

Local Development Plan Early Engagement



Context

New-style local development plans must meet three key expectations, including being ‘people-centred’. This requires early, collaborative, and meaningful engagement, ensuring communities and stakeholders can shape decisions in a proportionate and effective way.

What Happened

The ‘Have Your Say on Renfrewshire’s Places’ survey, based on the Place Standard tool, allowed people to score and comment on 14 aspects of places in Renfrewshire, covering topics such as moving around, natural space, and feeling safe. The survey was available online, promoted via social media and email, and hard copies were provided in libraries. Responses provide a rich source of information on specific places and will help inform local development plans and local place plans.



The 'Call for Ideas' survey invited individuals and organisations to suggest ideas and proposals for specific sites in Renfrewshire. It allowed the development industry to highlight areas of interest, helping the Council understand developer demand and pressure. It also gave community members the opportunity to identify small and medium-scale sites and projects that could enhance local areas. The results will inform both the local development plan process and local place plans.

The Planning Service has established strong links with Youth Services and Community Learning and Development teams to engage children and young people in the local development plan process. After initial meetings, a session was held with Renfrewshire Youth Voice, a representative youth group, to explore engagement methods. While the children and young person versions of the Place Standard tool were shared, the group advised that an online survey would be unlikely to generate many responses, recommending workshops instead.

Contact was made with Renfrewshire's secondary schools, and a session plan was developed in collaboration with Youth Services. Workshops, held in May and June, followed a structured approach: a short icebreaker to encourage participation, group work with school catchment maps where participants marked places they liked and disliked, group discussions on Place Standard topics with notes recorded on a flipchart, and individual completion of the Place Standard wheel.

Following the invitation to prepare Local Place Plans in May 2023, information sessions for community councils and community development trusts were held in March 2024. These sessions provided guidance on how to prepare a local place plan and the support available from the Council. Subsequent one-to-one meetings with some community organisations have taken place, and a number have started developing their Local Place Plans.

Areas of Collaboration

Renfrewshire Council Youth Services and Community Learning and Development; Renfrewshire Youth Voice; Renfrewshire secondary schools; community councils; development trusts; development industry.

Overall Result

Engagement on the local development plan is an ongoing process, but the responses gathered so far have been valuable. The 'Have Your Say on Renfrewshire's Places' survey received 232 responses, while the 'Call for Ideas' survey had 89 responses. Seven secondary school workshops were held, engaging approximately 100 pupils, with 52 students completing a feedback questionnaire that rated the session 4.42 out of 5. Following the workshops, 64% of participants felt they could make a positive change in their community, with an additional 31% believing they maybe could.



The local place plan information sessions were attended by 12 organisations, and an additional five one-to-one sessions were held with community organisations to discuss the local development plan and local place plans. The engagement responses will help shape the local development plan and local place plans and will also be useful for other services within the Council.

Lessons Learned

The 'Have Your Say...' survey, promoted through Council social media, did not generate a sufficient response across all areas. Its detailed nature may have led to respondents starting but not completing it, and there were geographic and demographic gaps in responses. To improve engagement, future surveys should be supplemented with workshop sessions to increase participation and ensure broader representation.

Working with Youth Services has been highly beneficial, strengthening links between Planning and Youth Services and establishing valuable connections with schools. The involvement of Youth Services staff, experienced in engaging young people, was particularly effective. Techniques such as simple icebreakers, structured session plans, and guided discussions helped participants feel comfortable and encouraged active participation. These approaches should be replicated in future youth engagement initiatives.

Running a 'Call for Ideas' survey at an early stage has provided an initial indication of developer interest and potential development pressure across different areas. While it does not determine site allocations, it allows for early infrastructure planning. Framing it as a 'Call for Ideas' rather than a 'Call for Sites' has also encouraged community-led proposals for smaller development opportunities, broadening the scope of engagement.

