

# Northumberland Local Plan

## Statement of Community Involvement

Adopted February 2015



**NORTHUMBERLAND**

Northumberland County Council

[www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)

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## 1. Introduction to the Statement Community Involvement

### What is Planning?

**1.1** Planning is a term which means different things to different people. Planning is one of the functions of the County Council – it is a statutory role. The Council has a responsibility to plan how Northumberland will look in the future, it can't stay the same because as there is a need to make room for new people, new jobs and new services. However, in planning for new development, the Council also has to seek to conserve and enhance what is good and valued about the environment of Northumberland. Through the statutory Planning process the Council does all of this by:

- drawing up a 'Local Plan' for Northumberland;
- helping local communities draw up their own plans; and
- deciding people's planning applications.

### Involving people

**1.2** The Council cannot plan the future of Northumberland without the help of its communities, its workforce, its visitors and all the many businesses, groups and organisations with a stake in Northumberland's future. The Council therefore needs to involve people in every part of the planning process in Northumberland, from the County-wide Local Plan to a neighbour's planning application to extend their property.

### What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

**1.3** This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) explains the Council's commitments on involving people in the planning process. It sets out how the Council will:

- Encourage communities to participate in drawing up the **Local Plan**;
- Assist Town and Parish Councils to prepare their own **Neighbourhood Plans**, if they wish to do so;
- Inform people and consult with them on **planning applications** and future developments in their local area; and
- Process people's comments on plans and proposals and provide proper **feedback**

### Why a Statement of Community Involvement?

**1.4** The Council has statutory responsibilities to allow people to participate in and comment on development plans and proposals which may affect them and their local area.

**1.5** The Localism Act of 2011 passed significant powers back to communities to shape the environment in which they live – e.g. through Neighbourhood Plans. The Council is encouraging and supporting communities who have decided to go down this route.

**1.6** The SCI intends to help people to understand the planning system and how they can get involved in shaping the places where people live, learn, work and play. The Council recognises that involving the community more closely in planning decisions will help to create better outcomes for local communities and for our local environment thereby enhancing people's quality of life in Northumberland.

## **1. Introduction to the Statement Community Involvement**

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**1.7** The Council wants to ensure that when new planning policies are proposed and when planning applications are made, everyone with an interest has an equal opportunity to influence how decisions are made.

**1.8** This is a statutory document. Once it is adopted, the Council must follow the actions it has set out within it.

### **How has this Statement of Community Involvement been put together?**

**1.9** When Northumberland County Council was formed in 2009, from the old County and its Districts, extensive consultation was carried out to establish how the Council should be engaging people and organisations in the planning process and how this should link with the wider relationship between the Council and the communities within Northumberland. The result was the Council's first Statement of Community Involvement, adopted in September 2009.

**1.10** This updated document reflects notable changes to the planning system and the way in which engagement takes place – resulting especially from the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in 2012, as well as the additional empowering of communities through the Localism Act 2011.

**1.11** In addition, since 2009, the Council has developed and refined its engagement techniques and, as a result, has built up a number of charters, compacts, and protocols, many of which deal with how the Council consults with different sections of the population or on particular aspects of our work. This new SCI brings together this work, having regard to more recent legislative changes.

**1.12** This revised SCI also takes account of lessons learned from past engagement and reflects changes in the way the Council communicates and provides information to communities. For example the opportunities, as well as limitations, of using online systems to gather views. This version of the SCI therefore aims to be as relevant as possible to communities across Northumberland as well as other key stakeholders.

### **Consultation on this version**

**1.13** Between October 2013 and January 2014 the Council invited comments on a draft revised SCI. A number of stakeholders provided very useful input on how best to involve people effectively in the planning process. In addition, a further review has been undertaken of additional changes in the planning system and experience of supporting communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans.

**1.14** This has led to some reorganisation of the SCI so that it provides people with a good understanding of how the planning process operates in Northumberland and how they can get involved in it.

# 1. Introduction to the Statement Community Involvement

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## Questions

**1.15** Any questions about the SCI, its content or the process which led to it should be directed to the Council's Planning and Housing Policy Team, using the contacts below.

- **Email:** [PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk)
- **Post:** Planning and Housing Policy Team, Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF
- **Telephone:** 0845 600 6400

## 2. Consulting People – Our Values

### 2. Consulting People – Our Values

**2.1** It is important that engagement in the planning process is guided by a set of consultation values, established specifically for planning matters. The SCI therefore defines a set of values based on how the Council believes it should work and how, through engagement you told us you would like the Council to work. Those values remain largely the same as those set out in the first SCI.

#### **CONSULTATION VALUES – SERVICE STANDARDS**

The Council will:

1. Involve people at the start of and throughout the decision-making process on planning applications and when developing new planning policy.
2. Engage with relevant people and organisations at the appropriate time using effective and appropriate engagement methods, allowing sufficient time for meaningful consultation and allowing all individuals and communities the opportunity to influence decisions.
3. Be adaptable, recognising that different consultation methods will be required in different circumstances.
4. Respect the diversity of people and their lifestyles and give people a fair chance to have their voice heard regardless of gender, age, race, abilities, sexual orientation, circumstances or wherever they live.
5. Communicate clearly with people using plain English and avoiding jargon.
6. Ensure that people's views are taken into account in reaching decisions on all planning matters using the most appropriate methods of community involvement as set out throughout this document.
7. Make documents publicly available on the Council's website and where appropriate across the networks of Council offices and libraries.
8. Be consistent in our approach, regardless of the location within Northumberland or the planning issue covered by the policy or proposal.

**2.2** Chapters 7 and 8 explain in more detail the Council's corporate commitments to engaging with communities. Chapter 7 outlines how the Council will work in a joined up way with different elements of the community, such as Town and Parish councils and the voluntary sector. Chapter 8 looks at how the Council will make every effort to reach into all parts of the community.

**2.3** The next four chapters explain the planning system and how the people and stakeholders of Northumberland will be included in the future planning and development of the County.

### 3. The Council's Planning Service

**3.1** Over the past ten years changes have been introduced by central Government in order to speed up the planning system and make it more responsive, flexible, customer focused and local. The changes mean that, more than ever, the Council must work meaningfully with the community to plan the County, while also delivering its own planning service efficiently and effectively.

**3.2** Within the Council planning and housing services are delivered by the Planning, Economy and Housing Division, which is part of the Corporate Resources Group. The role of the statutory planning service includes:

- Preparing and publicising the Local Plan;
- Registering, publicising, assessing and determining planning and related types of applications;
- Dealing with numerous enquiries about applications and possible future development sites and negotiating with developers and stakeholders;
- The spatial input to wider plans and strategies;
- Delivering a variety of spatial planning projects and programmes; and
- Assisting communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans.

#### **THE COMMUNITY AS CUSTOMERS OF THE PLANNING SERVICE**

The Council will seek to provide an efficient, open and transparent planning service to all its customers.

All those in contact with the planning service, including all communities and members of the public who respond to consultations on planning policies and proposals will be regarded as customers on an equal basis.

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

### 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

#### What is the Local Plan?

**4.1** The Northumberland Local Plan<sup>(1)</sup> will set out where new development should be located across the County<sup>(2)</sup> to 2031, while safeguarding Northumberland's environmental assets, its local economy and its communities.

**4.2** The Local Plan is a series of planning documents, plus a Proposals Map, drawn up by the Council, with the involvement of the local community and stakeholders. These documents contain written policies and proposals and maps. Some of the documents are statutory planning documents called Development Plan Documents (DPDs) which, once adopted, together with any Neighbourhood Plans form the "development plan" for the area. Planning applications have to be decided in line with the development plan unless there are very good reasons not to do so.

**4.3** The DPDs we have produced, are producing or intend to produce are set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme<sup>(3)</sup>, which is updated annually. They currently include:

- The **Northumberland Core Strategy** – the overarching strategic plan for Northumberland, setting out the vision, objectives and strategy for the future location of new development in Northumberland; and
- The **Northumberland Delivery Document** – which will set out how the vision, objectives and policies and proposals of the Core Strategy will be delivered across Northumberland, including detailed land allocation and designations.

**4.4** All DPDs go through several stages of public engagement, consultation and a public examination before they can be adopted by the Council – as outlined later in this section.

**4.5** In addition to the DPDs the Council will also produce Supplementary Planning Documents (or SPDs). These will add more detail on how aspects of development in the County are planned and delivered, which might relate to topics such as affordable housing or particular places, (e.g. a conservation area), that require special attention. They must go through at least one round of public consultation before they can be adopted<sup>(4)</sup> by the Council.

**4.6** Helping to shape these planning documents are evidence base studies such as strategic flood risk assessments, landscape character appraisals and the strategic housing land availability study. While some evidence base documents do include the results of surveys of the general public, they are generally background documents that are available to view but not always the subject of consultation<sup>(5)</sup>.

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1 The Local Plan system was introduced under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and has been modified through the Localism Act 2011.

2 Excluding Northumberland National Park, which is a separate Local Planning Authority and has separate adopted planning policies

3 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3457>.

4 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3731>.

5 Information on the evidence base can be found at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3458>.

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

**4.7** The Council also produces monitoring information on key indicators on matters such as the rate of house building and the availability of development land. These monitoring reports show how plans are progressing and being delivered<sup>(6)</sup>.

**4.8** Whenever new planning policies are produced, they are subject to:

- A **Sustainability Appraisal** <sup>(7)</sup>, which assesses their environmental, social and economic impact
- A **Habitats Regulations Assessment** <sup>(8)</sup> to ensure that the most important natural assets are not adversely affected.
- An **Equality Impact Assessment** <sup>(9)</sup> to seek to ensure that any new policies promote equality and diversity.

**4.9** These documents are published alongside each key stage of any DPD and are part of the consultation. Other documents, such as the plan on how the necessary infrastructure will be provided and paid for, have to be published in tandem with particular stages of DPD.

**4.10** Later in this chapter, the opportunities for involvement in the different stages of preparing DPDs and SPDs are outlined and also give the Council's commitments on this involvement.

### Who do we consult on the Local Plan?

**4.11** The minimum legal requirements for consultation on new and emerging planning policy documents are set out in Regulations issued by central government<sup>(10)</sup>. The Localism Act 2011 abolished the previously existing regional level of planning and imposed on Councils a new '**Duty to Cooperate**' in order to deal with cross boundary planning issues. In drawing up planning documents the Council therefore must work closely with Northumberland's neighbouring planning authorities, as well as statutory bodies like the Environment Agency, English Heritage, Natural England and various transport bodies. Local Nature Partnerships have been set up to address biodiversity issues across wide areas. A North East Local Enterprise Partnership has an overseeing role in terms of promoting economic growth across Northumberland, Tyneside, Wearside and County Durham. This same area is covered by a Combined Authority, which deals with issues of governance across boundaries. All of these are treated as part of the duty to cooperate, See Appendix A.

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6 This monitoring information is not the subject of consultation but is published as 'Development in Northumberland' and can be viewed at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3459>.

7 Under the European Directive, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.

8 As required by European Directive 92/43 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

9 This assessment is required under the Equality Act 2010 – see Chapter 4. The Assessment document examines whether the new policies differently affect any person or group of persons. It also must ensure that no stage of consultation precludes any group or section of society from having their say on the proposals. An Equality Impact Assessment document is published at each consultation stage of a Development Plan Document.

10 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

**4.12** There is a list of '**specific consultation bodies**', with which the Council must consult at various stages of the plan process, irrespective of dialogue that may be taking place under the Duty to Cooperate. Specific consultation bodies include Town and Parish Councils, neighbouring local authorities, utilities providers and relevant government departments and agencies. They are listed at Appendix A.

**4.13** The Council may also consult with '**general consultation bodies**' where this is considered relevant to the document being prepared. These include the many local environmental bodies, voluntary bodies, groups representing particular areas or sectors of the population and business representative bodies. More detail on general consultation bodies is given at Appendix A.

**4.14** There are also what could unofficially be termed '**other consultation bodies**' – i.e. people and organisations that the Council consider are important to planning in Northumberland but which do not fit into the two categories described above: for example land owners, particular businesses, planning consultants, or agents representing individuals or organisations, as well as residents or local groups, who may be significantly materially affected by something being proposed or who are, in any case, on the consultation list for any of a variety of reasons. More detail on other consultation bodies is given at Appendix A.

### How to get onto the Consultation Database for the Local Plan

**4.15** The Council holds necessary contact information on the above groups of consultees on its planning consultation database. It is possible to be added to or removed from the database at any time.

**4.16** The database offers the possibility of registering remotely online and commenting during consultation periods, without directly contacting the Council and this is now the preferred way in which to add new consultees and receive written views and comments. In order to be added to the database, go to <http://northumberland.limehouse.co.uk/portal>.

**4.17** Information held on the database is used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Through the database, the Council can keep people informed about progress with different stages of plan documents and feed back to people on the views they have expressed.

**4.18** People without suitable computer access can still register using traditional means; see contact details at the back of this document. The Council will add such registrations to the database but, if necessary, will contact people by letter. Emails and letters will also continue to be entirely acceptable ways in which to make written comments or representations. All written comments are treated equally in whatever form they are received.

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

### CONSULTATION DATABASE FOR THE LOCAL PLAN

The Council will add individuals or groups to its Local Plan Database, (or remove them), within five working days of being requested to do so, whether the request is in writing or by telephone.

The Council makes a guarantee that information held on the database will be used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Council will use the database to keep people informed about progress with different stages of plan documents, feedback to people on the views they have expressed and seek their views on the effectiveness of the engagement undertaken.

The Council will accept registration for the database received by letter or email and, where no email address is given, will contact people by letter at key stages of consultations, although not all regular updates will be sent in this way.

The Council will accept comments during consultation periods, online, or via email or letter and treat all these different ways of commenting in writing equally

**4.19** If your contact details are not currently held on our database, but you would like them to be, please let us know by registering as above or otherwise getting in touch with your details – see Chapter 11.

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

### Development Plan Documents - The main stages

1. Early engagement	2. Publication of Plan	3. Submission of Plan	4. Independent Examination	5. Adoption
<p>For you... A chance to contribute on the main planning issues and help shape the plan.</p>  <p>For the Council... We draw up the draft plan document</p>	 <p>For you... A chance to comment on the draft plan and tell us if you think it is a sound plan</p> <p>For the Council... We make the necessary amendments to the plan document</p>	<p>For the Council... We submit all your comments along with the finalised plan to the Government Minister</p> 	<p>An independent Inspector examines the plan to make sure that it is a sound plan</p>  <p>For the Council and you... At the invitation of the Inspector some of those commenting can put their case at hearings alongside the Council</p>	<p>The Inspector Reports back to the Council</p>  <p>For the Council... We make any final changes before the plan is adopted for the benefit of the community, as part of the statutory development plan</p>

### Development Plan Documents – Early Engagement

**4.20** The early stages in the preparation of a DPD offer the best opportunity for people to get involved in developing policies. Understanding community needs and building consensus at an early stage of the plan preparation process can help resolve issues and establish priorities. Rather than an isolated period of consultation there should be a series of consultation activities during which policy options are refined and improved.

**4.21** However, the early stages also involve the Council gathering large amounts of information and producing what can be lengthy and detailed documents. Wherever possible, the Council will endeavour to produce easy-to-understand versions of these. Different DPDs will call for different approaches on what documents are published, according to whether the Council needs to seek information from people and/or air issues and/or choose between alternatives<sup>(11)</sup>.

**4.22** Towards the end of the early engagement stage consultation will be more focused on outstanding or contentious issues.

11 For the Core Strategy, there has been an "Issues and Options" stage asking people to select the best approach on different planning issues, followed by a "Preferred Options" stage and then a "Full Draft Plan", with comments sought on draft policies. However this may vary.

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

### EARLY ENGAGEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS

The Council will create opportunities for the whole community and all relevant stakeholders to be involved in developing policies and proposals for Development Plan Documents.

This will include, where possible and appropriate, producing summaries of major and or complex documents, so that they are more accessible.

Where particular documents are the subject of consultation and written responses or comments are invited, the Council will:

- Endeavour to make the consultation periods at least six weeks long and, where possible, longer.
- Inform in writing, (electronically or, failing that, by post),
  - all bodies listed under the Duty to Co-operate
  - all specific and relevant general consultation bodies
  - all groups and individuals on the Council's Local Plan database, (which will include those who have commented at any previous stages)
- Raise awareness via the Council website, the press, information in Council offices and libraries, where appropriate using other methods such as leaflets, social media, exhibitions/road shows; special meetings and workshops.
- Send a standard acknowledgement, to all those who have responded in writing, (electronically or by post) within 5 working days.
- In due course, feed back on actions taken as a result of comments

In addition, during these stages, the Council will actively seek the early input of groups and interested bodies whose knowledge and experience will be of particular help in policy formulation and may carry out surveys or questionnaires. In these instances we may organise detailed focus groups and workshops.

### Development Plan Documents – Publication Stage – Making Representations

**4.23** The publication version of the plan will be prepared having regard to the outcome of the early engagement stages outlined above and background evidence. When the DPD is published, this will be accompanied by a statement of representations made at these earlier stages, showing how people's comments have been taken into account in reaching the final set of planning policies.

**4.24** At the publication stage, representations can only be made on issues of **soundness**. This means that comments must relate to whether the contents of the documents are:

1. Justified (i.e. founded on a robust and credible evidence base) and the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives;
2. Effective (i.e. deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored); and
3. Consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework.

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

**4.25** These representations will then be taken into account later when the plan goes through an examination process (see below).

### **PUBLICATION STAGE REPRESENTATIONS ON DPDs**

At the publication stage, the Council will clearly publicise and make widely available Development Plan Documents, using the Council's website, other appropriate electronic means and by placing paper copies in libraries and Council planning receptions. As appropriate, additional paper copies will be provided to Town and Parish Councils. The Council will explain the areas on which representations can be made and the period within which they can be made – a statutory six week period.

The Council will inform in writing, (electronically or, failing that, by post), all bodies listed under the Duty to Co-operate, all specific and relevant general consultation bodies and all others on the Council's Local Plan database, (which will include those who have commented at previous stages).

The main document(s) will be accompanied by a Statement of Consultation explaining the comments received during early engagement and how these have been taken into account in taking plans to the pre-submission stage.

The Council will send a standard acknowledgement to all those who make written representations within 5 working days.

### **Development Plan Documents – Submission to the Secretary of State**

**4.26** Having gathered comments on the soundness of the document, the Council will make any minor corrections and submit the document to the Secretary of State, who will also receive associated information, including the statement of representations and the substantive comments on the soundness of the document made at the Publication stage. The Council will publicise when all these document are submitted.

### **THE SUBMISSION STAGE OF DPDs**

At the formal, submission stage of Development Plan Documents, the Council will give notice by local advertisement that the document has been submitted to the Secretary of State.

The Council will clearly publicise how to view submission documents and will explain procedures of submission and subsequent Examination.

This will be done through the Council website, public notices and we will write, (electronically or, failing that, by post), to all bodies listed under the Duty to Co-operate, all specific and relevant general consultation bodies and all others on the Council's Local Plan database, (which will include those who have commented at previous stages). (See above for explanation of these terms).

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

### Development Plan Documents – Independent Examination

**4.27** The document will be considered at an Independent Examination by an Independent Person, appointed by the Secretary of State. The Examination will assess the soundness of the plan and consider representations made. If you have made an objection which relates to the soundness of the document you will be contacted and may, at the discretion of the Independent Person, be invited to appear at the relevant Hearing at the Examination. In the run-up to and during the Examination, participants will be contacted and kept informed by a 'Programme Officer' who will also operate independently.

#### EXAMINATION OF DPDs

Once an Independent Examination of a Development Plan Document is arranged, the Council will:

- Inform everyone consulted at previous stages and others who participated of the time and venue of the Examination and the name of the person appointed to carry it out, as well as explaining the procedures;
- Publicise these arrangements on the Council website;
- Give notice by local advertisement and formally notify those who have made a formal representations at the Publication stage and not withdrawn them; and
- Appoint an Independent Programme Officer to ensure that contact with participants before and during proceedings is impartial.

Once the Examination Report is received, the Council will clearly publicise how to view the Report and give notice to Examination participants, (and others who requested to be notified), that the recommendations are available.

### Development Plan Documents – Adoption

**4.28** An Inspector's report will be issued following the Independent Examination which will set out recommendations for how the Development Plan Document may be changed. Once the Council has decided which of these changes are appropriate to make, we can then proceed to adopt the document. The Council will publicise the fact it has been adopted.

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

### ADOPTION OF DPDs

At the time of adoption of a Development Plan Document, the Council will:

- Publish an Adoption Statement by local advertisement and send copies to those who wish to be informed of it;
- Make the final Development Plan Document and the accompanying Sustainability; and
- Appraisal generally available.

Thereafter we will provide updates on Development Plan Documents in a variety of ways, for example, through newspaper articles, the Council's website and press releases.

### Supplementary Planning Documents – Engagement

**4.29** The public consultation on a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is much less formal and there may only be one consultation period – although there can be more than one and it will often make sense to have additional input from relevant organisations.

**4.30** The fact that consultation is carried out, allows these documents to carry considerable weight in subsequent planning decisions, while often including quite detailed, local guidance.

### Supplementary Planning Documents – The main stages

1. Evidence	2. Draft SPD	3. SPD finalised	4. Adoption
<p>The Council gathers necessary evidence.</p>  <p>People and organisations with local knowledge can play a key role at this stage – e.g. if the SPD seeks to protect / enhance assets important to the local community.</p>	<p>The Council completes the drafting of the SPD.</p>  <p>A chance for communities and relevant stakeholders to comment on the content of the draft document.</p>	<p>The Council finalises the SPD based on representations gathered and other changes.</p> 	<p>The Council adopts the final SPD.</p>  <p>The document then gets used as a supplement to the Local Plan for decision-making purposes.</p>

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

### SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

When consulting on a Draft Supplementary Plan Document, the Council will

- Write to all of the specific and general consultation bodies we consider will be affected or interested in the document;
- Consult on the document for at least a formal period of 4 weeks.
- Over this period, publicise the draft document through the Council website at council offices and relevant libraries and by any other means thought appropriate,

At the time of adoption of a Supplementary Plan Document, the Council will:

- Notify everyone consulted during the process that the document has been adopted and stating where it can be viewed.
- Publish an Adoption Statement by local advertisement
- Make available, on the Council's website and in council offices and libraries, the final adopted SPD, plus a Statement explaining the comments received during the consultation stage(s) and how these have been taken into account in taking the SPD to adoption.

### Other possible planning policy engagement

**4.31** The Council may produce other documents about how new development in the County will be planned, such as informal planning guidance on aspects of development, (e.g. shop front design), or master plans for new development areas. These too will be the subject of consultation but this is likely to be less formal and/or more targeted than Development Plan Documents or Supplementary Planning Documents.

**4.32** The Council has the option of introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy, (or CIL), where developers pay previously agreed charges to be spent on a previously agreed list of infrastructure needed in the area. The Council will be the 'Charging Authority'. In moving towards having a CIL, the following two aspects will be of interest, not just to developers but also to communities who may benefit in different ways according to what might be funded in this way.

- Firstly there will be a '**Charging Schedule**', which is a table showing how different types of new development will be charged per square metre;
- Secondly there will be a '(Section 123) **List**' of those projects or types of infrastructure that the Council intends to fund through the levy.

**4.33** If it introduces a Community Infrastructure Levy system, the Council would be obliged to consult on a preliminary draft charging schedule, including relevant bodies representing developers and infrastructure providers, as well as Town and Parish Councils. The Council would have considerable discretion on how to consult at this stage, but would seek to involve all organisations representing those likely to have an interest in the Charging Schedule and the accompanying list of projects / types of infrastructure.

## 4. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

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**4.34** Subsequent to this the Council would publish the draft schedule and the appropriate available evidence on infrastructure costs, other funding sources and economic viability. At this stage, the Council would follow good practice by allowing at least a six week period for consultation, and longer if the issues under consideration were particularly complex. Any person would be able to make representations about the draft charging schedule and that person would be heard before an examiner at the Community Infrastructure Levy examination, if they had requested to be heard and the request had been made as set out in regulations.

## 5. Community Involvement in Neighbourhood Planning

### 5. Community Involvement in Neighbourhood Planning

**5.1** Town and Parish Councils have, for some years, been active in local 'place-shaping'. Many have developed their own community visions through village appraisals and Parish Plans.

**5.2** In 2011, with the Localism Act, the Government gave local communities much greater powers to shape their local areas through a series of Community Rights<sup>(12)</sup>. Within Northumberland, as a fully 'parished' council area, these rights are vested in Town and Parish Councils. The four Community Rights are:

- The Community Right to Bid – the opportunity to bid to buy local land or buildings in order to keep them in community use;
- The Community Right to Build – giving the opportunity to build community facilities or housing for local people;
- The Community Right to Challenge – the ability to challenge to take over local services if the local council consider they could be better run;
- Neighbourhood Planning – enabling Town and Parish Councils to create positive, statutory planning policies and allocate land for development within their own areas, through Neighbourhood Development Plans and to obtain permission for development through Neighbourhood Development Orders<sup>(13)</sup>.

**5.3** The Council is fully committed to the concept of neighbourhood plans and related Community Rights, as key to getting local people involved in shaping their environment. It is important to understand that Neighbourhood Planning powers are discretionary. It is not a requirement, for Town and Parish Councils to take up these powers.

**5.4** Neighbourhood Development Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders must be prepared to be in general conformity with planning policies adopted by the County Council in, for example, the Core Strategy. They should promote sustainable development and it is expected that such plans will provide detailed local policies and detailed allocations to complement the County Council's Core Strategy and other planning policy documents.

**5.5** Neighbourhood Development Plans may cover the whole of a parish, a small part of a parish or even a single site. They could cover a wide range of policy areas or they could be limited to a single topic, such as the delivery of affordable housing. Plans may also cover multiple parishes. In such cases one Parish Council must lead the process.

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12 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=15321> for more information.

13 With the emergence of neighbourhood planning, parish and town councils are able to make significant changes to the statutory planning framework for their own areas. In 2010, the Government launched a pilot scheme for Neighbourhood Plans, whereby "Frontrunner" Parish or Town Councils received special support to produce Neighbourhood Plans. There are five of these Frontrunners in Northumberland – at Allendale, Alnwick and Denwick, Morpeth, Cramlington and Tasset with Greystead. The Council has provided varying degrees of support to these original Frontrunners, according to their needs and the resources available. Other Parish or Town Councils have come forward wishing to produce their own neighbourhood plans and more are likely to do so. The Council has a duty to support town and parish councils with any neighbourhood planning activity.

## 5. Community Involvement in Neighbourhood Planning

**5.6** It can be seen, from the diagram that follows, that, as with plans prepared by the Council, Neighbourhood Plans must go through various legal stages. It would be appropriate for the community to be involved at all stages. The diagram shows that the County Council has statutory duties of publicising the plan, as well as organising and independent examination and holding a referendum towards the end of the process<sup>(14)</sup>.

### THE STAGES OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

**Stage 1: Defining the neighbourhood area** (a pre-requisite before any formal neighbourhoods planning activity takes place)

- The Town or Parish Council defines their area and applies to Northumberland County Council<sup>(15)</sup>; and
- The County Council publicise the application and designate the neighbourhood plan area where it is considered appropriate.

### Stage 2: Preparing the plan

- The Town or Parish Council draws up their plan, consults on it within their own community for a minimum of six weeks and submits a final draft version to the County Council; and
- The County Council publicise the draft plan for a period of six weeks.

### Stage 3: Independent check

- The County Council appoints an independent examiner with the agreement of the Town or Parish Council; and
- The Independent examiner checks that the neighbourhood plan meets certain legally defined conditions.

### Stage 4: Community referendum

 (once plan passes independent examination)

- The County Council organises a referendum on the neighbourhood plan within the area. If more than 50% of those voting support the plan, then it is "made" by the County Council, becoming part of the statutory development plan for the area.

**5.7** As well as its basic duties in relation to Neighbourhood Plans, the Council has a statutory 'duty to support' Town and Parish Councils in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. This role can be seen as one of facilitating the process and will not normally involve direct financial support. A number of agencies exist through which Town and Parish Councils can get training, advice and financial support to help them prepare their Neighbourhood Plans.

**5.8** The Council has supported the 'frontrunner' Neighbourhood Plan projects to varying degrees, in terms of time and resources and is committed to support subsequent neighbourhood plans in an advisory role as resources allow.

14 The Council receives allowances from Government to fund its statutory duties on neighbourhood plans.

15 Where the parish also lies within the Northumberland National Park the application must also be made to the Northumberland National Park Authority

## 5. Community Involvement in Neighbourhood Planning

### NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

In recognition of its duty to support Town and Parish Councils in relation to Neighbourhood Planning, the Council will help local communities plan their own areas. Direct financial support will not normally be provided. The Council reserves the right to withhold support if the scope of a proposed Neighbourhood Plan or Order is inappropriate in the context of the development plan and national advice.

The support provided to Town and Parish Councils may include the following, as staffing resources allow:

- Advice on general planning matters to help decide whether a Neighbourhood Plan is the right option;
- Advice on appropriate governance arrangements to manage the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan or Order;
- Where a neighbourhood area is designated, provide a named link officer who will act as the first point of contact with the County Council;
- Advice on the possible scope of the Neighbourhood Plan or Order;
- Provide constructive comments on emerging Neighbourhood Plan policies or proposals and on emerging Neighbourhood Development Orders;
- Advice on matters which will allow the plan or order to meet the basic conditions test, including advice on sources of evidence, strategic policies contained in the development plan, and issues of sustainability;
- Advice on survey methods, engagement and consultation techniques, and, where resources permit, direct support with community engagement;
- Assistance with related technical matters such as mapping;
- Screening to identify any need for a strategic environmental assessment or Habitat Regulations assessment;
- Attending meetings as appropriate;
- Provision of information on available outside support and assistance in applying for such support;
- Publication of locally specific good practice guidance about neighbourhood planning in Northumberland on the Council's website.

In terms of its statutory duties, the Council will operate in a timely and efficient manner, including:

- Publicising and making decisions on applications to designate neighbourhood areas;
- Appointing an independent examiner following the submission of a neighbourhood plan or order to the County Council; and
- Arranging a local referendum, which will be held as soon as reasonably practicable, following a successful outcome from an independent examination.

The Council may, on request from a Town or Parish Council, seek to enter into a service level agreement with the lead Town or Parish Council setting out how the County Council will support the community in progressing their plan or order.

## 6. Community Involvement in Development Management

### 6. Community Involvement in Development Management

#### The Development Management Service

**6.1** The Development Management service is responsible for the day-to-day planning service, dealing with people's development proposals. It seeks to be a seamless and comprehensive service, covering:

- Determining applications for Planning Permission for development<sup>(16)</sup>;
- Determining **various consents**<sup>(17)</sup>;
- Determining **Certificates of Lawfulness**<sup>(18)</sup>;
- Providing **pre-application advice** on development proposals;
- **Monitoring compliance** with permissions and consents;
- Undertaking **enforcement** against breaches of planning control;
- **Handling appeals** against the refusal or non-determination of planning applications.

**6.2** The Council's website sets out its commitments on the planning application process and explains how Development Management will work in Northumberland<sup>(19)</sup>. This Chapter of the SCI explains the Council's commitments on how people are informed about planning proposals and how they can influence the decisions made.

#### **COMMITMENT ON IMPROVING THE PUBLIC'S EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**

The Council will strive to learn, review and, where necessary, improve how it involves people in the management of development proposals in Northumberland, including through the use of regular agents forums and customer satisfaction surveys.

16 Not all planning permission is granted via an application to the Council.

17 Advertisement Consent is required for most types of advertisements on outdoor public display. Listed Building Consent is needed for any demolition or alteration works to nationally Listed Buildings. Conservation Area Consent is required for the substantial demolition of unlisted buildings or structures in Conservation Areas. Tree work consent is needed where people wish to remove or lop trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

18 Certificates of Lawfulness are required where people wish to ascertain that development such as a building or use of a building is lawful – i.e. does not need planning permission or has been established for long enough so as not to require a planning application.

19 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3420>.

## 6. Community Involvement in Development Management

### The stages of a Planning Application

	The Applicant	The Council	The Public
<b>1. Pre-application</b>  	May seek pre-application advice. May consult with public for larger scale proposals.	Give pre-application advice.	May be made aware of larger scale proposals by applicant and can comment to them.
<b>2 Application</b>  	Submits planning application and supporting information to Council.	Publicise application <sup>(20)</sup> .	May comment on application.
<b>3. Application considered and decided</b>  	Awaits decision – can speak at committee if application determined in that way.	Head of Planning and Housing Services (delegated) or Members at a planning committee consider and decide application based on relevant planning policies and other material considerations including comments received.	Await decision. Can speak at committee if application determined in that way (those who have commented on the application).
<b>4. Decision issued</b>  	Receives decision.	Issue decision notice: decision to approve application (usually with conditions) or to refuse planning permission.	Can view decision notices on the Council's website.
<b>5. After the decision</b>  	Can go ahead if approved.  Can appeal if refused.	Discharge conditions that may require further submissions for approval and monitor compliance with the conditions and approved plans.  Would take part in any appeal against refusal by the applicant.	No right of appeal themselves  Can take part in any appeal by the applicant against refusal (those who have previously commented on the planning application).

20 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3420> for more information on the process of considering planning applications.

## 6. Community Involvement in Development Management

### Before the Planning Application - the 'pre-application stage'

**6.3** Northumberland County Council's pre-application service aims to encourage all prospective applicants to talk to the Council and obtain informal guidance before submitting a formal planning application. Details on this, including the charging policy, can be found on the Council's website<sup>(21)</sup>.

**6.4** Often the public are concerned that they do not learn about proposals that affect them until a planning application is made to the Council and publicised, (see below).

The pre-application period presents an opportunity for this to be addressed. Prospective applicants for larger schemes that may affect a number of people or whole communities or that could be controversial are encouraged to enter discussions with the Council and local residents before submitting their application<sup>(22)</sup>.

#### PRE-APPLICATION HELP AND CONSULTATIONS

The Council will continue to make its pre-application service available to all prospective applicants, using set procedures and applying current charges.

The Council will encourage prospective applicants for permission for any proposal, which could be controversial or affect significant numbers of people, to consult the communities concerned first, and then submit, (with their application), an explanation of how they have taken the comments into account.

### Submitting a planning related application

**6.5** The Council's website explains how a member of the general public would go about applying for planning permission or another form of planning-related consent<sup>(23)</sup>. This includes filling in the application forms themselves – which can be done online; what it is necessary to submit with the application form (in order to make the application valid), and the fees structure.



21 See the web page on pre-application advice at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=5254>

22 The Council and the prospective applicant may enter a Planning Performance Agreement which will set out what is expected of each during the pre-application discussions and determination of the application. Occasionally pre-application discussions have to be kept confidential for good reasons but this should not normally prevent prospective developers making their ideas public prior to submitting their application.

23 See the link <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3391>

## 6. Community Involvement in Development Management

**6.6** The Council makes certain commitments to applicants once we receive a valid application. These are summarised on the webpages about the planning application process, including timescales for determination. See the link <sup>(24)</sup>.

### TO APPLICANTS WHO SUBMIT A VALID APPLICATION

The Council will enter a valid application onto a statutory planning register, which is the Public Access system, and send out an acknowledgement giving a target date for determining the outcome of the application. This target date relates to the statutory time periods for determining planning applications. However, the possibility of unforeseen occurrences means that meeting target dates cannot be absolutely guaranteed.

### Finding out about planning related applications

**6.7** Once a valid application has been received the Council will:

- Put it on the **planning register (Public Access)** and on **weekly lists** of applications that are made available.
- Publish details of the application with supporting documentation on the Council's website.
- **Notify neighbours** likely to be affected by an application.
- **Notify the relevant Parish Council.**
- Put up a **site notice** in a publicly accessible location(s) close to the application site usually on public land adjoining the site for major applications and those that have an impact beyond the immediate area.
- Where required **advertise** in the local press.

**6.8** An increasing range of more minor types of development no longer need a planning application and the Council simply has to receive 'Prior Notification' of the intention to proceed.

**6.9** The Prior Notification allows the Council to make sure that there are no strong environmental reasons for a planning application to be submitted. The Council will consult all relevant bodies on the Notification and, in certain cases, this will include households living alongside the proposal <sup>(25)</sup>.

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24 <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3419>

25 See under the heading "Prior Notification" on this webpage:  
<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=724>

## 6. Community Involvement in Development Management

### INFORMING PEOPLE OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

In accordance with national requirements, the Council will make sure that all applications for planning permission or related forms of consent are:

- Adequately publicised on the Council's website, and where relevant in the local press and on site;
- Notified to all neighbours likely to be affected by the application, as well as all relevant bodies, the extent of these being based on the judgement of planning professionals within the Council;
- Made available to view and respond to on the Council's website

### Commenting on planning related applications

**6.10** The Council's website explains how people can make comments on applications and what happens when they do comment<sup>(26)</sup>. It is a statutory requirement to allow 21 days for comments to be made, before determining a planning application<sup>(27)</sup>.

**6.11** **6.13** The commitments below relate to 'individually written comments'<sup>(28)</sup>. These commitments are key to the Council's approach to consulting the public on planning proposals but it is important to look at the Council's website<sup>(29)</sup> for the full picture, including advice on the best way in which to frame comments and objections and what would be a 'material' consideration – i.e. something that is relevant to planning and that the planning officers / Council Members could legitimately take into account<sup>(30)</sup>.

### ON INDIVIDUALLY WRITTEN COMMENTS ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

In accordance with the Development Management Charter, the Council will make sure that all individually written comments on applications for planning permission or related forms of consent, (except for any that are anonymous, libellous or offensive), whether made by letter, by email or on-line are made available for public inspection on the Council's website. Written comments are available for applicants and other parties to view on the Council's website.

26 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=8643#comment>.

27 The 21 days runs from the erection of a site notice and / or the notification of neighbours or consultees, or from the publishing of a press notice. The Local Planning Authority must take into account any representations made within that time. In practice, while we will ask for comments within 21 days, any representations received will be considered up until the day before the committee or delegated decision.

28 The term 'individually written comments' is used here because, when people comment as a large group on an application, for example using a standard letter or petition, we will address subsequent correspondence normally only to the organiser or to the first name on the list

29 See under "What to include in your comment" on this webpage:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=8643#comment>

30 Examples of material considerations include comments on: (1) whether the proposal is in line with national planning policy or policies in an adopted local plan documents or any 'made' neighbourhood plan covering the area; (2) whether it is environmentally acceptable – e.g. its impact on climate change, the local landscape or conservation of the natural or built heritage; (3) whether the site is suitable, including the impact on the residential amenity of neighbours. Examples of non-material considerations would be the effect on property values or the retention of individual people's views from their houses.

## 6. Community Involvement in Development Management

### Making a decision on an application

**6.12** All decisions on applications have to take full account of views and comments expressed, as long as they are material to the application. These have to be balanced against the intentions of those applying and, of course, relevant policies in the Local Plan, as well as all other material considerations<sup>(31)</sup>. A planning officer will write a report on the application with a recommendation.

**6.13** Only a small proportion of applications are decided at a Planning Committee. One reason for an application to go to Committee is where a number of people have objected but the planning officer is recommending approval; but there are a number of other possible reasons<sup>(32)</sup>.

**6.14** In most cases the decision will be '**delegated**' to the Head of Planning and Housing Services. Details on why and when decisions are delegated can be viewed via the Council's website<sup>(33)</sup>.

**6.15** **When a delegated decision is made**, the applicants themselves, plus those who commented on it and the general public, are able to view the officer's report, (which will give reasons for the decision), on the website.

**6.16** When an application is to be decided at Committee, the officer's report and recommendation are made available before the meeting – i.e. before the decision is made<sup>(34)</sup>.

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31 See earlier footnote for explanation of material considerations.

32 Where there is large scale objection to or interest in a major planning application, there may be reason to hold a public meeting prior to the determination of an application where appropriate. The public meeting will be conducted in accordance with the adopted Protocol for Public Meetings which is available on the Council's website, see

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=519b7c0c-3b10-45a8-8fa3-f5b792871596&version=-1>.

33 The majority of applications are decided by delegated powers. This means that an appropriate senior officer will decide if an application should be granted planning permission or not. More information on when planning officers can make decisions is available in the Council's website.

34 The Council's webpages explain what Committees decide applications. Larger and more contentious applications go to a Central Planning and Environment Committee and others go to one of three Area Planning Committees which meet in public on average 12 times a year. For the most complex or controversial applications a site visit may be arranged to take place prior to the committee if it is considered that this would help Committee Members to understand the proposal. The site visit will follow the Council's Planning Committee Site Visit Protocol – available on the Council's Development Management web pages – see . Sometimes it is not possible for the committee to reach a decision at the meeting – for example they may defer making a decision until they have more information about the case.

## 6. Community Involvement in Development Management

**6.17** People who have written in with comments on an application that is to be decided by the committee will have **the right to speak** at the meeting<sup>(35)</sup>, (and subject to the avoidance of multiple speakers making similar points). A special Protocol sets out the procedures for speaking at Committee<sup>(36)</sup>.

**6.18** When an application is approved this is usually subject to conditions, or when refused reasons for the refusal identified. The aim is to issue **decision notices**, setting out the reasons for the decision and update the planning register, **within 3 to 5 working days** of the decision, subject to the completion of any legal agreements and outstanding consultation responses. People can contact the Council the day after the committee to find out what decisions have been made. Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings are put on the website. It is possible to track planning applications through Public Access and this includes electronic alerts that an application status has been updated.

**6.19** Sometimes planning permission may be given subject to a 'Planning Obligation' – a legal agreement<sup>(37)</sup>, whereby the developer has to provide or contribute to additional works,(sometimes away from the site)<sup>(38)</sup>. These are only sought where there are planning reasons that make the works or contributions necessary for the development to go ahead.

**6.20** Such agreements may well be of interest to people affected by the development as they may relate to improvements in the area surrounding it. However, there is no legal requirement to consult on them.

**6.21** Irrespective on the type of application or whether it goes to Committee, an applicant has the right to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against a refusal of planning permission, conditions attached to an approval or against the failure of the Council to issue a decision within the statutory time period (appeal against 'non-determination')<sup>(39)</sup>. While the views of objectors ('third parties') are always taken into consideration in making a planning decision, they have no right of appeal against the decision made. They will, however receive notification of the appeal.

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35 The Council also has a 'Protocol for Dealing with Late Representations on Planning Applications' which sets out how any representations coming in after the committee agenda papers have been published and dispatched will be treated and in what way they will be drawn to the attention of Committee Members and others.

36 See the Council's approved 'Public Speaking Protocol' (see <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=519b7c0c-3b10-45a8-8fa3-f5b792871596&version=-1>). People who qualify for the right to speak will be informed at least 5 working days before the date of the committee at which the application will be considered. At the Meeting, they will normally be given five minutes to make their point. The applicant will also have a right to speak.

37 The agreements are under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. A protocol on Planning Obligations is available on the Council's website (<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=04af4425-08a4-48e0-b398-dcf25ec50033&version=-1>)

38 The Council has the option of (in future) introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy, which would partially eclipse the need for Section 106 Agreements, as it would consist of a charging schedule applied to developers of different forms of development to pay for community facilities and infrastructure needed in the area, which would directly or indirectly serve the development and the people using it. See Chapter 4, which explains how people would be consulted if the Council were minded to draw up Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.

39 Information on how to do this will be made available on the Decision Notice and can be found on the Council's website. See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3419>

## 6. Community Involvement in Development Management

### DECISION-MAKING ON APPLICATIONS – KEEPING PEOPLE INFORMED AND INVOLVED

When deciding whether to grant planning permission or other forms of planning-related consent, the Council will take full account of views and comments expressed, as long as they are material to the application, and balanced against other all other material considerations, including relevant planning policies, site-specific factors and information from the applicant.

Planning officers' reports will be written on all applications and made available on the Council's website. If the decision is to be by Committee, they will be available prior to the meeting.

Where the decision is to be by Committee, the applicant and people who have made legitimate written comments will have the right to speak at the Committee Meeting, subject to the procedures set out in the Council's 'Public Speaking Protocol'.

Once a decision is made on a planning or related application, a decision notice will be issued, details of which will be published on the website.

If the decision is to refuse planning permission, the Council will make clear applicants' rights of appeal.

### Enforcement

**6.22** Sometimes a member of the public will notice development happening but not be sure if it is being developed in accordance with the permission that has been granted or whether it has planning permission at all. In such circumstances the Council's Development Compliance officers will investigate whether there has been a breach of planning control and provide feed-back to the enquirer. Full details are set out on the Council's website and in the 'Strategy for the Monitoring and Enforcement of Planning Control'<sup>(40)</sup>.

### REACTING TO ENFORCEMENT ISSUES RAISED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The Council will accept planning enforcement-related complaints online or otherwise in writing, as well as accepting initial complaints made by telephone.

As set out in its Strategy for the Monitoring and Enforcement of Planning Control the Council will:

- Adhere to set target times for following up complaints.
- Maintain confidentiality where this is requested and can be guaranteed in terms of Freedom of Information and other legislation.
- Feed back to complainants at the appropriate time(s).

40 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1440> for information on Monitoring and Enforcement.

## 7. Joined up working in a diverse Northumberland - Working with Town and Parish Councils

### 7. Joined up working in a diverse Northumberland - Working with Town and Parish Councils

**7.1** As part of Local Government Reorganisation in 2009, the whole of Northumberland became 'parished', following the creation of parishes in the South East of the County. The Council considers this an important asset because it enables the Council to engage on issues at very local democratic level. A complete list of Town and Parish Councils is available on the council website<sup>(41)</sup>.

**7.2** A Northumberland Charter for Local Councils sets out protocols for the relationship between the County Council and the Town and Parish Councils, of which there are over 150<sup>(42)</sup> in Northumberland. There are commitments on both sides regarding local democracy and community leadership; communication; consultation and engagement.

**7.3** Parish and Town Councils are statutory consultees on local plans and Northumberland County Council sees them as key partners in the formulation of its Local Plan – see Chapter 6.

**7.4** Neighbourhood planning, introduced through the Localism Act 2011, gives Town and Parish Councils the option of becoming directly involved in planning their areas and for their plans to have a much stronger influence in the decision-making process. Chapter 7 sets out our detailed commitments to Parish and Town Councils on how the County Council will support them with neighbourhood planning.

**7.5** Parish and Town Councils are also notified of planning applications that affect their area – see Chapter 8 for our commitments on planning application consultation.

#### **PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS**

The SCI endorses the commitments set out in the latest version of the Local Council Charter for Northumberland insofar as they relate to the planning process.

Specifically, the Council will assist Town and Parish Councils to understand and be involved in the planning process, on behalf of their communities, through

- Providing briefing or training sessions to groups of Town and Parish Councils on complex consultation issues and where capacity allows;
- The provision of general information and training on the planning process;
- Consultation events in relation to the Local Plan;
- Advice and support in neighbourhood planning; and
- Comprehensive consultation on planning applications affecting their areas.

This will be done in line with the commitments set out in this document.

41 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=387>

42 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=6104>

### 8. Inclusive Planning

**8.1** Northumberland County Council realises that people will wish to get involved in the planning process, when they are directly affected by an imminent proposal close to their home or place of work. We also understand that it is often difficult to see the value of trying to influence plans that are further afield or in the more distant future. The Council are also aware that people may perceive that what they say about planning proposals will be ignored. This chapter sets out how the Council will try and include and involve all people of Northumberland in the planning of their County.

#### Barriers to involvement

**8.2** Not everyone may have a choice about whether to be involved in the planning of the County. Northumberland presents a number of issues that amount to barriers to communication and consultation that need to be overcome. The list below provides some key examples of barriers but there will be others.

- Northumberland has an **ageing population** <sup>(43)</sup> and people with disabilities. These groups may have greater difficulty in reaching venues where plans are on display and may be less likely to have access to the internet;
- A thinly spread population leads to relative **rural isolation**, resulting in difficulties in accessing opportunities to participate in the planning process;
- More urban areas may have **concentrated deprivation** and other forms of **social exclusion** which also make people less able to find out about or respond to consultations;
- Certain groups will have **no permanent address**. Northumberland has a transient population that includes Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities, as well as temporary and seasonal workers. In addition there is a small but significant homelessness problem in the county, which is classified as including those from the GRT communities not on permanent sites; and
- Certain minority ethnic groups (now accounting for up to 2% of the population) may present **language barriers** with accompanying issues of communication. Related to this, some people and groups continue to have **low literacy skills** and may not be able to read the plans or submit comments in writing.

**8.3** It is not just a matter of reaching these groups. Once they have been reached, special ways may be needed to gather their views and opinions.

#### Umbrella Organisations and Networks

**8.4** Some people and groups will frequently get involved in planning issues and the Council would like to encourage their continued involvement. For example the Council recognises the value that local development trusts, village trusts and amenity groups make to planning processes.

**8.5** These groups provide important links into certain sections of the population as many have networks and are, in effect 'umbrella organisations'. The Council's planning service has been expanding its contacts and widening the list of umbrella organisations that it

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43 Just over 20% of the County's population was aged 65+ in 2010, which is forecast to rise to 31% by 2031.

## 8. Inclusive Planning

uses to reach into the wider community and particular interest groups within it – including networks and organisations relating to groups with the 'protected characteristics' defined in the Equality Act 2010 – see below<sup>(44)</sup>.

**8.6** Local residents' associations and business related organisations (such as chambers of trade) are also recognised as important conduits to gathering views from large sections of the communities within Northumberland.

### UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS

The County Council planning service will continue to build up information on, and forge links with umbrella organisations which represent different areas and sections of the population, including residents, businesses, the voluntary sector and those with 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. In doing so, it will be sought to give these organisations, and those that they represent, a sense of empowerment within the planning process.

The Council will seek to engage these networks in disseminating information on planning policies and proposals and seek feedback from them on the extent to which the information has been passed within those networks.

The Council will continue to work with and value the contribution that local interest groups and trusts such as village and civic societies, historical and heritage groups, and development trusts, can make to planning processes.

### The Northumberland Compact – the Voluntary and Community Sector

**8.7** The Northumberland Compact 2010<sup>(45)</sup> outlines the relationship between the public sector (including the Council) and the voluntary and community sector (VCS), so that the two sectors working together can have major benefits for people and communities.

**8.8** Under the compact the Council has to inform and involve the VCS from the earliest stages of policy development, on all relevant issues likely to affect it. This can include empowering VCS organisations to start discussions within affected communities themselves. The Council is also expected to tackle barriers that may prevent VCS organisations from contributing to policy development and help build capacity within these organisations so they can contribute effectively.

**8.9** In return, VCS organisations have certain obligations including feeding back on views expressed – e.g. whether they have been gathered directly from people that the organisation works for / with, or whether the response is based on the organisation's own knowledge and experience of the issues.

44 Adapt NE launched a Single Equality Forum in May 2013, which brings together representatives of 'protected characteristic' groups across Northumberland. The Forum will be utilised when possible as a way of involving these groups in the planning process.

45 This document is authored by Connect4Change, a partnership, formed in 2011, initially to oversee the provision of voluntary and community sector support services in Northumberland. See [http://connect4change.co.uk/assets/uploads/June\\_2010\\_The\\_Northumberland\\_Compact.pdf](http://connect4change.co.uk/assets/uploads/June_2010_The_Northumberland_Compact.pdf)

**8.10** The compact includes many other commitments on both sides, many of which overlap with other Council commitments on equality of opportunity and other matters that are covered from a planning point of view, within this SCI.

### **VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**

The County Council will continue to apply its commitments in the Northumberland Compact on involving and working with the voluntary and community sector, when preparing new planning policies and consulting on planning proposals.

### **The Equality Act – protected characteristics**

**8.11** The Equality Act 2010 requires that people be treated fairly in terms of their 'protected characteristics' – i.e. age, sex (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion and belief, and, if appropriate, pregnancy, maternity and any disability. Under this, the Council has a duty to, among others, advance equality of opportunity and publish data to demonstrate this. The Council published its own 'Equality and Diversity Policy' in 2011<sup>(46)</sup>.

**8.12** The Council's corporate equality commitments tend to relate to people's access to the Council's own services. So it is important that the SCI extends this to add commitments on how all groups will be encouraged to participate in and not be excluded from town planning matters within Northumberland.

**8.13** The Council has to publish Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) alongside each key Council document<sup>(47)</sup>. Such assessments try to ensure that new and emerging plans and policies and proposals are not adversely affecting any particular groups of people or areas, and that opportunities for people to have their say on policies and proposals are equalised as much as possible.

**8.14** The work that has already been done on forging links with equality groups and analysis of the Equality Impact Assessments has informed the commitments below.

### **Older People**

**8.15** In recognition of the County's ageing population, the Council and its partners are closely involved in trying to create a level playing field so that older people can access and benefit from local services in the same way as the population as a whole<sup>(48)</sup>.

**8.16** The main issue that prevents older people from becoming closely involved in the planning process tends to be related to their relative lack of mobility and modern means of communication, making it less easy for them to attend events, access consultation information or respond to consultations. Umbrella organisations, such as Age UK and the

46 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1243>

47 Such an 'Equality Impact Assessment' is published alongside Development Plan Documents – see Chapter 6.

48 A document entitled: 'Older People in Northumberland: A Longer Term View' seeks to help bring about the situation whereby older people can benefit, in the same way as the population in general, from the aims and aspirations of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

## 8. Inclusive Planning

University of the Third Age are proving important means of reaching the older population. While resources are limited, it may be appropriate to make an additional effort to respond to requests to go out to meet representative groups within the older population than would normally be the case for more mobile elements of the community. It will also be important to adhere to commitments to provide consultation information in traditional, as well as digital forms.

### OLDER PEOPLE

In order to engage our increasing number of older people in planning matters, the County Council will do so through:

- its own networks, as well as Age UK and other umbrella groups that represent older people;
- As resources allow, respond positively to requests to go out and talk to representative groups on future plans and/or seek other means in which to maximise access to consultation materials and events.

### Younger People

**8.17** The County Council embraces the international commitment that children have the right to freely express their views on all matters affecting them<sup>(49)</sup> <sup>(50)</sup>.

**8.18** In 2008, Northumberland Families and Children's Trust (FACT) set out ways in which to increase the involvement of children, young people and their families in decision-making<sup>(51)</sup>. Northumberland County Council considers that people should not be seen as being too young to have an opinion and seeks to establish an ongoing dialogue with people of all ages.

**8.19** Past experience has shown that it is very difficult to reach the full range of young people in Northumberland. It is important to find the right participatory processes for younger people and to recognise they may be different to those used with the adult population, and may vary depending on the age of the young people whose views are being sought.

**8.20** There are several High Schools across Northumberland and numerous schools serve the younger age groups. It is clear that resources will never be sufficient to directly reach anything other than a small minority of people in schools and colleges. Even so, it is important to take opportunities to engage – especially with those who may already take an interest in the environment through courses that they are studying or thanks to keen teachers.

49 This commitment is set out in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and, under the National Service Framework for Children, there is a national commitment to engaging children, young people and their families in the design of services.

50 The Council has produced a 'Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2011-2014' which nests underneath the Sustainable Community Strategy and seeks to make sure that the achievement of that plan's "Big Partnership" issues benefits younger people as well as the population as a whole. See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=6001>

51 FACT Turn up the Volume September 2008.

**8.21** In addition, Northumberland has youth democracy networks and the "YPIN"<sup>(52)</sup>. The latter have put on special workshops in association with the Council's plan consultations. Through these, valuable information on the views of young people has been gathered. Even so, there is an ongoing need to find other organisations through which the views of young people in the county can be captured. This would include those representing disadvantaged young people.

**8.22** It is vital that the Council keeps abreast of new forms of communication as these tend to be taken up by younger people first and quickly become key ways of exchanging views and information. The County's own social media have been trialled as a means of raising awareness about plan consultation issues but a more effective means would utilise young people's own networks on their own terms. These means will be further explored.

### YOUNGER PEOPLE

In order to maximise the meaningful engagement of younger people in planning matters and allow young people to 'have their own voice', the County Council will:

- Engage through existing networks including 'YPIN' and the youth democracy organisations with a view to disseminating information.
- Encourage these organisations to hold their own events on their own terms, to air and gather views on planning issues to convey to the Council.
- Take opportunities to work with schools and colleges where the consultation connects with the students' or pupils' studies and the likely feedback will be of value in planning the County.
- Continue to adapt to changes in social media and other innovative forms of communication.
- Have regard to our Children's and Young People's Plan.

### Sex, sexual orientation, marital status parenthood, sexual orientation and gender reassignment

**8.23** The County Council must make sure that it engages people in the planning process in a fair and equal way in terms of their sex, marital status, parenthood (or otherwise) sexual orientation and gender reassignment. There is no reason why any group, defined along these lines, should have less opportunity to participate than any other group; but the Council must be vigilant that no individual or group are being excluded.

**8.24** There is a whole range of organisations, support groups and specialist publications relating to women's issues, gender issues, pregnancy and maternity. The Council has sought to make use of these in raising awareness about planning matters and will continue to do so.

**8.25** In addition, there may be issues which a plan or proposal covers, that will interest a particular group – e.g. future locations for particular types of community facility. Targeted consultation will therefore be appropriate in some cases.

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52 YPIN stands for "Young People in Northumberland". See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=8794>.

## 8. Inclusive Planning

### **SEX (INCLUDING GENDER REASSIGNMENT), SEXUAL ORIENTATION, MARITAL STATUS, PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY**

The Council will seek to ensure that all awareness-raising of, and participation in, planning matters does not exclude any individual or group by reason of their sex (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy or maternity. This will include

- Efforts to raise awareness and engage with, and empower people via appropriate networks, local and other representative groups and organisations and publications.
- Targeted consultations on issues or aspects of future plans, which are of particular interest to a section of the population, when defined along these lines, allowing groups and individuals to 'have their own voice'.

### **Race, culture, ethnicity religion and belief**

**8.26** Seeking to involve people from all races, ethnicities, religions and beliefs equally in the planning process raises many of the same issues as sex, parental / marital status etc. – ensuring that sub-sections of the population are not missed out of consultations. Some of the solutions are the same – engaging through appropriate networks and targeting the consultations. However, there are additional factors that call for variations in approach between ethnic or religious groups, one being language barriers and the other cultural differences.

**8.27** In terms of language barriers, the Council has made a number of commitments in the past on face-to-face contact and the use of translators. The SCI will continue to promote these commitments. However, networks and umbrella bodies exist which can act as interfaces to these communities and these networks and organisations should be the first point of contact.

**8.28** Cultural differences have two main effects in terms of meaningful planning consultation.

- Firstly, they can mean that there are planning issues that are unique to a particular ethnic or religious group, which require special consultations with the group itself and with other 'third parties'. Key examples are:
  - The accommodation issues of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
  - Land and building needs for places of worship or related community facilities that are particular to a religion
- Secondly, cultural differences can also mean that different ethnic or religious groups are difficult to identify and contact, sometimes due to issues of migration or transitory lifestyles or because people do not necessarily want to be identified or contacted due to past discrimination. If some groups are difficult to survey, they can be difficult to plan for.

**8.29** The Council's 'Strategy for Gypsies and Travellers'<sup>(53)</sup> sets out a shared vision and objectives for these groups in Northumberland, based on the closest possible consultation with the communities concerned. Under the Strategy, the Council must ensure that Gypsies and Travellers are given the opportunity to influence the design, development and delivery of services to better meet the needs of their communities. The Strategy also makes the commitment to improve how we collect information to better understand the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The Strategy also places a duty on the Council to ensure that the very particular accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers are better understood in the wider community.

**8.30** It is important that this SCI document applies these types of principles to planning. It is also sensible that the same basic principles are applied across races, religions and cultures.

### **RACE, CULTURE, ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND BELIEF**

The Council will seek to ensure that awareness-raising of, and participation in, planning matters is inclusive of the full array of races, cultures, ethnicities, religions and beliefs within the County. This will include:

- Engagement and empowerment through appropriate networks and publications insofar as language barriers and/or cultural differences allow;
- The use of translators and/or more face-to-face contact, where there are language and/or other communication barriers and/or where clearer explanation is required – as far as resources will allow;
- Targeted consultations to gather information or views on issues or aspects of future plans, which are particular to an ethnic, religious or cultural minority group, allowing groups to 'have their own voice';
- Where necessary using intermediaries who already have a relationship with the communities concerned;
- Promoting a better understanding, among the wider population, of any planning needs and requirements that are particular to an ethnic, religious or cultural minority group.

### **Protected characteristics – Disability**

**8.31** The challenges faced by the Council in seeking to involve people with disabilities fully in the planning process overlap in some respects with those relating to other groups. The barriers to involvement may include difficulty in accessing consultation events or in reading documents in standard formats. As with other groups, there are particular planning issues on which consultation targeted towards disabled groups could be appropriate – notably those to do with moving around the county or accessing suitable housing, workplaces or community facilities.

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53 See <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=c94612bf-605a-4a11-a4f7-d7c50b3a6e3b&version=-1>

## 8. Inclusive Planning

### DISABILITY

In order to engage people with disabilities in planning matters, the County Council will:

- Involve and empower people through appropriate networks and umbrella groups; As resources allow:
  - Respond positively to requests to go out and talk to representative groups on future plans; and/or
  - Seek other means in which to maximise access to consultations;
  - Continue to explore the potential for innovative ways to engage particular groups of disabled people, through adaptations to documents and display materials and/or various interactive means.
- Where necessary, use an officer trained in sign language or provide verbal accounts.
- Target consultations to gather information or views on issues or aspects of future plans, which are particular to people with disabilities, allowing groups to 'have their own voice'.

### Reaching other sectors

**8.32** As well as the protected characteristics, there are other sections of the community and society which may require particular levels of commitment in order to engage them on planning matters.

### The Business Community

**8.33** As well as developers and land owners, the wider business community has a key role in helping to deliver the aims of planning policy. Past surveys<sup>(54)</sup> have shown that Northumberland businesses would like more information about planning proposals which could potentially affect them, even if they were located in different parts of the county.

### THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

In order to engage the business community in planning matters, the County Council will:

- Recognise that networks and umbrella groups, including the Chambers of Trade/Commerce, can help to reach and empower a wide range of businesses.
- Target business as well as residential addresses within areas that are the subject of mailshots on planning proposals.
- Use targeted consultations to gather information or views on issues or aspects of future plans, which are of relevance to the business community.

54 Carried out when the original SCI was being written.

### **Disadvantaged Groups (unemployed, low income, homeless)**

**8.34** While not listed as protected characteristics under the Equality Act, people who are unemployed, on low incomes and/or homeless are often difficult to contact and/or difficult to engage in planning issues. Capturing their views would involve similar measures to some already set out. While it is recognised that deprivation exists in various forms and to varying degrees across the County, it is particularly important, when holding consultation events, to avoid missing out areas of deprivation, simply because, for example, local people have not requested meetings.

#### **DISADVANTAGED GROUPS**

In order to ensure that people who are experiencing unemployment, low income and/or homelessness have the maximum opportunity to engage with the planning process, the County Council will apply the principles and practices applied to all difficult-to-reach groups and, for certain consultations, will seek to use venues in or near to areas of multiple deprivation as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

### **People in Full-time Education or Employment**

**8.35** The Council recognises that it is inadequate to limit consultation opportunities to normal working hours as a substantial proportion of the population are in full time employment or education during these hours.

#### **PEOPLE IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT**

In order to cater for people in full-time employment, we will ensure that there are opportunities for involvement in planning events out of normal working hours, including, where possible, evenings and weekends in the main towns in the County.

# 9. Resources for Community Engagement

## 9. Resources for Community Engagement

9.1 The methods of engagement set out within the SCI will need to make the best use of resources available and to engage with as many people as possible, whilst avoiding consultation overload.

### Staff Resources and Joined Up Working

9.2 Specific Planning and Housing Services staff will have responsibility for engagement and will seek to co-ordinate consultation processes across the service with support from other council services where appropriate. For planning applications, the Development Management teams will have the central role in consultation on a day-to-day basis.

### Wider, Earlier and Effective Engagement

9.3 We are committed to reaching all relevant consultees and potential participants including under-represented groups. This means exploring the possibilities of using more innovative methods.

9.4 The current planning system means that the public will increasingly be asked for their views on proposals *before* a planning application is made; and for new planning policy documents it means that people will be asked to contribute their views at the *early* stages. While this should reduce disputes later in the process, it requires sufficient resources and staff time at an early stage.

9.5 New technology offers scope for large-scale, low cost consultation, but as set out in previous chapters, this will not meet all consultation needs. Building relationships and more intensive working through workshops and community events will inevitably incur increased costs.

**RESOURCES FOR GOOD QUALITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Council will ensure that resources are available to allow resource intensive methods of public engagement in planning processes to be used where appropriate. These methods will need to be justified on the basis that they support:

- Better quality engagement;
- Engagement with under-represented groups;
- Engagement with people who can deliver policy goals; and
- Conflict resolution.

### The Changing Need for Resources over Time

9.6 In terms of consulting on day-to-day planning applications and facilitating the involvement of local people and relevant stakeholders to respond to individual proposals for development, the resource requirements will be fairly constant.

## 9. Resources for Community Engagement

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**9.7** The phasing of engagement and consultation on the Local Plan is determined by the Local Development Scheme. The timings therein reflect the considerable resources needed for early engagement on Local Plan Documents, with the production of documents being stepped in order to spread this load where possible.

**9.8** As often as necessary, we will assess whether the level and quality of resources meets our engagement needs. Any increase in the need for resources will be subject to budget considerations and so additional funding opportunities will be explored. Opportunities will be taken to join up engagement activity with other council plans and strategies wherever possible and appropriate.

## **10. Monitoring and the Statement of Community Involvement**

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### **10. Monitoring and the Statement of Community Involvement**

**10.1** The Council regularly monitors the effectiveness of different methods of consultation and engagement. Lessons learnt from consultations on one stage of a plan document or on a particular type of application can help the Council make the next equivalent consultation more effective.

#### **Using evidence to monitor community involvement**

**10.2** The evidence base used to inform the Council about the effectiveness of the community involvement includes:

- Records of who has responded and what they have said;
- The results of customer feedback surveys carried out after key consultations; and
- Day-to-day feedback on the operation of consultation and engagement processes.

**10.3** Using such evidence, the Council will undertake an internal review of the effectiveness of the consultation techniques used, making modifications as necessary, under the guidance of the Council's Engagement Board.

#### **Monitoring whether people remain involved**

**10.4** In analysing the responses to consultations the Council can maintain an understanding of how different issues motivate people to respond. The Council must also monitor the extent to which people remain engaged with a lengthy planning process over time by monitoring their participation between stages of the process and also how we feed back to them on changes made.

#### **Monitoring and reviewing this SCI**

**10.5** On a wider basis, the Council will monitor how well this SCI is helping us to meet our commitments to consultation with and engagement of the community and stakeholders.

**10.6** As well as reviewing planning consultation processes, as described above, this will be informed by other monitoring going on across Planning and Housing Services and the wider Council, on aspects of engagement such as with parishes and with the different protected groups under the Equality Act. These aspects will also feed into the monitoring of this document.

**10.7** Inevitably new best practice will emerge regarding methods of consulting and engaging with people and this will also need to be fed into any review, as will any changes in legislation that affects consultation requirements. Any resulting changes to the SCI will be subject to public consultation.

### 11. More Help and Advice

#### Northumberland County Council Contacts

##### The Local Plan

**11.1** If you want to find out more about the Statement of Community Involvement, the Local Plan or other planning policy matters please contact the **Strategic Planning and Housing Policy Team**:

- **Telephone:** 0845 600 6400
- **Email:** [PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk)
- **Address:** Strategic Planning and Housing, Planning, Economy and Housing, Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF

##### Development Management

**11.2** If you require any information on specific planning applications or the planning application process in general, please contact the **Development Management** teams:

- **Urban and Rural Development Management Team Central, and Major Developments and Delivery Team**  
Telephone: 01670 622632  
Email: [Strategic.andurban@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Strategic.andurban@northumberland.gov.uk)  
Address: Urban and Rural Development Management and Major Developments - Central Team, Corporate Resources, Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF
- **Urban and Rural Development Management Team North**  
Telephone: 01670 622689  
Email: [North.Planning@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:North.Planning@northumberland.gov.uk)  
Address: Urban and Rural Development Management Team - North, Northumberland County Council, Greenwell Lane, Greenwell Lane Road, Alnwick, NE66 1HB
- **Urban and Rural Development Management Team West**  
Telephone: 01670 620083  
Email: [West.Planning@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:West.Planning@northumberland.gov.uk)  
Address: Urban and Rural Development Management Team - West, Development Services, Northumberland County Council, Hadrian House, Hexham, NE46 1XA

##### Democratic Services

**11.3** For Committee membership, dates and similar information, contact Democratic Services: Telephone: 0845 600 6400

## 11. More Help and Advice

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### Other Contacts

**11.4 The Planning Portal** website provides information on the UK planning system: [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)

**11.5 Planning Aid England** provides free and independent advice to those who need help but cannot access consultancy services. Planning Aid has a small number of paid staff and a network of professional volunteers and can offer expert advice and support:

- **Telephone:** 0330 123 9244
- **Website:** 'Planning Aid Direct' at <http://planningaid.custhelp.com/>

**11.6 Community Action Northumberland** provides support to rural communities across Northumberland. They can be contacted at:

- Address: Community Action Northumberland, UNIUN Enterprise Building, Front Street, Pegswood, Morpeth Northumberland NE61 6RG
- Telephone: 01670 517178
- Email: [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk)
- Website: [www.ca-north.org.uk/](http://www.ca-north.org.uk/)

**11.7** Community Action Northumberland (CAN) is the part of the Rural Communication Action Network (RCAN). The Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) website has information about RCAN and community-led planning: [www.acre.org.uk/](http://www.acre.org.uk/)

### Getting Involved

**11.8** As explained in Chapter 6, we have a database of people within Northumberland who have, in the past, had an interest in planning issues across Northumberland. If you would like to be included on this database and consulted on planning policy documents, please email your details to us at: [PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk)

### If you have a complaint

**11.9** If you have a complaint about the planning service (for example dissatisfaction about our actions, lack of actions or standard of service) please contact us as quickly as possible using the contact details above.

**11.10** If you are not satisfied after contacting us, you may wish to visit <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=362>. This web page explains procedures that you can follow to pursue your complaint.

## Appendix A: Lists of Bodies to Consult / Cooperate with on Plans and Proposals

### The Duty to Cooperate

The Localism Act 2011 imposes a '**Duty to Co-operate**' on local planning authorities **in relation to planning of sustainable development**. The bodies with which Councils are expected to cooperate in this respect are

- Other local planning authorities adjoining the area of the local planning authority the Environment Agency;
- the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage);
- Natural England;
- the Civil Aviation Authority;
- each Clinical Commissioning Group established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to deliver NHS services;
- the Office of Rail Regulation;
- each Integrated Transport Authority;
- each highway authority within the meaning of section 1 of the Highways Act 1980 (including the Secretary of State, where the Secretary of State is the highways authority);
- the Marine Management Organisation;
- each local enterprise partnership (established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in an area); and
- (NB to this list should be added local nature partnerships, of which there are two that include parts of Northumberland, and the Combined Authority for the North-East which deals with issues of governance that cross boundaries).

### Specific Consultation Bodies for Local Plan Documents

The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012, lists specific bodies which must be consulted by the Council when preparing development plan documents in which they may have an interest. The specific bodies are listed below:

- the Coal Authority
- the Environment Agency
- the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage)
- the Marine Management Organisation
- Natural England
- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited the Highways Agency
- a relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the local planning authority's area (includes neighbouring authorities, as well as parish and town councils)
- any person—
  - i. to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under section 106(3)(a) of the Communications Act 2003, and
  - ii. who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the local planning authority's area,
- if it exercises functions in any part of the local planning authority's area—

## Appendix A: Lists of Bodies to Consult / Cooperate with on Plans and Proposals

- i. a Clinical Commissioning Group established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to deliver NHS services. NB the Property arm of the NHS Foundation Trust will also be included as a specific consultation body.
  - ii. a person to whom a licence has been granted to transmit or distribute electricity, under section 6(1)(b) or (c) of the Electricity Act 1989
  - iii. a person to whom a licence has been granted to convey gas through pipes, under section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986
  - iv. a sewerage undertaker; and
  - v. a water undertaker;
- the Homes and Communities Agency.

### Statutory Consultees on relevant planning applications

The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 requires that the Council consults relevant 'statutory consultees' in relation to applications for permission / consent. These will vary according to the type of application and the land covered by it. Many of the organisations will be the same as those in the list of Specific Consultation Bodies for Local Plan Documents above but may also include any of British Waterways, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Crown Estate Commissioners, various other Government Departments, the Forestry Commission, the Health and Safety Executive, Sport England and/or the Theatres Trust.

### General Consultation Bodies for planning documents and applications

**A.1** The Regulations identify five types of bodies as general consultation bodies that relate to voluntary organisations representing certain groups within the community. The general consultation bodies are:

- Voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the Council's area (e.g. local development trusts)
- Bodies which represent the interests of:
  - Different ethnic groups in the Council's area
  - Different religious groups in the Council's area
  - Disabled people in the Council's area
  - People carrying on business in the Council's area

**A.2** Any combination of bodies falling within these categories may be consulted as appropriate for the particular planning document or planning proposal. We acknowledge that the exact organisations that fall into these types will vary locally and we will consult those general bodies we feel appropriate during the preparation of a development plan document and for planning applications.

### Other Consultation Bodies

In addition to specific and general consultees, the Regulations state that the local planning authority should consider the need to consult, where appropriate certain agencies and organisations in the preparation of local development documents. Depending on the plan being produced, it may be appropriate to consult with other agencies and organisations

## **Appendix A: Lists of Bodies to Consult / Cooperate with on Plans and Proposals**

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in addition to those identified as specific or general consultation bodies, such as Age Concern, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and The Home Builders' Federation.

We have prepared an extensive consultation database for the local development framework which includes such bodies.

### Glossary

**Adoption** Final confirmation of a development plan or Local Plan document as having statutory status.

**Area Committees** Three area committees representing the North, South East and West of the County will have various responsibilities including ensuring that the council takes account of the needs and aspirations of local communities in each area.

**Combined Authority** Created allow a group of local authorities to pool appropriate responsibility and receive certain delegated functions from central government in order to deliver transport and economic policy more effectively over a wider area.. A North-East Combined Authority has been established across Northumberland, Durham and the former Tyne and Wear authorities.

**Conservation Area Consent** Consent is required for any substantial demolition of a building or structure within a Conservation Area over a certain size.

**Core Strategy** The Core Strategy is the main Development Plan Document (DPD) setting out the spatial vision, objectives and key strategic policies for an area, having regard to the Sustainable Community Strategy.

**Decision Notice** Notification of the decision on a planning application.

**Delegated Powers** Those decisions made by officers without being considered by a committee of councillors.

**Delivery Development Plan Document** The development plan document that will be prepared following the Core Strategy in order to set out more detailed policies, proposals and allocations the main purpose of which is to ensure that the Core Strategy policies are realised on the ground.

**Development Management** The process through which a local planning authority considers a planning application and whether it should be given permission.

**Development Plan** Sets out the statutory policies and proposals for the development and use of land and buildings in the local planning authority area. This includes adopted council 'local plan' documents such as the core strategy and any future 'made' neighbourhood plans.

**Development Plan Document (DPD)** Adopted plans and documents that form part of the development plan. Once adopted, planning decisions must be made in accordance with them unless material considerations indicate otherwise. DPDs can include core strategy, land allocation and delivery plans, area action plans, and neighbourhood plans.

**Early Engagement** Involving the community and stakeholders at a very early stage of the planning process so that they are genuinely able to influence the final outcome.

**Empowerment** The process of enabling more people to play an active role in the decisions that affect their communities. The SCI seeks to enable the community to have more say in planning policies and decisions which affect them.

**Enforcement** The process of ensuring that development takes place in accordance with approved plans and permissions.

**Environment Agency** A governmental body that deals with issues of the environmental effects of activities including those arising from development – e.g. pollution, waste arising, water issues including flood protection advice.

**Evidence Base** The information and data gathered in order to ensure that policies and proposals set out in planning documents are based upon robust physical, economic and social information.

**General Consultation Bodies** Relevant groups and organisations that are consulted on Local Development Documents or applications, as exemplified in Appendix A.

**General Permitted Development Order (GPDO)** A ‘statutory instrument’ of Government which sets out certain types of development, such as small house extensions, where there is no requirement for a planning application to be submitted and which therefore comprise “permitted development”.

**Independent Examination** An examination of a draft plan, held in public by an independent planning inspector.

**Infrastructure** The physical entities (for example roads, railways, sewers, pipes, telecommunications lines) necessary for communities to function and move around.

**Inspector's Report** A report issued by an independent Planning Inspector, assessing the soundness of a Development Plan Document that has normally been the subject of a Public Examination. Also refers to a report of the decision on a Planning Appeal.

**Listed Building** A building of special architectural or historic interest Listed buildings are graded according to their importance (Grades I, II\* and II).

**Listed Building Consent** A form of consent which is required before the demolition or significant alteration to a Listed Building can take place.

**Local Development Documents (LDD)** The collective term for development plan documents and supplementary planning documents.

**Local Plan** The name given to the documents that form the plan for the area (in this case Northumberland), consisting of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents.

**Local Development Scheme (LDS)** Sets out the programme for the preparation of the Local Development Documents.

**Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)** Partnerships between local authorities and businesses, deciding priorities for investment in roads, buildings and facilities in the area. Northumberland is within the North East LEP, which also covers County Durham and the former Tyne and Wear authorities.

## Glossary

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**Local Nature Partnership** Partnerships of a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people who aim to help bring about improvements in their local natural environment. Two will cover large parts of Northumberland

**Local Planning Authority (LPA)** The local authority or council (in this case Northumberland), that is empowered by law to exercise planning functions.

**Material Consideration** A matter that should be taken into account in making a planning decision.

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** A Government document that sets out nationally important planning issues. It replaces Planning / Mineral Policy Statements and Guidance Notes.

**Neighbourhood Plan / Neighbourhood Development Plan** A plan prepared for a defined area by a “qualifying body”, a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum. When adopted a neighbourhood plan will form part of the Development Plan.

**Northumberland Compact** The Northumberland Compact is a short and simple agreement between the public sector and the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS). It is a commitment from both sides to work in partnership for the benefit and support of local communities.

**Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)** Sets out the long-term vision for Northumberland and how the Council and partners aim to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of our communities.

**Planning Aid** Planning Aid provides free and independent advice and support to community groups and individuals unable to employ a planning consultant. See: [www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk).

**Planning Appeal** An applicant may appeal to the Secretary of State, through the Planning Inspectorate, against a refusal of planning permission or against the imposition of conditions. The appeal is dealt with by an independent Inspector, either using written representations, a hearing or public inquiry.

**Planning Obligations** Legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken, for example, the provision of necessary highway works. These are sometimes called “Section 106 Agreements” based on the relevant Section of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

**Planning Permission** Formal approval sought from a council, often granted with conditions attached, allowing a proposed development to proceed.

**Planning Register** A register of applications for planning permission and other applications for consent, submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

**Proposals Map** Illustrates, on an Ordnance Survey base map, all the policies and proposals in development plan documents (DPD).

**Protected Characteristics** Particular characteristics of individuals or groups of individuals within the population regarding which the Council has a duty to (inter alia) advance equality of opportunity and must publish data to demonstrate this, (under the Equality Act 2010 and its own Equality and Diversity policy). It requires that people be treated fairly in terms of the following 'protected characteristics': age, sex (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion and belief, and, if appropriate, pregnancy, maternity and any disability.

**Soundness** A Development Plan Document is assessed at an Independent Examination in order to consider whether it meets the tests of soundness. In order to be considered 'sound' a DPD must be positively prepared (i.e. based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed requirements); justified; based on robust and credible evidence; the most appropriate strategy when considered against the alternatives; effective; deliverable; flexible; able to be monitored; and consistent with national policy.

**Specific Consultation Bodies** Particular bodies (such as parish councils) who are consulted on Local Development Documents as set out in chapter 6 and as specified in Appendix A.

**Stakeholders** A combination of statutory consultees, businesses, partners and other organisations identified by government guidance who along with the council have a 'stake' or interest in the preparation of a plan.

**Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** (This document). Sets out the standards which the plan making authority intend to achieve in relation to involving the community in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all local development documents (LDD) and dealing with planning applications. It also sets out how the local planning authority intends to achieve those standards.

**Statement of Consultation** Provides a written record of people's comments on a document or plan, explaining how these have been addressed in the Plan.

**Submission Stage** This stage is where Development Plan Documents are submitted to the Secretary of State for assessment and for subsequent examination.

**Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)** Non-statutory documents which add further detail to the policies in statutory documents such as the core strategy – e.g. providing guidance on design in general or on the development of specific sites. The content of SPDs may be material to decisions but do not form part of the development plan.

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** Document weighing and assessing policies for their global, national and local sustainability implications in relation to the environment, the economy and society, incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to comply with EU Directive 2001/42/EC.

**Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)** See 'Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy'

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