

Local Development Framework

**Background Paper on the Draft Statement of Community
Involvement**

July 2005

Huntingdonshire
district council

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This document has been produced as a background paper for the Draft Statement of Community Involvement.

CONTENTS

Part A Introduction

1. Purpose of this document	_____	1
2. What will the Statement of Community Involvement contain?	_____	1
3. National planning guidance	_____	2
4. Huntingdonshire District Council's Communication and Consultation Strategy	_____	2

Part B Research Overview

5. Introduction	_____	4
6. Leaflet/questionnaire	_____	4
7. Focus groups	_____	6
8. Hard to reach groups	_____	8
9. Agents forum	_____	9

Part C Key Findings and Conclusions

7. Key findings	_____	11
8. Conclusions	_____	12

Appendices

A. List of consultees	_____	13
B. Copy of Planning for Huntingdonshire – Get Involved leaflet	_____	14
C. Copy of letter & form to statutory consultees	_____	18

PART A INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of this document

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has introduced new types of plans for shaping and guiding development, and new procedures for preparing them. The **Local Development Framework** (LDF) will replace the Huntingdonshire Local Plan in setting out planning policies and proposals for the area.
- 1.2 The LDF will comprise a number of documents to be produced over a period of time. One of the first documents to be produced is the **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**. It will set out how the Council intends to involve communities and stakeholders in preparing the LDF and in determining planning applications. The **Local Development Scheme** provides a guide to all the documents that the Council intends to prepare, and can be viewed on our web site (<http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk>).
- 1.3 This background research report summarises the key findings of research that has been undertaken to establish how communities and stakeholders prefer to be consulted about planning matters. This research will enable the Council to prepare its Draft Statement of Community Involvement. Where possible the results of this research will be incorporated into the draft SCI, however other factors such as resource implications and previous experience of undertaking different consultation techniques will also need to be taken into account. Once published the Council will invite representations on the draft SCI for a period of 6 weeks.
- 1.4 The Council will consider the representations that have been received and make changes to the to the SCI where appropriate. The Council will then submit the SCI to the Secretary of State for independent examination. There will then be a further 6 week opportunity for communities and stakeholders to make representations.
- 1.5 In summary, the steps involved in producing the Statement of Community Involvement are:
- Initial consultation and research with communities and stakeholders
 - Public consultation on Draft Statement of Community Involvement
 - Statement of Community Involvement submitted to the Secretary of State (expected April 2006), followed by further public consultation on its content
 - Independent examination into the proposals (expected July 2006)
 - Receipt of Inspector's report (binding upon the Council) and adoption (expected November 2006)

2. What will the Statement of Community Involvement contain?

- 2.1 The Statement of Community Involvement will contain six main elements:
- An **introduction** including an overview of the statement and its purpose
 - A brief **summary** of the types of local development documents that the Council will produce and the types of planning applications that it will seek community involvement on

- ❑ A discussion of the **types of community involvement**, both formal and informal, that the authority intends to undertake
- ❑ A discussion of the relevant **communities and stakeholder groups**, their skills and interests and how the authority will identify them
- ❑ Commitment to **reporting back**
- ❑ An estimate of the likely **resource implications** of the proposed community involvement

3. National Planning Guidance

3.1 Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks (PPS12) (2004) sets out the Government's policy on the preparation of local development documents. It contains specific guidance regarding the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement. PPS12 has introduced the concept of 'frontloading' community involvement in planning to create a sense of community ownership of local policy decisions. This means getting people involved in the early stages to help influence the preparation of plans.

3.2 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1) (2005) sets out the importance of community involvement to planning and the achievement of sustainable development. It states that an inclusive approach should be taken towards community involvement to ensure that different groups have the opportunity to participate and are not disadvantaged in the process. It states that effective community involvement requires an approach which:

- tells communities about emerging policies and proposals in good time;
- enables communities to put forward ideas and suggestions and participate in developing proposals and options. It is not sufficient to invite them to simply comment once these have been worked-up;
- consults on formal proposals;
- ensures that consultation takes place in locations that are widely accessible;
- provides and seeks feedback

4. Huntingdonshire District Council's Communication and Consultation Strategy

4.1 The Communication and Consultation Strategy provides a framework and consistent approach to the Council's communication and consultation activities. The strategy was adopted in April 2005. Research for the Strategy established that local residents' preferred sources of information for all types of council issues are: -

- ❑ Council's district wide magazine;
- ❑ local newspapers;

- ❑ Council website;
- ❑ leaflets;
- ❑ local radio and TV.

4.2 The Strategy recognises that it is vital that we deliver information people want using the methods that are most effective for them. A database of organisations and stakeholders is currently being set up and updated to establish the most effective methods of consultation and feedback. Where feasible attempts will be made to use communities' and stakeholders' preferred consultation methods where known.

PART B RESEARCH OVERVIEW

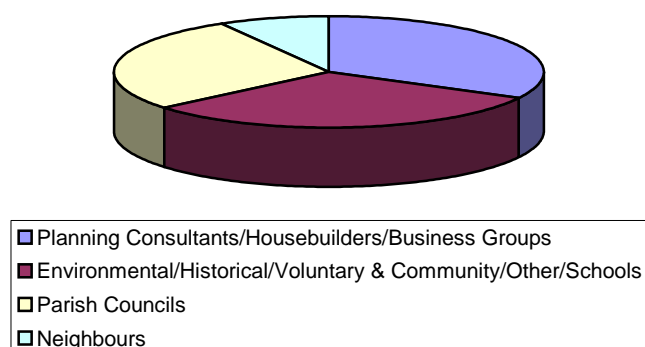
5. Introduction

- 5.1 In preparing the Draft Statement of Community Involvement, an initial consultation was carried out in spring 2005 which aimed briefly to explain the new planning system and gather information from stakeholders and communities on their preferred methods of involvement.
- 5.2 In order to gather information a leaflet was produced entitled Planning for Huntingdonshire – Get Involved. The leaflet explained the new planning system and had a quick questionnaire asking which consultation techniques organisations and stakeholders would like to see used for different types of planning purposes. Approximately 1,000 leaflets were sent out to stakeholders and interested parties known to the Council. Leaflets were also sent out with neighbour consultation letters on planning applications for 3 weeks. In addition to this, a meeting was held with St Ives Youth Council and two focus groups were held in May, one in St Ives and one in Ramsey. Other consultees such as adjoining parish and district councils were also contacted separately to establish what their preferred consultation techniques would be and how they would prefer to receive feedback from the Council. In June, an Agents Forum was held with local planning agents to establish their views about early public consultation. Copies of the consultation material is included in the appendices to this report.

6. Leaflet /Questionnaire

- 6.1 The leaflet/questionnaire was designed to find out which consultation techniques communities and stakeholders preferred for different types of plan making activities and the different types of planning applications.
- 6.2 There were 61 complete questionnaires received, of which 17 (28%) were from Parish Councils; 20 (33%) were from planning consultants, housebuilders or business groups; 19 (31%) from historical, environmental, community, schools and voluntary groups; and 5 (8.2%) from neighbour consultations. There were an additional 11 questionnaires received that were incomplete or filled in incorrectly that can be analysed partially, and 4

Type of Respondents to Planning Questionnaire/Leaflet



questionnaires received that are not possible to analyse. This means that the questionnaire had a 7.6% response rate overall, although only 7.2% of responses will be analysed.

- 6.3 Of the 61 respondents the most popular consultation technique for all planning matters was targeted mailing e.g. letters. This was followed by the Council website and making documents available for inspection at the Council offices. Given that these are techniques that the Council is required to use by various regulations, it is interesting to see what other choices were selected.
- 6.4 In terms of 'plan making – general policies' other popular choices that the Council is not required to use were questionnaires, public meetings/village meetings and focus groups. For 'specific plan allocations' preferred consultation techniques were questionnaires, public exhibitions and public/village meetings. For 'major applications' preferred consultation techniques were public exhibitions, public/village meetings and newspaper articles. Overall, fewer people gave answers for 'minor planning applications' and the preferred techniques were statutory consultation techniques that the Council is required to use. There was a greater preference for neighbour letters as opposed to site notices.
- 6.5 Particular groups did show preferences for different second and third choices. For example, planning consultants, house builders and business groups' second choice was the Council website and their third choice was being able to view documents at the planning offices, whereas environmental, historical, voluntary and community groups and schools all had different third choices depending on the type of planning activity. Parish Council's preferred choice tended to be letters, followed by the Council website for all types of 'planning applications' and newspaper articles and public exhibitions for 'general plan policies' and questionnaires and public exhibitions/village meetings for 'plan allocations'.
- 6.6 In terms of feedback 69% requested feedback via email, website or letter, 7% requested feedback via their Parish Clerk and 21% did not specify which method of communication they would prefer. This may be because 20% of respondents did not wish to be kept informed about the progress of the Statement of Community Involvement therefore they did not require feedback.
- 6.7 Of the questionnaires that were incomplete or filled in incorrectly, it appears that for plan making – general policies the preferred techniques were public/village meetings, the Council website and letters. For specific plan allocations the preferred techniques were the same as for general policies. The preferred techniques for major planning applications were also the same as both plan making functions. For minor planning applications, fewer respondents answered the questionnaire, those that did selected the statutory techniques that the Council would use in any case. Again there was a preference for neighbour letters rather than site notices.
- 6.8 Feedback for the incomplete questionnaires was requested by either letter or email, with Parish Councils requesting feedback to the Parish Clerk, although one respondent requested that feedback also by via the relevant ward district councillor.

7 Focus Groups

- 7.1 In May 2005 the Council commissioned BMG Research to conduct two focus groups to explore residents' views about how they would like to be consulted on planning matters. The focus groups were aimed particularly at finding out which consultation techniques are most appropriate to use when engaging the public about different planning functions and at different stages in those processes.
- 7.2 The first focus group was held at St Ivo Leisure Centre in St Ives and involved eight residents from the urban areas of Huntingdon, Godmanchester, and St Ives. Their ages ranged from 21 to 70 with three in employment, one not working, three retired and one in further education.
- 7.3 The second focus group was held at the George Hotel in Ramsey and involved six residents from the rural parts of the district. Their ages ranged from 30 to 72, with four in employment, one retired and one semi-retired.
- 7.4 Residents were recruited by telephone from a commercially available list of residents by staff at BMG Research's in-house telephone call centre and face to face in the street by research recruiters. BMG endeavoured to ensure that a cross-section of residents was invited to the focus groups, including young people, people from ethnic minorities, people with no access to private transport as well as ensuring that the group contained a equal mix of males and females and a good geographical spread across the district.
- 7.5 In recruiting for the two focus groups, BMG Research experienced more difficulties than expected. It was particularly difficult to recruit young people and people aged under 45 as they said that they were not interested in planning issues. BMG Research also experienced problems getting people to travel. People in St Neots were particularly reluctant to travel compared to people in Huntingdon. Unfortunately several people who had agreed to participate withdrew at the last minute.
- 7.6 The focus groups felt that the general public rarely object at the plan making stage. Often because they considered they had not been:
- a) made aware of proposals contained in plans,
- They also felt that there is:
- b) general lack of interest in planning issues which do not generally affect them;
 - c) a lack of sense of urgency. Plans are made many years into the future and can be vague;
 - d) that the plans can cover large areas, making it necessary for individual communities to work in partnership with each other, which is something that they may not be interested in.
- 7.7 In terms of public opinion regarding planning applications the participants generally felt that they are not informed about planning proposals until it is too late in the process.

7.8 In terms of what consultation techniques the general participants would like to see the District Council use there were no significant differences between the urban group and the rural group. The statutory techniques that the Council is required to use by regulations were generally taken as a given with the exception of the Council website. This is due to the fact that the website could be made to be more interactive so that the people have the opportunities to make more comments and objections to the Council electronically. This is already possible with planning applications and some policy documents.

7.9 Table 1.1 shows that public exhibitions, the Council website and District Wide Magazine were the preferred consultation techniques by the two focus groups. The participants felt that public exhibitions should be used for specific allocations made in plans and for major planning applications. They felt that these should be held at convenient locations and at times that would be suitable for the majority of people. They suggested holding them outside office hours and in locations such as schools, community halls and libraries.

Table 1.1: Preferred methods of involvement (focus group results)

Plan Making – General Policies	Plan Making – Specific Allocations	Major Planning Applications
Public Meetings (led by Council Officers or Members)	Public Exhibitions	Public Exhibitions
Council Website	Council Website	Council Website
District Wide Magazine	District Wide Magazine	District Wide Magazine
Focus Groups	Questionnaires/Surveys	Public Meetings
Telephone Hotline	Telephone Hotline	Telephone Hotline

7.10 Both focus groups felt that the District Wide Magazine could be a good method of advertising planning consultations. Some residents expressed interest as to whether the magazine could be published more regularly than quarterly in order to provide residents with more up-to-date information on planning matters. However, as the magazine is currently produced quarterly it would be difficult to fit publications to consultation periods. It could be regularly used to provide updates on the progress of the Local Development Framework generally, and could easily contain dates for Council development control planning meetings.

7.11 A number of comments were made regarding the use of site notices and neighbour notification letters. The participants felt that the people that are likely to be affected by a particular planning application do not necessarily read site notices. They also felt that the notice for just one new house was the same as a notice for a large housing estate and more distinctiveness would be beneficial. They have a similar opinion regarding neighbour letters. It was felt that they should be sent to a larger number of people than those that just adjoin the site, for larger proposals. In respect of public notices the participants felt that the size of the print in the newspaper was very small and provided very little detail.

- 7.12 In terms of feedback, both focus groups mentioned that if they had written to the Council objecting to a plan or a planning application, they would expect to receive a personalised letter explaining how their objection had been considered. This was particularly the case for planning applications where the focus groups felt that they were not given the reason why their objection had not led to planning permission for the proposal being refused.
- 7.13 Some members of the focus groups were happy to receive responses from the Council via email or by being able to search on the Council website. The focus groups also stated that they would expect to receive feedback about their comments quickly.

8 Hard to reach groups

- 8.1 Both the Government and the District Council are concerned that the widest possible range of interests participates in the planning process. It is recognised that diversity and equality are not 'minority' or 'fringe' issues. They should form part of the mainstream of planning and should be an integral part of everyday service delivery, not added extras. Nevertheless, there are 'hard-to-reach' groups that do not usually participate in the planning process and innovative techniques may need to be developed to involve sections of society such as young people, those with disabilities and people from ethnic minorities.

Young People

- 8.2 In April 2005 an officer from the Planning Division attended a St Ives Youth Town Council meeting to ask the Youth Council how they would like the District Council to communicate, consult and engage them and other young people in planning matters. Following a discussion and explanation of the different techniques that the Council could use, Members of the Youth Council were asked to select which methods they would like to see used. Although the meeting was not well attended by Youth Town Council Members, the results indicated that the website was the preferred consultation technique followed by public notices/newspaper articles. These choices were selected because it was felt that they would target the most people and be the most accessible to people.
- 8.3 The results from the questionnaire returned from Huntingdon Youth Town Council support the use of the website as a useful consultation technique for youth town councils and young people generally. However, Huntingdon Youth Town Councils' other preferred choices were targeted letters and leaflets/posters and questionnaires/surveys.
- 8.4 In 2004, the Council carried out a project to involve young people aged 11-19 years in local decision-making regarding the provision of facilities and services in the Ramsey Area Partnership. Various consultation methods were used including school citizenship workshops, focus groups (including a Big Brother diary room event), using artists to capture young peoples' ideas, site visits to other locations and peer research where training was given to young people to lead consultation with their peers. This exercise was successful in involving young people and indicates that young people are willing to engage with the Council where they are able to give their views verbally, rather than having to commit their views to paper.
- 8.5 In the future, it may be possible to join with Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Council for Voluntary Youth Services (CCVYS) on the work that they do in allowing young people to be actively involved in the decision-making and development processes of the rural

communities in which they live. A number of pilot projects have been set up in Huntingdonshire to establish effective processes of sustainable engagement for young people's active involvement. These groups may provide a forum for engaging young people in the planning process.

Disabled People – Huntingdonshire Coalition of Disabled People

- 8.6 One of the respondents to the questionnaire was the Huntingdonshire Coalition of Disabled People. The results of their questionnaire indicated that apart from the Council website and Questionnaires/Surveys they preferred to be consulted about planning by face to face communication, whether this be by small meetings, exhibitions, focus groups or public meetings. Traditional, statutory techniques were not favoured for any type of planning function. This may reinforce the need to use innovative techniques to reach people with disabilities.

Ethnic Minorities

- 8.7 Although there is only a small proportion of people from ethnic minorities within the district the Council is concerned that any specific needs they may have in relation to involvement are addressed. The urban focus group contained two people of non-white ethnicity. The planning leaflet/questionnaire was also sent to different faith organisations that operate locally. It is recognised that this sector of the community may be particularly difficult to reach, and that the Council may need to consider the use of specifically targeted consultation techniques.
- 8.8 The Council is a member of the Mapping Diversity Group, which is a multi agency group whose members also consist of representatives from Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership (HHP), Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Cambridgeshire County Council, Huntingdonshire Primary Care Trust and Cambridgeshire Travellers Initiative. This group was set up, as the various agencies involved had no established methods for identifying or consulting with minority groups. The group hopes to set up a consultative forum, made up of members of our local minority ethnic community. It is hoped that the work of this group can be used to enable local minority ethnic groups to be reached in relation to significant planning issues.

9 Agents Forum

- 9.1 In June, the Council held a 'Agents Forum' part of which was devoted to consultation issues. Approximately 35 agents attended from 30 different businesses. After a presentation about the Statement of Community Involvement the agents were asked to undertake a workshop exercise exploring the advantages of early public consultation on significant planning proposals using 3 scenarios based on different types of planning schemes. At the end they were asked to consider what support they would expect from the Council to assist with this.
- 9.2 The results of this workshop indicated that there were advantages for both the 'public' and 'developers' in carrying out early public consultation. Particular strengths for the public that were mentioned were "feelings of ownership, if views are seen to be acted upon",

“awareness of proposals”, and “involvement in the process”. Advantages for agents and developers were that it “could reduce objections at application stage” and that it would be “less contentious if public concerns had been incorporated”.

- 9.3 Scenario one considered significant proposals such as new development adjoining listed buildings or within conservation areas and new housing developments between 10 and 100 dwellings. Most suggested that they would be willing discuss the proposals with the relevant parish/town council prior to an application being submitted and some suggested that they may be willing to carry out a public exhibition, although it was noted that this would be for the larger proposals as it would be expensive. Many also suggested that they would like discussions with the local planning authority prior to submitting the application. Only a few suggested that they would consult the immediate neighbours to seek their views.
- 9.4 Scenario two considered proposals that may be particularly sensitive or cause local controversy, such as residential development of more than 100 dwellings, development on playing fields and development that would have transport implications. Again some suggested that they would have a public meeting although, there was uncertainty about who would facilitate the meeting. They also suggested that they would invite specialised bodies to the meeting such as the Highways Agency, the National Playing Fields Association etc, in order to allow the public to hear independent views. Other consultation techniques suggested were one to one meetings, exhibitions, media (press, TV or radio), letters to the public, development briefs and websites.
- 9.5 Scenario three considered major development proposals such as new settlements and urban extensions of 1000+ dwellings. Several participants suggested the use of PR firms to run the pre-application consultation. This would include the vision for the proposals, as well as meaningful involvement. Agents suggested that they would be asking the public for responses rather than just informing them. From the discussions it was noted that agents felt that the types of consultation techniques that they would consider using for this scenario would be similar to that of scenario two.
- 9.6 In terms of what support or involvement agents and developers would be seeking from the Council there were quite a few suggestions. Responsive meetings with planning officers was mentioned frequently along with receiving timely advice, particularly for routine planning applications. The use of duty officers had a mixed response with some liking them and others suggesting that they were fine for routine householder applications but not suitable for detailed applications. The concept of a development team for major development proposals was broadly supported, although it was felt that this should not be a fixed team. Agents also felt that they would like Members to endorse consultation that agents and developers had undertaken, and where necessary planning officers should act as facilitators between the public and developers.

PART C KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

10. Key findings

- 10.1 Overall there was a general preference for traditional techniques amongst the public and stakeholders. The results also indicated that there is no one way that the public and stakeholders would like to be kept involved, although planning consultants and house builders particularly preferred traditional methods, as they are not always local to the district and they tend to regularly contact the planning offices via telephone or email regarding how the Council is progressing its Local Development Framework. In selecting their preferred participation methods, all other consultees generally selected at least one non-traditional technique such as exhibitions, telephone hotline, meetings as his or her preferred means of being involved in planning.
- 10.2 The use of the Council website was seen as important to stakeholders and the public, as it provides information 24 hours a day and can be a very quick way to communicate with the Council. Although people did not necessary regularly check the website, they thought that it was a good means of displaying a large volume of material free of charge for people to view and make comments about.
- 10.3 By combining the findings of the research for the communication and consultation strategy with the findings of the SCI research it would seem that the use of media publications whether it be District Wide magazine or the local paper is important to people. Rural communities particularly considered that this type of communication reaches a large target audience and allows for information and decisions taken by the Council in Huntingdon to be delivered in a concise format.
- 10.4 In terms of consulting people about planning applications, the public generally preferred to be consulted by letter rather than having a site notice put up. It was also felt that for minor planning applications such as neighbour extensions a letter to the neighbour was sufficient consultation. For large applications such as new residential developments, the public thought that letters should be sent out to more people than those who just border the site and, where needed, public meetings could be held to allow the public to raise their views and objections. Overall for major planning applications the public and stakeholders thought that techniques such as public exhibitions, public meetings and District Wide magazine could be used to gather views.
- 10.5 The Agents Forum found that agents were keen to have pre-application discussions with planning officers and where the scale and nature of the proposal merited it they would consider carrying out pre-application consultation wit the public. Techniques that they would consider were public meetings and exhibitions with development briefs where appropriate. However, it was advocated that any pre-application consultation would have to be considered and given weight by the Council. Where development proposals were significant, agents stated that they would consider discussing the proposals with town and parish councils prior to submitting a planning application. However, agents did raise concerns regarding the confidentiality of such meetings. Where details of the likely proposals were known and likely to be supported, in principle by the District Council, there was greater acceptance of consulting town and parish councils and the public generally.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 Overall, the results confirm previous research carried out for the Communication and Consultation Strategy that the Council should continue to consult people about planning by using traditional consultation techniques such as letters, although a number of stakeholders are happy to receive notifications by email instead of by letter. Where staff and financial resources allow there is a desire for the Council to supplement these traditional techniques with other methods such as exhibitions, questionnaires, posters etc. Although not explicitly mentioned, 'piggy-backing'-where consultation on several issues is done together and attempting to get consultation documents mentioned in other publications or websites would be a useful and easy way to ensure that people find out about plan making activities.
- 11.2 The use of non-traditional techniques will clearly be important for 'hard to reach' groups as it is evident that the traditional techniques will not engage many of them in the process. Hopefully the work that is being carried out by the Mapping Diversity Group should enable the Council to effectively consult representatives of minority groups in the future.
- 11.3 In terms of how the Council deals with planning applications, the public and stakeholders indicated that they prefer to be consulted quite widely for major planning proposals. They felt that the Council should always try to use neighbour notification letters instead of site notices, and not just send out letters to households that will be adjacent to the proposal but to those that are within the wider catchment of that area. However, for minor applications most communities and stakeholders appeared satisfied with the statutory consultation requirements. Therefore, it is unlikely that any additional consultation techniques would need to be used to consult people about minor planning applications.
- 11.4 The use of pre-application consultation and discussions are recommended as best practice by the government. Through the Agents Forum, agents confirmed their preference for pre-application discussions with planning officers. Whilst the Council is committed to providing this service, it should be realised that the majority of officer resources will still need to be aimed at determining planning applications within the government targets. Agents were generally supportive of the benefits that pre-application consultation could have for them, and the quality of the end product. The overall feeling was that any pre-application consultation would need to be appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposal.
- 11.5 In terms of feedback from the Council it is clear from the research that stakeholders and communities would like feedback and acknowledgement of their correspondence as soon as is reasonably practical.

APPENDIX A

List of Stakeholders Regulation 25 SCI Consultees

Town & Parish Councils in Huntingdonshire
Adjoining Town & Parish Councils

East of England Regional Assembly
Cambridgeshire County Council
Bedfordshire County Council
Northamptonshire County Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council
East Cambridgeshire District Council
Fenland District Council
Peterborough City Council
East Northamptonshire District Council
Bedford Borough Council
Mid Bedfordshire District Council
Highways Agency

Business Groups
Religious/ Faith Groups
Environmental and Historical Groups
Voluntary and Community Groups
Planning Consultants and Housebuilders
Housing Associations
Disabled Groups
Young Persons Groups
Gypsy and Traveller Groups

Focus Group Participants
Developers Forum

APPENDIX B

Huntingdonshire

district council

Planning for Huntingdonshire – Get Involved!

The Government has recently changed the way the plan making system operates to put community involvement at its heart. This means we need to contact your organisation earlier during the plan and decision making processes. We would like you to be involved, so that your opinions can help to prepare better plans and make better decisions.

All planning authorities now have to produce a document called the “**Statement of Community Involvement**”. This will set out the way in which we consult you about planning policies and possible major developments. To help us prepare this document we would like your views on how you would prefer to be consulted by the Council on planning matters.

There are two main strands of planning – plan making and planning applications, which are explained in more detail below. We understand that there is likely to be no single ‘right’ way to for the community to get involved and so we will attempt to use a range of techniques, based on the outcome of this questionnaire. We would also like to hear how you would like us to feed back the results of our consultations.



Plan Making

Under the new planning system the Council intends to produce a number of plans for the district. These include:

- Core Strategy – document containing the planning policies that will be used to guide planning decisions
- Allocations Plan – document setting out where the Council will designate land for new development, for example new housing, employment, retail etc

When preparing these documents there is a legal requirement for consultation at certain stages.

Planning Applications

Most people become involved with the planning system when specific planning applications are submitted. Decisions on planning applications are based upon planning policies together with consideration of particular local circumstances. The Council receives a large number of planning applications every year ranging from minor applications, such as those for house extensions to major applications for new housing estates or business parks.

There are three main stages in the planning application consultation process: pre-application, during the application and post application. Pre-application refers to consultations that can be carried out prior to a planning application being submitted. During the application refers to consultations that are carried out by the Council as part of its decision making process. Post application refers to how those who have commented on a planning application are informed of the outcome.

Consultation Techniques

We would like to find out what types of technique your organisation would like us to use when consulting you about plan making and planning applications. The table below sets out a number of options that we can use to consult you. This list is by no means exhaustive, although there will obviously be implications for resources with some of the options. In this table we have tried to suggest when certain techniques could be used in order to stimulate debate.

Options on Community Involvement		
Options & Description	Commentary	Plan Making Stage/Type of Planning Application
Documents available for inspection at Pathfinder House	Minimum requirement. Available during office hours.	Suitable for all stages & all types of planning applications.
Internet (website, email)	Available out of office hours. Can be used to show a large volume of material.	Suitable for all stages & providing details of all planning applications.
Targeted Mailings & Letters	Direct mailings to specific consultees & letters to statutory consultees.	Suitable for all stages & all planning applications.
Site Notices	Placed next to area that planning permission is being sought for.	Suitable for consultation stage of planning applications.
Leaflets/Posters	Provides summary of plan document and can provide details of how the public can get involved.	Suitable for public consultation stages as summarises planning documents. May be suitable for major planning applications.
Questionnaires/Surveys	Quick and easy to administer. Provide targeted feedback.	Suitable for early plan making consultation stages, as it helps to bring out many areas of public concerns.
Press Notices/Newspaper Articles	Statutory requirement to advertise some planning applications in local newspapers. Information published in local papers circulating in the district.	Suitable for publicising details of the consultation stages of plan making and legal requirement for publicising details of some planning applications.
Meetings (one to one or small groups)	Allow useful discussions and enable linkages to other strategies and initiatives to be identified. Resource intensive requiring senior staff.	Suitable for pre-publication stage & post consultation stage of plan making, to discuss the basis of comments received.
Focus Groups/ Citizens' Panels – selected groups of participants with particular characteristics or randomly selected participants	Allow issues to be explored in depth by a cross-section of the community.	Suitable for pre-public consultation stage of plan making, to establish how the public prefer to be consulted and early consultation to draw out public concerns.
Public meetings/Village Meetings	Allow communities to give views in verbal form. Need to be held in accessible locations over various days and times to ensure everyone has the opportunity to attend.	Suitable for plan making public consultation stages, especially useful when discussing housing, employment and other major allocations. Suitable for major planning applications and may be appropriate for developers to carry out before submitting a major planning application.
Public Exhibitions/Displays/ Stalls/Roadshows	Allow communities to give views in verbal form. Resource intensive in terms of money, time and staff. Need to be held in a number of accessible locations over various days and times to ensure everyone has the opportunity to attend.	Suitable for plan making public consultation stages, especially useful when discussing housing, employment and retail allocations or area specific plans. Suitable for major planning applications and may be appropriate for developers to carry out before submitting a major planning application.
Workshops/Enquiry By Design/Planning for Real®	Allow views to be visualised. Significant preparation required. Useful for discussion about difficult issues and key themes.	Major planning applications or area based planning documents.

We need your views on how we should consult you. Please complete the questionnaire and return it by **29th April 2005** to:

Michael Bingham, Development Plans Manager, Planning Services, Huntingdonshire District Council, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN

Questionnaire

1) Do you wish to be consulted on:

- Plan making Yes / No
- Planning applications Yes / No

If the answer to both is 'No' please return the questionnaire and we will remove your details from our database. There is no need to complete further questions.

2) In order to establish how you would like to be consulted by the Council about various planning matters, please indicate your first, second and third preferred consultation techniques using the number 1, 2 and 3.

Options	Plan Making – General Policies	Plan Making – Specific Allocations	Major Planning Applications	Minor Planning Applications
Documents available for inspection at local planning offices				
Internet (website, email)				
Targeted Mailings & Letters				
Site Notices				
Leaflets/Posters				
Questionnaires/Surveys				
Newspaper Articles				
Meetings (one to one and small groups)				
Focus Groups				
Citizens' Panels				
Public meetings/Village Meetings				
Public Exhibitions/Displays/ Stalls/Roadshows				
Workshops/Enquiry by design				

3) From the table, have we missed any consultation techniques that you would like the Council to use?

.....

4) If so, when would you like the Council to use this technique and for which planning activity?

.....

5) How would you prefer to receive feedback on your comments?

.....
.....

6) Would you like to be kept involved in the production of the Draft Statement of Community Involvement?

Yes/No

What happens next?

After we have received your responses to the questionnaire, we will analyse them and where feasible use the types of consultation techniques that you prefer as part of the Council’s plan making and planning application processes. Your views on consultation will also be fed into a document called the “**Draft Statement of Community Involvement**”. The Draft Statement of Community Involvement will be available for public consultation in the autumn. This is when you will have an opportunity to comment on how the Council proposes to consult you in the future, taking into account the results of this questionnaire.

Key Timetable

Draft Statement of Community Involvement - Public consultation in October 2005

Submit Statement of Community Involvement to the Secretary of State – April 2006

Examination into the Statement of Community Involvement – July 2006

Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement – October 2006

If your details are incorrect or incomplete, please amend.

Organisation Name:	«CompanyName»
Department:	«Department»
Contact Name:	«Dear» «FirstName» «LastName»
Address:	«Address» «Address1»
Town/City:	«City»
Postcode:	«PostalCode»
Telephone:	«WorkPhone»
Fax Number:	«FaxNumber»
Email:	«Email»

This is your opportunity to get involved and shape the way the Council consults you!

APPENDIX C

«Department»
«CompanyName»
«Dear» «FirstName» «LastName»
«Address»
«Address1»
«City»
«County»
«PostalCode»

Our ref. SCI/Statutory Organisations
Your ref.

08 September 2005

Dear «Dear» «FirstName» «LastName»

Re: Statement of Community Involvement

The Council is currently preparing its Draft Statement of Community Involvement that will set out the standards to be achieved in involving the community in the preparation, alteration and review of all local development documents and planning applications. In order to comply with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, we are required to seek your organisation's opinions on preferred methods of consultation for these documents.

Obviously, we are legally required to send you copies of consultation documents. I would be grateful if you could tell me if there any particular types of format that you would like this in? E.g. hard copies, CD versions, or website links. It would also be useful if you could let me know how you would like to receive feedback from the planning department on comments you make about local development documents and planning applications. Please indicate this on the attached form and send it to me in the envelope that I have enclosed by **Friday 3rd June**.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Crees
Planning Officer
Planning Division

Tel. 01480 388434
Fax: 01480 388472
e-mail: Michelle.Crees@huntsdc.gov.uk

Organisation Details:

Organisation Name:	«CompanyName»
Contact Name:	«Department» «Dear» «FirstName» «LastName»
Address:	«Address» «Address1»
Village/Town/City:	«City», «County»
Post Code	«PostalCode»
Telephone:	«WorkPhone»
Fax Number:	«FaxNumber»
Email:	«Email»

Preferred Format (please tick)

Hard copy of documents	
CD version of documents	
Website link to documents	

Preferred Feedback (please tick)

Letter	
Email	
On Council Website	
In Council Magazine	
Other (please specify)	