



# **Statement of Community Involvement**

**Updated October 2014**

## **Introduction**

### **What is the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)?**

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlines how Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) expects to involve and consult the public and stakeholders when producing planning policy documents forming the Waste and Minerals Plan and associated documents, and when the public can have their say on the determination of planning applications.

The emphasis on consultation methods will be to promote an open and transparent process where communities and stakeholders are encouraged to be involved in and have greater ownership of the decisions being made. Although getting involved does not guarantee that the Council will make changes or decisions that reflect everyone's views, the Council's aim is to ensure that it explains appropriately why it has made particular decisions.

### **The need for a review of the SCI**

The requirement to produce an SCI was introduced in the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. In light of recent changes to the planning system, this SCI replaces the existing SCI which was adopted in September 2007.

The main changes have notably been the introduction of the Localism Act in 2011 and the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012. Both promote a move away from the previous Local Development Framework folder of planning policy documents towards a single local plan structure. The NPPF also replaces most Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance Notes. LCC will continue to deliver its statutory development plan based on Core Strategy and Site Allocation documents.

The Localism Act 2011 puts engaging with local communities to shape the places where they want to live, work and play at the heart of the planning system. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises that early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential to provide the framework on which local communities and planning authorities prepare effective local and neighbourhood plans (see page 10).

The updated SCI is also available online [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/mineralsandwaste](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/mineralsandwaste) and hard copies are also available at Council offices and main libraries across the County.

## **Development Plan Documents**

### **Community Involvement**

Community involvement in plan preparation is of great benefit to the Council, helping to identify problems and opportunities, and ensuring efficient use of resources. One of the aims of the planning system is to facilitate early involvement in the process

and maintain continuous engagement with stakeholders and the community. It is essential that those wishing to make comments do so early in the preparation stage, before the Development Plan Document is prepared for submission. Community involvement, as well as the methods used to engage the community, is intended to be continuously reviewed throughout the document preparation process to ensure its effectiveness.

Lincolnshire is the fourth largest county in England and is also the fourth most sparsely populated. With these demographics, difficulties concerning planning related issues such as involvement can be a problem. One of the challenges for Lincolnshire County Council as a local planning authority is working to address issues of remoteness and accessibility and also improving regional and national connections. The Council aims to address some of these latter issues through the new Government requirement to improve working relationships with nearby authorities, known as the duty to co-operate.

The involvement of communities will not cease after a consultation exercise. The Council will be available to provide feedback to the community after formal consultation periods and will also outline the key stages when further involvement will be possible and when key decisions are to be made.

## **Involvement of hard to reach groups**

All sections of the community with an interest in a particular area will be engaged. Particular effort will be made to identify and engage underrepresented and hard to reach groups in Lincolnshire. Such groups include:

- children and young people;
- the elderly;
- rural communities suffering from isolation;
- gypsies and travellers;
- ethnic minorities;
- migrant workers;
- disabled people and those with special needs;
- Lesbians, gay men and other people discriminated against because of their sexuality.

Problems they encounter range from accessibility to venues, language barriers, social differences and types of media being used. Specific organisations aimed at targeting these groups will be utilised for consultation purposes; appropriate locations and a variety of media employed. Consultation will adhere to the County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy 'Its Only Fair' which can be viewed at: <http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/jobs/manuals/employment-manual/equality-and-diversity/its-only-fair/58654.article>

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

The County Council is committed to promoting equality. An Equalities impact

Assessment will be carried out on all Mineral and Waste Plans before Submission, in order to ensure policies do not discriminate against individuals or groups of people. It is also a key objective of the Council to make certain there is equal opportunity for all members of the community to become involved in any of the various stages of plan production or the planning application process.

## **Community Engagement Strategy, 2013 – 2018**

LCC's Community Engagement team is a specialist group of people who provide support to both staff and communities in the preparation and operation of consultation exercises, to ensure good quality engagement occurs. These activities help to prevent consultation fatigue and duplication of effort and can help to inform people directly what engagement is taking place.

Some of the key aims of the strategy are as follows:

- to ensure the Council's engagement is effective, inclusive and has genuine influence
- use clear language wherever the Council informs, consults or involves the community
- ensure feedback is provided on all consultation and involvement undertaken
- work with town and parish council's and various organisations to provide support so communities can develop and be actively involved.

## **Consultation Methods**

Consultation methods will be chosen to make them as relevant and effective as possible based on the different stages of the plan-making process. Technological changes have led to the increased use of electronic communication and websites as the preferred method for both disseminating information and receiving responses and will be used as widely as possible. Where this is not possible a person can request a hard copy of the documents. Where a person does not have an email address, letters will be sent to them informing them of the consultation and written representations will be welcomed.

The Council recognises how important it is for interested parties to be kept up to date with progress on plan production. It therefore places great emphasis on ensuring its planning web pages are updated on a regular basis.

## **Who will be consulted?**

The Council must legally consult 'Specific' and 'General' consultation bodies who are considered to have an interest in the proposed Plan<sup>1</sup>.

When preparing the Minerals and Waste Local Plan, the Council will invite the following to be involved in the various stages of consultation:

- Specific consultation bodies – are statutory consultation groups that are often knowledgeable in certain subjects (e.g. the Environment Agency on flooding)

matters and utilities companies which operate in the County)

- General consultation bodies – include a wide range of other groups and organisations such as voluntary bodies, special interest groups (e.g. those that represent the interests of hard-to-reach groups)
- Residents, especially those that have expressed an interest in Minerals and Waste Local Plan issues and have asked for their details to be kept on our consultation database
- Businesses who the Council consider appropriate or who have expressed an interest.

In addition to those listed above who will be contacted/made aware of consultations by the use of e-mail, letter, web updates and press notices, any individual, business or organisation is welcome to participate at any stage of the consultation process .

In order to promote greater community participation and to meet the needs of different communities, a variety of methods are likely to be used at various stages of the plan making process.

<sup>1</sup> as specified in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

## When the Council will consult (consultation stages for development plans)

The stages of consultation and engagement are set out in national guidance. The latter stages are formal in nature and we cannot deviate from these.

<p><b>Issues and Options stage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence gathering</li> <li>• Set out what is to be reviewed and what possible changes are to be made</li> <li>• Ensure that the approach taken best suits the needs of Lincolnshire based on analysis of options</li> <li>• Minimum 6 weeks consultation</li> <li>• Make public the different methods for the consultation ie. both the Council's obligations and what provision is made for consultees to respond</li> </ul>
<p><b>Draft plan consultation</b></p>	<p>The main aim of the draft plan consultation will be to ensure the policies and context are the right ones for Lincolnshire.</p> <p>At this stage, as a legal minimum, the Council must notify appropriate bodies of its intention to prepare a Local Plan and what the subject of this plan will be.</p> <p>However, the Council intends to go further than this legal minimum as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send out notification of this consultation to all previous consultees via email/letter and updating the website stating how comments can be made</li> <li>• Publicise the consultation as widely as possible using various media options to ensure everyone is aware of it taking place and not just appropriate bodies required by law</li> <li>• Providing at least 6 weeks consultation and possibly longer if deemed necessary</li> </ul>

	<p>The Council will summarise and publish a report of all the key issues raised at the draft plan stage. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to reply to each individual person or respond to every comment raised, but the Council's policy is to ensure all comments received are carefully considered.</p>
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<p><b>Submission document</b></p>	<p>When the Council has finalised the plan in light of the earlier round(s) of Consultation, it will consult on what is known as a proposed submission version of the plan. This is the final version of the plan before it is submitted to the planning inspectorate for examination.</p> <p>The following are the main actions to be undertaken regarding the submission document consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish the proposed submission document</li> <li>• A six week consultation period will be decided upon</li> <li>• All consultees on the Council's database will be contacted</li> <li>• A statement will be included on all consultee formats advising that representations can only relate to issues such as the duty to cooperate, legal and procedural requirements, and soundness, in order for them to be duly made.</li> </ul> <p>All comments received during the above consultation will be considered by an independent Inspector who is appointed to examine the plan. The Inspector will consider if any changes are needed in light of the submitted comments. The Council's website will be updated to provide details of the examination and related documents.</p> <p>If the plan is found sound and the</p>
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	Council adopt the document, a six week period for legal challenge will follow. If there are no challenges, all respondents will be notified and an adoption statement will be published.
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## How we will consult

Legislation sets out the minimum requirements for public participation when preparing or Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents. This includes making information available on the Council's website. Where possible and appropriate, the Council will go beyond the minimum requirements to promote greater community participation. Therefore, a variety of methods are likely to be used at various stages of the plan making process. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Direct notifications to appropriate organisations and individuals** – emails or letters (where no email) will be sent to statutory bodies, relevant groups and to those who have requested to be contacted on our consultation database
- **Use of website** – progress on our planning documents will be publicised on the Council's website including making an electronic version of the Plan available for people to view and download. This will also be the place to download evidence base documents and feedback reports. People will be able to view consultation documents and access response/comment forms.
- **Issue a press release** to bring the consultation to the attention of the wider public and inform them of how and when they can make comments
- **Social networking sites** – information and consultation events will be advertised on our corporate Facebook page and Twitter feed
- **Council offices and libraries** – will be used to provide hard copies of the plan and these venues will also be used to display publicity material
- **Local media** – will be contacted such as local newspapers and radio stations to help publicise consultation events and other updates on plan production
- **Presentations and exhibitions** – where resources allow this type of consultation will be used to contact appropriate groups, organisations and stakeholders to target people in the community who may be interested in specific issues
- **Posters, leaflets and flyers** – will be produced, where resources allow, and distributed to promote awareness of consultations and provide summarised descriptions of relevant information



- **Notify** anyone else who has asked to be notified or the Council considers could be interested in emerging plans

## **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)**

### **What is a SPD?**

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) expand or add details to policies laid out in Development Plan Documents. They can use illustrations, text and practical examples to expand on how the authority's policies can be taken forward. SPDs are not subject to independent examination, but are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

### **Who will be consulted on SPDs**

The Council may prepare SPDs at any time, but is not obliged to do so. When preparing an SPD, any individual, business, organisation or group is welcome to partake in the public consultation stage/s. However, the Council may choose to notify those individuals, businesses, organisations and groups which it thinks will have particular interest in the SPD and invite them to comment.

### **When the Council will consult on SPDs**

Consultation on a draft SPD usually is for a period of 4 weeks when the Council will invite comments on its contents. All comments/responses made within the consultation period will be acknowledged and be used to review the draft SPD and where appropriate the document will be amended. As with Local Plans, only comments relating to planning considerations will be taken into account.

Depending on the nature and extent of changes made to the SPD, the Council may decide that it is necessary to re-consult on the revised draft, again for at least 4 weeks. If so, it will notify all those who submitted comments during the initial consultation of this second consultation. However, as before, anyone will be able to submit comments during the second consultation stage, if it takes place.

### **How the Council will consult on a SPD**

Consultation will be similar to Local Plans, when consulting on SPDs the Council will:

- Make hard copies of the SPD available to view at various suitable locations, such as Council offices and libraries during the consultation period.
- Publicise full details of the consultation on the Council website, including making an electronic version of the SPD available for people to view / download
- Issuing consultation letters / emails to parties who the Council considers will have a particular interest in the SPD to bring the consultation to their attention and inform them of how and when they can make comments

- Issuing a press release to bring the consultation to the attention of the wider public and inform them of how and when they can make comments.
- Having exhibitions/ displays in appropriate places where resources allow
- During all SPD consultations, individuals and organisations will be able to submit comments either:
  - In writing: via post, or at a focus group, workshop or exhibition (if held); or,
  - Electronically: via email, electronic questionnaire (if available), or via an online consultation portal (if available).

## **Council committees**

Council decisions and recommendations on planning policy documents, including consultation documents, the results of formal consultations and documents for adoption are considered by one or more of the following Council meetings:

- Environmental Scrutiny
- The Executive

The decision to adopt a document is taken by Full Council.

## **Sustainability appraisal / Strategic environmental assessment**

Legislation requires a Local Plan to go through a process of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The purpose of an SA is to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of planning policy documents. When required, an SA/SEA will be consulted on throughout the plan-making process, at the same time as the document itself. Relevant stakeholders will also be consulted on the 'scope' of the SA/SEA at the start of the document preparation.

## **Neighbourhood Plans**

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new form of community planning entitled Neighbourhood Plans. They allow Parish / Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums (authorised groups of local individuals in areas with no parishes) to prepare statutory Neighbourhood Development Plans against which planning applications will be assessed. As Neighbourhood Plans and Orders are not prepared by the Council, this SCI cannot prescribe what methods of community engagement they must follow. However, the Council will expect groups preparing Neighbourhood Plans to meet the requirements set out in legislation and to follow wherever possible the general principles and techniques set out in this SCI.

## Planning Applications

### An applicant engagement obligation before a planning application is submitted.

Those applying for planning permission for certain major developments are encouraged to engage with the local community on the proposal prior to formally applying for planning permission. The applicant is encouraged to have due regard to all comments received during this engagement when deciding whether to make changes to their proposal before submitting an application. When submitting their application, applicants should provide details of the consultation undertaken.

Developers are encouraged to contact the County Planning Authority to confirm those applications which are required to be subject to pre-application engagement.

Although only certain proposals will require this formal pre-application engagement applicants are encouraged to involve the local community when developing their proposal even when it is not a legal requirement to do so. Such engagement can be beneficial to both the applicant and the community, as it can foster transparency, and enable proposals to respond to local needs and desires.

### Who will be consulted on planning applications?

The County Council determines applications for minerals and waste developments as well as the County Council's own development. Full details of how to [submit a planning application](#), including details of all the information and documents that must be submitted alongside an application are available on the Council's website.

Any individual, business, organisation or group is able to submit comments on any planning application either electronically via the Council's website or in writing to the Council's Planning Services section.

When a planning application is received we will publish details of the application on our [website](#). Specifically we will publish details of the nature of the development; location; details of how comments on the application can be made and the deadline for comments to be submitted. In addition to this the application will be publicised as set out below:

TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT	MINIMUM PUBLICITY THAT WILL BE UNDERTAKEN
Development where the application: - is accompanied by an Environmental Statement; or - is a departure from the Local Plan; or - affects a public right of way	<b>Site notice</b> - on display on or near the site for a minimum of 21 days. Will contain details of the application and how to submit comments. <b>Press notice</b> – notice of the application publicised in a newspaper that circulates within the locality of the application site. <b>Neighbour notification</b> - (where appropriate) the owners/occupiers of properties adjoining the red line

	boundary of the application site will be notified.
Major applications (as defined by the Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure Order 2010).	<p><b>Site Notice</b> – on display on or near the site for a minimum of 21 days. Will contain details of the application and how to submit comments.</p> <p><b>Press notice</b> – notice of the application publicised in a newspaper that circulates within the locality of the application site.</p> <p><b>Neighbour notification</b> - (where appropriate) the owners/occupiers of properties adjoining the red line boundary of the application site will be notified.</p>
Minor development	<p><b>Site notice</b> – on display on or near the site for a minimum of 21 days. Will contain details of the application and how to submit comments</p> <p><b>Neighbour notification</b> – (where appropriate) the owners/occupiers of properties adjoining the red line boundary of the application site will be notified.</p>
Development affecting the setting of a listed building or the character and appearance of a conservation area.	<p><b>Site notice</b> – on display on or near the site for a minimum of 21 days. Will contain details of the application and how to submit comments.</p> <p><b>Press notice</b> – notice of the application publicised in a newspaper that circulates within the locality of the application site.</p>
Permitted development requiring prior approval of the local planning authority	<p><b>Site notice</b> – on display on or near the site for a minimum of 21 days. Will contain details of the application and how to submit comments.</p>

## How and when consultation will take place

Once a planning application has been validated we will endeavour to determine the application within 8 weeks in the case of minor applications, or 13 weeks in the case of major applications (all waste and mineral applications and some County Council applications).

Towards the start of this 8 or 13 week period we will invite comments on the application: this consultation period will normally last 21 days (although we will still take into account any late comments received after the specified date to the day prior a decision on the application is made). During this consultation and publicity stage the application and details of how to submit comments will be publicised as outlined above.

Those wanting to make comments on an application can do so either in writing or electronically. A verbal or anonymous comment will not be taken into account.

We can only take comments into account that relate to planning considerations: comments on non planning matters such as the impact of the development on property values, or loss of view for example, cannot be taken into consideration. Examples of the planning considerations that we can take into account include:

- Whether or not the proposal complies with the planning policies in the local plan;
- Government planning guidance and policy;
- Comments on the design and appearance of the proposed development and its potential impact on the surrounding area;
- Planning law and previous decisions;
- Highway safety and traffic issues;
- Noise, disturbance and odour; and
- Conservation of historic buildings and trees.

For the majority of applications where no objection has been lodged, a decision will be reached by a planning officer (a delegated decision) the criteria for those applications that are [delegated to Planning officers are listed on our website](#).

Should a proposal require determination at the Planning and Regulation Committee all those who made comments on the application will be advised of the date the application will be brought to the committee. An representative of those who submitted comments (one against and one in support) on the application will have the opportunity to speak to the committee for up to 3 minutes. Details of the procedures for [speaking at the Planning Committee](#) are set out on the Council's website.

**Contact: Lincolnshire County Council 01522 782070**

This information can be provided in another language or format. For all enquiries please contact the above number.