

Stroud District Council Statement of Community Involvement

Adopted 28 March 2019
Temporary changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic
were adopted 15 October 2020 and will remain in place until reviewed, when
the pandemic has ended

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out Stroud District Council's strategy for community involvement in the planning process. It sets out the ways in which we will **inform, engage** and **consult** people when we are formulating planning policies and considering planning applications and how we will give feed back to the community on the results.
- 1.2 The Council has also signed up to the following documents that cover how we will consult with the voluntary/community sector, Parish and Town Councils and service personnel and their families:
- The Gloucestershire Compact
 - "Working Together" – Parish and Town Council Protocol
 - Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant

2.0 Preparing the Local Plan and other policy documents

- 2.1 Local authorities are required to produce a local plan which sets out the planning policies for their area. They may also produce supplementary planning documents (SPDs) such as development briefs or design statements, or adopt those produced by other bodies such as parish councils, which add further detail to policies or sites. Documents produced by other bodies will need to be subject to consultation which complies with this SCI before they can be adopted as SPD.
- 2.2 The Council maintains a timetable for producing the Local Plan and SPDs known as the Local Development Scheme (LDS). We will publicise this on our website and keep it up to date so that local communities can keep track of plan making activity and know when they can get involved.
- 2.3 We will publish monitoring reports at least annually on our website on how policies within the Local Plan are being delivered and on progress with plan preparation as set out in the LDS.
- 2.4 Neighbourhood plans are produced by parish and town councils who are responsible for engaging and consulting with local communities, other consultation bodies and consultees. The District Council encourages parish and town councils to consult widely with local residents, local businesses and other interested parties through the initial engagement process. The District Council has a role to consult during the latter formal stages and will do so in

accordance with the relevant regulations. We will publish information on progress with neighbourhood plans on an annual basis.

Who will we inform, engage and consult?

- 2.5 The Local Plan Regulations set out who must be consulted at key stages of plan production. These are known as specific consultation bodies. The current list includes:
- The Coal Authority
 - The Environment Agency
 - Historic England
 - Marine Management Organisation
 - Natural England
 - Network Rail
 - Highways England
 - Relevant authority within or adjoining area (county, local , parish)
 - Electronic communications operator or owner
 - National Health Service
 - Electricity and Gas operators
 - Water and sewerage undertakers
 - Homes England
- 2.6 We will consult a wide range of general consultation bodies as appropriate and necessary. These bodies fall into several groups, as follows:
- Voluntary bodies
 - Community groups
 - Religious groups
 - Business groups (e.g. GFirst LEP)
 - Environmental groups (e.g. Cotswolds Conservation Board, CPRE)
 - Landowners & developers
 - The service sector (police, health, education, etc.)
- 2.7 Any group or individual showing an interest in the Local Plan or other policy documents and wanting to be included at any stage of the process will be added to the consultation database. We will manage and review this regularly to keep it as up-to-date as possible.
- 2.8 Town and Parish Councils, as the tier of government that is closest to local communities, have a central role to play in leading their communities and improving local quality of life. Town and Parish Council views are therefore an important consideration.
- 2.9 We recognise that many members of the community are hard to reach or engage with, whether due to working hours, commitments, personal circumstances or disabilities. We will try to modify traditional consultation methods where appropriate to engage with such groups and individuals and we will highlight in consultation reports how we have sought to capture their views. Some of these groups include:

- Older people
- Young people
- Minority ethnic people
- People who communicate in other languages and by different means
- Travellers
- People with disabilities (including people with mental illness, learning difficulties and visual or hearing impairment)
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people
- The socially excluded (including those living in poverty and the homeless)

How will we inform, engage and consult?

2.10 All Local Plan or SPD public consultations will be for a minimum of 6 weeks:

- We will publish information and documents on the Council's website
- We will notify appropriate organisations and individuals of any consultation events electronically or where a person does not have an email address, letters will be sent to them.
- We will publicise consultations where necessary by methods such as leaflets, posters, displays and newspaper notices.
- ~~Copies of consultation documents will be available for the public to view at specified locations. Currently the list includes:~~
 - ~~Town and parish council offices that open to the public: Berkeley, Gainscross, Cam, Chalford, Dursley, Minchinhampton, Nailsworth, Painswick, Redborough, Stonehouse, Stroud, Upton St Leonards, Wotton under Edge~~
 - ~~Public libraries at Berkeley, Brockworth, Dursley, Nailsworth, Minchinhampton, Miserden, Quedgeley, Stonehouse, Stroud, Wotton under Edge~~
 - ~~Stroud District Council, Ebley Mill reception – there are computers for public internet access here as well~~

NOTE: The deletion of the above text relating to copies of documents at specific locations will remain as long as the Government's changes to local plan regulations under the Coronavirus Act 2020 remain in place.

2.11 There are many different ways to encourage local participation. In order to widen the involvement of the community, and especially in engaging and consulting with hard to engage or reach groups, we will use a variety of methods and techniques to reach the intended audience. During the Covid-19 pandemic all methods need to reflect Government legislation and guidance on social distancing and best practice. We will tailor the methods to the specific stage of preparation. Examples of this involvement menu are set out below:

- electronically via the Council's website
- ~~at specific exhibitions of planning proposals or attending public events~~
- by e-mailing/texting to registered interest groups and individuals
- by holding online conferences or workshops e.g. planning for real exercises
- by establishing online discussion or focus groups

- through online face to face meetings with groups or individuals as required.

2.11a Online engagement methods are positively supported, including use of the Council's website, online questionnaires, online meetings and social media. However, we will take reasonable steps to ensure sections of the community that don't have internet access are involved and their views are captured.

2.12 Following the close of public consultations we will:

- publish comments received as soon as possible
- explain how these comments have been taken into account
- set out the next steps

When will we inform, engage and consult?

2.13 The following diagram outlines the process for the preparation of the Local Plan and for SPDs. There are various stages when an individual or organisation may be informed of the process, be engaged in the development of a document or be consulted on the draft of a document.

Local Plan stage	Preparation				Publication and submission	Examination	Modification	Adoption
	Survey	Issues and options	Preferred options	Draft plan				
Activities	We will produce and publish data and studies about the area's needs and issues	We will identify and then carry out consultation on issues and options	We will assess options and carry out consultation on preferred options	We will produce a draft plan and carry out consultation	We will produce a final draft plan, carry out formal consultation and send to Inspector	We will respond to questions from the Inspector.	We will produce modifications to the plan and carry out formal consultation	We will consider the Inspector's report and adopt the final Local Plan
How you can be involved	<p>We will inform communities of progress with plan preparation by publishing an up to date Local Development Scheme and annual monitoring reports on the website together with evidence documents when they are completed in an accessible format</p> <p>We will engage with relevant specific and general consultation bodies during the preparation of background studies and survey data. We will inform communities through the publication of data and studies when finalised on the website</p> <p>We will consult with specific and general consultation bodies and with members of the public on the content of documents. We will feedback on how comments have been taken into account through the publication of consultation reports on the website</p>				We will consult formally on the draft document. All comments will be published and passed to the Inspector examining the plan	If you made comments at the publication stage you can ask the Inspector to appear at a hearing session to put your case in person	We will consult formally on modifications to the plan. All comments will be published and passed to the Inspector examining the plan	We will inform consultation bodies and the public of the publication of the Inspector's report and the final adopted Local Plan

SPD/LDS Stages	Preparation	Public consultation	Adoption
Activities	We will prepare and publish a draft document	We will produce a draft document and carry out public consultation	We will consider comments received, make changes to the document as necessary and adopt the final SPD
How you can be involved	We will engage with relevant specific and general consultation bodies during the preparation of the document	We will consult with specific and general consultation bodies and with members of the public on the content of the document. We will feedback on how comments have been taken into account through the publication of consultation reports on the website	We will inform consultation bodies and consultees who responded to consultation of the adoption of the document. We will publish the document on the website.

3.0 Community Involvement in the planning application process

- 3.1 Stroud District Council determines around 2,800 planning and other applications each year, ranging from householder extensions to major new residential, retail and office developments. Whilst the focus for community engagement in planning is at the plan making stage, as part of the process to determine these applications, it is important that the community and other stakeholders have the opportunity to get involved and have their say.
- 3.2 Planning legislation sets out the minimum requirements for publicising and consulting the community and stakeholders on planning applications. This section sets out the Council's interpretation of how we will meet those requirements through the development management process at pre-application, application and appeal stages.

Pre-application advice

- 3.3 The Council's provides a pre-application advice service that allows a developer, be it a householder wondering if their extension is likely to get planning permission to a volume house-builder wishing to explore the planning issues raised by their prospective development, without incurring the cost of submitting a formal planning application. Information on accessing pre-application advice, the service that will be provided and the costs involved is available on the Council's website.
- 3.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights the benefits of early consultation and engagement with the development management process: "The more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, the greater the benefits." The onus for undertaking public consultation at the pre-application stage lies with the Developer, not the Council.
- 3.5 For larger-scale or potentially controversial development proposals, the Council expects developers to engage with relevant stakeholders, the local community, Ward Members and Town and Parish Councils. For large sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan, the Council has agreed a Pre-Application Community Involvement Protocol (available on the Council's website), which sets out good practice for developers, town and parish council's and the District Council. For very large development proposals, pre-application consultation is required by the Planning Act 2008 and the Localism Act 2011.
- 3.6 With small-scale development proposals, there is usually no need for an applicant to undertake pre-application public consultation beyond speaking to nearby neighbours about plans.

Planning applications

- 3.7 Once a planning application has been received and validated by the Development Management team, there is a process of informing through publicity and consultation that is undertaken to ensure that stakeholders and the community have the opportunity to have their say on the development

proposed. For all planning applications, neighbour notification letters are sent to the occupiers of properties immediately adjoining the site and a site notice is displayed as close as possible to the proposed development site. With the growth of customer 'self-service' via the Council's website 'Public Access' system, the use of neighbour notification letters may cease in the future, but for the present time, they will remain part of the consultation process.

- 3.8 An email will be sent to the relevant Town or Parish Council clerk for the area where the development proposal is situated, making them aware of the application. Internal and external statutory consultees are also notified of relevant applications (for example Highways, Environmental Health or Conservation teams and the Environment Agency).
- 3.9 For some types of application (such as major applications; applications for works to listed buildings; applications for developments affecting the setting of a listed building or a conservation area), a notice will be placed in the local press.
- 3.10 Following all these notifications, there is a period of at least 21 days on all applications for any interested parties, including internal and external statutory consultees, to make comments. We continue to accept comments until the application is determined, so in many cases this will be longer than 21 days but for the efficient determination of applications we do ask that the 21 day notification period is adhered to wherever possible.
- 3.11 If significant changes or amendments are submitted while the application is being processed, an additional 10 days will be available to make comments. The same parties will be notified of these changes, plus anyone who has already commented on the proposals.
- 3.12 All planning applications can be viewed online through the Council's Public Access system. We encourage people to respond online through the Public Access as this allows us to process comments more efficiently. Alternatively, comments can be submitted by email or post. All comments must be made in writing and contain the name and address of the author. We cannot consider anonymous comments.
- 3.13 All comments received are public documents and will be made available to view online through the Public Access system. They cannot be kept confidential, although personal information (signatures, email addresses and phone numbers) is censored. The adopted officer Scheme of Delegation means that the majority of applications are determined under officer delegated powers, leaving Development Control Committee (DCC) to consider the more contentious applications. The Scheme of Delegation can be found within the Constitution on the website.

Planning decisions

- 3.14 For those applications that are determined at DCC, members of the public have the right to speak in favour of or against applications. Objectors and

supporters are given 3 minutes each (this time is shared if there is more than one speaker) and the town or parish council also have 3 minutes.

- 3.15 Once a decision is made, either at DCC or under officer delegated powers, the decision notice will be issued and a copy of it placed to view on the Council's website. Those members of the public who have signed up via Public Access for application alerts will be notified with an email to say that there has been a change in the application.

Appeals

- 3.16 An appeal may be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by an applicant when planning permission is refused or where it has been permitted with conditions which the applicant considers to be unreasonable. Appeals can also be lodged if the application has not been determined within the appropriate statutory time limit.
- 3.17 If an appeal is made, the Council will notify everyone who was notified about the original application, plus anyone who commented on the application. Any further comments made at this time should be sent directly to the Planning Inspectorate (not the Council) for its consideration.
- 3.18 For appeals that are decided through an informal hearing or public inquiry, interested parties are also given the opportunity to appear before the Inspector. The Planning Inspectorate will consider the evidence and decide whether the Council's decision was correct. For all types of appeals the Inspector's decision is binding on the Council, although it can be challenged on a point of law in the High Court.
- 3.19 When an appeal decision is received by the Council, we will publish the decision on our website.

4.0 How to make your comments

- 4.1 To make a comment on the Local Plan or a supplementary planning document during a public consultation period:
1. the preferred method of response is via the online survey on the planning strategy pages of the Council's website www.stroud.gov.uk
 2. by email: local.plan@stroud.gov.uk
 3. write to: The Planning Strategy Team, Stroud District Council, Ebley Mill, Stroud, GL5 4UB
- 4.2 To make a comment on a planning application:
1. the preferred method of response is via the public access system (you will need to register on the website to do this) having viewed the application online on the Council's website www.stroud.gov.uk
 2. by email: planning@stroud.gov.uk

3. write to: Planning, Stroud District Council, Ebley Mill, Stroud, GL5 4UB

5.0 Revising the Statement of Community Involvement

5.1 Local planning authorities must review their Statements of Community Involvement every five years from adoption. In addition, we will review and update if necessary this document to reflect any national legislative changes or proposed changes to local practice.