



Local Development Framework
**Statement of Community
Involvement**

Consultation Draft October 2009

Published by South Cambridgeshire District Council

© October 2009

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

- 1.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is one of the key documents in the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF). It provides information on how this Council will involve the community and other national and local stakeholders in the planning process¹. The community includes the residents who live in South Cambridgeshire and those who work within the district as well as businesses and other organisations that contribute to life in South Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2 South Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to being a listening Council and providing a voice for rural life. The SCI will help to provide for this voice by setting out clearly how anyone can be involved in the planning of the district.
- 1.3 The SCI sets out when and how the Council will be consulting on the Local Development Framework. It also describes the ways to have a say on planning applications being considered by the Council.
- 1.4 There is already a well-established procedure for consulting the community about planning matters within South Cambridgeshire. South Cambridgeshire has already asked the public and stakeholders for their views on all the documents currently in its LDF. The Council also has an existing system for asking for the public's comments on planning applications.

What is the Local Development Framework?

- 1.5 The LDF comprises a number of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that set out policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the district and Supplementary Planning Documents that expand on policies contained in DPDs. (See Appendix B for more details). LDFs were introduced in 2004 as part of the new plan-making system. The need for effective community involvement is at the heart of the new planning system with an emphasis on early involvement as plans are being developed.
- 1.6 In South Cambridgeshire the first DPDs cover the period up to 2016 and the Council is well advanced in preparing these. The Council has already adopted a number of DPDs and SPDs and these are being used by the Council for planning in the district. With a plan-led system planning applications are determined in accordance with the policies in the LDF. The current position on adopted and emerging documents can be viewed on the Council's website at www.scambs.gov.uk/ldf.
- 1.7 The Council has a statutory duty to consult with the community and local stakeholders at a number of stages during the preparation of its plans.

¹ A Parish Planning Pack has been prepared by South Cambridgeshire to explain simply and clearly about the planning process in the district.

Planning Applications

- 1.8 Most people get their first experience of the planning process through planning applications. Planning permission is required for most new buildings, many changes of use and operational development or significant changes to existing buildings. To obtain planning permission a planning application must be submitted by anyone who wishes to undertake development requiring consent and the Council has a statutory duty to consult a variety of people about the application so that their views can be taken into account when the Council is determining the planning application.

Consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement

- 1.9 The Council has produced a draft SCI for public consultation for 6 weeks. This sets out the existing tried and tested consultation procedures that South Cambridgeshire has been using for consulting on its LDF and planning applications and proposes additional methods that may be used in future. It also provides an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to suggest ways the Council could improve its current way of doing things.
- 1.10 The Council wants to know from members of the community how they want to be consulted so that the limited resources that are available for consultation are used in the most efficient and effective way consistent with making timely decisions, which provide for consultation to help improve its planning decisions without unnecessarily delaying development.

How to submit your Views

- 1.11 Representations on this draft SCI are invited during a 6-week period running from 23 October to 4 December 2009.
- 1.12 The draft SCI contains a series of questions, which it is hoped, will help people make comments on the document. However, other issues or suggestions are welcome.
- 1.13 Wherever possible representations should be made on the Council's website via the interactive form (www.scambs.gov.uk/ldf) This will help to speed up the process of registering representations. However it is recognised that this is not appropriate for everyone.
- 1.14 Alternatively, representations may be made in writing using the appropriate form and sent to the Council as follows:

Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities)
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

Or emailed to ldf@scambs.gov.uk

- 1.15 Representations must be received by 12 noon on Friday 4 December 2009.

What Happens Next?

- 1.16 At the end of the consultation period the Council will consider all the comments that have been received and as a result there may be amendments made to the draft SCI before it is formally adopted it as part of the LDF for the district. This is proposed to take place in February 2010.

The Statement of Community Involvement in Context with other Strategies that the Council has prepared or has signed up to.

- 1.17 **The Statement of Community Involvement and the Sustainable Community Strategy** - The LDF is a key mechanism for delivering parts of the South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), which sets out the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of South Cambridgeshire that contributes to sustainable development in the UK as a whole. It tells the 'story of the place' – the distinctive vision and ambition of South Cambridgeshire. This Strategy is the result of partnership working between the public, private and voluntary and community organisations that make up the district's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The LSP produced the current Sustainable Community Strategy, which has a vision and a set of objectives for the period up to 2025.
- 1.18 The LDF and planning applications will be important in securing those parts of the Sustainable Community Strategy, that involve the use, or development of land and buildings.
- 1.18 **The Statement of Community Involvement and the Community Engagement Strategy** - As part of taking forward its vision to be a 'listening council', the Council has also recently prepared a Community Engagement Strategy, which outlines how the Council, working with its partners, will engage with the community on developing strategies for a wide range of issues and other initiatives for community development.
- 1.19 The Council wants to ensure that the Community Engagement Strategy and the SCI are where possible in agreement with each other and enable the community to have a say in the delivery of the Council's services. Because the SCI specialises in planning matters it may not always be appropriate to follow the wider Engagement Strategy.
- 1.20 **The Statement of Community Involvement and the Cambridgeshire Compact** - The Council has signed up to the Cambridgeshire Compact with voluntary and community sector organisations. This document is important in achieving effective engagement with the voluntary and community sectors and underpins partnership working and consultation with these groups. Promoting an effective working relationship with voluntary and community organisations is important as they help to give a voice to local people to enable them to contribute to community life. They also have a vital role to play in reaching parts of the community that tend not to get involved in the work of the Council. .
- 1.21 The SCI will play a key role in ensuring that the aims of the Cambridgeshire Compact are met. However the Compact proposes that all consultations with voluntary groups should be for a minimum of 12 weeks wherever possible.

The guidance and regulations directing how planning consultations are carried out for both planning policy documents and planning applications do specify shorter consultation periods and the SCI will have primarily to conform to these rules.

CHAPTER 2

OVERALL APPROACH TO INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Guiding Principles for Community Involvement.

- 2.1 The Council has devised a set of guiding principles for the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to make sure that community involvement in the planning process is as effective as possible. These require that the Council:
- Communicates effectively by making it clear in the information provided what is being proposed and how and when people can get involved.
 - Ensures that information is accessible to the community regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or disability.
 - Makes it easy for people to get involved. Helping and supporting groups and individuals with little or no knowledge of the planning process and encouraging involvement from groups that have traditionally not been involved in the planning process.
 - Uses appropriate consultation methods in order to maximise opportunity for involvement.
 - Makes sure involvement is effective by listening to the community at an early stage in the planning process.
 - Ensures that there is effective engagement in the preparation of the planning policies included in the Local Development Framework (LDF) so that there will be less need for engagement on individual planning applications which are consistent with the policies in the LDF.
 - Provides feedback on responses received and keeps consultees informed of progress made.

Question 1

Are there any others guiding principles that the Council should consider?

Consultation with Minority or Disadvantaged Groups

- 2.2 The Council is committed to treating everyone fairly and justly, whatever their race or background. The Council wants to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to be involved in the planning process. The Council is aware that in the past certain groups may have been under represented when it has consulted its. These groups include:

- Black and Minority Ethnic communities
- Disabled people
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gendered communities

- Children, young and older people
- Faith and belief groups
- Gypsies and Travellers

- 2.3 The Council's Comprehensive Equalities Policy 2009-2012 adopted by the Council in April 2009, includes a commitment to the following principle:
- 2.4 "Encouraging 'real' participation in local democracy by people who may normally feel excluded from decision-making processes. In doing this, we will ensure that we seek the views of groups who are particularly vulnerable or at risk of social exclusion or have found it difficult to access our services or receive favourable outcomes from them."
- 2.5 The Council within this policy document has identified four key objectives, which will be implemented over the next three years to deliver excellent equality and diversity practices within the Council. One of these objectives is 'Community Engagement and Accountability'. This will involve ensuring that the Council consults effectively. To get the right outcomes, the Council must know what equality groups and the community think about where and what the Council needs to change.
- 2.6 For example the Council recognises that Children and Young People have interesting and valuable opinions. A Youth Participation Strategy is currently being developed with partners, including young people, to support young people to be involved in delivery of services that affect them. This will include their involvement in consultations on plans for their own and new communities.
- 2.7 To help make the planning policy documents more accessible to all within the community the Council will on request where appropriate make available all its LDF documents in whole or in part in accessible formats or languages.

Who Can Help Community Involvement?

- 2.8 There are a number of people that can assist the community and stakeholders to become involved in the planning process. The following people can help the community to have a say on planning matters and ensure their comments are part of the decision making process:
- District Councillors
 - Parish Councillors
 - Planning Officers
 - Planning Aid

District Councillors:

- 2.9 District Councillors become involved in planning matters by being members of the Council's different decision-making committees. Some may be on the Planning Committee making decisions on planning applications and others on committees and meetings that consider the Council's planning policy documents.
- 2.10 As representatives of their respective wards District Councillors can listen to residents' concerns on planning issues and where appropriate can speak on

behalf of residents to put forward their concerns or provide support for a particular planning application or planning policy documents. District Councillors can speak at Planning Committees or they can make their constituents' views known to other councillors on relevant decision-making committees of the Council such as Cabinet.

Parish Councillors:

- 2.11 Parish Councillors as representatives of the community at a more local level can provide an invaluable voice for the local people by finding out people's views on any plans or proposals that may have an impact on a village. Parish Councils then have an opportunity to submit their comment on any planning matters to the District Council. They have a right to appear at a Planning Committee to state their views and can submit their representations on the LDF.

Planning Officers:

- 2.12 It is the role of the Council's officers to provide planning and other specialist expertise. Within the Council officers work in four different teams:
- 2.13 Planning Policy Team – The planning officers in this team are responsible for preparing the LDF for South Cambridgeshire of which this SCI will form a part. This team drafts the planning documents that are then subject to public consultation using the guidance set out in the SCI document. These documents must conform with national and regional planning guidance and then provide the framework for making decisions on planning applications.
- 2.14 Development Control Area Planning Teams - Planning officers work in two area teams – East and West, which divide the district into two halves with specific villages allocated to each team. These planning officers process and assess planning applications in accordance with the Council's adopted planning policy documents as well as national and regional planning guidance; site-specific issues; relevant consultation responses and other material planning considerations. They also are available to discuss planning applications with the public.
- 2.15 The planning officers can provide more detailed pre-application advice and information to applicants (as from 1st October 2009 there is a charge for some of applications – see page 21). They are also available for discussion about current planning applications and permitted development enquiries.
- 2.16 A Planning Duty Officer is available from 9am to 5pm to provide general planning advice by telephone or in person without the need for an appointment. However if more detailed advice is required then an appointment with the relevant planning team can be arranged.
- 2.17 Major Development Team – These planning officers are responsible for processing and assessing the planning applications for the major developments proposed on the fringes of Cambridge and for the new settlements of Northstowe and Cambourne. They are part of the New Communities Team within the Council in order to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to the planning of these complex developments and provide a similar service to the Area Planning Teams.

2.18 Conservation Team – The officers in this team provides specialist professional advice on the conservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment in the district, including the historic environment (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) and ecology, trees and landscape.

2.19 For the contact details of each of the different planning teams see Appendix F.

Planning Aid:

2.20 Planning Aid is a voluntary organisation providing free, independent and professional help, advice and support to members of the community about land use planning matters. It is linked to the Royal Town Planning Institute. It provides valuable help for people so that they can get involved in all stages of the planning process from making comments on planning applications to making representations on planning policy documents. Planning Aid complements the work of local authorities but is wholly independent of them.

How the Council will Deal with Responses to Consultations.

2.21 The Council will take account of all responses received from its consultations on LDF documents and planning applications where the issues raised are material planning considerations. Responses concerning other issues cannot be taken into account when determining a planning application or preparing an LDF document.

2.22 Material planning considerations can include:

- Central government policy and guidance e.g. Acts, Circulars, Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs));
- The adopted Development Plan Documents (DPDs);
- Any emerging Development Plan Documents – although the weight to be given to the DPD will depend on how advanced it is;
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs),
- The planning history of the site and
- Site-specific issues such as the impact of the development upon, for example, the character of the area, highway safety or the amenities of neighbours.

2.23 When determining planning applications or preparing LDF documents, material planning considerations also include any consultation responses from statutory and non-statutory consultees, and any representations from neighbours, amenity groups and other interested parties where relevant to planning matters.

2.24 Non-material planning considerations can include:

- Personal circumstances,
- Boundary disputes,
- Legal covenants,
- Loss of a private view,
- Devaluation of property, and

- Matters controlled by other legislation (i.e. structural safety of a building or fire prevention).

2.25 The methods that are used to inform the community of planning matters will vary depending on the issue – different methods will be used at different stages in the production of a planning policy document or when determining planning application. These methods are set out in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 3

GETTING INVOLVED IN THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Council's Local Development Framework (LDFs)

- 3.1 All the adopted documents that the Council has produced so far for its LDF have been subject to public consultation, community involvement and independent examination. There is therefore already a well-established procedure for consulting with the community within the district. Details about the documents that currently form part of the LDF in South Cambridgeshire are included in Appendix B.
- 3.2 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out what Development Plan Documents (DPDs) will be produced, when the community will be consulted upon them and the timetable of their production. The LDS is a public document and can be viewed on the Council's web site at <http://www.scambs.gov.uk/Environment/Planning/DistrictPlanning/LocalDevelopmentFramework/LDS.htm>

Who Will be Involved in Commenting on Local Development Framework Documents?

- 3.3 The Council wants everyone affected by its planning decisions to have the opportunity to have their say on the Council's planning policy documents. The Government already requires that certain groups be consulted directly at key stages in the preparation of documents in the LDF. This is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) Regulations 2004 (as amended). These groups are as follows -
- Specific consultation bodies - The regulations list specific organisations and types of organisations that should be defined as specific bodies. A Local Planning Authority must consult with those organisations in this list that they consider may have an interest in the subject of the proposed planning document.
 - General consultation bodies - The regulations list categories of organisations that should be defined as general consultation bodies. A Local Planning Authority must consult with those organisations in their list of general consultation bodies, as they consider appropriate.
- 3.4 The details of these bodies are listed in Appendix A.
- 3.5 The Council has an existing consultation database that has evolved as it has carried out consultations in the past on planning documents prior to the drafting of the SCI. This database is kept as up to date as possible. It included a list of organisations that the Council advises at the beginning of the plan making process that a plan is being prepared and consults at key stages during the process.

- 3.6 The existing database includes many types of organisations that have an interest in South Cambridgeshire. It includes groups that represent the following interests:

Housing
Transport and Travel
Leisure and Tourism
Ethnic minorities such as Travellers and Gypsies
Businesses
Young people and children within the community
Education and Training
Elderly people within the community
Religious groups
Disabled groups

- 3.7 Any individual or other organisation that submits a representation on a draft Local Development Document (LDDs)² will be added to a consultation list for that specific document and will be informed of all future stages of public consultation for that document.
- 3.8 The Council will seek to enable any other individuals, groups and organisations with an interest in any of their plans to be involved in the plan-making process. Any individual, organisation or group that wishes to be added to the consultation database to be kept informed of the progress of a particular planning policy document can do so at any time by contacting the Planning Policy Team at South Cambridgeshire District Council on 01954 713183 or email ldf@scambs.gov.uk. The Council would prefer that an email contact be given, as it is quicker and more efficient and cost effective for us to contact you and keep you informed by email.

How the Council will involve the Community in preparing Local Development Framework documents and at what stages

- 3.9 There will be a number of opportunities for the community to be involved in the preparation of LDF documents. These opportunities are indicated in the flow charts included in Appendix C, which show the process involved in preparing a DPD and SPD.
- 3.10 The Council has experience of carrying out consultations on earlier planning documents for its LDF. When carrying out consultations, the Council is required by the Regulations to use certain methods of consultation; however the Council also uses additional methods to help further involve the community. This draft SCI is providing an opportunity to suggest new methods.
- 3.11 **Existing methods:** Tables 1 and 2 show the range of methods that have been used by the Council for DPD and SPD consultations. It should be noted that the existing additional consultation methods shown are not used for every consultation but only where they are most appropriate. The Council will select the most appropriate methods for each document. Details of each of these methods follow the tables.

² LDDs - Local Development Documents are all the documents that form part of the LDF – both DPDs and SPDs as well as the Local Development Scheme and the Statement of Community Involvement and the Proposals Map

Table 1 - Consultation on Development Plan Documents (DPDs)

Stage	Minimum consultation carried out by the Council according to the Regulations	Additional consultation methods used by the Council to date
Initial consultation	<p>Consult with each of the specific consultation bodies that the Council considers may have an interest in the subject of the proposed DPD.</p> <p>Consult with other general consultation bodies that Council consider appropriate.</p> <p>Invite representations from persons who are resident or carrying on business in their area if the Council decides that it is appropriate.</p> <p>The Council must carry out the consultation on DPDs for a period of not less than six weeks.</p> <p>Methods used to consult these bodies or invite representations: either email or where email not available by letter in post.</p>	<p>Article in South Cambs magazine</p> <p>Notification of the intention to prepare document on the website</p> <p>Notification of Parish Councils by a regular monthly email outlining current and future consultations.</p> <p>News releases.</p> <p>Publication of public notices /posters in libraries.</p>
Draft submission	<p>Consult with each of the specific consultation bodies that the Council consider may have an interest in the subject of the proposed DPD.</p> <p>Methods used either email or where email not available by letter in post</p> <p>Send copies of the pre-submission documents to the specific consultation bodies selected by the Council as having an interest in the DPD Method used - send either on CD or as paper copies if requested</p> <p>Consult with other general consultation bodies that the Council consider appropriate and Inform where documents are available Methods used either email or where email not available by letter in post</p> <p>The Council must carry out the consultation on DPDs for a period of not less than six weeks.</p> <p>Copies of pre-submission documents to be made available in Council office at Cambourne and at such other places within South Cambridgeshire as the Council considers appropriate.</p> <p>Publish draft DPD documents on website.</p> <p>Publish a notice in the local press.</p>	<p>Article in South Cambs magazine</p> <p>Notification of Parish Councils by regular monthly email outlining current and future consultations.</p> <p>Leaflet drop</p> <p>Public Exhibition</p> <p>News releases.</p> <p>Publication of public notices /posters in libraries.</p> <p>Agents Forum</p> <p>Parish Council Forum.</p>

Table 2 - Consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

Stage	Minimum consultation carried out by the Council according to the Regulations	Additional consultation methods used by the Council to date
Consultation	<p>Consult with each of the specific consultation and general consultation bodies that the Council considers may have an interest in the subject of the draft SPD.</p> <p>Invite representations from persons who are resident or carrying on business in their area if the Council decides that it is appropriate.</p> <p>Methods used to consult these bodies or invite representations: either email or where email not available by letter in post.</p> <p>The Council must carry out the consultation on SPDs for a period of not less than four or more than 6 weeks.</p> <p>Send copies of the draft-SPD documents to the specific consultation and general consultation bodies selected by the Council as having an interest in the draft SPD Method used - send either on CD or as paper copies if requested</p> <p>Copies of draft SPD documents to be made available in Council office at Cambourne and at such other places within South Cambridgeshire as the Council considers appropriate.</p> <p>Publish draft SPD documents on website.</p> <p>Publish a notice in the local press.</p>	<p>Article in South Cambs magazine</p> <p>Notification of the intension to prepare document on the website</p> <p>Notification of the Parish Councils by a regular monthly email outlining current and future consultations.</p> <p>News releases.</p> <p>Publication of public notices /posters in libraries.</p> <p>Agents Forum</p> <p>Parish Council Forum.</p>

- 3.12 **Future proposed methods:** As part of preparing this draft SCI additional methods of consultation have been proposed. They are as follows
- On-line calendar on website to link all the engagement activities the Council has planned.
 - Poster/ public notice for parish notice boards
 - Information posted on Parish Council website
 - Involve young people via the implementation of the Youth Participation Strategy
 - Informing business groups via the proposed Business Forum
 - South Cambs Economic News to include item on future planning consultations.
 - Informing equalities groups via the Equalities Consultative Forum
 - Including information on consultations in specialist media /publications

Methods used in Consultation on LDF documents

3.13 The main methods used for consultations by the Council are described below. The details of the proposed additional methods are highlighted in the list in italics.

- **Public Notices:** the Regulations on how a planning authority consults require that a notice must appear in a local newspaper. The Council publishes its notices in the Cambridge News as the local newspaper with the widest circulation in the area.
- **News releases:** the Council has an in-house team dealing with communications who have a good working relationship with local media, including newspapers, radio and television. This will assist articles being published and broadcast to reach a wide audience so they can be made aware of planning matters in the district. News releases are also published on the Council's website.
- **Direct letter:** a formal approach, which is used to officially notify particular groups and organisations about public consultations that are being carried out on planning policy documents. The Council uses this method to target the appropriate organisations to consultations on that they would be interested in according to the Regulations (See Appendix A).
- **Documents available in print:** the Council makes available for inspection at its offices in Cambourne (which are fully accessible to people with disabilities) any document that is being consulted on. Printed documents are made available for purchase from the Council at a modest cost.

In future the Council will if requested make additional printed copies available for inspection at wider locations –e.g. Libraries /Cambridge City Council offices (The Guildhall) / County Council offices (Shire Hall) /Parish Council offices. This used to be the Council's normal practice, but was stopped some years ago because some local libraries have very limited space opportunities and were concerned at receiving substantial documents and because all local libraries have access to the internet on which interactive versions of the documents can be viewed. However, we recognise that this is not always convenient when viewing long documents, particularly if there are time limitations for Internet access. Therefore, where a specific request is made to the Council it will make paper versions available at local libraries or Parish Council offices, with their agreement.

- **CDs containing all the consultation documents:** these are sent out to those of the specific and the general consultation bodies that the Council consider will have an interest in the subject of the planning policy document that is being consulted on. It saves on postage and on paper so is more cost effective and environmentally friendly.
- **South Cambs Magazine:** the magazine provides regular updates on planning policy matters and is published quarterly by the Council. The magazine is delivered to all households in the district and is also placed in public areas in libraries and the Council's main office in Cambourne for visitors from outside the district to view it. It includes a regular LDF news

article to provide current information and also articles on plans and other planning matters of current interest.

- **Economic News:** *is published quarterly by the Council and is provides a range of information, advice and support for local businesses in South Cambridgeshire. In future editions news about forthcoming consultations could be highlighted so that the business community could be more involved in planning matters.*
- **Specialist media / publications:** *it may be appropriate for information on some or all consultations to be included in newsletters or magazines directed to specific groups or to inform radio programmes directed at these special groups.*
- **Leaflet drop:** *this can be a useful way of informing people living and working in an area that is to be affected by a planning policy proposal when the consultation timing does not link well with the publication dates of the South Cambs magazine. It can be targeted to a specific area.*
- **CDs providing spoken content of documents:** *this could be a method used to encourage the involvement of those groups that normally do not participate in planning consultations by making it easier for them to access the contents of planning documents.*
- **Posters:** *these are sent to libraries to be placed on notice boards. The information contained on them is based on the Public Notice that the Council must prepare as part of the preparation of LDF documents.*

Also posters are done to advertise public exhibitions to let everyone know when and where they are to take place.

In future the Council could send posters to Parish Councils and ask that they be placed on Parish notice boards with the co-operation of the Parish Councils.

- **The Council's website:** *the Council publishes all its major publications and documents for consultation on its website which is a means of making information available to an increasingly wide audience. This is particularly relevant in the South Cambridgeshire area with its higher than average proportion of residents connected to the Internet. Representations can be submitted via the website using the Council's interactive consultation response form which makes the consultation documents more accessible and easy to navigate around and makes submitting representations to the Council easier.*

The Planning Policy Team regularly publishes LDF news updates on the Council's homepage (www.scambs.gov.uk) and LDF homepage (www.scambs.gov.uk/ldf). .

In future the Council intends to include a consultation calendar on its web site, which will list all the consultations that the Council is to carry out, when and by whom. This will mean that the community will be better informed and the Council can be more efficient in co-ordinating the use of its resources and carry out joint consultations where appropriate.

- **Workshops:** these bring together key stakeholders representing service providers, agencies, developers, local community representatives and interest groups. The Council has found the use of independent and trained expert facilitators helpful. Workshops can be helpful for exploring site or subject specific topics.
- **Public exhibitions:** these assist in reaching the wider public and give the opportunity for discussion with representatives of the Council on a one to one basis close to where people live.
- **Parish Forum:** a quarterly meeting of all the Parish Councils in South Cambridgeshire to provide information on planning matters. This provides a means of notifying Parish Councils about current and future consultations and also an opportunity for Parish Councillors to discuss planning consultation issues together.
- **Parish websites/newsletters:** *many Parish Councils within the district now have their own websites and/or newsletters and information could be sent to the Parish Clerk in a format that could be published in the Parish newsletters or on their websites to let the community know when and what was being consulted on by the Council.*
- **Agents Forum:** a quarterly meeting of agents that act on behalf of developers and landowners within South Cambridgeshire to inform them on planning matters in the district. This could provide a means of notifying agents about current or future consultations and also an opportunity for agents to discuss together issues relating to planning consultations.
- **Equalities Consultative Forum³:** *in future this forum will be specifically notified of consultations that the Council will be carrying out. When appropriate a planning matter can be added to the agenda of their quarterly meetings.*
- **Business Forum:** *the Council is proposing to set up a regular forum for local businesses and future relevant consultations could be included on the agenda of these meetings to help ensure that the business community is aware of and can have the opportunity to be involved in commenting on planning matters*
- **Young People's Involvement:** *A Youth Participation Strategy is currently being developed with partners. This will include their involvement in consultations on plans for their own and new communities and will be through a variety of ways depending on how young people want to be involved, for example: District wide Youth Forums, Youth Participation projects, School Planning days, and Youth Parish Councils. Through the implementation of this strategy young people can be included in future planning consultations.*

Question 2

Should we be considering additional methods of consultation or have we got it right?

³ This forum has been set up to generate discussion about development of a consultation and engagement framework which will enable external stakeholders to have greater participation, engagement and a voice in the policy and service development process at South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Methods of Consultation with Minority or Disadvantaged Groups

- 3.14 When carrying out consultations the Council will ensure that the methods used will be the most appropriate to reach the groups that have been under represented in earlier consultations. Some methods are more successful than others at reaching these groups. These are considered to be:
- Newspaper publicity
 - Radio
 - Television
 - South Cambs Magazine
 - Exhibitions
 - Focused workshops
 - Use of specialist publications
 - Use of existing forums
 - Use of the Internet and websites
 - Equalities Consultative Forum
 - Notification letters (planning applications)

Question 3

Should the Council be considering other methods to better involve minority or disadvantaged groups?

Monitoring the Methods used for Consultation

- 3.15 The Council needs to be sure that the best methods are being used to involve the community and stakeholders in consultations. In the past there has been no way of finding out how anyone has heard about the consultations on LDF documents. In future a question could be included on the response forms used when representations are submitted to the Council. This could ask where the respondent had heard about the consultation and what would be best method to inform them of future consultations.

Question 4

Should the Council include a question on the response form to ask where the respondent has heard about the consultation and how might you want to be notified about our consultations in future?

How to Make a Representation on the Local Development Framework

- 3.16 The Council provides a guidance note for anyone considering submitting representations, which describes how to make a representation during the public consultation period.
- 3.17 The Council encourages people to submit their representations about local development documents on-line. It has the advantage of being the fastest and most accurate method and helps the Council to manage representations quickly and efficiently. All documents that are part of a consultation appear in an interactive form on the Council's website and they are also published on the website as an electronic version of the printed document (i.e. in pdf format).

- 3.18 Persons or organisations that cannot make on-line representations can submit representations in writing or electronically via email. The Council has standard response forms, which mirror the on-line form, which are made available in both printed and electronic format. It is easier for the Council to accurately record comments and a better use of public money if representations are submitted on these forms. The forms can be handwritten or typed and sent to the Council offices in Cambourne or they can be electronically sent to the planning policy email address, ldf@scambs.gov.uk
- 3.19 In making representations about a local planning document the respondent must state clearly which part of the document the comments relate to and whether there are any specific changes they would like to be made to the document as a result.
- 3.20 The Council wants to ensure that the consultation is reaching all the relevant parts of the community including those that are sometimes more difficult to reach. An equalities monitoring form has therefore attached to the response form – it does not have to be filled in and will remain anonymous. The information will be passed directly to the Equalities and Diversity Officer and will not be recorded against a specific person. It will help the Council know whether a consultation has reached the community effectively.

Considering Representations

- 3.21 Once comments have been submitted the Council will acknowledge receipt of duly made representations either via letter or email once all the representations have been registered after the end of the consultation period. All representations are published on the Council's website to enable people to easily view representations that have been received.
- 3.22 At the end of each consultation stage the Council will consider all the representations received and will provide a short response to each which will be included in the Council's report on the consultation.
- 3.23 The Council's response will be agreed at the appropriate Council meeting depending on the stage and nature of the document. The reports and minutes of the meetings are available on the Council's website.

Question 5

Do you feel it is straightforward to submit a representation on our planning documents? How could we improve it in a cost efficient way?

CHAPTER 4

GETTING INVOLVED IN PLANNING APPLICATIONS

What is a Planning Application?

- 4.1 Planning permission is required for most new buildings, many changes of use and operational development or significant changes to existing buildings. To obtain planning permission a planning application must be submitted by anyone who wishes to undertake the development.
- 4.2 The Council receives a number of different types of planning applications. Descriptions of these are included in Appendix D.

When are the Opportunities to make Comments?

- 4.3 The main opportunity for an individual or organisation to make comments on a planning application is before the Council makes a formal decision on it. The Council has a statutory duty to consult a variety of people about planning applications including neighbours and any relevant bodies such as the Highway Authority and /or the Environment Agency so that their views can be taken into account in the determination of an application.

Consultations Before a Planning Applications is submitted

- 4.4 The Council welcomes and encourages discussions before a planning application is submitted. Such discussions can assist in better quality applications, which stand a better chance of a successful outcome.
- 4.5 To ensure that these pre-application discussions are useful and constructive to both the Council and the applicant the Council has produced clear guidelines of what will be covered in pre-application discussions. This is included in Appendix E. There is also guidance on the procedure for seeking pre-application advice from the Council and the information that an applicant will need to provide before the Council will offer advice. The Council charges a modest fee for pre-application consultations –there is not a fee for advice on small household applications.

Question 6

Is there any additional advice that the Council could provide for pre-application meetings?

Community Involvements Before Planning Applications are submitted.

- 4.6 Once an applicant has received advice from the Council the applicant may wish to seek the views of the local community and/or the local Parish or District Councillors before they submit the application. By carrying out consultations at this early stage it will enable the applicant to avoid issues arising once the application has been submitted to the Council. It could be an opportunity to benefit from the input of local people and/or to address objections, which could affect the determination of the application.

- 4.7 Currently the Council does not ask for a statement of the pre-application consultations when a planning application is submitted, which could include who was consulted; the method, and timing of consultation and the feedback and how it was addressed in the proposal. Such information would be helpful for both the community and the Council to understand what consultation has been undertaken and how it has influenced the scheme.
- 4.8 However where a Design and Access Statement⁴ is required, the Council encourages the inclusion of details of any community engagement that has been carried out prior to submission of a planning application and how this process has influenced the design of the proposed development.

Informing the Community Once a Planning Application has been submitted

- 4.9 The consultation procedures to be followed on planning applications are laid down by Government regulation.⁵ It requires that all planning applications be subject to some form of publicity, consultation or notification before they are determined. This is set out in Figure 1. The results of any such consultation will be reported and taken into account in decisions made by and on behalf of the Council.
- 4.10 Nearly all applications require neighbour notifications. This takes the form of a letter that is sent to all neighbours immediately abutting the site area and any neighbours that have made a written representation in connection with any application on the site in the previous three years. The Council often goes beyond the statutory requirement and notifies properties opposite the site where the development would potentially have a wider impact. Such wider consultation is carried out at the discretion of the relevant planning officer.
- 4.11 All methods of publicity, consultation and notification have a statutory time period of 21 days for the receipt of responses unless otherwise stated. 21 days is the period recommended by Government to strike the right balance between timeliness of decisions and opportunity for comment. However with large scale applications such as Northstowe longer consultation periods have been given.

⁴ Design and Access Statements are documents that explain the design thinking behind a planning application. They should explain the design principles and concepts that have informed the development and how access issues have been dealt with.

⁵ Standards for consulting on planning applications are set out in various pieces of Government regulations

- The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure Order) 1995
- Circular 15/92 Publicity for Planning Applications
- The Town and Country Planning Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 1999
- The Town and Country Planning (Major Infrastructure Project Inquiries procedure)(England) Rules 2004

Figure 1 – Consultation on Planning Applications –

The Development Process

Stage in development process	Nature of development	Minimum consultation required by law with method used	Additional consultation
Pre-submission of planning application		See note 2 for policy on neighbour notification by letter. See note 3 for further explanation of figures in brackets.	See note 1 for meaning of wider concern as stated below None carried out by LPA. Applicant could seek views of local community. The extent and type of consultation will vary according to nature and scale of proposed development. E.g. from speaking to neighbours about plans for a house extension to exhibitions and workshops for major developments. Council officers can advise as to appropriate method.
Consideration once planning application has been submitted.	Major development and applications of wider concern	LPA required to advertise in local newspaper (21 days) And Either Site Notice (21 days) or neighbour notification (21 days) and Parish Council is notified (21 days)	The Council may consider further opportunity needs to be given to local community to air their views and to discuss their views with an applicant particularly for major developments. E.g. Public meeting or workshop, or some other type of public forum.
	Minor development	Neighbour notification (21 days) required to be done by LPA or Site Notice (21 days) and Parish Council is notified (21 days)	Site notice by Local Planning Authority (LPA) if application is of wider concern – at discretion of planning officer on case by case basis
	Development affecting the character or appearance of a Conservation Area	LPA required to advertise in local newspaper (21 days) and Site notice (7 days) and Parish Council is notified (21 days)	Neighbour notification by LPA (dependent on site situation) at discretion of planning officer on case by case basis
	Development affecting the setting of a listed building	LPA required to advertise in local newspaper (21 days) and Site notice (7 days) and Parish Council is notified (21 days)	Neighbour notification by LPA (dependent on site situation) at discretion of planning officer on case by case basis
	Applications accompanied by an Environmental Statement	LPA required to advertise in local newspaper (14 days) and Site notice (21 days) and Parish Council is notified (21 days)	Neighbour notification by LPA (dependent on site situation) at discretion of planning officer on case by case basis

Stage in development process	Nature of development	Minimum consultation required by law with method used	Additional consultation
		See note 2 for policy on neighbour notification by letter. See note 3 for further explanation of figures in brackets.	See note 1 for meaning of wider concern as stated below
	Applications which are a departure from the Development Plan	LPA required to advertise in local newspaper (14 days) and Site notice (21 days) and Parish Council is notified (21 days)	Neighbour notification by LPA (dependent on site situation) at discretion of planning officer on case by case basis
	Applications which affect a public right of way	LPA required to advertise in local newspaper (14 days) and Site notice (21 days) and Parish Council is notified (21 days)	Neighbour notification by LPA (dependent on site situation) at discretion of planning officer on case by case basis

Note 1: There are applications that fall outside the category of a major development but that are likely to be of ‘wider concern’ and as such may warrant an advertisement in addition to the possibility of a site notice or neighbour notification. These cases will normally have one or more of the following impacts associated with them, with the potential to affect more than just the adjoining properties. The likely types of development are:

1. Where the development will affect nearby property by causing noise, smell, vibration, dust or other nuisance;
2. Attracts crowds, traffic and noise into a generally quiet area;
3. Cause activity and noise during unsocial hours;
4. Introduce significant change e.g. particularly tall buildings;
5. Result in serious loss of light or privacy to more than just the adjoining properties;
6. Affect the setting of an ancient monument or archaeological site; and
7. Affect trees subject to tree preservation orders.
8. Certain contentious subjects such as telecommunication masts.

Planning staff will use their discretion and judgment in determining the need to publicise applications of wider concern.

Note 2: For the purposes of neighbour notification by letter, “neighbouring land” means “land whose boundary directly abuts the site of the proposed development or works except where that boundary is more than 90 metres away from the proposed development or works, or is land opposite the site of the proposed development or works, and is separated by a road of less than 20 metres wide”.

Note 3: The number of days given above in brackets represents the minimum statutory period for display of a site notice or advertisement (either 7 or 21 days); comments should be made within 21 days of the date of the site notice irrespective of the length of its display

How to View a Planning Application

- 4.12 Planning applications can be viewed:
- Online via the planning application search engine on the Council's website at www.scambs.gov.uk ;
 - Locally, by appointment with the Clerk or Chairman of the local Parish Council (or meeting); or
 - At the Planning Service, which is located at South Cambridgeshire's' Cambourne offices which are open between 8.30am and 5pm Monday to Friday.
- 4.13 Planning officers are usually available in the Cambourne offices to give advice on lodged applications. However it is advisable to make an appointment prior to visiting the offices if you wish to make a specific enquiry or wish to see a specific planning officer. The Planning Duty Officer is available for more general inquiries on a daily basis.

Question 7

Are there other ways we could reasonably let you know about planning applications or have we got it right?

How to Make Comments on a Planning Application

- 4.14 Any comments you may wish to make on a planning application should be in writing (by e-mail or letter, in both cases stating your full postal address) and received within the consultation period that is indicated for each application, although the Council will endeavour to take into account any representations received up to the date it makes a decision.

The Application Decision Making Process

- 4.15 Planning applications are determined against the planning policies set out in the adopted Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that form part of the LDF for South Cambridgeshire and against other material planning considerations such as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).
- 4.16 Decisions on applications can be made either by planning officers with delegated powers; or at Chairman's Delegation Meetings or by the Planning Committees.
- 4.17 Agendas and reports for the Planning Committee are publicly available 5 working days before the meeting and are also published on the Council's website. Meetings of Committee are minuted. Minutes of the last meeting are normally produced before the next meeting is held. Once agreed these are made available on the Council's website.

Opportunity to Speak at Planning Committee Meetings

- 4.18 Members of the public can speak at Planning Committee as long as they have already written to the Council in response to formal consultation and fall into one of the following categories:
- One objector to a proposal (including someone on behalf of a protest group)
 - Applicant (or the applicant's agent) or one supporter of the proposal.
- 4.19 Each speech is limited to three minutes and speakers must restrict themselves to material planning considerations. (See page 11)
- 4.20 An elected member of the Parish Council (or Chairman or duly nominated person of a Parish Meeting) may speak at a Planning Committee as long as the Parish Council itself is not the applicant. The parish representative can speak for up to three minutes and is not allowed to express any personal views. Also the local District Councillor not on the Planning Committee has a right to speak.
- 4.21 For further details on speaking at Planning Committee contact Democratic Services or view the Council's website:
<http://scams.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=768>

Petitions

- 4.22 The Council will accept petitions to be presented to the Planning Committee. The lead petitioner or nominee on the petition will be invited to speak at the meeting at which it is presented for no more than five minutes and may be questioned by the councillors on the committee for no more than five minutes.

Joint Planning Arrangements for Northstowe and the Major Growth Sites on Cambridge's Fringes

- 4.23 In late 2007 the three local authorities responsible for planning major growth around Cambridge – Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council committed to work more formally in partnership by creating two Joint Development Control Committees to determine the planning applications for the major growth sites. These Joint Committees were set up under the provisions of Section 101(5) of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 4.24 The consultation arrangements for these major planning applications target a wider area and can be carried out over a longer period of time. For example for Northstowe planning application the consultation period was 3 months rather than 21 days

Involvement of Community in Planning Obligations

- 4.25 Planning obligations or section 106 agreements⁶ are a necessary element of the planning process. They are increasingly used to support the provision of

⁶ The term S106 agreement refers to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 "A local planning authority may enter into an agreement with any person interested in land in their area for the purpose of restricting or

services and infrastructure, such as highways, recreational facilities, education, health and affordable housing which are required for individual developments. There are a number of tests to determine what should be included as part of a planning obligation⁷.

- 4.26 Before submitting a planning application, an applicant is encouraged to conduct pre-submission discussion with the Council. Applicants are expected to undertake research regarding the contributions in terms of planning obligations that they may be expected to provide as a result of their development.
- 4.27 The Council will be producing a Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which will assist in this research and will outline the expected infrastructure requirements as a result of development. The community and stakeholders will be consulted on this SPD as they were on the adopted Open Space in New Development SPD and adopted Public Art SPD, which provide guidance on what the Council expects developers to contribute to these specific areas.
- 4.28 The pre-application research undertaken by the applicant (or their agent) can, for example, involve contacting Cambridgeshire County Council to understand the current education, transport and highway needs or the Primary Care Trust to ascertain the need for local health facilities. Parish Councils are also an important consultee in any planning application and should be approached for information regarding the development and current needs of the community. The Council is willing to assist Parish Councils in these early discussions to identify appropriate needs and has a dedicated Section 106 Officer to help provide relevant advice and support during this process.
- 4.29 All Parish Councils are given the opportunity to comment on planning applications once they are submitted and can at this stage put forward suggestions of what is needed within the community in order to mitigate any potential impact of the development proposals that could be included as a planning obligation. Some parishes have produced Community-led Plans (formerly known as Parish Plans), which set out priority issues within a parish and could highlight what facilities a village may wish to have provided. This information, where relevant, can be used to respond to a planning application and be used as a starting point to negotiate planning obligations.
- 4.30 The Parish Forum could be used as a means of keeping parishes informed on how to respond to the planning obligations aspect of a planning application.

Question 8

Can we improve on how the community is involved in identifying what should be included in planning obligations to make developments acceptable in planning terms?

regulating the development or use of the land, either permanently or during such period as may be prescribed by the agreement.”

⁷ These tests, which are contained within Circular 05/2005, identify that planning obligations should be relevant to planning; necessary to make a proposed development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the proposed development; fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development; and reasonable in all other respects.

Community Involvement once Decision is made on Planning Application

- 4.31 All members of the public and other consultees who submit written representations are informed in writing of the decision on a planning application.
- 4.32 A decision notice is issued normally within 2 working days of a formal decision being made and some of these are sent out electronically, for example to Parish Councils. Reasons for approving or refusing an application are included in the decision notice. The decision notice is also available to view on the Council's website or at the Council offices in Cambourne.
- 4.33 In future it could be that the Council moves to sending all future notification about planning decisions by email in order to provide a more resource efficient and effective service.

Monitoring the Planning Application Service

- 4.34 The Council when it sends out decision notices regularly includes a letter about customer satisfaction to find out the applicant's experience of the planning service. A pre-paid addressed envelope is provided for the reply. It is hoped from the results of this survey that the Council can improve the service it provides in future.

Involvement if an Appeal is received on Planning Application

- 4.35 An applicant may appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against a refusal or contest any of the conditions imposed to the granting of permission or the non-determination of an application. Only the applicant has the right to appeal. It does not extend to other interested people or organisations (known as third parties).
- 4.36 Parish Councils and members of the public will be consulted and invited to comment on an appeal. This will be done through a standard consultation letter at the start of the appeal. The Council's Appeal team may invite where relevant a Parish Council to become more involved in an appeal.
- 4.37 Members of the public can speak at hearing and inquiries. Evidence from District and Parish Councillors can be useful especially if they have detailed local knowledge.
- 4.38 'Third party' interests can submit additional representations to the Planning Inspectorate on the appeal if they wish. This must be made in writing. It is also possible to ask the Inspectorate for a 'third party' to be allowed to attend an informal hearing or public inquiry in person to present their views.

How else does the Council Involve the Community and Stakeholders?

- 4.39 Weekly email bulletin- All District Councillors and Parish Councils are sent a weekly email bulletin that indicates how to use the planning application search facility on the Council's website to see which applications have been registered to that week.

4.40 Forums - The Council has set up forum groups in order to provide regular exchange of information between the planning officers and specialist groups.

- Agents Forum – This forum consists of agents who regularly come into contact with planning at the Council through submitting planning applications and by commenting on Local Development Documents (LDDs). This provides an opportunity to exchange ideas to ensure both the agents and the Council use the most effective and efficient methods when engaging with each other.
- Planning Parish Forum - The first Planning Parish Forum took place on Monday 19 January 2009. The meeting provided an opportunity for Parish Councils to discuss any planning issues they had, whilst also providing an additional level of training. These meetings will be held quarterly.

Question 9

Are there any other ways that the Council could do to improve the way it involves the community and stakeholders in considering planning applications.

CHAPTER 5

MANAGING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

How Community Involvement in Planning Process will be managed

- 5.1 The Planning Policy Team will manage the consultations on matters relating to the Local Development Framework (LDF). Consultation procedures for planning applications will be managed by the Council's Development Control Area Planning Teams. For the major development areas the consultation on masterplanning or on planning applications for these areas will be done by the Major Development Team in New Communities.

How it will be Resourced

- 5.2 It is important that the proposals set out in this document are based on a realistic assessment of the resources available in order to involve the community effectively in the planning process. It is essential that sufficient resources are made available to implement the consultation methods proposed.
- 5.3 This document has not included additional methods of consultation if it is considered that the Council would not have sufficient staff and/or funding to comply with the subsequent requirements in the agreed Statement of Community Involvement.
- 5.4 The Council may use specialist agencies or consultants for specific parts of the LDF.
- 5.5 Community involvement can be costly in terms of resources and staff time. The Council will maximise resources available by working with others to hold joint consultations where appropriate. The Council is setting up a consultation calendar so that the public will know what consultation is planned and for different Council departments to be able to co-ordinate consultation exercises.

Question 10

Is there anything more that the Council could do to cost-effectively advertise its forthcoming consultation events?

Reviewing and Monitoring the Implementation of the Statement of Community Involvement

- 5.6 In order for the Council to be able to consider the success of the implementation of the SCI there will need to be means of monitoring and reviewing the document. The Council will be collecting the following data to monitor the success of the SCI:
- Data collected from customer satisfaction letter sent out with some decision notices for planning applications (See page 27)
 - Equalities monitoring form data collected from consultation response forms by Equalities and Diversity Officer (See page 20)

- Use data collected from proposed additional question on consultation response forms about how respondent had heard of consultation and their preferred method for future consultations (See page 19)

5.7 The data collected will be published in the Annual Monitoring Report which the Council publishes each year. If this indicates that there are problems arising with the existing methods of consultation or improvements could be made to the way the Council involves the community and stakeholders in consultations on planning matters then changes may need to be made to the SCI. There will need to be a review of the SCI and the timescale of this set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Question 11

Is this sufficient data to monitor the success of the SCI? Should the Council be collecting other information and if so what?