

North West Leicestershire STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

June 2014



Statement of Community Involvement

As Local Planning Authority, North West Leicestershire District Council has to make many important decisions about where new development should go. This is done through the planning system. Consultation with local communities is an important part of this. To help make sure that our consultations are appropriate we have to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

Before considering the SCI it is useful to outline how the planning system works.

What is planning?

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The purpose of the planning system in the UK is to manage the use and development of land and buildings. It is how we as a society strike a balance between allowing development of land and buildings to support economic development, and provide the things we need like homes, jobs, shops and transport whilst conserving our heritage and the environment.

The planning system has two main parts to it:

- Plan making and
- Managing development.

Plan Making

The purpose of plan making is to set out how an area will develop over time and to provide a guide to future development. The main document is the Local Plan, but other documents can also be produced some of which are outlined below.

The Local Plan

The Local Plan will set out the planning strategy, policies and proposals for the district; it is intended to do a number of things:

- It will provide a vision for the future of the area, based on evidence of what is needed and what makes the local area distinctive
- It will provide priorities and policies to guide future development,
- It will allocate land for housing, employment, retail and other uses

The Local Plan will be the main consideration in determining planning applications.

Supplementary Planning Documents

In addition to the Local Plan the council can produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). SPDs supplement policies within the Local Plan and can be area or topic based. For example, the council has existing SPDs on affordable housing and retail. Although SPDs do not have the same status as the Local Plan they can be a material consideration when making planning decisions.

Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood plans are prepared by communities themselves with the support of the Council. Neighbourhood planning can be taken forward by two types of body - town and parish councils or neighbourhood forums. Neighbourhood forums are community groups that are designated to take forward neighbourhood planning in areas without parishes. It is the role of the local planning authority to agree who should be the neighbourhood forum for the neighbourhood area.

Neighbourhood Plans can allocate land or policies for the development of land in a neighbourhood if the majority of voters in the neighbourhood give approval. These plans must be in conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan and have regard to national planning policy.

Some neighbourhoods already have plans, often called Parish Plans. Neighbourhood Plans are different as from April 2012 they became part of the legal planning framework. This means that if they are agreed, planning decisions for that area have to be made in line with what they say, as well as the Local Plan for the area.

Please note that as Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by local communities they are not included as part of the SCI.

Managing Development

The management of development is done through the determination of planning applications.

Planning Applications

Most new development, building work and how land and buildings are used, are all managed through the process of planning permission. This is called development control or development management.

We receive about 1,000 planning applications per year which range from householder extensions and minor applications to large-scale proposals including new housing, employment, retail and other development. The Local Plan is the most important consideration in deciding planning applications and planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan (i.e. the Local Plan) unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

What is the role of Councillors in the planning system?

Elected members have an extremely important role to play in the planning process, both as decision makers and as somebody who will represent the views of local people. Before the Local Plan can be submitted for independent examination it must be agreed by a meeting of all councillors. The Planning Committee is required to determine planning applications. Although not all councillors are members of the Planning Committee they can attend meetings and make representations on behalf of local people.

Councillors will help you to understand the planning process and assist you to respond to consultations on the Local Plan or planning applications. They will also communicate your views to officers and other councillors so as to ensure that all views are taken in to account when determining how the council should proceed.

You can discuss any concerns or views you have with a councillor over the telephone or by meeting them in person. Councillors have regular surgeries which provide an opportunity for any ward resident to go and talk their councillor face to face. If you cannot attend a surgery then councillors will try and meet with you separately. You can also write to councillors using either e-mail or a letter.

Information about which councillors represent which areas together information about how you can contact them can be found on the district council's website at: www.nwleics.gov.uk/councillors

How can I be involved in planning?

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For the plans that we prepare and the planning applications that are submitted to us to decide, we must consult and engage with people and organisations in making our decisions.

Local Plans have to be widely consulted on; there is a formal process of consultation and examination that all Local Plans need to go through, with fixed deadlines. There are many stages in the preparation of a Local Plan and there are different opportunities to have your say throughout.

In terms of planning applications, for some large proposals developers will consult with residents and affected groups before making an application to the local authority (from April 2012 developers have been required to do this by law for certain applications). Once any planning application has been received and recorded, we take steps to publicise it, consult and invite comments.

To set out how and when we will consult and engage with stakeholders, organisations, businesses and residents on plans and planning applications we are required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

Local authorities are required by law to publish a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI sets out how the council intends to involve the community in plan making and in deciding planning applications.

Our latest SCI was adopted in October 2006. Since then there have been many changes, in both legislation and advances in technology providing us with more ways to engage through digital media.

We therefore need to prepare a new SCI to provide a framework for community engagement which is up to date, flexible, deliverable and cost-effective.

Once the new SCI is adopted, the Council will follow the procedures for consultation and engagement set out in the document. This will be tested by an independent Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Local Plan; failure to consult in accordance with the SCI would result in an unsound plan.

The SCI should be a clear statement enabling the community to know how and when they will be involved and how we intend to meet or exceed the minimum requirements set out in the regulations for both plan making and the consideration of planning applications.

What are we required to do?

Local Plan

There are regulations on who the council must consult and minimum legal requirements concerning how we consult on the Local Plan.

We must consult with the following:

- 'Specific consultation bodies' which includes a range of bodies with responsibilities for the environment, infrastructure, mining and we must also consult neighbouring authorities. Consultation with this latter group is more tightly specified, and is also part of the Duty to Cooperate placed on local authorities.
- 'General consultation bodies'. These are voluntary groups, groups representing different ethnic, national, or faith groups, businesses in the area, and groups representing the interests of local disabled people. The council can decide which organisations within these general categories it thinks are appropriate to consult.

1. Are you aware of any organisations which may represent a specific interest that should be consulted?

The council is also required to make documents available for inspection during any consultation at defined locations, which should include:

- At the Council Offices, Coalville, and at other such places within the district that we consider appropriate (documents to be available during normal opening hours), and
- On the Council's web site. (We have an online response system that we could use called Citizen Space, this will allow us to receive online responses to our consultations).

We have gone further to try and enable interested parties or individuals to be engaged in any consultations we undertake by setting up a database of contacts. You can request to be added to our database if you wish to be notified of consultations.

Planning Applications

Planning legislation sets out a minimum standard of publicity and notification of applications, depending on the nature of the application. More complex and contentious applications may require additional consultation arrangements depending on the nature of the particular proposal.

Legislation requires that for all major applications the application must be publicised either by:

- A site notice displayed in at least one place on or near the development site for at least 21 days, or,
- Serving notice on adjoining owners or occupiers, and,
- Advertisement in a local newspaper

How could I be consulted?

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Consultation methods and processes for engagement need to be as relevant and effective as possible based on the different stages of the plan-making process and the nature of planning applications.

In general we want to increase our use of electronic communication, online representations and social media as much as possible as these are easier and more efficient ways of communicating. For those that find it difficult to access electronic communication we will continue to make hard copies of consultation documents available. Where a person does not have an email address, letters shall be sent to

them informing them of the consultation and written representations will be welcomed.

Set out below are some suggested additional ways in which we could engage and consult with local people in addition to what we are required to do.

Local Plan – how might we consult you and keep you up to date:

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Residents:

Documents will be made available on the Council's website and at the Council Offices, Coalville. In addition documents will also be made available at the public libraries within the District during their normal opening hours.

2. Where else could we make hard copies of documents available?

- We will continue to use our database to which people's contacts details can be added to to ensure they are informed of any consultations
- Inform people via email or letters of any consultations we are undertaking and/or progress on the Local Plan
- Use social media to let you know of consultations or other important news, for example when a report is to be considered by the council
- Place information in local/community newsletters (e.g. Ashby Life)
- Place information on local websites (e.g. Leicestershire Villages/AboutMyArea)
- Use the council's e-newsletter (which will replace Vision magazine)
- Provide information at Community Events (such as Heart of the Forest Festival and Picnic in the Park)
- Information placed on community notice boards

3. Do you agree with the suggested methods of engagement? Please suggest others, or amendments if you wish?

4. How would you like to be involved in plan making?

5. What methods of engagement do you think work best?

Town/Parish Councils:

- Emails/letters to inform you of consultations we are undertaking
- Regular emails to inform you of progress on the Local Plan

- Provide information at Parish Liaison Meetings
- Hold workshops with parishes to engage with Parish Council members

6. Do you agree with the suggested methods of engagement? Please suggest others, or amendments if you wish?

7. How would you / your organisation like to be involved in plan making?

8. What methods of engagement do you think work best?

Businesses:

- Emails/letters to inform you of consultations we are under-taking
- Regular emails to inform you of progress on the Local Plan
- Utilise the quarterly Business Focus Newsletter to provide information/updates
- Use social media to inform you of a consultation
- Add your details to our database
- Provide information via the council's e-newsletter (which will replace Vision magazine)
- Meetings held with the business sector

9. Do you agree with the suggested methods of engagement? Please suggest others, or amendments if you wish?

10. How would you / your organisation like to be involved in plan making?

11. What methods of engagement do you think work best?

Planning Applications – how might we consult you and keep you up to date

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For all planning applications:

- Letters are sent to all owners/occupiers of residential properties that immediately adjoin the boundary of the application site
- Site notices are posted where an application is likely to have a wider impact or is in an area (e.g. in the countryside) where there are no immediate neighbours, but there may be public interest in the proposal, or where the proposals would affect the setting of a listed building or conservation area.

In addition the Council's Public Access system for planning applications is available on our web site and can be used to obtain details of current planning applications. This is available by individual property or by weekly list. Plans are also available to view at the Council Offices in Coalville (during normal opening hours).

Plans are sent to Parish Councils* as part of the consultation exercise and those neighbours notified of applications are advised that they can, by prior arrangement with the Parish Clerk, view the plans at the Parish Council offices.

**A pilot scheme is currently being undertaken by some Parish and Town Council's whereby planning applications are being sent via e-consultation rather than providing hard copies. If we get several hard copies of major applications one will be sent to the relevant Parish Council, otherwise all applications, minor or major, will be in electronic format. We will consider the success of this pilot scheme.*

12. Are these consultation methods appropriate?

Please suggest other ways in which you could be notified of planning applications

How can I respond to the Statement of Community Involvement Consultation?

Before we prepare a our new SCI we would like to invite you to consider how you would like to be involved in planning decisions in the future. We will consider your responses in preparing a new SCI.

The closing date for comments is Friday 19th September 2014. All comments must be received before 5.00pm on that day.

The consultation information is available to view and / or download from our website at:

www.nwleics.gov.uk/localplanmysay

Please e-mail your response to: **planning.policy@nwleicestershire.gov.uk**

Alternatively, you can provide comments via post to the following address: -

**SCI Consultation, Planning Policy, North West Leicestershire District Council
Council Offices, Whitwick Road, Coalville LE67 3FJ**

Hard copies can also be obtained from Main Reception at the District Council offices, and at the public libraries in the District (during their normal opening hours).