

Statement of Community Involvement in Planning



Draft for Consultation - 2014

Contents

What is a Statement of Community Involvement	P.3
1 - Introduction	P.4
Corporate Linkages	P.5
How can I get involved?	P.6
2 - Community Involvement in Planning Policy (the 'Local Plan')	P.7
3 - Community Involvement in Development Management (‘Planning Applications’)	P.16
Appendices	P.22

Foreword

“Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand.”
Chinese Proverb

This is particularly important in planning, as decisions impact directly on the future of our District and all of us as individuals. We want as much of the community as possible to be involved in planning and shaping our District.

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how Sevenoaks District Council will involve you in the development of local Planning Policy and in Planning Applications. It refreshes the version previously adopted in 2006, as the ways in which the Council engages with the community have developed and improved, particularly through the use of increased information technology.

The SCI will be shaped through public consultation and is an evolving document that will be updated as new consultation methods and channels emerge.

Councillor Ian Bosley, Portfolio Holder for Local Planning and Environment

What is a Statement of Community Involvement?

We want to help people get involved in planning the future of Sevenoaks and to improve opportunities for engagement.

Sevenoaks District Council has produced this Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to make sure we can involve our community effectively in the development of local planning policy and decisions on planning applications.

Our first SCI was adopted in 2006. Since then there have been significant changes to the planning system and this new version of the SCI has been revised to reflect the most up to date legislation and regulation.

We understand that in order to try to reach agreement within communities, people need to be involved from the early stages of the planning process. The SCI is therefore a public statement that lets communities and stakeholders know when and how they can be involved.

This document is structured:

Section one – Introduction.

Section two – Community Involvement in Planning Policy (the Local Plan).

Section three – Community Involvement in Development Management (Planning Applications).

1. Introduction

Why prepare a Statement of Community Involvement?

It is a key objective of the planning system to strengthen community and stakeholder involvement in the planning and development process. Planning affects all communities, so it is important that local people understand the process and are given the opportunity to get involved.

All local authorities are required to produce a SCI, which sets out their vision and strategy for effective community participation.

Greater community participation and empowerment is also on the national agenda, as outlined in the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 which states that one of the core principles of planning is to 'empower local people to shape their surroundings' (para 17).

Engaging communities early in the plan-making process should ensure that plans reflect the needs and aspirations of local people, and will allow for communities to fully understand the process from start to finish.

Some of the benefits of community involvement

- Outcomes that better reflect local needs and aspirations;
- Improved quality and efficiency of decisions by drawing on local knowledge and minimising conflict;
- Education and communication amongst the community of different sectors' needs and the planning process;
- Promotion of social cohesion - making real connections with and between communities; and
- Enhanced buy-in and a greater sense of ownership for decisions and outcomes.

Our Vision...

...is for our community to know more about, and be more positively involved in, shaping the development of our district so that we can make planning decisions that more effectively meet their needs and aspirations.

Corporate Linkages

Our Corporate Plan sets out that we are committed to cultivating:

'pride in the District of Sevenoaks by working with the Community as a whole, to sustain and develop a fair, safe and thriving local economy.'

It makes a specific commitment to:

'review our Statement of Community Involvement and clarify how people can get involved in shaping local planning policy.'

We also have our own policies and aims relating to community engagement and place a great deal of emphasis on ensuring the community has the opportunity to get involved in all areas of council work.

The Sevenoaks District Community Plan 'Making it happen together' was adopted in 2013 and sets out residents' priorities for the next 15 years to 2028. The Plan has been informed by comprehensive engagement and consultation so that the final document reflects the issues local people care about. A wide range of public, private, voluntary and community organisations have come together to form a Local Strategic Partnership which is responsible for producing our Community Plan and ensuring the communities needs are met.

The Community Plan contains a number of themes and priorities for action that are required to successfully deliver the vision for the District. Our local development documents will build upon these objectives and will be the principal mechanism for delivering the land use and spatial elements of the Community Plan.

The SCI has been produced in accordance with these corporate policies, and our consultation activities will aim to meet their objectives. We will work with other departments to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to consultation. Where, appropriate, we may also link our public consultation with events and activities organised by other council departments and vice versa.

How can I get involved?

There are two main areas of planning that you can get involved in:

Planning Policy (Local Plans) – setting the policy framework against which planning applications will be assessed. Please see section two of this document for more information.

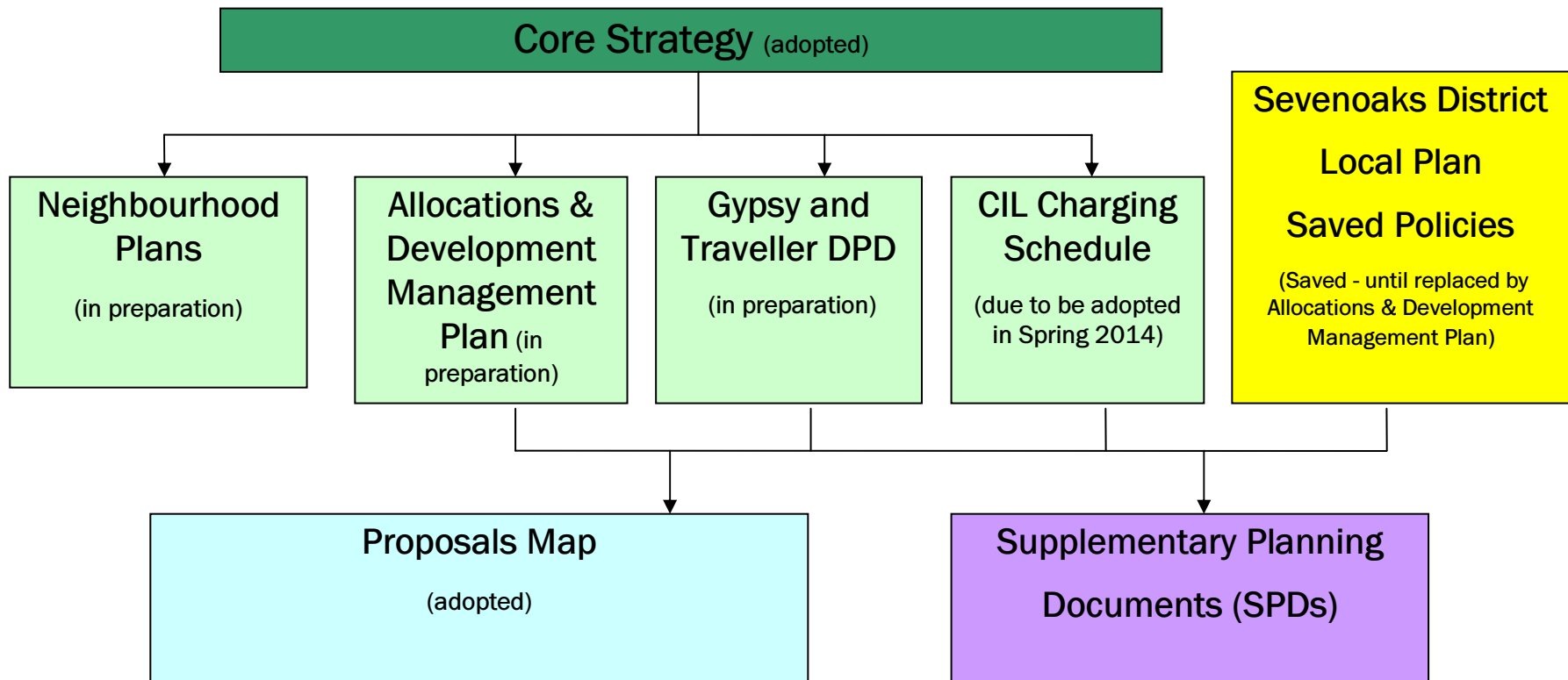
Development Management (Planning Applications) – most types of development require a planning application to be submitted and approved, and anyone can comment on a planning application. Please see section three of this document for more information.

Planning applications are determined in accordance with the Local Plan, so it is essential to get involved with strategic planning policy as well as specific planning applications.

2. Community Involvement in Planning Policy

(the 'Local Plan')

The figure below outlines the relationship between planning policy documents which will be or have already been produced.



The Planning System

The planning system requires local authorities to produce planning policy documents, which set out the spatial strategy for their local area, and provide the basis on which planning applications are determined.

Planning legislation¹ sets out which documents must be produced and which are optional. Regulations² also exist to set out which of the documents must be developed with community input, and which must then be examined by an independent Planning Inspector.

There are two types of planning policy document: Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). DPDs set out planning policies to manage land use within a local area, and SPDs provide further detail on the implementation of these policies.

Further information regarding the council's work programme for preparing planning policy documents is contained in the Local Development Scheme. Copies of the Local Development Scheme are available from the council's offices and website <http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/services/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy-and-the-local-development-framework/local-development-scheme>.

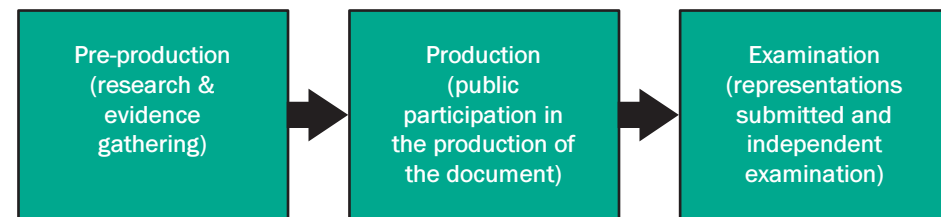
This Statement of Community Involvement will be used by us to guide the development of our local planning documents.

¹ The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, The Planning Act 2008, and the Localism Act 2011.

² The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Planning Policy Documents

The community will be involved throughout the different stages of production for each document prior to adoption, which can be summarised as follows:



The Regulations require us to publicise consultations on the our website and provide documents for inspection at the Council's offices and libraries, as well as sending letters to statutory, general and other consultees. However, we recognise the value of including more of our community in the development process – not least that the documents will more closely reflect local needs and priorities. Therefore we are committed to going further than these minimum requirements to ensure community involvement can be more effective for Sevenoaks.

In further detail, the preparation of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) involves the following key stages:

Stage 1 Evidence base	This stage involves us collecting an up-to-date information base on a range of social, economic and environmental matters
Stage 2 Public participation in the preparation of a development plan document (Regulation 18)	<p>The results of Stage 1 are used to identify the main issues that the plan needs to deal with and the options that are available. An assessment of the plan's social, economic and environmental impacts is also produced at this point, in the form of a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). At this stage, we are required to notify each of the specific consultation bodies that we consider may have an interest in the proposed DPD, and any general consultation bodies that we consider appropriate, as to the subject of the proposed DPD, and invite them to make representations. Local residents and businesses may also be informed, and invited to comment, and the Council maintains an LDF consultation mailing list of interested parties.</p> <p>The local authority must take into account any representations received as a result of preparing the development plan document. This is a duty which may technically be fulfilled up to the time of its publication.</p>
Stage 3 Preparation of DPD	At this stage we continue to develop our plan. This includes considering any comments from Stage 2 and the findings of any new studies.
Stage 4 Publication of a development plan document (Regulation 19)	<p>We publish the plan in what we think should be the final version. A more detailed assessment of the plan's social, economic and environmental impact (SA), and a draft proposals map, showing any changes that would result from the adoption of the plan, is also published.</p> <p>A public consultation will be held for a period of at least six weeks.</p> <p>A statement of consultation will also be produced, to provide a summary of the main issues raised by the representations. This will allow officers to review the representations and to consider what, if any, changes should be made to the draft development plan document before submission (Stage 5).</p>
Stage 5 Consider objections	We will consider any points raised by the consultation. If minor changes are required, then we will make these. If there are significant issues, we may withdraw the plan and return to Stage 3. Once we have dealt with all of the issues raised, we move to Stage 6.
Stage 6 Submission (Regulation 22)	We will send the plan and any supporting documents to the Secretary of State to be examined.
Stage 7 Examination (Regulation 24)	An Inspector appointed by the Government will carry out an independent examination of the 'soundness' of the plan. Those who object to the plan may be allowed to appear in front of the inspector in person.

<p>Stage 8</p> <p>Receipt of Inspector's report and adoption (Regulations 25 and 26)</p>	<p>The inspector writes a report of the examination, and decides what changes (if any) need to be made. Once we receive the inspector's report we have to change the plan in line with their recommendations. It is this version of the plan that will be adopted.</p>
--	--

In further detail, the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) involves the following key stages:

<p>Stage 1</p> <p>Development of evidence base</p>	<p>This stage involves us collecting up-to-date information on a range of social, economic and environmental matters.</p>
<p>Stage 2</p> <p>Preparation of draft SPD</p>	<p>A draft version of the SPD is produced, based on the evidence collected at stage 1.</p>
<p>Stage 3</p> <p>Consultation on draft SPD (Regulation 12)</p>	<p>Once the draft has been produced, we will consult on this document for a period of between 4 to 6 weeks.</p> <p>Any representations made will be considered and amendments will be made to the document, where required.</p>
<p>Stage 4</p> <p>Adoption (Regulation 14)</p>	<p>The SPD is adopted in line with Regulation 14 requirements.</p>

Consultation Methods

Since the publication of the last Statement of Consultation in 2006 the ways in which we engage with the community have developed and improved. One of the main changes has developed through the use of increased information technology. Over the past year we have increased our use of social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, to communicate with residents. Approximately 1,500 now receive regular updates from us through these sites. A variety of methods will be used at various stages of the planning process to enable community involvement in planning. These methods include, but are not limited to:

Website - our consultation activities will be publicised through the Council's website, on both the Planning Policy pages, and our News page. Our consultation portal will be available for people to read the documents and provide comments online.

Facebook and Twitter - our consultation events will be advertised on our Corporate Facebook and Twitter pages.

Local newspapers - often, we will advertise in the local press. Advertisements will include details on when and where planning documents can be inspected, how copies can be obtained, the closing date for representations and where to send them.

Leaflets - leaflets, flyers and brochures may be distributed separately, or with other Council Correspondence (such as the Council's 'In Shape' magazine, to summarise detailed information.

Emails / Letters - notifications will be sent to statutory bodies, stakeholders, relevant groups and other individuals and organisations on our consultation database.

Inspection points - documents will be made available for inspection at the Council's office and local libraries

Presentations - to groups, organisations and stakeholders as appropriate, to target particular people in the community who may be interested in a specific issue, for example the agents forum or the Parish Councils forum.

Questionnaires/Surveys - use of questionnaires, surveys and/or focus groups to determine attitudes towards particular issues and options. Such research can target groups and individuals with particular interests or citizen's panels with multiple interests.

Public exhibitions/displays/roadshows - for larger consultation events, we may promote our consultation event at a public exhibition, display or a roadshow. This has the ability to target members of the community who may not get involved through more formal methods.

Interactive workshops - use of interactive workshops to identify and focus discussion around difficult issues and key themes. These can reach people who might not get involved in more formal groups but who may respond to this kind of contact.

Community/resident meetings and groups - use of pre-existing community/resident meetings, and meetings of community groups to target people with particular characteristics/interests

Consultation Methods

We recognise that there are different levels of interaction between our planning team and the community including:

- Notification** providing information, for example through leaflets, advertising and ongoing awareness programmes
- Consultation** consulting you on your views, for example through surveys, exhibitions and formal consultation processes
- Participation** such as in workshops where you would be actively involved in identifying needs and priorities

We recognise that it is expected that everyone receives information and has an opportunity to participate and comment.

However, where documents relate to a specific area or issue - such as a Neighbourhood Plan for a defined Parish area, only organisations and individuals with specific relevance to this area or issue would be more actively involved.

The table shows how you could be involved, for which documents and when in the process.

	Method of Involvement	This is useful for...	Which Doc	What Stage	For which sectors of the community?	Things we need to consider?	Resource Intensity?
Notification	Electronic resources (Internet, e-mail, online consultation, twitter, Facebook, diary).	Allowing access to latest information about progress and opportunities to contribute.	All DPDs/SPDs	All stages	All sectors	Electronic resources must be user friendly and intuitive. Items should be placed online in time for people to respond effectively.	Low: initially specialist skills will be required, but posting information online is low/no cost once established.
	Local media (newspapers – adverts and articles, newsletters, flyers, TV, radio).	Raising levels of awareness and publicising specific opportunities to get involved. Reaching wide audience.	All DPDs/SPDs	All stages	Local communities, Developers & landowners, Business sector, Service providers.	Information must be interesting and relevant. We need to allow enough time for publication and set an appropriate timeframe for collecting responses.	Medium: whilst advertising in local press can be free, broader advertising can be expensive.
	Publicity in 'community centres' (e.g. libraries, shopping and sports centres).	Going out into the community to provide information and access views - reaching those who wouldn't seek to be involved.	All DPDs/SPDs	All stages	Local communities	Information should be accessible to all - in terms of mobility, understanding and times available.	Medium: production of material can involve significant costs. Staff time will also be needed.
	Letter based consultation to persons and organisations listed on the LDF mailing list.	Providing information specific to identified organisations and those requesting general updates on the LDF process	All DPDs/SPDs	All stages	All those requesting to be added to the mailing list and statutory consultees	Must be clear and understandable, although most people on this list will have a good understanding of the planning system	Low: will be supplementary to other consultation methods, reusing that information, but postage may be costly.

Consultation	Documents available for inspection at local council offices.	Meeting minimum requirements in allowing everyone the opportunity to comment on draft documents.	All DPDs/SPDs	All stages	Local communities, Developers & landowners, Business sector, Service providers, Additional authorities	It must be clear how and when people should respond. Information should be accessible to all - in terms of mobility, understanding and times available.	Low: Staff time may be needed to answer questions and collate any responses
	Area/Town Forums and Parish/Town Council Meetings.	Reaching community groups through existing forums dealing with local issues. Gaining first hand views regarding a specific area.	DPDs	Pre-production, production, submission.	Local communities, Developers & landowners, Business sector, Service providers.	We must be aware of the audience and any restrictions. We should also consider the time available for consultation on LDF (alongside other agenda items).	Medium: Attending existing forums requires staff time to attend meeting and to prepare any material.
	Qualitative Research (e.g. Questionnaire Surveys).	Determining attitudes and identifying needs for improvement. Gaining views from people who would not otherwise express an opinion.	DPDs	Pre-production, production, submission.	All sectors	Surveys can reap a greater number of responses but require significant administration. Focus groups require specialist skills but can be used to target specific groups.	Medium/High: Specialist skills are required. Depending on scope, costs of venue hire or distributing surveys can be significant.
	Public Exhibitions.	Outlining specific plans and proposals to target audience. Accessible to broad audience.	DPDs	Production, submission.	Local communities, Developers & landowners, Business sector, Service providers, Additional authorities	Information should be accessible to all - in terms of mobility, understanding and times available.	Medium: Preparation costs and time needed can be significant. Additional staff time is needed if manned.
Participation	Preparation of locally based documents (e.g. Neighbourhood Plans, Parish Plans and Village Design Statements).	Locally prepared by the community as their aspirations. Gives us information on what community wants with minimal effort on our part.	Neighbourhood Plans etc	All stages	Local communities	These outline community priorities and may differ from place to place. The LDF need to be flexible enough to respond to this challenge.	Low/Medium: We offer support for communities developing these documents, which can be intensive, although using the documents for background is low.
	Participation Workshops	Bringing together representatives from different sectors of the community to be more actively involved in scoping documents and identifying priorities.	DPDs	Pre-production, production, submission.	All sectors	Events require significant preparation and organisation. However they can be very useful for discussing important and/or difficult issues.	Medium/High: Time is needed for preparation, specialist skills may be required. The costs of venue hire can be considerable.
	Working Groups / Focus groups / Panels	Bringing together representatives to provide ongoing support to LDF development and production.	DPDs	Pre-production, production, submission	All sectors	Success is dependent on commitment from those involved. Regular or ongoing meetings can also have resource implications.	Medium: Ongoing support from staff has time implications. There are also costs in organising meetings.

Who We Consult

The Planning Regulations require local authorities to meet a minimum level of community involvement and specify a number of organisations which must be consulted if we consider that they will be affected, known as statutory consultees and general consultation bodies.

In addition to meeting our statutory obligations, we are committed to ensuring that local groups, organisations and individuals are provided with the best possible opportunity to become involved in the preparation of local development documents.

We have a Local Plan Consultation Mailing List around 750 consultees, who have either commented upon, or expressed an interest in being involved with the production of our planning policy document. This database is used to keep registered individuals, organisations and groups informed on the production of any local planning documents and new consultees are added to the consultation database as requested.

A list of statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, and other organisations and groups we involve in the plan-making process is included in Appendix A.

Sustainability Appraisal

Local Planning Authorities must undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of each of the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) they produce.

SA aims to ensure that the policies and proposals reflect the principles of sustainable development. An SA scoping report will be produced at the start of DPD preparation, which will be consulted on to allow for interested parties to have their say in what our SA should contain. An SA will be undertaken whilst preparing each stage of a DPD, and a report will be consulted on throughout the plan-making process, at the same time as the DPD itself.

An SA is not required for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

Communicating Effectively



Feeding information into decisions

The information we obtain through community involvement will be collated and used to inform our decisions and/or shape any documents we produce.

A summary report will be produced outlining all responses, how they were used to inform decisions or documents and providing an indication of the resulting outcomes. We aim to make the link between your responses and our decision or action clear.

These reports will be made available on our website.

Feeding back

Each planning policy document will require a 'statement of consultation'. This will outline how the SCI has been followed and how doing so has benefited document production. This will provide some indication of the benefits of involvement.

We will make all general feedback and summary outcomes available on our website and from our offices on request.

In addition we aim to feed back directly to those involved in either specific involvement activities such as workshops, or consultation processes associated with planning policy documents.

Our feedback commitment

We aim to provide feedback on any involvement activities or consultation processes associated with local development.

At minimum, the feedback will include:

1. an acknowledgement of your comments;
2. a summary of how the process is going; and
3. how your information will be used.

When applicable and/or possible we will also:

4. summarise the key information received;
5. outline the decision made and why; and
6. outline the benefits provided by community involvement.

3. Community Involvement in Development Management

(Planning Applications)

This SCI also outlines how our community will be involved in planning applications.

We are already required to consult with our community on all planning applications submitted. The chart overleaf sets out the legal minimum action we must take to provide you with an opportunity to put forward your views or concerns.

However, we recognise that, in some cases, it will be beneficial and appropriate to involve more people and/or involve them earlier in the process.

Greater Community Involvement

Involving people before an application is made allows them to influence developments as they are being designed, helping deal with issues that may become major issues later.

For each stage of the planning application process, and for the different types of application, we will consider whether greater involvement is appropriate and how we can support developers in involving people more effectively.

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 188) states that 'early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community'.

General advice and assistance

The Development Management team provides a daily duty officer system, which enables people to speak to an experienced planning officer by telephone during normal office hours.

A wealth of information on our development management functions including validation requirements can be obtained on our webpage:

<http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/services/environment-and-planning/planning>

The Planning Portal is the UK Government's online planning and building regulations resource for England and Wales and also provides advice and services for the public and professionals:

www.planningportal.gov.uk

Additionally, Planning Aid England provides free, independent and professional planning advice to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees. This service encourages people to become involved in the planning system.

The contact details for Planning Aid are:

Telephone: 0203 206 1880

Email: advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

Pre Application Advice

We encourage prospective applicants to consult at an early stage on potential developments before details are finalised. Consistent with the NPPF, we believe that early engagement both with us and the local community offers potential benefit for all parties.

Pre-application advice is of benefit to prospective applicant as:

- It gives an opportunity to understand how our policies will be applied to a development and potential issues can be identified and resolved before an application is submitted.
- It may lead to a reduction in time spent working up the proposals in more detail
- It can identify at an early stage whether any specialist advice is necessary (e.g. listed buildings, trees, landscape, transport, ecology or archaeology)

When a pre-application enquiry is submitted, we will:

- Register the enquiry, allocate a planning officer and write to confirm the timescales within five working days
- Identify the main constraints
- Identify key planning policies
- Identify recent history
- Give a view on the principle of the development
- Inform the customer of the issues that will need to be addressed as part of a formal application

- Identify any further studies or information that will be required to provide a more detailed pre-application view or that will be required as part of a formal planning application.

We can give advice that can help in the preparation of a better planning application so we can process it more quickly and give a decision sooner. It is also valuable in assuring the best possible development outcomes for the community. Where relevant we can also give advice on effective ways of consulting with the local community, including neighbours who may be affected by development proposals.

For further information, please see our website below:

<http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/services/housing/planning/planning-advice-and-guidance>

How Planning Applications are decided

Applications received by us are registered and acknowledged by the Validation Team. We aim to complete this process within five working days of receipt.

Once an application is accepted as valid it is recorded on the planning register that we are required to maintain and make available for inspection, and is available on our website, via the 'Public Access' portal: <http://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk/online-applications/>.

A weekly list of planning applications received is sent electronically to the local press, District Councillors, parishes, and amenity societies and anyone else who requests a copy and is published on our website

Some applications are advertised in the local press and on site if they are major developments, affect a listed building, a conservation area, depart from our Local Plan, have a substantial impact on an area or if they affect a public right of way.

Notification letters are also sent to immediate neighbours and may be sent to others who are invited to comment.

The statutory consultation period is 21 days. An application cannot be determined until this period has expired.

We aim to determine major³ planning applications within thirteen weeks and other planning applications within eight weeks.

³ 10 or more dwellings or where the site area is more than 0.5 hectares or for all other uses, where the floorspace created is more than 1,000m² or the site is more than 1 hectare.

Most planning applications are determined by the Chief Planning Officer under delegated powers. However, any application may be called to the Development Control Committee by a local Member if the officer recommendation is contrary to the view of the Parish Council. Local Members also have a general power to call an application to Committee within 21 days of publication of the weekly list. Applications of a significant controversial or sensitive nature may also be referred to the Committee by the Chief Planning Officer.

In cases where applications are reported to the Development Control Committee, the Planning Officer prepares a report for the Committee that outlines the proposal, sets out consultation replies, assesses the relevant issues and makes a recommendation regarding whether approval should be given.

Any person who comments on the proposal will be notified when an application is to be reported to Committee for determination, and there is an opportunity for an objector and a supporter of the proposal to put their views directly to the Committee. Applicants and objectors will be able to address Councillors for a maximum of three minutes speaking time. The relevant parish council and the local Member may also speak. For further information please see our leaflet 'Speaking on Planning Applications' on our website on the following link:

<http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/services/environment-and-planning/planning/development-control-committee>

1

Pre-Application

- We will encourage developers to contact us early on.
- We will encourage applicants, especially of larger schemes, to engage with relevant Parish/Town Councils, service providers and local groups as early as possible.
- For smaller applications, we will encourage applicants to discuss their plans with neighbours before preparing their submission to us.
- We will encourage owners of larger sites to prepare management plans for their land and submit them to us.
- Planning Officers are generally available to speak over the telephone during normal office hours



2

Application (minimum)

ALL DEVELOPMENTS

- A site notice displayed for 21 days and/or
- Writing directly to any adjoining owners or occupiers giving 21 days to make comments.
- Depending on the nature of the application, consult with appropriate statutory consultees and town/parish councils
- Additional requirements apply to applications involving listed buildings, conservation areas or environmental impact assessments.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- As above, and
- An advertisement will be placed in a local newspaper



3

Application (additional)

- We will notify immediate neighbours on every planning application
- We will notify others we consider may be affected by individual cases.
- Every application will have a nominated Case Officer, who will liaise with all stakeholders.
- Prior to recommending a decision, Case Officers will visit sites.
- If an application is substantially amended prior to a decision, all those who have expressed an interest in writing will be consulted again and given a minimum of 21 days to respond.
- You will be able to trace the progress of planning applications through Public Access, available on our website.



4

Decision

- If applications are taken to Committee for decision, applicants and objectors will be able to address Councillors (3 minutes speaking time).
- Everyone who responds in writing to an application will be informed in writing of the decision.
- Decision notices will be posted on our website.
- Any concerns about applications that may not have been implemented as agreed should be notified to our Enforcement Section for investigation.
- Any legal (Section 106 or 278) agreement attached to a planning permission will be available for viewing through Public Access, available on our website.

Enforcement

The enforcement team is responsible for investigating alleged breaches of planning control, including unauthorised works to listed buildings, unlawful advertisements, works to protected trees and developments carried out without the necessary planning permission.

If a development has been carried out without the necessary planning permissions, or not in accordance with a permission that has been granted, the enforcement team will normally seek the voluntary co-operation of those responsible to resolve the issue.

If negotiation fails, we may issue a notice requiring the breach of planning control to be remedied or to secure compliance with the terms of a planning permission. Failure to comply with such notices is an offence and the person responsible may be prosecuted.

Further information about enforcement priorities and principles are provided on our website and we are currently updating our enforcement charter:

<http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/services/housing/planning/planning-enforcement>

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)

Legislation is in place to afford protection to a percentage of those trees and woodlands that offer amenity value. The legislation is in the form of conservation areas throughout the District and tree preservation orders of which there are currently in excess of 900.

Sevenoaks District has many trees comprising of a range of diverse species. We do our best to manage this rich biological inheritance for the people of the District today and tomorrow.

To help us balance the management of trees, we welcome the help of local residents. This could include suggestions to protect certain important trees that you feel may be under threat or telling us about work to a protected tree that may be carried out without consent. For further details see:

<http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/services/environment-and-planning/planning/tree-management/works-to-trees>

Overcoming Barriers

We have identified several different, but connected, barriers to involvement. These included:

- ▣ apathy and disinterest
- ▣ time (of meetings/activities and to get involved)
- ▣ mistrust and cynicism that it's worthwhile
- ▣ lack of information and understanding

Our approach to involving people will seek to overcome these barriers by...

...connecting people to planning

One of our key priorities is to provide everyone with the opportunity to know what's going on and how they can get involved if they want to. To support this we aim to provide information that is local and relevant, and use methods of involvement that are accessible, interesting and fun.

Alongside the specific involvement activities, we are committed to raising awareness of the planning system throughout our community. With this in mind, we are committed to placing more emphasis on going out into local communities to discover your needs and aspirations.

...seeking more active involvement

Although this document sets out the different levels and methods of involvement, it is our aim to involve more people more actively if resources are available.

We will ask you about your aspirations for the area and expectations for the future. This will help to generate ideas and scope particular documents.

...meeting everyone's needs

In line with the Equality Act (2010) and our West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments, we want to ensure that all communities have the ability to respond to our consultations and have their voice heard. We aim to pay particular regard to the needs of different ethnicity and disability groups. We produce documents in different formats (e.g. large print, other languages) where a need is identified and consider access arrangements when organising involvement events.

Whilst we aim to increase participation from all sectors of our community, we recognise that some groups are harder to engage with than others. These hard to reach groups include rural communities, commuters, minority ethnic groups, gypsies and travellers, children and those with lower literacy.

To help improve representation and participation we will strengthen relationships with other council departments, the Sevenoaks District Strategic Board, education establishments and community development organisations to learn from their experience, gain a better understanding of the needs of particular groups and ensure that the needs of all sectors of the community are met.

Review

We give a commitment to review and amend our methods and level of engagement with the community in response to ongoing feedback on the effectiveness of our community engagement and the development of new channels of communication.

Appendix A: Stakeholders to be involved in Planning Policy

Statutory ('Specific') Consultation Bodies

The specific consultation bodies which the Regulations require the Council to consult are:

The Coal Authority*

The Environment Agency

English Heritage

Marine Management Organisation*

Natural England

Network Rail

Highways Agency

Kent County Council

Town & Parish Councils

Kent Police

Adjoining Councils

Telecommunication Providers

Kent and Medway NHS Trust

Utility Providers (water, sewage, gas, electricity)

The Homes and Communities Agency

Secretary of State for Transport

Civil Aviation Authority

* Unlikely to be relevant for Sevenoaks District Council

General Consultation Bodies

The Regulations also require the Council to consult these general consultation bodies where appropriate:

- voluntary bodies
- bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups
- bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups
- bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons
- bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business

For Sevenoaks, these bodies include: (please note this list is not exhaustive)

Agencies

Kent Association of Local Councils

Kent Rural Community Council

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

Sport England

Health & Safety Executive

Network Rail

Passenger Transport Authorities and Executives

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOB) Units

Environmental, Heritage and Wildlife Organisations

National Playing Fields Association

Age Concern/Help the Aged

Sure Start

Equal Opportunities Commission

Voluntary Organisations and Council for Voluntary Services

Other bodies which represent the interests of different groups within the community (e.g. racial, ethnic, religious, disability)

Service Providers

Health Trusts

Health Services

Kent Fire & Rescue Service

Kent Ambulance NHS Trust

Kent County Constabulary

Transport Providers (air, road, rail, water)

Education Establishments (state and private)

Sports Organisations

Business Sector

Chambers of Commerce

Town & Shopping Centre Management

Business, Trade and Industry Associations/Federations

Economic Development Organisations

Employment Organisations

Tourism Organisations

Local Communities

Individual residents

Residents Associations

Community groups (interest, activity and belief)

Community forums

Local Strategic Partnership

Community development organisations

NFU

Other organisations for specific community groups (youth, women etc)

Developers and Landowners

Registered Providers (RSLs)

Crown Estates

Defence Estates

The House Builders Federation

National Trust

Post Office Property Holdings

Individual Developers

Development & Building Companies

Regeneration Organisation

For more information...

Copies of the latest Local Development Scheme and other documents can be obtained from your local council office. For up to date information on progress and opportunities to get involved please see the local press and our website:

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

Information can also be obtained from:

Sevenoaks LDF Team, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1HG

Telephone: 01732 227 000

Email: ldf@sevenoaks.gov.uk

