework and Strategy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it still meets the needs of the Oberon Community.

Approving Authority	Oberon Council
Contact	Executive Management Team
Approval	21 June 2022, Item 13.03, Resolution 18 210622
Revised	17 April 2018: Item 13.05, Resolution 16 170418 Appendix A – Community Participation Plan 17 December 2019, Item 13.03 Resolution 13 171219
Revision Date	April 2024
Issue Date to Staff	June 2022



APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION COUNCILS PLANNING DECISIONS IN

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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN COUNCILS PLANNING DECISIONS

Oberon Council (Council) recognizes that community participation throughout the planning system delivers better planning results for residents, businesses and visitors of Oberon.

Ultimately, our responsibility is to deliver the objectives of various Acts, including the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). These objectives include the promotion of orderly and economic use of land, facilitating ecologically sustainable development and promoting social and economic wellbeing.

Community Participation is an overarching term covering how we engage the community in our work under the EP&A Act, including rezoning proposals, plan formulation and decision making for proposed developments. The level and extent of community participation will vary depending on the scope of the proposal under consideration and the potential impacts of the decision on the community.

“The Community” includes anyone who is affected by the planning system and includes residents, visitors, community groups, NGOs, Aboriginal communities, peak bodies representing a range of interests, businesses and State and Commonwealth Government agencies.

Why is community participation important?

- Community participation builds community confidence in the planning system.
- Community participation creates a shared sense of purpose, direction and understanding of the need to support growth and change, while preserving local character.
- It provides access to community knowledge, ideas and expertise.

Objectives

The community participation plan objectives are to:

- build community confidence in the planning system
- create a shared sense of purpose, direction and understanding of the need to manage growth and change, while preserving local character
- provide access to community knowledge, ideas and expertise

What is our Community Participation Plan?

Our Community Participation Plan (CPP) is designed to ensure participation from the community in planning decisions is both clearer and more accessible. It achieves this by setting out in a single document how and when you can participate in the planning system, our functions and different types of proposals. This CPP also establishes our community participation objectives which we use to guide our approach to community engagement.

Table 1: What functions does the Community Participation Plan apply to?	
Policies	Council develops policies that shape how we interact with the planning system. These may include policies on developments that do not require a development application, developer contributions or repayment schemes.
Plan Making	Strategic planning is an essential aspect in Councils work as it supports development and economic investment in the Council area. It involves planning for communities which integrate social, environmental and economic factors with the Council's unique attributes. Examples of this work includes Planning Proposals such as rezonings, development control plans and economic growth plans.
Assessment	Councillors in a Council Meeting, the General Manager, Director of Planning and Development and various officers in Councils Planning and Development department make decisions on a range of developments. When making decisions on developments, consideration is given to whether land use proposals are in accordance with the strategic priorities of Council, the Region and the State. Further, Council considers whether the proposed development is in the public interest and complies with applicable legislation, policies and guidelines.

Who does this community participation plan apply to?

Our CPP is a requirement of the EP&A Act (see division 2.6 and Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act) and applies to the exercise of planning functions by Council. Planning functions are vast and may include determining Development Applications, preparing Local Environmental Plans or Development Control Plans or preparing strategic documents such as the Local Strategic Planning Statement. These functions are generally administered either by the General Manager or their delegates. In general, planning controls and their delegations are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Planning functions		
Planning Function	Responsibility	Delegation
Strategic documents such as the Local Strategic Planning Statement and Community Participation Plan.	Endorsed by Council following a public exhibition period.	Planning & Development Director, assisted by Councils Town Planner.
Preparation of Local Environmental Plans and Development Control Plans	Endorsed by Council following a public exhibition period.	Planning & Development Director, assisted by Councils Town Planner.
Determination or modification of development applications.	Planning & Development Director on behalf of the General Manager	Councils Town Planner and Health & Building Surveyor.

Our approach to community participation

In line with our community participation objectives, we encourage open, inclusive, easy, relevant, timely and meaningful opportunities for community participation in the planning system, our planning functions and individual proposals. To achieve this, we design our engagement approach so that even where there may not be a community wide consensus on the decision or outcomes, there can be acknowledgement that the process was fair with proper and genuine consideration given to community views and concerns. To achieve the benefits of community participation in the planning system, we will tailor the following community participation approaches for all our planning functions:

Table 3: Community participation approach

What	When	How
Level 1: Inform		
<i>We will review all Development Applications to determine whether they should be placed on public exhibition in a timely manner.</i>	We make this decision as soon as practical after the application is lodged with Council and commence public exhibition and neighbour notification as appropriate.	Advertisements in the local paper, letter mailouts, our website, social media announcements, emails, information sessions etc as deemed appropriate.
Level 2: Consult		
<i>We consult with the community and invite them to provide their views and concerns on a development application or other planning function.</i>	During the public exhibition period, we seek your views and concerns. We welcome feedback as a submission in a formal exhibition, or at other times if appropriate.	Public exhibition, drop in sessions, walking tours, one on one engagement, emails and phone calls as deemed appropriate.
Level 3: Consider		
<i>We respond to the community's views by addressing concerns raised.</i>	In reaching a decision we consider your views and concerns, and outline how we have addressed them in the assessment.	Phone calls, emails, opportunities to speak at Council Meetings, mediation between disputed parties and targeted consultation as appropriate.
Level 4: Determination		
<i>We notify the community of decisions on proposals and detail how their views were considered in reaching the decision.</i>	In reaching a decision we consider your views and concerns, notify you of the reasons for the decision and how community views were considered.	Updates to websites, publication of submission reports, letters to submitters. Council provides a "Reason for the Decision" on the consent for each Development Application.

Local Developments that will be notified

- **Boarding Houses**
- Demolition of a heritage item
- Extractive Industries
- Intensive Livestock Keeping
- Liquid Fuel depots
- Junk yards
- Sawmills
- Subdivision (over 2 lots)
- **Brothels**
- Heritage Items
- Hotels / Motels
- Industries- other than in the industrial area of the Oberon Village
- Medium & high density housing
- Residential Flat Buildings and duplexes
- Stock & Sale yards
- Tourist Facilities

In addition, where Council's Planning & Development Staff considers that community interest in a development proposal warrants public consultation, such development can be notified appropriately as per this policy.

Who will be notified

The extent of neighbour notification will be determined by Councils staff having regard to the following:

- The siting of the building/development and its proximity to boundaries;
- The design of the building/development, and in particular its height bulk and scale and its relationship to the character of existing development in the vicinity and the street scape;
- The use of proposed rooms and the possible effect on adjoining land, due to overlooking and loss of privacy;
- The views to and from adjoining land;
- Any overshadowing of adjoining and;
- Natural drainage of the site and possible changes in response to the proposed works and the impacts that this may have on adjoining properties;
- The likelihood of the adjoining land being detrimentally affected by noise;
- Any relevant matter for consideration under division 2.6 and Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act.

THE ROLE OF EXHIBITIONS IN THE PLANNING SYSTEM

Exhibitions

A key technique we use to encourage community participation is formal exhibition. During an exhibition we make available relevant documents that may include a draft of the policy, plan or proposed development that we are seeking community input on. In conducting an exhibition we receive submissions and we maintain privacy of the submitter.

In reaching decisions on proposals that have been exhibited, the Council, the General Manager, Planning & Development Director or an assessment officer balances a wide range of factors to ensure that decisions are in the public interest. This includes considering the objectives of the EP&A Act, the strategic priorities of Council, the community's input, the land use priorities identified in strategic plans and applicable policies and guidelines.

How can you get involved in a public exhibition?

- Make a formal submission on an exhibition by email or post.
- Connect directly with Council staff working on a proposal, policy, plan or project.

Exhibition timeframes

Section 2.21(2) of the EP&A Act details the types of proposals that must be considered in the CPP and Schedule 1 of the Act sets a minimum exhibition timeframe for most of these proposals. We will always exhibit a proposal for this minimum timeframe and will consider an extended timeframe for exhibition based on the scale and nature of the proposal. The only requirements in this plan that are mandatory are those set out in the table below and these are the same as the mandatory minimum timeframes in Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act.

Table 4: Mandatory exhibition timeframes

<i>Draft Community Participation Plan</i>	28 days
<i>Draft local strategic planning statements</i>	28 days
<i>Planning proposals for local environmental plans subject to a gateway determination</i>	28 days or as specified by the gateway determination which may find, due to the minor nature of the proposal, that no public exhibition is required.
<i>Draft development control plan</i>	28 days
<i>Draft contribution plans</i>	28 days
<i>Application for development consent for designated development</i>	28 days
<i>Environmental impact statement obtained under Division 5.1</i>	28 days

Several of our functions and proposals do not have minimum exhibition timeframes. As a matter of course in line with our community participation objectives. We typically exhibit documents related to the exercise of these functions and proposals for the timeframes described in the tables below:

Table 6: Exhibition timeframes for Development Applications

<i>Notification to all landowners considered by the Planning & Development Director to be impacted by the Development Application</i>	14 days
<i>Advertisement if deemed to be of significant public interest by the Planning & Development Director</i>	14 days
<i>Integrated and Advertised Development</i>	28 days
<i>Amendments to Development Applications</i>	In the same manner as the original development application unless varied at the discretion of the Planning & Development Director.

Key points to note about public exhibitions include the following:

- A public authority is not required to make available for public inspection any part of an environmental impact statement whose publication would, in the opinion of the public authority, be contrary to the public interest because of its confidential nature or for any other reason.
- Timeframes are in calendar days and include weekends.
- If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or a public holiday, we may extend the exhibition to finish on the first available work day.
- The period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) and public holidays over the Easter period are excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition.
- Notification periods which include mailed notification letters should be extended by 3 business days to allow for postage to occur.

Making a submission

It is important that submissions only contain information relevant to the development or planning proposal. Council officers are required to assess proposals on planning grounds identified in relevant legislation. Issues such as a moral objection, commercial competition or personal circumstance of an applicant or objector cannot be given weight in Council's assessment. At a minimum, each submission must:

- Clearly identify the matter to which the submission relates
- State the grounds for any support or objection expressed in the submission
- Include appropriate contact details including email, phone and postal details.

Late submissions may be considered at Council's discretion until a determination has been made.

Feedback

There are many ways for the community to provide feedback or raise questions outside of formal exhibition and we will always consider and respond to your views and concerns.

Contact us:

Email us at council@oberon.nsw.gov.au

Write to the General Manager: PO Box 84, Oberon NSW 2787

Phone us on 02 6329 8100

Visit Council at 137 – 139 Oberon Street, Oberon

Glossary

Planning term	Definition
Contribution plans	A plan developed by councils for the purpose of gaining financial contributions from new development towards the cost of new and upgraded public amenities and/or services required to accommodate the new development.
Designated development	Designated Development refers to developments that are high-impact developments (e.g. likely to generate pollution) or are located in or near an environmentally sensitive area (e.g. a coastal wetland).
Development application	Development application refers to developments require consent pursuant to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.
Development control plans	A plan that provides detailed planning and design guidelines to support the planning controls in a LEP.
Gateway determination	A gateway determination is issued following an assessment of the strategic merit of a proposal to amend or create an LEP and allows for the proposal to proceed to public exhibition.
Local environmental plan (LEP)	An environmental planning instrument developed by a local planning authority, generally a council. An LEP sets the planning framework for a Local Government Area.
State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP)	An environmental planning instrument developed by the Department, that relates to planning matters that are state significant or are applicable across the state.

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