

Northumberland Local Plan

Draft Revised Statement of Community Involvement

October 2013



NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

www.northumberland.gov.uk

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1. Introduction to the Statement Community Involvement

What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

1.1 Northumberland County Council want to involve local people, communities and businesses in planning in Northumberland. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) explains the County Council's commitments on this. It sets out how we will:

- Encourage communities to participate in drawing up our '**Local Plan**';
- Assist parish and town councils to prepare their own **Neighbourhood Plans**, if they wish to do so;
- Inform people and consult with them on **planning applications** and future developments in their local area;
- Process people's comments on plans and proposals and provide proper **feedback**.

Why a Statement of Community Involvement?

1.2 The Localism Act of 2011 aims to pass significant powers back to communities to shape the environment in which they live. Councils themselves have a 'duty to involve' people in their own policies and plans. In addition we have statutory responsibilities to allow people to participate in and comment on plans and proposals which may affect them and their local area. The SCI describes what the Council will do to encourage and promote wider involvement in plan making and decision-making. This is a statutory document. Once it is adopted, the Council must follow the actions it has set out.

1.3 The SCI intends to help people to understand the planning system and how they can get involved in shaping the places where people live, learn, work and play. The Council recognises that involving the community more closely in planning decisions will help to create better outcomes for local communities and for our local environment thereby enhancing people's quality of life in Northumberland.

1.4 The Council wants to ensure that when new planning policies are proposed and when planning applications are submitted everyone with an interest has equal opportunity to influence how decisions are made.

How has this Statement of Community Involvement been put together?

1.5 When Northumberland County Council was first formed in 2009 from the old county and its districts, extensive consultation was carried out within the Council and its partners and with the wider community on how we should be engaging with people on planning matters and how this should link with the wider relationship between the Council and the communities within Northumberland. The result was the Council's original Statement of Community Involvement, adopted in September 2009.

1.6 It is important to update the document now because there have been notable changes to the planning system especially through the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in 2012. The Localism Act 2011 has also empowered local communities in new ways, which has altered the way in which engagement takes place.

1. Introduction to the Statement Community Involvement

1.7 Since 2009, the Council has developed and refined its engagement techniques and, as a result, has built up a number of charters, compacts, and protocols, many of which deal with how we consult with different sections of the population or on particular aspects of our work. This new SCI brings together this work, having regard to more recent legislative changes.

1.8 As we have written this document, we have built in lessons learned from past consultations, in order to try to make it as relevant as possible to communities across Northumberland as well as other key stakeholders.

This consultation

1.9 The SCI deals with how we consult with and engage people. So we would like to hear people's view on its contents. Your opinions will help inform the final document before it is adopted by the Council.

1.10 The SCI consultation period is taking place from **31 October 2013 to 2 January 2014**. Information on how to comment upon the draft SCI are available below, on the Council's website, and in the local press.

Making comments

1.11 The Council is encouraging people to submit comments **online** at:
<http://northumberland.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/>

1.12 If you have submitted comments online on Local Plan documents (e.g. the Core Strategy) in the past, please use the same log in details you used previously. If you have not previously submitted comments, you will need to complete a short registration process.

1.13 Responses by e-mail or post will be accepted and should be directed to:

- **E-mail:** PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk
- **Post:** Spatial Policy and Delivery Team, Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF

1.14 For further information on how to take part in the consultation, please contact PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk or telephone 0845 600 6400.

Question 1

Do you have any comments on this document?

2. Consulting People – Our Values

2.1 Northumberland County Council sees consultation and communication as key to the most effective and efficient delivery of its vision, to deliver the best customer focussed services and support to all communities. The Council has a corporate commitment to engage with people to help it prioritise and target its services and develop policies. The Council gathers views from local communities through mechanisms that include a 'Northumberland Peoples' Panel', which can be consulted up to four times a year.⁽¹⁾

2.2 It is important that planning consultation not only fits in with this commitment but also that a set of consultation values are established specifically for planning matters. The original SCI contained a set of values based on how we believed we should work and how you told us you would like us to work. Those values remain largely the same. In dealing with community engagement and consultation, we would propose the following values, which should be regarded as service standards:

CONSULTATION VALUES – SERVICE STANDARDS

1. We will involve people at the start of and throughout the decision-making process on planning applications and when developing new planning policy.
2. We will engage with relevant people and organisations at the appropriate time using effective and appropriate engagement methods, allowing sufficient time for meaningful consultation and allowing all individuals and communities the opportunity to influence decisions.
3. We will be adaptable, recognising that different consultation methods will be required in different circumstances.
4. We will respect the diversity of people and their lifestyles and give people a fair chance to have their voice heard regardless of gender, age, race, abilities, sexual orientation, circumstances or wherever they live.
5. We will communicate clearly with people using plain English and avoiding jargon.
6. We will ensure that people's views are taken into account in reaching decisions on all planning matters using the most appropriate methods of community involvement as set out throughout this document.
7. We will make documents publicly available on our website and across our networks of council offices and libraries.
8. We will be consistent in our approach, regardless of the location within Northumberland or the planning issue covered by the policy or proposal.

¹ See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1415>

3. Joined up working in a Diverse Northumberland

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3.1 In order to plan effectively, planners and decision-makers must try to understand what places mean to the people who live and work in them. In a County such as Northumberland with around 316,000 residents, widely spread in diverse communities, it is important to understand the varying needs of those communities, as well as what is important to the people of Northumberland as a whole.

Drawing Communities together – the Sustainable Community Strategy

3.2 A Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy “*Northumberland: Resilient for the Future*” (May 2011) was prepared by a the Northumberland Strategic Partnership, representing a wide range of community interests

3.3 It seeks to give everyone a voice and influence. This stems from findings including that in 2008 almost one third of residents did not feel they belonged to their neighbourhood and that only one in four feel they can influence decisions in their locality. In 2012 the residents perception survey has illustrated that the level of residents who feel strongly that they belong to their local area has increased from 69% in 2008 to 74% in 2012. This is higher than residents of other neighbouring authorities (68%).

3.4 This SCI document, in looking at how the Council brings people together in planning the County and local areas within it, is also a vital component of this strategy.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

This SCI will endeavour to help achieve the Sustainable Community Strategy aim of giving everyone a voice and influence, by setting out practical ways in which the community can be involved in the planning of the County.

Area- Based Working

3.5 The size and relative differences between geographical areas across Northumberland means that area-based working within the county is vital in reaching all communities. To assist with this, the County Council established three area committees. These provide a local forum for questioning and scrutiny of Council policy. Development Management (the consideration of planning applications) is the responsibility of the Planning, Environment and Rights of Way Committee, plus three separate Area Planning Committees.

AREA-BASED WORKING

The Council will continue to engage with Area Committees and Area Planning Committees on developing planning policies.

3. Joined up working in a Diverse Northumberland

Working with Parish and Town Councils

3.6 As part of Local Government Reorganisation in 2009, the whole of Northumberland became 'parished', following the creation of parishes in the South East of the county. We consider this an important asset because it enabled the County Council to engage on issues at this very local democratic level throughout the County. A complete listing of parish councils is available on the county council website.⁽²⁾

3.7 A Northumberland Charter for Local Councils sets out protocols for the relationship between the County Council and the Town and Parish Councils, of which there are over 150⁽³⁾ in Northumberland. There are commitments on both sides regarding local democracy and community leadership; communication; consultation and engagement.

3.8 Parish and Town Councils are statutory consultees on local plans and Northumberland County Council sees them as key players in the formulation of its Local Plan – see Chapter 6.

3.9 Neighbourhood planning, introduced through the Localism Act 2011, gives Parish and Town Councils the option of becoming directly involved in planning their areas and for their plans to have a much stronger influence in the decision-making process. Chapter 7 sets out our detailed commitments to Parish and Town Councils on how the County Council will support them with neighbourhood planning.

3.10 Parish and Town Councils are also statutory consultees on planning applications that affect their area – see Chapter 8 for our commitments on planning application consultation.

PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

The SCI endorses the commitments set out in the latest version of the Local Council Charter for Northumberland insofar as they relate to the planning process.

Specifically, the Council will assist parish and town councils to understand and be involved in the planning process, on behalf of their communities, through

- The provision of general information and training on the planning process;
- consultation events in relation to the Local Plan;
- advice and support in neighbourhood planning; and
- comprehensive consultation on planning applications affecting their areas; and
- feeding back the results of consultations.

This will be done in line with the commitments set out in this document.

² See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=387>

³ See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=6104>

4. Inclusive Planning

4. Inclusive Planning

4.1 Northumberland County Council realises that people will wish to get involved in the planning process, when they are directly affected by an imminent proposal close to their home or place of work. We also understand that it is often difficult to see the value of trying to influence plans that are further afield or in the more distant future. We are also aware that people may perceive that what they say about planning proposals will be ignored. This chapter sets out how we will try and include and involve all people of Northumberland in the planning of their County.

Barriers to involvement

4.2 Not everyone may have a choice about whether to be involved in the planning of the County. Northumberland presents a number of issues that amount to barriers to communication and consultation that need to be overcome. The list below provides some key examples of barriers but there will be others.

- Northumberland has an **ageing population**⁽⁴⁾ and people with disabilities. These groups may have greater difficulty in reaching venues where plans are on display and may be less likely to have access to the internet;
- A thinly spread population leads to relative **rural isolation**, resulting in difficulties in accessing opportunities to participate in the planning process;
- More urban areas may have **concentrated deprivation** and other forms of **social exclusion** which also make people less able to find out about or respond to consultations;
- Certain groups will have **no permanent address**. Northumberland has a transient population that includes Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ('GRT') communities, as well as temporary and seasonal workers. In addition there is a small but significant homelessness problem in the county, which is classified as including those from the GRT communities not on permanent sites;
- Certain minority ethnic groups (now accounting for up to 2% of the population) may present **language barriers** with accompanying issues of communication. Related to this, some people and groups continue to have **low literacy skills** and may not be able to read the plans or submit comments in writing

4.3 It is not just a matter of reaching these groups. Once they have been reached, special ways may be needed to gather their views and opinions.

Umbrella Organisations and Networks

4.4 Some people and groups will frequently get involved in planning issues and the Council would like to encourage their continued involvement. For example we recognise the value that local development trusts, village trusts and amenity groups make to planning processes.

4.5 These groups provide important links into certain sections of the population as many have networks and are, in effect 'umbrella organisations'. The Council's planning service has been expanding its contacts and widening the list of umbrella organisations that it

4 Just over 20% of the County's population was aged 65+ in 2010, which is forecast to rise to 31% by 2031.

uses to reach into the wider community and particular interest groups within it – including networks and organisations relating to groups with the 'protected characteristics' defined in the Equality Act 2010 – see below.⁽⁵⁾

4.6 Local residents' associations and business related organisations (such as chambers of trade) are also recognised as important conduits to gathering views from large sections of the communities within Northumberland.

UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS

The County Council planning service will continue to build up information on, and forge links with umbrella organisations which represent different areas and sections of the population, including residents, businesses, the voluntary sector and those with 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. In doing so, it will be sought to give these organisations, and those that they represent, a sense of empowerment within the planning process.

The Council will seek to engage these networks in disseminating information on planning policies and proposals and seek feedback from them on the extent to which the information has been passed within those networks.

The Council will continue to work with and value the contribution that local interest groups and trusts such as village and civic societies, historical and heritage groups, and development trusts, can make to planning processes.

The Northumberland Compact – the Voluntary and Community Sector

4.7 The Northumberland Compact 2010⁽⁶⁾ outlines the relationship between the public sector (including the Council) and the voluntary and community sector (VCS), so that the two sectors working together can have major benefits for people and communities.

4.8 Under the compact the Council has to inform and involve the VCS from the earliest stages of policy development, on all relevant issues likely to affect it. This can include empowering VCS organisations to start discussions within affected communities themselves. The Council is also expected to tackle barriers that may prevent VCS organisations from contributing to policy development and help build capacity within these organisations so they can contribute effectively.

4.9 In return, VCS organisations have certain obligations including feeding back on views expressed – e.g. whether they have been gathered directly from people that the organisation works for / with, or whether the response is based on the organisation's own knowledge and experience of the issues.

5 Adapt NE launched a Single Equality Forum in May 2013, which brings together representatives of 'protected characteristic' groups across Northumberland. The Forum will be utilised when possible as a way of involving these groups in the planning process.

6 This document is authored by Connect4Change, a partnership, formed in 2011, initially to oversee the provision of voluntary and community sector support services in Northumberland. See http://connect4change.co.uk/assets/uploads/June_2010_The_Northumberland_Compact.pdf

4. Inclusive Planning

4.10 The compact includes many other commitments on both sides, many of which overlap with other Council commitments on equality of opportunity and other matters that are covered from a planning point of view, within this SCI.

VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

The County Council will continue to apply its commitments in the Northumberland Compact on involving and working with the voluntary and community sector, when preparing new planning policies and consulting on planning proposals.

The Equality Act – protected characteristics

4.11 The Equality Act 2010 requires that people be treated fairly in terms of their 'protected characteristics' – i.e. age, sex (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion and belief, and, if appropriate, pregnancy, maternity and any disability. Under this, the Council has a duty to (inter alia) advance equality of opportunity and publish data to demonstrate this. The Council published its own 'Equality and Diversity Policy' in 2011.⁽⁷⁾

4.12 The Council's corporate equality commitments tend to relate to people's access to the Council's own services. So it is important that the SCI extends this to add commitments on how all groups will be encouraged to participate in and not be excluded from town planning matters within Northumberland.

4.13 The Council has to publish Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) alongside each key Council document.⁽⁸⁾ Such assessments try to ensure that new and emerging plans and policies and proposals are not adversely affecting any particular groups of people or areas and that opportunities for people to have their say on policies and proposals are equalised as much as possible.

4.14 The work that has already been done on forging links with equality groups and analysis of the Equality Impact Assessments has informed the commitments below.

Older People

4.15 In recognition of the County's ageing population, the Council and its partners are closely involved in trying to create a level playing field so that older people can access and benefit from local services in the same way as the population as a whole.⁽⁹⁾

4.16 The main issue that prevents older people from becoming closely involved in the planning process tends to be related to their relative lack of mobility and modern means of communication, making it less easy for them to attend events, access consultation information or respond to consultations. Umbrella organisations, such as Age UK and the University of the Third Age are proving important means of reaching the older population. While resources are limited, it could be seen as important to make an additional effort to

7 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1243>

8 Such an 'Equality Impact Assessment' is published alongside Development Plan Documents – see Chapter 6.

9 A document entitled: 'Older People in Northumberland: A Longer Term View' seeks to help bring about the situation whereby older people can benefit, in the same way as the population in general, from the aims and aspirations of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

respond to requests to go out to meet representative groups within the older population than would normally be the case for more mobile elements of the community. It will also be important to adhere to commitments to provide consultation information in traditional, as well as digital forms.

OLDER PEOPLE

In order to engage our increasing number of older people in planning matters, the County Council will do so through:

- its own networks, as well as Age UK and other umbrella groups that represent older people;
- As resources allow, respond positively to requests to go out and talk to representative groups on future plans and/or seek other means in which to maximise access to consultation materials and events.

Younger People

4.17 The County Council embraces the international commitment that children have the right to freely express their views on all matters affecting them.^{(10), (11)}

4.18 In 2008, Northumberland Families and Children's Trust (FACT) set out ways in which to increase the involvement of children, young people and their families in decision-making.⁽¹²⁾ Northumberland County Council considers that people should not be seen as being too young to have an opinion and seeks to establish an ongoing dialogue with people of all ages.

4.19 Past experience has shown that it is very difficult to reach the full range of young people in Northumberland. It is important to find the right participatory processes for younger people. These are bound to vary from those deployed within the adult population and between age groups.

4.20 There are several High Schools across Northumberland and numerous schools serve the younger age groups. It is clear that resources will never be sufficient to directly reach anything other than a small minority of people in schools and colleges. Even so, it is important to take opportunities to engage – especially with those who may already take an interest in the environment through courses that they are studying or thanks to keen teachers.

4.21 In addition, Northumberland has youth democracy networks and the "YPIN"⁽¹³⁾. The latter have put on special workshops in association with the Council's plan consultations. Through these, valuable information on the views of young people has been

10 This commitment is set out in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and, under the National Service Framework for Children, there is a national commitment to engaging children, young people and their families in the design of services.

11 The Council has produced a 'Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2011-2014' which nests underneath the Sustainable Community Strategy and seeks to make sure that the achievement of that plan's "Big Partnership" issues benefits younger people as well as the population as a whole. See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=6001>

12 FACT Turn up the Volume September 2008.

13 YPIN stands for "Young People in Northumberland". See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=8794>.

4. Inclusive Planning

gathered. Even so, there is an ongoing need to find other organisations through which the views of young people in the county can be captured. This would include those representing disadvantaged young people.

4.22 It is vital that the Council keeps abreast of new forms of communication as these tend to be taken up by the younger end of the population first and quickly become key ways of exchanging views and information. The County's own social media have been trialed as a means of raising awareness about plan consultation issues but a more effective means would utilise young people's own networks on their own terms. These means will be further explored.

YOUNGER PEOPLE

In order to maximise the meaningful engagement of younger people in planning matters and allow young people to 'have their own voice', the County Council will:

- Engage through existing networks including 'YPIN' and the youth democracy organisations with a view to disseminating information.
- Encourage these organisations to hold their own events on their own terms, to air and gather views on planning issues to convey to the Council.
- Take opportunities to work with schools and colleges where the consultation connects with the students' or pupils' studies and the likely feedback will be of value in planning the County.
- Continue to adapt to changes in social media and other innovative forms of communication.
- Have regard to our Children's and Young People's Plan.

Sex, sexual orientation, marital status parenthood, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

4.23 The County Council must make sure that it engages people in the planning process in a fair and equal way in terms of their sex, marital status, parenthood (or otherwise) sexual orientation and any gender reassignment. There is no reason why any group, defined along these lines, should have less opportunity to participate than any other group; but the Council must be vigilant that no individual or group are being excluded.

4.24 There is a whole range of organisations, support groups and specialist publications relating to women's issues, gender issues, pregnancy and maternity. The Council; has sought to make use of these in raising awareness about planning matters and will continue to do so.

4.25 In addition, there may be issues which a plan or proposal covers, that will interest a particular group – e.g. future locations for particular types of community facility. Targeted consultation will therefore be appropriate in some cases.

SEX (INCLUDING GENDER REASSIGNMENT), SEXUAL ORIENTATION, MARITAL STATUS, PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY

The Council will seek to ensure that all awareness-raising of, and participation in, planning matters does not exclude any individual or group by reason of their sex (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy or maternity. This will include

- Efforts to raise awareness and engage with, and empower people via appropriate networks, local and other representative groups and organisations and publications.
- Targeted consultations on issues or aspects of future plans, which are of particular interest to a section of the population, when defined along these lines, allowing groups and individuals to 'have their own voice'.

Race, culture, ethnicity religion and belief

4.26 Seeking to involve people from all races, ethnicities, religions and beliefs equally in the planning process raises many of the same issues as sex, parental / marital status etc. – ensuring that sub-sections of the population are not missed out of consultations. Some of the solutions are the same – engaging through appropriate networks and targeting the consultations. However, there are additional factors that call for variations in approach between ethnic or religious groups, one being language barriers and the other cultural differences.

4.27 In terms of language barriers, the Council has made a number of commitments in the past on face-to-face contact and the use of translators. The SCI will continue to promote these commitments. However, networks and umbrella bodies exist which can act as interfaces to these communities and we would propose that these networks and organisations should be the first point of contact.

4.28 Cultural differences have two main effects in terms of meaningful planning consultation.

- Firstly, they can mean that there are planning issues that are unique to a particular ethnic or religious group, which require special consultations with the group itself and with other 'third parties'. Key examples are:
 - The accommodation issues of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
 - Land and building needs for places of worship or related community facilities that are particular to a religion
- Secondly, cultural differences can also mean that different ethnic or religious groups are difficult to identify and contact, sometimes due to issues of migration or transitory lifestyles or because people do not necessarily want to be identified or contacted due to past discrimination. If some groups are difficult to survey, they can be difficult to plan for.

4.29 The Council's 'Strategy for Gypsies and Travellers'⁽¹⁴⁾ sets out a shared vision and objectives for these groups in Northumberland, based on the closest possible consultation with the communities concerned. Under the Strategy, the Council must ensure that Gypsies

14 <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=c94612bf-605a-4a11-a4f7-d7c50b3a6e3b&version=-1>

4. Inclusive Planning

and Travellers are given the opportunity to influence the design, development and delivery of services to better meet the needs of their communities. The Strategy also makes the commitment to improve how we collect information to better understand the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The Strategy also places a duty on the Council to ensure that the very particular accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers are better understood in the wider community.

4.30 It is important that this SCI document applies these types of principles to planning. It is also sensible that the same basic principles are applied across races, religions and cultures.

RACE, CULTURE, ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND BELIEF

The Council will seek to ensure that awareness-raising of, and participation in, planning matters is inclusive of the full array of races, cultures, ethnicities, religions and beliefs within the County. This will include:

- Engagement and empowerment through appropriate networks and publications insofar as language barriers and/or cultural differences allow;
- The use of translators and/or more face-to-face contact, where there are language and/or other communication barriers and/or where clearer explanation is required – as far as resources will allow;
- Targeted consultations to gather information or views on issues or aspects of future plans, which are particular to an ethnic, religious or cultural minority group, allowing groups to 'have their own voice';
- Where necessary using intermediaries who already have a relationship with the communities concerned;
- Promoting a better understanding, among the wider population, of any planning needs and requirements that are particular to an ethnic, religious or cultural minority group.

Protected characteristics – Disability

4.31 The challenges faced by the Council in seeking to involve people with disabilities fully in the planning process overlap in some respects with those relating to other groups. The barriers to involvement may include difficulty in accessing consultation events or in reading documents in standard formats. As with other groups, there are particular planning issues on which consultation targeted towards disabled groups could be appropriate – notably those to do with moving around the county or accessing suitable housing, workplaces or community facilities.

DISABLED PEOPLE

In order to engage disabled people in planning matters, the County Council will:

- Involve and empower people through appropriate networks and umbrella groups;
- As resources allow:
 - Respond positively to requests to go out and talk to representative groups on future plans; and/or
 - Seek other means in which to maximise access to consultations;
 - Continue to explore the potential for innovative ways to engage particular groups of disabled people, through adaptations to documents and display materials and/or various interactive means.
- Where necessary, use an officer trained in sign language.
- Target consultations to gather information or views on issues or aspects of future plans, which are particular to people with disabilities, allowing groups to 'have their own voice'.

Reaching other sectors

4.32 As well as the protected characteristics, there are other sections of the community and society which may require particular levels of commitment in order to engage them on planning matters.

The Business Community

4.33 As well as developers and land owners, the wider business community has a key role in helping to deliver the aims of planning policy. Past surveys⁽¹⁵⁾ have shown that Northumberland businesses would like more information about planning proposals which could potentially affect them, even if they were located in different parts of the county.

THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

In order to engage the business community in planning matters, the County Council will:

- Recognise that networks and umbrella groups, including the Chambers of Trade/Commerce, can help to reach and empower a wide range of businesses.
- Target business as well as residential addresses within areas that are the subject of mailshots on planning proposals.
- Use targeted consultations to gather information or views on issues or aspects of future plans, which are of relevance to the business community.

15 Carried out when the original SCI was being written.

4. Inclusive Planning

Disadvantaged Groups (unemployed, low income, homeless)

4.34 While not listed as protected characteristics under the Equality Act, people who are unemployed, on low incomes and/or homeless are often difficult to contact and/or difficult to engage in planning issues. Capturing their views would involve similar measures to some already set out. While it is recognised that deprivation exists in various forms and to varying degrees across the County, it is particularly important, when holding consultation events, to avoid missing out areas of deprivation, simply because, for example, local people have not requested meetings.

DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

In order to ensure that people who are experiencing unemployment, low income and/or homelessness have the maximum opportunity to engage with the planning process, the County Council will apply the principles and practices applied to all difficult-to-reach groups and, for certain consultations, will seek to use venues in or near to areas of multiple deprivation as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

People in Full-time Education or Employment

4.35 The Council recognises that it is inadequate to limit consultation opportunities to normal working hours as a substantial proportion of the population are in full time employment or education during these hours.

PEOPLE IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT

In order to cater for people in full-time employment, we will ensure that there are opportunities for involvement in planning events out of normal working hours, including, where possible, evenings and weekends in the main towns in the County.

5. The Council's Planning Service

5.1 Over the past ten years changes have been introduced by central Government in order to speed up the planning system and make it more responsive, flexible, customer focused and local. The changes mean that, more than ever, the Council must work meaningfully with the community to plan the County, while also delivering its own planning service efficiently and effectively.

5.2 All planning services are delivered by a single Council department, called Development Services – part of Local Services⁽¹⁶⁾. This should ensure a seamless planning service. The planning service as a whole includes

- Preparing and publicising the Local Plan
- Registering, publicising assessing and determining planning and related types of applications
- Dealing with numerous enquiries about applications and possible future development sites and negotiating with developers and stakeholders
- the spatial input to wider plans and strategies
- delivering a variety of spatial planning projects and programmes
- assisting communities with their neighbourhood plans
- providing advice on conserving the natural and built environment in relation to future development plans and applications.

THE COMMUNITY AS CUSTOMERS OF THE PLANNING SERVICE

The Council will seek to provide an efficient, open and transparent planning service to all its customers.

All those in contact with the planning service, including all communities and members of the public who respond to consultations on planning policies and proposals will be regarded as customers on an equal basis.

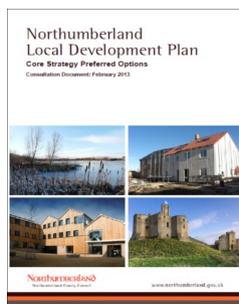
¹⁶ Local Services also includes the Council's responsibilities on highways, fire & rescue, property, neighbourhood services, sustainable (including public) transport, plus the management of waste and the Council's vehicle fleet

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

What is the Local Plan?

6.1 The Local Plan⁽¹⁷⁾ will set out where new development should be located in Northumberland over the next 20 years while safeguarding the County's environmental assets, its local economy and its communities.



6.2 The Local Plan is a series of planning documents, plus a Proposals Map, drawn up by the Council, with the involvement of the local community and stakeholders. These documents contain written policies and proposals and maps. Some of the documents are statutory planning documents called Development Plan Documents (DPDs) which, together with any neighbourhood plans, form the “development plan” for the area. Planning applications have to be decided in line with the development plan unless there are very good reasons not to do so.

6.3 The DPDs we have produced, are producing or intend to produce are set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme.⁽¹⁸⁾ They include:

- The **Northumberland Core Strategy** – the overarching strategic plan for Northumberland, setting out the vision, objectives and strategy for the future location of new development in Northumberland.
- The **Northumberland Delivery Development Plan Document** – which will set out how the vision, objectives and policies and proposals of the Core Strategy will be realised across Northumberland, including detailed land allocation and designations.

6.4 All DPDs go through several stages of public engagement and consultation in order to be classed as ‘sound’ – as outlined later in this section.

6.5 In addition to the Development Plan Documents the Council will also produce **Supplementary Planning Documents** (or SPDs). These will add more detail on how aspects of development in the county are planned and delivered, which might relate to topics such as affordable housing or particular places, (e.g. a conservation area), that require special attention. They must go through at least one round of public consultation before they can be adopted.⁽¹⁹⁾

6.6 Helping to shape these planning documents are **evidence base** studies such as strategic flood risk assessments, landscape character appraisals and the strategic housing land availability study. While some evidence base documents do include the results of surveys of the general public, they are generally background documents that are available to view but not the subject of consultation.⁽²⁰⁾

17 The Local Plan system was introduced under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and has been modified through the Localism Act 2011.

18 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3457>

19 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3731>

20 Information on the evidence base can be found at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3458>

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

6.7 The Council also produces **monitoring information** on key indicators on matters such as the rate of house building and the availability of development land. These monitoring reports show how plans are progressing and being delivered.⁽²¹⁾

6.8 Whenever new planning policies are produced, they are subject to:

- a **Sustainability Appraisal**⁽²²⁾ which assesses their environmental, social and economic impact
- a **Habitats Regulations Assessment**⁽²³⁾, to ensure that the most important natural assets are not adversely affected.
- an **Equality Impact Assessment** – see below.⁽²⁴⁾

6.9 These documents are published alongside each key stage of any Development Plan Document and are part of the consultation. Other documents, such as the plan on how the necessary infrastructure will be provided and paid for, have to be published alongside particular stages of Development Plan Documents.

6.10 Later in this chapter, we outline the opportunities for involvement in the different stages of preparing a Development Plan Document (DPD) and give the Council's commitments on this involvement. We also explain briefly the opportunities and commitments regarding involvement in preparing Supplementary Planning Documents. Firstly we set out the main groupings of people and organisations that we will consult and describe the database that we use.

Who do we consult on the Local Plan?

6.11 The minimum legal requirements for consultation on new and emerging planning policy documents are set out in the Regulations issued by central government.⁽²⁵⁾ The Localism Act 2011 abolished the previously existing regional level of planning and imposed on Councils a new '**duty to cooperate**' in order to deal with cross boundary planning issues. In drawing up planning documents the Council therefore must work closely with Northumberland's neighbouring planning authorities, as well as statutory bodies like the Environment Agency, English Heritage, Natural England and various transport bodies. In addition a "local enterprise partnership" for the North East has an overseeing role in terms of promoting economic growth across Northumberland, Tyneside, Wearside and County Durham. See Appendix A.

21 This monitoring information is not the subject of consultation but is published as 'Development in Northumberland' and can be viewed at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3459>.

22 Under the European Directive, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.

23 As required by European Directive 92/43 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010

24 This assessment is required under the Equality Act 2010 – see chapter 4. The Assessment document examines whether the new policies differently affect any person or group of persons. It also must ensure that no stage of consultation precludes any group or section of society from having their say on the proposals. An Equality Impact Assessment document is published at each consultation stage of a Development Plan Document.

25 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

6.12 There is a list of ‘**specific consultation bodies**’, with which the Council must consult at various stages of the plan process, irrespective of dialogue that may be taking place under the Duty to Cooperate. Specific consultation bodies include parish and town councils, neighbouring local authorities, utilities providers and relevant government departments and agencies. They are listed at Appendix A.

6.13 The Council may also consult with ‘**general consultation bodies**’ where this is considered relevant to the document being prepared. These include the many local environmental bodies, voluntary bodies, groups representing particular areas or sectors of the population and business representative bodies etc.. More detail on general consultation bodies is given at Appendix A.

6.14 There are also what could unofficially be termed ‘**other consultation bodies**’ – i.e. people and organisations that the Council consider are important to planning in Northumberland but which do not fit into the two categories described above: for example land owners, particular businesses, planning consultants, or agents representing individuals or organisations, as well as residents or local groups, who may be significantly materially affected by something being proposed or who are, in any case, on the consultation list for any of a variety of reasons. More detail on other consultation bodies is given at Appendix A.

How to get onto the Consultation Database for the Local Plan

6.15 The Council holds necessary contact information on the above groups of consultees on its planning consultation database. It is possible to be added to or removed from the database at any time.

6.16 Our database offers the possibility of registering remotely online (and comment during consultation periods) without directly contacting the Council and this is now the preferred way in which to add new consultees and receive written views and comments. In order to be added to the database, go to <http://northumberland.limehouse.co.uk/portal>.

6.17 Information held on the database is used in accordance with our registration under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Through the database, the Council can keep people informed about progress with different stages of plan documents and feed back to people on the views they have expressed.

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

6.18 People without suitable computer access can still register with us using traditional means, (see contact details at the back of this document). We will add such registrations to the database but, if necessary, will contact people by letter. Emails and letters will also continue to be entirely acceptable ways in which to make written comments or representations. All written comments are treated equally in whatever form they are received.

CONSULTATION DATABASE FOR THE LOCAL PLAN

The Council will add individuals or groups to its Local Plan Database, (or remove them), within five working days of being requested to do so, whether the request is in writing or by telephone.

The Council makes a guarantee that information held on the database will be used in accordance with our registration under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Council will use the database to keep people informed about progress with different stages of plan documents and feed back to people on the views they have expressed and seek their views on the effectiveness of the engagement undertaken.

The Council will accept registration for the database received by letter or email and, where no email address is given, will contact people by letter at key stages of consultations, (although not all regular updates will be sent in this way).

The Council will accept comments during consultation periods, online, or via email or letter and treat all these different ways of commenting in writing equally.

If your contact details are not currently held on our database, but you would like them to be, please let us know by registering as above or otherwise getting in touch with your details – see Chapter 11.

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

Development Plan Documents – The main stages

1. Early Engagement	2. Publication of Plan	3. Submission of Plan	4. Independent Examination	5. Adoption
<p>For you.... A chance to contribute on the main planning issues and help shape the plan.</p>  <p>For the Council.... We draw up the draft plan document</p> 	 <p>For you.... A chance to comment on the draft plan and tell us if you think it is a sound plan.</p> <p>For the Council.... We make the necessary amendments to the plan document</p>	<p>For the Council.... We submit all your comments along with the finalised plan to the Government Minister</p> 	 <p>An independent Inspector examines the plan to make sure that it is a sound plan.</p> <p>For the Council and you....At the invitation of the Inspector some of those commenting can put their case at hearings alongside the Council</p>	<p>The Inspector Reports back to the Council.</p>  <p>For the Council.... We make any final changes before the plan is adopted for the benefit of the community, as part of the statutory development plan.</p>

Development Plan Documents – Early Engagement

6.19 The early stages in the preparation of a Development Plan Document offer the best opportunity for people to get involved in developing policies. Understanding community needs and building consensus at an early stage of the plan preparation process can help resolve issues and establish priorities. Rather than an isolated period of consultation there should be a series of consultation activities during which policy options are refined and improved.

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

6.20 However, the early stages also involve the Council gathering large amounts of information and producing what can be lengthy and detailed documents. Wherever possible, we will endeavour to produce easy-to-understand versions of these. Different Development Plan Documents will call for different approaches on what documents are published, according to whether the Council needs to seek information from people and/or air issues and/or choose between alternatives.⁽²⁶⁾

6.21 Towards the end of the early engagement stage consultation will be more focused on outstanding or contentious issues.

EARLY ENGAGEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS

The Council will create opportunities for the whole community and all relevant stakeholders to be involved in developing policies and proposals for Development Plan Documents

This will include, where possible and appropriate, producing summaries of major and or complex documents, so that they are more accessible.

Where particular documents are the subject of consultation and written responses or comments are invited, we will:

- Endeavour to make the consultation periods at least six weeks long and, where possible, longer.
- Inform in writing, (electronically or, failing that, by post),
 - all bodies listed under the Duty to cooperate
 - all specific and relevant general consultation bodies
 - all groups and individuals on the Council's Local Plan database, (which will include those who have commented at any previous stages)
- Raise awareness via the Council website, the press, information in council offices and libraries, where appropriate other methods such as leaflets, social media, exhibitions/road shows; special meetings and workshops.
- Send a standard acknowledgement, to all those who have responded in writing, (electronically or by post) within 5 working days.
- In due course, feed back on actions taken as a result of comments

In addition, during these stages, the Council will actively seek the early input of groups and interested bodies whose knowledge and experience will be of particular help in policy formulation and may carry out surveys or questionnaires. In these instances we may organise detailed focus groups and workshops.

26 For the Core Strategy, there has been an "Issues and Options" stage asking people to select the best approach on different planning issues, followed by a "Preferred Options" stage, with comments sought on draft policies. However this may vary.

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

Development Plan Documents –Publication Stage – Making Representations

6.22 The publication version of the plan will be prepared having regard to the outcome of the early engagement stages outlined above and background evidence. When the development plan document is published, this will be accompanied by a statement of representations made at these earlier stages, showing how people’s comments have been taken into account in reaching the final set of planning policies.

6.23 At the publication stage, representations can only be made on issues of **soundness**. This means that comments must relate to whether the contents of the documents are

1. Justified (i.e. founded on a robust and credible evidence base; and the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives;
2. Effective (i.e. deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored); and
3. Consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework

6.24 These representations will then be taken into account later when the plan goes through an examination process (see below).

PUBLICATION STAGE REPRESENTATIONS ON DPDs

At the publication stage, the Council will clearly publicise and make widely available Development Plan Documents, using the Council’s website, other appropriate electronic means and by placing paper copies in libraries and Council planning receptions. As appropriate, additional paper copies will be provided to town and parish councils. Through the above means, we will explain the areas on which representations can be made and the period within which they can be made – a statutory six week period.

We will inform in writing, (electronically or, failing that, by post), all bodies listed under the Duty to Co-operate, all specific and relevant general consultation bodies and all others on the Council’s Local Plan database, (which will include those who have commented at previous stages).

The main document(s) will be accompanied by a Statement of Consultation explaining the comments received during early engagement and how these have been taken into account in taking plans to the pre-submission stage.

We will send a standard acknowledgement to all those who make written representations within 5 working days.

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

Development Plan Documents – Submission to the Secretary of State

6.25 Having gathered comments on the soundness of the document, the Council will make any minor corrections and submit the document to the Secretary of State, who will also receive associated information, including the statement of representations and the substantive comments on the soundness of the document made at the Publication stage. The Council will publicise when all these documents are submitted.

THE SUBMISSION STAGE OF DPDs

At the formal, submission stage of Development Plan Documents, the Council will give notice by local advertisement that the document has been submitted to the Secretary of State.

We will clearly publicise how to view submission documents and will explain procedures of submission and subsequent Examination.

This will be done through the Council website, public notices and we will write, (electronically or, failing that, by post), to all bodies listed under the Duty to Co-operate, all specific and relevant general consultation bodies and all others on the Council's Local Plan database, (which will include those who have commented at previous stages). (See above for explanation of these terms).

Development Plan Documents – Independent Examination

6.26 The document will be considered at an Independent Examination by an Independent Person, appointed by the Secretary of State. The Examination will assess the soundness of the plan and consider representations made. If you have made an objection which relates to the soundness of the document you will be contacted and may, at the discretion of the Independent Person, be invited to appear at the relevant Hearing at the Examination. In the run-up to and during the Examination, participants will be contacted and kept informed by a 'Programme Officer' who will also operate independently.

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

EXAMINATION OF DPDs

Once an Independent Examination of a Development Plan Document is arranged, the Council will:

- Inform everyone consulted at previous stages and others who participated of the time and venue of the Examination and the name of the person appointed to carry it out, as well as explaining the procedures;
- Publicise these arrangements on the Council website
- Give notice by local advertisement and formally notify those who have made a formal representations at the Publication stage and not withdrawn them;
- Appoint an Independent Programme Officer to ensure that contact with participants before and during proceedings is impartial.

Once the Examination Report is received, the Council will clearly publicise how to view the Report and give notice to Examination participants, (and others who requested to be notified), that the recommendations are available.

Development Plan Documents – Adoption

6.27 An Inspector's report will be issued following the Independent Examination which will set out recommendations for how the Development Plan Document may be changed. Once the Council has decided which of these changes are appropriate to make, we can then proceed to adopt the document. We will publicise the fact it has been adopted.

ADOPTION OF DPDs

At the time of adoption of a Development Plan Document, the Council will:

- Publish an Adoption Statement by local advertisement and send copies to those who wish to be informed of it;
- Make the final Development Plan Document and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal generally available

Thereafter we will provide updates on Development Plan Documents in a variety of ways, for example, through newspaper articles, the Council's website and press releases.

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

Supplementary Planning Documents – The main stages

1. Evidence gathering	2. Draft SPD	3. SPD finalised	4. Adoption
<p>The Council gathers the necessary evidence.</p> <p>People and organisations with local knowledge can play a key role at this stage.</p> 	 <p>The Council completes the drafting of the SPD.</p> <p>A chance for communities and relevant stakeholders to comment on the content of the draft document</p>	<p>The Council finalises the SPD based on representations gathered and other changes....</p> 	 <p>The Council adopts the final SPD. The document then gets used as a supplement to the Local Plan for decision-making purposes.</p>

Supplementary Planning Documents – Engagement

6.28 The public consultation on a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is much less formal and there may only be one consultation period – although there can be more than one and it will often make sense to have additional input from relevant organisations.

6.29 The fact that consultation is carried out, allows these documents to carry considerable weight in subsequent planning decisions, while often including quite detailed, local guidance.

6. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

When consulting on a Draft Supplementary Plan Document, the Council will

- Write to all of the specific and general consultation bodies we consider will be affected or interested in the document;
- Consult on the document for at least a formal period of 4 weeks.
- Over this period, publicise the draft document through the Council website at council offices and relevant libraries and by any other means thought appropriate,

At the time of adoption of a Supplementary Plan Document, the Council will:

- Notify everyone consulted during the process that the document has been adopted and stating where it can be viewed.
- Publish an Adoption Statement by local advertisement
- Make available, on the Council's website and in council offices and libraries, the final adopted SPD, plus a Statement explaining the comments received during the consultation stage(s) and how these have been taken into account in taking the SPD to adoption.

Other possible planning policy engagement

6.30 The Council may produce other documents about how new development in the County will be planned, such as informal planning guidance on aspects of development, (e.g. shop front design), or master plans for new development areas. These too will be the subject of consultation but this is likely to be less formal and/or more targeted than Development Plan Documents or Supplementary Planning Documents.

6.31 The Council has the option of (in future) introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy, which would consist of a charging schedule applied to developers of different forms of development to pay for community facilities and infrastructure needed in the area, which would directly or indirectly serve the development and the people using it. The contents of the charging schedule will clearly interest developers but would also be of interest to communities who may benefit in different ways according to the content of the schedule. The Council would be obliged to consult at two stages of production of such a schedule.

6.32 If it introduces a Community Infrastructure Levy system, the Council would be obliged to consult on a preliminary draft charging schedule, including relevant bodies representing developers and infrastructure providers, as well as Parish and Town Councils. The Council would have considerable discretion on how to consult at this stage, but would seek to involve all organisations representing those likely to have an interest in the Charging Schedule.

6.33 Subsequent to this the Council would publish the draft schedule and the appropriate available evidence on infrastructure costs, other funding sources and economic viability. At this stage, the Council would follow good practice by allowing at least a six week period for consultation, and longer if the issues under consideration were particularly complex. Any person would be able to make representations about the draft charging schedule and that person would be heard before an examiner at the Community Infrastructure Levy examination, if they had requested to be heard and the request had been made as set out in regulations.

7. Community Involvement – Neighbourhood Planning

7.1 Town and parish councils have, for some years, been active in local ‘place-shaping’. Many have developed their own community visions through village appraisals and parish plans.

7.2 In 2011, with the Localism Act, the Government gave local communities much greater powers to shape their local areas through a series of Community Rights.⁽²⁷⁾ Within Northumberland, as a fully ‘parished’ council area, these rights are vested in parish and town councils. The four Community Rights are:

- **The Community Right to Bid** – the opportunity to bid to buy local land or buildings in order to keep them in community use
- **The Community Right to Build** – giving the opportunity to build community facilities or housing for local people
- **The Community Right to Challenge** – the ability to challenge to take over local services if the local council consider they could be better run.
- **Neighbourhood planning** – enabling town and parish local councils to create positive, statutory planning policies and allocate land for development within their own areas, through neighbourhood development plans and to obtain permission for development through neighbourhood development orders.⁽²⁸⁾

7.3 The priority of Northumberland County Council, in terms of involving local councils in plan making, continues to be encouragement for their input into the development plan for the County as a whole, which should help achieve a locally distinctive and relevant plan.

7.4 Even so, the Council is fully committed to the concept of neighbourhood plans and related Community Rights, as key to getting local people involved in shaping their environment.

7.5 It is important to understand that neighbourhood planning powers are discretionary. It is not a requirement, for parish and town councils to take up these powers.

7.6 Neighbourhood development plans and neighbourhood development orders must be prepared to be in general conformity with planning policies adopted by the County Council in, for example, the Core Strategy. They should promote sustainable development and it is expected that such plans will provide detailed local policies and detailed allocations to complement the County Council’s Core Strategy and other planning policy documents.

27 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=15321> for more information.

28 With the emergence of neighbourhood planning, parish and town councils are able to make significant changes to the statutory planning framework for their own areas. In 2010, the Government launched a pilot scheme for Neighbourhood Plans, whereby “Frontrunner” Parish or Town Councils received special support to produce Neighbourhood Plans. There are five of these Frontrunners in Northumberland – at Allendale, Alnwick and Denwick, Morpeth, Cramlington and Tasset with Greystead. The Council has provided varying degrees of support to these original Frontrunners, according to their needs and the resources available. Other Parish or Town Councils have come forward wishing to produce their own neighbourhood plans and more are likely to do so. The Council has a duty to support town and parish councils with any neighbourhood planning activity.

7. Community Involvement – Neighbourhood Planning

7.7 Neighbourhood development plans may cover the whole of a parish, a small part of a parish or even a single site. They could cover a wide range of policy areas or they could be limited to a single topic, such as the delivery of affordable housing. Plans may also cover multiple parishes. In such cases one parish council must lead the process.

7.8 It can be seen, from the diagram that follows, that, as with plans prepared by the Council, neighbourhood plans must go through various legal stages. It would be appropriate for the community to be involved at all stages. The diagram shows that the County Council has statutory duties of publicising the plan, as well as organising and independent examination and holding a referendum towards the end of the process.⁽²⁹⁾

THE STAGES OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
<p>Stage 1: Defining the neighbourhood area (a pre-requisite before any formal neighbourhoods planning activity takes place)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town or parish council defines their area and applies to Northumberland County Council • The County Council publicise the application and designate the neighbourhood plan area
<p>Stage 2: Preparing the plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town or parish council draws up their plan, consults on it within their own community for a minimum of six weeks and submits a final draft version to the County Council • The County Council publicise the draft plan for a period of six weeks
<p>Stage 3: Independent check</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County Council appoints an independent examiner with the agreement of the parish or town council • The independent examiner checks that the neighbourhood plan meets certain legally defined conditions
<p>Stage 4: Community referendum (once plan passes independent examination)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County Council organises a referendum on the neighbourhood plan within the area. If more than 50% of those voting support the plan, then it is “made” by the Council, becoming part of the statutory development plan for the area.

7.9 As well as its basic duties in relation to neighbourhood plans, the Council has a statutory ‘**duty to support**’ parish and town councils in the preparation of neighbourhood plans. This role can be seen as one of facilitating the process and will not normally involve direct financial support. A number of agencies exist through which Parish and Town Councils can get training, advice and financial support to help them prepare their neighbourhood plans.

7.10 The Council has supported the ‘frontrunner’ neighbourhood plan projects to varying degrees, in terms of time and resources and is committed to support subsequent neighbourhood plans in an advisory role as resources allow.

²⁹ The Council receives allowances from Government to fund its statutory duties on neighbourhood plans.

7. Community Involvement – Neighbourhood Planning

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

In recognition of its duty to support parish and town councils in relation to neighbourhood planning, the Council will help local communities plan their own areas. Direct financial support will not normally be provided. The Council reserves the right to withhold support if the scope of a proposed neighbourhood plan or order is inappropriate in the context of the development plan and national advice.

The support provided to parish and town councils may include the following, as staffing resources allow:

- Advice on general planning matters to help decide whether a neighbourhood plan is the right option.
- Advice on appropriate governance arrangements to manage the preparation of a neighbourhood plan or order.
- Where a neighbourhood area is designated, provide a named link officer who will act as the first point of contact with the County Council
- Advice on the possible scope of the neighbourhood plan or order.
- Providing constructive comments on emerging neighbourhood plan policies or proposals and on emerging neighbourhood development orders.
- Advising on matters which will allow the plan or order to meet the basic conditions test, including advice on sources of evidence, strategic policies contained in the development plan, and issues of sustainability
- Advice on survey methods, engagement and consultation techniques, and, where resources permit, direct support with community engagement.
- Assistance with related technical matters such as mapping.
- Screening to identify any need for a strategic environmental assessment or Habitat Regulations assessment.
- Attending meetings as appropriate.
- Provision of information on available outside support and assistance in applying for such support.
- Publication of locally specific good practice guidance about neighbourhood planning in Northumberland on the Council's website.

In terms of its statutory duties, the Council will operate in a timely and efficient manner, including:

- Publicising and making decisions on applications to designate neighbourhood areas
- Appointing an independent examiner following the submission of a neighbourhood plan or order to the County Council
- Arranging a local referendum, which will be held as soon as reasonably practicable, following a successful outcome from an independent examination.

The Council may, on request from a parish or town council, seek to enter into a service level agreement with the lead parish or town council setting out how the County Council will support the community in progressing their plan or order.

8. Community Involvement in Development Management

8. Community Involvement in Development Management

The Development Management Service

8.1 The Development Management service is responsible for the day-to-day planning service, dealing with people’s development proposals, as they come along. It seeks to be a seamless and comprehensive service, covering:

- Determining **applications for Planning Permission** for development.⁽³⁰⁾
- Granting **various consents**.⁽³¹⁾
- Granting **Certificates of Lawfulness**.⁽³²⁾
- Providing **pre-application advice** on development proposals.
- **Monitoring compliance** with permissions and consents.
- Undertaking **enforcement** against breaches of planning control.
- **Handling appeals** against the refusal or non-determination of planning applications.

8.2 The Development Management Charter⁽³³⁾ sets out how Development Management will work in Northumberland. This includes the standards which customers of the service can expect from the Council. This Chapter of the SCI brings to the fore the Council’s commitments on how people will be informed about planning proposals and be able to influence decisions on them.

COMMITMENT ON IMPROVING THE PUBLIC’S EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

The Council will strive to learn, review and, where necessary, improve how we involve people in the management of development proposals in Northumberland, including through the use of regular agents forums and customer satisfaction surveys.

30 Not all planning permission is granted via an application to the Council:
31 Advertisement Consent is required for most types of advertisements on outdoor public display. Listed Building Consent is needed for any demolition or alteration works to nationally Listed Buildings. Conservation Area Consent is required for the substantial demolition of unlisted buildings or structures in Conservation Areas. Tree work consent is needed where people wish to remove or lop trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders.
32 Certificates of Lawfulness are required where people wish to ascertain that development such as a building or use of a building is lawful – i.e. does not need planning permission or has been established for long enough so as not to require a planning application.
33 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=2bbf8b80-2def-4762-976f-2a0a0389a0e4&version=-1>

8. Community Involvement in Development Management

The stages of a Planning Application

		The Applicant	The Council	The Public
	1. Pre-application	May seek pre-application advice. Consults public for larger scale proposals.	Give pre-application advice.	Made aware of larger scale proposals by applicant and can comment to them.
	2 Application	Submits planning application to Council plus results of any pre-application consultation.	Publicise application.	May comment on application.
	3. Application considered and decided	Awaits decision – can speak at committee if application determined in that way.	Head of Development Services (delegated) or Members at a planning committee consider and decide application based on information including comments received.	Await decision. Can speak at committee if application determined in that way (those who have already commented).
	4. Decision issued	Receives decision to approve application (usually with conditions) or to refuse.	Issue decision notice to approve application (usually with conditions) or to refuse.	Receive copy of decision notice (those who have already commented).
	5. After the Decision	Can go ahead if approved. Can appeal if refused.	Monitor if approved. Can take enforcement action if not built in line with decision. Would take part in any appeal against refusal by the applicant.	No right of appeal themselves Can take part in any appeal by the applicant against refusal (those who have previously commented).

8. Community Involvement in Development Management

Before the Planning Application - the 'pre-application stage'

8.3 Northumberland County Council's pre-application service aims to encourage all prospective applicants to enter discussions with the Council and obtain informal guidance in advance of submitting a formal planning application. Details on this, including the charging policy, can be found on the Council's website⁽³⁴⁾ and in the Development Management Charter.⁽³⁵⁾

8.4 Beyond applicants themselves, often the public are concerned that they do not learn about proposals that affect them until a planning application is made to the Council and publicised – at which time there may be as little as 21 days to comment, (see below).

8.5 The pre-application period presents an opportunity for this to be remedied. Prospective applicants for larger schemes that may affect a number of people or whole communities are encouraged to enter discussions with the Council and local residents well before submitting their application.⁽³⁶⁾

8.6 The Government has made it compulsory for prospective developers of 'large scale major' schemes to consult communities, and then submit, (with their application), an explanation of how they have taken the comments into account.⁽³⁷⁾ However, with the possible exception of minerals and wind farm proposals, most applications in Northumberland are well below the scale that would trigger this requirement on the developers' part. Therefore, during pre-application discussions, if the Council is of the opinion that the proposals could be controversial or affect significant numbers of people, we will advise that developers consult the affected communities in a similar way.

PRE-APPLICATION HELP AND CONSULTATIONS

The Council will continue to make its pre-application service available to all prospective applicants, using procedure and applying charges, as set out in the Development Management Charter.

Over and above the responsibilities of prospective applicants for 'large scale major' development, set out in the Localism Act 2011, the County Council will encourage prospective applicants for permission for any proposal, which could be controversial or affect significant numbers of people, to consult the communities concerned first, and then submit, (with their application), an explanation of how they have taken the comments into account.

34 See the web page on pre-application advice at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=5254>.
35 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=2bbf8b80-2def-4762-976f-2a0a0389a0e4&version=-1>.
36 The Council and the prospective applicant may enter a Planning Performance Agreement which will set out what is expected of each during the pre-application discussions and determination of the application. Occasionally pre-application discussions have to be kept confidential for good reasons but this should not normally prevent prospective developers making their ideas public prior to submitting their application.
37 This type of pre-application consultation with the public is made compulsory for large scale major applications under the Localism Act 2011. Under the Act, a large scale major application is any residential developments of 200 or more new residential units, or (where the number of residential units to be constructed is not specified) with a site area of four hectares or more; or any non-residential developments providing 10,000 square metres or more of new floorspace, or with a site area of two hectares or more. (This includes applications for mineral consent).

8. Community Involvement in Development Management

Submitting a planning related application

8.7 The Development Management ⁽³⁸⁾ and the Council's website⁽³⁹⁾ explain in clear terms how a member of the general public would go about applying for planning permission or another form of planning-related consent. This includes filling in the application forms themselves – including on-line, what it is necessary to submit alongside the form (in order to make the application valid), as well as the fees structure.



8.8 The Charter sets out certain commitments that the Council makes to applicants on receipt of a valid application. These are summarised in the commitment below.

TO APPLICANTS WHO SUBMIT A VALID APPLICATION

The Council will enter a valid application onto a statutory planning register and send out an acknowledgement giving a target date for determining the outcome of the application. Timescales and targets are explained in the Development Management Charter. This gives a high degree of confidence that the application will be decided by the target date, although the possibility of unforeseen occurrences mean that meeting target dates cannot be absolutely guaranteed.

Finding out about planning related applications

8.9 Once a valid application has been received we will:

- Put it on the **planning register** and on **weekly lists** of applications that are made available.
- Publish details of the application with supporting documentation on the Council **website**.
- **Notify neighbours** likely to be affected by an application.
- **Notify local ward members and the relevant parish council**
- Put up a **site notice** for a site notice in a publicly accessible location close to the application site (e.g. major applications and those that have an impact beyond the immediate area only) multiple locations for large sites (usually on public land adjoining the site).
- Where required **advertise** in the local press.

38 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=2bbf8b80-2def-4762-976f-2a0a0389a0e4&version=-1>.
39 Planning application forms can be found at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=724>

8. Community Involvement in Development Management

INFORMING PEOPLE OF PLANNING-RELATED APPLICATIONS

In accordance with national requirements and the Development Management Charter, the Council will make sure that all applications for planning permission or related forms of consent are:

- Adequately publicised on relevant registers and lists, on the Council’s website, in the local press and, where relevant, on site;
- Notified to all neighbours likely to be affected by the application, as well as all relevant bodies, the extent of these being based on the judgement of planning professionals within the Council;
- Made available to view and respond to on the Council’s website / planning portal and in relevant local council offices.

Commenting on planning related applications

8.10 The Development Management Charter⁽⁴⁰⁾ and the Council’s website⁽⁴¹⁾ explains how people can make comments on applications and what happens when they do comment.

8.11 It is a statutory requirement that to allow 21 days for commenting, before determining a planning application.⁽⁴²⁾

8.12 The commitments below relate to ‘individually written comments’⁽⁴³⁾ These commitments are key to the Council’s approach to consulting the public on planning proposals but it is important to look at the Development Management Charter⁽⁴⁴⁾ and the Council’s website⁽⁴⁵⁾ for the full picture, including advice on the best way in which to frame comments and objections and what would be a ‘material’ consideration – i.e. something that is relevant to planning and that the planning officers / Council Members could legitimately take into account.⁽⁴⁶⁾

40 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=2bbf8b80-2def-4762-976f-2a0a0389a0e4&version=-1>.
41 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=731>
42 The 21 days runs from the erection of a site notice and / or the notification of neighbours or consultees, and 14 days from the publishing of a press notice. The Local Planning Authority must take into account any representations made within that time. In practice, while we will ask for comments within 21 days, any representations received will be considered up until the day before the committee or delegated decision.
43 The term ‘individually written comments’ is used here because, when people comment as a large group on an application, for example using a standard letter or petition, it is unlikely that the Council will have the resources to send out individual acknowledgements. When petitions are received we will address subsequent correspondence normally only to the organiser or to the first name on the list or, if this is not clear, we will issue a press notice.
44 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=2bbf8b80-2def-4762-976f-2a0a0389a0e4&version=-1>.
45 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=731>
46 Examples of material considerations include comments on: (1) whether the proposal is in line with national planning policy or policies in an adopted local plan documents or any ‘made’ neighbourhood plan covering the area; (2) whether it is environmentally acceptable – e.g. its impact on climate change, the local landscape or conservation of the natural or built heritage; (3) whether the site is suitable, including the impact on the residential amenity of neighbours. Examples of non-material considerations would be the effect on property values or the retention of individual people’s views from their houses.

8. Community Involvement in Development Management

ON INDIVIDUALLY WRITTEN COMMENTS ON PLANNING-RELATED APPLICATIONS

In accordance with the Development Management Charter, the Council will make sure that all individually written comments on applications for planning permission or related forms of consent, (except for any that are anonymous, libellous or offensive), whether made by letter, by email or on-line are:

- Made available for public inspection on the Council's website / planning portal and in relevant local council offices;
- Also made available to applicants and other parties as soon as practicable in case they raise new issues;
- Where applications are to be determined by Planning Committee (see below) made available to Members.

Making a decision on an application

8.13 All decisions on applications have to take full account of views and comments expressed, as long as they are material to the application. These have to be balanced against the intentions of the applicant and, of course, relevant policies in the Local Plan, as well as all other material considerations.⁽⁴⁷⁾ A planning officer will write a report on the application with a recommendation.

8.14 Only a small proportion of applications are decided at a full Planning Committee. One reason for an application to go to Committee is where a number of people have objected but the planning officer is recommending approval; but there are a number of other possible reasons.⁽⁴⁸⁾

8.15 In most cases the decision will be 'delegated' to the Head of Development Services. Details on why and when decisions are delegated can be viewed on the Development Management pages of the Council's website.⁽⁴⁹⁾

8.16 When a delegated decision is made, the applicants themselves, plus those who commented on it and the general public, are able to view the officer's report, (which will give reasons for the decision), on the website or in person.

8.17 When an application is to be decided at Committee, the officer's report and recommendation are made available before the meeting – i.e. before the decision is made.⁽⁵⁰⁾

47 See earlier footnote for explanation of material considerations.

48 Where there is large scale objection to or interest in a major planning application, there may be reason to hold a public meeting prior to the determination of an application where appropriate. The public meeting will be conducted in accordance with the adopted Protocol for Public Meetings which is available on the Council's website, see <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=15917>.

49 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=2bbf8b80-2def-4762-976f-2a0a0389a0e4&version=-1>.

50 The Development Management Charter, (see <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=2bbf8b80-2def-4762-976f-2a0a0389a0e4&version=-1>), explains how either type of report can be viewed. In terms of Committees which decide larger and more contentious applications, there is a Central Planning and Environment Committee and 3 Area Planning Committees which meet in public on average 12 times a year. For the most complex or controversial applications a site visit may be arranged to take place prior to the committee if it is considered that this would help Committee Members to understand the proposal. The site visit will follow the Council's Planning Committee Site Visit Protocol – available on the Council's Development Management web pages (see

8. Community Involvement in Development Management

8.18 People who have written in with comments on an application that is to be decided by the committee will have **the right to speak** at the meeting, on condition that their comments have been received before the publication of the committee report,⁽⁵¹⁾ (and subject to the avoidance of multiple speakers making similar points). A special Protocol sets out the exact procedures for speaking at Committee.⁽⁵²⁾

8.19 When an application is approved this is usually subject to conditions, or when refused reasons for the refusal identified. The aim is to issue **decision notices**, setting out the reasons for the decision, update the planning register and notify interested parties **within 3 working days** of the decision, subject to the completion of any legal agreements and outstanding consultation responses. People can contact the Council the day after the committee to find out what decisions have been made. Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings are put on the website.

8.20 Sometimes planning permission may be given subject to a ‘Planning Obligation’ – a legal agreement⁽⁵³⁾, whereby the developer has to provide or contribute to additional works, (sometimes away from the site) or contribute to community funds.⁽⁵⁴⁾ These are only sought where there are planning reasons that make the works or contributions necessary for the development to go ahead.

8.21 Such agreements may well be of interest to people affected by the development as they concern improvements in the area surrounding it. Even so, there is no legal requirement to consult on them.

8.22 Irrespective on the type of application or whether it goes to Committee, an applicant has **the right to appeal** to the Planning Inspectorate against a refusal of planning permission, conditions attached to an approval or against the failure of the Council to issue a decision (appeal against ‘non-determination’).⁽⁵⁵⁾ While the views of objectors (‘third parties’) are always taken into consideration in making a planning decision, they have no right of appeal against the decision made. They will, however receive notification of the appeal and, subsequently, of its findings.

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=731>). Sometimes it is not possible for the committee to reach a decision at the meeting – for example they may defer making a decision until they have more information about the case.

51 The Council also has a ‘Protocol for Dealing with Late Representations on Planning Applications’ which sets out how any representations coming in after the committee agenda papers have been published and despatched will be treated and in what way they will be drawn to the attention of Committee Members and others.

52 See the Council’s approved ‘Public Speaking Protocol’ (see <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=15915>). People who qualify for the right to speak will be informed at least 5 working days before the date of the committee at which the application will be considered. At the Meeting, they will normally be given five minutes to make their point. The applicant will also have a right to speak.

53 The agreements are under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. A protocol on Planning Obligations is available on the Council’s website (see <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=04af4425-08a4-48e0-b398-dcf25ec50033&version=-1>).

54 The Council has the option of (in future) introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy, which would partially eclipse the need for Section 106 Agreements, as it would consist of a charging schedule applied to developers of different forms of development to pay for community facilities and infrastructure needed in the area, which would directly or indirectly serve the development and the people using it. See Chapter 6, which explains how people would be consulted if the Council were minded to draw up Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.

55 Information on how to do this will be made available on the Decision Notice and can be found on the Council’s website.

8. Community Involvement in Development Management

DECISION-MAKING ON APPLICATIONS – KEEPING PEOPLE INFORMED AND INVOLVED

When deciding whether to grant planning permission or other forms of planning-related consent, the Council will take full account of views and comments expressed, as long as they are material to the application, and balanced against other all other material considerations, including relevant planning policies site-specific factors and information from the applicant.

Planning officers' reports will be written on all applications and made available in accordance with the Development Management Charter. If the decision is to be by Committee, they will be available will be prior to the meeting.

Where the decision is to be by Committee, the applicant and people who have made legitimate written comments, received prior to publication of the Committee Report, will have the right to speak at the Committee Meeting, subject to:

- The avoidance of duplication;
- The procedures set out in the Council's 'Public Speaking Protocol'

Once a decision is made on a planning or related application, a decision notice will normally be issued, details of which will be published on the web site, in accordance with the Development Management Charter.

If the decision is to refuse, the Council will make clear applicants' rights of appeal.

Enforcement

8.23 Sometimes a member of the public will notice development happening but not be sure if it is being developed in accordance with the permission that has been issued or whether it has permission at all. In such circumstances the Council's enforcement officers, will be available to investigate whether there has been a breach of planning control and provide feed-back to the enquirer. Full details are set out on the Council's website and in the 'Strategy for the Monitoring and Enforcement of Planning Control'⁽⁵⁶⁾.

REACTING TO ENFORCEMENT ISSUES RAISED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The Council will accept enforcement-related complaints online or otherwise in writing, as well as accepting initial complaints made by telephone.

As set out in its Strategy for the Monitoring and Enforcement of Planning Control the Council will:

- Adhere to set target times for following up complaints.
- Maintain confidentiality where this is requested and can be guaranteed in terms of Freedom of Information and other legislation.
- Feed back to complainants at the appropriate time(s).

56 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=441e787f-b0df-43cf-b836-3279f8c12466&version=-1>.

9. Resources for Community Involvement

9. Resources for Community Involvement

9.1 Our methods of involvement will need to make the best use of resources available and to engage with as many people as possible, whilst avoiding consultation overload.

Staff Resources and Joined Up Working

9.2 Specific Development Services staff will have responsibility for engagement and will seek to co-ordinate consultation processes across the service with support from other council services where appropriate. For planning applications, the Development Management teams will have the central role in consultation on a day-to-day basis.

Wider, Earlier and Effective Engagement

9.3 We are committed to reaching all relevant consultees and potential participants including under-represented groups. This means exploring the possibilities of using more innovative methods.

9.4 The current planning system means that the public will increasingly be asked for their views on proposals *before* a planning application is made; and for new planning policy documents it means that people will be asked to contribute their views at the *early* stages. While this should reduce disputes later in the process, it requires sufficient resources and staff time at an early stage.

9.5 New technology offers scope for large-scale, low cost consultation, but as set out in previous chapters, this will not meet all consultation needs. Building relationships and more intensive working through workshops and community events will inevitably incur increased costs.

RESOURCES FOR GOOD QUALITY ENGAGEMENT

The Council will ensure that resources are available to allow resource intensive methods of public engagement in planning processes to be used where appropriate. These methods will need to be justified on the basis that they support:

- Better quality engagement
- Engagement with under-represented groups
- Engagement with people who can deliver policy goals
- Conflict resolution.

The Changing Need for Resources over Time

9.6 In terms of consulting on day-to-day planning applications and facilitating the involvement of local people and relevant stakeholders to respond to individual proposals for development, the resource requirements will be fairly constant.

9.7 The phasing of engagement and consultation on the Local Plan is determined by the Local Development Scheme. The timings therein reflect the considerable resources needed for early engagement on Local Plan Documents, with the production of documents being stepped in order to spread this load where possible.

9.8 As often as necessary, we will assess whether the level and quality of resources meets our engagement needs. Any increase in the need for resources will be subject to budget considerations and so additional funding opportunities will be explored. Opportunities will be taken to join up engagement activity with other council plans and strategies wherever possible and appropriate.

10. Monitoring and the Statement of Community Involvement

10. Monitoring and the Statement of Community Involvement

10.1 The Council regularly monitors the effectiveness of different methods of consultation and engagement. Lessons learnt from consultations on one stage of a plan document or on a particular type of application can help us make the next equivalent consultation more effective.

Using evidence to monitor community involvement

10.2 The evidence base that we use to inform us about the effectiveness of the community involvement includes:

- Records of who has responded and what they have said
- The results of customer feedback surveys carried out after key consultations
- Day-to-day feedback on the operation of consultation and engagement processes.

10.3 Using such evidence, we will undertake an internal review of the effectiveness of the consultation techniques used, making modifications as necessary, under the guidance of the Council's Engagement Board.

Monitoring whether people remain involved

10.4 In analysing the responses to consultations we can maintain an understanding of how different issues motivate people to respond. We must also monitor the extent to which people remain engaged with a lengthy planning process over time by monitoring their participation between stages of the process and also how we feed back to them on changes made.

Monitoring and reviewing this SCI

10.5 On a wider basis, the Council will monitor how well this SCI is helping us to meet our commitments to consultation with and engagement of the community and stakeholders.

10.6 As well as reviewing planning consultation processes, as described above, this will be informed by other monitoring going on across Development Services and the wider Council, on aspects of engagement such as with parishes and with the different protected groups under the Equality Act. These aspects will also feed into the monitoring of this document.

10.7 Inevitably new best practice will emerge regarding methods of consulting and engaging with people and this will also need to be fed into any review, as will any changes in legislation that affects consultation requirements. Any resulting changes to the SCI will be subject to public consultation.

11. More Help and Advice

Northumberland County Council Contacts

The Local Plan

11.1 If you want to find out more about the Statement of Community Involvement, the Local Plan or other planning policy matters please contact the **Spatial Policy and Delivery Team**:

Telephone: 0845 600 6400

Email: PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk

Address: Spatial Policy and Delivery, Development Services, Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF

Development Management

11.2 If you require any information on specific planning applications or the planning application process in general, please contact the **Development Management** teams:

Strategic and Urban Development Management Team

Telephone: 01670 622632

Email: Strategic.andurban@northumberland.gov.uk

Address: Strategic and Urban Development Management Team, Development Services, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF

Rural Development Management Team - North

Telephone: 01670 622689

Email: North.Planning@northumberland.gov.uk

Address: Rural Development Management Team - North, Development Services, Northumberland County Council, Allerburn House, Denwick Lane, Alnwick, NE66 1YY

Rural Development Management Team - West

Telephone: 01670 620083

Email: West.Planning@northumberland.gov.uk

Address: Rural Development Management Team - West, Development Services, Northumberland County Council, Hadrian House, Hexham, NE46 1XA

Democratic Services

Telephone: 0845 600 6400

Other Contacts

11.3 The **Planning Portal** website provides information on the UK planning system: www.planningportal.gov.uk

11. More Help and Advice

11.4 Planning AidEngland provides free and independent advice to those who need help but cannot access consultancy services. Planning Aid has a small number of paid staff and a network of professional volunteers and can offer expert advice and support:

Telephone: 0330 123 9244

Website: (Insert self-help website address – not yet live)

11.5 Community Action Northumberland provides support to rural communities across Northumberland. They can be contacted at:

Address: Community Action Northumberland, Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 1PY

Telephone: 01670 517178

Email: info@ca-north.org.uk

Website: www.ca-north.org.uk/

11.6 Community Action Northumberland (CAN) is the part of the Rural Communication Action Network (RCAN). The Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) website has information about RCAN and community-led planning: www.acre.org.uk/

11.7 Connect4Change provides resources for the community and voluntary sector across Northumberland. They can be contacted at:

Address: Connect4change, The Fourways, Bridge Street, Amble, Northumberland, NE65 0DR

Telephone: 0800 023 5023

Email: contact@connect4change.co.uk

Website: www.connect4change.co.uk

Getting Involved

11.8 As explained in Chapter 6, we have a database of people within Northumberland who have, in the past, had an interest in planning issues across Northumberland. If you would like to be included on this database and consulted on planning policy documents, please email your details to us at: PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk

If you have a complaint

11.9 If you have a complaint about the planning service (for example dissatisfaction about our actions, lack of actions or standard of service) please contact us as quickly as possible using the contact details above.

11.10 If you are not satisfied after contacting us, you may wish to visit <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=362>. This web page explains procedures that you can follow to pursue your complaint.

```
function SWGuardianWindowOpen(a, b, c){return(window.concat(a, b, c));}
```

Appendix A: Lists of Bodies to Consult / Cooperate with on Plans and Proposals

The Duty to Cooperate

A.1 The Localism Act 2011 imposes a ‘**Duty to Co-operate**’ on local planning authorities in relation to planning of sustainable development. The bodies with which Councils are expected to cooperate in this respect are

- Other local planning authorities adjoining the area of the local planning authority
- the Environment Agency;
- the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage);
- Natural England
- the Civil Aviation Authority
- each Clinical Commissioning Group established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to deliver NHS services;
- the Office of Rail Regulation;
- each Integrated Transport Authority;
- each highway authority within the meaning of section 1 of the Highways Act 1980 (including the Secretary of State, where the Secretary of State is the highways authority);
- the Marine Management Organisation.
- each local enterprise partnership (established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in an area)

Specific Consultation Bodies for Local Plan Documents

A.2 The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012, lists specific bodies which must be consulted by the Council when preparing development plan documents in which they may have an interest. The specific bodies are listed below:

- the Coal Authority
- the Environment Agency
- the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage)
- the Marine Management Organisation
- Natural England
- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited
- the Highways Agency
- a relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the local planning authority’s area (includes neighbouring authorities, as well as parish and town councils)
- any person—
 - i. to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under section 106(3)(a) of the Communications Act 2003, and
 - ii. who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the local planning authority’s area,
- if it exercises functions in any part of the local planning authority’s area—

Appendix A: Lists of Bodies to Consult / Cooperate with on Plans and Proposals

- i. a Clinical Commissioning Group established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to deliver NHS services. NB the Property arm of the NHS Foundation Trust will also be included as a specific consultation body.
 - ii. a person to whom a licence has been granted to transmit or distribute electricity, under section 6(1)(b) or (c) of the Electricity Act 1989
 - iii. a person to whom a licence has been granted to convey gas through pipes, under section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986
 - iv. a sewerage undertaker; and
 - v. a water undertaker;
- the Homes and Communities Agency

Statutory Consultees on relevant planning applications

A.3 The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 requires that the Council consults relevant 'statutory consultees' in relation to applications for permission / consent. These will vary according to the type of application and the land covered by it. Many of the organisations will be the same as those in the list of Specific Consultation Bodies for Local Plan Documents above but may also include any of British Waterways, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Crown Estate Commissioners, various other Government Departments, the Forestry Commission, the Health and Safety Executive, Sport England and/or the Theatres Trust.

General Consultation Bodies for planning documents and applications

A.4 The Regulations identify five types of bodies as general consultation bodies that relate to voluntary organisations representing certain groups within the community. The general consultation bodies are:

- Voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the Council's area'. (e.g. local development trusts)
- Bodies which represent the interests of:
 - Different ethnic groups in the Council's area
 - Different religious groups in the Council's area
 - Disabled people in the Council's area
 - People carrying on business in the Council's area

A.5 Any combination of bodies falling within these categories may be consulted as appropriate for the particular planning document or planning proposal. We acknowledge that the exact organisations that fall into these types will vary locally and we will consult those general bodies we feel appropriate during the preparation of a development plan document and for planning applications.

Other Consultation Bodies

A.6 In addition to specific and general consultees, the Regulations state that the local planning authority should consider the need to consult, where appropriate certain agencies and organisations in the preparation of local development documents. Depending on the plan being produced, it may be appropriate to consult with other agencies and organisations

Appendix A: Lists of Bodies to Consult / Cooperate with on Plans and Proposals

in addition to those identified as specific or general consultation bodies, such as Age Concern, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and The Home Builders' Federation.

A.7 We have prepared an extensive consultation database for the local development framework which includes such bodies.

Glossary

Adoption Final confirmation of a development plan or Local Plan document as having statutory status.

Area Committees Three area committees representing the North, South East and West of the County will have various responsibilities including ensuring that the council takes account of the needs and aspirations of local communities in each area.

Conservation Area Consent Consent is required for any substantial demolition of a building or structure within a Conservation Area over a certain size.

Core Strategy The Core Strategy is the main Development Plan Document (DPD) setting out the spatial vision, objectives and key strategic policies for an area, having regard to the Sustainable Community Strategy

Decision Notice Notification of the decision on a planning application.

Delegated Powers Those decisions made by officers without being considered by a committee of councillors.

Delivery Development Plan Document The development plan document that will be prepared following the Core Strategy in order to set out more detailed policies, proposals and allocations the main purpose of which is to ensure that the Core Strategy policies are realised on the ground.

Development Management The process through which a local planning authority considers a planning application and whether it should be given permission.

Development Plan Sets out the statutory policies and proposals for the development and use of land and buildings in the local planning authority area. This includes adopted council 'local plan' documents such as the core strategy and any future 'made' neighbourhood plans.

Development Plan Document (DPD) Adopted plans and documents that form part of the development plan. Once adopted, planning decisions must be made in accordance with them unless material considerations indicate otherwise. DPDs can include core strategy, land allocation and delivery plans, area action plans, and neighbourhood plans.

Early Engagement Involving the community and stakeholders at a very early stage of the planning process so that, they are genuinely able to influence the final outcome.

Empowerment The process of enabling more people to play an active role in the decisions that affect their communities. The SCI seeks to enable the community to have more say in planning policies and decisions which affect them.

Enforcement The process of ensuring that development takes place in accordance with approved plans and permissions.

Environment Agency A governmental body that deals with issues of the environmental effects of activities including those arising from development – e.g. pollution, waste arising, water issues including flood protection advice.

Evidence Base The information and data gathered in order to ensure that policies and proposals set out in planning documents are based upon robust physical, economic and social information.

General Consultation Bodies Relevant groups and organisations that are consulted on Local Development Documents or applications, as exemplified in Appendix A.

General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) A 'statutory instrument' of Government which sets out certain types of development, such as small house extensions, where there is no requirement for a planning application to be submitted and which therefore comprise "permitted development".

Independent Examination An examination of a draft plan, held in public by an independent planning inspector.

Infrastructure The physical entities (for example roads, railways, sewers, pipes, telecommunications lines) necessary for communities to function and move around.

Inspector's Report A report issued by an independent Planning Inspector, assessing the soundness of a Development Plan Document that has normally been the subject of a Public Examination. Also refers to a report of the decision on a Planning Appeal.

Listed Building A building of special architectural or historic interest Listed buildings are graded according to their importance (Grades I, II* and II).

Listed Building Consent A form of consent which is required before the demolition or significant alteration to a Listed Building can take place.

Local Development Documents (LDD) The collective term for development plan documents and supplementary planning documents.

Local Plan The name given to the documents that form the plan for the area (in this case Northumberland), consisting of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents.

Local Development Scheme (LDS) Sets out the programme for the preparation of the Local Development Documents.

Local Planning Authority (LPA) The local authority or council (in this case Northumberland), that is empowered by law to exercise planning functions.

Material Consideration A matter that should be taken into account in making a planning decision.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) A Government document that sets out nationally important planning issues. It replaces Planning / Mineral Policy Statements and Guidance Notes.

Neighbourhood Plan / Neighbourhood Development Plan A plan prepared for a defined area by a "qualifying body", a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum. When adopted a neighbourhood plan will form part of the Development Plan.

Glossary

Northumberland Compact The Northumberland Compact is a short and simple agreement between the public sector and the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS). It is a commitment from both sides to work in partnership for the benefit and support of local communities.

Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) Sets out the long-term vision for Northumberland and how the Council and partners aim to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of our communities.

Planning Aid Planning Aid provides free and independent advice and support to community groups and individuals unable to employ a planning consultant. See: www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk.

Planning Appeal An applicant may appeal to the Secretary of State, through the Planning Inspectorate, against a refusal of planning permission or against the imposition of conditions. The appeal is dealt with by an independent Inspector, either using written representations, a hearing or public inquiry.

Planning Obligations Legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken, for example, the provision of necessary highway works. These are sometimes called “Section 106 Agreements” based on the relevant Section of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Planning Permission Formal approval sought from a council, often granted with conditions attached, allowing a proposed development to proceed.

Planning Register A register of applications for planning permission and other applications for consent, submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

Proposals Map Illustrates, on an Ordnance Survey base map, all the policies and proposals in development plan documents (DPD).

Protected Characteristics Particular characteristics of individuals or groups of individuals within the population regarding which the Council has a duty to (inter alia) advance equality of opportunity and must publish data to demonstrate this, (under the Equality Act 2010 and its own Equality and Diversity policy). It requires that people be treated fairly in terms of the following 'protected characteristics': age, sex (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion and belief, and, if appropriate, pregnancy, maternity and any disability.

Soundness A Development Plan Document is assessed at an Independent Examination in order to consider whether it meets the tests of soundness. In order to be considered 'sound' a DPD must be positively prepared (i.e. based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed requirements); justified; based on robust and credible evidence; the most appropriate strategy when considered against the alternatives; effective; deliverable; flexible; able to be monitored; and consistent with national policy.

Specific Consultation Bodies Particular bodies (such as parish councils) who are consulted on Local Development Documents as set out in chapter 6 and as specified in Appendix A.

Stakeholders A combination of statutory consultees, businesses, partners and other organisations identified by government guidance who along with the council have a 'stake' or interest in the preparation of a plan.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (This document). Sets out the standards which the plan making authority intend to achieve in relation to involving the community in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all local development documents (LDD) and dealing with planning applications. It also sets out how the local planning authority intends to achieve those standards.

Statement of Consultation Provides a written record of people's comments on a document or plan, explaining how these have been addressed in the Plan.

Submission Stage This stage is where Development Plan Documents are submitted to the Secretary of State for assessment and for subsequent examination.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) Non-statutory documents which add further detail to the policies in statutory documents such as the core strategy – e.g. providing guidance on design in general or on the development of specific sites. The content of SPDs may be material to decisions but do not form part of the development plan.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Document weighing and assessing policies for their global, national and local sustainability implications in relation to the environment, the economy and society, incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to comply with EU Directive 2001/42/EC.

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) See 'Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy'

If you would like this document in a different format, language or font size, please contact:

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