

Statement of Community Involvement

August 2014

Development and Regeneration Services



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1. Introduction

What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

- 1.1 We place great importance on effective community involvement. We are committed to public engagement in the preparation of planning policy and we have long established procedures to give people a chance to express their views on planning applications.
- 1.2 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) reviews how we will involve communities, businesses and organisations in the preparation of local planning policies (Chapter 2) and on planning application decisions (Chapter 3).

Why do we need a new SCI?

- 1.3 The previous version was adopted in 2006 and this review is necessary for the following reasons:
 - a) We have to adhere to and reflect the latest planning legislation and national policy¹. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages consultation before a planning application is submitted and at key stages as we prepare our Local Plan and other policy documents. Significantly, the Localism Act (2011) has empowered communities to have greater influence over how plans for their area are drawn up. An update of the SCI needs to reflect this culture change.
 - b) Consultation is a very necessary but also a very resource intensive process (see appendix A). We need to review our practices due to increasing budget pressures and continue to consult in the most efficient way.
 - c) We need to promote new and increasingly standard electronic communication and social media.
 - d) We should account for changes to how we deliver services, for example, Local Area Partnerships in place of Community Assemblies (and previously Area Panels).

Our Approach

- 1.4 The Fairness Commission has highlighted the stark inequalities in Sheffield both between places and different groups of people. The geographical inequalities are well known – areas in the south and west of the city are in the least deprived 20% of the country, whilst over 30% of Sheffield's population live

¹ See Appendix C for a summary of the Acts of Parliament and national policy.

in areas that fall within 20% most deprived in the country, largely located in the north and east of the city.

- 1.5 In response to this, our Corporate Plan² has fairness at its heart. We believe that everyone should get a fair chance to succeed and we recognise that some people and communities need extra help to reach their full potential, particularly when they face multiple layers of deprivation. The preparation of local planning policy and the decisions on which they are based will impact on the delivery of at least two of the ‘outcomes’ in our Corporate Plan – A Great Place to Live and Competitive City. It is vital, therefore, that we uphold the following principles of community involvement, and that they are reflected in the methods of consultation described throughout this SCI:
- a) A culture of engagement: People should know that they are encouraged to take part in the planning process and that decision makers are really interested in their views.
 - b) Early involvement or ‘frontloading’: The community should be involved at an early stage in the preparation of local development documents and major development proposals.
 - c) Continuing involvement: The community should be involved throughout the process – both formally and informally – of preparing local development documents and major development proposals.
 - d) Reaching out: Methods used to encourage involvement should be appropriate to people’s experience and needs.
 - e) Fit for purpose: Arrangements for consultation need to be appropriate for the type of document or application being considered, and being realistic in terms of the available resources.
 - f) Clarity: The planning process and timetables for producing or reviewing local development documents should be clear, so that people are able to participate in a timely and effective manner.
- 1.6 There are several benefits to following the above principles. Firstly, giving communities the opportunity to influence decision-making will lead to outcomes that better reflect the views, aspirations and needs of the wider community. It will also improve the quality and efficiency of planning decisions, by drawing on local knowledge and encouraging consensus.

² www.sheffield.gov.uk/corporateplan

2. Consultations on Planning Policy Documents

Methods

- 2.1 Registered contacts. The Local Plan consultee database currently has approximately 2,000 organisations (see appendix A) and individuals that we can contact to publicise a consultation on local planning policies. We will publicise a consultation by detailing its purpose, where any consultation documents are available from, the consultation period, how comments can be made and any consultation events.
- 2.2 Available to read and for sale. The consultation documents will be available from our website. The availability of documents online or via email has reduced the demand for hard copies. We will continue to make consultation documents available from our principal office³ and at other places across the city as appropriate (e.g. libraries or First Point Centres), either for inspection or for sale. Documents in alternative formats will be made available on request.
- 2.3 Media. Both traditional e.g. newspapers, and “new media”⁴ will be used to publicise a consultation so that it reaches beyond registered consultees. Our consultations must reflect that “new media” e.g. the internet and social networking sites such as Twitter, is increasingly popular, whilst traditional media such as printed newspapers has become less popular. The SCI must be flexible enough to take advantage of new consultation options that arise as a result of new technology.
- 2.4 Press releases. Will continue to be issued to publicise new documents and consultation events and if they can be arranged, special features in local newspapers and radio shows. We can also publicise consultations by using posters or newsletters, on our website or via other electronic or social media methods e.g. Twitter or our email alert service.
- 2.5 Events. Exhibitions, public meetings, drop-in sessions and conferences are the most direct method of consultation and require the most resources. Their location should be targeted e.g. aimed at members of the public and located where most change is proposed⁵.
 - Good public *exhibitions* can raise the profile of proposals and are most useful when they contain a strong visual element.
 - *Public meetings* typically involve the more active members of a community and provide the opportunity to raise questions, concerns and debate on particular issues. Public meetings generally now require an existing and

³ Currently First Point at Howden House on Union Street

⁴ “New media” refers to on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, and creative participation.

⁵ For example, Green Belt review and allocations proposed on greenfield sites.

interested community group. [Local Area Partnerships](#) will be kept involved but do not have the resources that the previous Community Assemblies or Area Panels were able to lend to planning consultations.

- *Drop-in sessions* can combine the advantages of exhibitions and public meetings. They are less formal than public meetings and encourage a wider range of attendance and face to face discussion.
- A city *conference* with a wide range of stakeholders and workshops has proved effective in previous consultations.

2.6 Questionnaires are often used in combination with an *exhibition* but they have to be used with caution. They can help to keep comments focused on the scope of the consultation and therefore generate more useful feedback. However, there is also a risk that the issues are pre-judged and the design of a questionnaire discourages new issues being raised.

Ensuring Equality

2.7 People have different needs and some people may need more or different resources to have access to the same outcomes as others. This statement recognises that some people face additional barriers and constraints, and that we need to assist people to have the ability to become more involved if they choose to whilst recognising that people will not want to be involved and make different choices. We have a Public Sector Duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities⁶. We will:

- a) Liaise on who to consult and how, with our Elections, Equalities and Involvement Team, Staff Equality and Inclusion Network, Equality Hub Networks, Access Officers and Local Area Partnerships. Particularly on the way we engage with individuals and groups who belong to a Community of Identity specifically identified as a protected characteristic⁷. The protected characteristics are:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion and belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

⁶ Public Sector Equality Duty, Equality Act 2010.

⁷ Defined in the Equality Act 2010 (c. 15) Part 2 — Equality: Key Concepts, Chapter 1, Protected Characteristics, as age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

- b) Consider detailed matters such as the timing, type of venue, whether it feels safe and accessibility of consultation events;
- c) Ensure that all planning policy documents are available for free inspection at our principal office and other public information points across the city where appropriate.
- d) Documents produced for consultation will be in plain language, clear print standards and available in a variety of formats. Paper, including large print and electronic versions will be necessary, any formats required as a reasonable adjustments, such as braille or audio will be made available and languages other than English should be provided on request wherever practicable and reasonable.
- e) Consult and involve people from the City wide Equality Hub Network and Board, related groups/ organisations, for example the Access Liaison Group, housing equalities group, community and faith groups, and other relevant bodies through our and the Equality Hub mailing list;

Planning Policy Documents and Consultation Stages

- 2.8 The main planning policy document that we will produce is the Local Plan. The Proposals Map is an integral part of the Local Plan and illustrates how policies and proposals in the Local Plan apply in different locations. We have to produce a Local Plan and there are certain procedures we are obliged to undertake in order to adopt the document e.g. submitting the document to Government and undertaking an independent and public examination.
- 2.9 We will consult on the Issues and Options for the Local Plan for at least 6 weeks. Before submitting the document to Government there is another, more formal, 6 week representation period.
- 2.10 We don't have to produce SPDs (Supplementary Planning Documents) but we will if we need to provide more detail about policies in the Local Plan. SPDs don't have as many procedures as the Local Plan but we still have obligations e.g. we have to consult on them for a minimum of 4 weeks.
- 2.11 The Government's Localism Act (2011) introduced Neighbourhood Planning giving new rights and powers for neighbourhoods to produce a plan to shape how their neighbourhood area should develop and grow. They are taken forward by neighbourhoods themselves: by an existing parish council, or by the creation of a neighbourhood forum where there is no parish council.
- 2.12 There are parts of the neighbourhood planning process that we have to undertake and publicise. However, it is the Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum that is responsible for engaging and consulting with their neighbourhood during the development of a neighbourhood plan. There is further information about neighbourhood planning on our website, including how we will support parishes and forums producing a plan and our other responsibilities which include publicising neighbourhood area applications and holding a

neighbourhood referendum towards the end of the process:
www.sheffield.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning

- 2.13 Planning Briefs are site-specific and form a stepping stone between the planning policies and the requirements of a planning application. They allow the opportunity for early consultation with residents and other stakeholders. They provide the community, landowner and developers with a degree of certainty, ultimately resulting in better development proposals as designers and developers have a clearer idea of what is expected. All Planning Briefs will be subject to a minimum 4 week consultation period.
- 2.14 The LDS (Local Development Scheme) lists what planning policy documents are being prepared and the timetable for their different stages. The latest LDS is available from: www.sheffield.gov.uk/lds

What We Will Do

- 2.15 The table below indicates, for each stage of the plan, what we will do and some of the additional consultation options we will consider. The additional consultation options will be considered in relation to the scale, type and location of proposed changes of each consultation, as well as the resources available. The principle of “frontloading” means that additional consultation options should be considered during the earlier stages. Each consultation will have a plan outlining the choice and extent of additional consultation options. It will be approved by the Head of Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member and published.

Local Plan⁸ (including Sustainability and Equality Appraisal)		
Stage	What we will do	Additional options (see paragraph 2.15 above)
Issues and Options	<p>Consult for a minimum of 6 weeks;</p> <p>Notify Ward Members;</p> <p>Notify registered contacts (Appendix A);</p>	<p>Longer consultation period;</p> <p>Try to arrange special features in local newspapers and local radio;</p> <p>Notify neighbourhood publications;</p> <p>Publicise using posters or newsletters;</p>
Publication	<p>Make consultation documents available from our principal office⁹;</p> <p>Publicise in locations across the city e.g. First Point centres and libraries;</p> <p>Make consultation documents available in alternative formats on request;</p> <p>Publicise and make consultation documents available on our website;</p> <p>Issue a press release.</p>	<p>Publicise as a news item on our website or via other electronic or social media methods e.g. Twitter;</p> <p>Public exhibitions, public meetings, drop-in sessions aimed primarily at residents;</p> <p>Meetings or workshops with representatives of businesses and other organisations;</p> <p>Questionnaire;</p> <p>City conference;</p> <p>Provide an online consultation tool for consultees and agents to make comments online;</p> <p>Provide an interactive online map;</p> <p>City wide equality hub network.</p>
Submission to the Secretary of State	Following submission we will notify all of our registered contacts, and anyone else who requests to be notified, where and when the submission documents can be viewed.	None
<p><i>At this stage the Local Plan is 'examined' by the Planning Inspectorate on whether it is 'sound' and has met all of the legal requirements. During the examination the inspector will hold a public examination.</i></p>		

⁸ We will do the same for any other Development Plan Document.

⁹ Currently First Point at Howden House on Union Street and, for example, libraries

Local Plan⁸ (including Sustainability and Equality Appraisal)		
Stage	What we will do	Additional options (see paragraph 2.15 above)
Public Examination	<p>At least 6 weeks before the examination starts we will:</p> <p>Publish on our website the date, time and place where the examination is to be held, as well as the name of the person carrying out the examination;</p> <p>Notify anyone who has made a comment during the publication stage.</p>	<i>The Inspector and their Programme Officer are responsible for how the public examination is run.</i>
<i>The Inspector may suggest changes to the Local Plan and further consultation is normally required at this stage and any representations will be considered by the Inspector and not the local planning authority.</i>		
Adoption	<p>Publish it alongside an adoption statement and other supporting documents on our website;</p> <p>Notify all registered contacts;</p> <p>Issue a press release.</p>	Publicise as a news item on our website or via other electronic or social media methods e.g. Twitter.

The SCI, SPDs (Supplementary Planning Documents) & Planning Briefs		
Stage	What we will do	Additional options (see paragraph 2.15 above)
Preparation stage	No specific requirements.	Informal engagement with relevant stakeholders to agree the level of detail and identify key issues.
Draft	<p>Consult for a minimum of 4 weeks;</p> <p>Notify Ward Members we consider will be affected by it;</p> <p>Notify registered contacts (Appendix A) we consider will be affected by it;</p> <p>Make consultation documents available from our principal office¹⁰;</p> <p>Make consultation documents available in alternative formats on request;</p> <p>Make consultation documents available on our website.</p>	<p>Longer consultation period;</p> <p>Issue a press release;</p> <p>Publicise the consultation on our website;</p> <p>Publicise and make consultation material available from other locations across the city e.g. First Point centres and libraries;</p> <p>Try to arrange special features in local newspapers and local radio;</p> <p>Notify neighbourhood publications;</p> <p>Publicise using posters or newsletters;</p> <p>Publicise as a news item on our website or via other electronic or social media methods e.g. Twitter;</p> <p>Public exhibitions, public meetings, drop-in sessions aimed primarily at residents;</p> <p>Meetings or workshops with representatives of businesses and other organisations;</p> <p>Questionnaires;</p> <p>City conference;</p> <p>Provide an online consultation tool for consultees and agents to make comments online;</p> <p>Provide an interactive online map.</p>

¹⁰ Currently First Point at Howden House on Union Street.

The SCI, SPDs (Supplementary Planning Documents) & Planning Briefs		
Stage	What we will do	Additional options (see paragraph 2.15 above)
Adoption/approval	<p>Consider the representations received through the consultation and make amendments necessary before adopting, or in the case of Planning Briefs, approving;</p> <p>Once adopted/approved we will make it available on our website, and from our principal office¹¹;</p> <p>Notify any person or body that made a representation or who has asked to be notified of the adoption;</p>	Issue a press release; Publicise as a news item on our website or via other electronic or social media methods e.g. Twitter.

Giving Feedback to Consultees

- 2.16 After each stage of consultation, a report summarising the consultations carried out, the comments received from consultees, and the Council's response to them will be published and those who commented will be notified.
- 2.17 Consultees will be informed about responses to their comments and consultation reports when they are published.

¹¹ Currently First Point at Howden House on Union Street

3. Consultations on Planning Applications

Background to Current Practice

- 3.1 We are proud of our commitment to effectively engaging the community in the planning application process. We have one of the longest-established ‘Chance to Speak at Planning Committee’ procedures and have developed excellent services on the Council website to make public engagement via the internet even easier and more efficient. Although mindful of the fact that not every household has access to the internet, it is the case that community groups and ad hoc action groups do use the internet extensively. This provides real time updates on planning application submissions and decisions and a vastly improved service. Improved services on our website have significantly changed the way communities engage with the Planning Service. Together with increasing budget pressures, these require service changes and new commitments.
- 3.2 More detailed, practical advice for officers, with illustrated examples of notification requirements, is provided in a supporting document, the Code of Practice on Publicity and Consultation on Planning Applications. It is published alongside the SCI so that any interested member of the public can see it.

Site Notices and Notification by Letter

- 3.3 The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010, as amended, states that any owner or occupier of any land adjoining the land to which the application relates shall be notified either by site display (Statutory Site Notice) on or near the application site for at least 21 days or by serving notice on them (letter or e-mail). In Sheffield, wherever possible, all adjoining neighbours are notified by letter, unless an e-mail address has been provided, such as on a re-consultation. This is because individual neighbour notification minimises any risk that those affected might not realise that a notice posted in the street refers to their property adjoining the development site. Letters are also considered beneficial for more seldom heard from communities and residents without access to the internet. When a planning application is submitted, we will in most cases not know who owns or lives in those properties and so a letter to the owner/occupier is necessary. The period for responding is 21 days, though any late representations received before a decision is made will still be considered.
- 3.4 Where a planning application may affect neighbours beyond those adjoining the site, such as from hot food takeaway odours or the visual impact of a telecommunications mast, wider notification is carried out. Inevitably, with controversial applications, the public sometimes ask for more individual notification, but we will limit notification to those adjoining and where required by the SCI and the associated Code of Practice.
- 3.5 The Code of Practice will help define where wider neighbour notification applies, with a list of development types to which it applies, and an explanation

of how it will be delivered, including how many adjacent properties will be sent notification letters. An appendix to the Code of Practice will illustrate with examples how the mix of neighbour notification letters and site notices will be put into practice.

- 3.6 Due to budget pressures and the easy availability of information on the Council website, it is now reasonable to alert the wider community to these applications by site notices displayed on the application site or nearest suitable piece of street furniture, and by alerting any local community groups with a known interest by e-mail.
- 3.7 Planning applications can be amended several times during their course, often in order to overcome objections or in order to improve the quality of the design or layout. Wherever an amendment may be considered to worsen the situation or lead to a significant change, a further round of neighbour notification will be carried out, unless the application is to be refused regardless. All amendments to plans will be published on the website. It is not considered necessary to re-consult neighbours for minor amendments or where amendments clearly address planning concerns. A significant need to re-notify neighbours will outweigh any other considerations, but time constraints may lead to a second notification period being reduced from 21 days.
- 3.8 For further rounds of neighbour notification, shorter consultation periods can be reasonable where it should be possible for the changes to be quickly assessed by neighbours, but no consultation period will ever be for less than 10 working days from the date letters are sent out or notices posted, as this has proved the minimum period necessary for neighbours to respond. By this stage, where many individuals have provided an e-mail address, all further communication will be by e-mail rather than post.

Other Statutory Requirements

- 3.9 The principal other statutory requirements include:
 - A public register of all applications. This is published on our website. For those that do not have access to the internet, internet access and assistance can also be found at First Point in Howden House, Union Street and in local libraries.
 - The following application types require a statutory site notice and are advertised in the legal notices section of the Sheffield Telegraph: applications which affect Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas or an Ancient Monument, or applications which represent a departure from the development plan, include an Environmental Assessment (under the relevant regulations) or affect a right of way.
 - Bradfield and Ecclesfield Parish Councils and Stocksbridge Town Council are statutory consultees.

- Applicants inform application site owners and agricultural tenants by notice, if different from the applicant.
- Representations on planning grounds are material considerations, which have to be considered in the application decision-making process. In Sheffield every application report, whether to the Planning Committee or for a delegated decision, has an assessment of the material considerations including a summary of all representations on planning grounds received.
- All those who have made written representations on an application are informed of any appeal against the eventual application decision.

Other Publicity Information about Applications

3.10 We also carry out a wide range of additional measures, over and above the statutory minimum, tailored to the application type:

- Guidance on the application process is on our website, supported by downloadable information sheets that can also be posted out if an enquirer has no access to the internet. This has been produced to help the public understand how the process works, what things are considered and how to make effective representations.
- A weekly list of all applications submitted is published on our website. This is searchable by various criteria, such as by street name, electoral ward or type of application. Any local community group with a known or possible interest in an application is consulted.
- Local media are provided with information on significant applications to encourage good coverage of planning issues, to give publicity to applications and to foster a well-informed debate.
- For telecom prior approval applications, nearby schools are consulted
- Where considered appropriate, for a small number of large-scale developments, an applicant might be requested to provide a public exhibition and/or we might organise a public meeting.

Chance to Speak at Planning Committee

3.11 We offer the public and applicants a chance to speak at the Planning Committee, which is very effective in bringing representations to life for Members of the Committee when they make decisions on more controversial applications. The chance to speak is at the Chair's discretion and it may not be possible for everyone who wants to speak to do so. This is a longstanding service and we provide guidance on the web and in a leaflet to explain the process.

Decisions on Planning Applications

3.12 We currently inform every individual or group representative who has made written representations of the application decision. This is not a legal requirement. In exceptional cases, where an application decision receives much media coverage and there are hundreds of representations, then this is deemed to be unnecessary.

3.13 As noted above, anyone with an interest can also track the progress of an application on our website or find the decision themselves. As interested parties become more familiar with obtaining this information on the Council website and/or if resource constraints make it difficult to justify writing letters to those who have not provided e-mail addresses, the Planning Service may stop sending these letters.

Enforcement

3.14 Enforcing planning conditions, approved plans and unauthorised developments, is given prominence in Sheffield, with full enforcement reports and quarterly reports of progress made on all enforcement action authorised by the Planning Committee. Future investment in enforcement software may open up opportunities to improve online access to statutory enforcement action.

Substantial Additional Consultation on Development Proposals (Pre-Application Consultations) and Planning Applications

3.15 We strongly encourage pre-application consultations, especially on larger schemes. One of the benefits of pre-application consultation is that development proposals can be adapted to take account of consultees' views at an early stage. In Sheffield, an '**Added Value Test**' is applied to determine when substantial additional publicity and consultation measures should be taken. The test gives three possible reasons why substantial additional publicity and consultation might be beneficial:

1. to help the community shape a major regeneration scheme or a scheme with a wide community impact
2. to overcome barriers to service and assist seldom heard from groups such as some Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities
3. to generate informed debate about very complex planning issues of wide significance

3.16 This Added Value Test can be applied to development proposals at pre-application stage and/or after submission of the application, and used to judge whether substantial additional publicity and consultation is needed. The objective of substantial additional consultation is to engage in useful dialogue, not to provide extra opportunities for lobbying by objectors.

Methods of Involving the Community in Pre-Application Consultations and on Substantial Planning Applications

3.17 Where a proposed scheme meets one or more of the Added Value Test criteria, applicants will be welcome to use whatever techniques and approaches they think are appropriate. However, the Council will continue to use or advocate the following proven methods:

- Media coverage, by briefings, press releases and use of the Council's website
- Meetings in the Planning office between planning officers and small groups of people and their elected representatives, where detailed dialogue might be useful
- Exhibitions of proposals with the opportunity to make comments. Other techniques such as 3D models can be used at exhibitions.
- Public meetings, to ensure wide community involvement and neutral chairing.

3.18 In all cases, every effort will be made to organise events in a way that promotes dialogue and understanding, and tries to avoid confrontation. Public meetings organised by particular interest groups to push the objectors' point of view should be recognised as 'campaign meetings' and will not usually justify officer attendance. In most cases, objections can be made effectively through written representations, using the guidance provided.

Validity of pre-application consultations

3.19 Pre-application consultation needs to be meaningful and not seen as a public relations exercise to win support for a pre-determined proposal. Therefore, we will encourage developers to agree their approach to consultation with the Planning Service. We will apply criteria to test the validity of pre-application consultation and determine whether the responses can be given weight by the Council when deciding an eventual application:

- Was the process of consultation transparent and inclusive?
- Have objections based on sound planning reasons been addressed?
- Is a consultation supporting statement submitted with the application, enabling the process and outcomes to be validated?

3.20 The responsibility for carrying out pre-application consultation (and the costs of doing so) will rest with the applicant. Where carried out, an applicant should submit a consultation supporting statement with the eventual planning application, summarising what methods have been used, representations received, and changes made to the proposals.

3.21 To assist applicants and promote best practice, we will offer advice and support to applicants. In addition to publishing guidance on our website, we will respond to requests for advice on the applicant's proposed method of pre-

application consultation and on the proposed content of consultation material. Our service target is to respond within 15 working days of receipt of any such request for assistance.

- 3.22 Pre-application consultation will not remove the need for the Council to publicise an application in accordance with statutory requirements and in accordance with this Statement of Community Involvement.

Accessibility of Planning Services

- 3.23 Due to Sheffield's size and geography, it is essential that special measures be taken to ensure that those who might find it difficult to get to see plans and obtain advice and assistance from the Council in the city centre have adequate alternative means to get information. Alternative means available include free access to the internet and information leaflets at local First Points and libraries, and the provision of a good telephone service.

- 3.24 First Point at Howden House for viewing plans online and seeing planning officers, and the Town Hall for attending Planning Committees, are fully accessible to disabled people. Large print, audio tape or Braille versions and translations into other languages are available for all planning documents. Officers will meet or provide extra explanation to individuals who need extra help to read or understand drawings. Interpretation support can be arranged through First Point. Google Translate is available on all web pages and provides basic translations in to several languages. All web pages are written to cater for screen readers.

- 3.25 For individuals and groups with limited financial resources, who wish to make a planning application or put forward representations on an application, Planning Aid England may be able to provide a free advice service.

- 3.26 Our website provides good access to the planning application process, including the following key features:

- View all application drawings and associated documents online. All amendments or additional drawings are published as soon as possible after receipt, providing online access to all drawings and making it easier to meet government targets for the speed of determining applications without unreasonably constraining the ability of the public to make representations.
- Track applications of interest and to receive automatic e-mail alerts when any new documents are added to an application file.
- Make comments online while viewing application details.
- All public contributions (written representations) are published online, providing confirmation of receipt.
- Comprehensive access to information about decisions, including planning conditions and section 106 agreements and reports explaining how the

decision was made, agendas, committee dates, member information and minutes/decisions.

- It is a live database, continuously updated as new information is inputted into the Council's planning application system.
- For the convenience of customers used to making weekly checks on applications of interest, a 'weekly list' search option has been retained.
- New search options include a spatial element, enabling, for example, a resident to identify applications around the area of their house, at distances they can specify.
- Register an interest in applications for a geographical area and be automatically alerted to any applications submitted of possible interest.

3.27 We will continue to inform the public of service developments, and consult where appropriate, through the 'What's New' section of the planning web pages.

Personal Information on the Internet

3.28 We have reviewed national best practice advice in the way we publish application and enforcement information on the web site, and this has implications for personal information that are set out in guidance on our website. A balance is struck between ensuring that the planning application process is transparent and open, minimising the risk of possible undue influence being applied or corruption, and protecting individuals from possible identity theft or being deterred from making representations. Exceptional cases for confidentiality will be considered.

Appendix A: Types of Consultation and Costs

We will always try and achieve the maximum possible participation from the community, but we also have to consider our resource constraints and manage them effectively. The table below shows the broad resources required for the different types of consultation we propose.

Planning Policy Documents

Type of Consultation	Material Cost	Staff time
Notifying registered contacts (by email where an email address is known)	Moderate	Moderate
Making consultation documents available to read on our website	Low	Low
Making consultation documents available to read at our principal office and at other places across the city as appropriate	Moderate	Moderate
Press releases	Low	Moderate
Try to arrange special features in local newspapers and local radio	Low	Moderate
Notify neighbourhood publications	Low	Low
Publicise using posters or newsletters	High	Moderate
Publicise as a news item on our website or via other electronic or social media methods e.g. Twitter or our email alert service	Low	Low
Public exhibitions, public meetings, drop-in sessions aimed primarily at residents	High	High
Meetings or workshops with representatives of businesses and other organisations	Moderate	High
Questionnaires	Moderate	Moderate
City conference	High	High
Provide an online consultation tool for consultees and agents to make comments online	High	Medium

Planning Applications

Type of consultation	Material Cost	Staff time
A public register of all applications (para. 4.11)	Low	Moderate
Statutory site notices for application types listed in para.4.11)	Moderate	Moderate
Guidance on the application process is on our website (para.4.12)	Low	Low
A weekly list of all applications submitted is published on our website	Low	Moderate
Local media are provided with information on significant applications	Low	Moderate
Consulting on telecom prior approval applications that are near schools	Low	Low
Where considered appropriate, public meeting or exhibition	High	High

Appendix B: Specific, Duty to Co-operate and General Consultation Bodies

We must notify the specific bodies listed below about a consultation on the Sheffield Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), if we consider they may have an interest in the subject of the proposed document¹²:

The Coal Authority
The Environment Agency
The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (Known as English Heritage)
The Marine Management Organisation
Natural England
Network Rail Infrastructure Limited
The Highways Agency
A relevant authority in or adjoining Sheffield City Council:

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Derbyshire County Council
NE Derbyshire District Council
Peak Park Planning Board
Bradfield Parish Council
Ecclesfield Parish Council
Stocksbridge Town Council

Parish Councils adjoining the Sheffield local planning authority area:
Brinsworth, Catcliffe, Orgreave, Aston cum Aughton, Wales, Wentworth, Tankersley, Hunshelf, Langsett, Wortley, Dronfield, Eckington, Holmesfield, Killamarsh
Local Enterprise Partnership
Mobile Operators Association (representing the four UK mobile operators)
Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health in Sheffield, and NHS England South Yorkshire
Northern Powergrid
National Grid
Yorkshire Water
Homes and Communities Agency
Sheffield City Region Local Enterprise Partnership
South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive
Civil Aviation Authority
Office of Rail Regulation

General consultation bodies include voluntary groups and those which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups; disabled persons; different religious groups; and persons carrying on business in the Sheffield area.

¹² [Paragraph 18 of The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

Appendix C: National Planning Policy & Acts of Parliament

The preparation of an SCI is a requirement of Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Its purpose is to set how the Council will consult and involve the public in planning matters. The Council is legally obliged to comply with its SCI.

The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** Paragraph 155 states: “Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbours, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area...”

Localism Act 2011 places strong emphasis on the importance of community involvement within the planning system. Together with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the Act introduced Neighbourhood Planning and the Duty to Co-operate.

Plan-making: Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This Act sets out which documents must be developed with community input, who should be consulted, and which documents must then be examined by an independent Inspector.

Planning applications: Town and Country Planning General Development Procedure Order 1995 as amended by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2012 (or any subsequent amendment).

Equality: The Equality Act 2010 places a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on us. A public authority or those who exercises public functions (e.g. our contracted partners who deliver our services) must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

Appendix D: Glossary

Access Liaison Group: the Council's primary means of consultation with disabled people about access and an inclusive built environment, at policy level and in terms of practical requirements. The Group is supported by the Council's Access Officers and chaired by a disabled member.

Area Action Plan: a document providing a planning framework for an area where significant change or conservation is needed. Area Action Plans will have the status of Development Plan Documents.

Black and Minority Ethnic people/communities (BME): Black and/or Minority Ethnic, in the UK this includes anyone who is non-white British.

Carer: a person who provides unpaid care for a disabled relative, child, friend or other person

Development Plan Document (DPD): planning documents that are subject to independent examination and form part of the statutory development plan for the area, e.g. the Local Plan and Area Action Plans.

Disabled person: - Someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial (more than minor) and long-term (usually over 1 year) adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Social Model of disability: A disabled person is an individual who has an impairment and whose experiences are continually affected by contemporary social, educational, environmental or economic trends. These trends take little or no account of her/his 'rights' as a person to reach her/his maximum potential. Consequently, the individual is unable to participate fully in society. This view of disabled people is known as the Social Model of Disability. In other words, society and the built environment disable those people with impairment, not the condition.

Examination: the independent examination conducted by a planning inspector to test the soundness of a Development Plan Document or Statement of Community Involvement.

Equality Hub Network: A City Wide network of individuals and groups, based around people who share protected characteristics in the Equality Act .There are hub networks for BME, disabled, women, age (young and older), religion/ belief, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people) and carers and a Board and joint events which bring all hubs together. The Network recognises that the most deprived and excluded people and communities, requires additional efforts to empower and engage. The Network helps ensure the Council is engaging with and involving the full range of citizens that live and work in the city. We want under-represented communities to be able to have a say on issues that affect them, influence the decisions that are made, and help us to improve the services we and our partners provide and commission.

First Point and Local First Points: public reception centres where people can find out about Council services. First Point in Howden House, Union Street is in the city centre and is where planning applications and other records can be inspected. Local First Points have been established in Hillsborough and Chapeltown.

Seldom Heard from: groups of people who do not normally take much part in the planning process.

Local community forums: community-based organisations that link together local groups, and run or initiate projects and services to improve the quality of life of residents.

Local regeneration partnerships: community-based organisations similar to local community forums but focused especially on regeneration.

Local Development Scheme (LDS): sets out the 3-year programme for preparing Local Development Documents.

Planning Aid: provides a free, independent and professional planning advice service to individuals and groups who cannot afford professional fees.

Planning Committee: a committee (full title 'Planning and Highways Committee') composed of city councillors which is responsible for planning applications, Tree Preservation Orders, enforcement action and some highway, footpath, road safety and traffic management issues for the whole City. It is also responsible for determination of City Centre planning, development of transport matters and strategic development projects.

Planning Inspectorate: the body which provides an Inspector (appointed by the Secretary of State) to carry out an independent assessment of the soundness of a Development Plan Document or Statement of Community Involvement. The Inspectorate also processes planning, listed building consent, advertisement and enforcement appeals.

Prior approval application: an application notifying the Council that an applicant intends to carry out development that does not require planning permission.

Proposals Map: a map of the city (on a registered scale) illustrating the policies and proposals in Development Plan Documents. The adopted Proposals Map must be revised as each new DPD is adopted.

Race: refers to ethnicity, colour and nationality of a person.

Soundness: a Development Plan Document will be sound if it meets certain tests at the Examination stage. These tests require that a document is prepared according to the correct procedures, that it conforms to other policies, and that its proposals are coherent, consistent and effective.

Staff Equality and Inclusion Networks: These Networks are open to all staff within Sheffield City Council who are interested in equality, diversity and inclusion. These networks have replaced the old staff forums.

Stakeholders: individuals or organisations who stand to gain or lose from the impact of a planning policy, proposal or decision. The term is used mostly to refer to bodies that will affect the delivery of a planning document's policies and proposals.

Statutory Site Notice: a notice or poster that the Council posts on site to further publicise a planning application, in accordance with legal requirements.

Strategic Options: ideas, possibilities and alternative proposals produced at an early stage in the production of the Local Plan and issued for public consultation and have not been endorsed by the Council.

Submission: the stage in producing a Development Plan Document when it is given to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

Supplementary planning document (SPD): a Local Development Document which provides supplementary information about the policies in Development Plan Documents. SPDs are not subject to independent examination. An SPD may be related to a topic or to a specific area.

Sustainability appraisal: a tool for appraising policies to ensure they reflect sustainable development objectives (that is social, environmental and economic factors) and required in the Act to be undertaken for all Development Plan Documents.