



# Statement of Community Involvement

Adopted 10th December 2014



STAFFORDSHIRE  
*moorlands*  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

ACHIEVING · EXCELLENCE

# Final Statement of Community Involvement



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Foreword



## **1 Foreword**

### **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**ADOPTED ON 10TH DECEMBER 2014**

**This Statement of Community Involvement supersedes the Council's previous document which was adopted in 2006.**

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## About this Statement



## 2 About this Statement

### What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

**2.1** Planning has an impact on all residents' lives, for example the location of the homes we live in, the roads we travel on, where we shop, work and the open spaces we enjoy. These are all as a result of planning decisions. Therefore, there is a wide variety of individuals and organisations that potentially have an interest in shaping future development in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

**2.2** The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) describes how the Council will seek to engage with residents, businesses and other organisations in decision making on planning policy documents and planning applications in the part of the Staffordshire Moorlands outside of the Peak District National Park Boundary.

**2.3** The Council is legally required to prepare an SCI under the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and once adopted it will become a statutory part of the development plan and the Council will be required to implement the proposals within the document when undertaking consultation. There are also minimum requirements for consultation on planning policy documents set out in the Town & Country Planning Regulations which the Council must adhere to. However, the Council has consistently exceeded these requirements when producing key planning documents like the Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan, the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and the Churnet Valley Masterplan and intends to continue this approach to further strengthen community involvement in planning.

**2.4** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also provides guidance on engagement and collaboration with residents, businesses and organisations in the production of planning documents and in the preparation and determination of planning applications.

**2.5** The aim of the approach set out in the document is to ensure that all sections of the public, including local groups and organisations, and any 'hard to reach' groups traditionally under-represented in the planning process, have the opportunity to be pro-actively involved throughout the process of preparing planning policy documents. The intention is to focus community involvement at the outset of the plan preparation process, ensuring that residents and other interested parties have the opportunity to be involved at an early stage of production of each document.

**2.6** With these aims in mind, the SCI objectives are as follows:

- To clearly inform members of the public and all other interested parties how they will be notified about our planning policy consultations and how they can give their views on planning applications;
- To ensure the process of making comments is as straightforward as possible both electronically and on paper;
- To make our consultation material as clear as possible so that people understand the issues when replying to our consultations;
- To plan consultation carefully to ensure that the opportunity is given for all interested parties to participate in the process whilst at the same time making the most effective use of Council resources.

**2.7** The Staffordshire Moorlands is a predominantly rural area with three market towns along with a number of villages – both large and small – and hamlets as well as properties outside of established settlements in the open countryside. These characteristics of the area have to be taken into account when undertaking consultation with residents about planning documents. The demographics of the District also require consideration. The 2011 Census shows that the Staffordshire Moorlands has an aging population with increases in the proportion of residents aged 65+ and decreases in the proportion of those in the 0-14 and 25-64 age groups.

**2.8** A number of key planning policy documents likely to generate significant public interest will be produced by the Council in the near future, particularly relating to Site Allocations. With this in mind, the Council has decided to update its original SCI to reflect changes to the planning system and new opportunities to engage with the public (such as social media) which have arisen since the first document was published in September 2006.

**2.9** The SCI has been structured to give a comprehensive guide to the Council's approach whilst at the same time enabling the community to focus on particular areas of interest by splitting the document into sections.

- Part 3 provides key background information about how the planning system works, the planning policy documents produced by the Council and the production process for these documents. The section also covers other considerations the Council must take into account when preparing its planning policy documents such as the provisions made in the Localism Act 2011.
- Part 4 details methods of engagement to be used during the consultation process and includes a consultation plan showing who will be consulted at each key stage in the plan production process of the main documents. This section also includes details as to what happens to comments received by the Council during consultations on planning policy documents.
- Part 5 specifically covers consultation in the context of the planning applications process.
- Part 6 focuses on how the Council will ensure equal opportunities in consultation by seeking to involve all sections of the community in the process and measures to be used with the aim of achieving this.
- Part 7 details how the Council will monitor the effectiveness of consultations as well as the circumstances under which this SCI will be reviewed.

**2.10** This statement is intended as a reference point for the community to understand how they can become involved in planning matters. With this in mind, a glossary has been produced to explain the terms used (see **Appendix A**). Further sources of information and advice on planning can be found in **Appendix B**.



## Background



## 3 Background

### Who is the Community?

**3.1** This document has been prepared having first established a baseline structure of the Staffordshire Moorlands community and its stake holders.

**3.2** This comprises:

- Statutory Consultees (for example utilities, Natural England, English Heritage, Environment Agency, neighbouring authorities);
- General Consultation Bodies (i.e. voluntary bodies, those representing different racial, ethnic, national and religious groups, local interest groups, those representing the interests of disabled persons and local businesses – as the Local Planning Authority considers appropriate);
- General Public;
- Parish & Town Councils (including those who adjoin the Staffordshire Moorlands);
- Local Businesses (including Local Enterprise Partnership & Chambers of Trade)Developers/Agents; and
- Hard to reach groups.

**3.3** The Council has considered how its community can best be represented and at what stage, in the preparation of all planning policy documents and also in the determination of planning applications (refer to Figure 4.1 and Part 5 for details).

### How does the Planning System Work?

**3.4** There are two key parts to the planning system - Planning Policy and Development Management.

**3.5** Planning Policy is concerned with producing the local planning documents and policies that are used to guide development in the Staffordshire Moorlands (outside of the Peak District National Park Boundary). These documents must conform to relevant Government guidance, and there are specific regulatory procedures which must be followed during their preparation. They cover matters such as where new housing development will take place and issues which will be taken into account when assessing a planning application.

**3.6** Development Management is responsible for processing and determining planning applications, along with other applications including works to trees, advertisements and listed buildings. Planning applications may be determined either by officers (under delegated powers) or by the Planning Committee depending on the scale and nature of the proposal and any objections received.

**3.7** Anyone is entitled to make comments on a planning policy document (refer to Parts 3 & 4 of this document) or a planning application (refer to Part 5 of this document). Note that policies within the Local Plan will be used to determine planning applications so it is

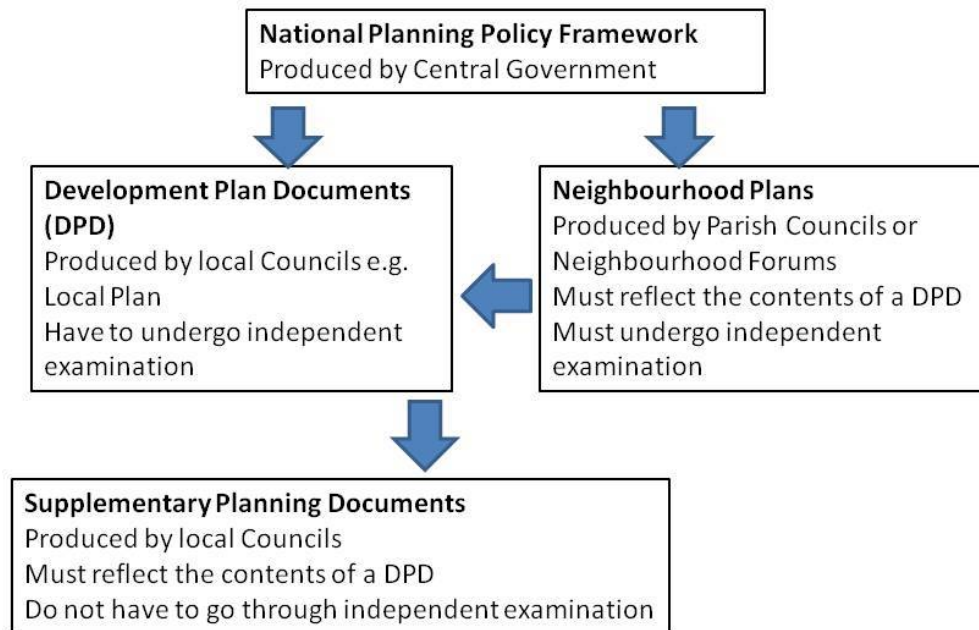
## Final Statement of Community Involvement

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important that those with an interest in the local area have their say when policy documents are being produced. Refer to **Appendix B** for a list of organisations that can provide further information and advice on the planning system.

## What are the Planning Policy Documents produced by the Council?

**3.8** Figure 1 (below) illustrates the hierarchy of documents within the planning policy system.



**3.9** There are a number of different planning policy documents which have been (or will be) produced by the Council and public consultation is a key part of this process. The Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS), published on the Council's website lists all of these documents and sets out a timetable for their preparation, consultation stages, submission and review. An up-to-date timetable is also published on the Council's website where 'real time' information on the progress of all planning documents is given.

**3.10** Planning Policy documents can be accessed by using the following web address: [www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk](http://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk)

### **Development Plan Documents (DPDs)**

**3.11** The documents forming the Council's Local Plan (known as 'DPDs') all undergo a statutory production process which involves an independent examination before they can be adopted by the Council. They are:

- The Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (adopted in March 2014)
- The Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan (adopted in February 2007); and
- The Site Allocations Development Plan Document (production currently underway). Both the Core Strategy and the Site Allocations DPD are to be combined together into a Local Plan.

### **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)**

**3.12** Other planning policy documents prepared by the Council, (known as ‘SPDs’) expand upon or supplement individual Development Plan Document policies although do not have Development Plan status themselves and do not require independent public examination. They can comprise of masterplans and strategies as well as development briefs and specific uses / topics. However they must also accord with this SCI and they cannot make or change policy. The Council’s current list of SPDs is:

- The Churnet Valley Masterplan (incorporating Alton Towers long term plan) (adopted as an SPD in March 2014);
- Housing Delivery (production currently underway);
- Open Space, Sport & Recreation (production currently underway);
- Design Guide (production currently underway);
- Leek Town Centre Masterplan (adopted as an SPD in March 2014);
- Cheadle Town Centre Masterplan (adopted as an SPD in March 2014);
- Natural Landscape Strategy (proposed).

**3.13** Note that the lists above are not exhaustive and new DPDs and SPDs may be added. Refer to the District Council’s website for the most up to date information.

### **What is the Production Process for Planning Policy Documents?**

**3.14** The Council aims to involve the community and other interested parties throughout the preparation of its Development Plan Documents and particularly at the early stages of production to achieve greater local ownership and legitimacy for the policies that will shape future development in the District.

**3.15** The tables below show the current production process for DPDs and SPDs based on The Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and guidance in the NPPF. Changes to the production process could be required by amendments to the Regulations.

### **Production of Development Plan Documents**

Involve	Stage 1 – Preparation (including early engagement)
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Normally covers 2 consultations – options and preferred options and in certain circumstances there may be a need for further consultation prior to publication</li> <li>● Gather evidence from a variety of sources.</li> <li>● Notify and consult with the local community, groups and organisations about the content of the proposed plan (required by Regulations).</li> <li>● Consider issues and alternatives.</li> <li>● Consider comments made and alternative approaches.</li> <li>● Prepare initial Sustainability Appraisal &amp; Habitat Regulations Assessment.</li> <li>● Prepare content of draft document.</li> <li>● Prepare part 1 of Consultation Statement (required by Regulations) outlining who was consulted at this stage and how, a summary of the</li> </ul>

	main issues raised and how these have been taken into account. Also demonstrate how requirements of SCI have been met at this stage.
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Stage 2 - Publication</b>
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 week (minimum) formal period to comment on soundness of plan, sustainability appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment and supporting evidence.</li> <li>Notify and invite representations from bodies required by Regulations.</li> <li>Documents made available for inspection at Council's principal office and other appropriate locations and published on the Council's website.</li> <li>Prepare part 2 of Consultation Statement (required by Regulations) outlining who was consulted at this stage and how, the number of representations made and a summary of the main issues raised and how these have been taken into account. Also demonstrate how requirements of SCI have been met at this stage.</li> </ul>
<b>Inspect</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Submission for Independent Examination</b>
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development Plan Documents submitted to Secretary of State for independent examination.</li> <li>Publicise examination.</li> <li>Notify those involved of procedures for examination.</li> <li>Independent examination.</li> <li>Planning inspector issues report.</li> </ul>
<b>Adopt</b>	<b>Stage 4 – Adoption</b>
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopted by Council if considered to be 'sound' by inspector with modifications if recommended.</li> </ul>
<b>Notify</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notify anyone who has requested to be kept informed about the publication of the Inspector's report and the adoption of the document.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final plan is regularly monitored, where possible, to make sure plan is achieving its aims.</li> <li>Plan may be reviewed, where necessary.</li> </ul>

**Table 3.1 Production Process for Development Plan Documents**

**Production of Supplementary Planning Documents**

<b>Involve</b>	<b>Stage 1 – Preparation (including early engagement)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather evidence from a variety of sources.</li> <li>Notify and consult with relevant individuals and organizations (required by Regulations).</li> <li>Consider issues and alternatives.</li> <li>Prepare initial Sustainability Appraisal (this is not required by Regulations but considered to be good practice where applicable).</li> <li>Prepare content of draft document.</li> </ul>

<b>Involve</b>	<b>Stage 1 – Preparation (including early engagement)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare Consultation Statement (required by Regulations) setting out who was consulted when preparing SPD, a summary of the main issues raised and how those issues have been addressed in the SPD.</li> </ul>
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Stage 2 - Publication</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 week (minimum) formal period for anyone to comment on plan, consultation statement, sustainability appraisal (where applicable) and any supporting evidence.</li> <li>• Documents made available for inspection at Council’s principal office and other appropriate locations and published on the Council’s website.</li> </ul>
<b>Adopt</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Adoption</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document adopted by the Council.</li> </ul>
<b>Notify</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify anyone who has requested to be kept informed about the adoption of the document.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final document is regularly monitored, where possible, to make sure plan is achieving its aims.</li> <li>• Document may be reviewed, where necessary.</li> </ul>

**Table 3.2 Production Process for Supplementary Planning Documents**

**3.16** The approach when producing all planning policy documents will be one which focuses on early involvement in the process with the most intensive consultation taking place at ‘Stage 1’, the preparation stage, with the aim of involving as many individuals and organisations as possible in shaping the contents of the document. This approach reflects the 2012 Regulations and the guidance in the NPPF. Stage 2 is a formal representation stage seeking comments on whether the plan proposed for submission for examination is sound (in the case of DPDs) or suitable for adoption (in the case of SPDs).

**Sustainability Appraisals (SAs)**

**3.17** It is a statutory requirement that the Council produces a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in order to assess the economic, environmental, and social effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process to inform policy and allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development. The SA documents are also subject to consultation alongside the plan and inform changes at each stage in the plan production process.

**3.18** At the beginning of the plan preparation process an SA Scoping Report will be produced setting out a ‘baseline’ picture of the District, with reference to both sustainability objectives and indicators. For this report the Council will consult only certain, selected, bodies, statutory consultees, as required under the regulations and various other organisations and representative interests as deemed appropriate. An initial SA is produced at Stage 1, ‘preparation’ and full consultation on this document takes place with a wider audience alongside consultation on the plan as the two are intrinsically linked. Therefore, the SA can also be amended to reflect comments received if appropriate. A further SA report is produced

at Stage 2, 'publication' alongside the plan so once again anyone is able to make comments on it and amendments can be made. In the case of a Development Plan Document, both the SA and the plan (along with other related documents) are then submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination. Following this, a final version of the SA will be produced alongside the adopted plan.

**3.19** It should be noted that production of a Sustainability Appraisal for a Supplementary Planning Document is not a statutory requirement. However, in most cases the District Council intends to produce one as it is considered to be good practice and useful in informing the production of the plan. There may be instances where an SA is not considered to be necessary, for example, when producing design guidance and a judgment will be made on a case by case basis.

**3.20** Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is also required to be undertaken if the contents of the plan are considered to have significant effects on European protected habitats or species in the area or in its vicinity. This document should be made available as a supporting document to accompany the plan alongside other evidence.

### **What else must the Council consider when preparing its Planning Policy Documents?**

#### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

**3.21** The National Planning Policy Framework was published in March 2012, consolidating previously issued documents called Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) for use in England. The document is a key part of Government reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, to protect the environment and to promote sustainable growth. Local planning authorities are required to follow the guidance within it when creating new planning policy and determining planning applications in their area.

#### **Staffordshire Moorlands Sustainable Community Strategy**

**3.22** When preparing its Local Plan and supporting policy documents, the Council is required to have regard to the Staffordshire Moorlands Sustainable Community Strategy. This document sets out a vision and series of outcomes for improving the quality of life in the District. The current version covers the period 2007 – 2020. A review is expected to take place in the near future to ensure the content remains up to date. The document sets out the Council's themes to promote economic, social and environmental wellbeing by addressing demographic changes and housing and employment needs and opportunities; and combating climate change impacts with the Vision of an "excellent quality of life" for all in the District. As the Government has identified Local Plans as one of the key mechanisms for delivering Community Strategy objectives, many of the outcomes of the Community Strategy will be linked with aims and objectives of Local Plan documents.

**3.23** The Community Strategy's Key Themes and Principles include that the Council will "*..involve, listen to and respond to local communities by providing services tailored to local needs and priorities*", "*..encourage local communities that want to take more responsibility for themselves*" and "*..support community empowerment..*"; these aspirations are considered to underpin all other areas of the Community Strategy.

**3.24** The District Council is currently reviewing its consultation policy as a whole and once produced this will be a useful reference point for individuals and organisations within the District.



**Localism Act 2011**

**3.25** The Localism Act introduced new elements into the planning process including ‘duty to co-operate’ and neighbourhood planning.

**a) Duty to Co-operate**

**3.26** Duty to Co-operate requires neighbouring local authorities including County Councils and other public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis on cross boundary matters (e.g. levels of housing, employment, road links etc). The relevant neighbouring Local Authorities for Staffordshire Moorlands are Stoke on Trent City Council, Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council, Stafford Borough Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Peak District National Park Authority, Derbyshire Dales District Council, High Peak Borough Council and Cheshire East Council as well as Staffordshire County Council. Regular co-operation takes place, particularly in relation to joint studies such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment to inform each area's Local Plan.

**3.27** Paragraph 4(1) of the 2012 Planning Regulations lists the current bodies that the Council is required to engage with as: (Note: this is subject to change as new regulations are issued or bodies change their name and / or function)

<b>Environment Agency</b>
English Heritage
Natural England
Mayor of London
Civil Aviation Authority
Homes & Communities Agency
Primary Care Trust
Office of Rail Regulation
Transport for London (London only)
Each Integrated Transport Authority
Each Highway Authority
Marine Management Organisation
Local Enterprise Partnerships

**Table 3.3 Bodies the Council is required to engage with in Duty to Co-operate Legislation**

**3.28** Local Councils are required to demonstrate compliance with the duty to co-operate as part of the examination of Local Plans. If a Council cannot adequately demonstrate that it has complied with the duty, its Local Plan will fail the independent examination.

**b) Neighbourhood Planning**

**3.29** Neighbourhood planning was introduced to enable communities to get more involved in planning for their areas – specifically around creating plans and policies to guide new development and in some cases granting planning permission for certain types of development.

**3.30** Other elements of neighbourhood planning introduced by the Localism Act include Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders.

**3.31** Neighbourhood Development Orders allow planning permission to be granted in relation to a particular neighbourhood area for certain types of development. It allows communities to permit the development they wish to see either in full or outline without the need for planning applications. The planning permission can vary from a number of homes on a specified site to blanket consent, such as extensions to residential properties across the defined neighbourhood area. Exclusions do apply such as minerals and waste development, types of development which need Environmental Impact Assessment and nationally significant infrastructure projects. Again, the process for creating a neighbourhood development order is statutory and very similar to the process for creating a neighbourhood plan.

**3.32** Community Right to Build Orders are made by a community organisation (set up as a body which is established to further the social, economic and environmental well-being of individuals living in a particular area) or the Parish/Town Council allowing them to bring forward a small development for purposes such as new homes, businesses or community facilities. It is a site specific application limited to the development site.

**3.33** The consultation bodies for Neighbourhood Development Plans are set out in Schedule 1 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and comprise:

<b>A Local Planning Authority, County Council or Parish Council any part of whose area is in or adjoins the Local Planning Authority</b>
Coal Authority
Homes & Communities Agency
Natural England
Environment Agency
English Heritage
Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd
Highways Agency
Marine Management Organisation
Those responsible for Electronic Communications within the Local Planning Authority Area
Primary Care Trust
Utility Providers (Gas, Electric, sewerage undertaker, water undertaker)

<b>A Local Planning Authority, County Council or Parish Council any part of whose area is in or adjoins the Local Planning Authority</b>
Voluntary bodies relating to any part of the neighbourhood area
Bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in any part of the neighbourhood area
Bodies representing the interests of different religious groups in any part of the neighbourhood area
Persons carrying on business in any part of the neighbourhood area
Bodies representing the interests of disabled persons in any part of the neighbourhood area

**Table 3.4 Consultation Bodies for Neighbourhood Development Plans**

**3.34** Consultation bodies vary from the above for Neighbourhood Development Orders & Community Right to Build Orders so current legislation should be referred to.

**3.35** **There are a number of sources of further information about all the elements of neighbourhood planning. Any interested parties should initially refer to the District Council’s website or contact the Planning Policy Team on (01538) 395570 or email forward.plans@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk.**

**What other Planning Documents can you comment on?**

**Neighbourhood Plans**

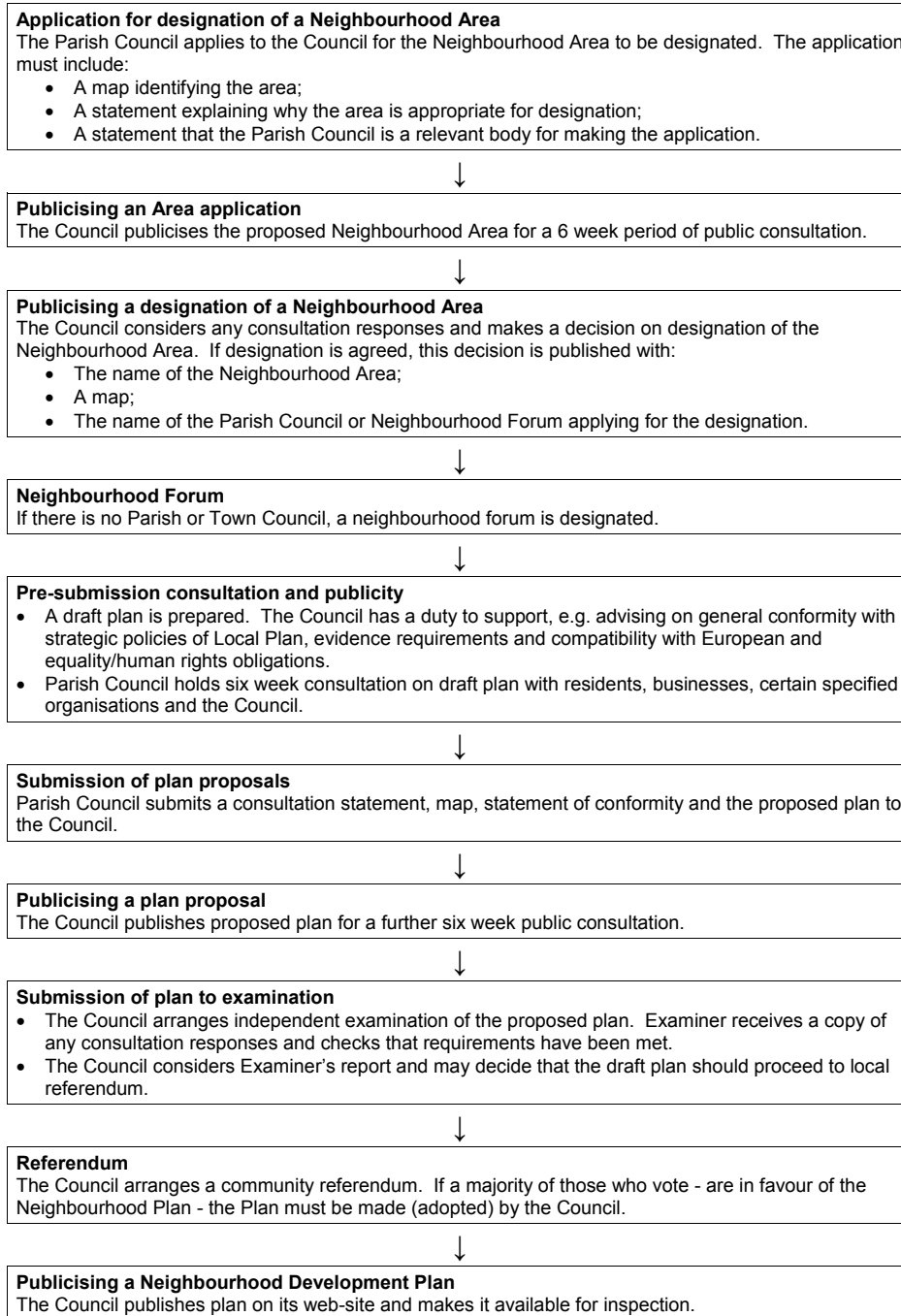
**3.36** Local communities are now able to produce Neighbourhood Plans for their neighbourhood, putting in place a vision and policies for the future development of their area. The plan can be used to choose where new homes, shops and employment should be built, protect important local green spaces and influence what new buildings should look like.

**3.37** Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by Town or Parish Councils, where these exist, or by a neighbourhood forum, not by the District Council. Once the neighbourhood area is approved, the local planning authority has a duty to support and advise neighbourhood groups which are seeking to take forward a neighbourhood plan.

**3.38** All Neighbourhood Plans must have regard to national planning policy and be in general conformity with the strategic policies in any up-to-date adopted or emerging Local Plan or Core Strategy. For example, whilst communities will have influence over what housing will look like and where it will go they will not be able to stop it altogether when there is a housing need identified for their area in a Local Plan or Core Strategy. Plan production has to follow a statutory process including independent examination, consultation with and participation by the public and the holding of a referendum. Neighbourhood planning is optional but if adopted by the Council, neighbourhood plans will have weight, becoming part of the plan making framework for an area.

**3.39** **Figure 2** below gives details of the process for creating a Neighbourhood Plan as set out by the Regulations.

**Figure 2 Neighbourhood Plan production process**



**3.40** There are a range of approaches the Council could take in order to fulfill its statutory duty to support and advise during the neighbourhood planning process with various levels of involvement. If a Neighbourhood Plan is proposed in the Staffordshire Moorlands, the levels of support provided will be considered on a case by case basis depending on the resources available to the Council at that time.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule**

**3.41** CIL is a standardized non-negotiable local levy that is placed on new development for the purpose of helping to raise funds to support the delivery of the infrastructure such as schools, highways etc that is required as a result of new development. The District Council has yet to decide whether to adopt CIL for the Staffordshire Moorlands.

**3.42** Regulations require local authorities to undertake a clearly defined procedure prior to adopting a CIL Charging Schedule, which sets out the level of charge the Council will require for every additional square metre of new development. The requirements for consultation prior to adoption include:

- The publication and consultation of a Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule setting out the Council's initial consideration of an appropriate charge;
- The publication of a Draft Charging Schedule on which representations can be made prior to its submission for an independent examination. The consultation will be for a minimum of 4 weeks;
- An examination in public of the Draft Charging Schedule. All those who made representations on the Draft Charging Schedule will have the opportunity to make an oral presentation at a public hearing.

**3.43** The Council will follow the process applied to Development Plan Documents (refer to paragraph 3.15) in the production or review of a CIL Charging Schedule, recognising the importance of early engagement within the development of new policy. The consultation methods to be used for both the consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule and the Draft Charging Schedule will be advertised on the Council's website at an appropriate time.

### **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**

**3.44** When preparing the SCI, the Council will undertake initial consultation which will be focused towards members of the public and local groups in order to gauge opinion on consultation methods used and make suggestions about other methods not currently used. It is considered that these groups are the key audience at this stage as they are not automatically notified of all consultations in person like the statutory bodies. Comments received will be used to create a draft document.

**3.45** The Draft SCI will then be subject to further consultation for a minimum of 4 weeks, giving the opportunity for anyone to suggest amendments before being presented to Council for adoption.

### **Local Development Scheme (LDS)**

**3.46** The LDS sets out a 3 year work programme for producing planning documents. This shows the key consultation periods for public involvement. This document is reviewed on a regular basis and the most up to date version is available on the Council's website and will be included within the consultation documents published in association with the forthcoming Local Plan.



How can you get involved in influencing the Content of Planning Policy Documents?



## 4 How can you get involved in influencing the Content of Planning Policy Documents?

### Methods of Engagement

**4.1** There are a wide range of techniques which can be used to involve individuals and organisations in planning matters. The following methods (shown in Table 4.1) will be used as engagement and notification methods at various stages in the production of planning policy. Note that the Council is not undertaking to use all of the methods listed at all consultation stages or for all planning documents. Details of which methods will be used when and who will be targeted follow in Figure 4.1.

**4.2** It should be noted that the methods the Council uses will be continually reviewed. The opportunities to use new types of engagement techniques and continually innovate in our approach to engagement will be considered at every consultation. Therefore, some activities may not be set out in the Statement of Community Involvement as they will be specific to the circumstances of the consultation, reflecting new opportunities and best practice. Similarly, some of the engagement methods listed may cease to exist or be superseded over time.

**4.3** The Council will make the most effective use of resources, for instance by employing external facilitators, as well as other sections of the Council and County Council; and by combining participation exercises where possible with other initiatives like the Community Strategy. In order to make effective use of resources there will also be an emphasis on use of online methods of notification about consultation and consultation itself.

**4.4** Effective engagement between District Councillors and Council Officers is also extremely important when creating new planning policy documents. As the legislative process for the creation of policy documents is constantly changing, Councillor training at an early stage in the process to advise them of the Council's statutory requirements will ensure that they are able to make fully informed decisions on the content of their Council policy documents.



METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
District Council's Website	<p>The Council's web site will display up-to-date information on the various stages of consultation as well as all documentation relating to the plan – this is required by Regulations.</p> <p>Details of the web site address will be included in each publication. Friendly links will be used wherever possible to make it easier to access information.</p> <p>A link from the home page of the Council's website directly to the consultation material will be present during all periods of consultation to ensure that interested parties are able to easily find documents.</p>	Providing Information & Raising Awareness
Social Media e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.	<p>Publication of information about planning policy production and consultation dates, often directing stakeholders to the website / a questionnaire and sources of further information.</p> <p>The Council has a Twitter account and regularly sends tweets to its followers. A Facebook page and / or blog will also be set up in relation to key proposals which are likely to have a high level of public interest.</p> <p>Social media will be used primarily to notify people about consultations rather than as a means of responding to consultations as the Council's online portal performs this role. The Council will not accept any inappropriate / abusive comments sent via its social media pages in response to consultations.</p>	Raising Awareness
Questionnaires & Response Forms (Electronic & Paper)	<p>This method will be implemented primarily through the Council's online consultation portal. Types of questions on a questionnaire will differ at different stages of policy production; they could be broad open questions at earlier stages of production or multiple choice questions relating to a particular topic, for example.</p>	Gathering Opinion

METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
	<p>A paper based version of questionnaires / response forms will be made available to those who cannot or prefer not to use the online consultation portal and whenever resources permit, the Council will provide a freepost address for the return of these.</p> <p>Samples of particular groups or types of individuals may be invited to complete questionnaires e.g. those who have recently applied for planning permission.</p> <p>The use of response forms (online and paper) produced by the District Council to gather comments about a plan during a statutory consultation stage is well established. As well as being preferred by the Planning Inspectorate (for those documents which undergo independent examination), they tend to be quicker and easier for the Council to process and provide a structure within which the participant can respond to specific parts of a plan. However, in response to feedback from members of the public, the Council has reviewed its approach to the format of consultation responses. At the time all consultation takes place on any planning policy document, the Council will make it clear that responding on its form is not compulsory and that representations can also be made by letter or email. This will also be stated in the Representations Procedure at statutory consultation stages to avoid confusion. It is also intended that formal forms are only used by the Council at publication stage of a development plan document and supplementary planning document as they are based on a model form from the Planning Inspectorate. Feedback from the general public has indicated that they are considered to have too much jargon making them difficult to complete. With this in mind it is proposed to use simpler more user friendly comments forms at earlier stages in the DPD and SPD production process.</p>	

METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
<p>Consultation Portal</p>	<p>The Council has a consultation portal where its planning policy documents can be published online and responses can be made directly into the system. It requires users to be registered on to the system and offers a number of advantages which the Council is keen to utilise when undertaking consultation on all of its documents particularly those which generate a high level of interest and consequently many consultation responses. The main advantages are that user contact details are entered by users themselves saving Council resources and reducing data entry errors. The Council can easily run reports and undertake analysis of the comments made. The comments will be organised by the system, saving the Council considerable resources in terms of manually entering comments and transcribing handwriting. Notification of a consultation is also much more straightforward through the automatic generation of emails to users.</p> <p>Anyone can register to use the consultation portal at:  <a href="http://staffs Moorlands-consult.objective.co.uk/portal">http://staffs Moorlands-consult.objective.co.uk/portal</a></p> <p>The Council would like to see as many individuals and organisations use its consultation portal to comment on consultations as possible and strongly advise that those with access to a computer make use of the system.</p> <p>Please be aware that comments made using the portal could be made available for anyone to view during the consultation period, though this is not guaranteed as it is dependent on when the comments are submitted and available resources. All comments however they were made will be made available to view online after the consultation has ended.</p>	<p>Gathering Opinion</p>

METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
<p>Paper-based Consultation</p>	<p>Paper copies of the main consultation documents relating to the Local Plan and supporting evidence base will be available to view at the Biddulph, Cheadle and Leek Councils Connect offices as required by Regulations. All libraries in the District will have copies of the main Local Plan consultation documents available to view at their counters (but not copies of the full evidence base unless they occupy the same premises as the Council Offices e.g. Leek and Cheadle). Some SPDs may cover specific parts of the District and in this case only appropriately located Council offices and libraries will be used. Where applicable, summary documents and leaflets will be widely distributed in order to reach as many members of the public and organisations as possible.</p>	<p>Providing Information &amp; Raising Awareness</p>
<p>Mail outs</p>	<p>In response to comments made about previous consultations, the Council will seek to correspond directly with the local community through mail shots / leaflets publicising its proposals delivered to households and businesses in the District at such times it considers this to be appropriate.</p> <p>The geographical coverage of such mail shots will depend on the nature of the proposals. For instance, for site allocations throughout the District as part of a Local Plan, leaflets / flyers will be distributed to all households and businesses in the District (with the exception of the parts of the District which fall within the Peak District National Park Boundary). For proposals affecting a smaller area leaflets / flyers will be targeted towards households and businesses within that particular area only or the Council may send out individual letters to householders and businesses.</p> <p>Statutory consultees will receive direct notification of all key consultation stages in the production of a Local Plan or an SPD by email or through the post.</p>	<p>Providing Information &amp; Raising Awareness</p>

METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
<p>Consultation Database</p>	<p>This database has been in operation for a number of years and is a vital tool used to keep details of key contacts and notify interested parties about forthcoming consultation on planning policy documents. It currently holds over 2000 records, including statutory and general consultees.</p> <p>The database is a record of organisations and individuals who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Have requested to be kept informed about planning policy documents; and / or</li> <li>b) Have previously responded to consultations on planning policy documents; and / or</li> <li>c) Organisations listed in the Regulations that the Council is required to consult.</li> </ul> <p>The Council will include new individuals and organisations on the database upon request.</p> <p>As new community groups and businesses are being formed and dissolved all the time the Council will rely on representatives of the group to inform them as to whether they want to be included or excluded from this database. Groups should not expect to be automatically included on the database unless they are ‘Specific Consultees’ (i.e. Statutory consultees as defined in the Regulations).</p> <p>E-mail alerts of forthcoming consultations will be sent out to all those with an email address on the Consultation Database. The Council’s preference is to communicate with interested parties electronically as this is quicker and more cost effective. However, postal communications will still take place at appropriate times with those who do not have an e-mail address to avoid excluding people from the consultation process. Clearly, email addresses and postal addresses change over time and if individuals and organisations wish to continue receiving information from the planning</p>	<p>Providing Information &amp; Raising Awareness</p>

METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
	<p>policy section, they will need to notify us of any changes to contact details otherwise postal and email addresses which are returned to the Council as undelivered will be deleted from the database unless they are statutory consultees.</p> <p>Online portal users will receive a reminder of their user name and password from time to time (usually on an annual basis).</p> <p>A review of the records held will be conducted from time to time to ensure that those on the database would still like to be included.</p> <p>For convenience, an opportunity to opt out of receiving consultations on planning policy documents will be given when consultation notifications are sent out.</p>	
<p>Availability of Documents in Alternative Formats</p>	<p>The Council will produce documents in alternative formats on request; this includes large print, Braille, the Talking Newspaper and in languages other than English. The Council also operates a 'Language Line' where an interpreter can translate the information.</p> <p>The Council will include information about this service in its consultation documentation and on its website.</p>	<p>Providing Information &amp; Raising Awareness</p>
<p>Site Notices</p>	<p>Site notices will be displayed to draw attention to all proposed site allocations for housing, employment or retail uses within draft copies of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document / Local Plan at an appropriate stage in the plan production process. This is considered to be an effective way of raising awareness of plan proposals and in particular notifying interested parties living and / or working in the local area.</p>	<p>Providing Information &amp; Raising Awareness</p>

METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
	<p>If these site notices are removed by any third parties during the consultation period, the Council cannot be held responsible and there is no guarantee that these will be replaced.</p>	
<p>Posters</p>	<p>Publicity posters are a useful mechanism to let the local community know about planning policy consultations. The Council will request assistance from Parish Councils to display notices in their community relating to planning policy consultations and / or Council Officers will display posters at appropriate stages to help raise public awareness where they consider that this would be beneficial.</p>	<p>Raising Awareness</p>
<p>Summary Documents</p>	<p>Many planning policy documents are lengthy and technical by their very nature. The Council will therefore produce more user friendly summary documents at an appropriate stage in the plan production process. These will be made available free of charge on the website and at appropriate venues throughout the District.</p>	<p>Providing Information &amp; Raising Awareness</p>
<p>Media Releases</p>	<p>The Council issues news releases to local, regional and (if appropriate) national, print, broadcast and online media outlets. This includes those suggested by a majority of the Citizens Panel in a survey held in July 2013. However, clearly the Council cannot control whether the press choose to feature these or not.</p> <p>The Council may arrange paid advertising in the local papers (Leek Post &amp; Times, Sentinel, Biddulph Chronicle and Cheadle &amp; Tean Times were the most frequently suggested in a survey of the Citizens Panel) to raise awareness about consultation on planning policy documents. The decision to take this approach will be based on the document in question and whether its contents are likely to create significant public interest as well as resources available at that time.</p>	<p>Providing Information &amp; Raising Awareness</p>

METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
	<p>Alternative methods of advertising including local newsletters will be used by the Council if it considers this to be appropriate and subject to resources available at that time.</p> <p>There is now no statutory requirement to place formal notices in local newspapers about consultation at every statutory stage on every document and it is not considered that these formal notices were particularly useful to notify the general public about forthcoming consultation as they were required to include terms which may not be easily understood and were placed in the formal notices section towards the rear of the newspaper so often missed by readers. Also, these adverts were not considered the best use of limited resources as they were relatively expensive to place. It is considered that more attractive advertising using less jargon would be more appropriate where there is likely to be significant public interest in the contents of a particular document. Therefore, types of advertising for each document will be considered on a case by case basis with the aim of it being as effective as possible.</p>	
<p>Parish and Town Workshops / Meetings</p>	<p>There is an established network of Parish and Town Councils throughout the District which will continue to be consulted on planning policy documents and planning applications relevant to their areas. Parish and Town Councils in other areas which border the Staffordshire Moorlands boundary are also consulted on planning policy documents as required by the Regulations.</p> <p>As they play such an important role in the local community, the Council will seek to involve Parish and Town Councils in the formulation of new planning policy documents on a pro-active basis. In addition to statutory consultation, officers currently attend Parish Assembly meetings as another way of informing parishes about forthcoming consultation on planning policy documents. On occasions special</p>	<p>Gathering Opinion Providing Information &amp; Raising Awareness</p>



METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
	<p>meetings of the Parish Assembly will be set up to discuss key policy issues which would impact upon parishes such as the allocation of sites. In these cases, parishes will be supplied with information in advance of the meeting so that they can reach a view on the matter(s), which can then be relayed to officers at the Parish Assembly through the parish representatives who attend. Training sessions have also been undertaken for the Parish Assembly and these will be held from time to time to assist Parish Councils.</p> <p>Also, individual Parish Council meetings have been attended by officers on request and this approach will be continued subject to available resources. The Council held Parish Workshops (to which all Parish Councils in the Staffordshire Moorlands planning area were invited) as part of Core Strategy consultation. Their format consisted of a presentation by Council officers to provide the context followed by small group round table discussions (with supporting material such as maps) covering a number of detailed issues. Feedback of the key issues identified on each table was then given to the group as a whole. Events like this are the Council's preferred approach to engaging with Parish Councils as it is considered that this is an effective way of discussing issues affecting their community and considering whether the community could accommodate growth, for example.</p> <p>In particular, the Council is committed to involving Parish Councils at an early stage in the production of documents (i.e. prior to any public consultation) where proposals will significantly affect their Parish, for example allocation of sites for development in the Local Plan. For example, in certain circumstances, the Council may provide assistance by undertaking measures such as arranging site visits to view similar</p>	

METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
Public Exhibitions / Drop-in Sessions	<p>types of development to that which may take place in their Parish to help them with understanding how this may fit into their area, about different types of design, scale and massing etc.</p> <p>Public exhibitions and drop in sessions where members of the public can discuss issues with Planning Officers will be held at key consultation stages to assist the public in understanding and responding to proposals. These will be held at a number of venues throughout the District where plans may affect the local community, or to allow greater access to members of the public and organisations that may not be able to attend during normal office hours (e.g., those without access to public or private transport, etc). The Council will also hold exhibitions out of office hours where possible to give members of the public access to the information and Council officers.</p>	Gathering Opinion Providing Information & Raising Awareness
Interactive Events	<p>Interactive events are a valuable tool for actively involving a local community. The Council has implemented a series of 'Community Conversations' – in conjunction with the Staffordshire Moorlands Community Voluntary Services (SMCVS) – with local villages. These were employed as part of its initial stages of public consultation relating to land use proposals within the emerging Site Allocations document (and also proposals within the emerging Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD). These conversations took the form of 'outreach' meetings at local village halls with local residents/community groups, allowing Officers to not only disseminate Local Plan preparation information, but to give presentations; and encourage "interactive" exercises e.g. with maps.</p> <p>"Planning for Real"® is another example of this type of event, and was used as part of the Biddulph Town Park project.</p>	Gathering Opinion

METHOD	HOW IT WILL WORK	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT
Meetings / Correspondence with Statutory Bodies & Local Interest Groups	Council Officers are keen to meet and / or correspond with Statutory Consultees and Local Interest Groups where this will help to cover particular issues in depth and / or help groups to become more involved, as resources permit.	Gathering Opinion
Moorlands Together Partnership	The Partnership is made up of key public and private organisations and one of its roles is to oversee the production of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Partnership Executive meets 6 times a year and is the main consultation body within the structure. It has one sub-group reflecting one of its 3 priorities, the Staffordshire Moorlands Worklessness Forum comprising of around 15 different partners from the private, public and voluntary sectors – all of whom provide some sort of service for people who are out of work. The Partnership Executive and the Worklessness Forum will both be consulted through attendance at their meetings and / or separate communications.	Gathering Opinion
Outreach work with Hard to Reach Groups	The Council is committed to ensuring equality in its planning policy consultations so will undertake outreach work (along with partners such as the SMCVS) with hard to reach groups identified in this document and other groups it considers necessary. This may take the form of meetings, workshops or questionnaires. The particular groups and the level of work undertaken will be commensurate with the document being produced and the likely impact proposals within the document will have on that group.	Gathering Opinion

**Table 4.1 Methods the Council will use to Engage with the Community**

## How will individuals and organisations be consulted?

**4.5** The Council will target those groups and individuals likely to have an interest in any particular document. The Council has limited resources and therefore has to be realistic in consideration of whom to consult, when, and how. Careful consideration of which groups to consult represents better economy of Council resources; and will also help to avoid “consultation fatigue” i.e. over-consultation with non-relevant groups (which could lead to apathy). The Moorlands Together Partnership offers an executive body (meeting 6 times a year) and a theme group and other existing community engagement structures like the Parish Assembly and the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly (both meeting 4 times a year) will be utilised where possible.

**4.6** The Regulations state that the Council must meet a minimum level of public involvement, and lists the bodies that must be consulted when preparing Local Plans. These are referred to as ‘general consultation bodies’ and ‘specific consultation bodies’ (i.e. statutory consultees). These have not been listed within this document as they are frequently subject to change, particularly the specific consultation bodies.

**4.7** Figure 4.1 set out below shows how each consultation category (listed in paragraph 3.2) will be consulted on the production of all key planning policy documents. This has been devised taking account of comments made about the consultation process during the recent production of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and the Churnet Valley Masterplan as well as the Council’s intention to use maximum publicity during the early stages of the process when plans are being drafted and make best use of its resources. The requirements set out in the Regulations (2012) are incorporated into the table at the relevant stage as well as additional measures the Council is proposing over and above these regulations. New consultation methods frequently come to light so the lists in the tables are not exhaustive and the Council may use other methods as well as those listed.

Who?	Document	Consultation Method																				
		Summary Documents	Publication on online Portal	Moorlands Together Partnership	Meetings if appropriate	Interactive Events	Public Exhibitions	Media Releases	Paper based	Direct Notification	Database Consultation	Response Form	Parish & Town Council Workshop	Social Media	Website	Mailout	Site Notices	Posters				
STATUTORY BODIES*	Local Plan																					
	Stage 1 - Preparation:																					
	a) Site Options	x			x																	
	b) Preferred Options	x			x																	
	Stage 2: Publication	x																				
	SPD**																					
PARISH & TOWN COUNCILS*	Local Plan																					
	Stage 1 - Preparation:																					
	a) Site Options	x			x																	
	b) Preferred Options	x			x																	
	Stage 2: Publication	x																				
	SPD**																					
GENERAL PUBLIC	Local Plan																					
	Stage 1 - Preparation:																					
	a) Site Options	x			x																	
	b) Preferred Options	x			x																	
	Stage 2: Publication	x																				
	SPD**																					
Stage 1: Preparation																						

Figure 4.1

Consultation Method																	
Who?	Document	Summary Documents	Publication on online Portal	Moorlands Together Partnership	Meetings if appropriate	Interactive Events	Public Exhibitions	Media Releases	Paper based	Direct Notification if on Database	Response Form	Parish & Town Council Workshop	Social Media	Website	Mailout	Site Notices	Posters
	Stage 2: Publication	x						x	x	x	x		x	x			
<b>LOCAL BUSINESSES</b>	Local Plan	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
	Stage 1 – Preparation																
	a) Site Options	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
	b) Preferred Options	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
	Stage 2: Publication	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
	SPD**																
	Stage 1: Preparation																
	Stage 2: Publication		x				x		x	x	x		x	x			
<b>HARD TO REACH GROUPS</b>	Local Plan																
	Stage 1 – Preparation																
	a) Site Options																
	b) Preferred Options																
	Stage 2: Publication																
	SPD**																
	Stage 1: Preparation																
	Stage 2: Publication																
<b>DEVELOPER / LANDOWNER / AGENT</b>	Local Plan	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
	Stage 1 – Preparation																
	a) Site Options	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
	b) Preferred Options	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
	Stage 2: Publication																

Figure 4.1

Who?	Document	Consultation Method															
		Summary Documents	Publication on online Portal	Moorlands Together Partnership	Meetings if appropriate	Interactive Events	Public Exhibitions	Media Releases	Paper based	Direct Notification if on Consultation Database	Response Form	Parish & Town Council Workshop	Social Media	Website	Mailout	Site Notices	Posters
	Stage 2: Publication SPD**	x	x				x	x	x	x		x	x				
	Stage 1: Preparation								x					x			
	Stage 2: Publication		x					x		x				x			

\* All Statutory Bodies are on the Consultation Database.

\*\* Note that SPDs vary greatly in terms of the topic covered and therefore the level of public interest. They may cover the detailed planning of an area e.g. the Churnet Valley Masterplan or a technical planning topic such as housing delivery. With this in mind, the table shows the minimum the Council will do to consult on an SPD but more consultation may take place if the contents of the document are considered by the Council to have a potentially high level of public interest.

Figure 4.1

## What Happens to the Comments / Representations made to the Council during Consultation?

**4.8** All comments / representations made in writing (i.e. by letter, on a form, email or on the Council's consultation portal) by the deadline given will be acknowledged and the individual / organisation who responded will be kept informed about future stages in the production of the plan (unless they request not to be). The Council will not accept anonymous representations and late representations will only be accepted with the Council's agreement. Sometimes plans may attract a large number of objections or petitions. These will be taken into account in the same way as other representations. Comments made at earlier rounds of consultation on a document will not normally be carried forward unless additional consultation is being undertaken. Any outstanding issues must be resubmitted in order to be considered.

**4.9** Copies of representations will be made available for inspection at the Council offices and on the Council's website. Copies of representations displayed on the website will remove signatures and addresses of residents in response to requests made by members of the public.

**4.10** Comments received from all community involvement will be carefully considered, and the changes proposed to a Local Plan or Supplementary Planning Document as a result, will be reported to the appropriate Council meeting. Documents for submission to the Secretary of State as well as the final version of an SPD proposed for adoption will be approved by a meeting of the entire Council.

**4.11** The comments / representations (usually presented to Councillors in summary form due to their number and length) will form part of the 'evidence base' given to Councillors when they are asked to make decisions. The evidence base consists of a range of information that needs to be considered in making a decision. This may also include guidance and research. It will be for the Councillors to judge the weight to be given to specific comments made and to balance those comments with other relevant sources of information on the matter.

**4.12** The Council is required to prepare a consultation statement setting out who was consulted and how, a summary of the main issues raised by respondents and how these issues have been taken into account for Local Plan documents and SPDs. The Council must then make a copy of this statement available for comment along with the document being prepared during statutory consultation periods and submit it to the Secretary of State for Local Plan documents undergoing independent examination as evidence that the Council has met the contents of its SCI as well as its statutory consultation requirements.



How can you get involved in the Decision Making Process on Planning Applications?



## 5 How can you get involved in the Decision Making Process on Planning Applications?

### Methods of Involvement when Consulting on Planning Applications

**5.1** The Council's policy for consulting on planning applications is set out below. It is in conformity with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 and other relevant legislation including the National Planning Policy Framework, and also reflects this Council's adopted practices and procedures (as amended in February 2014).

**5.2** When a valid application is received and registered, the Council has to carry out certain formal consultations, for example with the Parish Council or Highway Authority. Depending on the nature of the application, national bodies with statutory functions, such as the Environment Agency, Sport England and English Heritage will also be consulted. The Council also notifies interested parties and neighbours in accordance with Government Guidelines and the Council's own adopted practices.

**5.3** Different types and scales of application require different methods of consultation. For most applications neighbour notification is likely to be sufficient to meet the statutory requirements. However where applications that are deemed 'major' in terms of their scale, those that require an Environmental Impact Assessment Statement under the regulations, or are deemed contrary to the development plan are received, the regulations also require the Council to advertise these applications in the local press (and sometimes the national press).

**5.4** Additionally the Council will employ various 'outreach' methods of public consultation, where a planning application would either be:

1. on a site identified for redevelopment in a planning policy document or
2. 'major' in scale and not in accordance with planning policy; or
3. Where in the opinion of Councillors or Officers it would give rise to issues of local controversy.

**5.5** Where any of these situations arises, the Council will normally employ one or more of the following means of involving the community in addition to the statutory minima:

- Development briefs, and
- Public Exhibitions & Workshops.

**5.6** Town and Parish Councils have been invited to nominate any live planning application upon which they wish the Planning Applications Service to attend to undertake discussion with, and provide advice to, the public (on a without prejudice basis).

### Pre-application Community Involvement

**5.7** For significant applications such as those listed above, the Council will encourage developers to undertake pre-application discussions and early community consultation. The aim of this process is to promote discussion between developers, statutory consultees, other

relevant bodies like Staffordshire Police and the community to identify any issues of concern before a formal application is made and therefore give an opportunity for these to be resolved at an early stage.

**5.8** Community consultation could comprise the methods highlighted in paragraph 4.4 -developers meeting with Parish Councils, community groups or holding public exhibitions. It must be noted however that although the Council will strongly encourage effective consultation, it cannot refuse to accept a valid application because it disagrees with the way in which a developer has consulted the community. However, failure by the developer to adequately consult could lead to objections being made which are material to the determination of the application.

### **Pre-submission Consultation Regulations: Wind Turbines**

**5.9** In December 2013 the Government issued new Regulations which require that applicants proposing wind turbines above a certain height (or proposing multiple turbines), conduct pre-submission consultation with affected communities. Whilst it is not mandatory for applicants to consult the Council before carrying out such consultation, the Regulations state that applicants must have regard to any advice given by the Council regarding local good practice under these Regulations. Applicants should consult the planning department if they are not sure what pre-consultation measures are expected. Please refer to the Council's document Additional Validation Guidelines Specific to Wind Turbines , or the Regulations .

### **Availability of Information relating to Planning Application Decisions**

**5.10** The Council is in the process of reviewing and improving the accessibility to information once the decision on a planning application is made. It is intended that all of the application file papers will be available to view online at the time of receipt and during the decision making process. This will help residents, consultees, and Town and Parish Councils to keep updated and (for consultees and Town/Parish Councils) to scrutinise the extent to which decisions accord with their advice.

### **Methods of Consultation / Notification**

#### **The Weekly List**

**5.11** A register of all received and determined planning applications, updated weekly is available on the District Council's website at [www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk](http://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk)

#### **Newspaper Notices**

**5.12** Certain types of applications are advertised in the local press, including major developments (for example a housing development of ten houses or more), developments affecting listed buildings and conservation areas, an application which is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Statement, or an application which is a departure from the Council's normal policies. Occasionally the Council may also advertise applications which do not fit into the above categories, but are of wider interest.

#### **Site Notices**

**5.13** The Council posts notices on site informing people of applications which fall within the same categories as for newspaper notices, listed above. These state when the Notice was posted, and the date by which representations need to be made.

### **Local Councils**

**5.14** Town and Parish Councils are sent details of all current planning applications within their area of the Staffordshire Moorlands, for information and comment. Town and Parish Councils whose areas adjoin Staffordshire Moorlands District will be sent details of planning applications likely to have an impact on their areas. This will be applied at the discretion of the Council but in all cases for wind turbine applications.

### **Neighbour Notification**

**5.15** It is the Council's practice to directly consult neighbours with a common boundary with the site. The letter will advise them where the plans can be inspected and the date by which representations need to be made.

### **Web Site/ E-mail**

**5.16** The Council has recently introduced a new public access system which can be accessed through its website. This enables users to carry out planning application searches to view application files (from April 2001) and to comment upon a planning application which is currently being determined.

**5.17** Members of the Development Control team can be contacted or enquiries made at [planning@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk](mailto:planning@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk)

### **Meetings**

**5.18** Appointments can be made with a Case Officer to discuss an application and view a file. Town/Parish Council meetings attended on request to help explain larger applications (refer to paragraph 4.5 above).

### **Inspection of Plans**

**5.19** Planning applications are available for inspection at the District Council offices in Moorlands House, Stockwell Street, Leek during normal office hours.

### **Commenting on a Planning Application**

**5.20** 21 days (35 days for 'major' applications) are normally provided to allow for comment upon a planning application except where separate legislation dictates otherwise. Anyone is entitled to comment on a planning application whether or not they receive a letter. Any representations need to be made in writing or on the Council's online public access system and will be placed on the relevant file and available for public inspection including online. These views will be taken into consideration when a decision is made or an officer recommendation to the Planning Applications Committee is made.

### **Neighbour Consultation Scheme**

**5.21** From 30th May 2013 for a period of three years, householders are able to build larger single storey rear extensions under permitted development. These new larger extensions must go through a "prior notification" process through the Local Planning Authority which is subject to a neighbour consultation scheme. Please note that exclusions apply – refer to the Council's website for full details.

### **Planning Applications Committee**

**5.22** If a planning application is to be considered by the Planning Applications Committee all those persons making a representation on that particular application will be notified. Both applicants and other interested parties are able to address the Committee. The Council has published a leaflet called “Public Speaking at Planning Applications Committee” which sets out guidance to the public on speaking at committee. This is available from the Democratic Services section of the Council.

### **Decision and Appeals Procedure**

**5.23** Anyone making individual written representations and organisers of petitions will be informed of the planning decision within 10 working days of the decision notice being issued. If an application is refused and an appeal subsequently lodged all those making representations will be notified of the date of the appeal and how they can take part.

### **Other Information**

**5.24** Various guidance can be found on the District Council’s website on the planning applications pages and there is also a link to the Planning Portal website.

## Ensuring Equal Opportunities in Consultation



## 6 Ensuring Equal Opportunities in Consultation

**6.1** It is important that the views of a wide range of people within our community are represented when shaping future planning policy in the Staffordshire Moorlands. The 2011 Census results for the Staffordshire Moorlands show that:

- 49.2% of the population is male and 50.8% of the population is female;
- 15.3% of the population is aged 0-14, 10.7% of the population is aged 15-24, 53% of the population is aged 25-64, 18.5% of the population is aged 65-84 and 2.5% of the population is aged 85+;
- 11.1% of the population has a long term health problem or disability which limits day to day activities a little, 9.9% of the population has a long term health problem or disability which limits day to day activities a lot and 79% of the population has no long term health problem or disability;
- 54.1% of those aged 16 and above are married;
- 0.1% of those aged 16 and above are in a registered same sex civil partnership;
- 72.8% of the population states their religion as Christian, 19.6% state they have no religion, 6.8% do not state their religion and the other 0.8% are spread amongst Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and other religions; and
- 97.5% of the population classed themselves as White British and that there is no particular single ethnic group making up the other 2.5%. It is spread over 12 other ethnic groups so proportions of the population belonging to any one of these groups is very small.

**6.2** The Council has a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate any discrimination on the basis of:

- Age (including children and young people);
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Marriage and civil partnership;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;

- Sex; and
- Sexual orientation.

**6.3** The public sector Equality Duty came into force in April 2011. It means that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

**6.4** It also requires that public bodies:

- have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

**6.5** The Council will be mindful of this when undertaking consultation. In particular, consideration will be given as to the likely impact of the contents of the document on each of these nine ‘protected characteristics’ as this will dictate whether any additional measures will be required to reach particular groups. As part of its duty under the Act, the Council must publish an Equality Scheme, which sets out current understanding of the inequalities in the District and priorities for tackling them. The Council will also follow good practice and undertake an ‘Equality Impact Assessment’ on any planning policy it adopts.

**6.6** Parts of the community that sometimes find it hard to be involved in the planning process are commonly referred to as ‘hard to reach’ groups. Some of the hard to reach groups that have been identified in Staffordshire Moorlands include:

- Young people – school aged, young professionals and young families
- Ethnic minorities
- People with disabilities

**6.7** Particular efforts will be made to engage with all groups that are ‘hard to reach’ to ensure that they are given the opportunity to be fully involved in the preparation of new planning policies and documents. For example, arrangements can be made for copies of documents to be made available in large print or another language on request.

**6.8** There may be other groups not included on this list who also find it difficult to become involved in the planning process for any number of reasons. They may not understand the process, be very busy or have other priorities. Unfortunately the Council has limited resources available. Therefore attempts will be made to focus in on a few groups where difficulties seem to exist. This is not to say that the list above is exhaustive - there may be other groups which are also hard to reach (e.g. the gypsy and traveller communities), but attempts will be made to target them more specifically over particular issues which may affect them.

**6.9** Within the District, the Council will continue to identify these groups and involve them at the appropriate stages. Consultation methods will be tailored to increase the participation of these groups, for example:



- Attending local meetings / forums representing groups where these exist;
- Running workshops with representative groups;
- The use of interactive website links;
- ‘Outreach’ into local schools and colleges;
- Use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter;
- Ensuring summaries of key documents written in non-technical language are made available;
- the production of planning policy documents and any related literature in alternative formats (Braille, large print, audio cassette, and languages other than English), and advertising the ‘language line’; and
- ensuring all venues for events are accessible.

**6.10** In addition there are a large number of voluntary groups who can be contacted who represent many members of these groups (e.g. disabled persons’). This includes the Staffordshire Moorlands Council for Voluntary Services.

## Monitoring & Review



## 7 Monitoring & Review

### Monitoring

**7.1** The Council's Annual Monitoring Report will provide a summary of the previous years' community involvement activities in relation to Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents and assess their effectiveness.

**7.2** The Council's online consultation portal allows for registered consultees to input equal opportunities monitoring data. Similarly, an optional monitoring form will be included alongside paper consultation response forms to enable data to be collected from all participants. This is intended to be the case for all planning policy consultation relating to DPDs, SPDs and any future SCIs. If completed, this will help to monitor the effectiveness of consultations in terms of the characteristics of individuals who have responded. This information can then be used to assess whether changes to consultation methods are required to target those who have not responded to the consultation.

**7.3** The Citizens' Panel will be used when considered appropriate to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of planning policy consultations in terms of notification and gathering views.

**7.4** All comments received on the quality or effectiveness of planning policy consultations will be considered and, where applicable, used to inform future practices.

**7.5** The engagement methods outlined in this document will be supplemented, as appropriate, to reflect best practice in community engagement, to better manage the expectations of the community and other interested parties and to address specific problems or concerns as these emerge. The Council will always seek to maximize effective engagement of all those with an interest in planning in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

### Review of the Statement of Community Involvement

**7.6** Further reviews of this document will be undertaken if the Council considers that an update would be beneficial.

## Appendix A Glossary of Terms Used



## 8 Appendix A Glossary of Terms Used

### **Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)**

Annual report monitoring the implementation of the Local Development Scheme and the extent to which policies in the Local Plan are being achieved.

### **Area Action Plan**

Introduced as part of 2004 legislation designed to facilitate the regeneration of a small defined area. An AAP includes planning policies against which all proposals within it will be assessed, and a vision or strategy with which to coordinate the work of other partner organizations.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy**

The Community Infrastructure Levy is a new levy that local authorities in England and Wales can choose to charge on new developments in their area. The money can be used to support development by funding infrastructure that the council, local community and neighbourhoods want – for example, new or safer road schemes, park improvements or a new health centre.

### **Community Right to Build Order**

Introduced in the Localism Act 2011

these are made by a community organisation (set up as a body which is established to further the social, economic and environmental well-being of individuals living in a particular area) or the Parish/Town Council allowing them to bring forward a small development for purposes such as new homes, businesses or community facilities. It is a site specific application limited to the development site.

### **Core Strategy**

The requirement for all Local Authorities to produce a Core Strategy was introduced in 2004. Every other planning policy document is built on the principles it sets out, regarding the development and use of land in a local authority's area. The principles should be in accordance with the community strategy. The requirement to produce a Core Strategy has recently been superseded and authorities are now producing Local Plans as key policy documents instead.

### **Development Plan Documents**

Statutory planning documents comprising of the Core Strategy, Site Specific Allocations and Area Action Plans.

### **Duty to Co-operate**

A statutory requirement that neighbouring local authorities including County Councils and other public bodies engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis on cross boundary matters (e.g. levels of housing, employment, road links etc).

### **General Consultation Body**

Voluntary bodies, those representing different racial, ethnic, national and religious groups, local interest groups, those representing the interests of disabled persons and local businesses – as the Local Planning Authority considers appropriate to consult.

### **Hard to Reach Groups**

Members of the community that sometimes find it hard to be involved in the planning process.

### **Local Development Scheme**

A public statement of the Council's programme for the production of its planning policy documents.

### **Masterplan**

A comprehensive plan of a particular area providing a framework for future development often adopted by Council's as Supplementary Planning Documents.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

Sets out the government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied.

### **Neighbourhood Development Order**

Allows planning permission to be granted in relation to a particular neighbourhood area for certain types of development. The planning permission can vary from a number of homes on a specified site to blanket consent, such as extensions to residential properties across the defined neighbourhood area, though exclusions do apply.

### **Neighbourhood Planning**

Introduced in the Localism Act 2011 to enable communities to get more involved in planning for their areas – specifically around creating plans and policies to guide new development and in some cases granting planning permission for certain types of development.

### **Representations**

Responses made to consultations on planning policy documents during statutory consultations.

### **Statement of Community Involvement**

Sets out the standards which authorities will achieve with regard to involving local communities in the preparation of Local Plan documents, supplementary planning documents and development control decisions.

### **Site Allocations**

The inclusion of sites for future development in a statutory Local Plan / site allocations document. This could be for a variety of uses such as housing, employment, retail, leisure or a mixture of these, for example.

### **Specific Consultation Body**

A list of organisations set out in the latest version of the Planning Regulations who must be consulted during the production and publication of planning policy documents for example utilities, Natural England, English Heritage, Environment Agency, neighbouring authorities.

### **Supplementary Planning Documents**

Provide supplementary information in respect of the policies in the Core Strategy or Local Plan.

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

Tool for appraising policies to ensure that they reflect sustainable development objectives (i.e. social, environmental and economic factors), and are required to be undertaken for policies within a Local Plan, Core Strategy or Site Allocations Document. Optional for Supplementary Planning Documents – depends on the subject matter.

### **Sustainable Community Strategy**

A document which contains a number of crosscutting ‘ambitions’ for the District, stemming from community consultation. The Strategy’s ambitions must be adhered to by all departments in the Authority when producing their plans, etc.

## Appendix B Sources of Information & Advice on Planning





## 9 Appendix B Sources of Information & Advice on Planning

### **The Planning Portal**

The Planning Portal is the Government's online 'one-stop-shop' for planning and building services. It provides information on the planning system, allows you to submit a planning application, find out about development in your area, appeal against a decision and research government policy. Website: [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk) Email: [support@planningportal.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:support@planningportal.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)**

The DCLG provides general information on the planning system including the latest national planning policy, decisions on planning appeals, research and statistics and reform of the planning system. Website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) Email: [contactus@communities.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@communities.gov.uk) Postal Address: Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU Telephone Number: 030 3444 0000

### **Planning Aid England (PAE)**

Planning Aid England provides free, independent and professional planning advice to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees. It is provided by the Royal Town Planning Institute. Website: [www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid) Email: [advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk) Postal Address: The Royal Town Planning Institute, 41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL Telephone: 020 7929 9494

### **The Planning Inspectorate**

The Planning Inspectorate processes planning appeals and holds examinations into planning policy documents and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Website: [www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk](http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk) Email: [enquiries@planning-inspectorate.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@planning-inspectorate.gsi.gov.uk) Postal Address: The Planning Inspectorate, Room 3/13, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN Telephone: 0303 444 5000