



**PropTech Engagement Fund Round 2
Final Report
October 2022**

Your Neighbourhood in 3D

Local Planning Authority	Surrey County Council
Date Report Submitted	28/10/2022



Executive Summary

Region	Southeast
LA Rural-Urban Classification Category	Predominantly urban See: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-rural-urban-classification
Project summary	We wanted to build on Surrey County Council's recent expansion of citizen engagement and apply 3D digital tools and augmented reality to help visualise the benefits of high-quality development
Funding allocated	£125,000
Supplier(s) Appointed	Digital Urban
Consultation Topic	An opportunity for residents to explore, and give feedback on, how Farnham Town Centre could be transformed if current proposals were progressed, by making a choice of two options in a VR immersive game experience.
Consultation Outcomes	Our VR experiences attracted larger numbers, and from a full range of age groups, compared to the more formal and 'traditional' exhibitions held earlier in the consultation period. It means for the Farnham consultation that we have a broader range of feedback to consider compared to previous consultations, where younger groups were under-represented.
Consultation dates	In-person VR events: 16 Aug–23 August 2022



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1.0 Project Summary

• **Summary:**

Through the development of a new digital game, we aimed to reach a broader spectrum of the local community when consulting on planning proposals. A specific proposal for the revitalisation of Farnham Town Centre was chosen to pilot the digital engagement, alongside traditional engagement exercises. Four event days displaying proposals using VR technology were undertaken, where participants could fly on a jetpack or run through the streets of Farnham experiencing how the proposals could enhance the town centre. Images of the event days are available at Appendix 7.6.

• **Status quo pre-PropTech:**

Surrey CC would traditionally undertake planning engagements via advertisements on social media and in local newspapers, a Commonplace site, and in-person events with boards displaying proposal information.

• **Outcomes:**

We successfully reached around 400 people through our four VR roadshow events, broadening the range of responses to the Farnham Town Centre consultation. This will in turn enable the programme to make a more balanced view of public opinion before deciding on next steps. A far broader range of ages was reached through this engagement than that usually experienced via traditional engagement exercises, which was a key goal of this project. Additionally, the project created more positive feedback toward the proposals than that which was gathered at a series of comparable traditional events also setting out the proposals for Farnham Town Centre.

• **Opportunities:**

We would have not been able to explore the potential of digital engagement to the degree that we have. It also allowed us to reach a more diverse range of people than we would have otherwise reached.

• **Challenges and issues:**

We had an unanticipated cost in the form of a 3D model by Munrostudios for Atkins Global, which we contributed towards to enable the digital engagement project to take place within the overall Farnham Infrastructure Programme.

We were surprised by how little we spent on digital marketing – the attraction of the game itself was sufficient to entice participants. However, in any future projects, we would increase spending on specific digital tools aimed at younger audiences (e.g., Spotify, Tik Tok), given that reaching these groups was a key project goal.


• Funding review:

	Amount Bid	Amount Spent
Software license/test trial	£55,000	£54,000
SCC backfill	£37,011	£37,011
Platform testing including incentives for participants	£500	£500
Marketing outreach	£15,000	£6,100; £15,000 was also contributed to the 3D model, which was an unanticipated cost
Academic partner	£12,500	£12,500
Report writer	£3,500	£3,500 was added to the supplier contract to expand the activities
Contingency	£1,489	£1,489 was added to the supplier contract to expand the activities
TOTAL	£125,000	£125,000



2.0 Lessons Learned

As part of developing guidance for best practice, we want to understand the lessons learned at each stage of your project. We know that these project stages might look different for different projects so feel free to edit the table to reflect your particular experience. Please provide as much detail as possible as these insights will be integral to developing national best practice guidance. Where applicable, please share links or attachments to supplementary evidence such as a copy of your business case, supplier briefs etc. These can be included in the appendices at the end of the report.

Project stage or milestone	Approach - what process was undertaken?	Lessons Learned
<p>Getting started: Developing the business case/gaining organisational buy-in to apply for Round 2 funding.</p>	<p>The project sponsor convened relevant internal and external stakeholders in the weeks leading up to the proposal deadline. This included approaching a Coast to Capital LEP gaming sector specialist and the University of Surrey. A brief period of early market engagement brought them into contact with prospective suppliers.</p> <p>Then they consulted Orbis, the procurement partner, and SCC business partners in Finance and IT to secure support for submission. The proposal was shared in relevant forums as it developed. It was then signed off by the appropriate director.</p> <p>A parallel joint bid with another local authority was developed and submitted.</p>	<p>The background of a recent expansion in digital citizen engagement in SCC meant there was ambition to do more.</p> <p>How to respond to the problem of a narrow demographic responding to planning consultations.</p> <p>The range of internal stakeholders that collectively work to realise the ambitions of this type of digital engagement project, now and in the future.</p> <p>That a revenue funding bid has relatively light touch internal governance.</p> <p>How to simplify the narrative around two complex and novel projects and gain sign-offs for both when under time pressure, since we bid for a joint as well as a solo project.</p>



<p>Procurement: developing supplier brief and project budget</p>	<p>Created a risk spreadsheet to determine which relevant scheme within Surrey was best suited to this project, particularly regarding timescales required to be adhered to.</p> <p>Developed a project brief which was shared with several local and regional gaming companies; subsequently had individual follow-up meetings with interested parties.</p>	<p>Having such a loose brief in the initial stages led to a lot of meetings being undertaken that led to either dead-ends or passes to other similar organisations.</p> <p>Subsequently crafting a more detailed project brief to share with gaming companies helped to shape the project for us internally and reduced unnecessary meetings with parties that were not relevant.</p> <p>More detailed notes could have been captured in the early market testing that took place earlier in the year.</p>
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<p>Procurement: finding and appointing a supplier(S)</p>	<p>Invited all interested companies to respond with their proposal in response to the circulated brief.</p> <p>We created an internal Project Control Group and took all submitted proposals to it for evaluation and to collectively choose a suitable supplier.</p> <p>Relevant internal procurement processes were then undertaken.</p> <p>Please refer to Appendix 7.1</p>	<p>Ideally, we would have procured a single company to develop the game and model concurrently as delays occurred with Digital Urban having to amend the model to suit the gaming element.</p> <p>A longer period of time to procure would have allowed a greater number of submissions from suppliers and would have allowed time for game adaptations later in the process.</p> <p>We learned to navigate through uncertainty with this being a new task for SCC.</p> <p>We found that early market engagement is helpful and sector specialists can help in making introductions.</p> <p>The Surrey game developers we hoped to engage did not bid to supply the project and it is most likely they were busy on substantial national and international commissions.</p> <p>We learned what can be included in a partnership with a university e.g., a masters student project.</p>
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<p>Onboarding: Proptech suppliers, additional consultants, and internal teams</p>	<p>External Partners: Digital Urban University of Surrey Coffee Diem (local coffee shop for incentives) Farnham Leisure Centre Curchod & Co. (retail property agency) Farnham Town Council Munrostudios (digital modelling company)</p> <p>Internal Partners: Communications and Engagement IT and Digital Strategic Business Impact and Analysis Planning, Performance and Support Programme Management Office Communities Partnership Procurement Legal Placemaking</p>	<p>We learnt that several partners were very keen to be involved, which resulted in our ability to negotiate better outcomes for the project.</p> <p>Given the broad range of internal teams involved in the project, this led to a learning curve of different processes/ways of working.</p>
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<p>Campaign Development: developing marketing and engagement strategies. This might also include developing survey questions, platform content, or user research.</p>	<p>Communication focused around promoting the VR events to residents to ensure they were booked-up and well-attended. The communications targeted residents of all age groups so we could see if there was particular interest among our target audience of younger people. We used a wide range of channels and tactics, including PR, social media, email marketing, using local stakeholders to promote the message, and physical marketing such as posters around the town in advance as well as leafleting on the day to encourage drop-ins.</p> <p>Sites with high pedestrian footfall were intentionally chosen to gain good visibility of the events and encourage higher participation.</p> <p>Please refer to Appendix 7.2</p>	<p>The marketing was successful, with nearly all VR slots fully booked prior to the events, although we also allowed some non-bookable slots for drop-ins.</p> <p>PR was also effective, local media were invited to attend the first event resulting in an interview on BBC Radio Surrey. This was then picked up by BBC South Today, so a later event was filmed and broadcast with positive coverage on the council's use of innovative technology to engage residents. The events also received plenty of coverage in the Farnham Herald – a independently run local paper which is still respected in the community.</p> <p>The VR events attracted a wider range of ages than we had expected so the decision to promote to all residents, rather than just targeting younger residents, was the right decision.</p> <p>The communications had the additional benefit of raising awareness of the whole Farnham Town Centre consultation.</p>
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<p>Campaign launch and management: working with suppliers to 'go live', attending in person / hybrid events, troubleshooting tech issues</p>	<p>Initial site visits were undertaken to scope potential locations and determine best placement for the VR events.</p> <p>We increased Project Control Group meetings in the weeks ahead of the launch to ensure everything was on schedule. This included having live demonstrations of the game prior to finalisation, which allowed for further refinement such as adding in-game questions for participants.</p> <p>All events were attended by a range of Project Control Group members, and visitors included the project managers of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme.</p>	<p>We could have hosted additional events given the high level of demand for bookable VR slots.</p> <p>We were also concerned about availability of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme team and the ability to answer questions from the public, but as we successfully attracted a less-engaged audience the team was able to respond to most questions.</p> <p>Different techniques for gathering data were learnt, including the highly effective colour co-ordination of post-it notes for demographic representation.</p> <p>The SCC and Digital Urban teams worked seamlessly together during the events to ensure that they ran smoothly and that participants had a great experience. Attending in-person as well as the pop-up shop environment and gave us a focus for inviting stakeholders such as elected members, and they saw first-hand the positive reactions of people using the technology to help shape their opinions on proposed changes.</p>
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<p>Campaign wrap-up: Closing campaigns, running analysis, agreeing next steps</p>	<p>We estimate that around 400 people took part in the VR activities overall. A sample of them completed an online questionnaire about their experience on the day, in addition to the Commonplace site gathering feedback about the Farnham Town Centre proposals.</p> <p>Please refer to Appendix 7.3.</p>	<p>Participants were excited and curious to try the VR experience. There is evidence that it was popular with a younger audience and that younger people found the VR game worthwhile – 33% of those engaged in the VR events were aged 39 or under, compared to 6% during the traditional events.</p> <p>Feedback received was also from a broader range of ages during the VR events than at the traditional engagement events; most of the post-it notes were from the over 55s (n=130) and from the 16-34s (n=104) groups.</p> <p>The two most common communication sources were through Facebook (25%) and simply walking past the event itself (14%).</p>
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<p>Feedback loops: e.g. developing opportunities for ongoing feedback from the community, following up with people who responded to the consultation, sharing consultation insights with key stakeholders</p>		<p>Multiple VR participants left comments indicating that they enjoyed the event and the technology (“great fun”, “loved the VR experience”, “fun because I haven’t used VR before”); these were some of the most frequently made comments.</p> <p>Many felt that the VR was extremely useful in supporting engagement and understanding, especially among different audiences (“VR helped to visualise”, “VR experience very good – exposure to wider audience”, “good way to engage children”, “cool”).</p> <p>The technology also provided participants with a sense of presence and immersion in the plans (“it felt really real”, “I liked how you could go into Farnham”). However, some participants also experienced difficulties in understanding how to use the technology (“went through some of the VR hoops by accident”, “learning the tech took away from viewing the plans”, “struggled with the tech”) which may have impeded engagement.</p> <p>Some participants also had negative experiences even if they could use the technology, (“VR caused motion sickness”). It is notable that these more negative comments were provided by older</p>
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		participants, and therefore future events may benefit from consideration about whether certain demographic groups could be provided with additional support in learning how to use and enjoy the VR.
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Traditional Public Exhibition

In July 2022 four public exhibitions were hosted to present information about the Farnham Infrastructure Programme. The public events provided an opportunity for residents to see proposed designs and speak with the programme team and key decision makers. Display boards showed summaries of research, feedback from residents to date, and plans for the town centre. During the four events, approximately 200 residents visited and spent time reading the display boards and talking to key decision makers; they were then directed to provide their feedback through the Commonplace site.

Virtual Reality Events

In August 2022 four Virtual Reality events were hosted in locations across Farnham Town Centre to immerse attendees in the potential future designs of Farnham. This fun interactive experience provided an opportunity to explore Farnham now and in a possible future; participants were also provided with the opportunity to see the full designs. Over the four events, over 400 residents visited and spent time exploring the Virtual Reality, talking to SCC officers and leaving feedback about the proposals.

Final Reflections: Where applicable, please also respond to the following questions:

- **How did you conduct community outreach (digital and/or in person)?**

What approach, including timelines, budget, and tools were adopted? Social media posts including Facebook, Instagram, Next Door, and Twitter; leaflet dropping amongst local shops and cafés to advertise the VR events; we also encouraged our partner cafe (offering incentives) to post on their socials. The VR events were also posted on Eventbrite to enable participants to book-in sessions. A press release was distributed to all media, but we specifically and successfully targeted the Farnham Herald and BBC Radio Surrey, resulting in successful and timely coverage. The BBC Radio Surrey report led to a feature on the BBC South Today regional television bulletin.

From the Farnham Infrastructure Programme perspective, the events themselves were key community outreach, reaching a greater number and more diverse range of participants than earlier traditional exhibitions. This has had a significant impact on the breadth of responses to the consultation.

- **Looking back at this project, was there additional guidance or support from DLUHC or other stakeholders that would have been helpful to work through these and other stages of delivery?**

A longer timeframe for project development and delivery would have been welcome. A published guide on how to identify needs and procure & implement digital projects could be distilled as case studies from PropTech Round 1 and 2 participants for other local authorities to learn from.



● **What was the primary reason you chose your particular PropTech supplier?**

Digital Urban most closely aligned with the objectives of our project; their understanding of what we were hoping to achieve, relevant experience, and commitment to deliver within our tight timeframes all played a part in our decision to partner with them. In the selection process, they were more specific about how they would help us realise project objectives and already had experience of working with local authorities.

● **Were there any wider surprises which surfaced through undertaking the project?**

It was surprisingly challenging to arrange SCC weekend support for the events. Our academic partner did not fully grasp the purpose of the project but did not reveal this until the eleventh hour. The VR events spawned a broad range of conversations amongst participants, which often came about organically. The Farnham Infrastructure Programme team did not recognise the positive impact that this was likely to have on the overall project; they were subsequently very surprised at how popular and well-received the events were.

3.0 Pilot Outcomes

● **Proposed Outcomes:**

- Increased number of people who are engaged in the planning process - Greater breadth of age groups reached
- Increase in proportion of positive understanding of what is being proposed

● **Baseline data:**

We successfully reached around 400 people through our four VR roadshow events, which represents a broadening of the range of responses from the traditional engagement activities carried out.

● **Measurement challenges:**

- Clearer discussion from academic partners regarding baseline measures to compare subsequent interventions to would have resulted in more valuable insights into the effectiveness of the VR. For example, deploying the same questionnaire to visitors of a traditional exhibition stand as that to visitors of the VR game, from which a direct cross-comparison could have been made. Unfortunately, analysis methods and constraints were not outlined by our academic partners sufficiently early in the project.
- For future reference, consideration could be given to adopting or modifying existing scales in the literature that have been used to measure user experience/engagement – for example the User Engagement Scale (Wiebe et al., 2014).
- Questions could have been added and/or tailored to give a greater understanding of the current level of engagement – for example questions such as: *have you attended events like this in the past? If so, where and for what purpose?* Thus, a more accurate representation of the audience could have been presented; again, early discussion of these is essential.



- Follow-up questions post-event, e.g., adding an option to sign up for a follow-up questionnaire, allows the ability to see if any longitudinal attitude or belief change has occurred as a result of the intervention.

- **Demographics:**

- Our key demographic was age. We attempted to collect this at all data points. Within the survey we asked for specific ages and with the post-its we achieved this by assigning different coloured post-it notes to different age ranges (blue: under 16, green 16-34, yellow 35-55, pink over 55). Participants were then asked to self-select the correct colour. The results were as follows:

Under 16	16-34	35-55	over 55
67	101	80	125



- When compared to the previous consultation for the Farnham Infrastructure Programme (below), this was a much greater reach to younger participants which was the project's primary aim.

Under 16 16-34 35-55 over 55

0 38 138 175

- **Cost effectiveness**

- Given that this was the first time SCC had undertaken an immersive VR digital approach to engagement in the planning process, it required a significant amount of time and resource dedicated to establishing and executing the project. However, as the level of responsiveness and level of understanding amongst members of the community was greater than that in traditional approaches, the project should be viewed as more cost effective overall. We also negotiated free venues for the events as well as local business discounts.



4.0 Community Feedback

- **Summary of community consultation:**

- The focus of the engagement was potential infrastructure changes to Farnham Town Centre.
- We asked questions in four different ways to provide a variety of feedback mechanisms – in the game itself, using post-it notes, the purposive survey, and the Commonplace site.
- A full list of the questions asked in-game, on the Commonplace site, and through the purposive survey can be found in Appendix 7.3.
- We used four questions as prompts for the post-its:
 - What did you learn?
 - What did you love?
 - What would you like to keep?
 - What would you change?
- The Farnham Infrastructure Programme had already developed the Commonplace questions prior to this project's kick off. Therefore, it was important that each of the additional data collection points collected supplementary and complimentary data.
- Each platform had its own limitations, e.g., only yes/no questions could be asked in-game and so working within these limitations we adapted the questions posed.
- It was important to us that the language used was simple and clear - Overall, we were surprised with the positive nature of most of the responses. We were also surprised at the high number of over 55's who got stuck into the technology.

- **Summary of community responses:**

- Overarchingly positive responses given to the proposals for Farnham Town Centre, particularly in comparison to the traditional engagement events. - Greater demographic diversity, with almost as many in the 16-34 age group attending as those in the over 55 age group.
- The key themes were lack of cycle infrastructure, concern around parking, encouragement of trees and planting, and enjoyment of the VR experience.

- **Delivering on feedback:**

- The wider Farnham Town Centre consultation closed in mid-October, and responses from all consultation activities – including this project – are being reviewed at the time of writing. Top-level feedback however has already been heard by the programme team and they are considering how the proposals can now be updated.

- **Community testimonials:**

- “The VR gave me the hook to talk about the Farnham (Infrastructure) Proposals” (member of the community).
- “The game was a good way to explore what the plans might look like in real life” (member of the community).



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5.0 Conclusions and Policy Reflections

• **If you could re-start this project what, if anything, would you do differently?**

Given the tight timeframes for the project funding to be spent in, it would have been beneficial, in advance of the bid being submitted, to know specifically what project we wanted to apply the funding to.

More in-depth early market testing would also have given us greater knowledge of the local gaming market, thus reducing time taken on procurement whilst also allowing the gaming company more time to develop and test the product, including making changes before the live events.

We could have amended the Commonplace site to include a question “Did you attend the VR event?”, to establish a clear connection between uptake on the Commonplace site and attendance at the events.

Whilst the media coverage for our events was strong, it would have been beneficial to suggest they (BBC) interview a young resident, to reiterate the objectives behind the project around younger participation in the planning process.

We would have also set clear objectives for the University of Surrey as research partner and made event attendance a requirement.

• **What longer-term changes, if any, do you expect to make as a result of this pilot?**

Due to the high cost of implementation and staff time involved, it is unlikely that we will be able to find the resources to repeat projects like this regularly. However, it has demonstrated that finding innovative ways to engage with people in the right place and at the right time can lead to a wider group being reached than through a traditional self-selecting consultation.

• **If not, why - what barriers are preventing long term adoption?**

The high costs of developing a gaming product are likely to be prohibitive in terms of rolling this out on other projects. We would however look to attempt to find low cost methods of increasing digital engagement given the success of this pilot.

• **Policy reflections:**

- Did any existing planning policies limit your ability to achieve your goals for this project? No



- Are there any policies (national and local) you'd like to see changed in the future? If so, how? No
- Where do you think further guidance is required, either for local authorities and the wider PropTech sector? A good practice guide could be developed from PropTech 1 and 2 participants with case studies for other local authorities.
- How could DLUHC better support LPAs in the future with the further adoption of digital citizen engagement tools, best practice guidance, or other support? Ideally, more Continuation Funding to enable deeper learning to share with others.
- If additional funding was available - what do you think future PropTech Fund rounds should focus on delivering / achieving? Each PropTech recipient to have a two-year project

Please use this space to include any quotes from your team about your project. Don't forget to attribute the quote so it is clear whose perspective you are sharing (e.g. 'project team member or 'supplier' etc).

£ Quote from Ben Funning, Senior Communications Manager, Major Projects, Surrey County Council: "This was the third Farnham Infrastructure Programme consultation in three years. Respondents in the previous consultations were heavily skewed toward older people and numbers were dropping. This project has made a big difference by increasing the number, and diverse range, of responses. Compared to the (perhaps) more defensive exhibitions earlier in the consultation, the VR events were invigorating, resulting in people without previous agendas and those who hadn't engaged previously dropping in to find out more and ask questions. Providing us with a platform to reach those people is why this project has been such a success both to the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and Surrey County Council as a whole."

£ Quote from Deborah Fox, Placemaking Group Manager, Placemaking, Surrey County Council (project sponsor): "With the investment of DLUHC PropTech funding in successful pilots like Surrey's Your Neighbourhood in 3D, novel digital engagement methods look set to become mainstream in planning. I was impressed by the way the internal project team overcame gaps in knowledge and understanding by supporting each other. Going out into Farnham to scout venues was pivotal to sourcing our target audiences. Digital Urban was great to work with and became a seamless part of the project team."

£ Quote from Matt Furniss, Member for Environment and Transport, Surrey County Council: "On the day we saw a wide range of people coming through, people of all ages who were all wanting to have a go on the VR. They were really positive days where people were very happy to come and



find out (about Farnham) and share their views. We would love to use this technology again, because it really does show the community, in a fun way, what our proposals will look like.”

∄ Quote from Simon Mabey, Founder and Director Digital Urban (our technology supplier): “Everyone came together as a team from different sections across SCC and worked excellently together with us. It made it easy for us (Digital Urban) as SCC let us get on with the technology and they covered everything else (media/comms/event organisation etc). All of the selected venues were great; the events had a great atmosphere and people visiting were in good spirits.”

∄ Quotes from members of the public (on event days): “The VR gave me the hook to talk about the Farnham Infrastructure Project”. “The game was a good way to explore what the plans might look like in real life”

6.0 Additional reflections and feedback for DLUHC

This is a space for you to provide any additional reflections or feedback for the DLUHC team that you prefer not to be published publicly.

An earlier announcement of the funding would have given us a longer lead in time to define the briefs, secure our supplier and academic partner, and map benefits to be realised in the project. Alternatively, an 18-month or 2-year funded project could work well.

We appreciated the advice on how to search for suppliers on the Government framework and invested in time in learning how to undertake searches, however none of those identified in our early market engagement were on the framework.



7.0 Appendices

- The brief you developed for your PropTech supplier **Appendix 7.1**
- A stakeholder engagement plan **Appendix 7.2**
- Any raw data captured from the consultation (subject to a data sharing agreement we will agree with you and your supplier) **Appendix 7.3**
- Additional evidence of comms, press, or event materials **Appendix 7.4**
- Final report prepared by PropTech supplier(s) or other consultants you worked with **Appendix 7.5**
- Pictures of the event vs the previous traditional events **Appendix 7.6**
- Event days lessons learnt **Appendix 7.7**
- Case study overview for the VR and traditional events **Appendix 7.8**

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7.1: The brief you developed for your PropTech supplier

Your Neighbourhood in 3D – Encouraging Digital Engagement in Surrey

Surrey County Council (SCC) has recently expanded its citizen engagement approach, and we believe there is nobody too hard to reach – but we do need to work harder to find them.

This project intends to use digital engagement to increase stakeholder (citizen) participation in the planning system, compared to our traditional engagement methods alone.

Our main goals for this project are to:

- Encourage engagement
- Educate and inform
- Get more people involved in the design process

During the planning stages of any new development, whether a building development, a road scheme, or a redesign of a whole high street, citizen engagement is key to ensuring successful outcomes that reflect the wider objectives of local communities. However, at present we often do not secure sufficient breadth or diversity during the engagement process we would like to see, nor is this demographically representative of the wider community.

We would like to commission a local gaming company to work with us to turn a 3D model of an existing location into a game, that will enable us to reach out to and more effectively engage with a wider audience. The location will more than likely be a Surrey high street that is going through the early planning stages of redevelopment, and where a 3D model of the high street already exists.

Whilst the specifics of the game itself are open to suggestions that will entice audience participation and encourage effective interaction, we do want to be able to capture audience



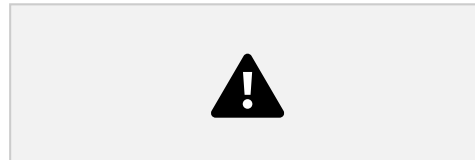
feedback/comments/ideas for the redevelopment (for example more tree planting, additional seating, new electric vehicle charging points).

Ideally the game will be hosted online thus allowing participants to play the game and interact with the proposals with ease, whilst also being able to leave feedback that can be collated for consideration at the end of the engagement period.

This digital engagement will run alongside more traditional engagement approaches, which often include posting proposals online and/or hosting a series of public events.

A reasonably quick turnaround is required for this project – the 3D model (the development of which is not part of this project but the requirement to work alongside is) will be developed across May and June 2022, and the gaming element should be developed in tandem wherever possible. A launch of the 3D model and gaming element for public participation is planned for late June/early July 2022.

If this sounds like something you would like to express interest in, please contact us (details below) for an invite to an open market meeting with our project partners, including the developers of the 3D model for the project.



7.2: A stakeholder engagement plan

Background

In Spring 2022, Surrey County Council Placemaking Team applied for and won funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC) to investigate the use of Property Technology (PropTech), which is using 3D/ virtual reality/ augmented reality and gamification, to increase engagement in public consultations about infrastructure.

Following an initial assessment of current and available projects that this funding could be used to support it was decided that the consultation on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme would work best in terms of timing and content.

In May/ June, three specialist digital agencies were invited to submit proposals for the work, and Digital Urban were selected. Their proposal includes holding in-person immersive events (suggest 4) over a period of about a week in a couple of central, easy to access locations in central Farnham.

Farnham Infrastructure programme

The vision for the Farnham Infrastructure Programme is to:

‘Deliver an attractive, well-integrated, future-focused and high-quality infrastructure solution for



Farnham that will enable a connected and vibrant town, where people choose to live, work, study and spend their leisure time in sustainable ways.’

During summer 2022, a consultation will take place that will put forward two options for the town centre, plus some early suggestions to improve the A31 that goes around the town. Residents are being asked important questions that will decide the future of the programme and the town. As part of the consultation, a 3D model has been created to illustrate what the town centre could look like with the two town centre options being proposed. Stills from the 3D model will be presented at exhibitions and online, to help inform residents and assist with decision-making.

Objectives

There are already comprehensive communications planned to promote the overall Farnham consultation, but additional comms will be required to support the immersive events. • *To promote awareness of the immersive event*

- *To encourage people to visit and participate in the immersive events*
- *To promote the overall Farnham consultation*

Key messages

- This a free virtual reality experience showcasing what Farnham town centre could look like • Come along to experience a free virtual reality Farnham
- Navigate and explore what Farnham could look like in 3D
- Have a go and tell us what you think
- Free drink for everyone who participates in our research

Audience

Overall, the audience for the consultation is Farnham residents. But for the immersive aspect, the focus is identifying if this tactic will increase engagement with 18–34-year-olds as this is a key group who do not typically respond to Surrey County Council consultations.

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Events

- Tuesday 16th August – in a vacant shop in Lion and Lamb Yard
- Saturday 20th August – in a vacant shop in Lion and Lamb Yard
- Sunday 21st August – stand at Music in the Meadow in Gostrey Meadow
- Tuesday 23rd August – outdoor space outside Farnham Leisure Centre

Format & details

There will be four ‘units’, 3 with VR headsets and one with a joystick control. The experience will allow people to navigate the proposed remodelled town centre in a jet pack, walking, cycling or wheelchair, to experience the benefits of the proposed changes. Suggestion is to allow some units (2) to be bookable, and some to be available for people who simply turn up. This is to avoid queues



and allow best use of the time to get as many people as possible using the units.

People will be asked for feedback after their experience. Abi will be there in person to speak to people, who will be offered a free drink voucher as a thanks for participating.

Tactics

- **VIP event day** – It is proposed that the first day is organised as a VIP day, inviting a reporter from the Farnham Herald and BBC Surrey, plus an influencer. Other local dignitaries, such as Jeremy Hunt MP, Cllr Matt Furniss and Leader Tim Oliver, plus the Farnham Board and councillors, could also be invited. The aim would be to get their support and encourage coverage of the subsequent three dates.
- **Press release** – We need to draft and issue a PR ahead of the event. This can also be issued to the invited media, under embargo, to provide background info about the experience. PR to be issued to Farnham Herald by Tues 9th, for the inclusion in edition issued on Thurs 11th. The reporter will then attend on Tues 16th and provide a write up in the edition published Thurs 18th.
- **Social media** –
 - o **Facebook** – set up events on FB and use boosted posts to target the area
 - o **Instagram** – Use our main SCC account to create reels and content at the first event to support the following events. Blend footage in split screen to show what the user sees and what they look like?
 - o **Influencers** – Livity is looking to recruit one or two Farnham-based influencers who will be invited along to the first event and asked to create content to promote the experience (and consultation)
 - o **Twitter** – use SCC account to promote events, could be targeted. Livity suggested polls?
 - o **Snapchat** – investigate possibility of ads on Snapchat – use content created at first event?
 - o **Nextdoor** – post images and content to Farnham area promoting events
- **Spotify** – you can place targeted ads on Spotify which would be a good channel for the audience
- **Toolkit (for Cllrs and others)** – some text blurb, images, social media assets and text to share with Waverley Borough Council and Farnham Town Council and request people share to their own networks and via local FB groups
- **Commonplace** – Update homepage with details of events (and include link to Eventbrite page) so we can share the link and QR code. Also add news item to alert those signed up
- **Email** – send promo email to Farnham subscribers via DotDigital
- **Internal comms** – aimed at Farnham-based staff, note on intranet home page, article (use PR as basis), can we get this picked up in blogs or otherwise? Focus on innovative approach and technologies as well as featuring the Farnham consultation
- **Posters** – A4 posters up in shop/ café windows promoting event from Thurs 11th
- **On site branding** – Digital Urban are providing a display with mannequins and jetpack to pull people in. (check if this will work for outdoor events as well as shop-based). We also have access to the standard Farnham consultation banners if needed.



Timeline

w/c 1st Aug

- draft PR & sign off
- draft email invite to dignitaries
- reach out to media outlets (Jem leading on)
- confirm plans with Livity and get their input (waiting for their feedback)
- set up Eventbrite link for registration (Elaine Grant?)

w/c 8th Aug

- schedule social media posts for launch on 11th
- Issue PR (Monday or Tues) and follow up with any journalists (Jem leading) •
issue email invite to dignitaries
- collate and issue Toolkit – 11th
- internal channels – 11th onwards
- send email and news item on commonplace – 11th

Tues 16th Aug – social media coverage from the event on the day

Weds 17th Aug onwards – social media switches to promoting next events