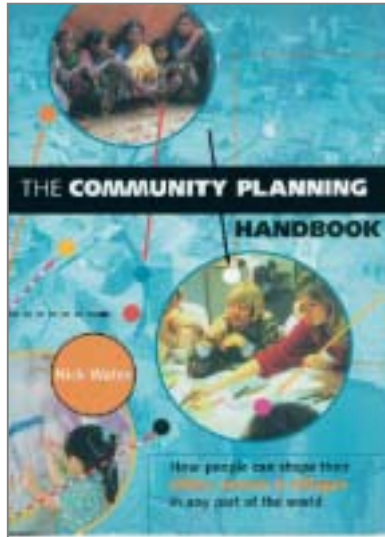


(5) The Community Planning Handbook:

How people can shape their cities, towns & villages in any part of the world

Hastings, United Kingdom

Figure: 2-2-22



The Community Planning Handbook:

**How people can shape their cities, towns & villages
in any part of the world**

Nick Wates (2000)

Earthscan, London <http://www.earthscan.co.uk>

230 pp book (English & Chinese) and e-book (English)

ISBN 1 85383 654 0

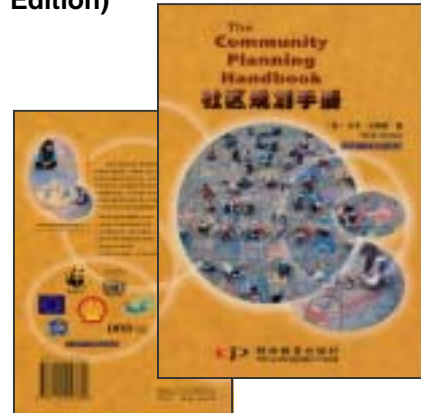
Website: www.communityplanning.net

1. INTRODUCTION

Local communities increasingly want more influence over their surroundings and governments and professionals are increasingly interested in involving local people more to avoid the alienation created by much planning over recent decades. In 2000, over six years of research and international networking, culminated in the publication of *The Community Planning Handbook*, an introduction to key principles and methods in the “art” of community participation that have been pioneered in many different countries over the past few decades. Two years later the Handbook was also made available as a web based resource and now registers a monthly average of 100,000 hits and 15,000 successful requests for pages. Both Handbook and website underline the growing awareness, interest and recognition that the involvement of citizens in their cities is critical and the demand globally from all sides for more local involvement in the planning and management of the environment.

The Handbook starts from a basic premise: “How can local people – wherever they live – best involve themselves in the complexities of architecture, planning and urban design? How can professionals’ best build on local knowledge and resources?”⁴⁴ Whilst many of the practical examples that support the methods presented are drawn from experience in the United Kingdom (UK), there are also cases that have been pioneered and drawn from elsewhere (including from the USA, Australia and Hong Kong and from developing countries in Asia and Africa). As such the principles and methods presented are generic and therefore international in their scope and outreach and with the common purpose of helping people make community involvement in planning a practical reality. The Handbook has been published in both English and Chinese (the website is in English only)⁴⁵.

Figure 2-2-23: The Community Planning Handbook How People can Shape their Cities, Towns & Villages in any Part of the World (Chinese Edition)



In keeping with other toolkits that adopt a generic principle and method led approach, the Handbook has not been designed for wholesale adaptation (translation) and application. Rather the material is conceived as a jargon free resource that is presented in a universally applicable, how-to-do-it style, and where methods can be applied singularly in their own right, or more effectively and creatively in combination as a powerful force for positive and sustainable change. The main focus of the objective of this tailor-made Handbook is to facilitate community involvement in planning, allowing people to benefit from the experience gained so far and by facilitating international exchange of good practice.

The Handbook is being applied in urban and rural communities in many parts of the world. The case study selected for this report comes from the seaside town of Hastings on the south coast of England. Hastings (which includes St Leonards on sea) has a

⁴⁴ *The Community Planning Handbook*, Nick Wates (2000) Earthscan p.2.

⁴⁵ The publishers, Earthscan, initiated the Chinese edition through its China Project.

Figure 2-2-24: Map of Hastings



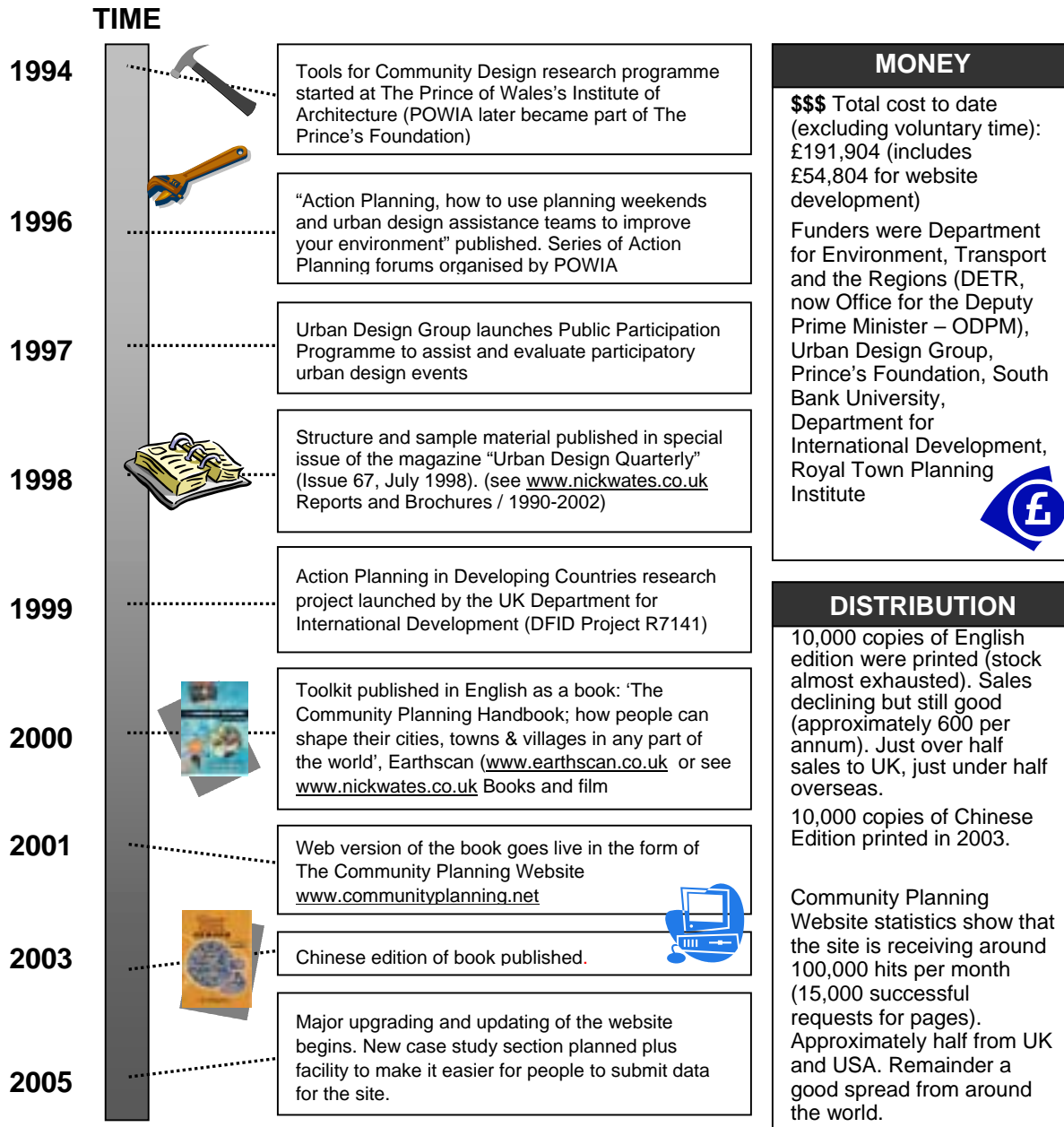
population of 70,000. The local authority is Hastings Borough Council. It lies within East Sussex County and is surrounded by Rother District Council. It has been identified by the regional development agency, South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), and national government as an area in need of regeneration and a variety of programmes have been established to achieve improvement. In particular a development company called

Seaspace has been established to spearhead the regeneration process.⁴⁶

The case study interweaves the story of the initiation and development of the overall Handbook with how the methods profiled have been applied in Hastings.

⁴⁶ Further background information (and up to date position) can be found on: www.hastings.gov.uk, www.rother.gov.uk, www.eastsussex.gov.uk, www.seaspace.org.uk .

Figure 2-2-25: CPH: Key Facts: Time, Money & Distribution



2. INITIATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Community Planning Handbook encapsulates the ground swell of both interest and development in participatory techniques and processes in the way in which environments are planned and developed, including the development of community architecture,

community design and community planning.⁴⁷ This interest is evident both nationally within the UK and internationally (and hence the international scope of the Handbook and the support and funding committed by both home and international arms of the UK Government). There is also an expressed demand for involvement from the grass roots combined with Government and private sector realisation that community involvement in planning could save time and money. The Handbook was therefore designed to be of interest and use to all parties involved in community planning (including professionals, local government and community organisations) and was purposefully edited to avoid jargon and ensure accessibility to all.

Within the context described above, the Handbook is the product of three related initiatives and agencies (and key individuals who advocated the need for such a Handbook); the evolution of the Handbook is demonstrated in Figure 2-2-26. The first, *Tools for Community Design Programme*, supported by The Prince's Foundation (and formerly The Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture in London), aimed to produce good practice tools through testing and monitoring new approaches in live pilot projects and resulted in the publication of *Action Planning* and a series of Action Planning Forums. The Foundation's first two Directors created the right environment for the Tools for Community Design programme and helped with raising funds. The Director of Research made it happen.

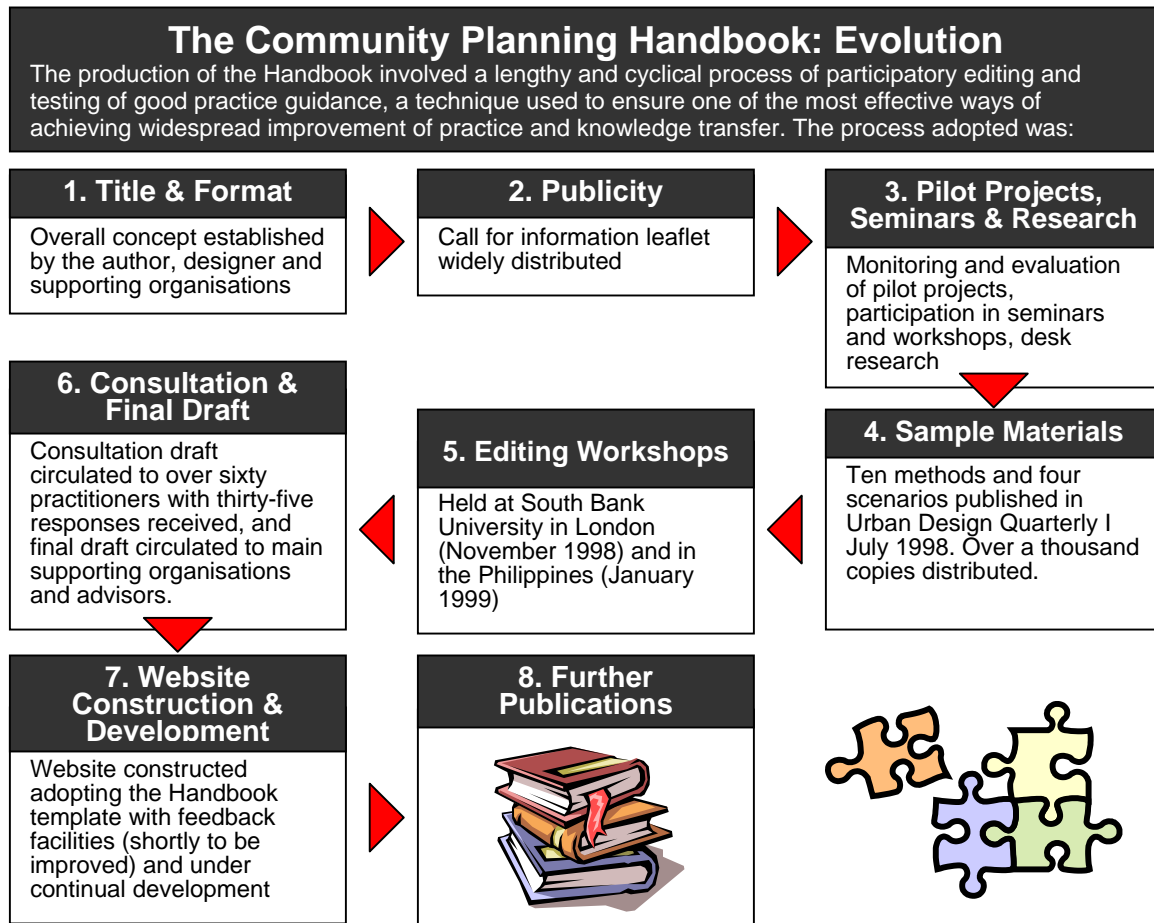
The second, *Urban Design Group Public Participation Programme*, funded by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) for England was an action research programme assisting and evaluating twelve public participation events and ten seminars in England during 1996 and 1997 to establish good practice. The Urban Design Group had identified the need to systematically explore ways to involve the public in urban design, had secured research funding and engaged the Handbook's author to be, Nick Wates, to manage this programme.

⁴⁷ See for example Community Architecture; how people are creating their own environment Nick Wates and Charles Knevitt, 1987.

And third, introducing an international dimension, the *Action Planning in Developing Countries Research Project* funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), examined practice in countries in many parts of the world during 1998 and 1999 to establish methods most appropriate for developing countries. Senior urban sector advisers had been very keen on the toolkit's development as a contribution to DFID's international urban programmes and sector knowledge.

The Handbook is, therefore, the product of practical observation and action research with people (citizens, practitioners and professionals) engaged in local participatory activities and methods (the evolution of the book is demonstrated in 2-2-26). Importantly the author provided a single champion for the Handbook from inception to publication and website development. The production of the Handbook was also guided by an advisory group of individuals (expert practitioners from supporting agencies) and many individuals and organisations in the UK and internationally provided support and assistance by supplying material, participating in editing workshops or commenting on drafts. This included a few key individuals involved in the regeneration of Hastings and the Royal Town Planning Institute's Director of Policy, who provided support and provided a bridge to the RTPI's Planning Aid programme (that provides independent advice and support on planning issues to people and communities who cannot afford to hire a planning consultant).

Figure 2-2-26: Evolution



The finalised toolkit is illustrated in Figure 2-2-27, 2-2-28 and 2-2-29 through the annotated reproduction of the Contents, A-Z Methods and the format adopted in the Handbook for profiling and presenting the fifty-three methods.

Figure 2-2-27: A to Z

General Principles A-Z
To understand the basic philosophy of community planning through the General Principles A-Z.

Methods A-Z
To get a feel for the range of options available through the Methods A-Z.

Scenarios A-Z
To see if there are any which relate to your own context or provide inspiration through the Scenarios A-Z.
To sketch out a scenario for your own situation

Appendices
To complete your own strategy planner, action planning event planner or progress monitor
To produce an itemised budget and allocate responsibilities

Figure 2-2-28: Book Format

Method Title
Community planning forum

Method's main use & strength
Community Planning Forums are open, multipurpose events lasting several hours. The three-stage format is designed to secure information, generate ideas and create interaction between interest groups with a minimum of advance planning.

Sample Fliers, posters, newspaper
Sample advertising leaflet

Sample Formats Timetables, forms, procedures, other detailed info
Sample Community Planning Forum Form

Features Method's main
Key ingredients are a wallet advertising the event, a means of distributing it, a venue and a facilitator.

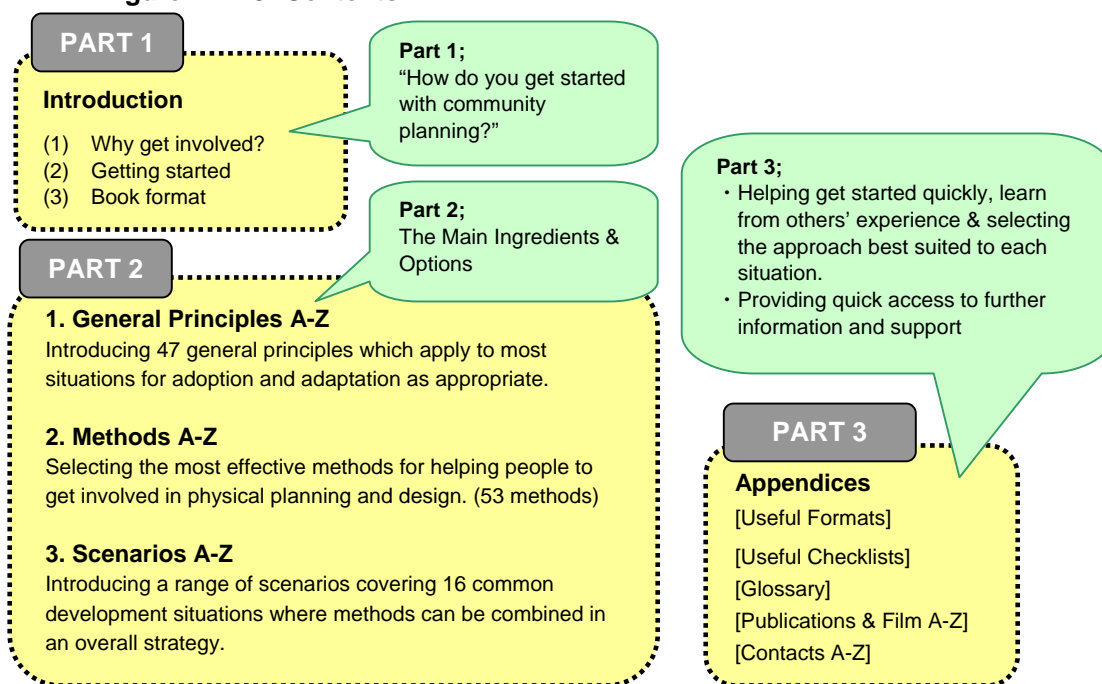
Inspiration & Insight Quotes from participants or observers
"This is one of the best methods I have used. An ideal way to get out of the planning process if you already have ideas and a plan to do it."

Check Lists Roles, equipment lists, etc
Key roles at a planning forum

Examples Explanatory images
Open Forum

Further Information
Further information

Figure 2-2-29: Contents



In common with the development of other toolkits, the Handbook faced two significant barriers to its effective development and local application. The first is cost. There is disbelief about how much time (and therefore money) it takes to produce toolkits well and those involved in developing toolkits have generally limited budgets and a consequent tendency to cut costs (for example by avoiding colour printing and maximising so-called “in-kind contributions”). The budget for *The Community Planning Handbook* was not secured at the outset but mobilised in stages as the work developed. In addition, this lack of funds is compounded by the lack of ongoing commitment (and hence funding) from any one partner and can only be overcome by securing support from new partners. The second barrier, is the difficulty at the early stages of development of conceptualising – or visualising - what the end product could be like.

The Handbook is one element in a broader knowledge transfer and acquisition effort, and a range of training initiatives have supported the overall appreciation of community planning and design methods and processes (though training was not undertaken as part of the Hastings programme). This included an Action Planning Forum events programme in 1996 and 1997, a Community Planning and Development Training Programme (which

comprised the development of seventeen one day training modules) initiated by the Prince's Foundation & Civic Trust in 2001 and 2002, and a training service supplied by members of the Hastings consulting team.⁴⁸

3. APPLICATION

Hastings on England's South Coast is typical of towns and cities at the margins of economic growth areas, where former economic activity (in this case fishing and tourism) have been in steady decline. By 2002, Hastings was the

Figure 2-2-30



CONSULTATION RESULTS
"The Future of Hastings & St Leonards: Your guide to who is planning what and how you can get involved"
Produced by Clive Jacotine & Associates with Nick Wates Associates, October 2002

On behalf of Hastings Borough Council
South East England Development Agency
English Partnerships
January 2003

27th most deprived area in England faced with multifaceted problems (of crime, education, housing, exclusion, environment, health, employment) manifesting in:

- A crime rate considerably higher than the national average;
- Low levels of basic literacy and numeracy (25% of people aged 16-60 face these problems);
- A shortfall of over 750 affordable homes each year, over 800 households in severe housing need awaiting assistance, and around 1,100 private homes empty for 6 months or more;
- A multi-racial and multi-cultural town but not a context often reflected in decision making;
- The need to dispose of 30,000 tones of household waste each year in more environment friendly ways;
- Higher than average rates of mental illness; and,
- High levels of unemployment (4.5% compared to a national average of 3.1% and East Sussex average of 2.4%) and unemployment of over 10% in some parts of the area.

⁴⁸ See www.nickwates.co.uk.

The operating environment was conducive to the application of elements of the Handbook. Hastings had been earmarked for regeneration by the regional development agency, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), and there was a political environment receptive and committed to the engagement of other key stakeholders in the future vision and plans for the town, including the commitment of the local government (Hastings Borough Council) and English Partnerships (the national regeneration agency). The need to consult on a wide range of planning issues was acknowledged and a team of local consultants (Clive Jacotine & Associates with Nick Wates Associates) were engaged to advise and assist on a coordinated programme of consultation activity.

The Community Planning Handbook and Website were used to assist in the preparation and design of core methods and activities in the coordinated programme (in combination with experience drawn from elsewhere by the consultancy team). The decision to proceed with the programme and the local application of Handbook principles and methods was therefore dependent on a number of factors including the genuine commitment to making progress in the area, the political need to be seen to be doing something constructive, and the tangible end products that were being proposed as an outcome from this enhanced local governance. The availability and track record of the consultancy team in delivering projects was also a critical factor in the decision to proceed. Additionally the local environment was conducive to the adaptation and application of toolkits with both the Hastings Borough Council and SEEDA demonstrating an interest and empathy to good practice guides. Importantly there is a degree of perceived safety amongst local officials in applying and following guidelines that have been sanctioned by the relevant agencies.

At the end of 2002 a month long consultation was carried out on the future of Hastings and St Leonards (and in part neighbouring Bexhill).⁴⁹ It was the most comprehensive such exercise ever undertaken in the area, and to that date one of the most extensive of its

⁴⁹ Consultation Results: the future of Hastings & St Leonards and Bexhill. Main Report (January 2003), Clive Jacotine & Associates with Nick Wates Associates.

kind in the UK. A coordinated approach to consultation on a range of plans and strategies resulted in widespread media coverage which combined with door to door delivery of an umbrella brochure, ensured virtually everyone in the area was aware of the changes taking place and had the opportunity to be involved. Well over 4000 people were engaged in over 35 events including exhibitions, meetings, briefings and workshops. A total of 1,268 written contributions (consisting of over 150,000 words) were received.

The consultation programme was initiated by the Hastings and St Leonards Local Strategic Partnership so the local community could understand and influence the choices facing the town at a time of major change. A substantial physical regeneration programme was about to commence (with a total estimated value of £380 million)⁵⁰. A number of related plans and strategies were being developed to guide the regeneration programme. To avoid overwhelming the public with separate consultations on each of the components it was decided to conduct a single coordinated consultation programme. The centrepiece of the consultation focused on the draft Community Strategy for Hastings and St Leonards and a draft Masterplan for the wider area (including Bexhill). The consultation was jointly funded by the three main funding partners; Hastings Borough Council, SEEDA and English Partnerships. The total estimated cost of the consultation was around £150,000 (including consultants fees, graphics and printing, room and equipment hire, and so on).

The programme was designed with four objectives in mind: to provide information, encourage involvement, secure informed feedback and build capacity. The last of these objectives sought to lay the foundations for a continuing engagement process by building on existing networks and events, helping people to work together and developing the capacity of individuals and organisations in the community.

Whilst the *Community Planning Handbook* was not specifically adapted for the process, it was used for developing the community engagement strategies and providing a

⁵⁰ By March 2006 £66.5 million had been committed from government and other public funding sources, and the EU. A further £210 million is in the pipeline for road and rail infrastructure improvements around Hastings, with anticipated private sector leverage in excess of £100 million.

foundation for the application of specific methods. Copies of the Handbook were made available to many of those involved in the process. Of particular interest is the way in which the broad nature of the consultation required the application of a range of methods in order to fulfil the objectives. Figure 2-2-32 lists some of the techniques that were used and Figure 2-2-31 illustrates the implementation timeframe. The approach and methods were selected by a Project Management Group established by the three funding partners (Hastings Borough Council, SEEDA, English Partnerships) following recommendations by the consultants based on interviews with key stakeholders in Hastings, experience of previous consultation in the town and experience of consultation initiatives elsewhere.

Figure 2-2-31: Implementation Timeframe

PHASE	PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES	TIMING
1. Getting started	Determine objectives, process and partners.	Consultants' report. Meetings between parties. Form Project Management Group.	Aug/Sept 2002
2. Preparation	Assemble draft plans and strategies and communicate them to the general public.	Participatory production of consultation material in print and on the internet. Event planning.	Sept/Oct 2002
3. Consultation	Public involvement	Publicity, exhibitions, meetings, written responses.	Nov/Dec 2002
4. Analysis	Presentation of results to main stakeholders.	Consultants' reports. Consideration by client organisations.	Dec 02/Jan 2003
5. Follow up	Ensure the public's views are publicized and taken into account in revised plans.	Town meeting. <i>About</i> magazine and internet publicity. Exhibition. Revision of plans.	Feb/Mar 2003

Figure 2-2-32: Combining Methods for Comprehensive strategic Local Consultation

Combining Methods for Comprehensive strategic Local Consultation	
The consultation programme included the following features:	
Information Brochures	Production of high quality printed brochures on each of the main regeneration strategies and plans, including 50,000 copies of <i>The Future of Hastings & St Leonards</i> and 25,000 copies of <i>Towards a Masterplan for Hastings and Bexhill</i> . All materials produced through participatory editing by key stakeholders. Available free of charge at all consultation events and at information centres and libraries. The umbrella brochure summarising each of the plans and outlining the consultation process was distributed to every household at the start of the process.
Marketing Campaign	Posters, advertising, securing press and television coverage to raise general awareness and inform people about the consultation programme. Activities ranged from posters along the entire Hastings and St Leonards seafronts (100 poster sites for 4 weeks) to a mobile caravan unit with exhibition material and publications for use at exhibitions and events.
Briefing Sessions	On the main plans and strategies for key audiences in the public, private and voluntary sectors. (13 sessions held)
Community Consultants Recruitment	Training and support for volunteers (particularly from 'hard to reach' constituencies) to help people in those constituencies engage successfully.
Staffed Exhibitions	At key public venues; stations and shopping areas. (4 one-day sessions held)
Public Meetings	Presentations followed by question and answer sessions with a panel of council members and officers. (3 held)
Questionnaires	Tear-off reply paid questionnaires in publicity material to elicit written views and build up data on people's requirements.
Citizens Panel	Comments on the community strategy invited by postal invitation from a sample of 1,226 members of the community.
Local Consultation Events	Half-day drop-in events with staffed exhibitions and workshops focusing on the local neighbourhood (four held in priority wards plus an extra one on request).
Local Forum Events	Meetings of local neighbourhood forums in the priority wards building up to and following on from the local consultation events.
Special Interest Group Forums	Encouragement to groups and organizations to debate the issues and submit views.
Peer Group Working	One to one discussion and informal interviews by community consultants.
Outreach Activity	Small group discussions with hard to reach groups, assisted by the community consultants.
Interactive Websites	Information and questionnaires on websites allowing people to receive and provide information electronically.
Regeneration Centre	Opening of a shop in Hastings town centre by SEEDA providing a permanent base for information on regeneration. A total of 788 visits with 245 recorded interest over October to mid-December
Permanent Displays	Permanent exhibition panels on the masterplan mounted at key public venues (two in Hastings and one in Bexhill).
Schools Programme	Project based consultation with pupils in schools.

Response to the questionnaire brochures indicated widespread support for the draft community strategy and substantial support for the Masterplan, together with widespread public support for the general thrust of other plans and strategies. In line with other successful community planning exercises however, the overall value of the month of activities had a broader and deeper affect on local governance. The consultation programme not only played a valuable role in focusing the thinking of all those involved in the regeneration of the area and clarifying the many proposals, it also promoted partnership working. The programme succeeded in making people aware of the possibilities for the future of the area and generating debate and providing opportunities for people to make their views known (including many hard to reach constituencies such as the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community and the elderly).

4. OUTCOMES AND LESSON LEARNING

The impact of the “soft” processes of consultation and participation, and the enhancement of local governance, are difficult to quantify and attribute. They are one significant part of a broader approach to the ways in which cities, towns and villages are planned and managed. What both the Handbook and its application in Hastings do clearly demonstrate is the demand and acknowledged need for such processes.

Figure 2-2-33: Council Leader Jeremy Birch at a public exhibition in the main Hastings shopping centre



At the local level, through the application of principles and methods in Hastings, a number of significant outcomes and improvements to the quality of life were achieved. These included:

- The Community Strategy was revised and adopted and a further consultation has recently been undertaken to review the Strategy three years on. Significantly,

consultants were not required for this second round task indicating that appreciation, understanding and the capacity to implement effective civic engagement activities has to some degree been institutionalised in the local authority.

- Some of the “early wins” included in the Masterplan have been implemented (such as the construction of a media centre and Marina Pavilion) and others are at an advanced planning stage (including an improved Station Quarter). Overall there is a constructive atmosphere and enthusiasm for the regeneration, despite the programme being jeopardised by the introduction of some major schemes, such as a major new building on the beach, which was not the subject of consultation during the December 2002 consultation month. This further emphasises the significance in meaningful civic engagement.
- The Housing Renewal Area in St Leonards has been adopted and progressed and local action plans were adopted and considerable progress made on their implementation. Indicative of this success: unemployment is falling and wage rates are up; crime has dropped by 50% over a five year period; 75% residents now express satisfaction with their neighbourhood; teenage pregnancy and child poverty has fallen; and, house prices are increasing at a higher than sub-regional rate and 250 properties have been improved by an initiative known as “grotbusters”.
- The Hastings Millennium Community (a project to create vibrant neighbourhoods on under-used land near train stations) is being progressed with construction of initial phases due shortly.
- The voluntary sector has become increasingly active with the creation of a number of new email groups, initiatives and organisations, indicating the longer term sustainability of inclusive and participatory processes.

More broadly, community planning principles and methods are now incorporated in the UK's planning system and Planning Aid is now funded by central government based on the community planning remit.⁵¹ In response most urban design and architectural practices now include community planning as part of their service. Whilst there is still much progress to be made, in less than a decade there has been measurable shift in thinking, processes and approaches to getting local citizens and other key stakeholders centrally involved in the future of their homes. No longer is city management a by-product of government, but a more inclusive process of governance. Whilst the Handbook is not a single cause of this shift, it has both played a significant part in, and is itself a product of the gradual institutionalisation of one the key pillars of good governance, civic engagement and citizen participation.

There are a number of practical operational lessons from the development of this Handbook:

- *Need for long term institutional commitment and funding:* there are problems with ensuring and maintaining ongoing commitment and funding from organisational partners, over the longer term, underlining the longer term development needs of toolkits to keep up-to-date, relevant and user-friendly.
- *Need for more resources for further development and evaluation:* problems with the Handbook's broader dissemination including the translation to other languages (including Italian, Spanish, and Japanese). Without detailed support these efforts rarely materialise though recent developments in automatic translation facilities for web browsers may help overcome these problems. However, the Handbook clearly has the capacity for replication and application elsewhere given an understanding of toolkit structure and methodology as well as local/regional context. Further translations and adaptations are planned. A Japanese translation is now available and

⁵¹ Planning Aid offers free and independent planning advice for individuals and communities with low incomes and who cannot afford advice from other sources.

is set for publication. The Handbook is already influencing the development of practice and educational material in Japan.

Figure 2-2-34: Exhibition at TESCO Supermarket



- *Development process*: retrospectively, the preferred development approach would be reversed, starting from the development of an interactive website, building the layers of knowledge and then publishing in print media. The website is being regularly updated, revised and improved and interactive feedback facilities on the website are being planned (for example by providing templates for information required in each section)
- *Importance of investing in high quality design and visuals in toolkits*: it was considered of fundamental importance to produce a toolkit that was visually, engaging, accessible and inspiring. The Handbook was, in part, a reaction to the relatively large amount of good practice guidance that tends to be more limited in use due to its development on the basis of anecdotal evidence and the text-dominant presentation and format.
- *User groups*: Based on largely anecdotal evidence it appears that community development practitioners and those involved in organising community consultation activity find the Handbook of most use. However it is used by people from all walks of life, thus achieving its aim of making the subject accessible to all.