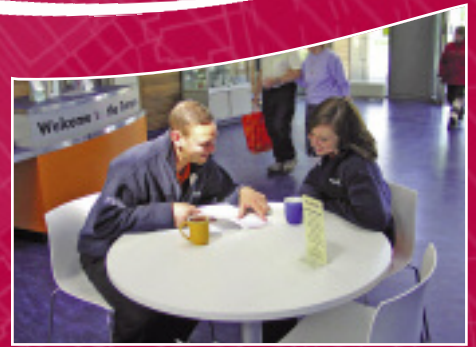


Statement of Community Involvement

How we will involve the community
in planning in North Somerset



Adopted February 2007

You can view the SCI and get information about North Somerset Council's Local Development Framework on the Council's website at www.n-somerset.gov.uk

You can also contact us:

■ by email: **planningpolicy@n-somerset.gov.uk**

■ by fax: **01275 888 569**

■ or at: Planning Policy Team
North Somerset Council
Somerset House
Weston-super-Mare
BS23 1TG

If you would like to speak to someone about the SCI please ring the Planning Policy Team on 01275 888 545.

**NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL
STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
ADOPTED FEBRUARY 2007**

This statement has been prepared to rectify two ambiguities which have come to light since the adopted SCI was printed ¹.

1. **Paragraph 3.2** does not reflect first paragraph of Appendix E regarding publicity and notification procedures and should be corrected as follows:

“We have a wide ranging system of notification and consultation for example by both notifying the neighbours and/or posting a site notice on every application site”

2. **Appendix E “site notices” third paragraph**
Delete paragraph. Not current council practice. Paragraph “amended plans publicity” deals with publicity on amended plans.

¹ Inspectors report paragraph 11.5 gives authority to correct any factual matters so long as they do not affect the substance of the SCI. These two items of clarification accord with the inspector’s direction.

February 2007

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1 Introduction

The Statement of Community Involvement

- 1.1** A new planning system came into effect in 2004. At the local level, rather than produce one Local Plan for the whole district, we will prepare several planning documents all contained within a **Local Development Scheme (LDS)**. This is a project plan which sets out the new planning policy documents which the Council will produce over a rolling three year period, as well as a time scale for producing them. There are two main types of document:
- **Development Plan Documents (DPDs)** which provide the main framework for planning decisions; and
 - **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)** which may expand on policies within them.
- 1.2** These are all known as **Local Development Documents (LDDs)**. In addition we will also prepare this **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**. All together they will be known as the **Local Development Framework (LDF)**. Paras 2.13 – 2.19 explain this in more detail.
- 1.3** Under the new system, a **Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)** will be produced instead of a Structure Plan. This will cover an area from Gloucester to Cornwall, rather than just the old Avon County area. A new RSS for the whole of the South West Region for the period 2006 – 2026 is currently being prepared. More detail will also be given for larger centres of population such as the greater Bristol area.
- 1.4** More information on the documents, which the Council will be producing is given in the **Local Development Scheme (LDS)**. This explains that the Local Development Documents to be prepared will include a Core Strategy; Land Allocations DPD; Waste DPD and Area Action Plan for Weston-super-Mare. You can either see the Local Development Scheme on the council's website at www.n-somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01275 888 545 for a copy.
- 1.5** The **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** deals with the consultation procedures which should be followed when we prepare each of these documents. It shows how we intend to involve the local community (local residents, businesses, landowners, organisations) and various government and other agencies (often referred to as stakeholders) in the new planning process in North Somerset. This is set out in section 2 of the document.
- 1.6** Preparing planning policies is only one aspect of the planning process. Section 3 of the SCI sets out the North Somerset Council's policy for community involvement on planning applications.
- 1.7** The SCI sets out the minimum standards of consultation that we should carry out when we prepare Local Development Documents (LDDs) and consider planning applications. Once it is adopted, the council must demonstrate how it has used and complied with the consultation requirements set out in the SCI at the various stages of development plan preparation and prior to making decisions on planning applications.

Aims and benefits of community involvement

- 1.8 There is a rich source of knowledge and experience in the community at large. In North Somerset we shall aim to involve our community in planning as early as possible, in order to:
- produce better informed policies and decisions
 - reduce conflict
 - improve understanding of both the scope and limitations of our planning process.

What the Statement of Community Involvement does

- 1.9 The aim of the SCI is to explain how and when local authorities will involve the local community and key stakeholders, including developers, in preparing Local Development Documents and considering planning applications. The objective is to strengthen community involvement and improve the quality of the planning process by involving all relevant and interested parties much earlier on in the process. To do this the SCI needs to:
- indicate the types of groups or individuals which might be expected or encouraged to participate
 - explain the sorts of ways and when, people can become involved in the preparation and revision of planning policies and consideration of planning applications
 - show how the results of consultation will be used
 - show how we will learn from the experiences we have of consultation and review and update our practices accordingly
 - ensure the types and scales of community involvement put forward are achievable and realistic given the limits of available resources.

Linking the Local Development Framework with the North Somerset Community Strategy

- 1.10 The purpose of the planning system is to encourage sustainable development. An important way of doing this is to ensure that we work together with those agencies which provide community services and facilities such as health centres and day care centres, the voluntary and community sector, as well as with developers and landowners, as early as possible. In this way we can make sure that we understand what the community's priorities and aspirations are in North Somerset.
- 1.11 An important way of doing this is by working closely with the **North Somerset Partnership** (NSP or Local Strategic Partnership LSP). This is made up of people from local public services, private business voluntary groups and community groups. The NSP is important in helping to give a voice to people, to enable them to contribute to community life and to reach marginalised sections of the community.
- 1.12 The North Somerset Partnership Board has prepared the **North Somerset Community Strategy**, adopted in 2004. The aim is to improve the quality of life for all who live in, work in and visit our area, by identifying key issues and priorities for the services and facilities which we need in North Somerset in a co-ordinated way. This will be revised to follow the guidance for Sustainable Community Strategies, which was issued in October 2006. Delivery Partnerships have been set up to look in detail at which services are needed and how to provide them.

1.13 The Local Development Framework is key to enabling the community services and facilities identified by the partnership bodies to actually be put into practice. The Development Plan Documents, which we will produce will bring together the spatial and community planning processes. They will identify how and where communities will develop and the land and buildings which will be needed for services and facilities. This will be undertaken in accord with the Partnership's **Sustainable Community Strategy**.

1.14 To ensure that these links are made we will work closely with the North Somerset Partnership Board and the Delivery Partners. This will ensure that they have a key role in developing the Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents at an early stage in their production. The Partnership has already had a role in the formulation of the Area Action Plan for Weston-super-Mare.

1.15 Members of the Partnership will also be kept fully informed of the progress of Local Development Documents through monthly North Somerset Partnership Board e-bulletins and the Quarterly Bulletin to all stakeholders. There will be opportunities for joint consultation, involvement and information sharing at the stakeholder events held by the Partnership. The North Somerset Partnership website will contain links to the Local Development Framework website and updates on the progress of the LDF documents can be included. Council involvement with Parish Plans will ensure that, as well as contributing to the Sustainable Community Strategy, relevant links are also made to the Local Development Framework and the policies being developed within the Development Plan Documents.

Links with other council policies on consultation and communication

1.16 In considering how best to involve the community, we will also have regard to the existing and emerging council's policy on communications. These are contained within the NSP "Compact Agreement", the North Somerset Council's "Town and Parish Council Charter" and "Communication Guide- Accessible information and communication guide" (or equivalent documents if or when these are superseded).

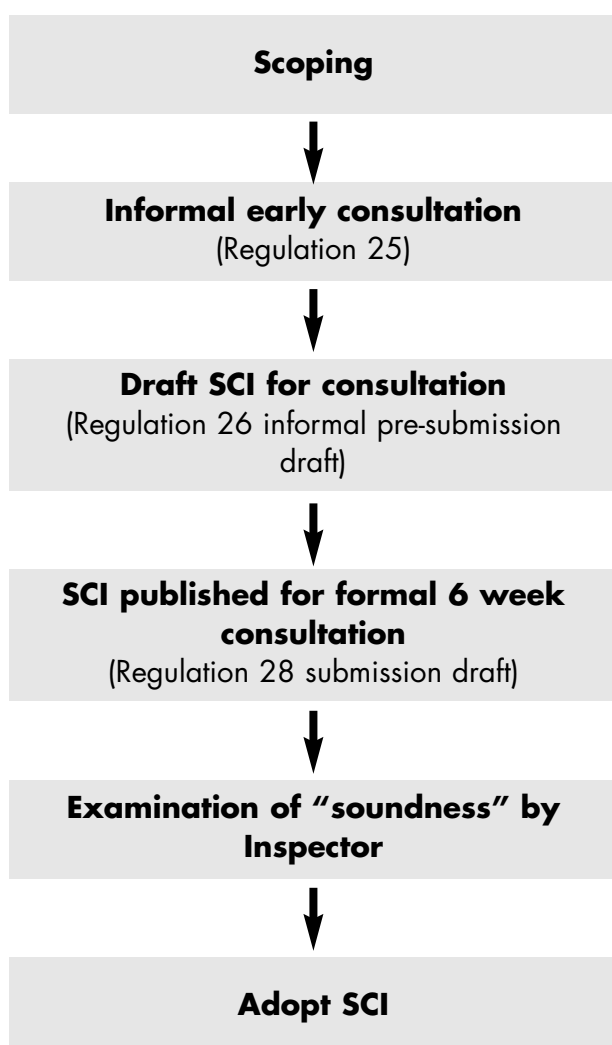
Reviewing the Statement of Community Involvement

1.17 North Somerset Council intends to build upon our existing and successful consultation practices and will learn from the experience of using the Statement of Community Involvement. We want our consultation processes to be simple to follow and use and we aim to carry them out in a fair, open and efficient way. To ensure this we will monitor the success of the methods we use for involvement and feedback at the various stages of preparation of each of the Local Development Framework Documents. We will do this when we prepare the statement of compliance document with each DPD we submit to the Secretary of State. This will set out in detail exactly how the council has met its community involvement requirements for a particular DPD as set out in the SCI. If this shows that improvements could be made then we will change our practices accordingly.

- 1.18 Additional contacts can be added to the Local Development Framework database at any time. If you would like your or your group's name to be added to the contact database (or you want to check whether or not you are already included) then please contact the Local Planning Team on 01275 888545, or email localplan@n-somerset.gov.uk.
- 1.19 A complete refresh of the Statement of Community Involvement will be undertaken where it is shown to be materially out of step in practice, or at the end of the current Local Development Framework cycle (expected to take place after 2009). When the SCI is formally reviewed the process of this review will follow the stages set out below.

- 1.20 Each year the council will produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to check the progress of the Local Development Scheme. It must identify which milestones have been met and explain why certain milestones may not have been met. Based on this it will recommend any necessary updating of timescale in the Local Development Scheme.

Process of production of the Statement of Community Involvement



2 How we will consult on Local Development Framework Documents

- 2.1 This section looks at how we will consult on the Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents which make up the Local Development Framework.
- 2.2 The council will ensure that the views of the community are incorporated as far as possible into the policy framework that guides development in the district. Community involvement will ensure that the plans produced are sound and will create the opportunity for the whole planning process to be more inclusive. Issues will be identified and debated at an early stage in the process with the aim of resolving where possible, any conflict or removing any misunderstandings at the earliest opportunity.

Learning from the previous Local Plan process

- 2.3 In order that we could assess the user-friendliness of the consultation and feedback methods we had used in the past, in the preparation of the Replacement North Somerset Local Plan a questionnaire was sent to all those who had been involved in the process. This asked for comments on the ways we had consulted, the type and frequency of reports used and feedback given. The comments received have helped to inform this Statement of Community Involvement and will make sure that we use appropriate techniques for the preparation of the Development Plan Documents contained within the Local Development Scheme.

Ways of consulting

- 2.4 There are many ways we will involve people in the preparation of Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. Some methods will be more appropriate than others depending on who will be involved or which stage of a document's preparation has been reached. The following list sets out some of the main methods we will use. This is set out on the basis of whether the main purpose may be to inform, consult with or involve individuals or groups at that time. A full list is given in Appendix B along with the advantages and disadvantages we see in using each technique.

Ways of informing

- Newspaper, radio and television coverage
- Council and other partnership publications (e.g. North Somerset Life newspaper, monthly North Somerset partnership e-bulletins, monthly Parish and town council newsletter "De-matters")
- Leaflets and posters
- Exhibitions
- North Somerset Council and other websites
- Information stands at key locations e.g. libraries
- Notice boards and display boards
- Hotlines

Ways of consulting

- Questionnaires
- Letters and e-mail
- Written material available for inspection or observation (including alternative formats e.g. audio tapes, easy read, plain text)

Ways of involving

- Public meetings
- Focus, advisory and steering groups
- Workshops
- Citizens panel
- One-to-one meetings

2.5 Not all groups, representatives or individuals will want to be involved in the same way and much will depend on the issues concerned. There may also be other useful methods we could use and the council would like to hear of any other ideas and best practice for effective communication and when they could be used – for example the Consultation Charter developed by the Consultation Institute, www.consultationinstitute.org.

2.6 We understand that the six week consultation period allowed under the planning regulations can be difficult to meet, if authorisation for a response is required from a committee or other body. As a general principle, therefore the council will give as much notice as possible of statutory consultation periods so that groups can plan accordingly. For the same reason, we will also try, but **can not** guarantee, to avoid statutory consultation periods falling during substantial public holidays or the main summer holiday period.

Target groups

2.7 It is important to understand who we should be trying to involve in preparing new development plans.

2.8 The council is obliged to consult the following Bodies (Statutory Bodies) on all Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents if the planning policies or proposals will fall within their sphere of interest:

- utility organisations eg electricity, sewerage, water, gas, telecoms
- Government agencies which look after the environment eg English Nature, Environment Agency, Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, Countryside Agency
- health authority
- highways agency
- other planning agencies eg neighbouring councils, South West Regional Assembly, South West Regional Development Agency
- town and parish councils both within and adjoining North Somerset.

2.9 In order for consultation to work, the council believes it will also be necessary to involve specific groups within the following broad target groups:

- general public
- neighbouring properties and local residents (for site specific proposals)
- those who don't normally become involved (hard to reach groups) eg children and young people, students, gypsies and travellers, tourists and commuters, those with learning difficulties
- councillors
- business community
- developers, landowners and agents
- other housing groups
- voluntary and Community groups
- residents and community groups/associations
- religious, racial, ethnic and language groups
- disability groups
- elderly
- young people and the learning community
- health and welfare groups
- arts and sports representatives
- interest groups
- transport groups/bodies
- environmental groups/ bodies
- utilities, telecoms and infrastructure bodies
- North Somerset Partnership.

2.10 Appendix C contains a list of the sorts of consultees who will be involved and Appendix D lists the likely ways that could be used to encourage them to become involved. Because of the large number and changing title of many organisations it is not appropriate to list them all individually and examples are given to indicate of the sorts of groups included.

2.11 The Local Planning Team maintain a consultation database which is regularly updated as additional individuals or names need to be added. During the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement and prior to consultation on individual Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, the database will be reviewed with the help of relevant bodies. Please let the Local Planning Team know if you or your organisation would like your details to be added 01275 888545, or email localplan@n-somerset.gov.uk. If you have been directly contacted by us about this document then you are already on the list.

2.12 To work, the right sort of consultation needs to be used for each broad group of people. Many individuals or groups will not be used to being involved in planning issues. They may not understand the issues so well, or have less time to be involved than others, such as planning agents or interest groups, who are used to dealing with the planning system. This may mean we hold more one-to-one meetings, focus groups or specially designed events, or provide material in a different format.

Types of Local Development Documents

2.13 What makes the new planning system different from the previous one is that the Local Development Framework can be seen as a folder containing a number of different Local Development Documents setting out different aspects of planning policy for North Somerset. These can be updated individually as necessary if they become out of date. This will make the planning policy system more flexible and will help North Somerset to react more effectively to changing circumstances.

- 2.14 It is intended that Local Development Documents will provide North Somerset's policies for meeting the community's economic, environmental and social aims for the future of the area where this affects the development and use of land.
- 2.15 There are two types of **Local Development Document – Development Plan Documents (DPDs)** and **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)**, these are explained below.
- 2.16 **Development Plan Documents** provide the main framework for planning decisions. They are subject to examination by an independent inspector, to verify what they say and how they have been prepared. The inspector's report is binding and the council must make any changes identified. **DPDs** must be in general conformity with the **Regional Spatial Strategy**, be consistent with national Government planning policy and have regard to the Community Strategy prepared by the North Somerset Partnership.
- 2.17 North Somerset Council will be preparing the following Development Plan Documents:
- **core strategy** – to set out the vision, objectives and spatial strategy for North Somerset
 - **site specific allocations and policies** – i.e. proposed sites for houses, retail, business or community use and policies to control specific types of developments (including supporting maps)
 - **area action plans** – to set out the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. An area action plan is being prepared for Weston-super-Mare
- **North Somerset Waste Development Plan Document** sets the overall planning strategy for sustainable waste management in North Somerset
 - **West of England Joint Waste Development Plan Document** sets the overall planning strategy for strategic waste management facilities in the West of England (former Avon Area).
- 2.18 A more detailed explanation of the process and the programme for preparation of all these documents is set out in our Local Development Scheme. As the scheme is likely to change over time please visit the council's website www.n-somerset.gov.uk for the latest version of the scheme.
- 2.19 **Supplementary Planning Documents** can also be produced to offer guidance to support the policies and proposals in the development plan documents eg design guides, or issue based documents such as the North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment. They will not contain new policies or proposals, but may give greater detail on certain development plan policies. They do not have the status of Development Plan Documents and are not subject to independent examination by an inspector. They must however be subject to formal consultation, but to a lesser degree than for Development Plan Documents. The Local Development Scheme contains details of all these documents including timescales for their production, (see paragraph 2.18).

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

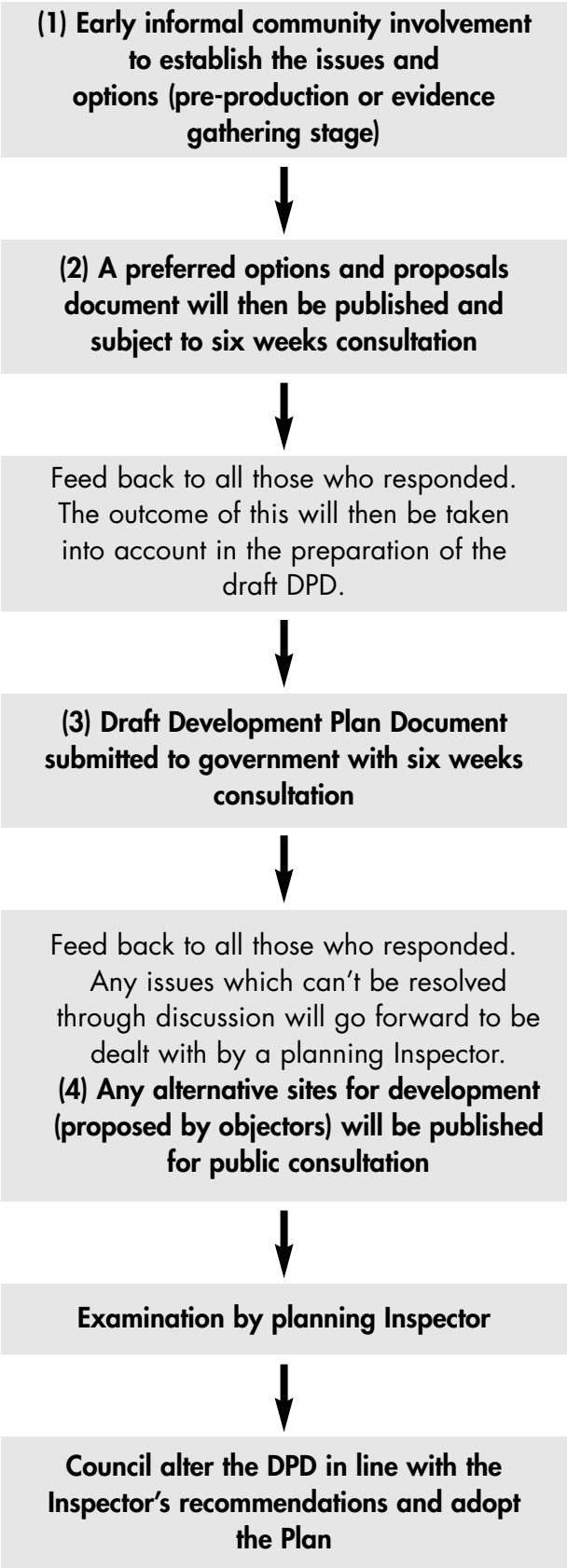
2.20 The Planning system requires that a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) be undertaken on all Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. The SA and SEA provide information on the potential implications of planning policies. Although legally separate, the two processes can be, and usually will be, combined for presentation purposes.

2.21 The appraisal process begins from the earliest stages of plan preparation. It identifies the likely significant effects of the plan and the extent to which the plan will achieve its sustainable, social, environmental and economic objectives. It also compares these effects with those of one or more realistic alternatives. The main opportunity for community involvement is at preferred options stage (stage (2) on the diagram opposite), when a sustainability appraisal report (incorporating SEA) is published for comment, alongside the plan it appraises. Statutory bodies (including Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage), will have been involved from an earlier date as providers of expert comment. Those voluntary bodies with relevant expertise or information may also be asked for their input at an early stage.

Timing of Community Involvement in Development Plan Documents

2.22 There are four stages during which you can be involved in preparing a Development Plan Document. These are numbered (1), (2), (3) and (4) on the diagram right. The diagram shows the typical procedure which will be followed.

Process for preparing and consulting on DPDs



- 2.23 As we start work on each Development Plan Document we will draw up a consultation programme based on the particular issues which are emerging. These will be in line with the principles in this SCI. In this way we aim to ensure the council can respond to the needs of individual issues and target groups and can plan the most appropriate and timely ways of involving people, while ensuring the effective use of resources.
- 2.24 The emphasis will be on “front loading”. In general for our DPDs we will use focus groups, questionnaires, workshops and “one to ones” in the early stages of preparing a document (consultation stage 1 and possibly 2 shown in diagram on page 9). These ways of involving people can help to get behind the issues to get the perspective of individual target groups and hard to reach groups. These early stages are also where Planning Aid may have their most important role (see para 2.39–2.40). They may also be particularly important for documents such as the Weston Area Action Plan and the Core Strategy.
- 2.25 At consultation stage 2 and 3 the emphasis is likely to be on consultation and strong flows of information using various methods shown in Appendix D to consult and inform. The particular methods used will depend on the document being prepared and the specific issues which may arise. In general, however, all of the methods shown are likely to be used. Where alternative development sites are put forward by objectors at stage 4 (primarily for the Land Allocations Development Plan Document), then the council will ensure that the local community is directly consulted and informed (neighbouring and local residents, parish/town councils, local interest groups) as well as using the other general ways of informing.
- 2.26 The following tables outline the likely consultation that can be expected to take place for DPDs and their associated Sustainability Appraisals.

Development Plan Documents

Stage (as referred to in diagram on p9)	Example of likely consultation / involvement methods	Who can expect to be involved
Stage 1 (to establish issues and options)	Focus groups Questionnaires Workshops One to one's Letters/email Website Media	Specific consultees Various target groups depending on issues involved- including 'hard to reach' groups Key stakeholders
Stage 2 (publication of preferred options)	Letters/email Leaflets Council/partnership newsletters Exhibitions Website Draft document (if appropriate) Possibly further focus groups /one to one's/ workshops Media	All groups
Stage 3 (after submission to Secretary of State)	Draft document available on website, at council planning offices and libraries Letters/email Website Council/partnership newsletters Media	All groups
Stage 4 (alternative site allocations)	Letters/email Information/documents available on website, at council planning offices and libraries Media	Neighbouring and local residents Parish/town councils Local interest and community groups
Adoption	Letter/email notification sent upon adoption Website Media	All those who have registered an interest in the DPD

Sustainability Appraisal for DPDs

Stage (linked to consultation stages of associated DPD)	Example of likely consultation / involvement method (linked to consultation on associated DPD)	Who can expect to be involved
Stage 1 (to establish issues and options)	Focus groups Questionnaires Workshops One to one's Letters/email website	Specific consultees Various target groups depending on issues involved- including hard to reach groups Key stakeholders
Stage 2 (Preferred options)	Sustainability appraisal report (incorporating SEA) Letters/email Leaflets Council/partnership newsletters Exhibitions Website Possibly further focus groups, one to one's, workshops Media	All groups
Stage 3 (after submission of DPD to Secretary of state)	Sustainability appraisal report (incorporating SEA) Letters/email Leaflets Council/partnership newsletters Website Media	All groups

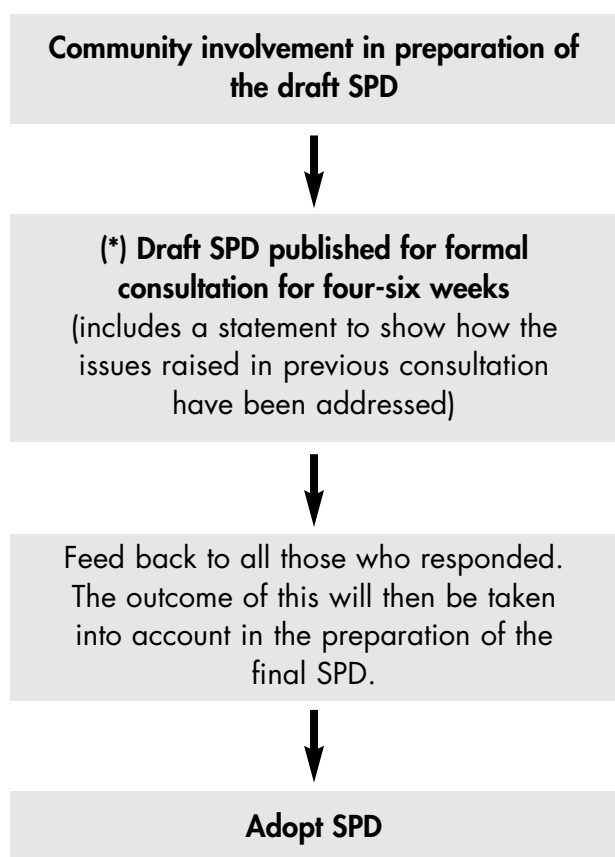
Supplementary Planning Documents

Stage (as referred to in diagram on p10)	Example of likely consultation / involvement method	Who can expect to be involved
Informal community involvement in preparation of draft	Focus groups Workshops Public exhibitions Letters Website	Specific consultees All site specific or district wide groups and key stakeholders appropriate to SPD
Formal consultation	Letters Council/partnership newsletters Draft document available on website, at Council planning offices and libraries Media	Specific consultees All site specific or district wide groups and key stakeholders appropriate to the SPD
Adoption	Letter/email notification sent upon adoption Website Media	All those who have registered an interest in the SPD

Timing of Community Involvement in Supplementary Planning Documents

2.27 The way in which Supplementary Planning Documents are prepared is different to Development Plan Documents. Supplementary Planning Documents do not need to be finalised by an independent Inspector. There are less strict rules about consultation, however there does still need to be community involvement during the preparation of the draft document as well as one formal period of consultation (*). The diagram below shows the typical process the council will follow.

Process for preparing and consulting on SPDs



2.28 Since Supplementary Planning Documents are likely to be site or issue specific there will be a strong role for focus groups, workshops and public exhibitions, particularly during the early stages of preparation, prior to any formal consultation being carried out. Information exchange will however also be very important at these stages. During the one formal consultation period (*) the council will concentrate on using methods from Appendix D appropriate to the document concerned, in order to inform and consult.

2.29 Government regulations allow for a four to six week consultation period. The council understands the difficulty experienced by groups in responding within a shorter period than six weeks therefore a period of six weeks will be the norm for supplementary planning documents.

2.30 If the Supplementary Planning Document deals with a specific site or area then the main emphasis of consultation will be those groups or individuals who are local to that area. If the Supplementary Planning Document is a more technical document then the emphasis may be to involve specialist groups or 'stakeholders'.

2.31 The table at the bottom of page 12 outlines the likely consultation that can be expected to take place for SPDs.

2.32 Our aim has been to avoid the SCI being unrealistic or over prescriptive as it would be if it tried to set out programmes of consultation which can only be guessed at before ground work begins on individual Local Development Documents. The procedure set out allows for specifically tailored consultation and involvement programmes to be developed which respond to the communities' needs, within the framework of the SCI.

Resources

- 2.33 The council has taken on board lessons learned from consultation on previous planning documents and recognises that there is scope to improve how we consult within the constraints of our resources. The section on Reviewing the SCI at paragraphs 1.17 to 1.20 explains this.
- 2.34 An effective way to also make best use of our limited resources will be to link into other agencies' meeting cycles and consultation mechanisms, including using the North Somerset Partnership contacts developed in preparing the Community Strategy as explained at paragraphs 1.10 to 1.15.
- 2.35 The organisation and participation in community involvement will largely be the responsibility of the council's Local Planning Team. Where workshops and discussion groups are involved then the council may also involve staff from other groups with the relevant experience, as well as employing external facilitators as the need arises.
- 2.36 As the costs associated with community involvement may be considerable, we will seek to ensure that the consultation strategy developed for each document is carefully related to the council's ability to properly resource and support it.
- 2.37 The tables in Appendix B and D show the range of methods which could be used. Resources will be made available for appropriate and effective community involvement as required by the nature and stage of the DPD and SPD. However it would be counterproductive for the SCI to set out particularly complex processes of community involvement which were too onerous to deliver. For these reasons, as explained at paragraphs 2.23 and 2.32, the council will prepare LDD consultation programmes which will clearly identify what type of involvement communities

can expect, with resource-hungry consultation and involvement targeted to those areas where there will be maximum benefit.

- 2.38 At formal submission stage (stage 3 on the diagram on page 9) we will produce a statement to show that the consultation which has taken place has been in line with the SCI. This will help us to review how effective the community involvement and engagement has been in line with the resources available. This will trigger a review of the SCI if necessary.

The role of Planning Aid

- 2.39 South West Planning Aid is a voluntary service linked to the Royal Town Planning Institute, offering free, independent and professional advice on town planning matters to community groups and individuals who cannot afford to employ a planning consultant. Planning Aid is an important part of the planning system. It enables local communities, particularly those with limited resources, to participate effectively in planning matters.
- 2.40 The council will ensure during consultation on Local Development Framework Documents that relevant individuals and bodies are made aware of the advice and support that Planning Aid can give. The contact details are given in Appendix H.

The Principle of Openness and Fair Interpretation

- 2.41 Representations made to LDD consultation exercises will be fully accessible to members of the public. It must be understood that in making comments on any LDD document this information will be open to anyone who wants to read and obtain it. Details of people making representations to LDDs cannot be kept confidential. Once each production and consultation stage has been completed the council will prepare and publish within a reasonable time period a list of stakeholders and consultees who participated, what they have said and which changes the council will make as a result. We will also seek to ensure that representations are assessed in an objective way without prejudice. Details of the feedback methods to be used are set out in paragraph 2.41.
- 2.42 The council will ensure that information gathered under consultation processes will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2005.

Feedback

- 2.43 North Somerset Council values public participation in the planning process and will strive to create worthwhile two-way contact by providing effective feedback to those who are involved. This will be achieved by:

A clearly understood feedback process

- All representations will be formally acknowledged and logged onto the database.
- Feedback will be given on all comments received (discussions entered into as necessary) so that everyone knows how their comments have been addressed and how they will influence decision-making.

- We will keep everyone who has made comments up to date to let them know how the document is progressing.

Making documents as accessible as possible

- Where possible, information such as reports of consultation will be made available in both paper, electronic and non-standard formats.
- All LDF documents can be made available, on request, in a variety of alternative formats such as large print, Braille, audio or language other than English. If you require a document in one of these formats please contact 01275 888 545.
- Copies of documents and reports including council responses to representations and reports of consultation will be made available to view at local authority offices, local libraries, within the district and on the council's website www.n-somerset.gov.uk
- Arrangements are being made for copies of representations made at formal submission stage to be available electronically through the council's website.
- The council will make every endeavour to meet the requirements of the Race Relations Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Publicising the process widely including

- Newsletters/articles in the district wide North Somerset Life newspaper to raise awareness and provide updates on progress.
- The LDF section of the council's website will be kept up to date with useful information regarding any emerging Local Development Documents.

- 2.44 The Planning Policy Team e-mail address localplan@n-somerset.gov.uk and telephone number 01275 888 545 will provide a single point of contact.
- 2.45 If you want to discuss any issues around consultation and involvement on the Local Development Framework Documents please contact:

Planning Policy Team

North Somerset Council
Somerset House
Weston-super-Mare
Somerset
BS23 1TG

On telephone number **01275 888 545**
or by fax: **01275 888 569**
or e-mail:
planningpolicy@n-somerset.gov.uk
documentation and information can
also be found on the councils website
at **www.n-somerset.gov.uk**

3 How we will consult on planning applications

- 3.1 Like all councils we will always ensure the statutory minimal consultation requirements are carried out. However, North Somerset Council does much more than just the minimum requirements. This section of the Statement of Community Involvement explains the council's policy for involving communities in the consideration of planning applications.

How do we currently consult you?

- 3.2 We have a wide ranging system of notification and consultation for example by both notifying neighbours and/or posting a site notice on every application site. Twenty-one days is normally allowed for comments on these applications (including those made by town and parish council). However, bodies such as Natural England will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation.
- 3.3 Notification letters to local residents indicate whether an application can be inspected at a local library, the time period for consulting and the case officer dealing with the proposal. All letters also refer to the council's website which features all current planning applications and the ability to comment electronically.

Use of technology

- 3.4 The council also considers it is important to allow users of the development control planning service to do this via the internet and have the ability to comment electronically.

- 3.5 Our development control website provides a range of information and guidance including the ability to view all correspondence relating to all applications, weekly lists of new applications, the ability to comment on-line as well as the ability to submit and pay for applications on-line. Anyone taking advantage of this facility can submit and also track their applications on-line. However, while new technology offers an ever wider choice of consultation mechanisms, the council is keen to ensure the 'digital divide' does not disadvantage those who do not have access to these facilities. For this reason, we will always offer a range of methods and techniques to enable people to hear about and comment on planning applications.
- 3.6 Appendices E and F indicate a summary of consultation methods for planning applications.

Who else do we consult?

- 3.7 In addition to consulting with parish/town councils and the public, we are required by law to consult with a range of statutory and non-statutory bodies depending on the nature and location of the proposed development (see Appendix G).
- 3.8 Internal professional advice is also sought from our own officers who have expertise in building, conservation/heritage, design, trees (arboriculture), landscape design, planning policy, noise, pollution, licensing, drainage, transport, and legal matters. External advice is sometimes obtained from a structural engineer and barrister/QC.

Commenting on Planning Applications

- 3.9 Anyone can make comments on a planning application, regardless of whether they are affected or not. People can also indicate whether they wish to speak at the area committee meeting should the application be decided in that way.
- 3.10 Only comments that are made on valid planning grounds can be taken into consideration.

How we will consult you on significant planning applications

- 3.11 At the moment we consult widely on a range of planning applications. However, under the new system the developer will also be encouraged to carry out additional community consultation on major or 'significant' planning applications. In exceptional circumstances the council may consider participating in joint consultation with the developer. Generally however, the council will undertake a watching brief only, monitoring developer-led consultation which should preferably be carried out at the pre-application stage.
- 3.12 The wide involvement of the community and stakeholders at an early stage of the planning process is of benefit for the public, individuals, organisations and local authorities. The Statement of Community Involvement is therefore important in providing a useful mechanism to engage the wider community on all planning applications and should be applied at the 'pre-application' stage.
- 3.13 North Somerset Council does not want to unduly delay or hold up the determination of planning applications. However, as a council we do seek to ensure an open and fair discussion of the planning merits and issues resulting from proposed developments.

3.14 In this respect, our SCI has avoided grouping planning applications by type, as we consider a more flexible approach is required. Instead we plan to use a criteria-based approach to identify what sort of development proposals constitute 'significant' planning applications. This will ensure that sufficient certainty is given to all parties, whether promoting or opposing development, about what will be required in the form of public consultation, while at the same time avoid an unnecessarily prescriptive approach.

3.15 In the context of North Somerset it is proposed that 'significant planning applications' will be identified by the following criteria:

- a major planning application likely to generate significant public interest or controversy
- an application likely to have a significant physical impact on the surrounding area
- an application considered to be a potential departure from the Local Development Framework as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) Directions 1992
- other applications for particular uses or in locations where on the basis of past experience there is reason to believe there will be significant public interest.

3.16 For planning applications that are judged to fall into these categories a more extensive process of consultation will apply. In addition to the standard requirements outlined above, this will include encouraging applicants to hold pre-application discussions with the community and parish/town councils, advertising in a locally circulating newspaper and/or public meetings/exhibitions.

3.17 We encourage developers to enter into an early dialogue with us. At this stage we can advise developers if their application is likely to be a 'significant' application and therefore if there is a need to undertake any additional community consultation. We will expect the developers to take the lead with these additional consultations.

3.18 The results of the consultation exercise should be made available to us and will be reported as part of the formal planning application process.

3.19 As a guide, we consider applications in the following categories would be the types of developments most likely to be assessed against the significant planning criteria:

- significant Development Plan departures (i.e. not in accordance with the most relevant Local Plan or Local Development Document), as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) (Departures) Directions 1999
- proposals over 20,000 m² gross shopping floor area
- large scale industrial development
- power stations
- airports
- motorways
- development likely to have a significant effect on the environment by virtue of its size and location – given the diversity and range of settlements and landscapes in the District this will be a planning judgement based on a development's potential impact
- urban Development projects on sites over 0.5 hectares (5,000m²)
- fifty houses or over 5 hectares of greenfield land

- development requiring a full environmental impact or transport assessment.

What happens if we receive amendments to a planning application?

3.20 It is common for submitted applications to be changed during the process of determination. These changes may be a result of negotiation with the case officer, or following comments from consultees, or perhaps following objections from local residents. It is important that all those with an interest in the application are aware that amendments have been proposed. The council has established detailed procedures for publicising amendments, which are set out in Appendix E.

3.21 From September 2006 amendments to approved plans are only being dealt with through new planning applications, where the arrangements for publicity and notification are as set out in paragraphs 3.1 – 3.3. This change to the way in which the council operates will be the subject of further guidance to be published and included on the website.

What happens when we receive your comments?

3.22 All comments form part of the planning file and are also placed on the council's website for viewing via the internet. It is important to remember this as all comments are open to public inspection.

3.23 We consider all comments together with any relevant Acts, regulations, planning guidance, development plans, supplementary planning guidance/documents, and other relevant plans and strategies. Apart from where statutory limitations dictate, the extent to which comments can be accommodated depends on the nature

of the application, the extent to which it complies with the development plan(s) and with planning guidance.

- 3.24 Where appropriate and within practical timescales, officers will negotiate with applicants and agents in the light of concerns raised by parish/town councils, consultees or local residents and again, where appropriate, re-consult or re-advertise revised proposals.

Who determines a planning application?

- 3.25 Planning applications will either be decided under what are called 'delegated powers' or by elected councillors at an area committee meeting. The scheme of delegation is set out in the 'Protocol for delegating planning decisions to officers', set out on the council's website under 'Planning Committees'. The majority of applications (90%) are determined under delegated powers which involves the planning officer writing a report which is then checked and authorised by a senior planning officer – usually a team leader or their deputy.
- 3.26 All other applications are determined by elected councillors at area committees. A report is written by the planning officer, which forms the basis of a recommendation to the councillors. This is also updated on the day of the meeting to incorporate any additional information made available between the drafting of the original report and the date of the committee of which the committee should be aware.

- 3.27 Sometimes elected councillors will decide to visit a site as a fact finding exercise (a site visit) or to hear the views of interested parties as well as viewing the site (a site meeting), but this decision will be made by the elected members and will take into account the need to avoid unfair pressure or lobbying influencing their decision.

How do we involve people after the decision has been taken?

- 3.28 A letter is sent to anybody who responded to the consultation on the planning application telling them the decision and the reason for that decision. A copy of the decision notice is also available on the council's website.

How do we involve people if there is an appeal against the planning decision?

- 3.29 Only applicants have the right of appeal. There are no third party rights of appeal.
- 3.30 All those people who were consulted on the original planning application will be advised that an appeal has been received and how to make their views known. Copies of letters already submitted will be forwarded to the planning inspectorate.
- 3.31 For hearings and Public Inquiries, the council follows statutory advice and where appropriate engages with interested parties to see if any benefit can be had from joint statements of case.
- 3.32 For hearings and public inquiries a site notice is erected to publicise the date/time and location of the inquiry. The media are also notified.
- 3.33 Further details about the appeals process is also available on the council's website including a link to the planning portal.

How do we complain if we are dissatisfied with the manner in which the planning application or our representations has been handled?

- 3.34 The complaints procedure is not intended to deal with complaints about the merits of the decision. However, if any party is dissatisfied with the manner in which the planning application has been handled they can complain to the council in the first instance, or if this does not lead to a resolution of the complaint, then to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 3.35 The council's complaints procedure can be found on the website. A leaflet with a complaint form is also available from Development and Environment.

Appendix A

Glossary

Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)

The AMR will show how the policies contained within LDDs are performing and monitor their effectiveness.

Area Action Plan

Detailed plans and proposals for areas with a concentration of proposals for change or where land uses and activities are particularly complex, such as town centres, industrial estates, or Green Belt.

Community Strategy

The Strategy provides an outline strategic framework for the work of organisations such as the council, the Primary Care Trust, the Police and a number of voluntary and community organisations that provide services to the various communities in North Somerset.

Development Plan Document (DPD)

DPDs are statutory documents with Development Plan status. They include a core strategy, site specific allocations, area action plans and a proposals map. They are subject to independent testing by the Planning Inspectorate. Area action plans cover major areas of change or conservation. The core strategy is primary policies and proposals to deliver a spatial vision for the area.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

A procedure and management technique which ensures that the likely effects of a new development on the environment are fully appraised and taken into account before the determination of development proposals.

Government Office for the South West (GOSW)

The Government Office for the South West Region within which North Somerset is located.

Local Development Documents (LDDs)

LDDs are all the documents in the LDF, both statutory and non-statutory. This includes DPDs, SPDs and SCIs.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

A Local Development Framework is a portfolio of Local Development Documents that provide the framework for delivering the spatial strategy of the area.

Local Development Scheme (LDS)

The LDS is a 3 year project plan that outlines a timetable for the production of LDDs.

Local Plan (LP)

A plan, prepared by the Local Planning Authority, to indicate where new development should be located and to set policies for development control.

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

The government department that deals with planning matters.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

The RSS will set a regional framework that addresses the 'spatial' implications of broad issues like healthcare, education, crime, housing, investment, transport, the economy and environment.

Secretary of State

The government minister in charge of planning issues.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

The SCI will set out how the council will engage the public and stakeholders in the planning process. The document will be subject to independent testing by the Planning Inspectorate.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

SEAs will underpin the Development Plan process. SEAs are environmental assessments of policies, plans and processes and are important when addressing issues and options at an early stage of plan preparation.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

SPDs support or amplify policies. SPD will replace SPG under planning reform.

Sustainability Appraisal

An appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.

Transport Assessment (TA)

An appraisal of the likely traffic generation impacts resulting from new development, taking into account the measures which are required to improve road safety and promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

Appendix B

Different ways of consulting

Ways of informing

Consultation method	Comment on use and effectiveness
Media coverage	Regular press releases and a flow of information for the local press, radio and TV. Good for raising awareness across a cross section of local people. Can use free newspapers, council publications and publications of partner organisations.
Leaflets	A cost effective means of providing information to a large number of consultees. May use a response form – if so, need to consider how these are returned (pre-paid envelope, collection boxes).
Posters	Good for raising general awareness and publicising events.
Exhibitions	Visual display information brought to local venues. Good for generating awareness and providing opportunity for face to face discussions. Could be simple information stands, or use electronic presentation.
Internet/website	Useful for providing detailed information on a regular basis, and the submission of comments via email, or using on-line forms.
Hotlines	Provision of a direct contact number with a planning officer to provide information/answer questions. Could also be via email.

Ways of consulting

Consultation method	Comment on use and effectiveness
Questionnaires	Used to obtain preferences and comments. Unlikely to be used by people without an interest in the planning process.
Letters/email	Direct provision of information to interested parties.
Written material available for inspection easy read, plain text	Documents made available at key locations such as libraries (including alternative formats eg audio tapes).
One-to-one meetings	Direct contact meetings – to obtain detailed comments and possibly resolve potential issues.

Ways of involving

Consultation method	Comment on use and effectiveness
Public meetings	Meetings arranged at a public venue for the community to receive information and express their views on relevant issues. Can engage with a large number of people at once, and provide direct feedback. Some people may not be comfortable in participating in such an event.
Focus groups	Semi-structured meetings, interviews or workshops with invited participants. Used to obtain the views of representative groups of people on a topic to assist in planning for a target group or wider community. Also useful for area based discussions and presentation of options.
Steering/Advisory groups	Groups would include internal and external stakeholders. The focus is on consideration of options or providing guidance.
Workshops	Invitation only event for people most involved with the document with the aim of identifying issues and possible solutions. Can be held with different sectors of the community and in different areas.
Citizens panels	Representative group of residents from across the district asked for their views.
Planning Aid	Government funded service aimed at targeting communities which traditionally do not get involved in the planning system.

Appendix C

Different types of consultees

Please note this list is not exhaustive and also relates to successor bodies where re-organisations occur.

The Statement of Community Involvement should set out in general terms which community groups and other bodies will be consulted in the preparation of Development Plan Documents.

Specific consultation bodies

The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 specify that the following bodies must be consulted if the council considers that body will be affected by what is proposed to be covered in a development plan document:

- Regional Planning Body – South West Regional Assembly
- South West Regional Development Agency
- Countryside Agency
- Environment Agency
- Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England
- English Nature
- Strategic Rail Authority
- Highways Agency
- Strategic Health Authority
- adjacent Local Planning Authorities - Bath and North East Somerset Council; South Gloucestershire Council; Bristol City Council; Sedgemoor District Council; Somerset County Council; Mendip District Council
- parish and town councils within and adjoining North Somerset
- electronic communications code persons under s106 (3) of Communications Act 2003

- owner/controller of electronic communications apparatus within the area. Electricity Licenced operators under s6 (1)(b) or (c) of Electricity Act 1989
- licensees under Gas Act 7 (2) 01886(I)
- sewerage undertaker
- water undertaker.

Government Departments

The Government Office for the South West (GOSW) will be the first point of contact for consultation with central government departments. We will consult any government departments or agencies where they have large landholdings in the area covered by an LDD. This will ensure that we are fully aware of the possible need for expansion of existing facilities or the likelihood of large scale land disposals taking place within the period of time covered by the LDD.

Home Office

Department for Education and Skills (through GOSW)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Department for Transport (through GOSW)

Department of Health (through relevant Regional Public Health Group)

Department of Trade and Industry (through GOSW)

Ministry of Defence

Department of Work and Pensions

Department of Constitutional Affairs

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Office of Government Commerce (Property advisers to the Civil Estate)

Countryside Agency

General Consultation Bodies

The Council may also consult, as appropriate, other local, national and regional groups (termed General Consultation Bodies). Specifically this is:

- voluntary bodies
- bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups

- bodies representing the interests of different religious groups
- bodies representing the interests of disabled persons
- bodies representing the business community.

Other consultation bodies

In practice there are many other groups or individuals that the council may involve and consult with. These are outlined in Appendix D.

Maintaining the database

The Local Planning Team will maintain a complete database of all individual consultees and this will be subject to ongoing updating as necessary. The large number and changing title of many organisations means it is not appropriate to list them all individually and those mentioned in Appendix D represent an indication of the different types of groups and individuals which will be involved and the types of consultation methods which may be appropriate. A group or organisation may fall into one or more target group.

Please let the Local Planning Team know if you or your organisation would like your details to be added to this database (see para 2.43 for contact details). If you have been directly contacted by us about this document then you are already on the list.

Appendix D

Our target groups and appropriate ways of consulting them

Target group	Example of group	Issues	Main consultation methods
General public	Residents, commuters, visitors	Need to raise awareness through media campaigns and public meetings with feedback via techniques such as leaflets and questionnaires	Media coverage Public meetings Leaflets Posters Exhibitions Questionnaires Internet/website Citizens panel
Neighbouring and local residents (for site allocations and alternative development sites)	Individual residents and residents associations	May not be familiar with the planning process. Likely to have strong views and early involvement important to promote understanding of issues on all sides	Direct mail Media coverage Public meetings Leaflets Posters Exhibitions Questionnaires Internet/website
Councillors	North Somerset Councillors	Councillors need to be fully engaged throughout the plan preparation process particularly through steering groups, working parties and participating in public meetings	Steering/advisory groups Workshops Letters/email Councillor briefing sessions
Town and parish councils	Town and parish councils within and neighbouring North Somerset	Likely to be involved via a wide range of consultation methods. Likely to participate effectively in direct consultation, public meetings and focus groups. Important contacts for a range of local organisations	Media coverage Public meetings Letters/email Leaflets Posters Exhibitions Internet/website Workshops

Target group	Example of group	Issues	Main consultation methods
Adjacent local councils	Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset, Sedgemoor District Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Mendip District Council, Somerset County Council	These are organisations familiar with the planning process and well used to consultation. They will respond to consultation letters and are likely to maximise opportunities for electronic communication	Media coverage Leaflets Internet/website Letters/email
Central and regional government and development agencies	GOSW, SW Regional Assembly, South West Regional Development Agency, English Partnerships	These are organisations familiar with the planning process and well used to consultation. They will respond to consultation letters and are likely to maximise opportunities for electronic communication	Internet/website Letters/email
Statutory bodies	All those listed under Appendix C as specific consultation bodies	These are organisations familiar with the planning process and well used to consultation. They will respond to consultation letters and are likely to maximise opportunities for electronic communication	Media coverage Leaflets Internet/website Letters/email
Business community	Local Businesses, retailers and retail industry, Chambers of Trade, Town Centre Managers	Spatial planning has key impacts on businesses but employers have traditionally not given priority to planning policy issues. Focus groups may be an appropriate technique	Media coverage Leaflets Internet/website Focus groups

Target group	Example of group	Issues	Main consultation methods
Developers, landowners and agents	House Builders Federation, individual house builders and developers	The input of key landowners is likely to be critical, so they may need to be identified and contacted directly. Public meetings are useful	Media coverage Leaflets Public meetings Internet/website Focus groups One-to-one meetings
Other housing groups	Housing Associations, Avon travellers support group, Housing Corporation	May be variable familiarity with the planning system, so a wide range of methods will need to be used	Media coverage Leaflets Letters/e-mail One to one Focus groups workshops Consultation material available in alternative appropriate formats
Voluntary and community groups	The Volunteer Centre, North Somerset Community Group Forum, individual community groups,	May not be familiar with planning issues, but may be an important source of local knowledge. Focus groups or workshops may be useful for particular issues	Media coverage Leaflets Letters/e-mail Focus groups workshops
Residents and community associations	Womens Institutes, Local Residents Associations, Community Action	May not be familiar with planning issues, but may be an important source of local knowledge. Focus groups or workshops may be useful for particular issues	Media coverage Leaflets Letters/e-mail Focus groups workshops
Religious, racial, ethnic and language groups	North Somerset Churches together, Dioceses of Bath and Wells, Equal Opportunities Commission, individual groups	May need to target format and language of consultation documentation. May not be familiar with planning issues	Media coverage Leaflets Letters/e-mail One to one Focus groups workshops

Target group	Example of group	Issues	Main consultation methods
Disability groups	Disability Rights Commission, Woodspring Association for the Blind, North Somerset Access Group, other groups representing particular disability groups	Likely to be an important source of specialist knowledge. Focus groups or one to one discussions may be useful	Media coverage Leaflets Letters/e-mail One to one Focus groups workshops Consultation material available in alternative appropriate formats
Elderly	Help the Aged, Age Concern, Senior Citizens Forum	May not be familiar with planning issues, but may be an important source of local knowledge. Focus groups or workshops may be useful for particular issues	Media coverage Leaflets Letters/e-mail Focus groups Workshops
Young people and the learning community	North Somerset Youth Parliament, youth clubs, school governing bodies, Learning and Skills Council	May not be familiar with planning issues, but may be an important source of local knowledge. Focus groups or workshops may be useful for particular issues	Media coverage Leaflets Letters/e-mail Focus groups Workshops
Health and welfare	Health Authorities, Primary Care trusts, Fire Service, Ambulance Service, Police, Coast Guard, North Somerset Local Strategic Partnership	An important source of specialist knowledge. Focus groups or one to one discussions may be useful	Letters/e-mail One to one Focus groups Workshops

Target group	Example of group	Issues	Main consultation methods
Hard to reach	Children, young people, travellers and homeless groups	Groups representing sections of the public that have been traditionally more difficult to canvass than the rest of the population – such as children and young people, gypsies and travellers, homeless persons, students, tourists and commuters. Unlikely to respond to traditional consultation techniques – need for innovative approaches and careful targeting. Focus groups may have a role	Specially tailored focus groups and workshops Media coverage Posters Exhibitions
Arts and sports representatives	Sport England, Arts SW	Likely to be an important source of specialist knowledge. May not be familiar with the planning system. Questionnaires, one to one discussions and focus groups may be appropriate	Media coverage Leaflets Letters/e-mail Focus groups workshops
Interest groups	Representing the natural and built environment, transport and single interest local issues	Likely to be an important source of specialist knowledge. Focus groups and workshops are useful	Media coverage Leaflets Internet/website Letters/email Focus groups Workshops

Target Group	Example of group	Issues	Main consultation methods
Transport	Coach companies, train companies, passenger groups, Highways Agency, sustainable transport groups (transport 2000, sustrans), footpath and bridleway groups	Likely to be an important source of specialist knowledge. Groups will vary in their knowledge of the planning system and therefore likely to be involved via a wide range of consultation methods. Focus groups may be an appropriate technique	Media coverage Leaflets Internet/website Letters/email Focus groups Workshops Questionnaires
Environment	Conservation groups including English Nature, RSPB, CPRE and other local groups, Forestry Commission, footpath and bridleway groups, farming groups, archeological groups and historical bodies and groups	Likely to be an important source of specialist knowledge. Groups will vary in their knowledge of the planning system and therefore likely to be involved via a wide range of consultation methods. Focus groups may be an appropriate technique	Media coverage Leaflets Internet/website Letters/email Focus groups Workshops Questionnaires
Utilities, telecoms and infrastructure	Environment Agency, gas and electricity suppliers, water and sewerage companies, internal drainage boards, renewable energy groups, telecommunication groups eg Orange, Telewest	Likely to be an important source of specialist knowledge. Groups will vary in their knowledge of the planning system and therefore likely to be involved via a wide range of consultation methods. Focus groups may be an appropriate technique	Media coverage Leaflets Internet/website Letters/email Focus groups Workshops Questionnaires
Local Strategic Partnership	Representatives from local public services, private business and voluntary groups	Important body in terms of a wide range of relevant organisations. Membership would provide useful contacts for focus groups and one means to identify best methods of engaging with hard to reach groups	Media coverage Leaflets Internet/website Letters/email Focus groups Steering Group

Appendix E

The Development Control publicity and notification procedures

The following procedures are intended to supplement the policies set out in Section 3 of the Statement.

All planning applications received will be publicised by a site notice or a neighbour notification letter or in some cases by both. Certain types of major applications are advertised in the statutory notices section of a local newspaper circulating in the area where the application relates. All applications are scanned and publicised on the council's website.

Site notices

These are posted by the case officer, and usually one notice will be placed on the main entrance to the proposed development. The notice should be placed in a position where it can easily be read by the public without entering the application site. Site notices give a date by which comments should be made, the name and telephone number of the case officer, as well as a website for viewing the application online.

Applications which legally require newspaper publicity are publicised every week in the statutory notices section of one of our newspapers circulating in the district. The newspaper used depends on the parish in which the application is made.

Time periods

Planning applications cannot be decided until the publicity period has expired. This will be 21 days after the site notice has been posted, any statutory press advertisement was published, or the date on the neighbour notification letter.

The letter, notice and press advertisement explain where the public can view the planning application.

Making Comments

Comments on applications should always be made in writing/email. Even where the publicity period has expired it may not be too late to comment, and this can be established by telephoning the case officer or Customer Services Team. Written comments should be addressed to:

Development Control Group
Development and Environment
Somerset House
Oxford Street
Weston-super-Mare
BS23 1TG

Comments can also be emailed using our website www.n-somerset.gov.uk

All letters or e-mail should quote:

- the planning application number
- the address of the property to which it relates
- your own address.

All comments will be acknowledged in writing and will be taken into account before a decision is reached provided they are received in time. All comments are placed on the application file and published on our website and are available for public inspection

If the application is to be considered by an Area Committee, anyone making written comments will be notified of the date of the meeting and how they can address the Committee if they wish. Once a decision has been reached, people who have made comments will also receive a copy of the decision notice.

Amended Plans Publicity

Where publicity is considered appropriate for plans amended prior to a decision, it follows a similar procedure as that for the original application. In these cases anybody who commented on the original application and where appropriate, anyone who may be affected by the changes, is notified by letter of amended plans that are received. In the case of consultees, consultation is increasingly done by electronic means. The new plans will be advertised with a combination of the words – amended plans; additional plans or information; additional plans or amended description.

Public Speaking

Where an application is to be determined by an Area Committee, an opportunity is provided to address the committee. The opportunity to speak is provided for:

- the applicant or supporters of the application
- objectors to the application who have already made written objections.

Each of these groups is entitled to speak for three minutes.

Further advice on public speaking on planning applications is available on the council's website: www.n-somerset.gov.uk and in the Customer Guide to Planning Advice Note 1: Public Speaking on Planning Applications.

Appendix F

Consultation Methods for Planning Applications

Type of Application	Method of Consultation
Development where the application is accompanied by an environmental statement	Advert in a newspaper and a site notice
Departure from the development plan	Advert in a newspaper and a site notice
Development affecting a public right of way	Advert in a newspaper and a site notice
Major Development Winning/working minerals All waste development 10 or more houses Building more than 1000m ² or Development on land of more than 1 hectare	Advert in a newspaper a site notice and neighbour notification
Minor Development	Neighbour notification
Development effecting the setting of a listed building	Advert in a newspaper and a site notice
Development effecting the character or appearance of a conservation area	Advert in a newspaper and a site notice

Appendix G

List of statutory and non-statutory consultees in the Development Control process

Statutory consultees

The regulations specify that the following bodies must be consulted if the planning authority considers that body will be affected by what is proposed to be covered in a development plan document:

Adjoining Local Authorities
Ancient Monuments Commission
Avon and Somerset Constabulary
British Gas
Civil Aviation Authority
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Countryside Agency
Georgian Society
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
English Heritage
English Nature
English Partnerships
Environment Agency
Fine Arts Commission
Forestry Commission
Government Office for the South West
Health and Safety Executive
Highways Agency
Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England
Historic Gardens Society
Ministry of Defence
National Trust
Ramblers Association
Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
Social Services
South West Regional Development Agency
South West Regional Assembly
Sport England
South West Sports Council
Strategic Rail Authority

Transco
Town and Parish Councils
Twentieth Century Society
Victorian Society
Wessex Water

Non-statutory consultees

We may also consult with:

- (a) voluntary bodies, some or all of whose activities benefit the whole or part of the authority's area
- (b) bodies representing the interests of:
 - different racial, ethnic or national bodies in the area
 - different religious groups in the area
 - people with disabilities in the area
 - persons carrying on business in the area.

Appendix H

Useful contacts

South West Planning Aid Service

The Architecture Centre
Narrow Quay
Bristol
BS11 4QA

Tel **0117 929 7292**
Fax **0117 922 1541**

Email swco@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk
Website www.rtpi.org.uk

Planning advice helpline 0870 850 9807

Planning Portal website:

www.planningportal.gov.uk
On-line advice and guidance on the planning system.

Government Office for the South West

2 Rivergate
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6EH
tel: **0117 900 1700**
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email: swcontactus@gosw.gsi.gov.uk

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

26, Whitehall
London SW1A 2WH
tel: **020 7944 4400**
email: enquiryodpm@odpm.gsi.gov.uk
website: www.odpm.gov.uk

Government department responsible for planning and housing.

Sources of information

www.communityplanning.net

Contains advice on a wide range of community involvement techniques and situations to which they are suited.

Planning Policy Statement 12-Local Development Frameworks (ODPM)
www.odpm.gov.uk/stellant/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=5382&l=3

Creating Local Development Frameworks-a companion guide to PPS12 (ODPM)
www.odpm.gov.uk/stellant/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_032580.pdf

Statement of Community Involvement and Planning Applications (ODPM)
www.odpm.gov.uk/stellant/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/pdpm_plan/033580.pdf

Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks (ODPM) November 2005
www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1161341

Development Plans Examinations – A Guide to the Process of Assessing the Soundness of Statements of Community Involvement
www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk/pins/appeals/local_dev/state_community_inv.pdf

**This publication is available in large print,
Braille or audio formats on request.**

**Help is also available for people who require council
information in languages other than English.**

Please contact 01275 888 545