

Statement of Community Involvement



DRAFT FOR CABINET

December 2015

Foreword

Introduction

The statement of community involvement (SCI) outlines Dacorum Borough Council's standards for involving the community in the planning process and identifies the ways it will achieve these standards. It sets out the Council's approach to public consultation in two areas of planning:

- 1) The preparation, alteration and continuing review of its planning policy documents; and
- 2) Consultation on planning applications

Consultation arrangements

This draft document has been published for targeted consultation, with feedback being sought from key groups and organisations who have a particular interest or involvement with planning and development issues. This includes:

- ***Specific consultation bodies***, as defined in the Localism Act 2001. This includes adjoining local planning authorities, Hertfordshire County Council and other key bodies such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and Heritage England.
- ***Planning agents and developers***
- ***Town and Parish Councils***
- ***Residents groups and community associations***

This consultation runs from **** January until *** February *** 2016.

Comments received before the *** February deadline will be reported to the Council's Cabinet and full Council in early Spring 2016, alongside any changes recommended to reflect comments received. Once formally adopted by the Council, the revised SCI will come into force and be used to manage consultation arrangements for both the policy development and decision taking functions of the Council as the local planning authority.

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Glossary

Some of the key terms used within this document are explained below.

Authority Monitoring Report (AMR):	A report produced each year by local authorities, which assesses progress with, and the effectiveness of, its plan-making documents. Formerly known as the Annual Monitoring Report.
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):	A new charge which local authorities in England and Wales will be empowered, but not required, to charge on most types of new development in their area. CIL charges will be based on simple formulae which relate to the size of the charge to the size and character of the development paying it.
Deposit Point	Locations across the Borough where consultation documents can be viewed.
Local Development Scheme (LDS)	This public statement sets out the programme for the preparation of the Local Plan and Local Development Documents.
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)	A body, designated by the Secretary of State, established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in an area.
Local Nature Partnership (LNP)	Partnership organisation with the main aim of improving the range of benefits and services obtained from a healthy natural environment. Also provide local leadership on environmental issues and to contribute to the green economy by linking with LEPs.
Local Plan	Formal plans for a geographical area which are key points of reference when deciding planning applications. May consist of a single document or a set of documents including a Core Strategy, Site Allocations, Development Management Policies and Area Action Plans.
Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)	The Dacorum LSP is a partnership comprising representatives from public and private organisations, business and the voluntary sector and community groups. One of its roles is to prepare and implement the Sustainable Community Strategy.
Minerals and Waste Local Plan	Produced by Hertfordshire County Council, these documents set out plans relating to mineral and waste developments in Hertfordshire.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England, and how these are expected to be applied. The guidance is to be used by local planning authorities in drawing up plans and determining

	planning applications.
Neighbourhood Plan	Neighbourhood plans deal with local land use and development issues, rather than strategic issues. They may relate to regeneration or growth. They may cover where new shops, offices or homes should go and what green space should be protected. Plans should be compatible with national policies and policies in the local authority's adopted development plan.
Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)	Voluntary agreements that commit applicants, local planning authorities and partner organisations to an agreed timetable for determining proposals.
Planning Permission in Principle (PIP)	A new type of permission that is expected to be introduced via the Housing and Planning Bill. It is similar in practice to outline planning permission and is where 'in principle' consent is granted, subject to conditions that the development in question will not begin until certain matters (e.g. access, design, landscaping etc.) have been approved by the Planning Authority.
Programme Officer	Person appointed to assist with all administrative matters related to Examinations of Local Plan Documents.
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	SPDs provide more detailed planning guidance to supplement what is in the development plan. They are part of the local planning framework.
Sustainability Appraisal (SA)	An appraisal of local development documents against their environmental, social and economic impacts. This often incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), required for some plans and proposals under European law.

1. Introduction

Role of the SCI:

- 1.1 The purpose of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is to outline the Council's standards for community involvement in the planning process and to identify ways these standards will be achieved.
- 1.2 The SCI sets out the Council's approach to public consultation in two areas of planning:
 - **Planning Policies:** the preparation, alteration and continuing review of planning policy documents included within the Local Development Framework (LDF); and
 - **Planning Applications:** Consultation on planning applications.
- 1.3 In particular, the SCI sets out the following:

When the community will be consulted in relation to planning applications, development plan documents and supplementary planning documents;

What publicity and consultation is expected from applicants before they submit a planning application;

How the community will be engaged; and

Who will be involved.

- 1.4 All local planning authorities are required to produce an SCI. The legal requirements for consultation, community involvement and planning applications are currently set out in the following legislation:
 1. **Plan-making:** Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; Town and Country Planning (Local Development) England Regulations 2012; Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012; and
 2. **Planning applications:** Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Regulations 1990.
- 1.5 Dacorum's SCI demonstrates how these requirements are taken into account to ensure that, as far as possible, all parts of the community have the opportunity to engage in the process of preparing planning documents and making decisions on planning applications.

The role of consultation

- 1.6 Dacorum Borough Council encourages public involvement in planning matters, both in policy making and in deciding planning applications. Through the Statement of Community Involvement the Council will seek to:
- Give those who want to, the opportunity to constructively contribute and participate in the local planning process
 - Commence the consultation process to enable comments to be made in the early stages before policies are drawn up, i.e. at the issues and options stage
 - Actively encourage participation from any groups who have in the past been under-represented in the local planning process e.g. young people and people from ethnic minority groups
 - Keep organisations and the public informed about the local planning process and provide feedback on how their comments have been considered
 - Raise awareness of the local planning process
 - Ensure corporate participation
 - Learn from the consultation process and to seek ways of improving it
 - Draw from the consultation process, views of other Council services and where possible outside organisations.
- 1.7 The purpose of consulting on planning policy issues and planning applications is to provide opportunities for constructive contributions and involvement. This will:
- Enhance the quality of decision-making by the Council;
 - Promote shared responsibility (where appropriate); and
 - Raise awareness of the issues and understanding of decisions taken.

The need for an update

- 1.8 The Council adopted its first SCI in June 2006. Since then there have been changes in government regulations, policies, guidance and ways of communication which have implications for the way the Council involves the community in planning. These changes in circumstances include:
- **National Requirements:** Dacorum Borough Council has to adhere to and reflect the latest planning legislation and national policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promotes consultation before and after a planning application is submitted and at key stages when preparing the Local Plan and other planning policy documents.
 - **Resources:** Consultation is a resource intensive process, therefore practices must be revised due to increasing budget pressures and to ensure consult is carried out in the most efficient way.
 - **New technology:** The need to promote and utilise electronic communication techniques and as well as social media, as part of the 'Digital Dacorum' initiative.

Equalities Issues:

1.9 The content of the Statement of Community Involvement is compliant with the Equalities Act 2010. The purpose of the document is to show how we will engage in consultation with all sections of the community within Dacorum. Equality issues are considered through the sustainability appraisal process whereby the economic, environmental and social effects of the plan making process of a Local Plan will be checked against a series of sustainability criteria. This work will be undertaken by an independent consultant.

Consultation on this SCI:

1.8 The Council's Communications team has confirmed that the arrangements for consultation set out in this SCI are in broad compliance with the Council's Corporate Communication Strategy. Advice on individual consultation events will be sought from Communication Officers as necessary.

1.9 Feedback on this draft SCI is being sought from the follow groups:

- Specific consultation bodies, as defined in the Localism Act 2011. This includes adjoining local planning authorities, Hertfordshire County Council and other key bodies such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and Heritage England.
- Planning agents and developers
- Town and Parish Councils
- Residents groups and community associations

1.10 Consultation responses will be considered and any necessary changes made to the document prior to its formal adoption by the Council.

Monitoring and Review

1.11 The Council considers that this SCI represents a realistic use of the resources available. However, there is some flexibility to undertake additional consultation if required and if sufficient staff and financial resources are available.

1.12 Consultation methods will be assessed for their effectiveness in reaching communities throughout Dacorum through ongoing monitoring and feedback. This will help ensure future consultation targets those groups that have not previously engaged with the consultation process. This will ensure that techniques for community involvement remain appropriate, and are achieving a representative level of involvement across all communities and groups.

1.13 The SCI will be kept under review and sections revised where necessary as part of the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR). This AMR is usually published on an annual basis in January.

1.14 A full review of the SCI will be triggered be carried out of the Government requires us to change who we consult or to use different types of engagement. This review process will involve the parties consulted on this SCI.

PART A

Planning Policies

2. Who We Consult

- 2.1 To guide the plan-making process, the Council has divided consultees into four sub-sections to reflect requirements in government regulations:
 - a) Specific Consultation Bodies
 - b) General Consultation Bodies
 - c) Other Consultation Bodies
 - d) Wider community
- 2.2 In addition, other Council departments and elected Members will also be consulted.
- 2.3 The role and composition of each of these categories is explained further below.
- 2.4 Specific consultation bodies and general consultation bodies are statutory consultees and if considered relevant to a particular issue or document they must be consulted at a prescribed stage of the document preparation. Equally, by law, businesses and residents in the area should be consulted if it is considered appropriate.
- 2.5 These lists are not exhaustive and may change over time as a result of organisational restructures and/or legislative change. The bodies consulted will be continually reviewed and updated as appropriate.

(a) Specific Consultation Bodies

- 2.6 The Localism Act (2011) has introduced the Duty to Co-operate which requires planning authorities and other public bodies to actively engage and work jointly on strategic matters.
- 2.7 Section 110 of the Localism Act and guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set out the duty to cooperate. This duty requires Dacorum Borough Council to work with neighbouring authorities and other public bodies involved in planning when it comes to tackling issues at a larger than local scale. The bodies that we are bound to work together with by the duty to co-operate are referred to as 'Specific Consultation Bodies.' They comprise:
 - Local planning authorities that adjoin the Borough;
 - Hertfordshire County Council and any other County Councils that adjoin the Borough;
 - Town and Parish Councils within and adjoining the Borough;
 - A local policing body;
 - The Coal Authority¹;
 - The Environment Agency;

- The Historic Buildings and Monument Commission for England (English Heritage);
- Natural England;
- The Marine Management Organisation¹;
- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited;
- Highways Agency;
- Any person to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under Section 106 (3) (a) of the Communication Act 2003, and any person who owns or control electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the area;
- Primary Care Trust²;
- Utilities and service providers; and
- Homes and Communities Agency.

2.8 In addition, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to work collaboratively with Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

2.9 The Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is a business-led partnership which aims to accelerate economic growth in the county and create jobs. It has an important role to play in encouraging inward investment, facilitating growth of the local economy and engaging with local businesses. The Council will work in partnership with the LEP in its efforts to consult with the local business community and potential inward investors.

2.10 The Hertfordshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) is one of a number of LNPs across the country. Their main aims are to improve the range of benefits and services we get from a healthy natural environment, provide local leadership on environmental issues and to contribute to the green economy by linking with LEPs. They will also contribute to local authority planning and co-operate with other partnerships where this results in more efficient use of resources. Partnerships will be fully inclusive with representation from local authorities, community forums, government arms-length bodies, civil society organisations and environmental charities, existing biodiversity and green infrastructure partnerships, land owners, businesses, LEPs, health and wellbeing reps and education establishments.

2.11 Town and Parish Councils are an important set of consultees, as they have a key role to play in voicing community needs and issues. Meetings and information exchanges with Town and parish Councils are an effective use of resources and assist in developing understanding between the Council and local communities on planning and development matters.

(b) General Consultation Bodies

2.12 The Council must also ensure it consults the following groups:

¹ These bodies are considered to be of limited relevance to Dacorum due to the nature of the Borough

² Now replaced by the GP Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)

- Voluntary bodies, some or all of whose activities benefits any part of the area;
- Bodies which represent the interest of:
 - different ethnic or national groups in the area;
 - different religious groups in the area;
 - disabled people in the area
- Persons carrying on businesses in the area.

(c) Other Consultation Bodies

2.13 Whilst not a requirement of Government regulations, the Council will also consult the following groups and organisations who may have an interest in planning policy matters:

- Environmental groups;
- Groups representing users, and the providers, of leisure, sport and recreation
- Health, education, social service and community based service providers;
- Cultural, historical and archaeological groups or bodies;
- Citizens' / borough / tenants panels;
- Local residents and community associations;
- Registered social landlords;
- House builders and developers;
- Landowners and land agents;
- Public transport users and providers;
- Groups representing retired and elderly persons;
- Groups representing young people; and
- The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

(d) Wider Community

2.14 It is very important that the wider community- people who live, work, run businesses and study in the borough – are consulted.

2.15 The Strategic Planning team maintain an electronic database of consultees to involve at various stages of the plan making process. Members of the public who would like to be notified about planning consultations and the progress of documents can add their details to this database. Those wishing to be added to, or deleted from this list should contact the Council at:

Email: strategic.planning@dacorum.gov.uk

Phone: 01442 228660 / 01442 228471

Write to: Strategic Planning
Dacorum Borough Council
Civic Centre
Marlowes

Hemel Hempstead
HP1 1HH

(e) Other Council Departments and Councillors

2.16 Relevant Council departments and key elected Members will be consulted through the preparation of new planning policies and guidance. Borough Councillors represent their constituents and therefore understand the communities they represent. A member steering group (known as a Task and Finish Group) may be used to consider detailed issues and provide informal advice to Officers.

3. How we will consult

Efficient Use of Resources

- 3.1 Consultation and the appropriate methods used at any particular stage will depend on:
- Geographic coverage of the document
 - Stage of the planning process reached
 - Nature of topic/area being considered
 - The appropriateness of the method for that particular consultation
 - Availability of resources
- 3.2 When preparing planning policy document, the Council needs to balance the extent of community engagement with the available staffing and financial resources. Staff within the planning policy team will primarily be responsible for carrying out the consultation processes for the Local Plan.
- 3.3 In order to avoid consultation fatigue we will maximise opportunities for joint consultation within the Council and with our partners or rely on consultations carried out by other parts of the Council if appropriate for the topic.
- 3.4 Resources will be targeted to where they will be used most effectively. Workshops and focus groups are resource intensive and will therefore be used where a more considered response is required or where there is an opportunity to consider a topic in more depth to encourage greater participation from particular sections of the community.

Methods of Communication

- 3.5 Since the first Statement of Community was adopted in 2006, methods of interaction and communication with the Council have significantly changed. Internet access has increased with a shift towards online services. Dacorum Borough Council will make best use of www.dacorum.gov.uk for planning consultations.
- 3.6 However, the Council recognises not all residents will have access to the internet. Therefore documents will also be made available in a variety of formats to enable widest possible audience to provide feedback on planning consultations. Particular efforts will be focused towards reaching 'hard to reach groups' such as young people, elderly people and those from ethnic minorities who do not often take part in planning consultations. Table 1 below explains the types of communications methods that will be used.

Table 1: Methods of Communication During Consultation

Method	Explanation
PAPER	
Documents made available for inspection	<p>Making documents available for inspection at specified 'Deposit Points' within the Borough is a minimum requirement set by planning regulations. Deposit points are the Borough Council Offices in Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring. All three locations are accessible to people with disabilities.</p> <p>Copies of documents are also sent to local libraries within the area and are usually held within the reference section.</p> <p>The availability of documents and opening times of the Deposit Points will be advertised in a number of ways, including letter / email, via the Council's website, through statutory notices within the local press and, where possible, through Dacorum Digest (see below).</p> <p>The Regulations allow for a reasonable charge to be made for copies of documents requested by individuals or organisations.</p>
Summary documents and questionnaires	<p>Summary documents and questionnaires may be provided and posted out where necessary. Where these are not posted out, information regarding how to access such documents will be made available at drop off points and the Council's website during the course of a consultation.</p>
Mail Shots (letters and emails)	<p>Mail shots are used to notify relevant bodies of consultation events depending on the issues raised, and are mainly used for statutory notification or to communicate with a specific group of bodies.</p> <p>The Council maintains a consultee database with those who wish to be informed of various stages of the Local Plan process.</p> <p>Email is an increasingly preferred means of communication on planning policy consultations. Email is a resource saving, quick and accurate way of communication with the public and various stakeholders</p> <p>The Council will not send notifications by post where a valid email address is held. Where possible the Council will use email as opposed to posting hard copy documents and letters in order to support its move towards being a paperless authority.</p>
Newspapers	<p>It is no longer a statutory requirement for local authorities to advertise consultation on planning policy documents in the local press. However, where appropriate the Council may decide to place an advert in the statutory notices page of The</p>

	<p>Gazette and St Albans Review. These notices will include information about where information can be found and consultation deadlines. Press releases will also usually be issued: although it will be a matter for the newspapers to decide if they wish to provide coverage of the story.</p> <p>Information will also be included in the Council newspaper – Dacorum Digest – which is delivered to every household in the Borough on a quarterly basis. Articles will inform the community of the issues under discussion, how to access information and how they can become involved. This provides a useful method of alerting the community to any forthcoming publications as well as providing updates on the results of previous consultation.</p>
Newsletters	<p>Town and Parish Councils and Ward Councillors in non-parished areas, will be encouraged to help raise the profile of consultation via their newsletters – both paper and online. Officers will provide assistance in writing articles and providing web links as required.</p>
Citizens Panel	<p>The Council’s Citizen Panel may be invited to consider particular planning issues, usually via completion of a questionnaire, or attendance at a focus group (see below).</p>
DIGITAL	
Dacorum website and interactive online consultation portal	<p>Digital communication is becoming an increasingly important method of interaction, and is being promoted through the ‘Digital Dacorum’ initiative.</p> <p>The Council publicises information on forthcoming consultations, including start and finish times on the Planning Policies web page of its website:</p> <p>http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning</p> <p>All Planning policy documents, consultation documents and supporting information will be made available, together with a direct link to an interactive online consultation portal.</p> <p>The consultation portal lists all planning policy consultations in one place, making it accessible and easy for people to comment online. By registering their details individuals and organisations will also be directly notified of all forthcoming consultations they may be interested in. The feedback received on each consultation can also be read via the portal. The link to the online portal is:</p> <p>http://consult.dacorum.gov.uk/portal</p> <p>Where appropriate links will be provided to this information from the Council’s homepage, Planning News page, and</p>

	consultation page.
Social Media	With an increasing number of residents and businesses using various forms of social media, consultation notifications will be posted on the Councils social media pages (e.g. Facebook and Twitter). This will be used to inform people of upcoming consultation events, where they can view particular documents, how they can submit comments and where any exhibitions and workshops will be held.
FACE TO FACE	
Meetings with selected stakeholders and key interest groups	<p>This provides a useful way of identifying key issues, getting key bodies involved and achieving alignment with other strategies and initiatives.</p> <p>The Council hosts an annual Town and Parish Conference which provides a useful forum to raise and discuss planning and development matters.</p>
Focus Groups / Workshops /	Workshops and focus groups enable a range of stakeholders, including local residents, to influence and shape proposals in a way that helps meet their aspirations and concerns. These events are usually more helpful when held early on in the plan-making process.
Exhibitions	Whilst not suitable or necessary for all consultations, exhibitions provide a useful way of conveying key pieces of information and providing a mechanism for stakeholders to understand the role and content of the consultation and discuss issues with Officers.
'Task and Finish' Groups	Informal meetings arranged with Member representatives, to discuss key policy issues and designations. Membership of this group will be politically balanced, and whilst having no decision-making powers, will provide a useful discussion forum before policy documents are formally considered by Cabinet and/or Full Council.

Consultation Challenges

3.7 Dacorum Borough Council recognises that the planning system can seem complex and confusing, so will try to make consultation documents as accessible as it can. Table 3 sets out some of the potential challenges facing the Council and the solutions that will be put in place to help maximise consultation participation.

Table 2: Methods to Overcome Consultation Challenges

Nature of Challenge	Solution
Language barriers may affect the	Translations and interpretation will be

community's ability to understand oral and written communications.	available if required.
Low uptake of online services due to low incomes or lack of IT skills.	Documents will be made available in paper form as well as online. Arrangements will be made for the community to access online services e.g. visiting public computers at council offices and local libraries.
Young people are less responsive to traditional forms of consultation.	Innovative and interactive consultation methods will need to be employed to engage this section of the community, including increasing use of social media.
Varied working hours and other commitments.	Use of the Council's website and online consultation portal will help ensure people with work and other commitments can be involved in consultations. Where possible, exhibitions will run from daytime into evenings.
Some areas may be dominated by business and some by residents.	Ensure a mix of consultation to be undertaken to ensure maximum consultation coverage and encourage feedback from both communities
Lack of public understanding of the planning system	Unnecessary technical jargon will be avoided. Where appropriate, summary documents will be published.

4. When we will consult

Introduction

- 4.1 As a local planning authority, Dacorum Borough Council is required to produce plans about new development in the area over a 15-20 year period. These plans need to assess the type and quantity of new housing, ensure there is sufficient land for employment needs, decide where to locate new development and enable delivery of other facilities that will be required by the development (shops, open space, community infrastructure, utilities etc.) and. Whilst delivering such plans it is essential that Borough's character and environment is conserved and where possible enhanced, ensuring that Dacorum remains a place where people wish to continue to live and work in the future. Involving the local community and other interest groups in these plans is very important.
- 4.2 A number of different types of planning documents will be prepared (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Types of Plan Making Document



- 4.3 As illustrated above, Government classifies some documents as Local Development Documents (LDD), whilst others are called Development Plan Documents (DPD). The Local Plan is both a Local Development Documents and Development Plan Documents.
- 4.4 DPDs are the main documents the Council will use when determining planning applications. LDDs play a supporting role: providing additional planning advice or information relating the preparation and performance of the Local Plan. Further information on the different documents is set out below.

Minerals and Waste Local Plan

- 4.5 These plans are produced by Hertfordshire County Council and set out policies and proposals relating to mineral and waste developments in Hertfordshire. Dacorum Borough Council is not directly involved in writing these plans but is a statutory consultee. The County Council has produced its own SCI for matters it is responsible for and will carrying out consultation in accordance with this:
<http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/envplan/plan/hccdevplan/sci1/>

Neighbourhood Plans

- 4.6 The Localism Act 2011 made provision for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans directly by local communities. These plans let people set out their vision for their local area and general planning policies to guide development in their neighbourhood. Neighbourhood Plans can only be prepared by Town and Parish Councils or by a designated Neighbourhood Forum. There is further information about Neighbourhood Plans on the Council's website:
<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home%5Cregeneration/grovehill-future-project/neighbourhood-planning>

Local Plan

- 4.7 Dacorum Borough Council has begun work on a new Local Plan. This will incorporate the early partial review of the Core Strategy adopted in September 2013. This new Local Plan will be pivotal to delivering Dacorum Borough Council's vision for the next 15-20 years. It is expected that the plan will comprise a single written document, with an associated Policies Map, rather than a series of separate documents. It will be supported by appropriate Supplementary Planning Documents (see below).
- 4.8 The Local Plan will contain planning policies, site allocations and other designations, all of which will be taken into account when deciding planning applications.
- 4.9 It will be subject to rigorous procedures including public consultation with the community and examination by an independent Inspector. It must be found 'sound' by the Inspector before it can be adopted by the Council.

- 4.10 The Local Plan also requires a Sustainable Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) where the economic, social and environmental impacts of a plan are considered. This Sustainability Appraisal must also be made available as part of the consultation.
- 4.11 Arrangements for consultation will depend on which stage the plan has reached (see Figure 2). These arrangements are summarised below. References to regulations relate to the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Figure 2: Stages in preparing the Local Plan



Stage 1: Prepare Plan (Regulation 18)

This stage covers the 'Issues and Options' stage and also any draft plans published for comment.

Whilst the plan is being prepared, it is important that the local community have the opportunity to identify local issues and influence options for future development and examine the evidence.

What will Dacorum Borough Council do?

- Maintain and update our consultation database.
- Advertise any consultation and clearly identify how and where material can be viewed and accessed.
- Ensure compliance with current planning regulations, consulting more widely where it is relevant to do so.
- Make the plan and supporting documents available online and printed if necessary.
- Make summary documents, maps and diagrams explaining key issues publically available online and printed if necessary.
- Take comments received into account alongside technical evidence and national policies and guidance.

Who will Dacorum Borough Council Consult?

- Consult specific, general and other consultation bodies where appropriate (full list in Section Two).
- Consult the wider community at least once during this stage in the production of the document.

How will Dacorum Borough Council Consult?

A wide range of types of consultation will be used during this stage in order to understand key issues and views. Methods will include one or more of the following:

- Contact persons registered on the Council's consultation database (by letter or email) and via the online consultation portal.
- Events, displays, exhibitions, surveys and meetings as appropriate.
- Surveys and questionnaires.
- Workshops or focus groups.
- Drop-in events, displays or exhibitions.
- Make plans available on our website and at deposit points.
- Targeted measures for hard to reach groups.
- Raise awareness of consultation via social media.

Stage 2: Publish Proposed Submission (Regulations 19, 20 and 22)

This stage is often referred to as 'Pre-Submission.'

Dacorum Borough Council will prepare and consult on the final draft of the plan prior to submission to the Secretary of State for Examination. Representations submitted at this stage will be forwarded to the Planning Inspector.

What will Dacorum Borough Council do?

- Consult on the plan for at least 6 weeks.
- Publicise where and when the documents can be inspected through what is called a 'Statement of Representations Procedure.'
- Make the plan and supporting documents available online and printed if necessary.
- When appropriate, publish summary documents, maps and diagrams explaining key issues.
- Raise awareness of consultation via social media.
- Take into account all comments made within the consultation period and if necessary, make changes to the plan before it is submitted to the Secretary of State.
- Notify consultees of the submission by letter or email.

Who will Dacorum Borough Council consult?

- All consultees listed in Section Two, including all who submitted comments at earlier stages.

How will Dacorum Borough Council consult?

- Contact persons registered on the Council's consultation database (by letter or email) and via the online consultation portal.
- Make plans available on our website and at deposit points.
- Raise awareness of consultation via social media.

Stage 3: Examination (Regulations 23 and 24)

Dacorum Borough Council is required to submit a plan and supporting information to the Secretary of State for a public examination. The appointed Inspector will take into account written comments on the plan and if invited by the Inspector, those who commented can also appear at the examination to speak in support of, or against the plan.

What will Dacorum Borough Council do?

- Make a copy of the full Examination library available online and at the Council offices in Hemel Hempstead.
- Appoint a Programme Officer who will publish full details of the Examination of Plan on the Council's website.
- Ensure everyone who commented on the plan at Proposed Submission stage is aware of the Examination at least 6 weeks in advance.

Who will Dacorum Borough Council consult?

- Specific, general and other consultation bodies who previously were invited to make representations on the plan, and those who requested to be notified, about the submission of the plan to the Secretary of State.
- The Programme Officer will notify all those who commented on the plan at stage 2 with details of the Examination.

How will Dacorum Borough Council Consult?

- Notify relevant people and organisations on the Council's consultation database (by letter or email).

Stage 4: Adoption (Regulations 25 and 26)

The Council will consider the Inspector's Report issued following the examination. Changes will be made where appropriate and then the document will be formally adopted.

What will Dacorum Borough Council do?

- Publish the Inspector's Report and notify bodies who requested to be notified.
- Make the adopted Plan, Sustainability Appraisal Report, Adoption Statement and other relevant information available for inspection at the Council's Hemel Hempstead office and on the Council's website.
- Publish the adopted document and place an Adoption Statement on the website.

Who will Dacorum Borough Council notify?

- The Adoption Statement will be sent to all individual and organisations who asked to be notified, and to the Secretary of State.

Supplementary Planning Documents

4.12 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide additional guidance on adopted policies in the Local Plan. They include issue-based documents, design guidance and site master plans and briefs. Their role is to provide more detail about how policies in the Local Plan should be used. SPDs will also be prepared with the involvement of relevant consultees. They are not subject to examination by an independent inspector but do need to be formally adopted by the Council.

4.13 Figure 3 below identifies the stages used in the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents. References to regulations relate to the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Figure 3: Stages in Supplementary Planning Documents



Stage 1: Prepare Draft Supplementary Planning Document

The scoping stage helps gather ideas and look at alternative approaches before preparing the document.

What will Dacorum Borough Council do and who will we consult?

- Consult organisations and individuals who are relevant to the successful implementation of Supplementary Planning Documents.
- Consider wider consultation, depending on scope and content of document.

How will Dacorum Borough Council consult?

Consultation will vary depending on the type of SPD and a variety of methods will be considered, including:

- Contact persons and bodies registered on the Council's planning database.
- Make documents available on our website and at deposit points.

We will also consider:

- Workshops or focus groups.
- Meetings.
- Drop in events.
- Exhibitions.

Stage 2: Publish Draft Supplementary Planning Document (Regulations 12 and 13)

Dacorum Borough Council is required to consult on the Supplementary Planning Documents. Publishing draft copies of the document provides an opportunity to consider comments on the document and make any necessary changes prior to the document being finalised.

What will Dacorum Borough Council do and who will we consult?

- Consult on the document for at least 4 weeks.
- Publicise where and when the document can be inspected.
- Consult specific, general and other bodies to whom the Supplementary Planning Document may be relevant.
- Consult residents and businesses in the area, depending on nature of document.
- Consider and report all comments received.
- Prepare a Consultation Report setting out the consultation processes, summarising the main issues raised and the Council's response.

How will Dacorum Borough Council consult?

The way Dacorum Borough Council will consult will vary due to the nature of the Supplementary Planning Document being consulted. Ways we will consult include:

- Contact persons and bodies registered on the Council's planning database.
- Make plans available on our website and at deposit points.

We will also consider:

- Workshops or focus groups.
- Meetings.
- Drop in events.
- Exhibitions.

Stage 3: Adoption (Regulation 14)

Once Dacorum Borough Council has taken into account comments and made any changes, it will be adopted by the Council's Cabinet. Independent examinations for Supplementary Planning Documents are not required.

What will Dacorum Borough Council do?

- Adopt the Supplementary Planning Document.
- Publish the adopted document and place an Adoption Statement on the website.
- Make documents available for inspection at the deposit points.

Who will Dacorum Borough Council Notify?

- Send copy of the Adoption Statement to anyone who has asked to be notified.

Local Development Schemes (LDS)

4.14 The Local Development Scheme sets out the programme for the preparation of the Local Plan. A copy is available on the Council's website:

<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning>

4.15 Due to the factual nature of its content, it is not subject to public consultation.

Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)

4.16 Previously referred to as the 'Annual Monitoring Report', this document is produced by local authorities to assess progress with, and the effectiveness of, plan-making documents. These are also available to view on the Council's website:

<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/local-planning-framework/monitoring-reports-land-position-statements>

4.17 Due to the factual nature of its contents, it is not subject to public consultation.

Other documents

Informal Masterplans and Planning Statements

4.18 Sometimes the Council will prepare a masterplan or planning statement relating to a site or area that does not require the formal status of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). These documents will usually involve some consultation, but this will be more limited and targeted than required by the regulations governing formal SPDs.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

4.19 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a new way of collecting contributions from developments towards the provision of infrastructure required to support growth within Dacorum. It is a tariff that will be applied per square meter of new development which may vary by scale, use and geography. Dacorum Borough Council is responsible for setting a CIL charge, collecting CIL money and allocating money for infrastructure projects. The CIL charge is applicable to developments that received planning permission on or after 1 July 2015.

Advice Notes / Clarification Notes

4.20 From time to time the Council may prepare documents that provide additional advice or clarification about how it will apply policies or processes. Consultation will not usually be required on these documents, as their role is to

explain the application of existing policies or processes which will have already been subject to consultation.

Reviewing responses and opinions from consultation

- 4.21 All consultation responses received within the allocated timescale will be acknowledged and taken into account to inform the decisions the Council makes. All comments received will be made publically available via the consultation portal and hard copies made available for public inspection at the Council offices.
- 4.22 For all Local Development Documents (LDDs), a consultation statement will be published. This will provide information about:
- Who was consulted;
 - Consultation techniques used;
 - Dates of consultation period(s); and
 - The main issues raised and Council's response to these.
- 4.23 These consultation reports will assist elected Members in deciding what changes may need to be made to a document before it is adopted.
- 4.24 Any decisions made by the Council following consultation will also take into account a number of external factors including government policies, guidance, technical evidence and the Sustainability Appraisal.

PART B

Planning Applications

5. Introduction

- 5.1 For many people, the submission of a planning application, on a neighbouring or nearby site or premises, is the first, and possibly, the only time that they will become directly involved in the planning system. It is important that anyone who feels that they may be affected by a development proposal or has an opinion that they wish to be taken into account before a decision is made, is able to take part in and respond to consultation.
- 5.2 This section sets out the consultation requirements for applicants before a planning application is submitted, how the rest of the community will be informed about applications and how they can be involved in influencing decisions.

6. Pre-application Consultation and Advice

- 6.1 Before submitting a planning application, we encourage prospective applicants to seek advice at the pre-application stage. This allows for the identification of issues and constraints at an early stage in the design process; it enables concerns to be raised early; and can improve the quality of the scheme.
- 6.2 At an early stage, developers should discuss with service providers the implications of development on, and contribution towards, provision of infrastructure. In addition, where proposals are of particular significance, for example they would involve a significant impact upon the main retail, commercial, employment and leisure facilities of the borough, then the council will encourage prospective developers to undertake pre-application consultation with the community. This would usually be through the use of public meetings, meetings with local residents groups, amenity groups or parish/town councils, exhibitions and press releases. However, the council cannot make prospective developers or residents seek pre-application advice or carry out consultation. In some circumstances quite significant forms of development may not have been subject to any pre-application discussion.
- 6.3 Consultation with statutory consultees may take place as part of the pre-application service. However, some of the consultees may charge for advice and this will need to be paid for separately by the applicant.
- 6.4 Further details of the service can be found on the Council's website below including details of charges which will be updated in 2016.
<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home%5Cplanning-development/planning-applications/pre-application-advice>

7. Planning Performance Agreements

- 7.1 Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) are primarily aimed at complex development proposals. They are voluntary agreements that commit applicants,

local planning authorities and partner organisations to an agreed timetable for determining proposals. Essentially they are a collaborative project management process, which aim to improve the quality of development and decision making by taking away national targets for determining an application (13 or 16 weeks).

- 7.2 When a PPA is proposed, an inception meeting will be held with all the relevant parties. At this meeting a project team, with named persons from each party, will be agreed and a framework will be established setting out the process, timing and fees applicable. The framework will include the pre-application procedure, number and nature of meetings to be held, timing of submission of application through to decision and discharge of conditions and an implementation programme for the development. The fee will be dependent on the scale and complexity of the development, the number of parties involved and number and length of meetings, time involved in research and information gathering.

8. Community Involvement in Planning Application Decisions

- 8.1 Development should be in accordance with the policies and proposals set out in the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. The previous sections of this SCI have dealt with how stakeholders can influence the drafting of these policies and proposals. However, there will continue to be the opportunity for individuals, groups and organisations to become involved in the decision making process for planning applications.
- 8.2 The Government has set minimum standards for consultation on planning and other related applications. Local planning authorities are required to undertake a formal period of public consultation, prior to deciding a planning application. This is prescribed in [Article 15 of the Development Management Procedure Order](#). There are separate arrangements for listed buildings which are set out in [Regulation 5](#) and [Regulation 5A](#) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Regulations 1990 (as amended).
- 8.3 The Council currently goes further in trying to engage the community in the determination of applications. For example the Council currently sends out individual letters to any neighbouring properties telling owners/occupiers about planning applications rather than simply relying on a site notice. This is considered to be the most effective way of letting people know about planning proposals that may affect them.
- 8.4 Table 3 below sets out the current practices for statutory consultation.

Table 3 – Statutory Publicity Requirements for Planning and Heritage Applications

Type of development	Site notice	Site notice or neighbour notification letter	Newspaper advert	Website
Applications for major development as defined in Article 2 of the Development Management Procedure Order		✓	✓	✓
Applications subject to Environmental Impact Assessment which are accompanied by an environmental statement	✓		✓	✓
Applications which do not accord with the development plan in force in the area	✓		✓	✓
Applications which would affect a right of way to which Part 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 applies	✓		✓	✓
Applications for planning permission not covered in the entries above eg non-major development		✓		✓
Applications for listed building consent where works to the exterior of the building are proposed	✓		✓	✓
Applications to vary or discharge conditions attached to a listed building consent or conservation area consent, or involving exterior works to a listed building.	✓		✓	✓

Note: the [Environment Impact Assessment guidance](#) sets out further publicity and consultation requirements for applicants where this is relevant.

- 8.5 No system for publicising planning applications can be infallible, however extensive. There needs to be a balance between consideration of cost, speed of decision making and providing a reasonable opportunity for public comment. The current procedures do balance these conflicting issues.

9. Consultation procedures for planning applications

- 9.1 These notes apply to applications for full planning permission, applications submitted by the Borough Council, applications for outline planning permission and subsequent applications for the approval of reserved matters.
- 9.2 No notification/consultation other than with appropriate statutory/expert consultees is carried out for applications for certificate of appropriate alternative development, prior approvals, agricultural determination, applications for the discharge of conditions or applications for lawful development certificates.
- 9.3 Applications for County Matter applications and Statutory Undertakers the Borough Council is a consultee and not the determining authority.
- 9.4 Applications for approval of works to trees that are subject to a Tree Preservation Order only the Trees and Woodlands Section is consulted. These are normally applications where the technical expertise of members of this section are required to ascertain whether the works are acceptable. Details are also sent to the Town or Parish Councils.
- 9.5 Applications for works to trees in Conservation Area (TCA) only the Trees and Woodlands Section are consulted. These are normally applications where the technical expertise of members of this section is required to ascertain whether the works are acceptable. Details are also sent to the Town or Parish councils.
- 9.6 Applications for Lawful Development Certificates require a technical assessment of whether planning permission is required. Comments on the planning merits of the proposal cannot be taken into account. Where the issue is whether a development has been in existence for 4/10 years some consultation with residents/Town or Parish Councils may be carried out to verify information submitted by the applicant. This will be determined by the Planning Case Officer on a case by case basis.
- 9.7 Representations on any planning or other application can be made in writing to Planning and Regeneration. We will accept comments by letter, e-mail or through the Council's website. Representations should refer only to material planning considerations.

10. How a decision is made

- 10.1 Once the application has been registered and the consultation letters sent out the application is passed to the Planning Case Officer. When the Case Officer

has visited the site and received all comments he/she will write a report recommending that planning permission is either refused or granted.

- 10.2 Not all of our planning applications are reported to the Council's Development Control Committee. If the application is not contentious and falls within the Council's Scheme of Delegation the application will be decided by the Group Manager or other delegated officers. In other cases the application will be reported to the Development Control Committee who sit on a three-weekly cycle. The Committee will then decide on the application.

Development Control Committee

- 10.3 The Committee is made up of 14 of the Council's elected Members.

- 10.4 Meetings of the Development Control Committee meeting are open to the public. You can address Councillors at the meeting. There are some rules to make sure that as many people as practicable can be heard fairly. You need to register in advance of the meeting with the Council's Member Support Section. Speakers are given 3 minutes to address the Committee. Where more than 1 person wishes to speak, on a single item, a total time of 5 minutes is shared between speakers.

- 10.5 Further information on the process and how to register to speak can be found on the following link:

<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home%5Ccouncil-democracy/meetings-minutes-and-agendas/speak-at-a-committee-meeting/speak-at-a-development-control-committee-meeting>

Post decision

- 10.6 Decision notices are sent to applicants electronically and can be viewed on the Council's website.

- 10.7 A weekly list provides a list of all applications determined in a particular week. This is available on the website:

<http://site.dacorum.gov.uk/planonline/acolnetcgi.gov>

- 10.8 The weekly list of applications received and determined is also sent to Town/Parish Councils for information purposes.

Appeals

- 10.9 After the council has reached a decision on a planning or a related application, and has refused it or permitted it with conditions attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against that decision, either in writing or with a hearing. The requirements for notification with regard to appeals are set down in government regulations and the council will comply with these. Those who have commented on an application that is subject to an appeal may be invited to submit further comments to the Planning Inspectorate (often dependant on the

type of appeal).

- 10.10 The council produces information on its website about the appeal process which gives further details of the appeal procedures and the potential for third parties to be involved.

11. Review

- 11.1 Members of the Development Management team attend a monthly agent/developers' forum to discuss relevant issues regarding the planning process and to provide information to agents, for example regarding new government policy. These meetings are organised and arranged by a group who regularly submit applications in the Borough. This provides an opportunity for the Council to promote the key principles of this Statement of Community Involvement.