

## RTPI South East Community Engagement

Savills, 11 West Way, Botley, Oxford, OX2 0QL

Thursday, 7 December 2023

9.00am-5.00pm

### Programme

- 9.00am**      **Registration and refreshments**
- 9.25am**      **Welcome and introduction**
- **Chair: Neville Surtees**, Savills
- 9.30am**      **Workshop One: Local Politics**
- Speaker:**
- **David McFarlane**, SP Broadway
  - **Alex Wilson**, Psephos Consulting
- 11.00am**      **Tea/coffee break**
- 11.15am**      **Workshop Two: Social Value**
- Speakers**
- **Ruth Skidmore**, Meeting Place
  - **Joseph Baum**, Meeting Place
- 12.45pm**      **Lunch and Networking**
- 1.15pm**      **Workshop Three: Digital Engagement**
- Speakers:**
- **Charlotte Bowen**, Common Place
  - **Joney Ramirez**, RPS
- 2.45pm**      **Tea/coffee break**
- 3.00pm**      **Workshop Four: Hard to get Groups**
- Speakers:**
- **Gareth Epps**, Chess Engage
  - **James Mills**, Community Engagement Consultant
- 4.30pm**      **Closing discussion**
- Speakers:**
- **Ian Green**, Oxford Civic Society
  - **Gillian Coates**, Oxford Civic Society
- 4.55pm**      **Thanks and Closing Remarks**
- **Chair: Neville Surtees**, Savills

## Speaker biography:

### **Nev Surtees**

Associate Director



Nev Surtees is an Associate Director in the Central Planning Team based in Oxford and has been responsible for the promotion and management of a variety of strategic land promotions – ranging from strategic urban extensions to small and medium sized sites. Nev has also in-depth experience of development management and coordinated the delivery of numerous, and often complex, planning applications.

Nev's role often involves advising upon and undertaking community engagement, including meetings with Councils and key interest groups, speaking at Committee meetings, public exhibitions, Design Review Panels, and Inquiry by Design.

### **David McFarlane**

SP Broadway



David set up SP Broadway in 2013 to provide political, community and media relations advice using his extensive experience of the politics of planning and community engagement gained from two decades of frontline political service in the Conservative Party; having serving as a Conservative councillor on West Oxfordshire District Council from 1999-2019.

SP Broadway works across sectors supporting clients promoting strategic land, housing, supermarkets, business and trade parks, retail, renewable energy, care homes, service stations, cemeteries, hotels, mineral extraction, and life sciences.

SP Broadway clients include London Fire Brigade, University of West London, Spectrum Housing Group, Leverhulme Estate, Vistry, Christchurch Borough Council, Taylor Wimpey, Berkeley Homes, Waitrose, Force 9 Energy and retirement home provider Lifestory.

### **Gareth Epps**

Chess Engage



Gareth Epps specialises in community relations and consultation for major projects. From Oxfordshire, he devised and implemented the community relations strategy and requirements for Crossrail. He was the first independent HS2 Construction commissioner, mediating unresolved construction complaints. With twenty years' experience in consultation and stakeholder engagement and a particular focus on engaging the hard-to-reach, he served ten years as an elected local

councilor and retains an active interest in politics. He has also formed part of the award-winning Fair Deal for your Local campaign which has won legislation to protect tied pub licensees. He is a consultant for Chess Engage.

**Ruth Skidmore**  
Meeting Place



Ruth leads Meeting Place’s Social Impact work through engagement with local people, gathering data and using this to drive positive change. This includes working with clients to help them understand the impact of their design decisions, engagement approach and outreach activities. Ruth works with clients to determine how they act responsibility to meet the needs of people, local communities and achieve wider social sustainability goals. Ruth has an architectural background and has previously worked on large-scale design projects as well as in environmental consultancy.

**Joseph Baum**  
Meeting Place, South East



Joe is responsible for providing strategic advice and support to a range of different clients within the built environment - from retirement living operators to volume house builders. Believing that no project is the same, as the Director of the South East team Joe draws on his experience, and on the support of a number of different consultants, to set the right strategy and deliver results.

Alongside working at Meeting Place, Joe is a Councillor on both Buckinghamshire Council and Chesham Town Council. Whether it’s on the doorstep as a campaigner or at a consultation event as a consultant, the most enjoyable part of Joe’s job is when he is out talking to people, listening to their concerns and building relationships. On Buckinghamshire Council, Joseph is currently the Council's Deputy Cabinet Member for Skills and sits on the Board of Trustees for a local charity dedicated to supporting the most disadvantaged in society.

**Charlotte Bowen**  
Common Place



Charlotte Dove Bowen works in Business Development for Commonplace, the world's most accessible and innovative community engagement platform. Prior to this, Charlotte worked at VU.CITY, and a number of PropTech startups over the past 6 years focused on placemaking (StreetDots) and place based data (Infabode). She also helped to organise the world's first international proptech event Future:PropTech. Prior to PropTech, Charlotte worked for CBRE, State Street Bank and The Football Association, overseeing Critical Facilities Management. Charlotte helped to create the international Women in PropTech group, and also sits on the Women in Planning committee.

**Joney Ramirez**  
RPS



Joney is a Chartered Town Planner since 2017 and is the RTPI South East Young Planner of the Year 2023. She is a Principal Planning Consultant at RPS specialising in residential, leisure and renewable energy projects. She also acts as the Planning Aid England representative for the South East, looking for ways to increase public participation and engagement with planning, in particular from hard to reach groups.

**Alex Wilson**  
Psephos Consulting



Alex has significant experience across a range of sectors including retail, residential, energy, waste management and transport, delivering high quality public engagement and gaining hard-won planning consents in every part of the country. He established Psephos Consulting in 2017 after working with several larger agencies and advising some of the biggest names in property.

Psephos' approach to development communications is intensely political – reflecting Alex's background as a former councillor and Cabinet member for Planning, and one of the UK's leading election analysts. In 2024, Alex will be a candidate for both the London Assembly and UK General Elections.

**James Mills**  
Community Engagement Consultant



James Mills is an Associate Director at the Community Communications Partnership. He enjoys finding creative solutions to help clients communicate their message to political and community stakeholders. He served as a Councillor, including time as West Oxfordshire DC Leader, a County, Town Councillor, and Mayor. He navigated the delivery of a 9-year delayed local plan and led joint Council cross-party member work on a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan. His experience as a charity trustee, ambassador and regular volunteer provides a unique insight into community stakeholder groups. He is a neurodiversity advocate.

**Ian Green**

Oxford Civic Society



Ian is an urban and regional development planning and management specialist, with 50 years national and international experience advising central and local governments, multi-lateral and bi-lateral aid agencies, the private sector, and communities. Ian links economic, social, and environmental development planning and management at national and sub-national levels including working with communities. He has been doing this in Indonesia, Viet Nam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Thailand, China, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Kiribati, Russia, and UK. Ian owns and manages a small international development consultancy. In UK, Ian is the Chairman of the Oxford Civic Society, with special interest in Oxfordshire's strategic planning.

**Gillian Coates**

Oxford Civic Society



Gillian is Vice-Chair of Oxford Civic Society and Co-ordinator of its Planning Group. She is an art historian by training, prior to retirement she was a senior manager in the University of Oxford