Statement of Community Involvement for Shropshire

Adopted version 2011

CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted by Shropshire Council in 2011. Minor amendments were made in 2014 to reflect factual changes since 2011, such as addresses of Council offices and the adoption of the Localism Act.

1.2   Should you wish to contact Shropshire's Planning service please use the following e-mails:
   - Planning Policy – planning.policy@shropshire.gov.uk

   - Development Management Central Area – planningdmc@shropshire.gov.uk

   - Development Management North East area – planningdmne@shropshire.gov.uk

   - Development Management North West area – planningdmnw@shropshire.gov.uk

   - Development Management South East area – planningdmse@shropshire.gov.uk

   - Development Management South West area –

   - planningdmsw@shropshire.gov.uk

Background

1.3   Planning plays an important role in shaping the places where people live and work. It is the role of Local Planning Authorities to administer this role, both in setting long term priorities for their area and in making judgements on development proposals. This must be done in a fair and open manner, which allows the opportunity for the public to become empowered in the decision making process.

1.4   Shropshire Council, as the Local Planning Authority for the administrative area of the Shropshire[1], views constructive community involvement as central to the development of sound and robust plans and in the determination of individual planning applications. Responding to this, the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) therefore sets out the following broad areas:

- **Who** the Council will seek to involve in the preparation of planning policy documents and in the determination of planning applications;

- **How** this process will be handled;

- **When** this involvement will happen;

- **What** methods will be used to encourage as wide involvement as possible

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[1] The administrative area of Shropshire Council does not include the Borough of Telford and Wrekin

What will this SCI Replace?

1.5   The need to prepare this SCI is borne from Shropshire's recent local government restructuring, which saw a new county wide unitary authority formed. It also responds to the recent changes made to the development planning process in the Planning Act 2008.

1.6   Each of Shropshire's former Local Planning Authorities adopted their own SCIs before the formation of Shropshire Council in 2009. When adopted, this countywide SCI will replace each of these and it will also supersede the Interim Community Involvement Statement and the Development Management Charter both prepared in 2008.

The Localism Act

1.7   The Localism Act 2011 made some important changes to the planning system in England and Wales including the type of plans being prepared and who will prepare them. These changes, responded to the Government 'Big Society' agenda and included:

- **Local Plan Reform**, removing some of the procedural elements of plan preparation and adoption;
- **Neighbourhood Plans and Development Orders**, which can be developed by local communities. These can be based along similar lines as the Parish and Town Plans;
- **Community Right to Build,** which will enable communities to permit development in their locality without the need to approve a planning application;
- **Pre-application consultation,** introducing a requirement on developers to consult local communities before submitting planning applications for very large developments.

1.8   These changes have had significant implications on several key aspects of community involvement in the planning process. For instance, the Act enables local communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans and to instigate referendums on these in their area, which the Local Authority will administer. The SCI reflects the Localism agenda covered by the Act, in particular ensuring early and meaningful engagement with local communities in the decision making process.

Structure of the SCI

1.9   The SCI is split into several key sections. Firstly, the SCI suggests a set of overarching 'guiding principles' to be applied to community involvement. The document then provides background information on the mechanisms and structures already in place that are supporting effective community involvement within the County.

1.10 Chapters 4 and 5 of the SCI are especially important as they explain how the Council intends to ensure effective community involvement in the preparation of long term planning policies, particularly as part of the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF), and within the determination of individual planning applications.

1.11 The SCI concludes with details of the resources available to support the approaches outlined, and how the document will be monitored, reviewed, and where necessary updated.

2 THE 'GUIDING PRINCIPLES' OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 set out the need for all local planning authorities in England to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The government's expectations for local community engagement in planning are outlined in Planning Policy Statement 12. The SCI is in line with these requirements.

2.2 Anyone with an interest, or who wants to get involved in the planning process, can be considered to be a stakeholder. There are a wide and varied range of stakeholders the Council seeks to involve in the planning process, from individuals; local organisations or interest groups; developers and agents; pressure groups; and national and government bodies. An indicative list of these bodies is included in Appendix 2 of this report.

2.3 Community involvement should be viewed as a means to ensure an effective and meaningful dialogue with communities and organisations on a range of locally relevant issues. To ensure this happens, the council will use resources effectively and efficiently, and in doing so support practical opportunities to join-up community engagement activities across different service areas.

2.4 The SCI embodies a range of other community engagement documents already outlined by Shropshire Council. These include the 'Participation Toolkit' which sets the Council's general standards for involving the public in decision making, and the 'Shropshire Compact' which is an agreement setting out the "rules for engagement" between Shropshire Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). The SCI will also have a particularly important role in helping to shape community involvement exercises in the implementation of Shropshire's Sustainable Community Strategy.

2.5 The following guiding principles reflect the wider need to ensure communities feel empowered to take an active role in the decision making process. They apply equally to all types of planning issues, from policy preparation to the management of development, and in particular seek to ensure that resources are used wisely and in an effective manner.

- Engage in a timely, and constructive manner with key stakeholders, including representative bodies such as Parish and Town Councils as appropriate;

- Use flexible, appropriate, transparent and efficient methods to inform and engage communities in the planning process;

- Recognise the value and diversity of groups, organisations and individuals;

- Ensure consultation is proportionate and relevant to the needs of local communities;

- Avoid the potential for consultation fatigue by co-ordinating community involvement methods with other service areas;

- Provide information on how people's views have been handled, including reporting back to communities on a regular basis through agreed means;

- Avoid using jargon wherever possible in correspondence and publications;

- Encourage the greater use of electronic communication to support a more effective and efficient engagement process;

- Manage the public's expectations, by ensuring people are aware that there may be limits to achieving some local objectives

3   RESPONDING TO SHROPSHIRE'S DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

3.1   The Council understands that Shropshire is a large and diverse place. The County is made up of the strategic centre of Shrewsbury; a number of market towns and key centres of various size; and many small villages and hamlets helping to serve large rural areas. These areas have unique characteristics and aspirations, and it is important that community involvement plays a crucial role in responding effectively to these.

3.2   As part of the Council's response to this challenge, a number of Local Joint Committees (LJCs) have been established across the county. Each LJC acts as a decision maker with regard to the delivery of a range of local services. They also manage a delegated budget, help prioritise resource allocation in their area, and are able to scrutinise decisions made by the council.

3.3   Each LJC is made up of local councillors of Shropshire Council and representatives from local Parish and Town councils, and local people have the opportunity to attend meetings and discuss relevant issues. The LJCs have been successfully used as a means of consulting the public in a range of planning issues, particularly over planning policy consultation documents.

3.4   The delivery of effective community engagement is crucial to Shropshire Council and the continuation of this will mean that new ways of working with communities will need to be developed. Whilst the focus of this document is community involvement in planning issues, it is recognised that effective engagement means listening and responding to local issues across a range of different service areas, and accordingly officers from other areas of the council can play a vital part in this process.

The Shropshire Partnership and the Sustainable Community Strategy

3.5   The Shropshire Partnership acts as the Local Strategic Partnership for the County (excluding the Borough of Telford and Wrekin). The Partnership is a strategic partnership involving councils, regional, public and local agencies, the voluntary and community sector, business, young people and equality and diversity communities. Partners work together to meet local needs and improve the quality of life in Shropshire.

3.6   A key function of the Shropshire Partnership is to prepare and implement the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for the area. The SCS helps to guide policy and financial decisions about service

provision, and is therefore closely connected to decisions on planning matters, particularly with the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF). Shropshire Council and the Shropshire Partnership jointly adopted a new version of the SCS in February 2010. The preparation of the SCS was subject to public consultation during 2009, including several joint consultation exercises with the preparation of the Council's Core Strategy.

3.7   It is particularly important for community involvement that the Planning service utilises and builds upon the close links established with the Shropshire Partnership. In doing so, a number of organisations and sectors can become more aware of the planning service and the important role it has in the implementation of the prioritise set out in the SCS.

3.8   Whilst providing information on the mechanisms that will be used in engaging local communities, the SCI should also remain flexible in order to respond effectively to new methods of locality working and to encourage innovative approaches and projects into the future. This is particularly crucial as the planning service responds to the need to implement both the Local Development Framework and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Underrepresented and 'hard to reach' groups

3.9   It will be especially important to engage 'hard to reach' groups who for a number of reasons are usually underrepresented through traditional, more formal consultations methods. These groups include young people, elderly people, people with disabilities, gypsies and travellers, black and minority ethnic, migrant populations, the business community, young working families, those who work long hours and those living in certain places, such as remote rural areas.

3.10   Shropshire has already made efforts to breakdown some of the barriers to engaging 'hard to reach' groups on planning issues, particularly through community working and specific projects such as the Rural Toolkit[2] in 2010. It is now important that this work is built upon as Shropshire Council continues to prepare the Local Development Framework and processes planning applications.

3.11   In seeking to engage with these groups some methods will be more useful than others. Of particular importance will be enhancing links with the Shropshire Partnership, especially with the numerous forums and committees it currently coordinates. The level of involvement of

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[2] The Rural Toolkit is a process currently being used by Shropshire Council to gather evidence on the needs and aspirations of local communities, through meetings with a representative group of the community. This process began in February 2010 in partnership with Parish Councils, and it is expected that up to 30 areas in the county will become involved over the next year.

'hard to reach' groups on consultation exercises will be monitored in order to identify continuing best practice.

Planning Aid England

3.12 Planning Aid England is part of the Royal Town Planning Institute and provides answers to questions about planning, simple explanations of how the planning system works signposts on where to go next. People can contact Planning Aid England for advice by calling 0330 1239224.

3.13 The service has been used as a partner to Shropshire Council over the past few years especially to support community consultations. Where future opportunities and resources allow, their further involvement in Shropshire will be sought.

4   COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLANNING POLICY PROCESS

4.1   The process of preparing local planning policies has often been accused of being over complicated and disconnected with local communities. In recent years concerted efforts to tackle this perception have been made at all levels of plan making in order to make the process more streamlined and efficient. The key role of the SCI is therefore to spell out exactly how the public can get involved in the plan making process, and to make this involvement easy, accessible and transparent.

4.2   Shropshire Council has already made considerable efforts to engage communities in plan preparation through both the preparation of an Interim Community Involvement Statement in September 2008, and in the preparation of the Shropshire Local Development Framework to date. Indeed, recent experiences in seeking to engage the public in the plan making process has allowed the Council to reflect upon best practice and to review the way in which it effectively communicates and involves individuals, organisations and other stakeholders.

The Local Development Framework

4.3   The major role of planning policy is the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF is effectively a folder of documents which together prioritise and focus development appropriately and which are used to assess planning applications against. The key documents that make up the LDF are:

- **Development Plan Documents (DPD)** – These documents include policies that seek to prioritise and guide development for the area. DPDs form part of the 'Development Plan' for the area, which means that where relevant, their policies must be taken into account of in the determination of planning applications. All DPDs are subject to independent examination before they can be formally adopted. Examples of DPDs include the Core Strategy, Site Allocations documents and Area Action Plans.

- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) –** These are documents used to expand upon policies within Development Plan Documents. They can therefore take a themed approach, e.g. affordable housing delivery, or can focus on a particular geographic area. As SPDs do not introduce new policy they are not part of the 'Development Plan' and are not subject to independent examination. They are however subject to community involvement in their preparation.

- **Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) –** The AMR is produced every December and monitors the implementation and effectiveness of planning policies in the area over the previous year.

- **The Local Development Scheme (LDS) –** The LDS sets out which documents the Council intends to develop and the timeframe for their preparation, including when periods of formal public consultation will take place.

Community Involvement in Development Plan Documents

4.4   Local Planning Authorities have some flexibility over the format and number of DPDs they prepare. In Shropshire's case the following DPDs are being prepared as part of the Shropshire Local Development Framework:

- **Core Strategy DPD** – This DPD sets the long-term vision and key objectives for the authority in the form of a spatial strategy. Amongst other things the Core Strategy should: include strategic policies on a full range of planning issues; identify strategic sites where necessary and provide an implementation framework

- **Site Allocations and Management of Development DPD** – This DPD sets out how the strategic principles of the Core Strategy will be implemented in practice, through both the allocation of sites for development and in the preparation of further specific policies to help manage development.

Table 4.1: DPD Stages and Community Involvement

DPD Stage	Community involvement and consultation
Pre-Production	This stage involves the authority gathering evidence and establishing relevant planning issues for the area. The authority will seek input from relevant interested organisations and individuals.
Pre-Submission	This is a key stage of plan development and therefore wide stakeholder input is important. The council will prepare and consult on an 'Issues and Alternative Options' document early on in this process, and will continue to engage with key stakeholders and the public throughout the whole pre-submission stage. In continuing to seek views throughout the pre-submission stage, the council may decide that a further informal consultation on a 'Preferred Options' document is required within this stage.
Pre – Submission Representation	This stage involves the opportunity for the public to express representations of 'soundness' on a draft Final Plan version of the DPD. The will last at least 6 weeks, however the council will seek to inform people in advance of the start of the consultation period.
Submission	Following any revisions made the council will formally

	submit the DPD along with all representations made to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

4.5 Table 4.1 indicates that the plan making process has several statutory stages that local authorities must follow, known as 'regulations'. However, within these 'regulations' there is considerable flexibility as to how exactly local authorities involve the public, and particularly about how consultation is carried out.

4.6 This flexibility recognises that there can never be a 'one size fits all' approach to community involvement, and that in seeking to implement the guiding principles outlined in section 2, councils should always seek to be proportionate and cost effective in the way they engage. It also recognises that whilst specific consultation periods on draft documents can be particularly beneficial in encouraging community views and responses, there is also a need to facilitate ongoing dialogues with communities and organisations through a more informal 'continuous engagement' throughout the preparation of a planning document.

The Shropshire Local Development Framework

4.7 Shropshire Council has already made good progress on preparing the Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy is at a relatively advanced stage and is about to be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination (Regulation 30 stage). The Site Allocations and Management of Development DPD is currently within its pre-submission phase.

4.8 Both these documents have been subject to extensive community involvement already, through a variety of means. This process has allowed us to review what worked well, as well as areas that could be improved, across a number of areas, including:

i. How we communicate with the communities, individuals and organisations from an early stage;

ii. The methods and formats we use to engage these key groups;

iii. How we respond to people's concerns and provide feedback on ongoing work

4.9 Broadly speaking, our experience has told us that whilst an equal voice should of course be given to all sections of society, the involvement of some key groups have been identified as central in the continued development of Shropshire's LDF, including:

- **Parish and Town Councils –** these play a particularly important part in enabling an effective 'first point of contact' with local communities. There is particular value in using these local councils

as a means to galvanise and express local issues and concerns and, on a practical note, to promote consultation events in their locality;

- **Elected Councillors –** There are 74 elected councillors in Shropshire Council who play a vital role in representing local concerns and aspirations across a variety of issues, including planning;

- **Local Joint Committees -** These can play an important role in awareness raising and in facilitating debate and consensus about local issues. Whilst it is recognised that the frequency of meetings will not always correspond with LDF consultations, where more frequent or localised community engagement is needed, local members will be supported to host informal neighborhood or community forums within their divisions

Local Consultee Database

4.10 Shropshire Council's planning policy team maintain a list of contact information for a range of people with an interest in the planning process through a Consultee Database. This list is made up of many sections of society including individuals, Parish and Town Councils, groups, developers, agents, government bodies, utility companies and organisations. Anyone can be added to the Database simply by making a request to the Councils Planning Policy Section using the contact details at the front of this document.

4.11 Planning regulations define different types of consultee into three categories: Specific Consultation Bodies; General Consultation Bodies; and, Other Consultation Bodies. Whilst there is some flexibility in which of these bodies councils should contact directly when preparing plans, the Specific Consultation Bodies must always be consulted. Appendix 2 provides an indicative list of these types of consultee.

4.12 Shropshire Council will always have regard to the geographic scale and nature of the specific consultation exercise when assessing which groups should be contacted. In many cases, especially when plans have an impact across the whole County, such as the Core Strategy, the council will directly consult everyone on the LDF Consultee Database.

How and when will communities become involved in Planning Policy preparation?

4.13 Tables 4.2 and 4.3 describe how Shropshire Council will seek to inform and engage communities and other organisations in the plan making process. They cover all aspects of involvement, from informing communities about consultations and meetings; the types of engagement events we will hold and when these would happen; how

the Council will respond to issues raised; and the type of feedback we will provide.

4.14 We do not start with a blank sheet when it comes to preparing this SCI. Since 2008 as Shropshire Council has been working on the new Local Development Framework, the Council has engaged in several important consultation exercises covering the whole County, from the preparation of the Core Strategy through to the early stages of the Site Allocations and Management of Development DPD. These experiences have allowed us to gauge the methods that work well, as well as the areas where more work is needed. Alongside this, the Council needs to ensure that methods of communication and involvement are always efficient, provide value for money and work in the best interests of Shropshire's communities.

Table 4.2: Methods of Informing Communities

Type of method	Description
Parish & Town Councils	Parish and Town Councils play a vital role in providing a voice for local communities to raise issues, and in providing a particularly important link between local areas and Shropshire Council. In providing this role Parish and Town Councils hold regular meetings on local development issues and also prepare their own local Parish and Town Plans and Village Design Statements A key element of Shropshire Council's engagement strategy will be to utilise this local resource, working constructively and in partnership with Parish and Town Councils. Likewise, it is envisaged that Parish and Town Councils will play a central role in informing local communities about current consultations and in expressing the views of local residents effectively. It is not envisaged that council officers will have a direct input into Parish meetings on a regular basis, but where appropriate and where resources allow it may be advantageous for planning officers to attend relevant meetings to discuss current consultations or emerging issues. In supporting efficiency savings, Shropshire Council will normally use the Association of Local Councils (ALC) as the principal means of contacting Parish Clerks with direct mail.
Elected members	Shropshire Council has 74 elected Councillors. Their duel role is to directly represent the concerns and aspirations of local communities in their locality at Shropshire Council, whilst also agreeing, scrutinising and debating the services Shropshire Council provides. Councillors therefore have a key role in both agreeing the scope and form of Planning Policy documents and consultations exercises and in

	providing a vital link between the Council and communities acting as local 'ambassadors'.
Shropshire Council Website	Improvements to the way the Council utilises electronic communication is becoming increasingly important. The Shropshire Council website has been proven to be a cost effective and efficient way to distribute information on planning policy, and in receiving comments from both the public and organisations. Central to this is the Council's website, particularly the 'Planning' pages, and the continued use of direct e-mail, which since 2009 the Council has continued to develop. Shropshire Council Planning Website www.shropshire.gov.uk/planning.nsf Shropshire Council Planning Policy e-mail planning.policy@shropshire.gov.uk The website will include information on current planning policy consultations, the times and venues of consultation events, and the opportunity to download and view documents and publications. The Council's Planning Policy Team will ensure that information on the website is up-to-date and easily useable.
Social Media and Interactive Consultation	The advancement of social media formats such as Facebook and Twitter has opened up new avenues of communication for individuals, and is also becoming an increasingly accepted way for organisations to liaise with customers and clients, and for public sector bodies to communicate with the public. Shropshire Council is currently looking at ways to use social media formats across a range of service areas in order to improve delivery. It is anticipated that increasingly these methods will play an important role in the need to enhance electronic communication within the planning policy service. For instance this could be used to alert local communities to a consultation meeting in their area, or for directing people to the Council website when a consultation is happening.

Direct mail	Direct mail is a traditional form of communication, and has proved popular in many parts of Shropshire, particularly in more rural areas without broadband connection. In planning policy consultations since 2008, the Council has consistently used direct mail to inform the individuals and organisations on the LDF consultee database about consultations. However, it is increasingly being recognised that the cost of doing this is relatively high, and as Shropshire Council continues to look at ways to improve efficiency across all service areas, it is clear a balance will need to be struck between the continuation of this method and the promotion and development of electronic means of communication.
Local Media and Council Publications	Various forms of media have already been used to promote planning policy matters, especially in times of formal public consultation. This has involved close working between officers in the Council's Policy and Communications teams, and between officers, elected members and Parish and Town Councils. Press releases by the Council's communications team have normally formed the basis for informing local newspapers and radio about consultation documents, policy issues and community events. These are always issued before consultations and during periods of consultation as well to promote specific events and meetings. The use of this 'free press' approach has proven both an effective and efficient way to express information easily to a large number of people. However, it is recognised that some forms of local media do not always pick up press releases, and use them in their publications. An alternative to solely using press releases is paid advertisements, which while ensuring articles are covered, does come at a price to the council and the taxpayer. This method has traditionally been resisted because of concerns over cost and effectiveness. Given the ongoing need to provide effective and efficient services to the public it is proposed to continue to use the 'free press' approach. In addition the Council also produces regular newsletters and e-mail bulletins that will be used to provide information on current and upcoming events and consultations. Many Parish and Town Councils also prepare their own magazines and newsletters informing people of locally important issues. The Council will ensure that press releases are also sent to these publications.
Regular LDF E-Mail Updates	It is envisaged that as the Local Development Framework progresses a series of short regular updates will be used to inform the public on news and progress on emerging planning documents. Whilst these regular updates are envisaged to be sent out principally by e-mail to the individuals and organisations on the LDF consultee database, hard copies will be made available on request and will be distributed to customer first points and libraries around the county, and placed on

	the Council website.

Table 4.3: Methods of Engaging Communities

Continuous Engagement	The Council are committed to ensuring continuous engagement throughout the preparation of planning policy documents. This approach emphasises the 'open door' policy approach to community involvement and recognises that the preparation of policy documents is a fluid process.
Consultation Documents on Development Plan Documents	It is recognised that specific periods of consultation based around a draft document remain a vital way for people to engage constructively.
	Development Plan Documents form part of the Development Plan and set planning polices and allocate sites for development. They are therefore subject to extensive periods of preparation during which the Council must meet certain standards known as 'Regulations' (See Glossary). However, it is expected that the Council should exceed these standards, and in doing so the following types of consultation documents could be used during their preparation:
	Topic papers: Where appropriate, before the formal start of the plan making process the Council will prepare short topic paper discussion documents based on either a geographic area or a theme. The Council will seek to engage specific consultees especially, but the documents will be made available to all.
	Issues and options: This document will mark the formal beginning of the plan preparation process. It will highlight the key issues relevant to the document, and set out a number of alternative options the Council could take to tackle the issues. This is a key document and will be consulted on widely.
	Preferred Options: Whilst this stage remains flexible and will depend on the scope of the DPD, it will often be appropriate to consult the public on emerging preferred options resulting from the responses to the Issues and Options stage.
	Final Plan Publication: This is a much more formal stage where the Council presents the DPD in the form it intends to submit it to the government for Inspection. Rather than seeking consultation views, the Council will ask the public for formal representations on the 'soundness' of the Final Plan. Guidance on providing representations of 'soundness' will accompany the document.
	At each stage it is the intention to send a limited number of documents to Parish and Town Councils. All documents will be available for inspection at Council offices, libraries, Customer First Points and will be available to view and download on the Council website. Whilst

	continuing to meet the regulatory requirement set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, the Council will increasingly resist sending out paper copies of documents, unless a specific need is identified; instead focussing on enhanced electronic communication. In meeting regulatory requirements, all relevant documents will be available for inspection at Council offices, libraries, Customer First Points and will be available to view and download on the Council website. In recognising the complexity and length of some of these documents, an Executive Summary will also be produced. Wherever appropriate, specific office contact details will be included on correspondence.
Consultation Documents on Supplementary Planning Documents	Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are documents used to expand upon policies within Development Plan Documents, but do not in themselves set new planning policy. There are Regulatory requirements that the Council must meet in the preparation of SPDs. The Council will always prepare a draft version of the SPD and consult on its contents for no less than 6 weeks. In the continued delivering of an efficient approach to consultation it is not intended to send paper copies of draft SPDs to consultees, unless a specific need is identified. However, in meeting regulatory requirements, all relevant documents will be available for inspection at Council offices, libraries, Customer First Points and will be available to view and download on the Council website.
Community meetings	Community meetings have proved a particularly useful method of directly involving stakeholders in planning issues for both distributing information and in gathering responses. Indeed, community meetings have formed a vital part in the continued consultation into the Shropshire Local Development Framework. Parish and Town Councils and local Councillors will be contacted well in advance of arranged community meetings, and help will be provided to Parish clerks in advertising these events locally. The great benefit of community events is the flexibility they present in terms of format, and that they allow direct contact with a large number of local residents. The meetings can be in the form of a presentation to an audience, or can be 'drop-in' sessions where the public can speak directly to planning officers. The type and stage of document will be a key factor in deciding what type of format is most suitable. Community meetings can be unpredictable in terms of public turn-out and can be very resource intensive because of the size of the county. Clearly a balance will need to be struck between the type and number of events arranged and the resources availability.

Stakeholder Workshops	Depending on the type and stage of the document, it will also be important to effectively engage local interest groups and relevant regional and national organisations directly. A good way to do this is through stakeholder workshops based around a specific topic area. Past experience has shown that this format can work well in attracting comments during the early part of the plan preparation process, and can attract a good turn-out of organisations. Depending on the topics under discussion the workshop events could take a number of forms, from informal presentations by officers, to more interactive means such as 'planning for real' exercises.
Forums	Existing forums can be an effective method of involving particular stakeholder groups as normally they have an established membership and formal meeting structures. They also allow the planning service to engage with people representing a wide variety of issues and different sections of society, from developers and agents, the business sector, environmental groups, social groups and younger people.
One to one meetings	Whilst it is envisaged that other means of community involvement will be sufficient to engage communities the Council will use one to one meetings, where these are requested and resources are available. It is likely this method will be most useful as part of ongoing involvement in the pre-submission period with key stakeholder groups, although meetings with members of the public should not be ruled out.
Local Strategic Partnership for Shropshire	In developing the Local Development Framework, it is crucial that a coordinated approach is taken to community involvement between the Planning Policy service and the Shropshire Partnership. This approach has already led to particularly successful joint events being held between the two services, as the Shropshire Partnership prepared the revision to the Sustainable Community Strategy that was adopted in 2010. The Partnership uses a number of forums and consultation initiatives that specifically seek to include a wide and diverse range of interested groups, including those considered 'hard to reach'. The key forums are: **Standing Conference** – This meets three times a year and represents an opportunity for a range of partners to have their say on important issues. During the preparation of the Shropshire Core Strategy, Standing Conferences have already been used successfully to engage members of the Partnership in the process. **Equalities Forum** – This brings together all of Shropshire's equality and diversity organisations; **The Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly** – This Assembly was formally launched this February and aims to strengthen the voice and influence of Shropshire's many voluntary and community sector

	organisations
Citizen's Panel	The Citizen's Panel is a survey based method principally used by the Shropshire Partnership to find out what the key priorities for the community are. The Panel is made up of a representative section of the county's population who are asked to respond to a set of questions concerning quality of life issues in Shropshire. It will be important for work on emerging unitary planning documents to reflect the outcomes of the Citizen's Panel. This will be particularly useful in the early stages of plan development in setting out key planning issues for the county.
Shropshire Youth Parliament	Shropshire established its Youth Parliament in 1999 as a means to give 11 – 18 year olds a voice on issues that affect them. The Youth Parliament have coordinated several themed events allowing young people from all around the county to debate issues important to them. Depending on the themes of any future event it may be important to seek that local planning issues are debated. The Shropshire Speaking Out (SO) group was established in 2003 in order to give young people a voice. The group is made up from 15-20 individuals, 4 Members of the Youth parliament and a county councillor and meets once a month at Radbrook College in Shrewsbury. It will be important for development on planning documents to incorporate relevant views from this forum, and where appropriate a planning officer could attend specified meetings.
Exhibitions, road shows	Depending on the type of document, a combination of exhibitions and road shows may be used to advertise its preparation. These types of events have normally been used to advertise site specific development proposals, but could also be used to promote larger development strategies such as the Core Strategy. They will be used principally as part of the earlier stages of plan preparation, but can also be set up in the ongoing pre-submission participation period.

How people's views will be taken into account

4.15   Whilst it is crucial to consult and involve a wide range of people in a plan's preparation it is equally important to show how the public's views have been incorporated into the plan making process. As well as meeting national requirements, the council will use additional ways to report on the findings of community involvement and how this has influenced plan development. These will include:

- A 'Pre-submission Consultation Statement' at the DPD submission stage outlining what consultation and involvement methods were used;

- An interim Consultation Statement at the Issues and Alternative Options stage describing how the council identified issues;

- Regular LDF updates throughout the pre-submission stages;

- Where workshops or other community events are used, produce and publish 'event summaries' on the website;

- Use the council's electronic consultation system to group similar consultation responses together.

- Wherever possible a response will be provided to all mail and e-mail enquiries into planning policy issues within 10 working days. However, due to heavy resource requirements, it may not always be possible to acknowledge receipt of consultation responses.

5. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

5.1 As the Local Planning Authority, Shropshire Council is responsible for processing, taking decisions and enforcing planning applications throughout the administrative area of Shropshire. Shropshire Council's Development Management (DM) team delivers this service.

5.2 Planning applications are applications for permission to carry out various types of development from small extensions to changes of use and large-scale new building. Shropshire Council also administers applications for minerals and waste management development.

5.3 As with the preparation of planning policy, publicity and consultation on planning applications is central to the process and minimum requirements are set down in law[3]. Public participation provides opportunities to improve proposed development and to alleviate concerns and issues people may have. This section of the SCI explains how these requirements are being developed locally, along with information on the standards of service and performance that the public can expect in relation to:

   i.   The Structure of Shropshire's Development Management service and how a planning application is processed;

   ii.   Consultations on planning applications, including the Council's approach to notification;

   iii.   The Council's approach to pre-application discussions; and

   iv.   The Council's approach to community involvement in planning obligations

Structure of Shropshire's Development Management Team

5.4 The Service is organised into 3 area teams covering the North, Central and South areas of the County. These teams are located within 5 area offices at the following locations:

Table 5.1: Development Management Area Offices

North Area Team	Central Area Team	South Area Team
Oswestry – Castle Gate **Wem** – Edinburgh House	**Shrewsbury** – Shirehall, Abbey Foregate	**Bridgnorth** – Westgate **Ludlow** – Stone House

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[3] Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (as amended)

5.5   Each of these area teams provides a Duty Officer every day between normal office hours at the above offices that will be available to speak to members of the public about planning issues. Additionally planning officers dealing with specific applications (known as the case officer) are available to meet members of the public at their respective council offices by appointment.

Validating a Planning Application

5.6   The formal planning application process begins when a planning application is validated. This process ensures that the correct documentation is included with the application in order to make the application 'valid'. Invalid applications cannot be processed and will be returned to the applicant.

5.7   All planning applications are currently validated by the Central Validation Team at the Shirehall in Shrewsbury before being distributed to the appropriate local office where a case officer is assigned. The necessary documentation that should accompany an application will depend on the type of proposal; information on submitting an application can be found on the Shropshire Council planning webpages or by speaking to one of the Area Teams.

What types of Planning Applications are there?

5.8   There are several kinds of planning application depending on the scale and nature of the proposal. These are covered in detail in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. Broadly these can be broken down into the following categories:

  a) **householder applications** which relate to alterations and additions to dwellings such as porches, conservatories and other extensions

  b) **minor applications** that relate to residential development of less than 10 dwellings and other developments less than 1000 square meters.

  c) **major applications** which are defined as relating to residential developments of 10 or more dwellings (or on sites of more than 0.5ha) and other developments with a floor space of 1000square metres or greater (or on a site of 1ha or more)

  d) **Minerals and Waste applications** refer to applications for waste management facilities and mineral working.

  e) **Change of Use applications** refers to proposals to alter the use of an existing building. Sometimes, depending on the change involved, proposals may not need planning permission.

Other types of application processes relate to:

•   **Listed Building Consent** that is required for demolition of or alterations/additions to a listed building.

- **Conservation Area Consent** that is required for demolition of buildings in a conservation area and to ensure the character and appearance of the area is preserved or enhanced.
- **Advertisement Consent** that is required for displaying signs and notices.

- **Applications for Certificates of Lawful Use or Development** establishes whether a development or use is lawful without requiring planning permission.

- **Telecommunications Prior Notification** establishes whether telecommunications developments, such as masts, are acceptable.

- **Section 37, Electricity Act notifications** where the Council registers and is consulted on overhead line proposals.
- **Agricultural Buildings Prior Notification** is usually required by the Planning Authority before the development of agricultural buildings under permitted development rights.

5.9   It is always advisable for an applicant to speak to the relevant Development Management office before submitting an application.

Consultation on Planning Applications

5.10   There are minimum standards the Council will adopt in terms of consultation on planning applications. These standards are consistent across all three of Shropshire's area teams.

5.11   Anyone is allowed to comment on a planning application, regardless of the location of the proposal. Comments can be made in support as well as objection. In taking into account the nature and location of the proposal, the Development Management service will specifically contact a number of statutory bodies, and as appropriate to the nature and size of the application, the will notify a range of non-statutory bodies such as local interest groups, and other bodies identified in Appendix 2.

Town and Parish Councils

5.12   Town and Parish Councils are particularly important consultees in the Development Management process. After an application is validated Town and Parish Council clerks will always receive immediate e-mail notification and comments will be invited. Those Town and Parish Councils without access to e-mail will be notified of planning applications by letter. Paper copies of planning applications will be provided on request to Town and Parish Councils, with the cost of doing so being met by the respective Town or Parish Council. The expected improvements to Shropshire Council's electronic Public Access system in early 2011 will enhance the ability of consultees, including Town and Parish Councils, to view and comment on planning applications electronically.

How to view planning applications

5.13 The main way people can view details of current and historic planning applications is through the Shropshire Council website via 'Public Access'. The Public Access system allows the public to search for applications in their area through a variety of ways, and offers the opportunity to view and download documentation associated with individual applications.

5.14 Additionally, paper copies of current plans and applications will be available within the main reception area of the relevant Council offices: (Shrewsbury, Wem, Oswestry, Bridgnorth and Ludlow)

Who is notified of planning applications?

5.15 The Council will ensure that the type and scale of community involvement on planning applications is appropriate to the type of development proposed. Whilst the majority of applications received relate to small-scale developments it is nonetheless recognised that consultation is important, particularly for local residents. To support this the Council has set out how it intends to notify people of current planning applications through a variety of means.

- ### Site Notices

5.16 Site Notices will be displayed on behalf of the Council for all planning applications except householder development proposals. In most cases the applicant or agent will be responsible for displaying the site notice in a prominent location visible from public vantage points. It is the responsibility of the applicant or agent to ensure that the site notice is erected and maintained for 21 days. All sites are visited by planning officers who will ensure that site notices have been erected correctly.

5.17 For major applications, which cover a large area more than one site notice will be displayed in prominent locations.

- ### Press Notices

5.18 Notification of the following types of application will be published in all versions of local County wide newspaper the Shropshire Star:

  o Departures from the adopted development plan
  o All "major" applications
  o Development within a conservation area
  o Works to a listed building
  o Development affecting a public right of way

- ### Neighbour Notification

5.19   We will send individual letters to occupiers of all properties with a common boundary with the site directly for all development proposals excluding householder development. The letters will inform neighbours what is proposed in the application, when and where they may see the submitted plan and the closing date by which we must receive any comments.

5.20   Planning officers will check on their site visit that appropriate consultation has been carried out and if not arrange for additional consultation to be sent. Postal cards will be used by planning officers to advise any additional neighbouring properties during their site visit.

5.21   For householder developments the Council will solely undertake neighbour notifications in accordance with the following arrangements:

5.22   In the case of rear extensions, notification will be sent to:
    • Immediate neighbouring properties either side of the application site
    • Any properties to the rear of the site that share a common boundary

5.23   In the case of front and side extensions, notification will be sent to:
    • Immediate neighbouring properties either side of the application site
    • Properties on the opposite side of the road that face the site
    • Any properties that share a common boundary

How can people comment on planning applications?

Representations on Planning Applications must be made within 21 days of the date of consultation letter or site notice. Representations received after 21 days will be accepted at the discretion of the case officer.

5.24   There are three principle ways in which people can make comments on planning applications, these are:
    • Shropshire Council's online 'Public Access' IT system;
    • E-mail
    • Letter

5.25   'Public Access' has proved to be an efficient and effective way for people to comment on planning applications throughout Shropshire, with respondents receives immediate notification that their comments have been submitted. The 'Public Access' system can be accessed via the Development Management pages of the Shropshire Council website. It is anticipated that improvements to the 'Public Access' system making it easier for people to make comments electronically

5.26   E-mail has also proved to be an effective way to make comments. Depending on where the proposed development is, people can make comments via e-mail to the following addresses:

- Shrewsbury – planningdmc@shropshire.gov.uk
- Ludlow – planningdmne@shropshire.gov.uk
- Bridgnorth – planningdmnw@shropshire.gvo.uk
- Wem – planningdmne@shropshire.gov.uk
- Oswestry – planningdmnw@shropshuire.gov.uk

5.27 Whilst the Council encourages use of 'Public Access' as the preferred form of communication, it is recognised that some people cannot or will not choose to use this format. In these cases the Council encourages people to write in to the case officer at the relevant area office with their comments via the address in Table 5.1 above. However, due to the volume of comments being received the Council cannot acknowledge comments made in writing or by e-mail.

5.28 When using e-mail or letter the public are encouraged to quote the relevant reference number, the name of the respondent (or agent) and address.

Decisions on Planning Applications

What issues are considered?

5.29 Comments on planning applications must be related to a relevant planning issue in order to be considered by the council in reaching a decision. These issues are known as 'material considerations' and include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- **Plan policies** contained in existing 'saved' local plans, or adopted Development Plan Documents;
- **Supplementary guidance** contained in Supplementary Planning Documents or interim statements;
- **Local strategies**, such as relevant Parish and Town plans or Village Design Statements
- **Visual appearance** (including building materials and design issues);
- **Environmental impacts**;
- **Conservation issues**;
- **Impacts on safety**;
- **Privacy issues**;
- **Infrastructure provision and other community benefit.**

5.30 Issues such as the impact of a proposal on the value of property or land are not 'material considerations', and therefore will not be considered when assessing planning applications. Clarifications and questions on what can issues can be considered 'material considerations' should be directed to the relevant Development Management area team.

5.31   The Shropshire Council Constitution contains further information on the process of how the Council will decide planning applications. This includes details of the Council's committee structure; the types of planning applications that will be decided by planning officers through a system called 'delegated powers'; and those applications which will normally be decided by a planning committee. The Constitution also sets out important information about the how the public are able to voice their opinions of planning applications at a committee. The SCI will reflect any revisions to the Constitution.

Enforcement

5.32   In complying with planning legislation, the Council expects that all development is carried out in accordance with their planning approval. The Council's Planning Enforcement Team investigates potential breaches of planning consent, and a full range of enforcement powers can be used to stop unlawful development.

5.33   In most cases, breaches of planning rules are brought to the Council's attention by members of the public, which the Council encourages. All complaints received by the Council will be acknowledged and individually recorded, with complainants advised of the action taken. In all cases the complainants confidentially will be agreed.

Standards on Pre-application Discussions

5.34   Increasingly, as a result of legislation that came into place in 2004, prospective applicants and developers have become more involved in carrying out their own consultation with local people and other stakeholders, such as Parish Councils and other statutory consultees such as the Environment Agency. This is particularly beneficial at a pre-application stage particularly when their application is likely to have a significant impact on the local area or be sensitive or controversial.

5.35   This approach has the benefit of allowing the provision of better information to the public before the formal planning process has begun , allowing more community and professional input into the proposal, such as the design of a scheme, and possibly reducing objections at the time of application.

5.36   To support the effective use of pre-application discussions, Shropshire Council had developed a co-ordinated 'Development Team Approach', which relates to major applications and applications of local interest. The aim of this approach is to provide advice on a range of issues including design, policy and technical matters. In doing so this hopefully provides more certainty to the applicant, the council and to the public.

5.37 Appendix 1 contains full details of the Council's approach to pre-application discussions.

Consultation on pre-application discussions

5.38 There are no formal requirements to be met by applicants or the council in consulting on pre-application stages of planning applications. However, it is widely accepted that there should be an element of public engagement prior to the submission of all planning applications , whether this be a conversation with neighbours, or public displays and formal meetings.

5.39 This public engagement can range from informal discussions with neighbours in the case of household or minor applications, through to more formal consultation with Parish Councils and local communities on more significant applications through, for example, community discussions, displays and exhibitions.

Planning Obligations

5.40 Planning Obligations have traditionally been used by Local Planning Authorities to make acceptable development proposals which might otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms. They have been seen as a useful tool to support the sustainable development of areas.

5.41 The use of planning obligations must be fair, open and transparent. There are three key tests the Local Planning Authority must consider in the application of planning obligations. A planning obligation must be:

    I. Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms
    II. Directly related to the development; and
    III. Fairly and reasonably related to the scale and kind to the development

5.42 Planning obligations, where they are used, will be considered as part of the determination of a wider planning application, and therefore will be open to public scrutiny in the same manner as any other aspect of the application. A recent consultation document by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)[4] has highlighted the potential need to refine the manner in which Planning Obligations are used, and Shropshire Council will of course reflect the outcomes of this process.

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[4] New Policy Document for Planning Obligations – Consultation, CLG, March 2010

6   RESOURCES AND MONITORING

Resources

6.1   Community working and effective public engagement are key priorities for Shropshire Council. In relation to the continued preparation of the Local Development Framework it is envisaged officers from the Planning Policy team will undertake the bulk of this work. Consultations on planning applications will be undertaken by the Development Management Team. Officers with particular expertise in aspects of communication and consultation will support this process, particularly the Council's Community Working and Communications Teams.

6.2   There is recognition that effective engagement can be a resource intensive process, and this will be reflected in work programmes and officer time, particularly in times of formal public consultation. It is envisaged that each officer will have a role to play, whether this is preparing publicity material, arranging meetings, giving presentations, attending meetings and talking to stakeholders. Resources will be monitored, and care will be taken not to raise expectations unduly.

6.3   There are clear financial implications in delivering community involvement, including printing consultation documents; sending letters; hiring rooms for consultation events; and providing press notices. In looking at ways to deliver community involvement in an increasingly effective and efficient manner, this SCI places a particular emphasis on enhancing the use of electronic forms of communication. Whilst continuing to meet legislative requirements, the Council will regularly look at ways to deliver community involvement in the planning process in a genuinely more progressive and efficient manner.

Monitoring

6.4   The SCI must remain sufficiently flexible in order to respond to new ways of engaging the public in planning issues, and therefore the document's implementation will be monitored. Whilst the flexible nature of the document means that regular alterations to the SCI may not be necessary, the Council is committed to reviewing its progress and responding, where necessary, to significant issues.

6.5   It is anticipated that revisions to the SCI could be made in response to the following issues:

- Alterations to the types of groups who should be consulted;

- New methods for informing and involving the public, such as changes to technology or responding to emerging best practice;

- Responding to the emerging practices of locality working by the council;

- Responding to low turnouts at consultation events, or low response rates to consultations.

32

APPENDIX 1: PRE-APPLICATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SIGNIFICANT PROPOSALS

Introduction

This guidance note explains Shropshire Councils approach to pre-application discussions on more significant development proposals. This is to be delivered by the use of the Development Team approach (DTA)

The following sections of the guidance relate to:-

- What is the Development Team Approach
- Who needs to be involved with the DTA
- How will the DTA operate
- Information requirements
- Format of any DTA meeting
- Feedback from a DTA meeting

As in the case of all pre-application discussion, their success depends on commitment from both the developer and the Local Planning Authority (LPA). These commitments are clearly set out in the document entitled 'Pre-application Guidance Notes for general and householder proposals', which is available on request or can be viewed on the Council's website at www.shropshire.gov.uk

What is the Development Team Approach?

The DTA will be a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to not only 'major category' enquiries but also to enquiries relating to issues of local interest. This begins at the pre-application stage and is followed through into the planning application process. Such an approach is becoming increasingly more important given the growing complexity of the planning application process and the continuing number of significant development proposals that are likely to be submitted within the district.

DTA seeks to provide the applicant with a clear indication, at the earliest stage of:

- Whether or not the Council as LPA, are likely to support an application, and
- What package of information is necessary to support a proposal submitted as a planning application.

The Council will aim to provide advice in relation to policy, design quality, technical matters and the level and content of information necessary to support any planning application. Therefore, expertise from both within the Development Service itself and from other services and organisations will be sought and co-ordinated by the Council at the earliest stage.

It is anticipated that this approach will provide a level of certainty to the applicant and should result in quality development in line with the policies and proposals of the Council and such an approach to more complex applications should assist in providing timely decisions for applicants.

Who needs to be involved?

Local Planning Authority
A corporate approach will be taken to discussions and will be co-ordinated through a development control case officer. The specific disciplines required will depend upon the nature of the proposal and Development Control, Conservation, Planning Policy and Highways should have an input to all proposals of a significant nature.

Dependent upon the scheme it may also be necessary to involve some or all of the following, at the appropriate point:- Landscape, Legal, Environmental Health, Housing, Leisure, The Environment Agency, Highways and Drainage Engineers, English Heritage, Ecology, Archaeologist, Police Authority.

Developer
It is important that the developer reflect the corporate approach taken by the Council and bring the relevant professional disciplines together as a project team. This will vary depending on the nature of the proposal but a co-ordinated approach by the developer will prevent confusion from all parties having an input to the discussions.

How will it operate?
Each enquiry will require an individual approach, but the need for co-ordination and management of such an approach is important to reach a mutually beneficial result.

It is recommended that all approaches by potential developers are directed through Development Management Team rather than individual approaches to other Departments/Agencies.

This can be done through the DC Manager or the Principal Planner Growth Point thus enabling a decision as to whether or not a DTA is necessary.

It is proposed that the DTA will deal with projects briefly outlined below:-

- 5 dwellings or more in a rural location, 20 or more in the town area
- 5,000 square metres of industrial, commercial or retail floorspace
- Corporate involvement by the Council itself
- Development of strategic significance e.g. wider regeneration benefits, new transport infrastructure
- Schemes on complex or sensitive nature e.g. development affecting SSSI's, large livestock/intensive units.

On receipt of an enquiry/proposal, the developer will be invited to attend a meeting, allowing the opportunity for the proposal to be explained and a way forward being agreed in terms of:-

- Key issues for consideration
- Involvement of other parties not present at first meeting including statutory consultees, local Councillors, Parish/Town Councils
- Provision of further information necessary to progress pre-application discussions.
- Written comments required from Council prior to any formal planning application submission
- Identifying information required to enable an informed opinion to be given.

Prior to the first meeting a case officer will be assigned and he/she will be responsible for the following:-

- Communication with the potential applicant throughout the process
- Ensuring that the project is scheduled for the appropriate co-ordinating meeting
- Co-ordination with other parties to obtain comments, ensure attendance at the relevant meeting
- Monitoring progress on the project and provide update reports
- General project management of the process including informing ward members as appropriate.

Information Requirements
For the DTA process to be successful it needs to be a two way process and the following commitments will be expected:-

Local Planning Authority
- Appointment of a lead officer
- Availability of appropriate disciplines and expertise to advise on the submission
- Written advice at a pre-application stage to confirm the Council's views on any submitted pre-application proposal
- Support and advice in relation to pre-application consultation as may be required to conform with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement
- Provision of or access to, Guidance documents in relation to the validation of planning applications, Section 106 templates, standard clauses, relevant policies and proposals, and any other relevant Supplementary Planning Documents.

Developer
Submission of draft proposals at the earliest stage possible in the process and ideally two weeks in advance of any meetings. As a minimum the first approach should include the following:-
- Location plan with site outlined in red
- Brief description of the development proposed, ideally with an indication of architectural approach/materials

- Plans/description/photographs of existing site/land use
- Plans of the proposed land use/development showing relationship to adjacent development
- Draft supporting documents at the earliest possible stage for comment by the Council

Format of DTA Meeting

The format of the meeting will be for the applicant/agent representative or the case officer to present the outline of the proposed development and for the case officer to provide any initial updates in terms of feedback and contributions from other consultees.

General discussions will then take place including input from other attendees.

Feedback from the DTA Meeting

Content

Unless it is agreed otherwise at the DTA meeting, it is the intention that formal written feedback of the discussions will be given to the applicant/agent. The Council's response will aim to:

- Provide a brief summary of the discussion and highlight key issues raised by the proposal
- Highlight whether the principle of the development is supported by the prevailing planning policy context
- Highlight the key issues to be addressed by the planning application submission to make it likely to be acceptable in planning terms
- Identify the documentation that will be required to support an application
- Provide a list of relevant consultee contact details so that the applicant can further develop their proposals
- Provide an indication of any subsequent pre-application meetings that may be required. This is particularly the case for significant strategic applications and may involve a more in depth project management approach. In these cases, the feedback from the DTA meeting should ideally include an outline project plan to include key stages in the process with target dates and milestones, and how the key issues will be resolved and who is responsible for key tasks. This approach is consistent with the feedback from Communities and Local Government regarding proposals for LPA's and developers to enter into Planning Performance Agreements.

Timescales

Issuing a response from the case officer from:

Strategic Project Meeting – within 15 working days

These timescales reflect the time required to provide coordination for:

- Any additional comments from consultees that were not able to attend the meeting

- Any additional advice from officers who need to reflect on the meeting discussion and undertake any follow up work to which they have given a commitment.

Considerations and Commitments

The key aim for both the Council and the developer in the pre-application process is to ensure that there is some level of consistency in advice so that application submission can be provided with some certainty regarding the outcome of that process. This certainty is provided by attempting to align both applicant and the community aspirations through the pre-application process.

Even though there is a vast difference in the scale and nature of development proposals, and therefore the level of information to be provided and discussions to be undertaken at the pre-application stage, the Council will seek to ensure that clear advice is communicated for all projects through the process. This will inform potential applicants on the most appropriate course of action. However applicants/agents must note that all pre-application advice is given without prejudice, and does not prejudge the determination of a subsequent planning application.

APPENDIX 2: INDICATIVE TYPES OF CONSULTEES

Specific Consultation Bodies:

- West Midlands Regional Assembly;
- The Coal Authority;
- The Environment Agency;
- English Heritage;
- Natural England;
- Shropshire's Parish and Town Councils;
- Neighbouring Parish and Town Councils;
- Adjoining Local Authorities;
- West Mercia Police;
- Advantage West Midlands (the Regional Development Agency);
- Shropshire Primary Care Trust;
- The Highways Agency;
- The Coal Authority;
- Severn Trent Water;

General Consultation Bodies:

- Voluntary and charitable organisations;
- Ethnic or national groups;
- Religious groups;
- Representatives of disabled people;
- Local business representatives;
- Health organisations other than PCT;
- Local action / interest groups;
- Registered social landlords and housing associations;
- Individuals;
- Consultants and agents
- Environmental organisations;
- Resident Associations

Other Consultation Bodies

This level of consultee is predominantly made up of specialist organisations and interest groups. A significant proportion of consultees fall into this category. In planning consultations Local Authorities should take a decision on which of these bodies they are to consult directly taking into account the nature and type of document under preparation.

APPENDIX 3: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)
A report submitted to the Government by Local Planning Authorities or Regional Planning Bodies assessing the progress and effectiveness of the Local Development Framework.

Appropriate Assessment (AA)
The purpose of an appropriate assessment is to assess the impacts a local development document will have on internationally designated nature conservation sites. As of October 2006 all councils must decide if they need to carry out an appropriate assessment on the local development documents they produce. If an assessment needs to be carried out it can either form part of the sustainability appraisal, or can be a document in its own right. The Appropriate can also be termed the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA).

Area Action Plan (AAP)
A type of planning document that focuses upon a specific location or area. They may be used to provide the planning framework for areas of significant change or where conservation is required.

Core Strategy
The primary planning policy document for a Local Authority area. It sets out a clear, long term vision for the future pattern of development, a set of strategic objectives, and introduces policies to deliver the vision.

Development Plan
The development plan for a Local Authority area is made up of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), produced by the Regional Planning Body, and Development Plan Documents (DPDs) produced by the Local Authority. The development plan is used to assess planning applications.

Development Plan Documents (DPDs)
Development Plan Documents (DPDs) are the statutory planning documents prepared by the council. They include policies which planning applications can be assessed against, and they can indicate where potential sites for future development are to be located. The Core Strategy is the primary Development Plan Document.

Development Team Approach
The system to be used by the Development Management service for engaging into discussions with developers at both the pre-application and main application stages. The approach includes both 'major category' enquiries and proposed development leading to issues of local interest.

Evidence Base
The collection of wide ranging information and data used to support the production of policies in DPDs.

Examination
All DPDs are subject to independent examination before a Planning Inspector. The Inspector's role is to consider the DPD as a whole and to determine its soundness. In doing so the Inspector will consider all representations made and any changes which may have been suggested. Following the examination, the Inspector will produce a report which will be binding on the Local Authority.

Implementation Plan
The Implementation Plan for the LDF outlines the key infrastructure requirements needed to support regeneration and the scale of growth identified in the Core Strategy. This is allied to the Local Investment Plan (LIP). Together they comprise the Regeneration Prospectus.

Infrastructure
The collection of services that support development including electricity and other utilities, roads, sewerage, health facilities, open space and other green infrastructure, and the emergency services.

Localism
The Planning system is currently subject to reform through the Localism Bill. The Bill sets out the Government's approach to neighbourhood planning and the intention to develop proposals for local communities to approve certain types of development without the need for a full planning application. The Bill is due to be enacted in to legislation in 2011.

Local Area Agreement (LAA)
The local area agreement (LAA) is a formal three year agreement between central Government and the local area aimed at improving the quality of life for local people. The local area is represented by local authorities and other key partners through the Local Strategic Partnership. The Sustainable Community Strategy provides the framework for the LAA and sets targets for achievement.

Local Development Documents (LDDs)
This is the collective term used to describe the various planning documents produced by the council. Collectively they deliver the planning strategy for the council's area.

Local Development Framework (LDF)
The portfolio of Local Development Documents, which together set a vision for future development and provide a set of policies to guide development. The LDF includes:
- Development Plan Documents
- Supplementary Planning Documents
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Local Development Scheme
- Annual Monitoring Report

Local Development Scheme (LDS)

The LDS describes the planning documents which a Local Authority intends to prepare and the timetable for their preparation. This must be agreed with Government and reviewed every year.

Local Investment Plan (LIP)

The Local Investment Plan forms part of the Single Conversation between the Council, the Homes and Communities Agency and other public sector funding bodies. It identifies how regeneration and supporting infrastructure will be delivered. The LIP is closely allied to the Implementation Plan of the Core Strategy covering a wide range of aspects such as economy, education, skills, health, transport, climate change and the environment.

Local Plan

The 'old style' local planning policy produced by district and borough councils. Changes brought about in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 replaced Local Plans with the LDF. Certain policies within the Local Plans of Shropshire's authorities have been saved under transitional arrangements to the new planning system until they are replaced by the Shropshire Council LDF.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is a partnership involving local councils; regional, public and local agencies; the voluntary and community sector; business; young people; and equality and diversity communities. Partners work together to meet local needs and improve the quality of life. The Shropshire Partnership acts as the LSP for Shropshire.

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

This is the legislation passed by the Government which brought about changes to the planning system in England. It introduced the Local Development Framework as a replacement for the Structure Plan and Local Plan. The Act took effect in September 2004.

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)

Issued by central government these are national policy guidance notes which set out the requirements for planning. They include policies and some practical advice for the implementation of policy. They are in the process of being replaced by Planning Policy Statements which were introduced into the planning system by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Planning Policy Statement (PPS)

These are individual documents stating the Government's national policy framework for specific areas of planning. These were introduced in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and are replacing previous PPGs. They differ from PPGs by being more concise and have no reference to the practical implementation of policy. They are material considerations in planning application decisions.

Proposals map
The base map which shows the sites proposed for development in Development Plan Documents.

Rural Toolkit
The Rural Toolkit is a process currently being used by Shropshire Council to gather evidence on the needs and aspirations of local communities, through meetings with a representative group of the community. This process began in February 2010 in partnership with Parish Councils, and it is expected that up to 30 areas in the county will become involved over the next year

Spatial planning
The Government is seeking to promote greater integration between the land use planning system and the various strategies produced by local authorities and other organisations. The spatial approach towards planning goes beyond the grant or refusal of planning permission and involves a wider range of policies than has normally been included in planning documents.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
Statement of a Council's proposed standards and approach to involving the local community and stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and review of all Local Development Documents and development control decisions.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA)
Used as a tool by Local Authorities to assess flood risk for spatial planning, producing development briefs, setting constraints, informing sustainability appraisals and identifying locations of emergency planning measures and requirements for individual development flood risk assessments.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)
A planning document that gives further information on policies laid out in Development Plan Documents such as the Core Strategy. They can cover a range of site and theme specific issues but should not contain new policies.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
All Local Development Documents need to include a separate document called a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The SA appraises the economic, environmental and social effects of planning policies to ensure they uphold the principles of sustainable development. All Sustainability Appraisals need to include the requirements of a European directive called the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)
A wide ranging strategy aiming to improve the social, environmental and economic well being of a Local Authority area, focussing on the needs, aspirations and priorities of local communities. The Sustainable Community Strategy co-ordinates the actions of public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The Government intends that LDFs will provide spatial expression to those elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy which relate to the use and development of land