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**DARLINGTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK:  
CONSULTATION DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT  
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) -Councillor David Lyonette,  
Regeneration and Planning Portfolio**

**Responsible Director(s) - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To consider and make recommendations in respect of the Council's implementation of the following key elements of the new arrangements for development plans being introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004:
  - (a) a draft for consultation of its first Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which would explain how the Council will seek to involve the community in planning matters generally, particularly in the shaping of Local Development Documents (LDDs) which will progressively replace the existing development plans, and in the consideration of significant planning applications; and
  - (b) the role of Members in bringing about the Local Development Framework (LDF), the 'folder' of LDDs and 'saved' policies from existing development plans which will, with the Regional Spatial strategy, form the new development plan for Darlington.

**Summary**

2. The report:
  - (a) provides an update on the introduction of the provisions of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 relating to development plans, and related Government advice and guidance;
  - (b) refers to the Government's recent advice that planning authorities take time to absorb its latest guidance before finalising and submitting their Local Development Scheme (LDS), a three-year project plan for preparing LDDs;
  - (c) outlines the requirements for, and function of, a SCI;
  - (d) appends a Draft SCI, proposed for consultations with stakeholder and the public, and outlines the main changes proposed from the Council's current consultation arrangements;

- (e) reviews the role of Members in progressing the LDF.
3. It concludes by recommending that consultation on a proposed Draft SCI be undertaken as soon as practicable and that the procedure/protocol for the role of Members in progressing the replacement Local Plan be maintained for the LDF.

## **Information and Analysis**

### *Previous Consideration*

4. At its meeting on 30 March 2004 Cabinet resolved (Min 2004 Mar C226) that:
- (a) the replacement for the Borough Local Plan be progressed as a Local Development Framework;
  - (b) a revised outline project plan and timetable, for the replacement of the Borough Plan, be submitted for consideration to a future meeting of Cabinet;
  - (c) that further reports be submitted to future meetings of Cabinet should there be any further changes in respect of the transition to the new development plan system.

### *Current Position on Legislation and Government Advice and Guidance*

5. The Act received Royal assent in May this year. In respect of LDFs, its content has not been substantially changed from the Bill before Parliament at the time of the previous report to Cabinet. Government Planning Policy Statements, PPS11: Regional Planning and PPS12: Local Development Frameworks, and draft guidance on sustainability appraisal [are expected to be/were] issued in the first week in September, too late to fully inform this report. The relevant Act provisions (Parts 1 and 2) and regulations are expected to come into force in the last week in September, and the Local Development Framework preparation guide issued at about the same time.
6. Replacement of planning policy guidance notes (PPGs) by planning policy statements (PPSs) is proceeding more slowly than originally planned, with only two having so far been issued in final form (PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas and PPS22: Renewable Energy). The Government has recently decided that priority will be given to revision or replacement by PPSs of eight further PPGs, including those referred to in the previous report to Cabinet, by early 2005, with others only to be revised or replaced as and when necessary in the light of their policy and strategic significance. It now proposes interim revision of Circular 1/97 Planning Obligations by early 2005, with a further review later in the same year.
7. There is not, and is unlikely to be, any change to the deadlines for every planning authority to:
- (a) have a LDF in place by March 2007;

(b) submit their first LDS to the Government within six months of the Act coming into force.

8. The Government has been reviewing its previous advice on the form and content of LDS, and recently advised authorities to take time to absorb the then still forthcoming finalised guidance, before finalising and submitting their LDS to their Government Office. This component of the new LDF will therefore now be the subject of a separate future report to Cabinet.

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

9. Under the old arrangements, consultation was undertaken, and summary statements submitted to Inspectors, on a plan by plan basis.

10. The new arrangements also require every planning authority to have a comprehensive and fully documented stakeholder and community engagement strategy, the SCI, additionally involving:

(a) earlier and more effective stakeholder and community engagement;

(b) specific action to involve 'hard to reach' groups that have not previously got involved in planning;

(c) pre-application public involvement for significant planning applications.

The SCI has to be submitted to the Government and its soundness assessed by a Planning Inspector. The Government advises that the SCI itself be subject to consultation, although this is not mandatory.

11. A consultation draft has been prepared in advance of the finalised Government guidance, in order to bring forward delivery as an early component of the LDF. A provisional timetable for progression to adoption, subject to the views of GO-NE and the Planning Inspectorate, is:

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Consultation	2004 fourth quarter
Submission to SoS and receipt of formal representations	2005 first quarter
Independent Examination	2005 second quarter/third quarter
Adoption	2005 fourth quarter

12. A proposed Consultation Draft SCI, together with a Summary and an At-a-Glance Guide, are attached as **Appendices 1, 2, 3** for Members' consideration.

13. The main changes proposed from the Council's current arrangements include:

- (a) establishment of a Planning Forum, to specifically focus on matters relating to the use and development of land during the LDF processes (Table 1 Line 3);
- (b) proposed requirements of potential developers to engage with local people before a significant planning application is submitted (Chapter 3);
- (c) working with Darlington Partnership's Representatives Group to encourage participation in planning matters in local communities (Table 1 Line 4);
- (d) inviting some public speaking on plan-making matters at Scrutiny Committee (Table 1 Line 7);
- (e) enhancement and harmonisation of public involvement service standards in plan making and determining planning applications (Table 2 and Chapter 3);
- (f) annual review, with changes to be made to reflect changing Government requirements, best practice guidance and community aspirations (Chapter 4).

It is *not* proposed that these changes come into affect now, but only after consultation on the SCI has taken place and comments considered.

- 14. The documents attached are to be looked at by an outside organisation to ensure that the final versions meet the Plain English standard.

#### ***The Role of Members in Progressing the Local Development Framework***

- 15. It will be possible under the new arrangements to continue with the previously adopted (Min 2001 Dec C181) procedure/protocol for the role of Members in progressing the Replacement Local Plan through initial consultation to formal deposit, ie:
  - (a) Cabinet considers and approves arrangements for consultation or deposit/submission;
  - (b) Members Workshops at appropriate stages to involve all Members;
  - (c) Environment Scrutiny Committee considers consultation responses and officer responses and recommendations;
  - (d) Cabinet or Council considers Environment Scrutiny Committee's recommendation.
- 16. Detailed timetabling must be undertaken in conjunction with finalisation and approval of the LDS. A workshop for all Members, to consider the new arrangements for development plan preparation, is envisaged for early/mid October.

#### **Outcome of Consultation**

- 17. No consultation was required in the production of this report.

#### **Legal Implications**

18. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

### **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

19. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

### **Council Policy Framework**

20. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

### **Decision Deadline**

21. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter, but Environment Scrutiny will have the opportunity to consider the SCI after consultations have taken place on it and before it is adopted by the Council.

### **Key Decisions**

22. In accordance with the Council's constitution this is classed as a Key Decision as it affects one or more Wards within the Borough.

### **Recommendation**

23. It is recommended that :-
- (a) consultation on the Draft Darlington Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement appended to this report, amended as necessary to reflect final Government advice, be undertaken as soon as practicable after commencement of the relevant provisions of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004;
  - (b) the procedure/protocol for the role of Members in progressing the Replacement Local Plan through initial consultation to formal deposit be maintained in respect of the emerging Local Development Framework; and
  - (c) Officers submit further reports on any further changes in respect of the transition to the new development plan system.

### **Reasons**

24. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) it is necessary to have a full Local Development Framework in place by March 2007;
- (b) consideration of, and decisions on, the matters covered is necessary at this stage to assist in meeting this deadline.

**John Buxton**  
**Director of Development and Environment**

**Background Papers**

- (i) Office of the Deputy Prime Minister consultations October 2003:
  - Draft PPS12: Local Development Frameworks;
  - Draft Town and Country Planning (Local Development) Regulations;
  - Draft Town and Country Planning (Transitional Arrangements) Regulations;
  - Local Development Frameworks: [Draft] Guide to Procedures and Code of Practice;
  - [Draft] Creating Local Development Frameworks.
- (ii) Keith Hill MP - Ministerial Statements 17 June 2004
- (iii) Keith Hill MP - letter to Chief Executive Mole Valley District Council 3 August 2004
- (iv) Otherwise, none other than those referred to in this report.

Graham Farr : Extension 2629  
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**Draft STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## What is this Document and Why Has it Been Prepared ?

This document explains what we (the Council) will do to involve you in shaping our new Local Development Documents<sup>1</sup>. It indicates when and how you can get involved in planning matters, and what to expect from the us when you do so. It also sets out what we will expect potential developers to do to involve you before they submit significant planning applications.

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is required by new legislation, introduced in September 2004, and once finalised, its provisions are binding on us; if we do not carry out the actions indicated in the document in preparing new planning documents, the Government could intervene and require us to withdraw them.

*To find out why we are preparing new planning documents, what plans are being prepared and when, please consult our “Why We Plan” and “The Local Development Scheme 2005-2008”<sup>2</sup> documents. To find out how to have your say on Planning Applications, consult our ‘A Charter for Development Control’ and ‘Have Your Say’, a leaflet specifically about speaking at Committee. All these documents are on our website, [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk) or can be inspected at the Town Hall and local libraries. Alternatively you can request copies from the Department, tel: 01325 (388799); there may be a small charge for this.*

## Using this Document

<sup>1</sup> Formal development plan & supplementary planning documents that will replace our existing adopted Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance.

<sup>2</sup> Not currently available.

Plan Making: If you want to get involved in the preparation of new Local Development Documents, go to Chapter 2.

Planning Applications: If you want to find out about the proposals for pre-application community engagement on significant planning applications, go to Chapter 3.

## Your Comments on This Document

You can comment on this draft document and ask for changes to be made to it, and a form is available to help you do this. **Your comments must be put in writing and sent by post, fax or email, so that we receive them no later than 25th November 2004.** However you choose to reply, please make sure you provide at least the minimum information indicated on the form.

## What Happens Next ?

We will consider all the comments received, and may make changes to this document as a result. We may consult you again if we want further information about your comment, or if we want your views on other suggested changes.

Figure 1 shows the main steps to be taken to finalise this document, and the further opportunities for you to express your views on it. There will be a 6 week period when you can have your say on a revised document, followed by the opportunity for objectors to make their views known at a Public Examination, run by an Independent Inspector. Once the Inspector reports, we will be able to publish the document in its final form, towards the end of 2005.

## Getting Involved: A Cautionary Note

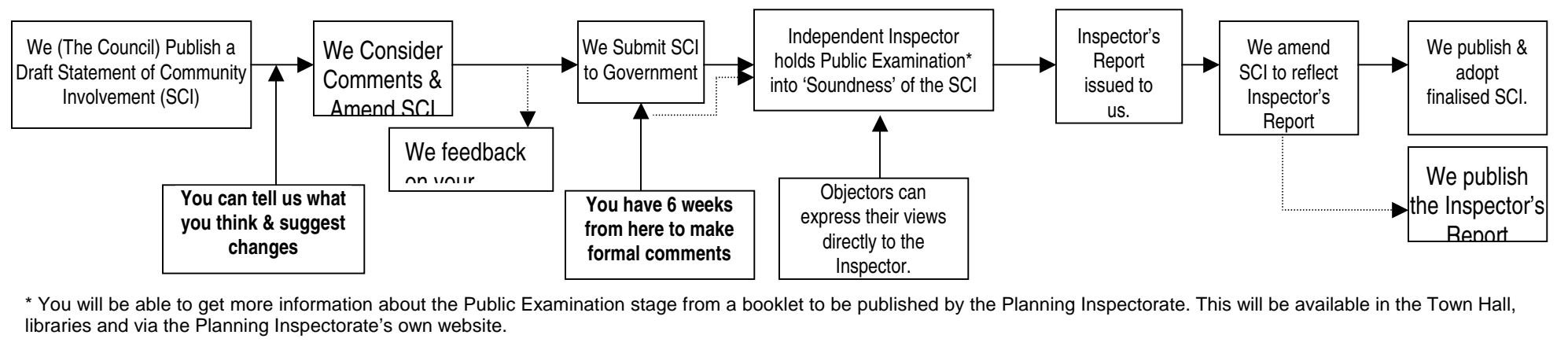
You are most likely to come face to face with the planning system if a development proposal is going to directly affect you. However, because of the range of people and interests that changes to the

local environment can affect, it is rarely possible to find development solutions that satisfy everybody; furthermore, issues such as available resources and statutory requirements also need to be considered. Getting involved does not guarantee that your views will prevail, but we undertake to consider all the material planning issues you raise. Where a report to Councillors is

prepared, it will include a summary of your written comments and the officer's response to them.

Sometimes, you may find that your views are not reflected in the final decision because the policies on which the decision is based were agreed some time ago. This is why it is also important to have your say in the preparation of our planning documents.

**FIGURE 1: Statement of Community Involvement: Main Preparation Stages & Your Opportunities to Get Involved**



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We want to improve the way we involve you in both plan-making and in making decisions on planning applications. We want to encourage more of you to become involved and to make it as easy as possible for you to do so. We also want to make sure that you are only involved when there is still scope to change plans or proposals in response to your comments.

We think that taking account of your views, aspirations and local knowledge as early as possible is the best way to ensure that the

Borough's evolving pattern and form of development has the widest possible local support.

To achieve this, we will apply the following guiding principles when we involve you in planning matters. We will:

### Communicate Clearly

- State why we want to involve you, and whether your comments are being sought on a formal or informal basis;
- Set out documents and reply forms as simply, clearly and concisely as possible, in a form that is easy to understand by all. Where jargon cannot be avoided, this will be clearly explained.

- Publish an 'At a Glance' summary document alongside any Local Development Document that is more than 1500 words long. These will also be available (on request) in large print, on tape or in the language of any recognised minority group in Darlington.

### **Make it Easy for You to Be Involved**

- Make it clear what you need to do (and when) to make your views known, regardless of any physical or language barrier you may perceive.
- Hold any public events as close as possible to where the people most likely to be affected live.
- Try to match how we involve you with the time and financial resources you have available, and your experience and knowledge of the planning system.
- Try to match our public involvement programme to the scale and nature of the planning issues being aired.
- If your group has little or no experience of the planning process, we will work with you, alongside Planning Aid North<sup>3</sup>, to improve your ability to respond, for as long as is necessary to enable you to do so independently, using your own skills and resources.
- Make particular effort to involve groups that traditionally have not voiced their views on planning matters.
- Make reasonable adjustments as necessary to our public involvement programme and events to ensure that people with a disability do not receive a lower standard of service.

### **Make Sure Your Involvement is Effective**

- Involve you at the earliest stage, and all subsequent stages of plan making or making decisions on planning applications, when your comments could make a difference;

- Only ask for your views on matters and at times when there is still a genuine opportunity to alter the content of a planning document or the nature or an aspect of detail of a planning application.
- Make it clear what things are open to change and what are not.
- Give you plenty of time and good notice of the opportunities to get involved, wherever possible.

### **Share Information and Provide Feedback**

- Draft planning and any associated documents will be made readily available to the public and stakeholders and will be available in electronic form from our website.
- Publish all background documents no later than the date that the first development plan document or planning decision that relies on it is made or published. Publication will be via our website and in paper form, available for inspection at the Town Hall and libraries, and available either free or for a small fee.
- Consider all planning-related comments received and provide feedback to you on how your views have been considered. This will generally only apply to comments made within the publicised time period.
- Ensure that the comments of the public and other stakeholders are reported to Councillors no later than the date when they are next to make decisions on the proposed plans or planning documents.
- Make your comments publicly available so that they can be viewed by others with an interest in the same issue or matter<sup>4</sup>.
- Only use any records we have formed from the information you provide for planning purposes.
- Not keep records of the information you have provided any longer than is necessary for the original purpose.

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<sup>3</sup> a service offering free, independent & professional advice on town & country planning issues to people or groups who cannot afford a planning consultant. Phone 0191 222 5776 or 0870 850 9803 or email [ntco@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:ntco@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk) for details.

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<sup>4</sup> This is a statutory requirement on the Council.

**Keep the Process Simple**

- Make use of the existing community involvement frameworks established by us and our partner organisations in the Borough, such as the Darlington Partnership (see Appendix 1 for details), to improve the range and balance of people having their say on planning matters, and to help avoid consultation fatigue.
- Wherever possible, group together consultations on several planning documents/issues to reduce consultation fatigue.

**Learn from Our Mistakes**

- Review the effectiveness of each of our efforts to involve you, and make alterations to the methods used where shortcomings are identified.

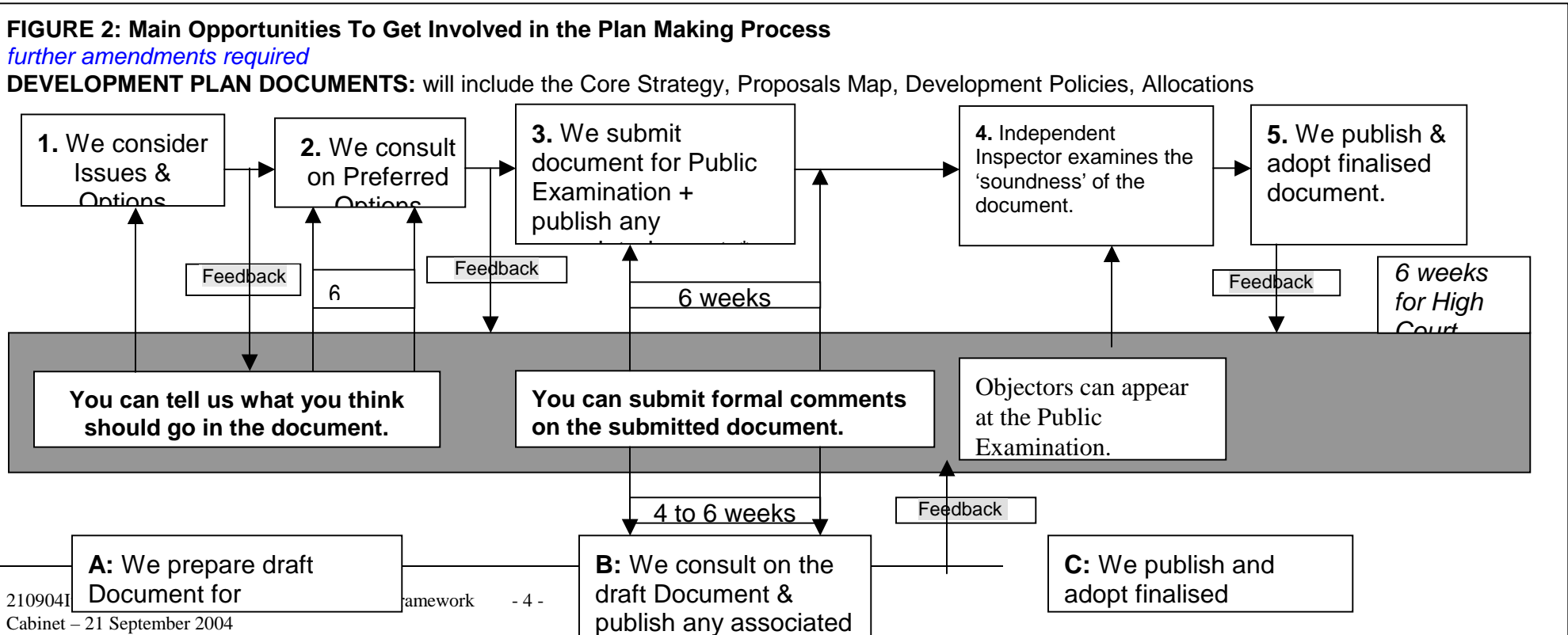
**Applying the Principles**

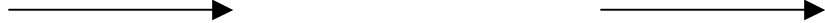
Sections 1 and 2 below outline how these principles will be applied and the standards of service you can expect from us.

Section 3 explains the resources that will be in place to underpin our efforts to involve you.

# Chapter 2 : Local Development Documents

Fig. 2 shows the main opportunities for you to help shape the 2 types of Local Development Documents that the Council will be preparing.

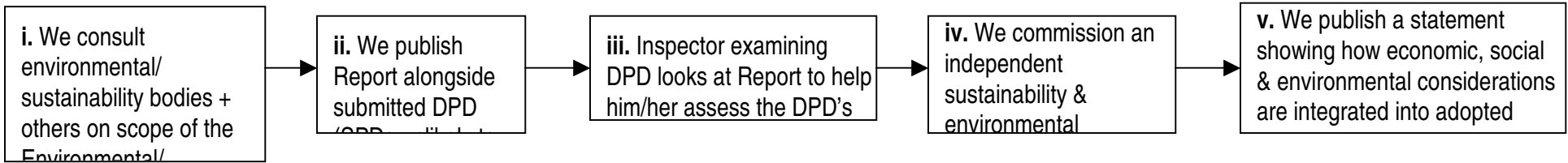




**SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS:** will include Planning Obligations & a Housing Design & Layout Guide

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**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT/SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT**



## **How We Plan To Involve You**

We want to involve you throughout the plan-making process, and will try to do this in several ways. The methods used will vary according to the stage of preparation of each plan, the nature of your interest, and the extent of your previous experience and knowledge of the process. At the heart of our consultations with the local community will be Darlington Partnership. We will make use of its structures to involve a wide cross section of people in our work, with the main link being through its Environment and Economy Sub Group. Appendix 1 sets out the community engagement links with Darlington Partnership in more detail.

Figure 2 shows that there will generally be more opportunities to get involved in the preparation of development plan documents (DPDs) than supplementary planning documents (SPDs), and that the periods for involvement in the former will be longer. We will only actively seek to involve you in the preparation of SPDs if we think you have a clear interest in the area or the issues that the document tackles, or if we are required to consult you.

However, where we need to prepare a SPD particularly quickly, e.g. to help secure funding for developments or to respond to developer interest, the opportunities to get involved may be more limited. In these cases, we will give clear reasons why the need for speed outweighs more extensive community involvement.

Table 1 below indicates what we will do to involve people in plan-making, the reasons for doing it, and who we hope will get involved as a result. These include specific actions to encourage those who traditionally have had little involvement in planning, such as young people, and those who have previously come up against barriers to their involvement, such as people with disabilities and the black and minority ethnic population.

For details of who has been/will be involved in preparing the evidence documents that will inform new policies, please see Appendix 2.

**TABLE 1: Community Engagement Activities**

<b>What We Will Do</b>	<b>Plan-making Stage (Fig. 2)</b>	<b>How We Will Do It</b>	<b>Why We Will Do It</b>
1. Notify you when new draft or revised planning documents are published, indicating where you can view the documents and when you can submit representations.	DPD: Stages 2, 3 & 5. SPD: Stages B & C. EA/SEA: Stages ii & v.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Via local media (including public notice in the Northern Echo and/or D&amp;S Times), Town Crier, direct letter and/or email to statutory consultees* and people/groups on planning policy mailing list, notices in libraries and main Council offices, within a week of the start of any consultation period.</li> <li>• Where a planning document proposes land use change or development on a specific area of land, we will distribute leaflets or letters to the neighbouring residents/businesses most likely to be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So that anyone who want to or needs to know about the use and development of land in Darlington Borough is kept up to date about the plans being prepared and the opportunities to have their say.</li> <li>• To improve awareness of new documents amongst those most directly affected.</li> </ul>

		<p>affected, and post notices in prominent locations in the area. Where possible, we will notify owners of property that is likely to be affected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish a notice on the website at the start of the consultation period, indicating where you can view new or revised planning documents.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.</b> Promptly publish and make available copies of all new or revised planning documents.</p>	<p>DPD: Stages 2, 3 &amp; 5. SPD: Stages B &amp; C. EA/SEA: Stages ii &amp; v.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish all new &amp; revised planning documents on the Council's website in a downloadable form, no later than the day the document is adopted or its revision agreed by the Council.</li> <li>• Make paper copies available either free or for a reasonable charge.</li> <li>• Make paper copies of local development documents and any associated/background documents available to view at Crown Street library, Cockerton library, the mobile library and at the Town Hall, our neighbourhood offices, and the Citizens Advice Bureau during normal office hours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So that anyone who wants to can promptly and readily see for themselves what the Council is planning or proposing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.</b> Debate and ask for your views on planning issues and options.</p>	<p>DPD: Stages 1 &amp; 2. EA/SEA: Stage i.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold open participation events/exhibitions where you can meet the planners face-to-face.</li> <li>• Hold events, such as focus groups, for invited community representatives, organisations and individuals.</li> <li>• Where invited and where possible, attend other organisation's meetings.</li> <li>• Arrange specific events for groups who need particular encouragement to get involved, as required.</li> <li>• Establish a Planning Forum at key stages of the preparation of documents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To find out people's aspirations and views, priorities and preferences</li> <li>• To share and gather local information.</li> <li>• To identify local issues.</li> <li>• To raise awareness of planning issues throughout the Borough.</li> <li>• To provide individuals and groups with an opportunity for face-to-face discussion with a Planning Officer.</li> <li>• To give an opportunity for more detailed discussion of specific local planning issues.</li> <li>• To involve traditionally hard to reach groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.</b> Offer Advice &amp; Assistance to, and</p>	<p>DPD: All Stages SPD: All Stages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange 'orientation' events for representatives of hard to reach groups, as required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help local communities understand how to engage in the process.</li> </ul>

<p>Develop the Knowledge and Skills of, People and Groups with Little Previous Experience of the Planning System. (awaiting SR's agreement of this)</p>	<p>EA/SEA: All Stages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Darlington Partnership's Representatives Group to develop their role as 'champions', encouraging participation in planning matters in their local communities and providing a community view on planning matters.</li> <li>• Promote the services offered by Planning Aid North amongst disadvantaged communities, the black and minority ethnic population, people with disabilities, young people and the elderly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the amount and quality of participation in planning of disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Give You Notice of the Formal Opportunities to Make Representations on or Challenge a Planning Document*, and Invite Your Comments.</b> * also applies to other people's suggested site allocations, where these are made in response to a Planning Document published by the Council.</p>	<p>DPD: Stages 2 to 5. SPD: Stage B EA/SEA: None.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish at least one public notice in at least one local newspaper circulating the area.</li> <li>• Distribute forms for formal responses with all documents dispatched and to all local libraries, main Council offices and the Citizens Advice Bureau.</li> <li>• Publish a notice on the website indicating where you can view the document(s), together with when, how and to whom you should send any formal representations</li> <li>• Where a planning document proposes land use change or development on a specific area of land, we will distribute leaflets or letters to the neighbouring residents/businesses most likely to be affected, and post notices in prominent locations in the area. Where possible, we will notify owners of property that is likely to be affected.</li> <li>• Make forms for formal comments available on the website, with the facility to complete and reply on-line.</li> <li>• Send to any statutory consultees a copy of the document and any associated documents, together with a notice saying where the document can be inspected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To meet the requirements of the Planning Act.</li> <li>• To give you an opportunity to indicate whether you support or object to specific policies and proposals.</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send a notice indicating that a new document has been published, and where &amp; when it can be inspected to all others on the planning policy mailing list.</li> </ul>	
<b>6. Try to Build Consensus and Mediate between Parties with Opposing Views.</b>	DPD: between Stages 2 & 3. SPD: between Stages B & C EA/SEA: between Stages i & ii.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold meetings, as required, with selected individuals and groups to explore particular issues in more depth, and secure agreement on detailed policy wording.</li> <li>• Facilitate the exchange of agreed and disputed information.</li> <li>• Explore issues with members of the Planning Forum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote dialogue between different interests in the local and business community.</li> <li>• To build consensus or find common ground</li> <li>• To clarify and reduce the areas of disagreement.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Use the Environment Scrutiny Committee as the forum where the public may, on occasions, be invited to express their views on a specific planning matter directly to elected members.</b>	DPD: between stages 2 & 3 SPD: between stages B & C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue invitations to attend Committee to members of the public or organisations whose views Members of the Committee particularly wish to hear, together with guidelines about the nature and scope of the speaking opportunity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide an opportunity for Councillors to hear first hand a range of views on the issues raised by new planning documents.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Publish Reports (e.g. feedback, environmental assessment, consultations, Inspector's Report &amp; Annual Monitoring Report).</b>	DPD: between stages 1 & 2, 2& 3, 3&4 and at stages 3& 5. SPD: between stages A & B and at stage C. EA/SEA: Stages ii & v.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify directly by email or post all those who sent in comments directly</li> <li>• Send copies of the report to relevant statutory consultees.</li> <li>• Publish report on website.</li> <li>• Print and distribute paper copies to main Council offices &amp; libraries.</li> <li>• Make printed copies available for a nominal charge.</li> <li>• Advertise publication via local press and Town Crier.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide feedback to those who have an interest</li> <li>• To ensure information is widely available</li> <li>• To comply with regulations.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Give Notice of the Arrangements and Timing of Events</b>	DPD: between Stages 3 & 4. SEA/SA: between	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish at least one public notice in at least one local newspaper circulating the area.</li> <li>• Press release to local media.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So that anyone who has the right to be heard at the Public Examination is made aware of the arrangements</li> </ul>

Associated with the Public Examination of Planning Documents	Stages ii. & iii.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible, place item in Town Crier.</li> <li>• Post notices in Town Hall Reception and local libraries.</li> <li>• Notify directly those who have outstanding objections lodged.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So that anyone else who may be interested is aware of when and where it will take place.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10.</b> Give Notice of the Council's Intention to Adopt a Planning Document and Publish a Community Involvement &amp; Responses Statement setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who has been consulted;</li> <li>• How this was done;</li> <li>• The main issues that arose and</li> <li>• how the revised document addresses them.</li> </ul>	DPD: Stage 5 SPD: Stage C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• publish a make copies of the consultation statement available with the planning document at the Town Hall, Crown Street and Cockerton Libraries during normal opening hours</li> <li>• make copies of the documents and the involvement &amp; responses statement available on the Council's website, together with a notice setting out when and where copies of the documents can be inspected.</li> <li>• Send copies of the Planning documents and any associated documents to the organisations it is required to consult, together with a notice indicating where the documents can be inspected.</li> <li>• Place an advertisement in the Northern Echo and/or Darlington &amp; Stockton Times' public notices sections, giving details of the proposed Planning Document together with details of where and when it (and the associated documents) can be inspected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure that all those with an interest in the Planning Document know about the Council's intentions and their right of appeal to the High Court.</li> </ul>

Note: the specific methods used to involve you may vary according to the nature of the specific planning issues on which a response is being sought.

Please refer to our Local Development Scheme and the Annual Monitoring Report for details on the timetable for each document's preparation.

### Our Service Standards

We are committed to making our dealings with everyone who gets involved in the plan-making process fair, transparent, accessible and timely. Table 2 sets out the standards you can expect in your dealings with us.

**TABLE 2: PREPARATION OF NEW PLANNING DOCUMENTS: THE COUNCIL’S SERVICE STANDARDS**

<b>GENERAL</b>	In all our dealings with you, we will treat you fairly and considerately.
<b>If You.....</b>	<b>We Will.....</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• write to us</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledge it within 3 working days of the date that we receive it.</li> <li>• Reply in full within 10 working days of the date that we receive it.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• telephone us</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• try to answer your query immediately over the phone, provided you call within normal office hours. If your query relates to a specific site, we may ask you to send us a map by post or fax. This is to make sure that the advice we give is actually for the site that interests you.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• email us</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provided you use the email address <a href="mailto:planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk">planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk</a>, you will receive an automatic acknowledgement that your email has been received, and a Planning Officer will follow this up with a full reply by email within 10 working days of the date the email was received. This service cannot be guaranteed if you use the email address of a specific Planning Officer.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fax us</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• see standards for writing to us. These only apply if you use the fax no. 01325 388616. It often helps if you contact us first by phone or email to tell us to expect a fax.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meet us face to face</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• try to answer your query immediately. If this is not possible, we will explain why not, and will let you know when you can expect a follow up response to your query. We will ask you how you wish</li> </ul>

	further contact to be made.
<b>SPECIFIC ACTIONS</b>	
<b>If you.....</b>	<b>We will.....</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• submit formal representations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledge it within 3 working days.</li> <li>• Provide feedback either directly or through a summary report of all representations prepared for Councillors.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask for planning and/or environmental information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If required, explain your rights under the Freedom of Information Act (effective January 2005) and what the Council is required to make available under the new Environmental Information Regulations (the Aarhus Convention).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell you where you can already view the</li> </ul>

document	document <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell you whether there is a charge, and if so what it is</li> <li>• Post it out to you the same day (if it is free of charge) or on receipt of your payment (if there is a cost).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have submitted comments on any Planning Document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish a Community Involvement &amp; Responses Statement alongside the finalised Planning Document, setting out the issues raised by respondents and the Council's response to each issue raised.</li> </ul>

Which Documents Will I Be Invited to Get Involved In and When?

Table 3 shows who we want to actively involve in preparing each new planning document. Refer to Table 1 to find out how we will go about it.

<b>TABLE 3</b>									
<b>Interests to Be Involved</b>	Statement of Community Involvement	Local Development Scheme	Core Strategy (DPD)	Development Policies (DPD)	Annual Monitoring Report	Sustainability Assessment Scoping report	Environmental/ Sustainability Report(s)	<b>Notes</b>	
Government Office for the North East, The Media	✓	✓ *	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	* Govt. Office for North East	
The General Public, MPs, MEP	✓		✓	✓			✓		
Darlington Partnership, Adjoining Local Planning Authorities, Police, Fire & Rescue, Regional Health Authorities, Parish Councils/Meetings, Built Environment, Architecture & Heritage Bodies, Housing (developers, private & social landlords), Environmental & Sustainability Bodies	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Government Agencies & Departments	✓	✓ *	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*Planning Inspectorate only	
Regional & Strategic Organisations	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Utility, Energy & Telecoms Providers	✓		✓	✓		✓ *		*Green Energy, e.g. wind power interests.	
Transport Companies & Bodies	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Local Neighbourhood Groups	✓		✓	✓			✓		
Community Diversity	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		
Open Space, Sport & Recreation	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Rural & Countryside	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Land & Property Interests	✓		✓	✓		✓ *	✓	*planning consultants only.	
Business, Industrial & Commercial Interests	✓		✓	✓					
Education, Learning & Skills	✓		✓	✓ *				* if education/learning provision included.	
Retail & Town Centre	✓		✓	✓			✓		
Health	✓		✓						

Land & Property Owners + Occupiers	✓ *		✓ *	✓ *				*major landowners only.# those directly affected
Minerals & Waste Interests	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Tourism Interests & Visitors to the Borough	✓		✓	✓				
Other Local Community/Voluntary Groups	✓		✓	✓				

Note: Appendix 3 lists all the broad groups that we want to involve in the plan-making. Refer to the website or contact us for an up-to-date list of the organisations currently appearing in each group.

#### Your Involvement in Assessing the Impact of the Proposed Plan Provisions

Alongside the preparation of any new development plan document and at each stage of preparation, we must undertake an assessment of the environmental impact of its provisions and an assessment of how sustainable its provisions would be. In practice, these two assessments will be combined, as will assessments for development plan documents that are being prepared simultaneously.

We will consult environmental bodies and selected local organisations on the scope of the Environmental/Sustainability Report, and will continue to involve them as necessary during the assessment process. Everyone will have the opportunity to comment on the Reports, which will be prepared at each key stage of the plan preparation (see Figure 2).

## Chapter 3: Planning Applications

### General

This section outlines our new (proposed) requirements on potential developers to engage with local people **before** a 'significant' planning application is submitted. These requirements will be **in addition** to our established consultation and publicity practices that take place once a valid planning application has been received. These can be viewed on our website or in person at the Town Hall. These practices often exceed the minimum legal requirements, e.g. by giving publicity via the website, and no changes to these practices are proposed.

### Why Propose Pre-Application Public Engagement?

We believe that early public involvement on significant planning applications will benefit everyone, and are keen to improve the amount, quality and effectiveness of community involvement.

These proposed arrangements, to be organised, managed and funded by the potential developer, will give the public an opportunity to have their say whilst the details of a scheme are being put together. Developers stand to benefit from swifter processing of any subsequent planning application (if local material planning objections have been addressed in designing the submitted scheme) and the early exchange of information about the site and its surroundings is likely to produce a scheme that better fits into its local environment.

### What is Regarded as a Significant Planning Application ?

The following kinds of development, whether proposed by the public or private sector, will be regarded as 'significant':

- a. major developments. These are defined as housing developments comprising 10 or more dwellings or consideration of the principle of residential development on a site of at least 0.5ha, and any other development with a floor area of 1000sqm or a site area of 1 ha or more.<sup>5</sup> Major developments will include changes of use where these include the above thresholds.
- b. development requiring the submission of an Environmental Assessment
- c. development that does not accord with the policies in our Development Plan
- d. development proposing the closure or alteration of a public right of way

It is potential applicants' responsibility to establish if their planning application will be regarded as 'significant'. They should contact a Planning Officer to do so.

### What Is Expected From Developers ?

Where 'significant' development is proposed, applicants will be expected to undertake pre-application community engagement that is tailored to reflect the nature and scale of the proposed development. They are strongly encouraged to discuss this with a Planning Officer as part of their pre-application discussions with the Council.

As a guide, applicants will be expected to at least:

#### Publicity

- a. notify local residents and businesses by letter of the proposed development, and state when and where they can find out more.

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<sup>5</sup> Definitions as per ODPM PS2 return

- b. place an advert in a local newspaper (usually The Northern Echo), detailing the proposed development and stating when and where people can find out more. Additional information should be circulated as a press release.
  - c. The closing date for comments should be set no earlier than 10 days after the close of a consultation event.
- Publicity material should concentrate on conveying facts about the proposed scheme and avoid bias.

#### Public Engagement Event

- d. Provide details of at least one event organised by the applicant in the letters/adverts/press releases, and the event should be no earlier than four days after they have been circulated or published.
- e. The event must be staffed and include display material detailing the applicant's proposals for the site, the scope for public comment, how comments will be dealt with and an explanation of what will happen next. Presentation material and any questionnaires for the public should avoid bias.
- f. The event must take place at a time or times that enables as wide a cross section of the public as possible to attend; it may therefore need to cover weekends and evenings.
- g. The event must be held on the application site/building, or at venue as close as possible to the application site. Venues should be fully accessible but if not, reasonable adjustments must be made to permit access for people with disabilities.
- h. The closing date for receipt of comments should be set no earlier than 10 days following an event.

#### Contacting Community Representatives

- j. Contact should be made with all local community groups and interest groups, together with any other relevant groups who may have a specific interest in a particular proposal. Appendix 2 provides a starting point for identifying them, but applicants should discuss this with a Planning Officer, who will be able to provide all necessary contact details.

- k. All Borough Councillors whose ward includes the application site and any Parish Council whose parish includes or adjoins the site must also be informed. Note that a code of conduct prevents Borough Councillors from expressing any views on proposals at this stage, as they must remain impartial until any application is formally presented to them at a Planning Committee.

#### Outline Applications

Developers should provide as much detail as possible about their intentions to allow the public to make meaningful comments. This will be easier where the proposals include, say, illustrative layouts. In the case of proposals to establish the principle of a development, which may result in an outline application, developers should be aware that they will need to explain this approach in any presentation and attempt to achieve responses that address the broad principle of development, rather than details, at this stage.

A further pre-application publicity event may be necessary to address a detailed submission, following an outline approval, and developers should check with Planning Officers, before making such submissions.

#### Variations to Significant Schemes

Similarly, a further pre-application publicity event may be necessary to address a formal variation or modification to a proposal that already has planning permission, where this relates to a significant application. Again, developers should check with Planning Officers before making such further submissions.

#### Submitting a Significant Planning Application

The subsequent planning application should be accompanied by a statement setting out the community engagement undertaken, including:

- The scale of the notification, including a list of properties and businesses contacted.



- List of interest/pressure groups or other organisation contacted.
- Location and duration of any event held.
- Summary of all the comments received and issues raised.
- A clear indication of which comments have resulted in amendments to the scheme and what those changes are, and which comments have not, and why not.
- Highlight any criticism by groups or individuals about the public engagement process.

The applicant should also retain all consultation responses.

### **Failure to Comply with these Guidelines**

The Council cannot refuse to accept a planning application just because the applicant hasn't done enough pre-application community engagement. However, where this does occur, it could delay consideration of the application, as unresolved material planning objections may need to be referred back to an applicant.

If a developer fails to carry out any community engagement or carries out engagement that falls short of the guidelines set out above, then Councillors will be made aware of this in the officer's report on the submitted proposals. If material public objections are also received, the Council will have to consider whether refusal of planning permission is justified, in order to help it meet the Government's demanding targets for speed in decision-making.

Where an applicant is genuinely ignorant of the Council's pre-application consultation requirements, we will advise them of the requirements as soon as we can and give them an opportunity to suspend the submission of the application to allow the necessary community engagement to take place. If an applicant refuses to comply with the adopted guidelines, then they will be made aware of the consequences set out above in this section.

## Chapter 4:

### MAKING IT HAPPEN & REVIEWING WHAT WE DO

#### **What Resources Do We Have to Support This ?**

The programme of events to involve you in plan-making will be managed by the Planning Policy Team, on the instructions of the Planning Services Manager. The Team comprises four professional town planners, technical and administration support.

The actions set out in this document will be carried out by the Team alongside its other activities. Occasionally, specialist expertise may be sought to complement existing staff. In particular, the design and arrangement of specific events may be carried out by others on our behalf. Wherever this is the case, at least one officer from the Council's Planning Policy Team will be present, and one or more Councillors may attend.

We have received money from the Government specifically to help improve the Planning Service. Some of this will be used to improve the amount and quality of feedback we receive from you on new plans and development proposals. This will be in addition to using the existing communication, customer feedback and participation arrangements supported by us and our partners, e.g. Town Crier, the annual Community Survey and the Darlington Partnership.

Resources will be concentrated on engaging people in the preparation of Development Plan Documents, such as the Core Strategy, with more limited resources set aside to support community engagement in preparing Supplementary Planning Documents.

#### **What Role will Elected Councillors Have ?**

Councillors have 2 principal roles within the Council – as decision makers and as community representatives. They may carry out the former role as members of the Cabinet and/or at Full Council and/or as Planning Committee members. The latter role is performed as Ward Councillors and members of Scrutiny Committees and consultation fora.

- When we involve you in plan making or making decisions on planning applications, your contact will generally be with Planning Officers, though if local events are arranged, one or more Councillors will often be present. Councillors will find out what you think through written reports from officers, presented to them at regular public meetings, such as Planning Committee, Cabinet or Council Meeting. They will need to take account of these views in their decision making.

If you want, you can make your views known to your Ward Councillor directly, by phone, email, by letter, or by attending a ward surgery. Councillors generally pass on comments made in these ways to the Planning Officers. Note, however, that unless your comments are also made in writing to the Planning Officer within the specified timescale, you will not have an automatic right to be heard at any subsequent Committee, meeting of the Council, Public Inquiry or Examination.

If you have submitted written comments on a plan, you may be invited to speak directly to the Environment Scrutiny Committee or if you have commented on a planning application, to the Planning Committee (see our 'Have Your Say' leaflet).

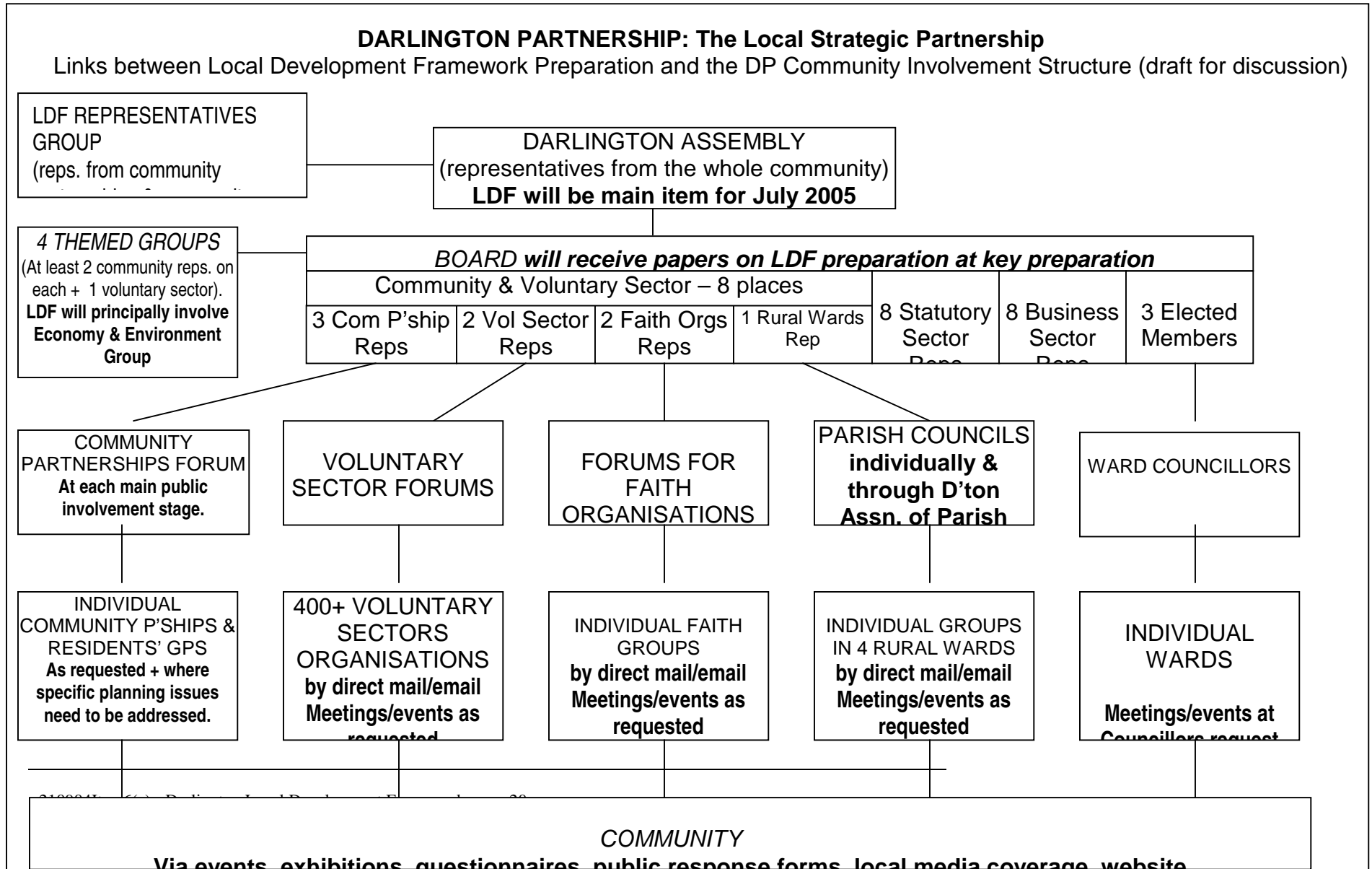
#### **Reviewing What We Do**

We will assess the effectiveness of each initiative to involve you and publish a statement about our findings alongside the feedback we give you on how your comments have been considered. Where our findings indicate that a change in our methods is required, we

will publicise these changes widely in the local press, and propose them as updates to this document. Changes may also arise to reflect emerging best practice and government requirements, or to respond to changing local expectations. These will be highlighted through the Annual Monitoring Report.

# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1: INVOLVING DARLINGTON PARTNERSHIP IN PLAN PREPARATION (awaiting SR's confirmation of accuracy of this)



**APPENDIX 2:****PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN THE PREPARATION OF EVIDENCE FOR THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

<b>Document Title</b>	<b>People/Groups Involved</b>	<b>Nature of Involvement</b>	<b>Date</b>
Community Strategy	Led by Darlington Partnership. Public involvement Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive programme of consultation during development of Community Strategy (focus groups, participatory appraisal activities, exhibitions &amp; surveys)</li> <li>• Formal consultation on draft strategy (mail out and briefings)</li> <li>• Ongoing commitment to community involvement through 'Darlington Assembly'</li> </ul>	<p>May-July 2002</p> <p>Nov-Jan 2003</p> <p>Every Jan &amp; June</p>
Local Plan Review: Key Issues Report	Wide range of stakeholder and community groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mail out at start of formal consultation period.</li> <li>• Widely publicised invitation to comment.</li> </ul>	July - Sept 2002.
Corporate Consultation	<p>Annual Community Survey</p> <p>Citizens' Panel</p> <p>BVPI surveys</p> <p>'Listening' days</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1000 face to face interviews with random sample of residents.</li> <li>• Database of 1000 residents maintained – volunteers prepared to complete postal questionnaires. Surveyed typically twice a year.</li> <li>• Main survey every 3 years, i.e. 2000, 2003, 2006</li> <li>• Ad-hoc over course of year (used by community services)</li> </ul>	<p>Every Aug.</p> <p>May/June &amp; Nov/Dec.</p> <p>Sept-Nov Ad-hoc.</p>
Darlington Urban Capacity Study	House Builders Federation, Darlington Civic Trust, Sandersons, BrowneSmithBaker, Teesside Chamber of Commerce (AlphaPlus Architects), DBC Housing, Three Rivers Housing Association, Tees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As partners in shaping the survey work and agreeing the final report.</li> </ul>	2003/04

	Valley Living.		
Darlington's Housing Strategy 2002.	Residents Panel/Residents' Associations Targeted consultation of older people, young people and black & minority ethnic groups, stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminars &amp; workshops</li> <li>• Face to face interviews with young people on housing estates</li> <li>• 2000 questionnaires to tenants and leaseholders.</li> <li>• Estate based 'Come for a Chat' sessions with tenants, leaseholders and owner-occupiers.</li> </ul>	2001/2002.
Housing Needs Survey 2003	4000 local residents.	Structured Postal survey.	Spring 2003.
Adding Quality: A Development Strategy for Darlington Town Centre February 2001	?????	?????	2001.
Darlington Retail Study 2004	Town Centre Forum, random households in shopping catchment area, visitors to the town centre, retail & town centre businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured telephone survey</li> <li>• Street interviews/questionnaires</li> </ul>	2003/04
Darlington Greenspaces Study	1000 randomly selected local residents (Nov. 2003). Further consultations planned.	Structured telephone survey.	Autumn 2003.
Darlington Pedestrian Heart	Local residents, town centre users (including retailers, market traders & businesses), key stakeholders (including bus & taxi operators, DAD, Darlington Civic Trust etc.) Town Centre Board, Joint Transport & Town Centre Forums, DP Economy & Environment Sub Group.	Public Consultation Exhibition, response leaflets, media publicity, mini-consultations / presentations, letters from the public	Summer 2004
Haughton Road	Residents adjoining the site,	Exhibition of draft plans at Eastbourne Sports	Autumn

Masterplan	businesses currently on and adjoining the site, allotment holders currently on the site,	Complex.	2004
Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy	Communities in deprived wards, Community Partnerships, Darlington Partnership.	Consultation and Action Planning Events, responses to doorstep leaflets & other publicity.	2003 & 2004
Economic Regeneration Strategy	Local organisations and businesses	Meetings, focus groups etc.	Summer 2004
'On the Move'	Local transport operators and Darlington Primary Care Trust at bid stage. Local community during implementation stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In developing a bid that they could support.</li> <li>Many ways, e.g. direct resident surveys, through the Transport Forum.</li> </ul>	Spring 2004  Autumn 2004 onwards.
Local Transport Plan	??		
Social Inclusion Strategy (draft) 2004	??		
Integrated Older Persons Strategy 2002.	??		
Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy	??		
Cultural Strategy	???	???	<i>Steve Thompson</i>

@ 25th August 2004

Note: the Local Plan Review was not one of the areas of work identified to which the Council's Corporate Consultation Strategy (Jan. 2002) should apply. The Council's Resources Scrutiny Committee has also recently looked at internal and external consultation methods used by the Authority, and it was recommended to Cabinet on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2004 that, amongst other things, 'the membership of the Council's consultation forums be revisited to try and recruit new members'.

**APPENDIX 3****COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ORGANISATIONS THAT WE WILL SEEK TO INVOLVE IN PLAN PREPARATION**

<b>Consultee Group</b>
Government Office for the North East
The Media
Darlington Partnership
The General Public
Members of Parliament, Member of the European Parliament
Adjoining Local Planning Authorities
Police, Fire & Rescue, Regional Health Authority, Parish Councils/Meetings
Government Agencies & Departments, e.g. Environment Agency, Countryside Agency, English Nature, Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England.
Regional & Strategic Organisations, e.g. North East Assembly, One North East, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, Tees Valley Living, Tees Valley Regeneration.
Utility, Energy & Telecommunications Providers, e.g. BT, Ntl, Npower, Northumbrian Water
Environmental Organisations & Bodies
Other Sustainability Organisations
Transport Companies & Bodies, e.g. Strategic Rail Authority
Local Neighbourhood Groups (e.g. residents associations,

Note: some organisations/groups may be included in more than one group to reflect the range of their interests.

community partnerships)
Community Diversity (e.g. faith groups, black & minority ethnic groups, disability groups, older people, young people)
Built Environment, Architecture & Heritage (e.g. local architects, planning consultants, Darlington Civic Trust)
Open Space, Sport & Recreation (e.g. Sport England)
Rural and Countryside
Land and Property Interests (e.g. Developers, Agents, Planning Consultants)
Housing (developers, private & social landlords)
Business, Industrial & Commercial Interests
Education, Learning & Skills
Retail and Town Centre
Health, e.g. Northern & Regional Health Authority
Land & Property Owners & Occupiers
Minerals & Waste Interests
Tourism Interests & Visitors to the Borough
Other Local Community/Voluntary Groups



## **Draft STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT POPULAR VERSION**

The draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how we intend to involve you in preparing new planning documents and what we want to do to encourage pre-application public engagement where developments that are likely to result in a significant planning application are proposed.

Copies of the full SCI are available via the planning policy pages of our website [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk) or can be inspected at the Town Hall, Crown Street, Cockerton or the mobile library. If you would like your own copy, please contact the Planning Policy team on 01325 388644; there may be a small charge for this.

### **Help Us to Shape the Future for Darlington...**

What do you think Darlington will look like in 2020 ? How would you like it to look ?  
We are currently putting together our ideas on the first question, but need your help with the second. Where will the open spaces be ? Where should new development take place ?

By having your say on the new planning documents that will be prepared over the next 2 years or so, you can help to make sure that future development meets both current needs and those of our children, whilst respecting the environment around us. It will be your chance to tell us what you think should happen - if anything - on particular pieces of land, what changes you would like to your local environment - and what you would not; you can help frame the policies that in future, will be used to consider the merit of proposals that could affect you !

Several new planning documents concerned with the use and development of land will be prepared to eventually replace the existing Borough Local Plan. They will contain the Council's policies on the use and development of land, and will support the actions arising from the Community Strategy. At this stage, the exact number and type of documents that we will prepare is uncertain; we hope to be able to tell you more about this later in the year. Once finalised, these documents will underpin the decisions that the Council makes on all new planning applications.

Now, though, we would like to know how and when you want to be involved in preparing new planning documents. *We want to know what things you think we can do to make it as easy as possible.*

Under the new Planning Act, there are some things we must do to involve you in plan-making, but we are suggesting a number of other things to help as many of you as possible to give us the best response you can. Some of the main ones are set out in the following table:

Some Things We Must Do To Involve You	Some Additional Things We Propose To Do
Ask for your views on our preferred option(s) for the approach to take in drawing up the main new planning documents.	Publish publicity about new planning documents and the opportunities to comment in the Town Crier.
Give you 6 weeks to make formal comments on any planning document at the stage that we submit it to the Government for independent examination.	For planning document that propose land use change or development on a specific area of land, we will distribute leaflets or letters to the neighbouring residents & businesses most likely to be affected, and post notices in prominent locations in the area.
Give you notice of the arrangements and timing of events associated with the Public Examination of the main planning documents.	Establish a Planning Forum that meets at key stages in the preparation of documents, where local people can explore current planning issues with others who have an interest in planning matters in the Borough, including Councillors and Planning Officer(s).
Publish reports setting out our response to the comments received during consultation periods, and the methods we used to encourage the community to get involved.	Use the Environmental Scrutiny Committee as the forum where the public and organisations can be invited to make their views known directly to Elected Members.
Give you notice of the Council's intention to adopt a planning document.	Offer advice and assistance to people & groups with little or no previous experience of the planning system, including promoting the free services of Planning Aid North.

> *Is there anything else you would like us to do ?*

> *Is there anything listed in the right-hand column that you think we should not do ?*

Different programmes of community engagement are proposed at each stage of plan-making. Figure 1 illustrates the opportunities to comment on new planning documents as they progress through the system. (Fig 1 = Figure 2 in the main SCI). It also highlights that the preparation processes differ between the main planning documents (known as Development Plan Documents) and the documents that provide more detail on specific issues (Supplementary Planning Documents) and that generally, there will be more extensive opportunities to have your say on the preparation of DPDs than SPDs.

### **What You Can Expect from Us**

The SCI also sets out a number of principles and service standards to give you an idea of what kind of service to expect from us when we involve you. These include:

#### **Principles**

- Communicate Clearly, e.g. set out documents as simply, clearly and concisely as possible, in a form that is easy to understand by all. Where jargon cannot be avoided, this will be clearly explained.

- Make It Easy and Simple For You To Be Involved, e.g. hold any public events close to where the people most likely to be affected live, and wherever possible, we will group together consultations on several planning documents/issues..
- Make Sure Your Involvement Is Effective, e.g. make sure it is clear to you what things are open to change and what are not.
- Share Information & Provide Feedback, e.g. we will feedback to you on all relevant comments made during the specified consultation period(s), usually in the form of a summary report about all the comments received.
- Learn From Our Mistakes. We will review the effectiveness of each of our efforts to involve you, and make alterations to the methods used where shortcomings are identified.

### Service Standards

These relate to how promptly we undertake to respond to you, depending on the form of communication you choose to use, and what you have asked for or submitted.

*> Are there any particular things relating to your interaction with us that you would like to see a service standard or guiding principle set down for ?*

## ..... and Tell Us What You Think of Our Plans to Encourage Developers to Give You a Say in Planning Significant Developments

With the Government's encouragement, we have developed draft guidelines aimed at those planning significant new development in the Borough. These guidelines indicate that developers should undertake a range of activities to build awareness and get local views about their proposed scheme *before* a planning application is submitted. The kinds of things we would like potential developers to do include...

- Letting local residents know by letter about the proposals and where they can find out more;
- Placing a notice in a local paper alerting people to the proposed development and saying where they can find out more.
- Holding at least one public event to explain the proposals close as close as possible to where the development is proposed.
- Seeking the views of local community and interest groups.

*> Are there any other ways you think that developers should canvass local opinion ?*

The reason we are suggesting this measure is so that developers can find out about local concerns and issues at an early stage, giving them more time to make adjustments to their scheme prior to the Council making a decision on any planning application. We think that this approach will result in new developments that better fit into their local environment, and will reduce the time taken to deal with this type of planning application. However, developers may well see it as an early additional cost, and we must be careful to strike a balance between getting the best result for local people and the need to minimise the perceived barriers to potential investors in the town.

The kinds of development that this new measure would apply to are as follows:

- housing developments of 10 or more dwellings, or on a site of 0.5ha (about the size of a football pitch) or more.
- any development with a floor area of 1000 sqm (about the size of ----) or more, or a site area of 1ha (about the size of St.Cuthbert's Churchyard) or more.
- Development that requires the submission of an Environmental Statement. This generally occurs because of the particular nature of the proposed development and/or the environmental character of the intended location.
- Development that conflicts with the policies of the development plan (mainly the Borough of Darlington Local Plan).
- Development that involves the closure/alteration of a public right of way.
- Playing fields/open space.

In the last year, approximately – developments would have met one or more of these criteria.

If developers fail to comply with the guidelines, the Council may have to consider refusing the planning application, if there unresolved material planning objections.

*> Do you think these proposals will 'catch' the right number and type of developments ?*

## What are the Next Steps for this Statement of Community Involvement ?

Once the period for comments has closed, we will make amendments to the main document, and republish it. This is likely to be in early Spring 2005. A Government appointed Inspector will examine the document to check its soundness, and following his/her report, the Council will be able to adopt a finalised SCI.

## Why is the Statement of Community Involvement Important ?

The SCI is important because once adopted, the commitments to public and stakeholder engagement set out within it are binding on us. If we do not comply with its provisions in preparing a new plan, we risk a challenge to the legality of the plan.

## Making Comments

If you would like to respond to the questions posed in this leaflet, or make comments on the full document, you can either use the reply form (available at the locations listed above), or write in. Please remember to include your name and address, as we will not consider anonymous comments.

Please reply to the Planning Services Manager, so that your comments arrive **no later than 25<sup>th</sup> November**, at the following address:

Post : Development & Environment Dept.  
Town Hall,  
Darlington  
Co. Durham  
DL1 5QT

Email : [planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk)  
Fax: 01325 388616

If you wish to receive this leaflet in another format, e.g. large text, Braille, spoken tape or another language, please contact the Planning Policy Team by telephone on 01325 388644 or by email via [planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk)

# DARLINGTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Draft STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

## *At a Glance*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The SCI outlines what we (the Council) intend to do to involve local people and others in the preparation of new local development documents for Darlington Borough. These will eventually replace the Darlington Local Plan, the document that currently sets out our policies for the use and development of land and guides us in making decisions on planning applications. The SCI also sets out and asks for your views on proposed new arrangements to require developers to carry out consultations with local people and interests *before* submitting planning applications for significant development.

### **MAKING COMMENTS**

Comments on the draft SCI can be made by post, fax or email and a form is available for this purpose. Completed forms, obtainable on the website or through the contact details below, should be returned to the Planning Services Manager to arrive no later than 25<sup>th</sup> November, at the following address:

Post : Development & Environment Dept.  
Town Hall,  
Darlington  
Co. Durham  
DL1 5QT

Email : [planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk)

Fax: 01325 388616

### **WHAT'S IN THE DOCUMENT**

Chapter 1 of the SCI sets out the principles that will guide our efforts to make sure that you are involved simply and effectively. It also outlines our commitment to sharing information with you and providing feedback on comments you make.

Chapter 2 explains when and how you can get involved in the preparation of each new local development document, and highlights the procedures that will be followed for different types of document. For example, it shows that there will be more opportunities to comment on

the main documents (known as Development Plan Documents) than on Supplementary Planning Documents (that give details on matters mentioned in the main documents) and highlights where a formal rather than an informal response from you will be required.

The chapter also outlines all the methods we will use to involve you and invites you to tell us if we have got this right, if there are any specific requirements you have in order to be involved, and/or if there are any aspects of town planning that you would particularly like to be involved in.

Chapter 3 explains why we are proposing to introduce pre-application consultations for developers intending to submit significant planning applications, and sets out the types of development that we will consider 'significant'. When developers submit 'significant' planning applications, they will need to be able to show that they have carried out certain public engagement and publicity activities. If they do not, their applications may face delay whilst relevant planning objections are resolved or where objections cannot be resolved within a reasonable time, we will have to consider refusing the application.

Chapter 4 of the SCI outlines where the resources to carry out this work will come from and how it will be managed. It also outlines the role of Elected Councillors in shaping the Council's new development documents and gives some advice about making contact with them, and concludes by explaining the procedure that will be followed to review the SCI.

### **MORE INFORMATION**

To view a full copy of the draft SCI, follow the website links at [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk), where a copy is available to download. Alternatively, you can inspect copies at the Town Hall or at Crown Street, Cockerton and the mobile library. If you would like your own copy, please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01325 388644.

If you wish to receive this leaflet in another format, e.g. large text, Braille, spoken tape or another language, please contact the Planning Policy Team by telephone on 01325 388644 or by email via [planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk)