



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of an **INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION** will be held in First Floor 12 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **THURSDAY 10 AUGUST 2023 AT 10.30 AM**

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 2 August 2023

Note: Non-Committee Members and members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting or participate in the meeting virtually, in line with the Council's Constitution. If you wish to participate either in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams please contact Democratic Services. The meeting can also be watched live using the following link:
https://youtube.com/live/yCjc858JJ_U?feature=share

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business

Enriching Lives

- Champion outstanding education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.
- Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to complement an active lifestyle.
- Engage and involve our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity which people feel part of.
- Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.

Safe, Strong, Communities

- Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people.
- Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to prevent the need for long term care.
- Nurture communities and help them to thrive.
- Ensure our borough and communities remain safe for all.

A Clean and Green Borough

- Do all we can to become carbon neutral and sustainable for the future.
- Protect our borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas.
- Reduce our waste, improve biodiversity and increase recycling.
- Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.

Right Homes, Right Places

- Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future.
- Build our fair share of housing with the right infrastructure to support and enable our borough to grow.
- Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment.
- Help with your housing needs and support people to live independently in their own homes.

Keeping the Borough Moving

- Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways.
- Tackle traffic congestion, minimise delays and disruptions.
- Enable safe and sustainable travel around the borough with good transport infrastructure.
- Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners to offer affordable, accessible public transport with good network links.

Changing the Way We Work for You

- Be relentlessly customer focussed.
- Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around you.
- Communicate better with you, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough.
- Drive innovative digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.

For consideration by

Lindsay Ferris, Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan

Officers Present

Ian Bellinger, Service Manager for Growth and Delivery

Ian Church, Local Plan Manager

Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

IMD NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	
IMD 2023/19	None Specific	STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	5 - 32

CONTACT OFFICER

Callum Wernham

Tel

Email

Postal Address

Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

0118 237 9559

callum.wernham@wokingham.gov.uk

Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

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Agenda Item IMD19

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: 2023/19

TITLE	Statement of Community Involvement
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan - Lindsay Ferris
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	10 August 2023 FF12 at 10.30am
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framaliccio

PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)

The purpose of this report is to consider the approval of a draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for consultation. The SCI is a document that sets out how we will ensure effective community involvement at all stages of the land use planning process.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan approves the draft Statement of Community Involvement 2023, attached as Enclosure 1, for consultation.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a document that sets out how we will ensure effective community involvement at all stages of the land use planning process, covering the preparation of local plans, neighbourhood development plans, and supplementary planning guidance, as well as in the consideration of planning applications. Our current SCI was adopted in 2019.

The recommended draft SCI has been prepared to ensure our practice remains effective and up-to-date. The opportunity has also been taken to improve the accessibility of the document overall.

The recommended draft SCI maintains the current commitment to engagement. One major change is to extend the consultation period for major planning applications from the statutory requirement of 21 days to 28 days (excluding bank holidays). This change is recommended to ensure there is sufficient opportunity for residents and stakeholders to review such applications and provide comments.

If the recommendation is approved, the draft SCI will be published for public consultation in line with the adopted SCI, for a period of 6 weeks.

Following the closure of the consultation, all responses will be carefully considered and an updated draft SCI prepared. This will be reported to a meeting of the council's Executive in the autumn.

Background

A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a document that sets out how we will ensure effective community involvement at all stages of the land use planning process.

It explains when, how and for what reasons people are able to be involved. This includes the preparation of local plans, neighbourhood development plans, and supplementary planning guidance, as well as in the consideration of planning applications.

Business Case (including Analysis of Issues)

Our current SCI was adopted in 2019. The recommended draft SCI has been prepared to ensure practice remains effective and up-to-date, for example referencing the e-newsletter which did not exist in 2019. The opportunity has also been taken to improve the accessibility of the document overall.

In broad terms, the recommended draft SCI maintains the current commitment to engagement. One major change is however the proposed commitment to extend consultation on major planning applications from the statutory requirement of 21 days to 28 days (excluding bank holidays). This change recognises that planning applications for larger developments are more complex to understand. The proposal to extend the consultation period seeks to ensure there sufficient opportunity for residents and stakeholders to review and provide comments. The change is not expected to impact the planning functions performance statistics.

If the recommendation is approved, the draft SCI will be published for public consultation in line with the adopted SCI, for a period of 6 weeks.

Following the closure of the consultation, all responses will be carefully considered and an updated draft SCI prepared. This will be reported to a meeting of the council's Executive in the autumn to consider adoption.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	No additional costs. Costs in preparing and actioning the draft SCI are contained by existing budgets.	Yes	Revenue

Next Financial Year (Year 2)	No additional costs. Costs of actioning the draft SCI are contained by existing budgets.	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	No additional costs. Costs of actioning the draft SCI are contained by existing budgets.	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
The costs of preparing the recommended LDS, consultation and adoption (subject to a future decision) are contained within existing budgets.
The costs of implementing the recommended SCI are also contained within existing budgets, with actions such as the proposed extension to the consultation period for major applications not changing the costs of consultation.

Cross-Council Implications
There are no implications for other council services from the recommended SCI. The council's property function already budgets for and undertakes proportionate engagement activity to inform its own development proposals.

Public Sector Equality Duty
A Stage 1 Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken to support the preparation of the recommended SCI. The assessment concluded the recommendation would have a neutral or no impact.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	No comments.
Monitoring Officer	No comments.
Leader of the Council	No comments.

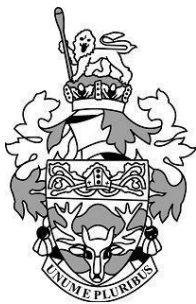
List of Background Papers
WBC Statement of Community Involvement, 2019.

Contact Ian Bellinger, Ian Church	Service Delivery and Infrastructure
Telephone No Tel: 0118 974 6231, Tel: 07824521749	Email ian.bellinger@wokingham.gov.uk, ian.church@wokingham.gov.uk

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Statement of Community Involvement

Consultation draft – INSERT DATE



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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1. [Introduction](#)

[What is a Statement of Community Involvement?](#)

- 1.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a document that sets out how we ensure effective community involvement at all stages in the land use planning process. It sets out how anyone who lives, works, visits or carries out business in the borough can be involved in the preparation of planning policy documents and in the consideration of planning applications.
- 1.2 The SCI explains when, how, and for what reasons you will be able to be involved. This includes how you can be involved in local plans, neighbourhood development plans, supplementary planning guidance, planning applications, and planning enforcement.

[Why is the Statement of Community Involvement relevant?](#)

- 1.3 We recognise that land use planning can affect everyone's daily lives, as the decisions we make shape the place we live and work in, visit or pass through. As a result, we want to involve communities at all stages of the planning process.
- 1.4 There are many benefits of involving communities in planning matters, these include:
- A greater focus on local needs and priorities.
 - Decisions being informed by local knowledge.
 - Increased community understanding of how planning policies are developed and how they are linked to other council documents.
 - Increased community understanding of how decisions on planning applications are made.
 - Creates a sense of ownership of key planning policy documents.
 - Removes barriers (physical, language or social) and gives communities access to information and opportunities to voice their needs and opinions.
 - Creates accountability by generating a wider interest in monitoring outcomes.
- 1.5 We want everyone to feel empowered to get involved with the planning process should they wish.
- 1.6 We aim to make consultation and involvement in the planning process transparent, accessible, collaborative, inclusive and consistent. We will do this through the methods set out in this SCI.
- 1.7 In the sections that follow, we set out what the law says we must do and a range of other options that we will most likely choose to do to enhance our engagement. For these other options which go beyond the lawful requirements, we use the word 'may' do. We may well do a lot, or all, of these optional 'mays' but there will be occasions when it will not be practicable or appropriate to do all of them.

2. [Principles of Community Involvement](#)

- 2.1 The land use planning process is more effective when the people that might be affected by change are an integral part of the engagement process. Greater involvement can help shape planning solutions that maximise the positive outcomes and minimise any negatives.
- 2.2 We will not pretend that planning decisions are free of difficult choices. Decisions need to be made within legal requirements, have regard to national planning policy and guidance, and consider technical evidence. In most cases, the planning judgement and decision will balance both positive and negative effects. There will also be differences of opinion. However, through positive engagement we hope interested parties become engaged in our work so that the quality of decisions is improved by taking account of local knowledge and opinion, and that the outcomes are understood.

[Our principles for involving communities](#)

- 2.3 As a minimum, we will comply with any legislation that is currently in force or comes into force in the future. This includes any national legislation in an emergency, such as the coronavirus pandemic.
- 2.4 We will tailor our approach where needed for specific issues, audiences and the scale of proposals, so that it is fit for purpose for the subject being consulted on, making it easier for people to take part. For example, where proposals have a local or limited impact, then we will seek to more closely involve those most affected. When we are planning for a large area, or considering choices which might affect much of the borough, then we will engage widely.
- 2.5 Our main principles of involving the various communities in the planning process are set out below:
- Encouraging our communities to contribute by providing opportunities to put their ideas forward where there is scope to influence our decisions.
 - We will be transparent and clear about the planning process, what is being proposed and the scope to influence.
 - We will use a variety of methods to make it easier for people to take part in the planning process, with the method used being appropriate to the subject being consulted upon.
 - We will design engagement exercises to be accessible.
 - We will encourage better inclusion of everyone affected by a planning matter, making the effort to include “disengaged” groups such as young people, ethnic minorities, disabled people, and the travelling community.
 - We will make information available that is appropriate and understandable, raise awareness of planning matters and ensure people are kept up to date. All data stored and published will be compliant with our data protection policy.
 - We will analyse carefully and, where appropriate, provide clear feedback for participants after an engagement exercise. This may include changes we have made as a result of comments.
 - We will protect residents by redacting sensitive information before it is made public, such as personal addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and dates of birth.
 - We will encourage appropriate representations (comments), by only accepting comments that are relevant to the subject being consulted on. No profanities, or statements considered derogatory or offensive to persons sharing a protected characteristic (such as disability, race, religion and others) will be accepted. If your representation is rejected for such reasons, you will be notified of the reason for this once it has been processed.

Engagement by landowners and developers

- 2.6 We look for our commitment to engagement to be matched by landowners and developers who are considering bringing forward proposals.
- 2.7 Landowners and developers should engage early so that the views of residents and other stakeholders can be taken into account when deciding whether to proceed with a proposal, and if that is the decision, in the detail of the proposal itself. The purpose of the engagement should be made clear and highlight that this is prior to any planning application being submitted to the council.

Digital and online technology

- 2.8 Greater use of digital-technology is likely to continue to play an important role in the planning process in the future. Online events can allow us to provide information easier and in a way which can be less intimidating, as people do not have to travel or make their voice heard in a crowd. It can also lead to greater engagement from young people who typically don't get involved with planning matters.
- 2.9 We recognise there are potential disadvantages with relying entirely on digital-technology. These include excluding those who do not have access to it, and that it relies on people visiting websites and clicking links, which they will do only if they already have an interest.

Equalities

- 2.10 As required by law, the SCI has been drafted to have regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups.

3. [Planning for the future of Wokingham Borough](#)

3.1 In this section we give more detail about the main types of policy plans and documents we produce.

[Documents we produce](#)

a) Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

3.2 The preparation of a SCI is itself subject to consultation. Consultation requirements set out in an SCI will need to be followed when preparing policy documents and when consulting in planning applications.

b) Local Development Scheme

3.3 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out our work programme for preparing the local plans we aim to prepare over the next three years or so. Local plans form part of the 'development plan' for the borough which is the starting point for determining planning applications.

3.4 The LDS explains:

- What local plans we will work on.
- What will be in the plans and where they will apply.
- How long it will take us to prepare the plans.
- What kind of plans they are.

3.5 An LDS does not include details of other plans and policy documents such as neighbourhood development plans, supplementary planning documents and other guidance documents, or the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule.

c) Local Plans

3.6 Local plans describe the places where development is intended, and where it needs to be carefully controlled. Policies within local plans should set out how development is to be managed over a minimum period of 15 years from adoption.

3.7 Local plans must include both 'strategic policies' to address the development and land use priorities, and non-strategic policies which will include things like sustainable design and construction. Local plans will allocate land to help deliver strategic requirements, including land for housing and employment.

3.8 Local plans are a key consideration when determining planning applications with decisions expected to be in accordance with local plans, and made neighbourhood development plans, unless other material planning considerations indicate otherwise. Other material planning considerations are matters that should be considered in making a planning decision.

d) Sustainability Appraisal

3.9 A sustainability appraisal is a process through which the effects of a local plan on economic, social and environmental objectives are considered. A sustainability appraisal also incorporates a further

assessment process known as 'Strategic Environmental Assessment' which focuses on environmental impacts. Sustainability appraisals are iterative, with the appraisal updated alongside each consultation stage of a local plan.

e) Supplementary Planning Documents

- 3.10 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) set out more detailed guidance to further explain the policies and proposals in local plans. SPDs cannot change policies contained within local plans but can give detail on how those policies are implemented. SPDs are a material consideration when assessing a planning application.

f) Non-statutory guidance

- 3.11 The council may prepare other development briefs and guidance which are not formal SPDs, and we may also carry out consultation on these documents. Like SPDs, non-statutory guidance cannot change policies contained within local plans but can give detail on how those policies are implemented. Such documents and policies are also a material consideration when assessing a planning application.

g) Community Infrastructure Levy

- 3.12 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge per square metre which can be levied by local authorities on new development to help deliver the infrastructure needed to support growth. CIL only applies in areas where a local authority has consulted on, and adopted, a charging schedule which sets out its levy rates. We adopted the current CIL charging schedule in 2015. These rates continue to apply, adjusted for inflation.

4. [Engagement process for local plans](#)

4.1 In this section we give more detail about how we will engage in the preparation of local plans.

4.2 Local plans are prepared in accordance with a regulatory process. The process includes consultation with the community and stakeholders. Following its preparation, a local plan is subject to examination by an independent Planning Inspector.

4.3 The process of preparing a local plan involves five broad stages:

1. Plan preparation.
2. Proposed Submission Plan publication and submission for examination.
3. Plan examination.
4. Publication of recommendations – Inspector’s report stage.
5. Plan adoption.

4.4 Once a local plan is adopted, it becomes part of the development plan alongside other local plans and made neighbourhood development plans. Together these are the starting point for deciding planning applications.

[How we will involve people in the preparation of local plans](#)

4.4 We are required by law to engage on the preparation of a local plan. This includes engaging with a range of specific consultees some of which are listed below.

- National statutory bodies and agencies (e.g., Environment Agency, National Highways, Natural England, Historic England, etc.).
- Other local authorities (as appropriate).
- Parish and town councils.
- Service providers of all kinds, including the emergency services, utility companies and health providers.
- National organisations such as The National Trust.
- Local organisations and societies such as civic amenity groups.
- Businesses and economic groups including the Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- Environmental stakeholders, e.g., wildlife trusts.
- Groups who are less likely to be heard (disengaged groups), and groups with a specific role in equalities.
- Individuals (who have asked to be notified).
- House builders / agents / landowners / housing associations.
- Schools and youth groups.

[Plan preparation](#)

4.5 The plan preparation stage typically includes evidence gathering on key issues, the development of options and a sequence of engagement exercises. Engagement may include both informal methods as well as formal methods such as consulting on a draft local plan.

- 4.6 We will:
- Write to consultees to say we intend to produce a local plan and invite them to say what issues they think the plan should cover.
 - Advertise our intention to produce a local plan, including a notification on our website, so that the public and organisations may register their interest.
 - Consult on draft policies. We may do this in stages, for example, consulting on strategic policies and potential site allocations separately from non-strategic development management policies.
 - Hold engagement events to support consultations in person and/or online.
 - Engage with town and parish councils and other stakeholders, for example, through meetings, workshops and forums.
 - Issue information through press releases, e-newsletters, and social media.

- 4.7 We may:
- Prepare summaries of technical reports.
 - Create online surveys.
 - Produce further publicity such as posters, leaflets or postcards.

4.8 After consultations we will consider the representations received and set out the main issues raised in a report of the consultation.

[Proposed Submission Plan publication and submission for examination](#)

4.9 At this stage, we will publish the Proposed Submission Plan and invite representations on its legal compliance and soundness as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework. We will pass all representations to the Planning Inspectorate who will arrange for their consideration by an Inspector through an examination process.

- 4.10 We will:
- Publish notification on our website of the Proposed Submission Plan (the version that we consider ready for examination) is being consulted on and invite comments for a minimum of six weeks (excluding bank holidays).
 - Get in touch directly with consultees to let them know of the publication of the Proposed Submission Plan.
 - Clearly set out how people and organisations can make valid representations (comments).
 - Prepare a consultation statement which sets out how we have taken account of comments received during the plan preparation stage in preparing the Proposed Submission Plan.
 - Make all statutory publication documents available, including the consultation statement either electronically and/or in paper form, for inspection at the council office.
 - Issue a press release to inform people that the consultation is taking place.
 - Use our e-newsletters and social media to inform people that the consultation is taking place.

- 4.11 We may:
- Make paper copies of the Proposed Submission Plan available at main libraries.
 - Produce further publicity such as posters, leaflets or postcards.
 - Publish a press notice in a local newspaper.
 - Undertake briefings with town and parish councils and other stakeholders either online or in person.

Plan examination stage

- 4.12 The examination stage is run by the appointed Inspector, supported by an independent Programme Officer. The Inspector will consider all representations and evidence, then identifies areas they wish to investigate further. They will set specific questions and a programme to do this, typically involving hearing sessions.
- 4.13 We will:
- Get in touch directly with all those who made representations at the Proposed Submission Plan publication stage to give details of the date, time and place of the hearings, and the name of the person appointed to hold the examination.
 - At least six weeks before the first hearing, give details on our website and at the council office of the date, time and place of the hearings and the name of the person appointed to hold the examination.
 - Make examination documents available on our website.
- 4.14 We may:
- Use press release and our e-newsletter to inform people.
 - Use digital platforms to allow online viewing of hearing sessions.

Publication of recommendations – Inspector’s report stage

- 4.15 Based on their examination, the appointed Inspector will form a view on whether the local plan is legally compliant and is sound. Where necessary to make the local plan sound, the Inspector will recommend amendments to proposed policies and supporting text. This will be recorded through a formal report.
- 4.16 We will:
- Make the Inspector’s report available for inspection at the council office and on our website.
 - Notify all those who requested to be informed of the Inspector’s report.
 - Issue a press release and e-newsletter to inform people.
- 4.17 We may:
- Make paper copies of the Inspector’s report available at main libraries.
 - Use social media to inform people.

Plan adoption stage

- 4.18 Adoption is when the council confirms that the local plan has statutory status and full weight can be given to it in the determination of planning applications and appeals.
- 4.19 We will:
- Make available the local plan, adoption statement, the sustainability appraisal and habitat regulation assessment reports at the council office and on our website.
 - Send a copy of the adoption statement directly to those who asked to be notified.
 - Issue a press release and e-newsletter to inform people.

4.20 We may:

- Make paper copies of the local plan available at main libraries.
- Use social media to inform people.

5. [Engagement process for supplementary planning documents](#)

5.1 In this section we give more detail about how we will engage in the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).

5.2 There are three types of SPD that might be prepared:

1. Site or area specific guidance (e.g. development briefs).
2. Design guidance.
3. Topic based policy guidance (e.g. affordable housing).

5.3 The process of preparing SPDs is simpler than that of local plans because they are not subject to examination. The process involves three broad stages:

1. Early engagement and preparation of a draft SPD.
2. Consultation on the draft SPD.
3. Adoption.

5.4 As with local plans, the law governs how SPDs are prepared, including minimum requirements for engagement.

[Early engagement and preparation of a draft SPD](#)

5.5 We will:

- Identify specific groups and individuals who are likely to have an interest in what the SPD will say.
- Undertake a targeted engagement process with those groups and individuals to explore issues and options.
- Produce a draft statement of consultation setting out who we have engaged with in preparing the draft SPD, the issues raised and how we have addressed those issues.

5.6 We may:

- Invite views from the public through surveys or by notifications on our website inviting comments or through social media channels.

[Consultation on the draft of the SPD](#)

5.7 We will:

- Publish the draft SPD for consultation on our website for a minimum of four weeks (excluding bank holidays), together with the required supporting documentation and make paper copies available to view at the council offices.
- Issue a press release and e-newsletter telling people about the consultation.

5.8 We may:

- Make paper copies of the draft consultation SPD and supporting documentation available at main libraries, as appropriate.
- Produce further publicity such as posters, leaflets or postcards.
- Hold exhibitions, workshops or forums, face-to-face or online.
- Use social media to inform people that the consultation is taking place.

- 5.9 After the consultation we will:
- Consider the representations received.
 - Update the statement of consultation document, setting out the main issues raised and how we have addressed those.
 - Amend the SPD, where we consider that it is appropriate to do so, to reflect the point raised in the representation.

SPD adoption

- 5.10 We will:
- Publish the adopted SPD, the amended consultation statement and adoption statement by making them available to view at the council offices, and on our website.
 - Send a copy of the adoption statement directly to those who asked to be notified.
- 5.11 We may:
- Make paper copies of the adopted document available at other council offices and appropriate libraries.
 - Issue a press release and e-newsletter to inform people.
 - Use social media to inform people.

Non-statutory guidance

- 5.12 Engagement relating to the preparation of non-statutory guidance will follow that set out for SPDs as set out above, where appropriate.

6. [Engagement process for neighbourhood development plans](#)

6.1 Neighbourhood development plans (also known as neighbourhood plans) gives communities the ability to further shape their local area by setting out planning policies to help guide decisions on planning applications. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies within local plans and cannot promote less development.

6.2 Once a neighbourhood development plan is 'made' (adopted), it becomes part of the development plan alongside local plans and other made neighbourhood development plans, which together are the starting point for deciding planning applications.

[If you want to make a neighbourhood development plan](#)

6.3 There are formal stages required by law when developing a neighbourhood development plan, these stages are:

1. Designating the neighbourhood area.
2. First draft of the neighbourhood plan (Pre-Submission version).
3. Final draft of the neighbourhood plan (Submission version).
4. Examination.
5. Referendum.
6. Making (adoption).

6.4 More information on how to prepare a neighbourhood development plan can be found in the [Locality neighbourhood Plan toolkit and guidance](#).

[Our legal duties to groups making a neighbourhood development plan](#)

6.5 We are required by law to offer help and advice to groups producing neighbourhood development plans. This includes:

- Advice on what is involved in making a neighbourhood development plan and potential scope, and share learning and best practice.
- Advice to support policy development, including the sharing of data and technical reports, creating maps (excluding printing costs), and attending appropriate meetings.
- Advice on methods of public consultation and engagement.
- Advice on how to publicise the proposed plan to the community, how to consult and publicise.
- Make venues available for public engagement (costs apply).
- Advice on the availability of grant funding for neighbourhood planning groups.

6.6 This is in addition to our commitments during the individual plan stages.

[Designating the neighbourhood area](#)

6.7 We will:

- Where an application for area designation differs from the parish or town council boundary, consult on the application for neighbourhood area designation for a minimum of 6 weeks (excluding bank holidays) publicise the application on our website.
- Provide a paper copy of the application at the council's office for inspection.

- 6.8 We may:
- Issue a press release and e-newsletter to inform people that the consultation is taking place.
 - Use social media to inform people that the consultation is taking place.
 - Provide a paper copy of the application at main library nearest to the proposed neighbourhood area.
 - In discussion with the neighbourhood body, amend the boundary of the neighbourhood area if it is inappropriate (for example, if it includes parts of other parishes that have not consented to their inclusion).

[Initial draft\(s\) of the neighbourhood development plan \(Pre-submission version\)](#)

- 6.9 We will:
- Support the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment screening reports of the emerging neighbourhood development plan.
 - Assist the parish or town council with undertaking a SEA and Habitat Regulations Reports where found necessary.
 - Advise on the consultation process and who to consult.
 - Comment on the draft neighbourhood development plan.

- 6.10 We may:
- Publicise the consultation on our website.
 - Issue a press release and e-newsletter to inform people that the consultation is taking place.
 - Provide a paper copy of the Pre-Submission Plan at the council office for inspection.

[Final draft of the neighbourhood development plan \(Publication version\)](#)

- 6.11 We will:
- Consult on the Publication version (the Submission Plan) for a minimum of 6 weeks (excluding bank holidays).
 - Publish the plan on our website.
 - Provide a hard copy of the plan and supporting documents at the council office for inspection.
 - Collate all responses and prepare them for submission to the examiner.

- 6.12 We may:
- Issue a press release and e-newsletter to inform people that the consultation is taking place.
 - Use social media to inform people that the consultation is taking place.
 - Summarise the comments received for the examiner.

[Examination](#)

- 6.13 We will:
- Liaise with the neighbourhood planning group to appoint an examiner.
 - Publish details of the examination on our website.
 - Pass any representations made at the Publication stage to the examiner.
 - Manage and fund the process of the examination.

- Act as a key contact for the examiner.
- Answer any questions raised by the examiner.
- Publicise the examiner's report on our website.

6.14 We may:

- Notify consultees.
- Provide the examiner with a summary of the main issues raised in the representations.

6.15 There may be instances where we disagree with the appointed examiner's findings. If this is the case, clear reasons would need to be given for rejecting the examiner's recommendations, and we would discuss any modifications with the neighbourhood planning body. Additional consultation would also need to take place.

Referendum

6.16 We will:

- Arrange and fund the referendum.
- Publish information about the neighbourhood development plan.
- Give notice that a referendum is taking place.
- Publish the results of the referendum.

Making (adoption)

6.17 We will:

- 'Make' (i.e. adopt) the plan, subject to the outcome of the referendum.
- Publish the decision to 'make' a neighbourhood development plan on our website.
- Notify all individual and organisations who asked to be notified.

6.18 We may:

- Issue a press release and e-newsletter to inform people that the neighbourhood development plan has been made (adopted).

7. [Engagement process for planning applications](#)

- 7.1 We are responsible for determining planning applications. This includes applications such as those for:
- Changes to your home.
 - New houses and businesses.
 - Changing a building from one use to another.
 - New schools, roads, pathways and infrastructure.
 - New sites for minerals and waste developments.
- 7.2 We are not responsible for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), such as changes to the motorway.
- 7.3 Not all types of development require applications to the council, being permitted automatically under national legislation. This includes some types of house extensions and changes in the use of land or buildings. These are generally referred to as 'permitted development'.
- 7.4 In addition, some types of development only require our approval on limited aspects of a proposal, such as design and external appearance, transport impacts and flooding information. These are generally referred to as 'prior approval' development.

[How we make decisions on planning applications](#)

a) What we must consider

- 7.5 Decisions on planning applications must be made in line with the development plan (adopted local plans and made neighbourhood plans), unless there are 'material considerations' that indicate otherwise.
- 7.6 A material consideration is a matter that should be taken into account when deciding a planning application. Material considerations can include, but are not limited to:
- Overlooking / loss of privacy.
 - Loss of light or overshadowing.
 - Parking.
 - Highway safety.
 - Traffic.
 - Noise.
 - Layout and density of building.
 - Design, appearance and materials.
 - Access arrangements.
 - Effects on listed buildings or conservation areas.
 - Effect on trees and hedgerows.
 - Government policies, e.g. those set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.
 - Previous planning decisions.
 - Human rights (including best interests of children).
- 7.7 Anything relevant to making the decision can be a material planning consideration, however in general it relates to matters in the public interest rather than private matters (e.g. the value of an adjoining property or the loss of a view are not material planning considerations).

b) How long we have to decide

- 7.8 The time periods for determination are set out in law. The time limit is usually:
- 8 weeks for most planning applications.
 - 13 weeks for 'major' (larger) developments.
 - 16 weeks for applications that need an Environmental Impact Assessment.
- 7.9 If more time is needed to determine an application, an 'extension of time' can be privately agreed between our case officer appointed to determine the application and the applicant.
- 7.10 If we fail to determine the application in time, the applicant can appeal to the Secretary of State against 'non-determination'.

c) How and when we will involve you in the planning application process

- 7.11 To assist people considering developing land or buildings, we offer a paid for discretionary planning advice service, to help people understand whether a proposal is likely to be acceptable, and what information they need to provide should they proceed to submit an application. We encourage site promoters to be open about their proposals and to engage with the local community.

Before the application is submitted

- 7.12 A person proposing to make an application for development is required by law¹ to bring it to the attention of those who live or occupy premises in the vicinity of the site. In addition, we encourage positive engagement with local people to help prepare and refine their proposal. For household extensions this may simply mean speaking to neighbours. For larger proposals, engagement should involve the wider area.
- 7.13 We encourage anyone proposing development to actively engage the community when preparing their proposals as set out in Table 1 below. The suggested method vary depending on the scale and type of proposal, with larger proposals expected to use method that would engage with more people.

Table 1: Indicative methods of engagement for proposed planning applications by applicants

Method of engagement	Householder applications	Minor applications	Major applications	Large scale major applications	Other applications
Letters, emails and postcards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
One to one meetings*	✓				
Website			✓	✓	

¹ Localism Act 2011, Regulation 122.

Advert in local press				√	
Public meetings / forums			√	√	
Public exhibitions			√	√	
Social media			√	√	
Workshops				√	
Leaflets			√	√	

*People considering the extension of their home are encouraged to meet with their neighbours to discuss their ideas.

7.14 In all instances, the comments and concerns raised through engagement should be considered, and if necessary, changes made to the proposed development before an application is submitted. Information on how engagement has been undertaken, the issues raised and how these have been responded to should be submitted as part of the application.

7.15 We will:

- Encourage applicants to consult the community where relevant.

7.16 We may:

- Liaise with town and parish councils, where relevant.

[Once the application is submitted](#)

7.17 Details of all submitted planning applications can be viewed on our website by entering the site, address, the reference number or by via an interactive map.

7.18 The law requires that we consult for a 21 day period (unless a longer period applies) before a decision can be made. Whilst we feel this appropriately balances the need to consult with the time period for determining applications set nationally for many types of application, for major applications we will consult for an extended 28 day period. Major applications are those proposing 10 or more dwellings, or 1,000 square metres of non-residential floorspace.

7.19 We will:

- Make planning applications and the supporting documentation available to view on our website.
- Consult upon applications as set out in law (excluding bank holidays), or in the case of major applications extend this to a 28 day period (excluding bank holidays).
- Notify town or parish councils of relevant planning applications in their area, inviting comments.
- Where required by law, we will either:
 - display a planning notice on or near the application site; or

- post letters to neighbours adjoining the application site.
- Where a site notice is not required by law, we will send a notice to the applicant and ask them to place this on display voluntarily.

7.20 We may:

- Publish a press notice.
- Consult with other organisations such as the Environment Agency, Natural England etc. where applicable.
- Publicise a weekly list of planning applications via public channels.

During the determination process

7.21 We will:

- Publish relevant documents on our website, including comments received in response to the application.
- Consider the issues raised response to the application.
- If the application is considered at Planning Committee, provide applicants, town and parish council representatives, and those who have commented on a planning application, an opportunity to register to speak at Planning Committee.

7.22 Due to the volume of representations received it is simply not possible to acknowledge or enter correspondence regarding all the representations submitted. You can however be assured that all relevant matters raised are fully considered.

7.23 Representations from local people are very important in highlighting material planning considerations. Then ultimately applications are determined in accordance with current legislation, development plan policy and all the material considerations identified.

7.24 The consideration of each application is led by a case officer. Their role will be to assess the application against development plan policy and other material considerations. They will read all representations and summarise the key points raised when preparing their report which will consider and explain whether the application should be permitted or refused.

7.25 Some applications will be determined by the Planning Committee, rather than officers. The Planning Committee is made up of elected councillors. For these applications, the case officer provides their report for the Planning Committee who decide whether the application is permitted or refused.

7.26 Where an application is to be considered by the Planning Committee, anybody that has submitted a representation will be notified of proceedings. Planning Committee meetings are open to the public.

After we have made a decision

7.27 We will:

- Publish the decision notice and officer report on our website.
- Inform the agent (or in the absence of an agent the applicant) of the decision, usually by email.
- Publish any relevant appeal documents on our website.

If the planning decision has been appealed

- 7.28 If the applicant does not agree with our decision, they have the right to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. In these we will write to everyone who has been consulted or has submitted representations on the planning application, letting them know about the appeal. Further representations are sent at this stage directly to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration.

8. [Dealing with unauthorised development](#)

- 8.1 Sometimes, development goes ahead without planning permission or without meeting all the specified planning conditions. This is known as 'unauthorised development'. When this happens, our planning enforcement team will investigate and, where appropriate, expedient and in the public interest, take formal enforcement action. Planning Enforcement action is discretionary.

[How we make decisions on unauthorised development](#)

- 8.2 We will undertake our enforcement duties as set out in our Local Planning Enforcement Plan.
- 8.3 You can view more information on the planning enforcement process and the types of actions available with unauthorised development on GOV.UK's website.

[How and when we will involve you in enforcement matters](#)

- 8.4 If you suspect a breach of planning control, you can report concerns via our website.
- 8.5 An overview of the service and what you can expect from this process is set out in our Local Planning Enforcement Plan.

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