

Statement of Community Involvement

Adopted February 2016



Stafford
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Statement of Community Involvement

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1 Foreword

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1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement demonstrates Stafford Borough Council's commitment to engaging with local people and other stakeholders in planning issues.

1.2 It will provide a structured approach to engaging with local people and organisations across Stafford Borough in the preparation of Planning Policy Documents and consideration of Planning Applications.

1.3 A key objective of the planning system is to strengthen local community participation and stakeholder involvement in shaping future development and reaching planning decisions. Stafford Borough Council aims to build on this foundation and provide a transparent, user friendly and accessible platform to encourage and maximise public participation.

1.4 Planning Policy Documents are not prepared in isolation and are progressed with the input of local people, businesses and other stakeholders. Therefore, it is important for those who live, work and enjoy being in Stafford Borough to have every opportunity to influence growth and development through the Council's planning system. This will help us make the best possible planning decisions in the future.

Councillor Mrs Frances Beatty

Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration

2 Introduction

What is a Statement of Community Involvement?

2.1 A Statement of Community Involvement explains how the Local Planning Authority will engage with stakeholders, such as their local community and businesses, to prepare Planning Policy Documents and determine Planning Applications by describing who is consulted, how, and when.

2.2 This Statement of Community Involvement sets out Stafford Borough Council's approach to strengthening community involvement, and engaging with stakeholders to help shape the use of land and development.

2.3 When consulting local communities and stakeholders in preparing Planning Policy Documents and determining Planning Applications, consultation and engagement will need to meet the requirements of this Statement of Community Involvement.

2.4 Under Section 18 (Part 2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Planning Authorities are required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement to describe how they will engage with local people on planning decisions.

2.5 The Borough Council's first Statement of Community Involvement was adopted in 2006. Due to recent changes to the planning system (the Localism Act 2011, the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012, and the replacement of 'Local Development Frameworks' with 'Local Plans') a revised document has been prepared to reflect these changes.

3 Vision and Our Commitment to You

3 Vision and Our Commitment to You

Our Vision

3.1 The Borough Council believes that local community participation and involvement is central to the delivery of sustainable development and helps to provide effective planning for the future.

3.2 Our vision is to provide a platform for people to express their views on planning matters and share their local knowledge in an interactive and inclusive manner, to help inform planning decisions and create effective strategies.

Our Commitment to You

3.3 To achieve our vision,

- We will inform stakeholders about development proposals and planning applications as early as possible using a variety of methods and techniques
- We will create and prepare planning policy documents in a user friendly manner
- We will ensure our methods and approach are transparent and accessible to help people understand the planning process better
- We will record and consider views to help inform Planning Policy Documents and determine Planning Applications
- We will seek to work with groups and individuals who do not normally engage with planning
- We will encourage developers to consult on their proposals as soon as practicable.

A Consistent Approach

3.4 This Statement of Community Involvement has been aligned with the Borough Council's emerging Communication Strategy. This Strategy, which sets out the Council's approach towards engaging with local communities and stakeholders, aims to provide a transparent process that will help increase public engagement and ensure the Borough Council is capturing a wide range of views to help make effective decisions. The commitments stated above will help achieve the aims stated in the Communication Strategy and provide a consistent approach when consulting with the local community.

Council Constitution

3.5 Stafford Borough Council has a Constitution that sets out how the Council conducts its business, how decisions are made and ensure the procedures followed are consistent and transparent, so that the Council remains accountable to local people. To view the Council's Constitution, please visit <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/constitution>

Stafford Borough Community Compact

3.6 Stafford Borough Council is a signatory of The Staffordshire Compact. The Staffordshire Compact is a commitment between the third sector (made up of voluntary and community organisations) and public organisations (made up of local authorities, police, fire and rescue and the health authority) in Staffordshire. This compact aims to provide a framework for the third sector and public organisations to work together to provide more effective and co-ordinated services to local communities.

3.7 The Stafford Borough Compact was developed to help achieve shared aims and principles outlined in the Staffordshire Compact and to also demonstrate how it would support the voluntary and community sector in the Borough. This includes building stronger partnerships with the voluntary and community sector.

3.8 With regards to planning matters, Stafford Borough Council will engage with VAST, who are the Voluntary and Community Infrastructure Organisation for Staffordshire, and Support Staffordshire (Stafford and District), who are the local Community Voluntary Service (or successor organisations) to help assist with the formulation and development of Planning Policy Documents, as and when appropriate.

3.9 Stafford Borough Council is currently in the process of reviewing the existing Compact agreement with the Voluntary and Community Sector, and once this has been completed, it will be available on the Stafford Borough Council website to view.

4 The Planning System

4 The Planning System

The Planning System

4.1 The Planning System plays a key role in shaping the use of land and development to provide attractive, vibrant and well-designed places to live and work. Whilst it seeks to conserve and protect the environment, it also aims to provide new development that meets the needs for new housing, employment, and other facilities. This inevitably involves making some challenging decisions. The role of the Local Planning Authority is to make balanced decisions after considering consultation responses and other material planning matters.

4.2 The Planning System is made up of two parts:

- Plan Making - Planning Policy Documents
- Development Management - Planning Applications

Plan Making

4.3 Plan Making is referred to as planning policy or spatial planning. Plan Making requires Local Planning Authorities to produce a Local Plan for the area which sets out how the area will develop over a period of time. The Local Plan policies will be used to guide future development.

4.4 The process of creating a Local Plan requires Local Planning Authorities to identify and engage, at an early stage, with all those that may be interested in the development or content of the Local Plan, and with groups who may be affected by proposals. With the help of the local community and the collation of an evidence base, the Local Planning Authority will identify options for addressing local development needs, to inform a preferred approach for future development. This requires carrying out a robust community consultation with local communities, businesses and other interested parties.

4.5 The Local Plan includes a list of strategies and policies, allocations of land and resources that will deliver the overall vision for future development in Stafford Borough.

Development Management

4.6 Development Management is the process of determining Planning Applications. Planning Applications are submitted to the Council by those seeking permission from the Local Planning Authority to make changes to the use of land, existing buildings, or development of new buildings.

4.7 When determining Planning Applications, the Local Planning Authority has to consider the contents of the Local Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework, consultation responses, and any other relevant planning issues.

A Customer Service Approach

4.8 At Stafford Borough Council the Development Management team is strongly customer focused and aims to provide an excellent service. At the heart of processing Planning Applications is a customer care promise, which is effectively working towards specific standards of service. These standards can be found in the Planning Customer Service Charter, which includes a list of objectives, one of which embraces involving people in taking decisions that affect them.

4.9 To see the Planning Customer Service Charter, please visit <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/planning>

5 Planning Policy Documents

5.1 This section focuses on what Planning Policy Documents are and a general description of their contents. It explains who, when and how people are consulted during the preparation of Planning Policy Documents.

5.2 Planning Policy Documents provide the strategic framework to guide future growth and development proposals. They are used to help determine Planning Applications. There are two types of Planning Policy Documents: Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

Development Plan Documents

5.3 Collectively, Development Plan Documents form the Local Plan for the area. They are the statutory documents that contain planning policies for the Borough. In Stafford Borough, the Local Plan will be made up of the Plan for Stafford Borough and the Site Allocations document.

Supplementary Planning Documents

5.4 Supplementary Planning Documents are complementary documents that provide further details and guidance to policies contained in the Local Plan, and are used as material considerations in reaching planning decisions. Supplementary Planning Documents take many forms, ranging from a master plan or development brief, to design guides and general additional guidance produced by the Council.

Neighbourhood Planning

5.5 Neighbourhood Plans (sometimes called Neighbourhood Development Plans) were introduced by the Localism Act in November 2011 to enable local communities to further shape the development and growth of their local area.

5.6 Neighbourhood Planning allows communities to choose where new homes, shops, offices and other development should be built, identify and protect local green spaces and influence what new buildings should look like.

5.7 Neighbourhood Planning can be taken forward by two types of bodies - Town and Parish Councils or 'Neighbourhood Forums'. Neighbourhood Forums are community groups, including local residents, that are designated to take forward Neighbourhood Planning in areas without Parishes. It is the role of the Local Planning Authority to firstly agree the formation of the Neighbourhood Forum and secondly to designate the Neighbourhood Area.

5.8 Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan enables communities to develop a shared vision, with key aims and objectives to help deliver new sustainable development for their area. Neighbourhood Plans set out planning policies that are used to help determine Planning Applications. They should help, not hinder development and must conform to the Local Plan.

5.9 When a Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted, it will then become part of the Local Plan and used to help determine future Planning Applications.

5.10 For more information and guidance on Neighbourhood Planning please visit <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>

Community Infrastructure Levy

5.11 The Community Infrastructure Levy allows Local Planning Authorities to set charges which developers must pay when bringing forward new development, to contribute towards the cost of new local infrastructure. This can include new roads, schools, health centres, and sport, recreation and green spaces.

5.12 A Community Infrastructure Levy is prepared by Local Planning Authorities before it is adopted. The key stages in preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy are set out on page 14.

6 When We Will Consult – Planning Policy Documents

6.1 Consultation on Planning Policy Documents takes place during a series of key stages as the document develops. Different types of Planning Policy Documents will have different mechanisms used for community involvement at various stages.

6.2 Planning Policy Documents are prepared in accordance with the Regulations alongside the [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#) and the National [Planning Practice Guidance](#).

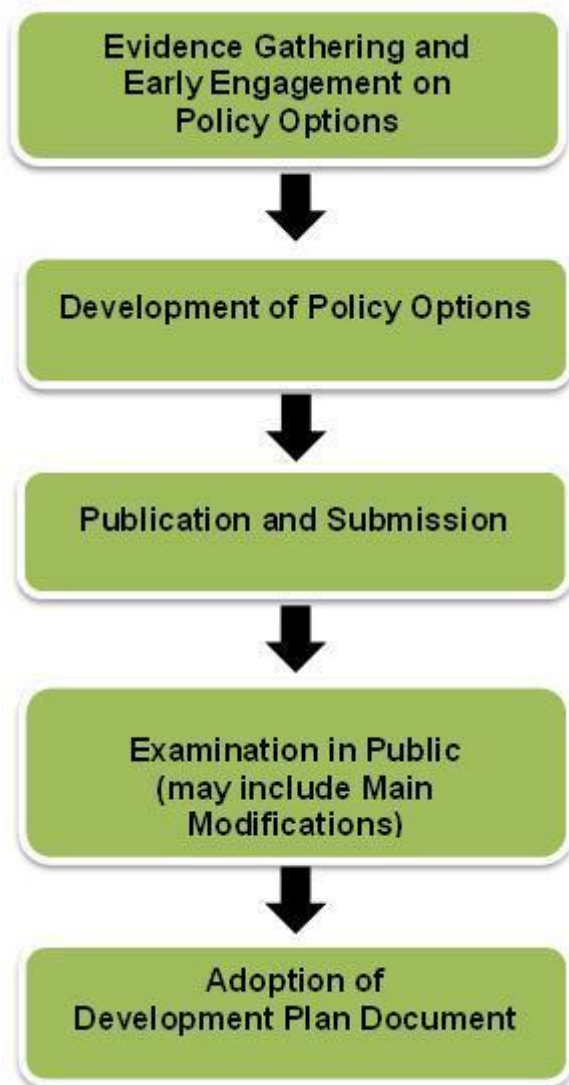
6.3 The Stafford Borough Community Compact stipulates that there should be a minimum consultation period of 12 weeks for new policies and services that are being introduced. However, in line with the Town and Country Planning Regulations (2012), the Borough Council is required to consult for a minimum period of 6 weeks. To ensure that consideration is given to the Compact, the Borough Council will extend the period of consultation where necessary i.e. during holiday periods to ensure that those who are required to respond have sufficient time to do so.

6.4 The key stages in preparing different Planning Policy Documents and when you can get involved at each stage is set out below.

6 When We Will Consult – Planning Policy Documents

Key stages in preparing Development Plan Documents

6.5 The key stages required to prepare a Development Plan Document (DPDs) are shown below. Each stage is described, including when the Borough Council will carry out consultations.

**Evidence Gathering and Early Engagement on Policy Options**

6.6 The Borough Council will collate a range of socio-economic and environmental evidence. It will consult with the community and statutory organisations listed in Appendix 1 & 2, and establish the main issues for the document to address as part of developing policy options. This may include consultation on issues and reasonable policy alternatives.

6.7 The local community and stakeholders are encouraged to provide their details via a consultation database so that they can be kept informed throughout the following stages.

Development of Policy Options

6.8 The community and stakeholders, including statutory organisations, will be encouraged to participate in the on-going policy development process and a range of consultation / engagement methods will be used to help achieve this. Following on from the early engagement on policy options, the Council will consult on preferred options for the Development Plan Document.

Publication and Submission

6.9 Following preparation of the Development Plan Document the Borough Council will publish a final version and invite comments on the document from the community, statutory organisations and other interested parties as part of a statutory 6 week consultation stage.

6.10 This is effectively the final stage to submit formal representations to the Borough Council on the Development Plan Document. The Borough Council will then submit the Development Plan Document, the Sustainability Appraisal and the entire evidence base, including the representations made, to the Secretary of State for an Examination in Public.

Examination in Public

6.11 An independent Inspector is appointed to undertake an Examination in Public, to test the legal compliance and soundness of the Development Plan Document whilst considering all representations made at the Publication stage.

6.12 Prior to the Examination in Public, the Borough Council must publish an advert notifying the public, including any interested parties, about details of the Examination.

6.13 Anybody who submitted representations at the Publication stage will have the opportunity to present their case to the Inspector.

6.14 During the Examination in Public stage the Council may propose Main Modifications to the document, if these are needed to make it “sound”. If this is the case further consultation on the proposed changes will be carried out. The Inspector will then produce a report setting out any changes the Borough Council must make to the document before it can be adopted.

Adoption of Development Plan Document

6.15 The Borough Council will receive the Inspector’s Report, publicise an adoption statement and adopt the Development Plan Document.

6 When We Will Consult – Planning Policy Documents

Key stages in preparing Supplementary Planning Documents

6.16 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are supporting documents and do not have the same status as Development Plan Documents.

6.17 The stages of preparing a Supplementary Planning Document are similar to the stages in preparing a Development Plan Document, except there is no Examination in Public. In addition the level and scope of community involvement will depend on the nature of the document being produced. For example, consultation on a Design Statement is likely to be focused on the particular area to which it will directly apply.

6.18 The Council will expect developers to follow similar consultation requirements for masterplans in the same manner as required for SPD's.

6.19 The diagram below shows the key stages for preparing a Supplementary Planning Document. Each stage is described including when the Borough Council will carry out consultations.

**Evidence Gathering and Early Engagement**

6.20 The Borough Council will engage with relevant stakeholders to collate evidence to produce the draft Supplementary Planning Document.

Publication of Draft Document

6.21 Following the evidence gathering stage, the Borough Council will prepare and publish a draft Supplementary Planning Document for consultation.

6.22 The Borough Council will invite comments from the local community, relevant stakeholders, statutory organisations and interested parties on the draft Supplementary Planning Documents for a minimum of 4 weeks.

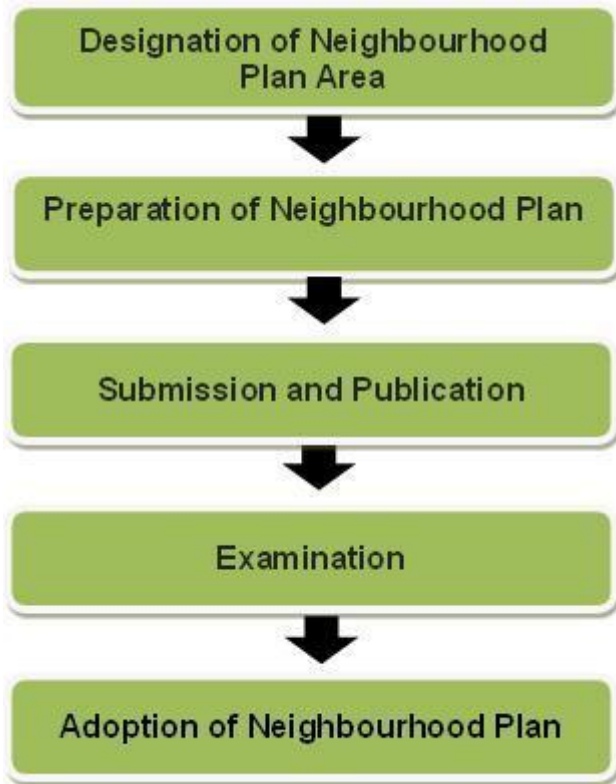
Adoption

6.23 The Borough Council will consider all the representations received from the consultation and make any necessary amendments to the final document before it is adopted.

6.24 The Borough Council will produce a statement summarising what consultation has been undertaken, the main issues raised and how these have been considered in the preparation of the Supplementary Planning Document.

Key stages in preparing Neighbourhood Plans

6.25 The key stages for preparing a Neighbourhood Plan are shown below. Each stage is described including when the Borough Council will carry out consultations.



Designation of Neighbourhood Plan Area

6.26 A Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum can submit an application to the Borough Council requesting for a Neighbourhood Plan Area to be designated.

6.27 The Borough Council will publicise the Neighbourhood Plan Area Application and carry out a statutory consultation for a period of 4 or 6 weeks before it is considered for designation as a Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Borough Council will then publish details of its decision, including a map of the designated area.

Preparation of Neighbourhood Plan

6.28 The Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum will prepare their Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#). This involves collecting evidence, engagement and

consultation with the local community on issues and options, and developing draft planning policies for inclusion to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Submission and Publication

6.29 The Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum are required to submit the draft Neighbourhood Plan to the Borough Council who will then publish the proposed Neighbourhood Plan for a 6 week period of consultation. The Borough Council will notify all relevant stakeholders and invite comments during the consultation stage.

Examination

6.30 The Borough Council will arrange for an independent Inspector to examine the Neighbourhood Plan. Prior to the Examination, the Borough Council must publish an advert notifying the public, including any interested parties, about details of the Examination.

6.31 Following the Examination, the Inspector will produce a report to show whether the Neighbourhood Plan meets the [basic and legal requirements](#) set out in the regulations.

Adoption of Neighbourhood Plan

6.32 Following receipt of the Inspector's Report, this recommends any changes required and whether the Neighbourhood Plan can proceed to a referendum (vote).

6.33 The Council will publish the Inspector's Report and arrange a referendum. If the Neighbourhood Plan is successful at referendum (achieved more than a 50% yes vote) the Borough Council will then adopt the Neighbourhood Plan and it will be used in the determination of Planning Applications in the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

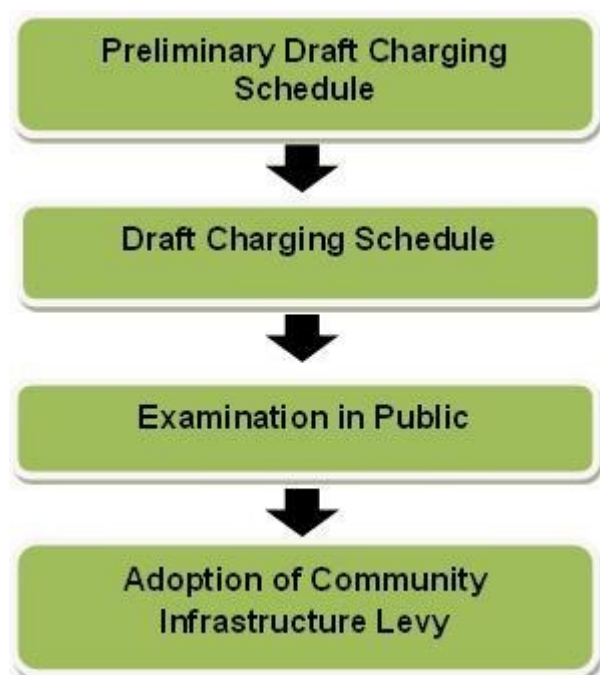
Note: The Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum preparing a Neighbourhood Plan is responsible for undertaking community engagement and consultation before the draft plan is prepared. Consulting with the wider community in the early plan making process could increase the likelihood of the Neighbourhood Plan being successful at the referendum stage.

6 When We Will Consult – Planning Policy Documents

Key stages in preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy

6.34 The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 set out the procedure for Local Planning Authorities to meet in order to adopt a Charging Schedule.

6.35 The diagram below shows the key stages in preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy. Each stage is described including when the Borough Council will carry out consultations.

**Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule**

6.36 Following the production of an evidence base including viability reports and an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Borough Council prepares a preliminary draft charging schedule, which sets out the proposed levy rates. The Borough Council will then carry out a period of consultation seeking views from stakeholders on the proposed rates.

Draft Charging Schedule

6.37 Following consideration of the views made to the preliminary draft charging schedule the Borough Council will publish a draft charging schedule for a 6 week consultation, seeking comments from all relevant stakeholders. The Borough Council will then submit a final draft charging schedule to the Secretary of State for an independent Examination. At this stage,

anybody who has made a representation to the draft charging schedule has the opportunity to be involved as part of the Examination in Public.

Examination in Public

6.38 An independent Inspector is appointed to examine a draft charging schedule, and will consider all of the representations together with the evidence base.

6.39 Prior to the Examination in Public, the Borough Council must publish an advert notifying the public, including any interested parties, about details of the Examination.

6.40 During the Examination in Public, those who have made representations to the draft charging schedule can present further information to the Inspector. Following the Examination in Public the Inspector produces a report and recommendations regarding the draft charging schedule.

Adoption of Community Infrastructure Levy

6.41 The Borough Council will publish the Inspector's Report and make any amendments prior to the Community Infrastructure Levy being adopted.

7 Who We Will Consult – Planning Policy Documents

7.1 In the preparation of Planning Policy Documents, a wide range of individuals, groups, representatives and organisations will be consulted.

7.2 In line with statutory obligations, the Borough Council is required to provide a '**specific consultation**' list of statutory organisations who must be consulted (please see Appendix 1) and a '**general consultation**' list of those who may wish to be consulted (please see Appendix 2) on Planning Policy Documents. These lists of bodies are not definitive and the Borough Council may need to consult with other organisations at the appropriate time.

7.3 Stafford Borough Council wants to ensure that all stakeholders have every opportunity to be involved with the preparation of Planning Policy Documents and no groups / organisations and individuals, including hard to reach groups are excluded.

7.4 Stafford Borough Council maintains a database of over 3,000 consultees, which largely consists of those who have expressed an interest in being involved in the preparation of Planning Policy Documents. These are identified as key stakeholders and are shown in the diagram below.

Key Stakeholders



7.5 Any resident, business or interested party can be included in this database by contacting the Borough Council's Forward Planning team on 01785 619000, or visiting the online consultation portal. The Borough Council will comply with the Data Protection Act to ensure personal information is kept confidential and secure.

Duty to Co-operate

7.6 The Council is required, under Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011, to engage with neighbouring authorities and other statutory organisations to satisfy the 'Duty to Co-operate' legal requirement. This is to ensure that neighbouring authorities and relevant organisations work together to meet development requirements and address any strategic cross boundary issues.

7.7 Stafford Borough Council has worked closely with all relevant Duty to Co-operate organisations throughout the preparation of the Plan for Stafford Borough. The Borough Council remains committed to fulfilling this Duty in the preparation of future Planning Policy Documents.

8 How We Will Consult - Planning Policy Documents

8 How We Will Consult - Planning Policy Documents

8.1 Stafford Borough Council will use a range of methods to involve local people and strengthen community involvement. The table below describes the various methods used for consulting on Planning Policy Documents.

Methods	How this works
Letters & Emails	Letters and emails sent out to notify relevant stakeholders about a consultation on Planning Policy Documents.
Online Consultation	Consultation portal for people to enter their comments on Planning Policy Documents online.
Parish Forum Meetings	Attendance at Parish Forum meetings to provide Parish Councils with information on Planning Policy Documents.
Focus Groups	Interactive consultation events where the views of a specific group of people are sought. Examples of such groups include: Older People's network groups and Youth Councils.
Display boards	Display boards are set up in the reception of Council Offices to raise awareness of consultation on Planning Policy Documents and how people can get involved.
Public Exhibitions & Workshops	Exhibitions are set up in various locations across the Borough to provide information on Planning Policy Documents. Workshops are organised to gather information and feedback from members of the public and other stakeholders to help inform Planning Policy Documents.
Press Release	Press releases / adverts are issued to the local newspapers and local radio stations to raise awareness about consultation on Planning Policy Documents.
Libraries	Hard copies of Planning Policy Documents, with response forms, are distributed to local Libraries for people to view and make comments.
Council website www.staffordbc.gov.uk	Details of Planning Policy Documents are published on the website for the public to view, including details of the consultation.

The Methods used for different types of Planning Policy Documents at various key stages

8.2 The table below shows what methods will be used for consulting on each of the Planning Policy Documents at different stages, as listed below.

Methods	Development Plan Documents				Supplementary Planning Documents			Neighbourhood Plans				Community Infrastructure Levy			
	Evidence Gathering & Early Engagement	Development of Policy Options	Publication & Submission	Examination in Public	Adoption	Publication of Draft SPD	Adoption	Designate Neighbourhood Plan	Submission & Publication	Examination	Adoption	Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule	Draft Charging Schedule	Examination in Public	Adoption
Letters & Emails	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Consultation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parish Forum Meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Focus Groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Display boards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Exhibitions & Workshops	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Press Release	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Libraries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Council website – www.staffordbc.gov.uk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

What happens to the comments received on Planning Policy Documents?

8.3 All representations received via the online consultation portal will receive an automatic acknowledgement of the representation and then be electronically recorded. The Borough Council will also accept comments by letter and email, but will not acknowledge their receipt.

8.4 All representations will be published on the Borough Council's website, for the public to view via the online consultation portal. They will be considered and used to help inform the production of Planning Policy Documents.

9 Planning Applications

9 Planning Applications

9.1 This section focuses on the types of Planning Applications the Borough Council deals with and explains who, when and how people are consulted on development proposals.

9.2 Most types of new development or the change of use of land and buildings require planning permission. There are other types of applications that request consent for works to Listed Buildings, demolitions and advertisements (signage).

9.3 Planning Applications are decided by Local Planning Authorities in line with their Local Plan, unless there are good reasons not to do so.

9.4 Stafford Borough Council deals with approximately 1,000 Planning Applications each year. They are considered and determined through the Development Management process and can range from house extensions and minor applications to large scale mixed use proposals, which include major new housing, retail, leisure and industrial developments.

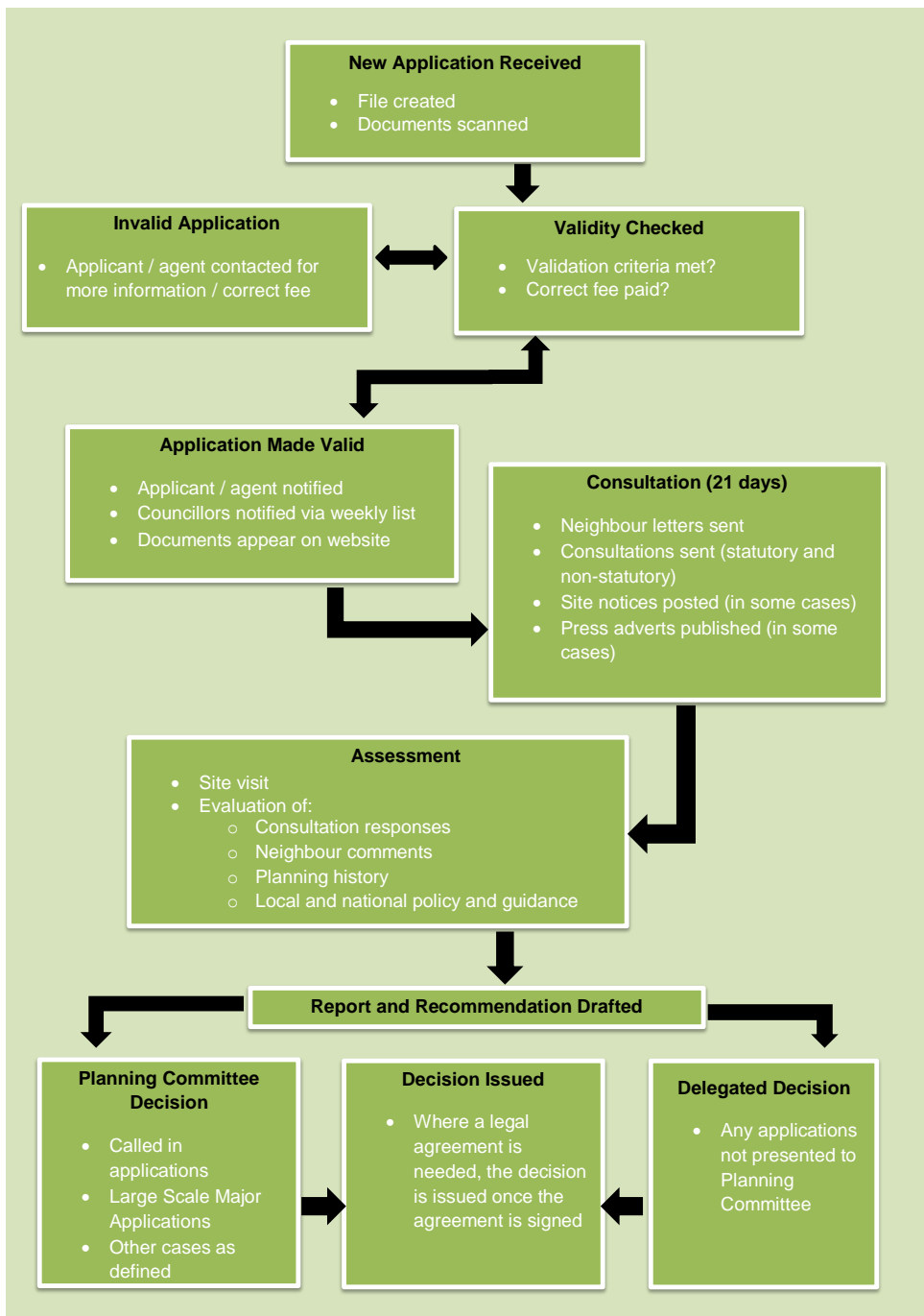
9.5 For more information on what development requires planning permission and how to submit a Planning Application please visit <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/planning>.

10 When We Will Consult - Planning Applications

10.1 Consultation on Planning Applications is different to consultation on Planning Policy Documents. The scale, type and nature of Planning Applications will determine how the Borough Council will involve and consult with the community, in accordance with the [Development Management Procedure Order 2010 \(as amended\)](#).

10.2 The flowchart below shows the key stages in processing Planning Applications at Stafford Borough Council. Each stage is described further below.

Planning Application Process



10 When We Will Consult - Planning Applications

Key Stages for Processing Planning Applications

Registering and Validating Applications

10.3 When the Borough Council receives a Planning Application it must first be registered and checked for completeness (validated). The validation process ensures that the applicant has met the local and national requirements for a valid Planning Application. For a list of the local and national validation requirements please visit <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/information-needed-for-a-planning-application>

10.4 The Case Officer assessing the application will consult with relevant officers such as County Highways, Tree Officer or Conservation Officer on the proposal as soon as possible. This highlights any potential issues or lack of evidence at an early stage.

Consultation on Planning Applications

10.5 The Borough Council will consult with relevant parties, which can include sending a letter to the occupiers of the neighbouring properties notifying them of the Planning Application. The Case Officer has to use his/her discretion as to who is defined as a near neighbour.

10.6 For information on which neighbouring properties are usually notified on Planning Applications, please visit <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/letting-you-know-about-planning-applications>

10.7 Neighbouring properties will be invited to make any comments within a time-frame of 21 days, and encouraged to view the application at the Council Offices or on the Council's website. The Council will consult with various organisations and bodies listed in Appendix 3 and 4, depending on the type of Planning Application.

10.8 The Borough Council will display a site notice for some developments on or near the site, and depending on the type of development, may advertise the Planning Application in a local newspaper. The site notice and newspaper

article will describe the nature of the Planning Application and how people can make comments.

10.9 People are encouraged to make comments electronically via [Public Access](#).

10.10 During the consultation period, the Case Officer will carry out a site visit, and collect information on the proposal including taking photos and sometimes measurements.

Making a Planning Decision

10.11 After the consultation period has ended, the Borough Council will consider the proposed application against the Local Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework, any comments received and any material considerations (such as supplementary planning documents or other guidance), before the Case Officer makes his/her recommendation.

10.12 Planning Applications are approved, approved with conditions or refused.

10.13 Planning decisions are either made by Planning Committee or delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration.

10.14 Large scale Major Planning Applications are decided by the Planning Committee, and other planning applications can be called in by Borough Councillors, for a valid planning reason.

Pre-Application Assistance

10.15 The Borough Council welcomes and encourages pre-application advice with applicants and agents before submitting a Planning Application.

10.16 Pre-application advice is a discussion between a Case Officer and the applicant based on a proposed scheme. A discussion can take place over the phone, face to face, via email or a letter.

10.17 The Case Officer will help the applicant to identify the validation criteria and any potential concerns that need to be considered. These discussions respect commercial confidence and the detail of discussions is not publicly available before an application is made.

10.18 To access pre-application advice the Borough Council ask for a pre-application form to be completed with the details of the proposed development. To download a pre application form please visit <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/pre-application-assistance>

Pre Application Consultation

10.19 Applicants are encouraged, but not required by the National Planning Policy Guidance, to consult with local communities before submitting a Planning Application.

10.20 The Borough Council's [Local Validation Criteria](#) requires applicants to consult with local communities and businesses prior to submitting large scale Planning Applications. This is to give local people an opportunity to be involved in the planning process at an early stage, and help the application to be determined more quickly, by identifying and resolving issues as soon as possible.

Appeals

10.21 If a Planning Application is refused, not validated or not determined within the statutory timescale, or contains conditions that are considered unacceptable, the applicant who has submitted the Planning Application has a right to appeal to the Secretary of State. The Borough Council will notify anyone who has commented on the Planning Application about the appeal. The appeal is then dealt with by an independent Planning Inspector.

10.22 For more information about the appeals process please visit <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/What-happens-after-a-decision-is-made>

11 Who We Will Consult – Planning Applications

11 Who We Will Consult – Planning Applications

11.1 The Borough Council will encourage any individual, group, representative and organisation interested in a Planning Application to have their say, and ensure their views on planning matters are considered before the application is determined.

11.2 In line with statutory Regulations, the Borough Council will consult with those directly affected by the proposed development (living nearby, or adjoining property owners) and also invite representations from other consultees / organisations where relevant to the particular application (shown in Appendix 3). This list is not definitive and the Borough Council may need to consult with other organisations at the appropriate time according to the type, nature and location of the development. For example, the Canal and River Trust, Natural England and the Environment Agency will be consulted on Planning Applications involving development along canals or rivers.

12 How We Will Consult – Planning Applications

12.1 The Borough Council will use various methods to consult with the community on Planning Applications in order to determine planning decisions. The methods used are described below.

Methods	How this works
Letters and Email's	Letters and email's are sent out to those who the Case Officer considers are directly affected by the proposal, to notify and seek comments regarding the Planning Application.
Site Notice	<p>Site notices are sometimes displayed notifying the public on Planning Applications, inviting comments during a consultation period.</p> <p>Site notices are displayed on or near the site in question of the Planning Application.</p>
Press Notice	Press notices are sometimes published in the Staffordshire Newsletter to notify the wider public and seek comments about certain Planning Applications.
Publicise Weekly Lists	Weekly lists of Planning Applications that have been validated are circulated to interested parties and published on the Council's website for notification purposes only. To access this, please visit http://www7.staffordbc.gov.uk/online-applications/
Online Public Access Link	People can view and make comments via the Council's website. Planning Applications can be searched by entering an application reference number, street or keyword. People can also view other comments made and any associated documents including maps, plans and photos. To access this, please visit http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/planning-public-access

12 How We Will Consult – Planning Applications

The Methods used for different types of Planning Applications

12.2 The methods used for consulting on Planning Applications will depend on the nature, type and scale of Planning Application that is being considered. The table below shows the methods that will be used to consult on most common type of Planning Applications received at Stafford Borough Council.

	Planning Applications				
Methods	Household & Minor Planning Applications	Large scale Planning Applications	Listed building Consent	Lawful Development Certificates	Advertisement
Letters/ Emails or Site Notices	✓	✓	✓		
Press Notice		✓	✓		
Publicise Weekly Lists	✓	✓	✓		✓
Online Public Access Link	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

12.3 When we receive a Planning Application with all the necessary plans and supporting information Government Regulations require that we notify those people potentially affected by it. This might be through a notice displayed on or near the application site, a public notice in the Staffordshire Newsletter, or by direct mailing to neighbours. Depending on the size and type of application, it could be a combination of all three.

12.4 On the smaller applications, the Regulations don't specify which method of publicity we should use, so we have to decide which method is more appropriate. In most cases, we will write to neighbouring properties, wherever it's possible to do so, but the Case Officers have to use their judgement as to the extent of the notification.

What happens to the comments received on Planning Applications?

12.5 The Borough Council will electronically record all responses received on Planning Applications. All representations will be published on the Borough Council's website available for the public to view via [Public Access](#).

12.6 All representations received before a decision has been made will be considered.

13 Monitoring and Review

13.1 Stafford Borough Council is committed to strengthening local community participation and stakeholder involvement in the planning process.

13.2 Each year the Council monitors and reviews the progress and effectiveness of the Local Plan in an annual Authority Monitoring Report. In addition and where appropriate, the Council will carry out a periodic review of the Local Plan.

13.3 In accordance with the Authority Monitoring Report, the Council will also review consultation activities that have been carried out in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement. This is to ensure the methods and techniques used to engage with all stakeholders of the community are effective and robust.

13.4 The Council will use the following indicators to measure outcomes.

- Number of people participating in consultation
- Number of people using the Council's online website to make representations

13.5 If significant changes are required to meet new circumstances or legislation changes, a review of the Statement of Community Involvement will be undertaken.

14 Glossary of Terms

14 Glossary of Terms

Adoption – When a Planning Policy Document has been through all the stages of production and is accepted by the Council (and Inspector where relevant) it will then be adopted by full Council.

Appeals – This is a process designed for anyone who has applied to the Council for planning permission and is unhappy with the resulting decision, or the lack of decision.

Community Infrastructure Levy - This is a levy allowing local authorities to raise funds from owners and developers of land undertaking new building projects in their area.

Duty to Co-operate – This is introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and places a legal duty on Councils to engage constructively and actively with certain specified bodies to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation.

Examination in Public – Development Plan Documents and the Community Infrastructure Levy are subject to an Examination. This is where an independent Planning Inspector assesses the soundness of the document. Representatives can provide their views to the Inspector.

General Consultation Bodies – These are organisations defined by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations (2012) that are required to be consulted at key stages of plan production. These include groups which represent different interests within a Local Planning Authority area.

Inspector's Report – A report issued by a Planning Inspector regarding the planning matters discussed at the Examination in Public.

Local Plan – The Plan for the future development of the local area prepared by the Local Authority in consultation with the local community which is used to determine Planning Applications.

Local Planning Authority – The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area.

Material Planning Considerations – Factors that are considered to determine a planning decision, i.e. loss of light, parking or noise.

National Planning Policy Framework - This sets out the Government's national planning requirements, policies and objectives which are used to inform production of Planning Policy Documents and help determine Planning Applications.

Neighbourhood Plans - A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (introduced by the Localism Act 2011). It can include planning policies and land allocations for new development.

Planning Committee – This is a committee of local councillors that determine Planning Applications referred to them under the Borough Council's Constitution.

Policies Maps – These illustrate the local plan policies on an Ordnance Survey Base Map.

Stakeholders – Any individual, group, organisation, developer or other party that is affected by or has an interest in planning matters.

Statement of Community Involvement – A statement explaining how and when the Council will consult with local and statutory stakeholders in the process of planning for the local authority area. This sets out the standards that the Council intends to achieve in relation to involving the community and stakeholders.

Specific Consultation Bodies – These are organisations defined by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations (2012) that are required to be consulted at key stages of plan production. They include neighbouring and Parish Councils, key service providers, Government agencies and Non-Government Organisations.

Sustainability Appraisal – This is a form of assessment which considers the environmental, social and economic effects of a Planning Policy Document. It appraises the contents of the document and suggests alterations to help achieve sustainable development.

Supplementary Planning Document - Documents prepared and produced by the Council that provide further guidance on specific policies to support the Local Plan or provide detailed guidance on the development of specific sites in the form of a master plan or development brief.

Site Allocations Document – Development Plan Document which forms part of the local plan that includes sites for specific or mixed uses or development to be contained in the Local Plan.

15 Appendix 1 - Specific Organisation Bodies for Plan Making

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Specific Consultation Bodies for Plan Making

- Adjoining Local Planning Authorities
- Canal and River Trust
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Highways England
- Historic England
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Local gas and electricity providers
- Local sewerage and water providers
- Ministry of Defence
- Natural England
- Network Rail
- Railway Infrastructure Managers
- Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Staffordshire County Council
- Staffordshire Police
- Staffordshire & Shropshire Strategic Health Authority
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Enterprise Partnership
- The Coal Authority
- The Environment Agency
- Town and Parish Councils within Stafford Borough as well as those adjoining the Borough

16 Appendix 2 - General Consultation Bodies for Plan Making

General Consultation Bodies for Plan Making

- Airport Operators' Association
- Amenity groups
- Charities
- Civic Societies
- Community groups and residents' associations
- Countryside / conservation groups
- Culture, Recreation and Faith groups
- Disability groups
- Ethnic minority groups
- General Members of the Public
- Health groups
- Housing interest groups and housing associations
- Landowners and Developers
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups
- Local business groups
- Local Councillors and MPs
- Local Canal Societies
- Local interest groups
- Local media
- Local Public Transport Providers
- Local telecommunication providers
- National Association of Gypsy and Traveller Officers, The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, and the Gypsy Council
- Older groups
- Stafford District Voluntary Service (SDVS)
- Voluntary and Community Infrastructure Organisation (VAST)
- Woodland Trust
- Young Persons group

17 Appendix 3 - Consultation Bodies for Development Management

17 Appendix 3 - Consultation Bodies for Development Management**Consultation Bodies for Development Management**

- Canal and River Trust (formerly British Waterways)
- Cannock Chase AONB Unit
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Coal Authority
- County Archaeological Officers
- County Education Authority – SCC Schools Organisation
- County Waste Disposal Authorities
- DEFRA (The Secretary of State for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs)
- Design Council / CABI
- District (Neighbouring) Planning Authorities
- Emergency Service and Multi-Agency Emergency Planning
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Garden History Society
- Health Authorities and Agencies
- Health and Safety Executive
- Highways England (Secretary of State for Transport)
- Highways Authority (Staffordshire County Council or Stoke on Trent City Council)
- Historic England
- Homes and Communities Agency (formerly) Regional Development Agency
- Internal Drainage Board (Sow and Penk IDB)
- Ministry of Defence
- National Air Control Transport Services
- Natural England
- Network Rail
- Parish Council (s)
- Police Architectural Liaison Officer
- Railway Infrastructure Managers
- Ramblers Association
- Sport England
- Staffordshire County Council
- Theatres Trust
- Water, Waste and Sewerage Undertakers

Internal to Stafford Borough Council

- Biodiversity and Tree Officer
- Legal Services
- Conservation Officer
- Cultural and Leisure Services
- Environmental Health Services
 - Regulatory Services
 - Pollution Control
 - Housing Strategy

Forward Planning (planning policy)