Service Definition

For GCloud 13 - May 2022 v.1

Commonplace
1. About us: Community engagement software

You’ve run community engagement consultations – you know how hard it is to engage local people. You’ve also experienced the analytical nightmare of processing data from multiple sources like exhibitions, community events, social media and other digital platform channels. There must be a way to make it simpler… right?

That’s where Commonplace comes in. We bridge the divide between you and the public, driving balanced, constructive and representative feedback, all into one intuitive hub so you can make democratic decisions together. We have a vision to connect people to places in order to accelerate positive change and are passionate about giving people a meaningful voice in changes to their neighbourhood. Designed from the ground up for councils and developers during regeneration, development and transport projects, our tools are made for places – fitting in with the timeline, themes and the nature of your project. You’ll show people how changes could impact them, listen and respond to their concerns in real-time, and gather information tailored to your submission.

With over 750 Commonplaces, we’ve developed a sure-fire way for our customers to gather user-friendly digital engagement insight – insight that can make your local projects all the more effective. We’ve even won the Planning Magazine’s Best Stakeholder Engagement Award with our partner London Borough of Waltham Forest.

2. Our service: user-friendly digital engagement insight

Commonplace will provide its websites for a specified license period of 12, 24, 36 or 48 months. We offer single project and programmes licenses as well as departmental and corporate-wide, unlimited use licenses.

The Commonplace platform will help you:

1. Gain a shared understanding of community priorities
Commonplace identifies the key locations and topics that communities care talking about, providing you with rich, data-led evidence to inform design and planning decisions.

2. Reach a broader and balanced audience
Town Hall meetings are attended by a small number of people. Commonplace attracts a greater number of people under the age of 40 for a secure engagement - overall the age of our respondents spans 13 to 92.
3. Make better decisions by building trust
Lack of trust is often a barrier to a constructive community discussion. Commonplace helps generate trust through an open, honest conversation and feedback solutions that help reduce your project’s risks. Online resident engagement has never been easier.

“Commonplace has enabled us to reach thousands of residents and helped us better understand what they like about our town centre and what they’d like to see improved. It is also a popular and useful communication platform for sending out news and animating conversations. It has assisted us in promoting a sense of local identity and in building trust through Commonplace’s openness.”

Deborah Efemini, London Borough of Lewisham

“Working with Commonplace to adapt the system for use in Wales has been really straightforward and efficient. They have understood the statutory needs for accessibility and language parity and have been flexible and accommodating to ensure our requirements were met. I also highly recommend Commonplace to clients who are in similar situations where designing a single template for use rolling out across several different areas is the requirement.”

Jane Lorimer, Project Officer, Welsh Government

“We’re looking forward to a positive planning outcome, as the robust data set and analytics provides strong evidence to support the proposal going forward.”

Chris Scott, Development Director for Muse Developments

3. Commonplace platform features & functionality

Platform features. The Commonplace platform is an integrated suite of modules and tools that you can assemble in seconds to create a bespoke engagement mobile phone and website experience to meet your engagement needs. Some customers find it helpful to think of Commonplace as Wordpress, Google Analytics, a GIS system, Google Forms, and Microsoft Excel all in one seamless package that is tailored to your specific project needs. You can find full details of functionality and features on our website. Across all of our modules we offer:

- Accessible mobile-first experience for any web-connected device. We support screen readers and other accessibility features
- Fully customisable content, questions and demographics data collection. You will have all the support you need from our team, and you can edit from your browser
- Application-specific templates and tools that enable you to get up and running quickly whether you are running a planning application, an active travel project or a local plan. You can see our full range of these templates in the appendix.

- A news feed that notifies our community about updates and new projects closeby

- Full social media integration

- Customisable look and feel to reflect your brand

The **news feed** is part of every Commonplace site. As an administrator you can post updates that can include text, images and video. Everyone signed up or a participant on that Commonplace (and consented), receives a notification email.

The example shown is Catford Town Centre, with a bespoke infographic (produced by our customer) summarising what people have said to date.
The Community Heatmap module gets people talking about a place.

It enables people to map issues, respond to routes, see how proposals fit into an area, and to make suggestions. When someone drops a pin on the map, they answer a series of customisable questions that can include the full range of digital community engagement survey question types. The map encourages people to add their own comments or to agree with other comments they read on the map.

GIS data can be loaded onto the map to show routes, areas, locations or other data sets such as ONS data. The focus of a heatmap can be an area such as a town centre or a broader region.

- Collect citizen’s views, sentiments and ideas about an aspect or aspects of a locality, such as transport & infrastructure, regeneration or public realm.
- Typically used during pre-planning to understand needs, to show where plans will affect an area on a map, and for evaluation of a place or area after the project is implemented.
- Choose from map, satellite or 3D modes of viewing.
- Over 650 Community Heatmaps have been launched with around quarter of a million comments added
- Customer examples: Landsec (02 Centre planning application), Waltham Forest Council (Mini Holland development), Leeds City Council (Public transport strategy)
The Survey and Proposal module is a super-flexible survey tool to present plans for change.

It uses context-specific questions supported by relevant content and provides the ability to create a series of one or more ‘tiles’, each containing integrated content and questions. For example, tiles might contain information and questions on different aspects or phases of a proposal. Each tile can have an unlimited number of questions of different types including sliders, long and short text, multiple choice, visual selection, multiple select, prioritisation, tag clouds and others. Every tile can be edited directly from your browser. Tiles can be turned on and off independently, to create phases or iterative conversations.

- Collect views on detailed aspects of plans or policies as these evolve through an iterative process with the public.
- Very flexible - add & edit plan elements as they progress and switch "Comment" on/off for individual aspects of a plan during the entire duration of your licence.
- Use for all levels of plan- from high level concept plans, all the way to choosing individual elements of street furniture. Present alternative options if required.
- Highly visual - include images, sketches, photos, videos and interactive 3D.
Plan Apps by Commonplace is designed to help you reach your community, and engage them in conversation about the major planning applications happening near them.

Plan Apps brings planning engagement and processes into the present day, providing your community members with easy-to-understand, visual, essential information, and your team members the tools to analyse their feedback and collaborate on future ideas. Use Plan Apps as your online planning engagement hub and build trust and transparency with local people.

With Plan Apps you can:

Get more people engaged in planning applications

- Connect with our 130k-strong engaged community panel
- Display planning applications simply and visually to increase trust and engagement rates
- Present the future in 3D to increase understanding and improve the materiality of comments

Increase your chances of positive comments

- The wider your reach the higher chance of getting more balanced sentiment
- Reduce jargon and maximise community understanding to generate more positivity
- Allow residents to see what others said, with the option to add an ‘agreement’
Reduce burden on planning officers

- Customise the comment form to categorise comments and understand materiality quickly
- Increase community self service, with fewer inbound enquiries for planning officers to handle
-Invite local people to sign up for automated alerts: for specific planning applications, by custom polygon or category

Power up your planning insights

- Understand the origins of your website traffic to spot geographical or socio-demographic gaps
- Build engagement metrics so you can identify which presentation format performs best
- Analyse comments using our TopicsAI to extract key themes in text based comments
The Customer Dashboard is a powerful analytics & reporting engine to make your job easier.

Every Commonplace comes with a dashboard showing a graphical summary of headline numbers; who has participated; and what they have said in response to the engagement. Because users tag their own comments, most of the analysis is automatic, cutting down time for analysing text comments.

The dashboard allows multi-variable filtering so that you can analyse for example people who live in a certain postcode and have said that they travel three times per week. Dashboard charts can be downloaded for use in written reports.

We also provide a bespoke advanced analytics & reporting service, for which there is an additional charge. For team members with less time to review performance in depth, the dashboard overview page summarises responses across the whole community hub.

All pseudonymised data including filtered datasets can be downloaded as csv files. Where relevant, latitude and longitude is included, enabling you to upload this data into your own geographical information system (GIS).
4. Support and Success Services

Our approach

Commonplace is a technology-enabled service not just a technology platform. We pride ourselves on our customer success and support services, which help you maximise the value of Commonplace. We also provide fully responsive support services.

In practice this means three things:

- Our aim is to understand and meet your objectives.
- Our team is there to do everything we can to support you.
- Our team provides advice responsively and proactively. You will receive regular updates on your Commonplace websites and suggestions on how to improve their reach. I goal is for you to put your Commonplace license to best use and so to improve the value we deliver.

Your Commonplace contact points:

As a Commonplace customer, you have three contact points:

- Your Customer Success lead, whose job it is to ensure you make the most of your investment in the Commonplace platform.
- Your Account Manager - this is a member of our sales team who is responsible for an overview of your relationship with Commonplace and leads the Quarterly Business Review. They are also on-hand for strategic advice and best practice - taking the best practice from across the sector.
- Customer Support team - the customer support team is on hand to resolve any technical issues and provide guidance in using the platform’s features such as editing and data extraction.

Setting up your engagement websites quickly and easily

Commonplace is super-easy to use and you will be editing your pages within minutes, assisted as necessary by our extensive online help and our dedicated Support team who are on hand to resolve technical issues. If it is your first time using Commonplace, and depending on what type of license you have bought, we will suggest an appropriate onboarding process. For a new customer we normally suggest a two-week lead time before first launch. A typical set of activities is listed below:
Kickoff meeting. The kick-off meeting will happen as soon as possible after appointment. This will cover: introduction to the teams; detailed objective setting; roles and responsibilities; communicating and reporting; agreement of project plan and milestones; a detailed introduction to the Commonplace platform; an initial discussion about which modules and elements will be used at different stages of the project; and the promotion plan. Following the meeting, you will receive a summary of the information covered.

Training session(s). Based on the output from the kickoff meeting, your Customer Success lead will design a series of training sessions for key team members on the process of building and adapting the first set of engagements. Prior to the training sessions, we will have set up all of your team with Commonplace logins. During the session we will discuss the types of features that are available, and the content production requirement to use them effectively in order to agree an appropriate launch experience. This will include changing the look and feel of the engagement to match your requirements.

Review sessions. During the discovery phase we will conduct at least weekly review sessions with your lead or key team members. In reality we will probably be in contact with the team more frequently for the first few days after the training session.

Promotion planning. Our goal is to help you maximise the reach of your Commonplaces and the data collected. We have developed a lot of understanding about how to create a call-to-action that is effective on different channels. We also have some good experience to share on how to optimise engagement using the news feed. We have some guidelines and templates that are sometimes useful and would love to help you maximise your reach.

Quality Assurance. Prior to launch we will plan and conduct detailed quality assurance on all areas of the engagements to pick up errors; suggest tweaks to improve questions and comments, optimise the data analysis and maximise engagement. The first Commonplace launched by a new customer is always reviewed by a Director to make sure that all our team can be familiar with your needs and focus from the outset.

Ongoing support and success services

Our Customer Success team is made up of communications, technology and engagement experts. Their aim is to deliver your needs throughout the time that you use Commonplace. They ensure that your success objectives are achieved and will be your main day-to-day point of contact. They will provide:

- Project management, planning and delivery of the discovery / scoping and build & launch phases.
● Working with your team to plan and deliver the ongoing launches or phases of the engagements and consultation. Post launch this may include setting up new functions within the tool, and integrating with other business tools. We also have a detailed set of customer help pages.

● Pre-launch quality assurance. Before any new engagement is launched, our team will review the content, questions, accessibility and other key points to ensure that the engagement meets both your and Commonplace quality standards.

● Direct support by fielding questions and bringing in the right experts from the team, whether they be technical, urban planners or engagement strategists. We also have a support email address and phone line as a second line. You can expect prompt and reliable communications and responses to your questions and support needs.

● Recommendations: such things as how to make content work more effectively online; how to tweak your promotion plan to maximize reach; suggestions to get the most out of your dashboard insights; and so on.

● You will also receive a (regular project based - either 2-weekly or monthly) email report from your Customer Success lead, summarizing project performance and making recommendations.

● Regular phone / video conference / face-to-face catch up meetings to analyze, reflect and plan with your team in order to continually improve in meeting your objectives

● Ongoing training. We believe strongly that training is most effective when delivered regularly, and therefore top-up or refresher sessions are encouraged. This might also be used to support new staff joining your team.

● Liaison with technical support partners such as your CRM partner, website partner and creative design partner.


Commonplace is a web application that runs on all modern browsers on any web-connected device.

We are:

● Hosted in the UK
● ISO27001 certified
● Cyber Essentials certified
● GDPR compliant and registered with the ICO

For more technical information please visit -
https://www.commonplace.is/technical-overview
Service level

- The service is fully hosted with Amazon Web Services, located in London, UK and compliant with ISO 9001, ISO 27017 and ISO 28018.
- The hosting infrastructure is designed for resilience by including redundancy to support failover.
- 99.95% service uptime guarantee with 365x24x7 application monitoring and alerting.
- UK office hours email and phone support.
- Online knowledge base and product guides available 365x24x7.
- Commonplace performs regular data backups with regular tests to ensure resilience.
- Users are informed of any exceptional planned downtime with 7 days notice, with downtime only ever being planned between 11pm and 5am UK time.
- Profanity monitoring of contributions in accordance with the Acceptable Use Policy.
6. Our People

Mike Saunders (CEO & Co-Founder)
Mike has led development of digital products for over 15 years. He sold his first start-up to Eleco plc in 2000, and has since had senior roles at Channel 4, DCMS, ActionAid, Kew Gardens, Artfinder and Trinity College London. Mike co-founded Commonplace to realise a belief that technology can play a greater role in empowering citizens. His TEDx talk at the UK Parliament set out this vision, and Commonplace tackles the challenge of sentiment analysis and engagement in transport and local planning, incorporating intuitive interfaces and sentiment analysis tools.

David Janner-Klausner (Co-Founder, Director of Customer Success)
David has been involved in local development, planning, sustainability, regeneration and community engagement throughout his career. He has been a policy director at the Local Government Information Unit, and Programme and Planning director at UJIA (major UK Jewish charity) with responsibility for multi-million pound construction and educational programmes. David holds a PhD in economics and geography and a Masters degree in sustainable architecture.

Our Team
By working with Commonplace you get full support for using our digital platform. We are with you, every step of the way. Whether its technical support, advice on engagement or getting best practice from across the sector.

Our team includes experts in:

- Engaging hard to reach communities
- Local government
- Transport and transport planning
- Built environment
- Social Media Promotion
- Targeting
- Technologists
- Web development
7. Company registration details

England Company Registration number: 08575062
Company registered on 18 June 2013
VAT number: 177 5424 82
DUNS number 219482240
UTR 623 / 84808 07699 A
Registered Office: ℅ Lopian Gross Barnett
1st floor, Cloister House
Riverside
New Bailey Street
Manchester M3 2LG

8. Awards

2017 - Planning Awards - Award for Stakeholder Engagement in Planning
2017 - London Ventures - selected partner
2019 - Smart Cities Award - Data winner
2020 - The Pineapple Awards - Contribution to Place
2020 - Building London Planning Awards - Community Engagement in the Planning Process
2021 - The Planning Awards - Digital Tech in Planning
2021 - The Pineapple Awards - Sustainable Transport
2021 - Digital Leaders Week - Social Transformation
2021 - Tech for Our Planet (PUBLIC/Cabinet Office) - Selected to present at COP26
9. What can I use Commonplace for?

Commonplace offers multiple specialist solutions in each of the following categories:

- **Communication & Strategy teams**: Statutory consultations, council conversations, resident surveys, service changes, health, wellbeing and mental health services.
- **Plan-making**: local plans; CIL and Section 106; master-planning
- **Housing associations**: estate community heatmap; pre-planning engagement; master plans; post-occupancy evaluation
- **Transport planning**: transport strategy; active travel engagement; major and minor transport scheme planning, parking schemes,
- **Residential development**: development area community heatmap; pre-planning engagement; master plans; post-occupancy evaluation
- **Regeneration**: neighbourhood community heatmap; pre-planning engagement; master plans; post-occupancy evaluation
- **Climate and energy**: climate adaptation heatmap; climate emergency citizen assembly; energy masterplan; energy installation pre-planning engagement