



Local Plan

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

Adopted March 2013

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## 1. Introduction

### The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

- 1.1 Colchester's planning system seeks to strengthen community and stakeholder involvement and encourage people to participate in the development of their local community. To help achieve this we are required to prepare and consult on a Statement of Community Involvement. The Council has frequently updated its SCI to reflect changes in the planning system, with the last update occurring in 2011. Since then, further changes in legislation have occurred, so the SCI has been edited to include those and additionally has been simplified to ensure clarity and promote public involvement.
- 1.2 We understand that in order to try to reach agreement within communities, people need to be involved from the early stages of the planning process. The Statement of Community Involvement is therefore a public statement that lets communities and stakeholders know when and how they can be involved. This includes both preparing planning policy documents and when considering applications for planning permission.
- 1.3 The objectives of this Statement of Community Involvement are to:
  - (a) Show how the Council aims to strengthen community involvement in the planning process;
  - (b) Make sure that the local community and stakeholders know when and how they can get involved in the production of planning policy documents and major planning applications;
  - (c) Improve the quality of our community involvement and consultation initiatives in cost-effective ways, maximising the potential of both traditional information sources and new social media
  - (d) Involving as many sectors of the local community as possible while recognising their different consultation needs;
  - (e) Show how community involvement in planning will, where possible, be joined up with other community involvement initiatives; and
  - (f) Explain the consultation process of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and how it will be monitored and reviewed in the future.

### Your Involvement in the process

- 1.4 Throughout the planning process we welcome all your comments and suggestions. You can do this through the formal consultation processes which are the subject of this guide. You may also wish to raise matters or discuss ideas with your local ward councillor at any time. They can raise matters directly with the Council or other organisations on your behalf. Local town and parish councils are a further source of advice and assistance. Details of all the Colchester Borough Council members along with town and parish councils can be found at [www.colchester.gov.uk](http://www.colchester.gov.uk).
- 1.5 However, it is important to note that because of the range of people and interests that changes to the local environment can affect, it will be difficult to find solutions that satisfy everyone. We will also have to take into account available resources and government policies which are applied across the country. Getting involved in the process will not therefore guarantee that your views will be successful, but we do promise to listen and seriously consider all comments and suggestions that are put forward. The Council also encourages other organisations operating across the Borough to undertake effective and

transparent community involvement activities to promote awareness of issues and opportunities for involvement and conflict resolution. Those proposing development need to work with the Council to ensure early involvement where appropriate with all concerned parties including ward members and Parish/Town Councils.

## **2 Community Involvement in the Planning Process**

### **How you can influence the Local Plan**

2.1 Throughout the preparation and production of planning documents there will be various stages during which you will be able to comment and influence their content. All comments made on a particular document will be seriously considered and, where appropriate, will be taken forward and fed into the production of that document before the council adopts it. These stages are illustrated in section 4.

2.2 The type and coverage of plans has evolved over the years and has most recently been affected by the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012 which entails the replacement of 'Local Development Frameworks' with 'Local Plans'. The overall requirement to ensure wide consultation remains, but the NPPF and the associated Localism Act have introduced some new plans, such as Neighbourhood Plans, and provided greater flexibility in the requirements for plan preparation. The continuing source of information on all the Council's planning policy documents continues to be the Local Development Scheme available on the Council's website ([www.colchester.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.colchester.gov.uk/ldf))

2.3 The Local Plan Committee has been established as a sub-committee of Full Council and is open to the public in the same way as other formal council committees. The Committee has responsibility for guiding the Local Plan process and takes decisions on the various documents to be produced. As part of this process they will take account of all consultations.

2.4 We will, where appropriate, encourage and advise the community to contact groups and organisations that may be able to offer independent planning advice or further information during the plan preparation process. A representative list of relevant groups can be found in appendix 4.

### **Ensuring Effective Consultation**

2.5 At every stage of the process it will be important to plan consultation exercises thoroughly before they begin so that we are aware of whom we are consulting and why we are consulting them. We will refer to our 'Consultation Guidelines', which can be found in appendix 5.

2.6 So that our consultations may be as effective as possible we will ensure that all methods are appropriate to each document being consulted on, each stage of consultation and to each group being consulted. This will ensure that all the consultations and community involvement activities we carry out are fit for the purpose they are intended for.

2.7 We will also encourage the involvement of the community groups, associations and organisations that we already have good links with, and will aim to seek out and involve others.

### **Consulting Hard to Reach Groups**

2.8 In order to encourage participation from all parts of the community, it is important to realise the diversity within the borough and the need to treat everybody as an individual. We recognise that some parts of the community often have less chance than others to get

involved and are therefore under represented in the planning process. Examples of these hard to reach groups may include, younger people, older people, people who are homeless, temporary residents, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities. It is our aim to give these groups and individuals every opportunity to be involved and to encourage their participation in planning policy documents.

2.9 When deciding on the nature of our consultations in the project plan, we will seriously consider the issues that our target groups and individuals may face in terms of methods, venues, language, access, childcare etc., and the approaches we might take to overcome or minimise these barriers. The table below illustrates some of these issues and their possible solutions. (Please note, that this list is not exhaustive). The Council's Diversity Steering Group has contributed to the preparation of this document and is happy with the methods identified for involving 'hard to reach' groups. Each document produced and every planning application considered will be assessed to ascertain which 'hard to reach' groups should be consulted with and the methods for doing so.

<b>Potential Barriers to Consultation</b>	<b>Possible Solution</b>
<p><b>Difficulties with written information.</b> (Literacy problems, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and English as a second language.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone questionnaires.</li> <li>• Face to face surveys.</li> <li>• Focus Groups.</li> <li>• Provide accessible written information including large font, good colour contrast and avoiding abbreviations.</li> <li>• Browse Aloud on the Council's website which "reads" content out loud to the customer.</li> <li>• Sign language translator.</li> <li>• Translated into a customer's first language by use of the translation facility on the Council's website.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intimidated or alienated by approach.</b> (Communication/literacy problems, attitude to staff, put off by 'officialdom' of process, long-standing hostility to the council, lack of confidence or self-esteem.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone questionnaires.</li> <li>• Face to face surveys.</li> <li>• Consider engaging a specialist consultant, voluntary or community group to carry out consultation on the council's behalf.</li> <li>• Consider using representatives who are already known and trusted by the target group.</li> <li>• Contact community representatives such as health workers or teachers.</li> <li>• Choose language carefully and explain clearly that individual views do matter and that there are no wrong or right answers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Can't access meeting venue.</b> (No transport available, lack of adequate child care, cannot physically access the venue, fear of going out after dark or alone, timing makes attendance difficult or impossible.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan meetings in accessible locations.</li> <li>• Choose a location where public transport and parking are easily accessible.</li> <li>• Consider covering people's expenses / providing transport / providing childcare.</li> <li>• Check that the venue meets Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements.</li> <li>• Plan the event around the needs of the group.</li> <li>• Check that events do not coincide with religious or non-religious festivals.</li> <li>• Consider holding more than one event to offer a choice of time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lack of time or</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go to respondents directly, for example, parent and</li> </ul>

<p><b>resources.</b> (Busy working families/lone parents, poorly funded community / voluntary groups.)</p>	<p>toddler groups or outside school gates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to reduce the time it takes to participate in the consultation, as many respondents may be volunteers with little time to spare.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rarely reached by publicity material.</b> (Those living in isolated rural communities, publicity material is in an inappropriate format, no access to the internet.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish newsletters and village notice boards can help reach rural areas.</li> <li>• Make sure material is clearly presented and follows good practice guidelines for written information.</li> <li>• Identify local events that we can join up with.</li> <li>• Use community notice boards in local shops, supermarkets and sports centres.</li> <li>• Internet consultation should only be used along with other methods.</li> </ul>

2.10 As a part of our good customer service we will also make every effort to meet all reasonable requests to make consultation exercises and documents more accessible for everyone.

2.11 We will encourage villages and neighbourhoods to develop their own community-led plans early on in the development planning process. Any plans that are produced may be used by the council to help put together its own plans for the borough or specific area. Community-led plans may include:

- Village Design Statements;
- Parish Plans; and
- Neighbourhood Plans.

2.12 We will work with organisations such as the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) and Planning Aid in order to promote these important initiatives (see contact details in the Further Information section at the end of this document.)

### Equality and Consultation

2.13 Throughout all planning consultations and engagement we will comply with the commitments set out below so that everybody has an opportunity to be involved in the development of planning documents and planning applications.

- We will provide services that are appropriate, sensitive and available to everyone.
- We will not discriminate on any unjustifiable grounds.
- We are committed to working with partners and communities across the community.
- We will maintain as far as possible our commitment to equality whilst not compromising on our service.

This will also ensure that the current legal requirements set out in equality legislation are met.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Equality Act 2010, Disability Discrimination Act 1995

### 3. Standards for Consultation

3.1 The following standards will apply to consultation and access to information and will be adopted, where possible, when preparing planning policy documents:

- Copies of the draft, final and adopted planning policy documents will be made available at Colchester Central Library and at the Council's Customer Service Centre;
- Documents will be published in both paper and electronic formats. Copies of adopted planning policy documents will be sent out within five days of the request. There may be a cost for some documents to cover printing costs. However, all consultation material will be available on the Colchester Borough Council website at [www.colchester.gov.uk](http://www.colchester.gov.uk);
- All documents will be made available on request in large print or alternative format;
- Details of people submitting comments or requesting information will be kept on a database (subject to data protection requirements), and respondents will be notified of progress on key stages for planning policy documents when they request it;
- Consultees will be notified of the council's decision-making process and how their representation will be addressed. Where appropriate, consultees will be informed of the Inspector's decision on their representation, where they have requested to be informed;
- The council has a complaints procedure, and this is available on request if the matter cannot be resolved within the Spatial Policy section.

## 4 Stages of Community Involvement in Planning Policy Documents

### Consultation Process for main Local Plan Documents

#### Stage 1 – Preparation

4.1 National legislation requires that local authorities invite representations on any planning policy document it prepares, but the precise nature and number of consultations is up to the local authority. Where possible and appropriate, the Council will go beyond minimum requirements to promote greater community participation and to meet the needs of different communities. Depending on the type and nature of the document being prepared, engagement with stakeholders and the community will encourage participation on:

##### a) Scoping and evidence gathering

At the beginning of the Local Plan document's preparation we will gather evidence from a variety of sources and stakeholders to ensure that we have an understanding of the main issues that need to be addressed in the document. Reports produced as part of this process will be made available on the Council's website.

##### b) Development of policy options

The community and stakeholders will be encouraged to participate in the ongoing policy development process and a range of consultation/engagement methods will be used to help them. In the majority of cases a two-phase approach will be used, even though it isn't statutorily required, beginning with consultation on issues and reasonable policy alternatives and secondly, consultation on the Council's preferred options for the policy document. The Council's Local Plan Committee oversees the process of plan preparation, and approves planning policy documents prior to their consultation. All reports and documents considered by the Committee are available on the Council's website and opportunities for public comment are provided at each meeting. For each consultation we will aim to provide:

- i. Information about the planning policy document on our website ([www.colchester.gov.uk](http://www.colchester.gov.uk)), through the media, at Colchester library and directly via email or letter if you are a statutory stakeholder or registered on our consultation database.
- ii. An opportunity to comment on the planning document via the website and electronic surveys. Paper surveys/reply slips will be available from our Council offices and the library.
- iii. An opportunity to discuss the Local Plan document at focus groups or statutory meetings and to make links with existing community activities.
- iv. An opportunity for those people who traditionally are less involved to have their say.

#### Stage 2 – Publication of the proposed submission Local Plan document

4.2 Following the engagement and preparation of the plan during initial stages

(Regulation 18), the Council will publish our proposed submission plan (Regulation 19) and invite comments on it for six weeks before we submit the document to the Secretary of State for examination (Regulation 22). Comments will also be invited on the Sustainability Appraisal that accompanies the plan.

At this formal stage of consultation we will:

- Make a copy of each of the proposed submission documents (and a statement of the representations procedure) available during normal office hours at:
  - The principal council offices;
  - Other places within the council area considered appropriate;
- Publish on our website:
  - The proposed submission documents;
  - A statement of the representations procedure;
  - A statement advertising the documents availability and setting out where and when the proposed submission documents are available for inspection;
- Send each of the specific consultation bodies invited to make representations on the plan:
  - A copy of each of the proposed submission documents;
  - A statement of the representations procedure;
- Send each of the general consultation bodies invited to make representations on the plan:
  - A statement of the representations procedure;
  - A statement advertising the documents availability and setting out where and when the proposed submission documents are available for inspection;
- Where appropriate to ensure widespread awareness, set out in a local paper:
  - A statement of the representations procedure;
  - A statement advertising the documents availability and setting out where and when the proposed submission documents are available for inspection.

At this time we will publish:

- The plan (as proposed to be submitted);
- The changes to the proposals map (if the adoption of the plan would result in changes to the map);
- The sustainability appraisal report;
- A statement setting out:
  - Who was invited to be involved in the plan preparation;
  - How they were invited to be involved in the plan preparation;
  - A summary of the main issues raised and how they have been addressed; and
- Any other supporting documents relevant to the preparation of the plan.

Regulations provide that anyone wishing to make a representation on the proposed submission plan must do so within these six weeks. A standard form will be used at this stage for responses.

The Council will consider any points raised by the consultation and produce a consultation statement. If significant changes are required, we may withdraw the document and re-consult on a revised version.

### **Stage 3 - Submission of the document for independent examination**

4.3 The proposed plan, the sustainability appraisal, the representations made and any other supporting documents to the Secretary of State following the consultation period. An examination of the plan will be carried out by an independent Planning Inspector to test its soundness, taking into account the representations that have been received. Those who make representations may be invited by the inspector to attend and take part in the relevant parts of the examination held in public. The Localism Act provides that the Council may ask the Inspector to consider modifications to the plan as part of the examination process.

### **Stage 4 – Consultation on Modifications**

4.4 The Council will publish all main modifications which have been put forward during the Examination process for a six-week consultation period in line with the processes noted above for consultation. It will also provide notification of any minor non-material changes it wishes to make to the plan if adopted. The Council will forward all responses received to the consultation on the Inspector who will have regard to them in forming final views on the soundness of the plan.

### **Stage 5 – Inspector’s Report**

4.5 The Inspector will report back to the Council and will recommend main modifications if the Council has requested this.

### **Adoption of Local Plan document**

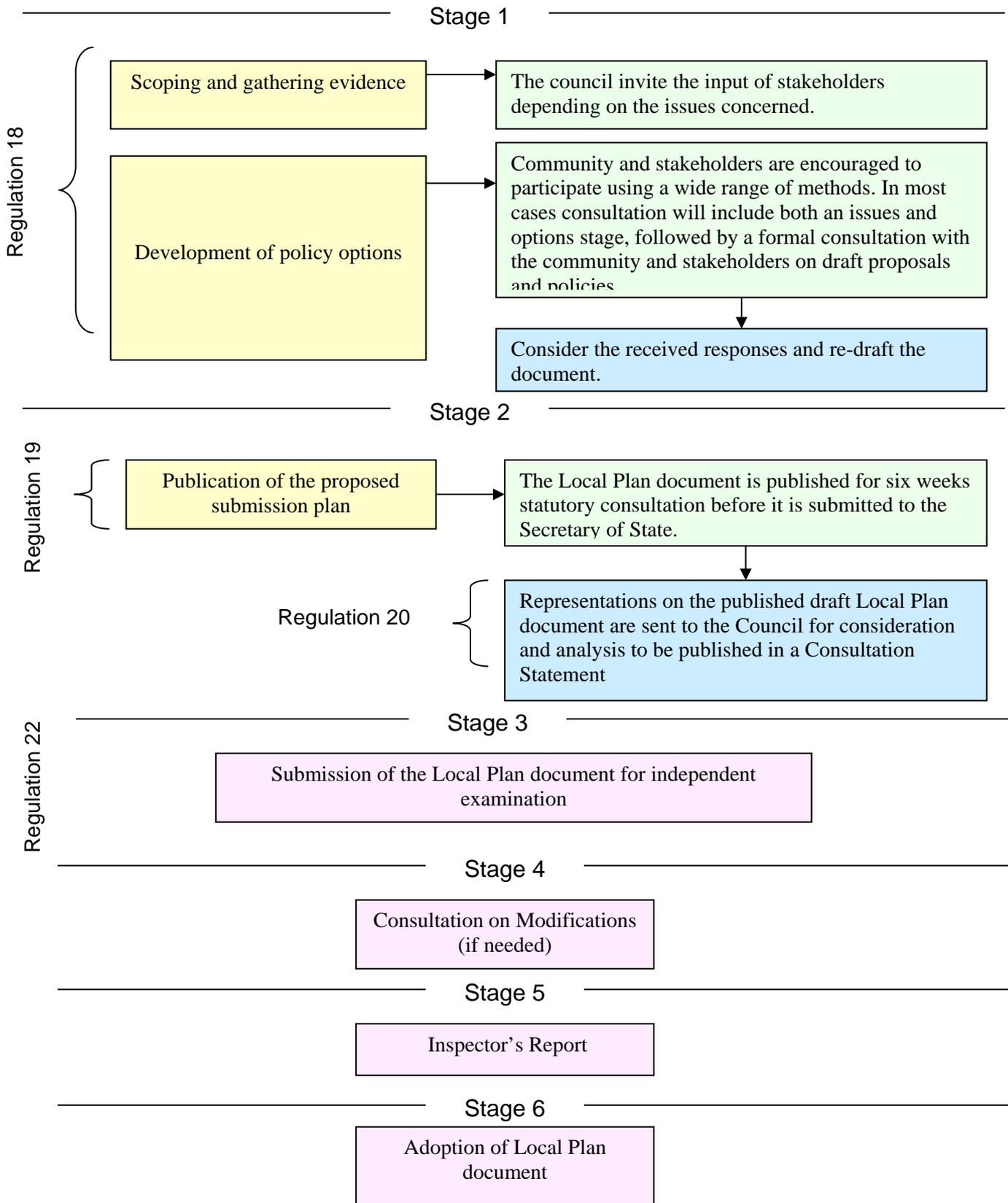
4.6 Provided that the Local Plan Document receives a ‘sound’ rating from the Inspector’s Report, the Council can then accept the Inspector’s modifications and submit the plan to full Council for adoption. The Council can make minor non-material changes themselves. Alternatively, the Council can decide to re-consult and re-submit on a new plan. If adopted, we will notify our stakeholders and previous respondents directly (if requested) and publicise the adoption on our website and as appropriate in local media.

4.7 The planning system now makes more specific requirements for councils and other public bodies to work together on strategic and cross-boundary planning issues. This ‘duty to co-operate’ may result in a development plan document being prepared jointly with other local planning authorities. Subsequent consultation on these would follow the processes described above to ensure all communities are involved appropriately.

4.8 The process outlined above is also relevant to the process of developing and approving a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule. The CIL is a charge which will allow the Council to raise funds from new development. The money collected will be used to support locally agreed infrastructure projects such as transport improvements, schools, leisure facilities, green links, and/or flood defences. The Council is required to consult on an evidence-based charging schedule and amend the schedule as needed based on the

comments received. Upon approval by the Local Plan Committee, the draft charging schedule is submitted for independent examination into its 'soundness'. Subsequent implementation of the CIL will involve a Council led body to agree priorities for spending in a public and transparent manner, with governance arrangements to be finalised as part of consultation on the charging schedule. Part of the CIL revenue will be awarded to Parish Councils who will publicise their own consultation methods and implementation plans in due course.

## Local Plan document consultation process



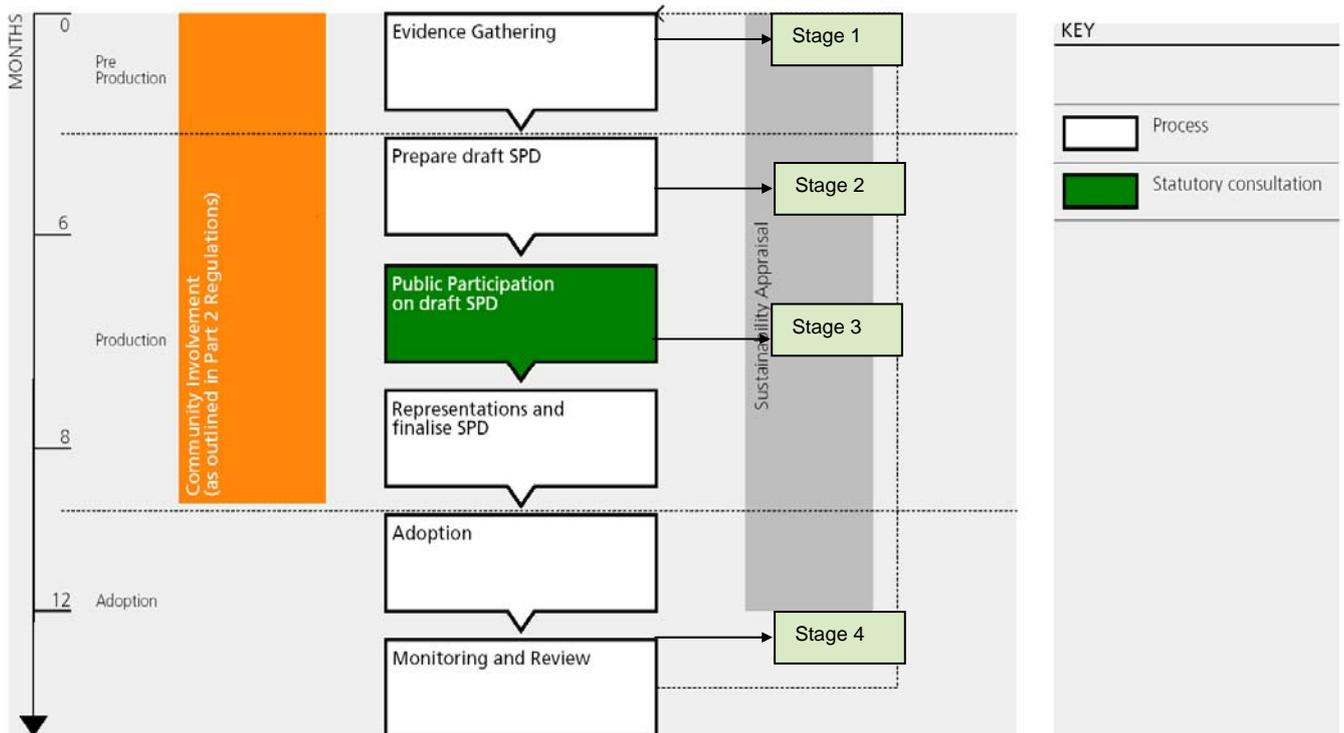
## Local Plan Documents

	Pre-production / Production	Production	Production	Public Examination
	Stage 1 Scoping and Evidence Gathering, Preferred Options	Stage 2 Publication of Proposed Submission DPD	Stage 3 Submission of DPD	Stages 4 – 6 EIP & Adoption
Consultees	<p>We will involve relevant groups in the preparation of the evidence base. We will begin the frontloading process by promoting planning issues and providing an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to influence the process at an early stage.</p> <p>We will involve the community &amp; stakeholders in the preparation of the Preferred Options. There will also be ongoing engagement regarding the Sustainability Appraisal. (Reg 25)</p>	<p>After considering the representations received and amending the DPD, where appropriate, we will publish the proposed submission document, the Sustainability Appraisal Report and ask for comments within 6 weeks. (Reg 27)</p>	<p>We will publish a notice stating that the DPD has been submitted for Independent Examination along with representations made at the regulation 27/28 stage. If focused changes are needed to the DPD we will seek to involve the community and stakeholders during a further 6 week consultation.(Reg 30)</p>	<p>An Independent Examination (EIP) will consider all representations made. After considering all representations the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State will produce a report. We will then amend the DPD following this report and inform consultees that the final SCI has been adopted. (Reg 36)</p>
<b>General Public (including 'hard to reach groups')</b> (General or Other Consultees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Media &amp; Publicity</li> <li>✦ Exhibitions</li> <li>✦ Leaflet</li> <li>✦ Surveys (written &amp; electronic)</li> <li>✦ Interactive Website</li> <li>✦ Workshops / discussion groups</li> <li>✦ Consultation Document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Media &amp; Publicity</li> <li>✦ Consultation Document</li> <li>✦ Reply Slip</li> <li>✦ Interactive Website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Media &amp; Publicity</li> <li>✦ Emails/Letters to respondents</li> <li>✦ Focused changes document (if needed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Media &amp; Publicity</li> <li>✦ Emails/Letters to respondents</li> </ul>
<b>Community / Voluntary / Special Interest Groups</b> (General or Other Consultees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Leaflet</li> <li>✦ Surveys (written &amp; electronic)</li> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Workshops / discussion groups</li> <li>✦ Presentation and Q&amp;A session</li> <li>✦ Consultation Document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Consultation Document</li> <li>✦ Reply Slip</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Focused changes document (if needed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/ Letters</li> </ul>
<b>Borough / Town / Parish Councillors</b> (General or Other Consultees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Reply slip / leaflet</li> <li>✦ Surveys (written &amp; electronic)</li> <li>✦ Workshops / discussion groups</li> <li>✦ Presentation and Q&amp;A session</li> <li>✦ Consultation Document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Consultation Document</li> <li>✦ Reply Slip</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Focused changes document (if needed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> </ul>
<b>Businesses / Developers and Agents</b> (General or Other Consultees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Reply Slip / Leaflet</li> <li>✦ Surveys (written &amp; electronic)</li> <li>✦ Workshop/discussion groups</li> <li>✦ Presentation and Q&amp;A session</li> <li>✦ Consultation Document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Consultation Document</li> <li>✦ Reply Slip</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Focused changes document (if needed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> </ul>
<b>Specific Consultees and Government Departments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Reply Slip / Leaflet</li> <li>✦ Consultation Document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Consultation Document</li> <li>✦ Reply Slip</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> <li>✦ Focused changes document (if needed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Emails/Letters</li> </ul>

### Consultation Process for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

4.9 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are intended to explain or provide further detail to policies or site allocations in a Local Plan document. They could take the form of design guides, area development briefs, master plans or issue based documents. They will be used in deciding planning applications and will help the council defend its decisions at appeals.

4.10 The diagram below sets out the process that the council is required to undertake when preparing Supplementary Planning Documents. Sustainability Appraisal is no longer a requirement for all Supplementary Planning Documents and will only be carried out when appropriate. The evidence gathering and preparation stages should include frontloaded engagement with the community where this would be possible and beneficial.



4.11 Although Supplementary Planning Documents will not require an independent examination and will not form part of the statutory development plan, they will be subject to thorough procedures of community involvement. Stages 1 to 4 show the times at which you can get involved. A full description of the various community involvement methods that we may use can be found in appendix 2.

## **Consultation Process for the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**

- 4.12 The Statement of Community Involvement is a Local Development Document and does not need to be accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal, nor is an examination in public required.
- 4.13 The consultation process on the Statement of Community Involvement will therefore operate in a similar way to consultations on Supplementary Planning Documents where there will be a formal period of consultation, after which the Council will consider any representations made before the Local Plan Committee adopts the document.

## **Consultation Process for Neighbourhood Plans**

- 4.14 Neighbourhood Plans, which were introduced by the Localism Act 2011, allow designated groups of local people to prepare statutory developments plans against which planning applications will be assessed. If a community wishes to simplify the process for allowing development, it can also produce a Neighbourhood Development Order (areas where specified development is permitted without the need to apply for planning permission) or a Community Right to Build Order (permission for small scale community led-schemes). These can be instead of, or in conjunction with, a neighbourhood plan and would result in effectively granting planning permission for certain types of development in specified areas. These orders, however, can't remove the need for other permissions such as Listed Building or Conservation Area consent.
- 4.15 Since Neighbourhood Plans and Orders aren't prepared by the Council, this SCI can't prescribe what methods of community consultation they should follow. The Council will, however, expect these documents to meet the requirements set out in legislation and to follow wherever possible the general principles and techniques set out in this SCI. The Council will also provide technical guidance and support as required by legislation and will offer additional advice where feasible.

## 5. Community Involvement and Planning Applications

### Introduction

5.1 Involvement of the community and stakeholders beginning at an early stage of the planning application process is of great benefit to the public, individuals, organisations, authorities and the applicant themselves. The following section explains how the Council will seek to encourage awareness and involvement in the planning application decision-making process, starting with pre-application discussions and continuing through to the planning application stage, and in some cases, the planning appeal stage.

### Pre-application discussions

- 5.2 The Council encourages developers to consult the community prior to submitting planning applications for larger-scale or potentially contentious development proposals, in line with guidance on decision-taking in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Localism Act. We will engage in pre-application discussions with the developer that are often undertaken in confidence because of the various sensitivities of some early ideas, but discussions are always recorded and are always without prejudice to the later application, consultation requirements and the decision making process. At this stage, we will be in a position to advise developers and help clarify the format, type and level of consultation to be undertaken. The Council has a schedule of charges for preliminary enquiries and pre-application advice. As part of this process we will also seek to engage elected members through our “Early Member Engagement Protocol” wherever this is applicable. This Protocol forms part of the Council’s Constitution and can be read online.
- 5.3 In the case of larger applications the Council operates a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) approach. Details of the applicable charges are available on the Council’s website. A PPA is an agreement between the Council and applicants to provide a project management framework for major applications that are meant to exceed the 13-week period normally expected to be the period required to determine major applications. The PPA sets out the targets agreed by both parties for the levels and types of consultation required, information gathering process, consideration of options and agreement on design issues.
- 5.4 The Council expects applicants in most cases to carry out their own pre-application consultation. This should be effective in bringing draft proposals to the attention of the public, the local Town or Parish Council and other affected parties and provide opportunities to make comments. The purpose of early discussions between the community and the developers is to encourage agreement within the community early on in the process and provide a better chance for schemes to be positively received. This process will help benefit both parties. For developers it will ensure that key issues are addressed prior to planning applications being submitted and for the local community it will enable them to have an influence before proposals reach an advanced stage.
- 5.5 It is essential that any community involvement conducted by the developers be tailored to the nature and scale of the proposal. A broad list of consultation and community involvement methods is provided in appendix 2, along with details of when they are most suitable, their advantages and disadvantages, and resource implications. Chapter 2 outlines the necessary steps that we will take to ensure equal and effective consultation.

- 5.6 The Council will expect the applicant to submit details of pre-application consultation as well as an explanation on how responses have been taken into account, alongside their planning application, and this information will be used in the decision-making process. In some cases it can also be a validation consideration, whereby applications will not be processed unless the Council is satisfied that adequate consultation has been undertaken by the developers.

### **Submission of a planning application**

- 5.7 The process of deciding planning applications is often of great public and local interest, and comments on proposals are welcomed.
- 5.8 When deciding which applications are classed as major applications and therefore subject to wider community consultation, the Government sets out the following criteria:
- Residential developments comprising 10 or more homes;
  - A site area of 0.5 hectares or more where the number of homes is unknown;
  - Commercial proposals creating more than 1,000 square metres of floor space or on sites of 1 hectare or more; or
  - A change of use application involving the above.
- 5.9 The Government sets targets for the time taken to determine planning applications. These are currently 13 weeks for major applications and 8 weeks for all others. If an Environmental Impact Assessment is required by the scale of development then this period will extend to 16 weeks, but this is not common. Before a decision is made, the case officer will prepare a report with a recommendation.
- 5.10 The recommendation will take into account the adopted Development Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework as well as any comments made. However, the Council can only take into account comments relating to material considerations, which excludes such non-planning considerations as property values, loss of a private view over land, moral objections to development and commercial considerations.

### **Major applications**

- 5.11 The level of consultation carried out for all major planning applications, will be determined by the council to ensure that it is appropriate. Statutory advertisements will be used as a means of consultation if required and as laid out in legislation, which means that in the majority of cases it will be necessary to publish an advertisement in the newspaper and on a site notice to be displayed at the application site. We also recognise that any involvement will need to encourage participation and social inclusion to ensure that the local community is given every opportunity to influence the process.
- 5.12 A weekly list of all applications received appears on the council's website. Individual letters/emails will be sent in respect of every planning application where neighbouring properties/businesses can be identified. Parish and town councils will be consulted on every application within their parish boundaries. Similarly, the elected ward members will be consulted on applications that fall within their wards.
- 5.13 It is important to note that the types of methods used and the length of consultation will need to suit the type of application and therefore the methods listed above are provided as a guideline of how we may consult, but is in no means intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive. The Development Services Manager, Planning Manager, Planning Projects

Manager or a Principal Planning Officer will make this decision.

## **Other applications**

5.14 With regard to all other types of applications, the Development Services Manager, Planning Manager, Planning Projects Manager or a Principal Planning Officer will determine the appropriate level of consultation. Individual letters/emails will be sent to neighbouring properties/businesses and/or site notices used. Parish and town councils will be consulted on every application in their parish. Similarly, the elected ward members will be consulted on applications that fall within their wards. All the planning applications appear on the website which is updated weekly.

## **Sources of information on planning applications**

5.15 Information on planning applications can be found in the following places:

### **5.15.1 The Planning Register**

Applications for planning permission must by law, be entered on a register within 14 days of receipt. Maintaining a planning register is a statutory obligation imposed on the council by the Town and Country Planning Acts and the information is available for inspection by arrangement during office hours. In Colchester the register consists of three parts:

- A register containing details of all current applications for planning permission, including plans and drawings;
- A register that contains a permanent record of all applications and decisions since 1 July 1948 (including any order made, appeals and their outcome); and
- An index is provided in plotting sheets.

Current planning applications including plans and drawings and those dating back to the year 2000 can be viewed online using the Colchester Planning website. For those who do not have access to a computer the Council provides appropriate terminals at its Customer Service centre for public use.

### **5.15.2 The Weekly List**

The statutory register does have limitations for general use and accordingly we also produce a weekly list. As the name suggests, this is a list of all new applications registered and decisions made the previous week.

### **5.15.3 Advertising**

Regulations set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2010, the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Regulations and the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, state that all planning applications need to be publicised, either by site notice or individual neighbour notification. A press notice and site notice is also required for the following types of application:

- Erection of 10 or more dwellings or site area of 0.5 hectares or more;
- Erection of 1000 square metres of floor space, or site area of 1 hectare or more;
- An application subject of an environmental assessment;
- An application that would affect a right of way, under Part III of the Wildlife and Countryside Act;

- Development affecting listed buildings;
- Development affecting the character or appearance of a conservation area; and
- Departures from the Development Plan.

These requirements are subject to change and a press notice will only be used where required by legislation.

#### 5.15.4 Individual Letters

We are aware of the need to provide an effective and efficient service, and to ensure that budgets are closely controlled. It is sometimes difficult to bring together these objectives with widespread public consultation on planning applications. The actual extent of consultation in each case will be determined having regard to the type of development involved.

Letters will only usually be sent to those properties directly affected by a proposal, which according to the Development Management Procedure Order 2010 is any adjoining owner or occupier. "Adjoining owner or occupier" means any owner or occupier of any land adjoining the land to which the application relates. For example, the minimum consultation for extensions to buildings would be properties sharing a common boundary with the application site. In the case of rear extensions those to the rear will be consulted whilst those on the opposite side of the road may not be. Any further consultation will be at the discretion of the case officer.

#### 5.15.5 Parish and Town Councils

The Council is committed to close working with local representative bodies, as provided within part 8 of the Constitution. We have set up a forum for parish and town council clerks, which is held every two months. Although this is a corporate initiative there is opportunity to report on planning matters on a regular basis.

It is also intended to develop and extend regular planning liaison meetings with all of the town and parish councils (we already have regular sessions with Dedham, East Mersea, Myland, Stanway, Tiptree and West Mersea) and continue to provide a regular programme of planning workshops for rural councils on an twice-annual basis.

Planning workshops for Town and Parish Councillors include workshops on subjects including, material considerations, influencing the planning process, enforcement, appeals, planning law, design, legal obligations etc.

#### 5.15.6 Website

Our website is increasingly being used as a tool for consultation. The website includes weekly lists of applications received and decisions made. These can be viewed by application number or by ward and comments can be sent direct. Committee agendas, reports, S106 agreements, planning enforcement activity and associated Notices and a list of current appeals and appeal decisions can also be viewed. The Colchester Planning Online website now allows copies of the application forms, plans and drawings, and consultation comments to be viewed online.

## **Procedure for Dealing with Written Representations to Applications**

- 5.16 We currently notify neighbours within a week of registering a planning application and they are given at least 21 days to reply. All those wishing to comment on an application are encouraged to do so electronically using the Council's 'on-line planning' web site. Whilst we will accept written letters, faxes and e-mails we will not acknowledge their receipt. Any representation received is however scanned and placed on the Council's 'on-line planning' web-site and is available for viewing by the public. This also allows those people sending such representations to check safe receipt by the Council for themselves.
- 5.17 The Planning Service does not respond in writing to comments about a planning application unless specifically requested, but is happy to give advice over the telephone. All comments received are considered by the case officer, which may result in the application being revised. If the scheme is significantly changed or changed in a manner deemed to have a greater impact upon a you than the original submission we will try to repeat the consultation allowing, where possible, an extra 14 days or less in certain circumstances, for further comments (at the discretion of the case officer). Sometimes time constraints mean a shorter period is given for comments on revised plans and sometimes it is not possible to reconsult at all. Where the subject of an objection has, in the opinion of the Planning Service, been addressed in amended plans, re-consultation has occurred and no further comment made, the previous objection will be considered withdrawn.

## **Determination of a planning application**

- 5.18 The Localism Act clarifies the ways in which councillors can be involved in the planning process and play an active part in local discussions.
- 5.19 The receipt of one or more letters of objection will normally result in a major application being determined by committee if it is being recommended for approval or if it is subject to a S106 Agreement.
- 5.20 In the case of all other applications a decision will be made under delegated powers by the Planning Service unless that application has been subject to a 'call-in' by a Councillor. A 'call-in' is subject to a formal process and for it to be triggered automatically a councillor must make a valid request within 25 days of being notified of the application. Anyone can approach their councillor to have an application 'called-in' and thereby determined by the Planning Committee after public debate. A councillor is not duty bound to request a 'call-in' if asked. Where an application is being reported to Committee a list of the different material planning considerations raised within the various comments received are summarised in the Committee report. Letters will not be accepted after 5pm on the day before Committee. Once the agenda has been prepared, anything received before 5pm on the day falling 2 days before the day of the committee meeting will be reported on an amendment sheet. Anything received after 5pm on the day falling 2 days before the day of the committee meeting will be reported verbally.
- 5.21 If an application is to be reported to committee this will be stated on the Council's online planning website. The full committee report is available 5 days before the meeting on the website and in all council offices. Where an application has been subject to a valid 'call-in' the applicant and any person making an electronic submission via the Council's on-line planning web-site will be notified via e-mail of the relevant Committee date, 5 days prior to the meeting.
- 5.22 At committee one representative speaking against an application and one speaking for an

application are able to speak to committee for up to 3 minutes. At the Chairman's discretion, and where prior notification has been given, further objectors will be allowed to speak on particularly complex or controversial applications. Usually this will be with a maximum number of 3 speakers for and 3 speakers against any application. Objectors are invited to view the application on-line to obtain a full list of objectors' comments to enable them to co-ordinate a reply in the event that more than one person wishes to speak. Ward Members may also speak on behalf of their electorate and will be allowed up to 5 minutes.

- 5.23 When a decision is reached, respondents who have sent their comments in via the Councils 'on-line planning' web site using an e-mail address will be advised of the decision within 10 days. The update will state whether the application has been approved or refused and where the decision can be viewed in full, i.e. the statutory register or in summary form on the website.
- 5.24 Further details on how to comment on planning applications at the Planning Committee can be found in our document 'Have your Say on Planning Applications' which is available on the website. Other relevant information includes "Planning Procedures Code of Practice" which is in Part 5 of The Constitution and is on the Council's website. It sets out general guidelines for borough councillors and council officers who are involved in planning applications and the Planning Committee. The information it contains may help provide background information to applicants and those commenting on the planning process.

## **Appeals**

- 5.25 When an appeal is made against the decision of the council to refuse an application all previous correspondence is forwarded on to the Planning Inspectorate. Letters/emails are also sent to all those people who had previously been consulted/commented on the application, advising them of the appeal. Further representation can be made direct to the Planning Inspectorate. These procedures comply with the statutory procedures set out in S78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning Inspectorate's Procedural Guidance 'Planning appeals and called-in planning applications' (PINS 01/2009).

## **6 Involving representative organisations and individuals**

- 6.1 Appendix 1 provides a comprehensive list of the types of consultees that we will inform and involve throughout the plan development process. The organisations and groups listed there are representative organisations and individuals of all types and ranges of interest that we feel will have an important part to play in the planning process. They will all be consulted as part of the local plan process and will be consulted as appropriate on planning applications.
- 6.2 A full list of all types of consultees will be stored on a database along with their details. This information is not listed here as it is constantly being updated due to the fact that new groups frequently emerge or disband or their details change and individuals request to be added or removed from the database. However, the database is available to view upon request so that anybody may suggest additional bodies and groups to be added or so that they may find a group to represent their views in the new planning process.
- 6.3 If you would like to join the Local Plan consultation database and be kept up-to-date on development plans for Colchester please contact the Planning Policy team using the contact details at the end of this document.

## **7. Monitoring and review of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**

- 7.1 The SCI provides flexibility to allow for appropriate changes in our approach to community involvement. Comments received on the quality or effectiveness of our consultation will be considered and used to inform future practice. If significant changes are required to meet new circumstances or legislation, a review of the Statement of Community Involvement will be undertaken.
- 7.2 Consultation exercises include opportunities for consultees to complete equality monitoring data forms. If completed, this helps us monitor the effectiveness of our policies surrounding equality and diversity and to make changes where required.

## **Consultation organisations**

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the consultation bodies who must be consulted in the preparation of Local Plans. The regulations also specify the bodies that are covered by the Duty to Co-operate.

### Duty to Co-operate

There is a duty to co-operate on any strategic matter relating to a Development Plan Document or Local Development Document. A strategic matter is defined as an issue that would have significant impact on at least two planning areas or a county matter in a two tier area. Colchester Borough Council is required to co-operate with appropriate authorities as listed below to maximise the effectiveness of activities related to the preparation of the plan.

The duty to co-operate applies to:

- Environment Agency
- English Heritage
- Natural England
- Mayor of London
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Primary Care Trust
- Office of Rail Regulation
- Transport for London
- Integrated Transport Authority
- Highway Authority
- Highways Agency
- Marine Management Organisation
- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Essex County Council

The duty to co-operate is most likely to apply to authorities that adjoin Colchester Borough, although there may be some strategic matters where co-operation with authorities in the wider area may also be necessary. Adjoining authorities are:

- Suffolk County Council
- Tendring District Council
- Babergh District Council
- Braintree District Council
- Maldon District Council

### Sustainability Appraisal Consultation Organisations

The following organisations should be consulted for a sustainability appraisal under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004:

- Natural England
- The Environment Agency
- English Heritage

### Specific consultation bodies

When preparing plans the Council is required to consult such of the specific consultation bodies as it considers may have an interest in the subject of the proposed local plan. The specific consultation bodies are set out in the regulations as:

Environment Agency  
English Heritage  
Marine Management Organisation  
Natural England  
Network Rail  
Highways Agency  
Telecommunications operators  
Primary Care Trust  
Electricity and gas companies  
Sewerage and water companies  
The Homes and Community Agency  
The Coal Authority

#### *Parish Councils*

Abberton & Langenhoe Parish Council  
Birch Parish Council  
Boxted Parish Council  
Chappel Parish Council  
Little Horkesley Parish Council  
Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council  
East Donyland Parish Council  
East Mersea Parish Council  
Eight Ash Green Parish Council  
Fingringhoe Parish Council  
Fordham Parish Council  
Great Horkesley Parish Council  
Great Tey Parish Council  
Langham Parish Council  
Layer de la Haye Parish Council  
Layer Marney Parish Meeting  
Marks Tey Parish Council  
Messing cum Inworth Parish Council  
Myland Community Council  
Stanway Parish Council  
Tiptree Parish Council  
Wakes Colne Parish Council  
West Bergholt Parish Council  
West Mersea Town Council  
Winstred Hundred Parish Council  
Wivenhoe Town Council  
Wormingford Parish Council  
Mount Bures Parish Council  
Aldham Parish Council  
Dedham Parish Council  
Layer Breton Parish Council

#### *Adjoining Parish Councils*

Alresford Parish Council  
Ardleigh Parish Council  
Brightlingsea Town Council  
Bures St Mary Parish Council  
Feering Parish Council  
Great Braxted Parish Council  
Kelvedon Parish Council  
Nayland with Wissington Parish Council  
Stoke By Nayland Parish Council  
Stratford St Mary Parish Council  
Tollesbury Parish Council  
Tolleshunt D'Arcy Parish Council  
Tolleshunt Major Parish Council  
Tolleshunt Nights Parish Council

#### *County Council and adjoining*

Essex County Council  
Suffolk County Council

Policing body and adjoining policing body

### General consultation bodies

When preparing plans the Council is required to consult such of the general consultation bodies as it considers appropriate. The general consultation bodies are set out in the regulations as:

- voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the local planning authority's area,
- bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the local planning authority's area,
- bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the local planning authority's area,
- bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the local planning authority's area,
- bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area;

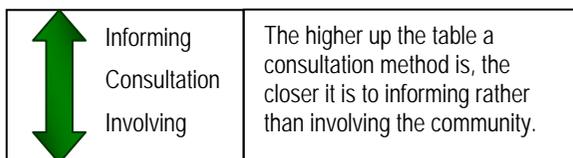
The Council maintains a consultation database that includes all of these types of general consultation body.

The database also includes landowners, developers, businesses, residents, and any other organisations or individuals who have requested to be kept informed of planning policy matters.

### Neighbourhood Plans

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 set out the consultation bodies for Neighbourhood development plans. This is listed separately in the regulations but includes the same specific and general consultation bodies as those which are required to be consulted in the preparation of local plans.

In the case of neighbourhood development orders and community right to build orders the consultation bodies depend on the type of development proposed. Schedule 1 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations provides more information.



## Methods of Community Engagement

### APPENDIX 2

Consultation Method	When is it most suitable	Advantages	Disadvantages	Resource Implications
Consultation Document (paper or electronic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inform / promote</b></li> <li>• Useful for consulting on technical policies and plans and inviting comment on them.</li> <li>• Would be most useful towards the end of the policy process.</li> <li>• Can be produced in a variety of formats e.g., on paper, website.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing detailed information in this way enables consultees to make an informed response, which will ultimately be more meaningful to the process.</li> <li>• It is therefore important to make responding as easy as possible by accompanying the paper with reply slips, email addresses etc.</li> <li>• They can also be made available in a number of places i.e., libraries, schools, local offices etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual two-way participation with respondents is inhibited and this can be a missed opportunity to encourage responses and/or explain policies and processes, thereby avoiding possible mis-interpretations.</li> <li>• Particularly long and complex consultation papers can be daunting and off-putting to read. It is therefore important to recognise that many sectors of the community will not or cannot read them.</li> <li>• If documents are sent by post it is difficult to judge if they have been read or considered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The usual costs of printing and distribution will apply.</li> <li>• Cost of producing the document in alternative formats to make it accessible to all sectors of the community.</li> </ul>
Letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inform / promote</b></li> <li>• To provide information to all relevant stakeholders at the beginning of a consultation.</li> <li>• To provide feedback to stakeholders concerning the outcomes of a consultation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A quick and easy way to provide feedback on the results of a particular consultation.</li> <li>• Reply slips requesting information can be with the letter to gain factual information and / or views and opinions.</li> <li>• Can also include consultation papers and any other supporting documents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This can be a very labour intensive method if administration support is limited.</li> <li>• Mailing lists must be updated regularly to ensure that addresses are correct etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs depend on the number produced and distributed.</li> <li>• Officer time and stationary costs also need to be taken into account.</li> </ul>
Reply slip / Leaflet (Quantitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strengthen evidence base / gather opinion / promote / inform</b></li> <li>• Can be useful for providing basic or summary information or for drawing attention to forthcoming consultation events and initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be targeted more specifically and personally than posters.</li> <li>• Can also provide an opportunity for the public to feedback i.e., through tear off reply slips.</li> <li>• Feedback forms with the respondents contact details can be fed into a mailing list, through which future information can be disseminated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of information that can be provided is often limited due to size of document.</li> <li>• Variations are often needed to target specific audiences, for example, older people, children, ethnic minorities.</li> <li>• Thought needs to be put into how they will be disseminated so that a wide range of people and groups are covered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs depend on the number of leaflets printed and methods of dissemination.</li> <li>• May also need to pay for a designer.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Media and Publicity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inform / promote</b></li> <li>• Press releases, newspaper articles and advertisements and briefings for local radio / TV and press.</li> <li>• This will be suitable at varying stages of the process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can reach a large number of people in a short space of time.</li> <li>• Can help advertise events.</li> <li>• Can use as a method of feedback to the public.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to be aware that it is unlikely that you will have editorial control with local papers. It is always possible that a different slant may be put on a story.</li> <li>• You cannot be certain how many people have read and understood the information provided.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspaper supplements can cost if you want editorial control as can radio adverts.</li> <li>• However, a cheaper method in comparison to others.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public Meetings (Qualitative)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inform / promote debate</b></li> <li>• For addressing specific concerns that may have been raised by the public.</li> <li>• They should not be used for geographically dispersed issues or for getting representative feedback about particular issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If chaired properly it can be a good way of hearing different / opposing points of view.</li> <li>• It is possible to break meetings up into smaller groups when you can encourage brainstorming and action planning. This is also an opportunity to give voice to those individuals who may not wish to speak in front of large audiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be difficult, as people tend not to turn up in significant numbers unless the issue is of particular concern or very contentious, in which case they can easily become confrontational.</li> <li>• If the meetings are too large, some attendees may be inhibited from speaking. More vocal members of the public can sometimes dominate the discussion, disrupting the timetable and preventing other issues and opinions from coming through. This can also be a problem for anyone with language problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs tend to be low but need to consider venue hire, staff time, and advertising and publicity materials.</li> <li>• It is important to have a suitable venue and times to suit the target audience.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Exhibitions (Qualitative)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote / inform / strengthen evidence base / gather opinion.</b></li> <li>• As a supplement to other forms of participation. This type of activity should not be used as a sole means of consultation for major schemes and projects.</li> <li>• Information and comments are usually collected on the day through self-completion questionnaires, comment cards, voting boxes, informal discussions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roadshow exhibitions can be useful to ensure that opportunity to take part and feedback is open to all members of the public. Can target specific areas, i.e., the rural communities.</li> <li>• Allow you to make use of visual aids, including 3D models, maps, videos, written material and illustrations.</li> <li>• Allows the public to visit at a time that is suitable to them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The event may be seen as information giving rather than full consultation. Therefore need to ensure that staff are fully briefed and can respond to queries. Be seen to be listening.</li> <li>• People who attend are unlikely to represent the community as a whole.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertising and publicity.</li> <li>• Hiring the venue/s and staff costs.</li> <li>• The total costs will depend on the length of the exhibition or open day and the use of displays, especially the commissioning of new ones.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Surveys (Quantitative)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strengthen evidence base / gather information.</b></li> <li>• Can be a good introduction to a consultation.</li> <li>• Useful for discovering factual information, views, attitudes and opinions.</li> <li>• Where views are needed across a wide geographical area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can cover a range of issues.</li> <li>• Can involve a large number of people.</li> <li>• Can be easy to communicate findings.</li> <li>• Makes decision-making easier if there is a clear evidence base.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complex or technical issues can be hard to explain.</li> <li>• Care needs to be taken with wording, especially with open-ended questions, to avoid confusion and leading questions.</li> <li>• Can be difficult to determine reasons behind responses and explore attitudes.</li> <li>• Postal questionnaires often have low response rates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial costs vary depending on how the survey is done and how large the sample is.</li> <li>• Usual costs of printing and postage, however, can be quite cheap in comparison to other techniques.</li> <li>• Joining up with other departments and sharing findings can reduce costs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interactive Website (Quantitative with surveys but qualitative with on-line forums)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strengthen evidence base / gather information / inform / promotion / promote debate.</b></li> <li>• Should be used to provide information and as a method of feedback.</li> <li>• Is useful at all stages of the process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It allows communication with a wide range of people, across geographically broad areas.</li> <li>• It can help attract those in the community who may not normally wish to comments via conventional means i.e. those who are unable to, or afraid of leaving the house. Can also attract those who may experience difficulty attending meetings or exhibitions due to physical, work or childcare constraints.</li> <li>• Analysis of responses can be quicker and easier and involve less paper work and travel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It must be clearly recognised that even though the technology is growing, a large number of people, still do not have access to the Internet. For this reason, all information posted on the website should also be available in other formats.</li> <li>• The inability to use body language to build up a rapport as in face to face interviews, can be a serious disadvantage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cost of software and programming assistance needs to be assessed depending on the work you need done.</li> <li>• This is a very cost effective method of consultation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Workshop / discussion group (Qualitative) – Small groups of people invited to attend informal discussion sessions on a particular topic. Often semi structured and consultation papers may be provided.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote debate / build consensus / strengthen evidence base / gather opinion.</b></li> <li>• Used to gain deeper insights into behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions and why such things are present.</li> <li>• Can also help generate ideas and suggestions for improvement.</li> <li>• Can be a useful forum for communicating the results of previous consultation activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be used to consult a number of different groups in the community.</li> <li>• Allows the organisers an opportunity to explain the context so that respondents can give informed opinions.</li> <li>• Interactive and visual aids can be used to help encourage involvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Samples are usually small and responses therefore do not represent the views of a whole community.</li> <li>• Can be difficult to collate and analyse the data.</li> <li>• Issues of bias and interpretation can occur if officers are recording views and opinions themselves. Outside agencies employed to do this may overcome this problem but may also have difficulties if their knowledge of the issues are limited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively inexpensive to organise, depending on the number of sessions to be facilitated. Should consider the cost of outside facilitators.</li> <li>• It can be difficult to join up with other services in the council and discuss a range of issues in these groups. However, the information received should be shared, especially where it can link up with the Local Strategic Partnership or Strategic Plan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participatory Appraisals (including planning for real style exercises) (Qualitative)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote debate / build consensus / gather opinion.</b></li> <li>• Allows a person to put forward and prioritise ideas on how their area can be improved.</li> <li>• It is a highly visible and hands-on tool.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can use it.</li> <li>• Using models and can generate interest and create an initial vision of an area.</li> <li>• Allows a practical, non-threatening way of communication and participation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for Real is a registered trademark of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation and it is therefore necessary for facilitators to be trained by the foundation, which can significantly expand financial budgets.</li> <li>• Involves a large amount of planning and publicity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of training and model kits.</li> <li>• Officer time.</li> <li>• Venue hire.</li> <li>• Media / publicity.</li> </ul>

# Glossary

For a full glossary of planning terms please visit the Planning Portal at

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/general/glossaryandlinks/glossary>

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** - The CIL is a charge set at a standard rate which will allow the Council to raise funds from new development. The money collected will be used to support locally agreed infrastructure projects such as transport improvements, schools, leisure facilities, green links, and/or flood defences.

## **Development Briefs**

Inform developers and other interested parties of the constraints and opportunities presented by a site, and the type of development expected or encouraged by local planning policies.

## **Disability**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, defines a disabled person as an individual with a physical (including sensory) impairment or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

## **Evidence Base**

An up-to-date information base on key aspects of the social, economic and environmental characteristics of the area, to enable the preparation of a sound spatial plan that meets the objectives of sustainable development.

## **Guidance Notes**

From time to time we will publish guidance notes on a range of planning topics. These will be similar to Supplementary Planning Documents but will be much more informal. They will be used to provide information and advice rather than set out policies. We intend that they will be a practical part of the policy's framework.

## **Independent Examination**

The council must arrange for an independent examination of the submitted Local Plan Document, the purpose of which is to consider

the "soundness of the plan". An independent inspector will be appointed by the Secretary of State to conduct the examination and it is his/her role to consider the Development Plan Document as a whole and to determine its soundness. In assessing this, the inspector will consider all representations made on the submitted Development Plan Document and the changes that have been suggested by those making representations.

## **Local Development Framework (LDF) (now Local Plan)**

This was the term given to the portfolio of planning policy documents which as a group provided the framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for the area during the period 2004-2012. The publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in April 2012 means that the term has been superseded by 'Local Plan'.

## **Local Plan (previously Local Development Framework)**

The adopted planning policies setting out the strategic policy, detailed development management policies and site allocations for a local authority area.

**National Planning Policy Framework** – The NPPF sets out the Government's national planning requirements, policies and objectives. It replaces much of the national advice previously contained within Planning Policy Statements, Planning Policy Guidance and Circulars. It is a material consideration in the preparation of Local Plan documents and when considering planning applications.

**Neighbourhood Plan** – A plan for a small neighbourhood area which is prepared by an authorised local group. The plan must be in general agreement with the overall plan for the local authority and can include general planning policies and allocations of land for new development.

**Planning Performance Agreement (PPA)** – An agreement between an local planning authority and an applicant to provide a project management framework for a major planning application.

### **Proposals Map**

The adopted proposals map illustrates on an Ordnance Survey base map, all the relevant policies from Local Plan Documents. It must be revised as new Local Plan Documents are adopted, and it should always reflect the up-to-date planning strategy for the area. Proposals for changes to the adopted proposals map will accompany submitted Development Plan Documents in the form of a submission proposals map.

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

This will set out the standards that the council intend to achieve in relation to involving the community and all stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all Local Plan Documents and in significant planning applications, and also how the local planning authority intends to achieve those standards. A consultation statement showing how the council has complied with its Statement of Community Involvement should accompany all Local Plan Documents.

### **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

These documents contain policy guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in Development Plan Documents (see above). They will not form part of the development plan or be subject to independent examination.

### **Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)**

An appraisal of the economic, social and environmental effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process, so that decisions can be made that accord with sustainable development. The sustainability appraisal process incorporates requirements of the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment.

## Further Information

For further information and advice on planning issues, please refer to the following list.

<b>Planning Aid</b>	<p>A charity that provides free, independent and professional advice and support on planning issues to people and communities who cannot afford to hire a planning consultant.          Website: <a href="http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid">www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid</a>          E-mail - <a href="mailto:advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk">advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk</a></p>
<b>Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)</b>	<p>The professional body for town planners. Its website contains a wealth of planning related information.  <a href="http://www.rtpi.org.uk">www.rtpi.org.uk</a>          On-line directory of planning consultants  <a href="http://www.rtpiconsultants.co.uk">www.rtpiconsultants.co.uk</a></p>
<b>The Planning Portal</b>	<p>The Government's one-stop shop for planning information, with information on the planning system, planning application submission assistance, information on local developments and appeals as well as government research.          Website: <a href="http://www.planningportal.gov.uk">www.planningportal.gov.uk</a>          E-mail: <a href="mailto:support@planningportal.gsi.gov.uk">support@planningportal.gsi.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)</b>	<p>An organisation that works to empower local communities, and promote community-led regeneration initiatives.  <a href="http://www.essexrcc.org.uk">www.essexrcc.org.uk</a></p>
<b>Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)</b>	<p>The professional body for architects. Its website contains useful information relating to architecture.  <a href="http://www.riba.org.uk">www.riba.org.uk</a></p>
<b>Essex County Council (ECC)</b>	<p>The County Council for Essex which deals with minerals and waste issues.  <a href="http://www.essexcc.gov.uk">www.essexcc.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)</b>	<p>Website contains access to national planning guidance and policies.          Website: <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk">www.communities.gov.uk</a>          E-mail: <a href="mailto:contactus@communities.gov.uk">contactus@communities.gov.uk</a></p>

## **Effective Consultation**

### **Consultation Guidelines**

- ☞ It is important to plan effectively before beginning any type of consultation - be clear on your aims, objectives and time scale. Involve local community groups and/or the Parish Council where possible.
- ☞ Be clear about who is being consulted and why.
- ☞ Try to use more than one method of consultation in order to get more valid and reliable data.
- ☞ Be flexible and prepared to modify or change your consultation at the last minute.
- ☞ Present information in a clear and concise way and avoid jargon.
- ☞ Be open and honest with your consultees.
- ☞ Be sensitive to the needs of those you are consulting with. Respect local knowledge and cultural differences.
- ☞ Embrace all sections of the community and aim to include hard to reach groups such as young people and those in ethnic minority groups.
- ☞ Be sure to give consultees enough time to respond to the consultation.
- ☞ Conduct objective analysis once all the responses have been collated.
- ☞ A thorough and objective evaluation should be carried out at the end of the consultation to identify strengths and weaknesses for future exercises.
- ☞ Try using new technology to introduce new and more interactive methods of consultation and which can also aid analysis and feedback.
- ☞ Have fun! – Consultation is a great opportunity to meet new people and have fun. Use visual displays and interactive methods wherever possible to encourage participation.

### **Factors to consider**

- ☞ Why am I consulting?
- ☞ Who do I want to consult with?
- ☞ Has research on this topic already been conducted?
- ☞ What methods will I use to consult?
- ☞ How will I make sure that a representative sample of the borough's population are consulted?
- ☞ Are there any equality issues or impacts to consider, and if so, what action will you take to address this?
- ☞ How do you intend to use equality monitoring information?
- ☞ Where will I consult?
- ☞ What equipment/facilities will be needed? What will be my costs?
- ☞ What media (if any) will I use to promote this consultation?
- ☞ Are there any potential limitations? How will I overcome these?
- ☞ How will I inform consultees of the outcomes and any progress?

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**If you need help reading or understanding this document, please take it to our Customer Service Centre, High Street, Colchester. Or phone 01206 282222. Text phone users should dial 18001 followed by the full number. We will try to provide a reading service, a translation, or any other format you need.**

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