



Borough-wide engagement, London Borough of Redbridge, London E11

As the 2020 COVID pandemic demonstrated, unexpected things can and will occur, so the true test of developing an effective resident engagement strategy is how to cope with choice, challenges and deflections. We have four principal components to achieve this:

- 1 Developing good working relationships with residents, building trust and breaking down barriers to engagement
- 2 Developing and delivering a resident engagement strategy that works and enables participation right down to a one-to-one level
- 3 Providing support and capacity building to enable residents engage on an equal basis to the ‘professionals’
- 4 Delivering effective and accessible information that enables residents to make decisions

The effect of the pandemic meant a necessary change to how resident engagement on housing renewal is undertaken. One example of this is our experience from 2020. Redbridge Council gave a manifesto commitment in its 2017 Housing Strategy to build 1000 new council homes. In February 2020, PPCR were appointed to conduct an extensive resident engagement programme on infill proposals on 12 separate estates. We had proposed a three-stage face-to-face resident consultation exercise. Due to COVID, we had to radically adapt and change this programme. This is what we did:

We produced a video on the Affordable Homes Programme. This was available online on a variety of platforms. For stages one and two, two newsletters and questionnaire surveys were hand delivered to all residents living in each estate and the surrounding area. All these materials were also available online. Stage one introduced the concept of possible infill development and sought residents’ views. Stage two presented feedback from stage one and detail of possible schemes developed by the Design Teams. We also produced a ‘Q and A’ document summarising all common themes. ZOOM webinars and chat room sessions were conducted throughout the programme. These were facilitated by PPCR and attended by council officers and representatives from the Design Teams. Each session started with a presentation of the proposals by the Design Team. Resident feedback at both stages could be given in 7 ways:

- 1 Returning a questionnaire by post
- 2 Completing a questionnaire survey online
- 3 Completing a telephone interview
- 4 Sending comments by email
- 5 Discussing issues using the PPCR free phone
- 6 Contacting Redbridge Council
- 7 Taking part in ZOOM chat room sessions

Summary reports were produced at the conclusion of stages one and two. These were made available online and also printed and posted to residents who requested them. We produced and distributed a final newsletter for each scheme with details of final proposals prior to planning application submission. All 12 schemes have received planning approval.