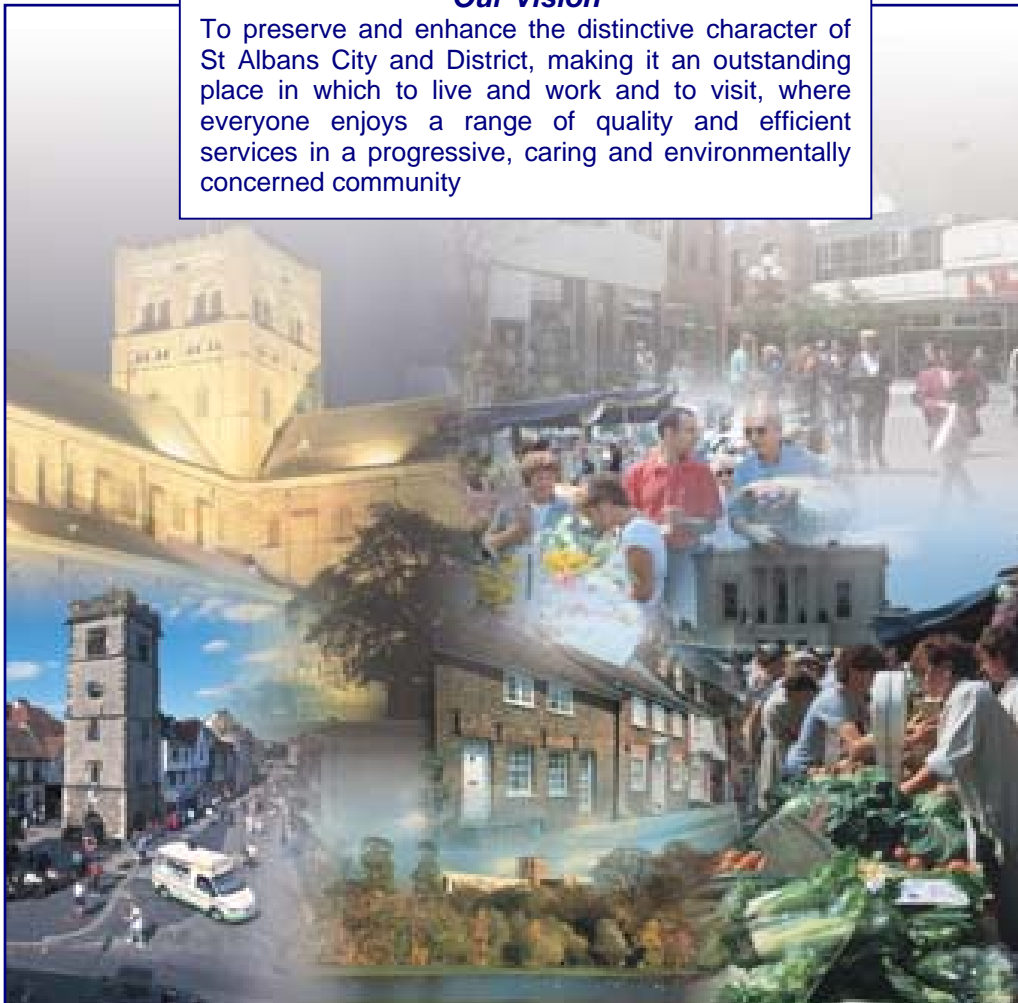




# Statement of Community Involvement

## *Our Vision*

To preserve and enhance the distinctive character of St Albans City and District, making it an outstanding place in which to live and work and to visit, where everyone enjoys a range of quality and efficient services in a progressive, caring and environmentally concerned community



**Adopted April 2006**

City and District of St Albans  
District Council Offices  
Civic Centre  
St Albans  
Hertfordshire  
AL1 3JE

## **Equalities**

The Council is committed to observing legislative requirements and actively promoting equalities in all aspects of its work and service provision.

- Under the Race Relations Act, the Council has a general duty to promote race equality and actively challenge discrimination. The Council will therefore have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equal opportunity and promote good relations between people of different racial groups. Race equality has been placed at the centre of service delivery and the development and review of policy.
- Under the Disability Discrimination Act, the Council has a duty to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people, requiring the needs of disabled people to be considered as early as possible and at every stage of our policy and decision making.

These duties will be complied with throughout the plan preparation process and in all aspects of public consultation.

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduces major changes to the planning system. The key aims of the new system are to streamline the plan making process and promote a pro-active, positive approach to managing development. There is a very strong emphasis on community and stakeholder involvement in planning and making key decisions early in the process.
- 1.2 The Act introduces Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) which will replace the present system of Structure Plans (produced by the County Council) and Local Plans (produced by the District Council). The LDF will comprise a series of documents, which set out spatial policies and proposals for future development within the District. These documents are explained in more detail in Section 2.
- 1.3 Under the new legislation, the Council is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). **This Statement of Community Involvement sets out the District Council's policy for involving the community in the preparation and revision of Local Development Documents (see paragraph 2.4) and the consideration of planning applications.** Once it has been adopted following an independent public examination, the Council will have to comply with the consultation requirements set out in the SCI.
- 1.4 The Council believes that wide ranging community involvement in the planning process is beneficial for all parties involved, including local residents, businesses, organisations and the District Council itself.

### **How will the general public benefit?**

- Local services that are better able to meet local needs
- Greater community cohesion and inclusion
- More public ownership and greater sense of democracy

### **What can individuals and organisations expect to achieve by getting involved?**

- An ability to influence the decision making process and 'make a difference'
- Increased understanding of how policies are developed and linked
- Enhanced sense of contributing to the future of the community

### **Benefits to the District Council include:**

- Wider contributions to problem solving
- Increased support for local planning policies and Council activity
- Local expertise, opinions and insight are brought to the planning process

- 1.5 Overleaf is an at-a-glance guide to the SCI. This gives examples of questions that members of the public may have about community involvement in the planning process, and explains where answers can be found in this document.

# At-a-glance guide to the Statement of Community Involvement

*Q: Who can make comments on planning applications and on any of the Councils planning policy documents?*

**A: Go to page 29 of the SCI where Section 7 explains who can get involved in the planning process**

*Q: How can I make a specific objection to a planning application that will have a negative impact on me?*

**A: Go to page 22 of the SCI where Section 5 outlines how to get involved in planning applications submitted to the Council**



*Q: How will the Council let the community know about possible large-scale developments that will have a major impact on the District's infrastructure?*

**A: Go to page 28 of the SCI where Section 6 includes a summary of how the Council will publicise major, minor and other planning applications**

*Q: I own a piece of land in the District and would like to put forward a proposal to have it designated for an alternative use. How do I go about this?*

**A: Go to page 15 of the SCI where paragraph 3.18 outlines the best time for people to put forward proposals for possible inclusion in the Development Plan Documents**

*Q: Where can I find out how the Council proposes to inform the community about which areas of land are being proposed for housing in the District?*

**A: Go to page 13 of the SCI where Section 3 outlines the different types of community involvement techniques the Council will use for planning policy documents**



## Glossary of terms

Below are brief descriptions of some of the frequently used terms within the Statement of Community Involvement.

<b>Cabinet</b>	The St.Albans District Council's Cabinet is made up of a group of councillors who meet on a regular basis throughout the year. Each cabinet member has a portfolio of services. They work closely with council officers and heads of service, to make many decisions that affect services.
<b>EERA</b>	East of England Regional Assembly - a voluntary association comprising all 54 county, unitary and district/borough councils in the region as well as a wide cross-section of stakeholders. EERA is a regional planning body.
<b>Full Council</b>	The full council is made up of all 58 elected members and has the role of setting the annual budget and overall policy framework for the council.
<b>GO-East</b>	The Government Office for the East of England, this provides a regional perspective to central government legislation and regulations and acts as the link between regional and local bodies.
<b>LDF</b>	The Local Development Framework is the title for the overall folder of documents that will guide the future development of the District. The LDF replaces the existing 'Local Plan' and 'Supplementary Planning Guidance'.
<b>LDS</b>	The Local Development Scheme is the timetable setting out the when the Council will work through the various stages of producing the new planning documents. The LDS looks forward for a period of 3 years.
<b>RSS</b>	Regional Spatial Strategy – produced by EERA, RSS14 is a spatial strategy to guide development in the East of England through to 2021. It contains only regional and sub-regional issues to guide local development through a regional perspective.
<b>SoS</b>	Secretary of State - draft Development Plan Documents should be sent to GO-East, who act on behalf of the Secretary of State, and representations will be made on the quality and soundness of the DPD
<b>Stakeholder</b>	An individual, group or business that has a particular interest in the development of the District, or in a particular project.
<b>Sustainability Appraisal</b>	The main purpose of a sustainability appraisal is to assess the social, environmental and economic effects of the new planning documents to ensure that the policies within them are in accordance with the objectives of sustainable development.

## 2.0 Which planning policy documents and planning applications will be subject to public consultation?

- 2.1 This section briefly outlines both the planning policy documents and types of planning application that will be subject to public consultation. It is hoped that greater community and stakeholder involvement at an early stage will enable policies to be developed and decisions to be made that reflect the needs and aspirations of the District's residents. The different stages in the preparation of each planning policy document are also discussed.
- 2.2 The introduction of the Local Development Framework (LDF) system requires each local planning authority to produce a Local Development Scheme (LDS), which is essentially a three-year work programme for the production of the Local Development Documents (see paragraph 2.4).
- 2.3 The LDS informs the local community and stakeholders of the timetable (initially April 2005 - March 2008) that the Council intends to follow for the production of each new style planning document and enables people to see exactly when they can get involved in the planning process.
- 2.4 Under the collective title of Local Development Documents (LDDs), the Council will prepare the following:
- *Development Plan Documents (DPDs)*
  - *Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)*
  - *Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)*
- 2.5 Each of these types of LDD is briefly explained below, whilst Figure 1 opposite shows the relationships between each type of planning policy document:

### ➤ **DPDs – Development Plan Documents**

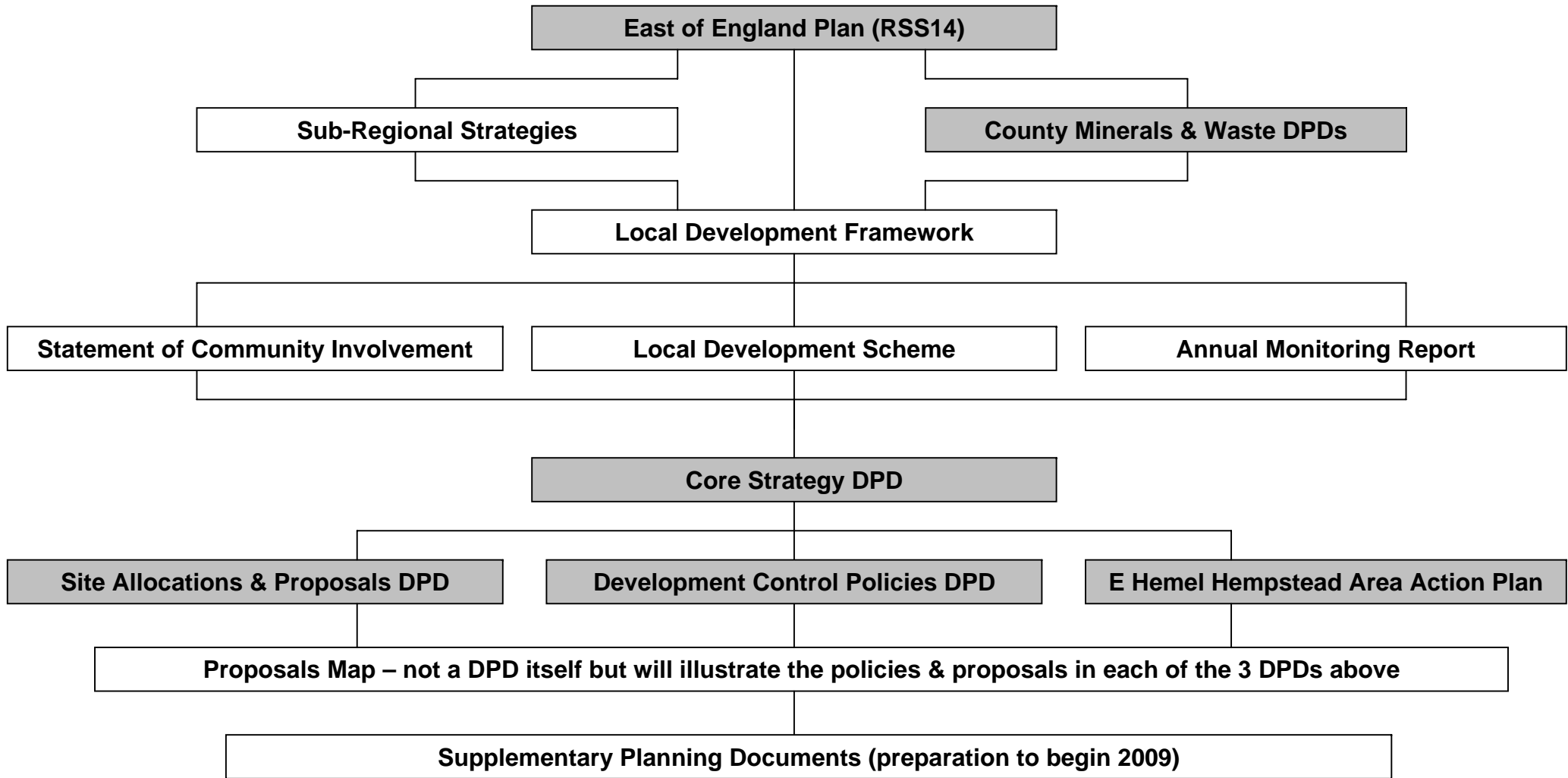
- 2.6 DPDs will replace the existing local plan. They will be spatial planning documents, which together with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the County Minerals and Waste DPD, will form the statutory development plan for the District and will be subject to independent examination. After consideration of the key issues and challenges facing the District, it is proposed that St.Albans District Council will produce three DPDs, namely the Core Strategy, Site Allocations and Proposals, and Development Control Policies. These will be produced in parallel, but will be separate documents. As the three documents are being published at the same time, the same consultation techniques will be used for each. Table 1 in Section 4 provides further details on this process.

### **The Core Strategy**

- 2.7 This will set out the key elements of the planning framework for the area. It will include a vision and strategic objectives, together with core policies for achieving them. The Core Strategy will include the District's housing requirement and will set out broad locations for delivering strategic needs such as employment, retail, leisure, community and transport development.



**Figure 1 - Relationship of documents within the Local Development Framework**



*The chains of conformity are indicated by the lines within the diagram, beginning with RSS14 and moving downwards*

**█** = Forms part of the Statutory Development Plan

Each DPD and SPD will be subject to Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment

### **Site Allocations & Proposals**

- 2.8 This will set out proposals for specific sites across the District, with associated policies (e.g. access requirements, broad design principles etc) to ensure their delivery.

### **Development Control Policies**

- 2.9 This DPD will contain a limited set of policies, against which planning applications can be assessed (e.g. protecting residential amenity, transport issues, protecting vitality and viability etc). This document will not include a large number of use-related policies that can be repetitive and quickly become out of date.

### **Proposals Map**

- 2.10 A Proposals Map (and any inset maps) illustrating the Council's spatial policies and site specific allocations must be prepared on an Ordnance Survey base and be continuously updated as changes are made to each DPD.

### **Area Action Plans**

- 2.11 Area Action Plans (AAPs) are specific to an identified area within the District and would be produced if significant change is required or proposed. The specific proposals for the development or improvement of a site(s) would be outlined, together with a timetable of implementation.
- 2.12 At present, it is not considered that the future development of any sites solely within the St Albans District would be of a scale to warrant the preparation of an Area Action Plan. However, it is proposed that the District Council and Dacorum Borough Council will jointly produce an AAP for the area to the East of Hemel Hempstead, which falls mainly within the Borough of Dacorum, but partly within St Albans District. If comprehensive development proposals were to come forward for any of the smaller sites in the District, these would be subject to specific policies in the Site Allocations and Proposals DPD.

### **➤ SPDs - Supplementary Planning Documents**

- 2.13 SPDs will replace the existing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPGs). These documents will be used to supplement the policies contained within the Development Plan Documents. They can be thematic or site specific and can take the form of design guides, area development briefs, master plans or issue based documents. SPDs will not form part of the statutory development plan or be subject to independent examination, but they will be subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement as shown in Section 4 of this SCI.

### **➤ Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment**

- 2.14 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will need to be undertaken for each of the Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents that the Council intends to produce.

- 2.15 The main purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating SEA) is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of the strategies and policies in the DPDs and SPDs. Public consultation on the final SA report will occur at the same time as consultation on the preferred options document for each DPD (Stage 2 - see paragraph 2.18) or on any draft SPDs (Stage 2 - see paragraph 2.26). The specific techniques that will be used are outlined in Sections 3 and 4 of this SCI.

➤ **The plan-making process**

- 2.16 Section 3 of the SCI details the consultation techniques that may be used at each stage of the DPD and SPD preparation process. The Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) contains full descriptions of these preparation processes, however the stages are summarised in brief below. Any relevant consultation timescales are highlighted, whilst the relevant regulatory stages from the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 have also been identified:

**For each Development Plan Document (DPD)**

Stage 1 Production Period

- 2.17 This will take the form of meetings and consultation with relevant stakeholders, external groups and internal departments (see page 15) and any comments will be reported back to the Council's Planning Policy Advisory Panel for consideration before a preferred options and proposals document is produced. This work will satisfy Regulation 25 - 'Pre Submission consultation'.

Stage 2 Public participation on Preferred Options and Proposals document

- 2.18 Following the initial consultation, the Council will produce a Preferred Options and Proposals document, which will be approved by full Council for consultation purposes. The period of consultation on this document will be **at least 6 weeks. THIS WILL BE THE MAIN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO GET INVOLVED IN THE PLAN MAKING PROCESS.** Stakeholders consulted at Stage 1 will again be asked for their comments. This consultation will satisfy Regulation 26 - 'Pre submission public participation'.

Stage 3 Consideration of responses to Preferred Options and Proposals document

- 2.19 The Council's Planning Policy Advisory Panel will then consider a summary and analysis of all representations received, which will shape the formation of the DPD. The process of public consultation undertaken will also be reported. This is a non-consultative/participative stage of the process, which will satisfy Regulation 27 - 'Representations on proposals for a development plan document'.

Stage 4 Submission of DPD to Secretary of State for independent examination

- 2.20 The proposed DPD will be presented to the Council's Planning Policy Advisory Panel and will then go before both Cabinet and full Council for approval. Once approved, each DPD will be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination together with the following documents:

- Final Sustainability Appraisal
- Supporting technical documents
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Statement of conformity with the SCI

2.21 Stage 4 is when anyone can make formal representations supporting or objecting to the content of the DPDs. The time period for people to make representations is **6 weeks**, although the main stage for people to get involved is Stage 2. This submission will satisfy Regulation 28 - 'Submission of documents and information to the Secretary of State'.

#### Stage 5 Consideration of representations on submitted DPD

2.22 Any representations made will be considered under Regulation 29 - 'Representations on development plan documents'. The Council's Planning Policy Advisory Panel will consider a summary and analysis of any representations received. The process of public consultation undertaken will also be reported. If any changes to a DPD are proposed, Full Council will decide these. In light of government guidance, it is not expected that the Council will propose any changes at this stage. PPS12 states that such changes are not likely to be required if the process of community involvement has been effective. Publication of information at this stage will be carried out in line with Regulation 31 - 'Handling of representations: general'.

#### Stage 6 Independent examination of DPD

2.23 Once an Inspector has been appointed, a pre-examination meeting will be held. The purpose of this will be to organise the structure of the examination, identify the issues to be covered and decide who else might need to be invited to the examination to assist the Inspector in considering the soundness of the DPD. Those people making representations at Stage 5 who wish to be heard at the examination will also attend this meeting and be informed by the Inspector how their representation will be dealt with. The timetable for the submission of evidence will also be set and all parties must adhere to this.

2.24 The examination itself will consider any representations made under Stage 5 and the general soundness of the plan, which includes an assessment of whether the views of the community have been taken into account during preparation. This process will be carried out in line with Regulation 34 - 'Independent examination'.

2.25 Participants at the examination, which includes those making representations at Stage 5, will be able to give oral presentations and also question other participants should the Inspector consider this valuable. Those appearing at the examination need not attend every session, however all sessions are open to the public to observe.

#### Stage 7 Binding report and adoption of DPD

2.26 Following the examination, the Inspector will produce a final report setting out precise recommendations for how the DPD must be changed. This report is binding on the Council and the DPD will be adopted as soon as is practicable in

line with Regulation 36 - 'Adoption of a development plan document'. Once adopted, the DPD will become part of the Local Development Framework.

### **For each Supplementary Planning Document (SPDs)**

#### Stage 1 Production period

- 2.27 This will take the form of meetings with relevant stakeholders, external groups and internal departments and any comments will be reported back to the Council's Planning Policy Advisory Panel for consideration before a draft SPD is produced. A summary of this production period will also be contained in a statement sent out at Stage 2 detailed below.

#### Stage 2 Public participation on Draft SPD

- 2.28 The Council will publish a draft SPD and invite comments from the community and stakeholders. This will satisfy Regulation 17 - 'Public Participation'. The period of consultation will last between **4 and 6 weeks**. Together with the draft SPD, the following documents will also be published:
- Sustainability Appraisal;
  - Statement of Conformity with the SCI.

#### Stage 3 Consideration of representations on Draft SPD

- 2.29 Any representations made will be considered under Regulation 18 - 'Representations on supplementary planning documents'. The Council's Planning Policy Advisory Panel will consider a summary and analysis of any representations received. The process of public consultation undertaken will also be reported.

#### Stage 4 Adoption of SPD

- 2.30 A final version of the SPD will be presented to the Council's Planning Policy Advisory Panel and will then go before the Cabinet for adoption. The adopted document will contain a statement of the representations received on the document and the Council's response to the representations. This will be carried out in accordance with Regulation 19 - 'Adoption of supplementary planning documents'.

### ➤ **Planning Applications**

- 2.31 As well as the preparation of the new Local Development Framework documents, the community can also get involved in planning applications received and determined by the Council. **All** planning applications received by the Council are subject to minimum statutory requirements for public consultation. The wider range of consultation procedures that the Council may undertake for major, minor and other planning applications are explained in more detail in Section 5.
- 2.32 To briefly summarise, on the receipt, acceptance and registration of a valid planning application, the Council will enter details onto the weekly list, which includes information on all applications registered over the previous 7 days. This

list is available for inspection at the Council offices and on the Council's website, [www.stalbans.gov.uk /living/planning/applications](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/living/planning/applications)

- 2.33 Other statutory consultation techniques include neighbour notification letters, site notices and advertisements in the local press. Not every planning application requires all, or even any of these techniques to be carried out. A number of factors will determine how an application is dealt with and these include whether there are major issues of scale or controversy, whether the application is in a conservation area, is a listed building or whether the application is contrary to development plan policies. Sections 5 and 6 of the SCI cover this in more detail.

### **3.0 Types of Community Involvement in the plan making process**

- 3.1 As Section 2 described, the new planning system is quite complex and involves the publication of a number of different documents. The Council recognises that the varying content and status of these documents means a wide range of consultation techniques are required to ensure the community has as much chance as possible to be involved in the planning process. This Section will list the range of techniques the Council will employ and also outline the strengths and weaknesses of each. Details are also provided on how the Council will acknowledge any comments made and also how comments will be reported internally. Section 4 will then outline which techniques the Council will employ for each type of planning document detailed in Section 2. As mentioned in paragraph 2.6, the Council is producing its three DPDs in tandem, and as a result the same consultation techniques will be used for each DPD.
- 3.2 The first couple of techniques described are those that will be used most regularly by the Council. They mainly deal with how and where information on planning documents will be publicised for the community to view. There then follows information on the more specific techniques which will be used at the various stages of the plan preparation process that were detailed in Section 2.

#### **1. CONSULTATION TECHNIQUES**

##### **Copies of documents (DPD Stages 1,2 & 4, SPD Stage 2)**

- 3.3 One of the simplest ways of getting information into the public domain is to make copies of planning documents available for the public to view, inspect and purchase (if applicable). There are a variety of ways the Council can do this to ensure as many people as possible are able to access the information.
- 3.4 Copies of documents will be available to inspect or purchase during office hours from the District Council Offices in St Albans and the District Office in Harpenden (at Harpenden Town Hall, Leyton Road).

District Council Offices  
Civic Centre  
St.Peters Street  
St Albans  
Hertfordshire  
AL1 3JE

- 3.5 It is considered that making copies available at the Council Offices is a good way of informing those local groups already familiar with and involved in the planning process, for example local conservation, preservation and amenity groups and planning agents.
- 3.6 Copies of certain documents will be available to inspect at the following local libraries:

- Cunningham
- Fleetville
- Harpenden
- London Colney
- Herts Archive and Local Studies
- Marshalswick
- Redbourn
- St.Albans (Maltings)
- Wheathampstead
- County Library

- 3.7 Making copies available at the various public libraries gives people the opportunity to look at proposals in their own time, without having to travel to the Council Offices. This may benefit those who feel uncomfortable meeting an officer face to face or who are unable to journey into St.Albans and Harpenden town centres. It is thought that this facility may be useful for local residents associations and the ethnic minority community.
- 3.8 Documents will also be posted on the General Consultation and Planning Policy sections of the Council's website, together with full details of any relevant consultation period and information on where and when copies can be inspected / purchased. The Council's web address is listed below:
- [www.stalbans.gov.uk](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk)
- 3.9 Given the rise in home computer ownership and internet usage, making documents available on line is a valuable way of giving out information to the public. It is thought that this will be a good way for non-local groups, e.g. national and regional conservation groups, to access any documents produced, as well as those who use computers in their everyday environment such as schools and colleges.
- 3.10 Copies of documents may also be produced on CD-ROM. The benefits of this would be primarily the saving of resources and cost, as the number of paper copies required would reduce. CD-ROMs would also enable individuals and businesses to view documents in the comfort of their own offices and homes. This will again benefit those groups who are everyday users of computers such as planning agents, schools and colleges.
- 3.11 Documents or extracts of documents may be available in alternative formats on request, e.g. in Braille, large print, on audio tape, via e-mail or in different languages. It is considered that this facility will be a valuable technique in engaging the often under-represented groups such as the disabled or those people whose first language is not English. Information on how alternative formats can be obtained will be displayed on the inside cover of each document using the standard corporate wording that is printed on all Council publications.

#### **Press Releases (DPD Stages 1,2 & 4, SPD Stage 2)**

- 3.12 Using the local media is another way to inform the public about planning matters. The Council issues press releases on a wide range of subjects, and the publication of planning documents is no exception.
- 3.13 Press releases can be issued to all local newspapers and radio stations outlining the purpose of documents together with full details of the consultation period and process. Public notices can also appear in local newspapers briefly outlining any documents and how the public can make comments on them. Below are some examples of who press releases are sent to:

**Newspapers:** St.Albans Observer, St.Albans Review, Herts Advertiser, Focus newspapers, Harpenden First

**Local Radio:** BBC Three Counties, Chiltern FM, Watford Mercury

**TV Stations:** BBC London News, London Tonight

**Magazines:** Hertfordshire Life, Herts Cambs & Essex

- 3.14 The use of the media is considered a valuable way of getting information across to a variety of sections of the community, including the less mobile members of the public and ethnic minority groups. By including details in free newspapers and radio broadcasts, it is anticipated that more people will hear about the planning process and feel able to get involved.

**Statutory and Non-Statutory consultees (DPD Stages 1,2 & 4, SPD Stages 1 & 2)**

- 3.15 The Council has a legal requirement to consult a number of bodies through the Local Development Framework process. Appendices A and B of this SCI list the statutory and non-statutory bodies that the Council will consult at various stages of the planning process. These lists exceed the legal requirements for local authorities set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.
- 3.16 The statutory consultees listed in Appendix A include organisations such as neighbouring local planning authorities, the Environment Agency, utility companies and Hertfordshire County Council. The non-statutory consultees in Appendix B are defined in the regulations as voluntary bodies whose activities benefit any part of the district and other bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic, national, religious, business and disabled persons groups.
- 3.17 When consulting organisations and groups on both of these lists, it is anticipated that full copies of documents will be sent. For the non-statutory consultees this should have the effect of cascading information down to a wider range of the community. Not all Development Plan Documents will necessarily be relevant to every consultation body. The Council will consult with those bodies it considers will be affected by the subject matter in the DPD in question.
- 3.18 The list in Appendix B is by no means exhaustive and all of the types of organisations, associations, businesses and individuals are held on the Council's consultee database. Anyone can request that their details are added to this database, which would result in them being consulted at key stages in the plan making process.

**Stakeholder meetings (DPD Stages 1,2 & 4, SPD Stages 1 & 2)**

- 3.19 Local planning authorities are advised to “front load” the preparation process for development plan documents (DPDs), taking key decisions on the spatial strategy, proposals and land allocations at the earliest possible stage. As such, this should be done in consultation with as many of the statutory and non-statutory bodies set out in the regulations as possible. The Council's Planning Policy Advisory Panel and / or Council Officers will hold meetings with the following types of group to discuss possible development options and to facilitate effective discussion on particular key issues of interest.
- Commercial and business interests, including the Chamber of Commerce
  - Housing interests (public and private, including housing associations and house builders)
  - Parish and Town Councils in St Albans District
  - The Council's Planning (Development Control) Committees

- Conservation, Preservation and Amenity Groups
- The Local Strategic Partnership
- Relevant landowners / developers

3.20 The list above is not a complete list, and as Table 2 shows in Section 4, these stakeholder meetings are considered an excellent way of providing and receiving information from **all** sections of the community, especially those who have been under represented in the past. Through the Council pro-actively seeking the views of certain groups at an early stage, it is hoped this will provide the stimulus for their continued involvement throughout the plan preparation process.

#### **Summary Leaflet (DPD Stages 2 & 4)**

3.21 Some of the DPDs and other documents that the Council produces will be quite lengthy publications covering a wide range of in-depth topics. As such, the Council considers it would be beneficial to produce a Summary Leaflet for some of these documents. These are likely to be in colour, reader friendly and will highlight the main points raised in the main document. Details of how people can respond and make comments on the main document will also be included in this free of charge summary leaflet. They will be distributed to all contacts on the consultee database (see paragraph 3.17) and to anyone else requesting a copy.

3.22 It is thought that the Summary Leaflets will be a good way of providing information to local groups who may have a general interest in the future of the district rather than specific comments on individual policies. These groups may include local businesses, housing & design interest groups and residents associations.

#### **Postcard type flyer (DPD Stage 2)**

3.23 For the key consultation stages (DPDs only), the Council will send a postcard type flyer to all households in the District which gives everyone basic information on the DPD and consultation process. It is anticipated that the key information will be provided in different languages. A postcard type flyer is likely to generate interest from the public, rather than sending households full copies or summary leaflets.

3.24 The flyer is considered to be a key technique for involving traditionally harder to reach groups in the planning process, such as ethnic minority groups, disability groups and older persons groups. By sending information to every household in the District, all sections of the community will at the very least receive details on how to comment or access further information. This will overcome the barrier of people not being able or not wanting to leave home to visit libraries, council offices or attend meetings / exhibitions.

#### **Community Newspaper (DPD Stages 2 & 4)**

3.25 The Council currently publishes a monthly four-page 'Community News' paper that is wrapped around the outside of the Herts Advertiser and delivered to approximately 57,000 homes in the District and adjoining areas free of charge. The paper aims to keep local people informed about local issues, and therefore provides another way in which the Council can inform residents about the key stages of the plan-making process and how they can get involved.

- 3.26 As with the postcard type flyer, the 'Community News' paper is thought to be vital for providing information to the harder to reach groups. The articles produced will contain more detailed information than the flyer and will also be a good way of publicising any public exhibitions and meetings that are taking place. It is also anticipated that the paper will be distributed a week or so after the flyer to act as a reminder to people who read it.

#### **Community Panel consultation (DPD Stages 1 & 2)**

- 3.27 The Community Panel is a 1,000 strong list of members of the public who represent a wide cross-section of the community, including minority groups and those not often involved in the planning process. The Council regularly consults the Panel on matters of District-wide interest. Methods of consultation with the Panel will include sending copies of any DPD summary leaflets produced, and the possibility of holding workshop sessions on the DPDs if there is enough interest from the Panel.
- 3.28 Close contact with the Community Panel is the most pro-active way that the Council can seek to involve the harder to reach groups. Whilst techniques such as flyers, library copies and 'Community News' can relay information, the comments and ideas coming in the opposite direction are just as vital.

#### **Public exhibition (DPD Stage 2)**

- 3.29 For the major consultation stage of the DPDs (see paragraph 2.18), a public exhibition will tour the District, visiting St Albans City Centre, Harpenden Town Centre, Redbourn, Wheathampstead, London Colney and the Park Street/Frogmore area. Advance notice will be given in the local media of the specific times and dates. The exhibition will include daytime and some evening and/or weekend opening at each location. Council planning officers will staff the exhibition and Councillors will be invited to attend the evening sessions. Once the tour has finished, it is envisaged that the exhibition will remain on display at the Council Offices in St.Albans until the relevant consultation period has expired.
- 3.30 The main benefit of a public exhibition is that it is a good way of raising the profile of the issues and policies being developed. Formal public meetings can have the same effect, however an exhibition gives those members of the community not comfortable about speaking in public the opportunity to ask Officers questions in person or leave completed comments forms after viewing the exhibition.

#### **Website Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (DPD Stages 2 & 4)**

- 3.31 As some of the planning documents are published, there will be a link set up on the Council's website giving answers to a number of 'frequently asked questions'. It is unlikely that the Planning Policy Team has the capacity to respond to all feedback if the public were given the opportunity to ask questions on-line in addition to submitting written responses. It is considered that the FAQs will provide the community with a valuable point of reference should they have basic queries concerning the content of documents or the consultation process taking place.
- 3.32 As with posting copies of documents on-line, the FAQs page will be of use to those groups or individuals within the community who are regular internet users. It is also

considered that this technique will be of use to the non-local organisations that may have queries, for example national or regional conservation groups, national housebuilders and design interest groups.

#### **Access to Planning Officers' advice (DPD Stages 2 & 4)**

- 3.33 For certain major consultation stages, Planning Policy Officers will be available to offer advice and respond to questions. Working along the same lines as the Development Control Duty Officer scheme (see paragraph 5.12), a rota system will be set up. At certain times of the week, Officers will be available for members of the public to telephone or meet and ask questions on the content of documents or the consultation process that is taking place.
- 3.34 This facility will give local groups and individuals an opportunity to receive information and pass on their own comments or queries to planning officers. For example, local residents associations or businesses could set up individual meetings if they felt uncomfortable attending a wider ranging stakeholder meeting.

#### **Alternative formats**

- 3.35 In line with the Council's Equalities Plan, documents or extracts of documents may be available in alternative formats on request, e.g. in Braille, large print, on audio-tape, via e-mail or in different languages. Information on how this can be accessed will be displayed on planning documents.

### **2. FEEDBACK / ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

#### **Comments Form (DPD Stages 2 & 4, SPD Stage 2)**

- 3.36 Getting information out to the community is vital, however equally important is receiving comments back from members of the public. The Council is committed to providing the community with as much input as possible into the planning process. As a result, every document that goes out to public consultation will have a comments form included. This will include details of how and when people should respond by and how best to structure their comments to enable opinions and thoughts to help shape emerging policies.

#### **Commitment to reporting back**

- 3.37 Any written responses to the DPDs & SPDs will be acknowledged in writing, normally within 5 working days. Comments that are submitted via the Council's website will receive an electronic acknowledgement. Any person, group or organisation making comments at the first public consultation stage will automatically be consulted at all future stages in the process unless they indicate otherwise.

### **3. INTERNAL REPORTING**

#### **Meetings / liaison**

- 3.38 The Council will also have regular contact with certain internal departments, such as Leisure, Housing and the Corporate Policy Team. The purpose of this liaison will be to discuss key issues and also each Council department has databases of contacts that can be used by the Planning Policy Team. For example, the

Equalities Officer has contacts with a wide range of ethnic minority groups, whilst the Corporate Policy Team have close links with the Community Panel (see paragraph 3.27 for more detail on the Panel). All of the relevant contacts will be entered onto the Planning Policy consultee database. The overall benefit will be that certain groups that have often been under-represented in the planning process can be contacted and encouraged to participate.

#### **Reporting to Planning Policy Advisory Panel, Cabinet and full Council**

- 3.39 The Planning Policy Team will, at certain key stages of the plan preparation process, report the views and comments expressed during consultation to the Planning Policy Advisory Panel (PPAP), which comprises 11 District Councillors. These, together with any comments from the Panel, will help to shape policy in draft planning documents. As paragraphs 2.16 onwards of Section 2 explain, Cabinet or full Council will approve draft and final documents at certain relevant stages of the plan making process.

#### **Timespan of consultation process**

- 3.40 In order to ensure that the Council and the community can benefit as much as possible from the techniques outlined in this section, the Council's approved Local Development Scheme timetables a specific period for the Regulation 25 and Regulation 26 consultations (see paragraphs 2.17 & 2.18). The Regulation 25 consultation and subsequent development of issues runs from January 2006 to September 2006. The main public consultation stage, Regulation 26, and the subsequent development of submission DPDs is proposed to run from October 2006 to September 2007. It is considered that these time periods allow the results of the various consultation techniques to be comprehensively addressed and incorporated into our emerging policy documents.

## 4.0 Summary tables of consultation techniques for the plan making process

4.1 Below is a summary table showing all of the consultation and internal reporting techniques discussed in Section 3, and when they will be carried out.

**Table 1**

(please refer to Section 3 sub-headings) <b>Consultation Technique</b>	<b>Development Plan Document Stage 1 – Production period</b>	<b>Development Plan Document Stage 2 – Preferred Options &amp; Proposals Document</b>	<b>Development Plan Document Stage 4 – Submission for independent examination</b>	<b>Supplementary Planning Document Stage 1 – Production period</b>	<b>Supplementary Planning Document Stage 2 – Public participation on Draft SPD</b>
Copies available at Council offices	✓	✓	✓		✓
Copies available at libraries		✓	✓		✓
Copy posted on Council website	✓	✓	✓		✓
Copy available on CD-ROM		✓	✓		
Local Media / Press releases	✓	✓	✓		✓
Consultation with relevant statutory & non-statutory consultees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stakeholder meetings	✓	✓	✓?	✓	
Summary Leaflet		✓	✓		
Postcard type flyer to all households		✓			✓*
Comments Form		✓	✓		✓
Community Newspaper article		✓	✓		
Consultation with the Community Panel	✓	✓			
Community Panel workshop sessions		✓?			
Public Exhibitions		✓			✓*
Website Frequently Asked Questions		✓	✓		
Access to Planning Officer advice		✓	✓		
Internal meetings / liaison	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Report to Planning Policy Advisory Panel	✓		✓	✓	

***This is the key stage for the public to be involved in the DPDs***

\* = where SPDs are site specific, letters will be sent to local area and local exhibition may carried out  
 ? = not definite, depends on interest

4.2 Table 2 below shows which different groups within the community (including those traditionally under-represented in the planning process) will be targeted by certain consultation techniques. Please also refer to Section 3, which explains why each technique is considered suitable for the identified target groups shown below. It must be noted that this table is not exhaustive, and all methods will be available to all groups where possible. For example, a CD-ROM copy will not only be available to planning agents and youth groups, schools and colleges, it is just that the Council considers this one of the more appropriate ways of providing information for these particular organisations.

**Table 2**

<b>Non-statutory consultee</b>	<b>National &amp; Regional Conservation / Preservation Groups</b>	<b>Local Conservation, Preservation &amp; Amenity Groups</b>	<b>Ethnic Minority Groups</b>	<b>Housing / Design Interest groups</b>	<b>Local Residents Associations</b>	<b>Planning Agents</b>	<b>Youth groups, schools, colleges</b>	<b>Disability Groups</b>	<b>Local Businesses / Business Groups</b>	<b>Older Persons Groups</b>
<b>Consultation Technique</b>										
Copies available at Council offices		■			■	■			■	
Copies available at libraries		■	■		■					■
Copy posted on Council website	■			■			■			
Copy available on CD-ROM	■			■		■	■		■	
Local Media / Press releases			■				■	■		■
'Hard' copy of document	■	■		■		■			■	
Stakeholder meetings	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Summary Leaflet		■		■	■				■	
Postcard type flyer to all households			■					■		■
Community Newspaper article			■					■		■
Consultation with the Community Panel			■	■				■	■	■
Public Exhibitions		■	■		■	■	■		■	
Website Frequently Asked Questions	■			■			■	■		
Access to Planning Officer advice		■	■		■	■			■	■
Internal meetings / liaison			■					■		■

■ Good way of providing information

■ Good way of receiving comments back

## **5.0 Community Involvement in Planning Applications**

5.1 As well as the preparation of the new Local Development Framework, the community can also be involved in the process of determining planning applications considered by the Council. This Section will briefly explain the consultation process that the Council may undertake for the three types of planning application - 'major', 'minor' and 'other' (see Appendix C for definitions of the three types of application). Section 6 contains a summary table of which techniques will be used for each type of application.

### **Pre-application discussions**

5.2 To ensure an inclusive and transparent approach to the determination of planning applications, the Council, where appropriate and resources permitting, welcomes pre-application discussions between Officers, applicants and interested parties. For 'minor' and 'other' applications, a short discussion with the Duty Officer (see paragraph 5.12) is recommended. For 'major' applications, it is likely that one or a series of meetings with various Council departments will be appropriate. The Council is aware that in certain cases applicants may wish these discussions to remain private and confidential. However it must be noted that the Council is bound by the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2004. Any pre-application views expressed are informal only and are not binding on any future decision made by the Council.

5.3 The Council is committed to developing discussion and dialogue at an early stage to ensure that benefits can be realised. Some of the key overall objectives of both pre-application discussions and pre-application consultation (see paragraph 5.4) are listed below:

- A means of resolving problems, thereby avoiding possible public objections at a later stage
- An open and transparent approach, overcoming any perceived 'closed door' approach to determining planning applications
- Results in the submission of applications which are straightforward and can be quickly processed
- Early availability of information enables issues to be addressed up front

### **Pre-application consultation**

5.4 Applicants proposing 'major' applications are also recommended to carry out pre-application consultation / community involvement and report any findings as part of their planning submission. Where this occurs, the Council will maintain a 'watching brief' to ensure impartiality, i.e. we can provide guidance on the process but not offer an opinion on the proposals. One of the aims of highlighting pre-application consultation in this SCI is to encourage potential applicants to undertake some community dialogue before 'major' applications are made to avoid objections at a later stage, some of which may not be of material planning relevance.

5.5 The Council recommends that applicants address the consultation standards outlined in this SCI. The extent to which pre-application consultation undertaken by

the applicant can be considered as contributing to the requirements of this SCI depend on a number of factors. These include:

- a) The extent to which the process and outcomes of consultation can be 'validated' by the Council
- b) The degree to which potential problems and possible public objections identified in the consultation have been addressed
- c) The extent to which the developer has undertaken consultation in accordance with the SCI
- d) The submission of a consultation supporting statement with the application
- e) The extent and scope of the pre-application discussions with the Council and the wider community

5.6 In relation to point c) above, the Council expects that the techniques to be used by the applicant may include neighbour notification letters, site notices, meetings with local community groups / residents associations and public notice / newspaper advertisement. This is to ensure that the consultation is in line with that which the Council itself would carry out. With regard to point d), the statement accompanying the planning application should detail the techniques used, the timescales for response, lists of people consulted, and if appropriate, how the applicant has amended the scheme in light of the responses made.

#### **Neighbour Notification letters**

5.7 All residential neighbours and business premises with common boundaries abutting the planning application site or who are located opposite will be notified of the application by letter. Any other properties or premises that are strongly affected by the proposals (visually, environmentally etc) will also be consulted. This letter will contain details of the proposals, information on where plans can be viewed and how to make comments on the application. The Case Officer contact information will be given, together with the timescales involved in terms of returning any comments on the application being determined. People other than neighbours who have expressed an interest in the application will also receive this letter.

#### **Internal / External Consultation**

5.8 In addition to the neighbour notification letters mentioned above, the Council may also consult a number of internal and external bodies when considering planning applications. The scope of consultation is extensive. Each body has its own criteria as to when they need to be consulted. Consultees and interest groups include the Environment Agency, English Nature, Parish Councils, English Heritage and various Council departments including Leisure, Housing and Environmental Health. This list is not exhaustive however, please see Appendices A & B for other possible consultees. These consultations are undertaken as those bodies involved have a specialist interest in the application, for example the Environment Agency would be consulted on applications for development in a flood plain area. Any comments received from these bodies in response to the consultation will assist the Case Officer in determining the application.

## Site Notices

5.9 A number of registered applications necessitate the display of a site notice. Examples of these are listed below.

- All planning applications in a Conservation Area
- All planning applications on or adjacent to a listed building
- A departure, i.e. where an application is contrary to the development plan (e.g. new dwelling in the Green Belt)
- Residential developments of more than 1 dwelling
- Applications where the site has no identified neighbours or surrounding land ownership is unknown

The notice will be on or around the application site and contains details of where plans can be viewed, how to make comments and relevant Council contact information. For large sites and major applications, multiple site notices may be put up at various locations on or near the site.

## Advertisements

5.10 Certain applications also require the Council to place advertisements in a local newspaper. Those proposals requiring an advert are summarised below. As with site notices, the advertisements will contain details of where plans can be viewed, how to make comments and relevant Council contact information.

- **Section 73** - All planning applications in a Conservation Area
- **Section 67** - All planning applications on or adjacent to a listed building
- **Departure** - Where an application is contrary to the development plan (e.g. new dwelling in the Green Belt)
- **For residential development applications less than 10 dwellings** - only those that will affect nearby property by:-causing noise, smell, vibration, dust or other nuisance; attracting crowds, traffic and noise; activity and noise during unsociable hours; introducing a significant change; resulting in serious reduction or loss of light or privacy beyond adjacent properties; those affecting the setting of an ancient monument or archaeological site; where sites adjoin open land and/or neighbours are not known; applications which have previously caused wide concern
- **All residential development applications of 10 or more dwellings or over 0.5 hectare**, or for other types, where the floorspace to be created is greater than 1000 square metres or the site area is greater than 1 hectare

## Development Briefs

5.11 For certain major sites, the Council may seek to prepare a Development Brief. This document will outline the key issues affecting the site and surrounding area, the relevant policies from the Development Plan and identify what the Council would seek to achieve from any future redevelopment. The aim of Development Briefs is to provide developers with a clear understanding of what the Council considers is appropriate for a site. This in turn should ensure any planning application submitted has addressed all of the issue raised in the brief. This should speed up the determination of any proposals. Development briefs may be produced as SPDs

(see paragraph 2.13) and, if so, will be included in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS).

### **Duty Officer**

- 5.12 The Planning Development Control Section offers a Duty Officer service to members of the public. This entails a professional Development Control Planning Officer being available to answer queries, offer advice and discuss key issues with applicants, neighbours, developers or people interested in the planning process. The Duty Officer service is available from 1pm-5pm Mon-Fri and from 9am-12pm on Saturdays. This service is recommended for 'minor' and 'other' applications such as householder extensions or changes of use where queries can be answered and advice given on all aspects of the application. There is, in addition to this, a reception service to deal with more general enquiries and provide any necessary application forms and publicly available leaflets and documentation.

### **Planning Committees**

- 5.13 The majority of planning applications received by the Council are dealt with under delegated powers by the Head of Planning & Building Control. The Planning (Development Control) Committees decide planning applications that, in the opinion of the Council, raise major issues of public interest. Applicants can contact the Case Officer to enquire how the application will be decided. There are three Area Committees - North, South and Central, which meet every three weeks. District Councillors have the facility to 'call-in' any application to be decided at Committee. Applications submitted by the Council itself are also decided by the Planning Committees. There is also a Planning Referrals Committee, which generally decides applications that have been referred from any of the other area committees.
- 5.14 The timetable of Committee meetings is available from the Council website ([www.stalbans.gov.uk/local-democracy/committees/calendar](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/local-democracy/committees/calendar)) and by telephoning Corporate Services on 01727 866100 Ext. 2529. Interested parties can contact the Planning Department via a hotline telephone number 01727 819469 to find out the planning applications on the next Committee agenda. Committee Meetings are held in public so that interested parties can attend to hear the discussion. It is also possible to register a request to speak for 3 minutes on a particular application. Information and guidance on how to do this is given in a leaflet available on line ([www.stalbans.gov.uk/living/planning/leaflets](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/living/planning/leaflets)) and in paper form from the Council Offices.

### **Revised applications**

- 5.15 Occasionally, planning applications are revised after they have been submitted. Often this is in response to Officer concerns or objections that have been raised. In the majority of cases, the amendments are minor and do not necessitate re-consultation (for example, a change in design of a house extension to satisfy a neighbour's concern). For more major amendments, for example highway changes in a residential scheme, the Council will re-consult all those people originally consulted with details of the amendments. Given the time deadlines on deciding applications, the response period for re-consultations will be reduced. It may be that the revisions necessitate a new application and full re-consultation.

## **Reporting consultation responses to planning applications**

- 5.16 The appointed Case Officer will consider any responses received by the Council either supporting or objecting to a planning application before a recommendation is made to either approve or refuse the application. The Officer report for each application will mention all of the representations received and summarise the main planning issues that were raised. These will then be addressed in the main body of the report. Should the application be decided at the relevant Planning Committee, then objectors / supporters have the opportunity to present their response (see paragraph 5.14). A letter of support or objection will not necessarily mean a proposal is approved or refused. Any responses received are only one aspect of all the factors that Planning Officers and Councillors take into account when dealing with an application. Decisions have to be made in line with the policies in the current adopted Local Plan. As planning files are public documents, any responses received will be placed on the relevant file and available for inspection.

## **Planning application decisions**

- 5.17 Once a decision has been made on a planning application, the Council will notify the applicant / agent and any person(s) making representations by form of a letter informing them of the decision. The Council also publishes a weekly list of applications and decisions that have been made, and this is available every Monday for the previous week on the Planning section of the Council website. Individual decision notices are also available to view on the Council website and these can be accessed via the Planning Application Search page.

## **Planning Aid**

- 5.18 Planning Aid is a free, voluntary service that offers independent professional advice and help on town planning. It is aimed at individuals, community groups and other voluntary groups who cannot afford to pay for private consultants. Planning Aid can help people with their own planning applications, and can help them to comment on other people's. It aims to give people the confidence to help themselves and to become involved in wider planning issues.
- 5.19 Planning Aid is NOT part of St.Albans District Council. It is a separate service that complements the advice and information provided by local authorities. For further information and details of how to get in touch with the local Planning Aid service that covers this District, contact the National Planning Aid Unit using the details below:

Unit 419, The Custard Factory, Gibb Street, Birmingham, B9 4AA

Telephone: 0121 693 1201

Email: [info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

Online: [www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

## **Complaints / Referrals to the Ombudsman**

- 5.20 If you have a complaint about the way that the Council dealt with your planning application or your objection to an application, the Local Government Ombudsman can be asked to investigate. A complaint to the Ombudsman cannot be made in respect of the planning issues involved in the decision. A complaint can only be made if the complainant can prove that maladministration has occurred which resulted in a wrong or damaging decision. The Ombudsman cannot be approached direct - an MP must do it for you. This doesn't have to be your local MP but this will usually be the easiest person to ask.

## 6.0 Summary table of consultation techniques for planning applications

6.1 Below is a summary table showing all of the consultation techniques discussed in Section 5, and when they will be available / carried out by the Council in relation to the three types of planning applications received. As paragraph 5.4 states, applicants proposing large-scale development schemes are encouraged to carry out their own pre-application consultation and report any findings as part of their submitted application.

**Table 3**

Consultation Technique	Application type #		
	Major	Minor	Other
Pre application discussions	✓		
Pre application consultation	✓*		
Neighbour Notification	✓	✓	✓
Site Notices	✓	✓	✓*
Advertisements	✓	✓*	✓*
Development Briefs	✓*		✓*
Duty Officer		✓	✓
Planning Committee decision	✓*	✓*	✓*

\* = depends on circumstances, please refer to Section 4 explanations of consultation techniques for more information

# = please refer to Appendix C for definitions of application type

6.2 As every planning application is individual, and is treated as such, the consultation techniques for each will also vary. It is impossible to group every type of planning application into a table, however Table 3 above outlines the Council's broad approach to consultation. Further information on the planning application process is available on the Council website ([www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning)). There are a number of useful leaflets also available, either on-line at the web address above or in paper form from the Council Offices. These include:

- Making a Planning Application
- How to respond to Planning Proposals
- Pre-application discussions
- Guide to the planning process
- Public speaking procedure at Planning Committee meetings

## **7.0 How the Council will identify and engage different community groups**

- 7.1 Any person, organisation, business or voluntary group is welcome to make comments on the various documents that the Council will produce for public consultation, and/or get involved in individual planning applications. St.Albans District Council is committed to involving as many people as possible in the process of formulating the planning policies for the District.
- 7.2 Traditionally, certain groups within the community have been under-represented in the planning process. These include the elderly, ethnic minorities, youth groups, gypsies and travellers, the disabled and homeless. In line with the Council's Equalities Scheme, every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that these hard to reach groups are involved, as often their specific needs are vital to the development of a policy or scheme.
- 7.3 Sections 3 and 4 outlined the wide variety of ways the Council will seek to involve the public in the planning process. As mentioned in paragraph 3.38, utilising existing lists of community group contacts from other Council departments and the use of the Council's Community Panel will help to ensure that as wide a variety of people as possible is involved as part of the consultation process.

### **The Community Strategy for St.Albans District**

- 7.4 The St.Albans Community Strategy is a partnership document that was produced in 2003 by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). St.Albans District Council is an LSP member, together with a number of other groups and organisations taken from the general categories listed below. All of the LSP members will be consulted on the DPDs and any relevant SPDs.
- Religious Groups
  - Local Voluntary Groups
  - Local Constabulary & health organisations
  - Hertfordshire County Council & local Parish Councils
  - Housing Interest Groups
  - Disability Groups
  - Youth groups, schools, colleges
  - Local Business Groups
  - Local Conservation, Preservation and Amenity Groups
- 7.5 The Community Strategy has a time scale of 2003-2007 and contains 5 chapters, all of which detail a specific action plan of issues that the community would like to see addressed.
- 7.6 The Community Strategy contains a great deal of information about what local people would like to see improved and carried out within the District. Whilst some of these issues are not planning related, a number of them are and it is vital that these are carried forward into the new Local Development Framework. A report detailing the land-use implications of the Community Strategy has been presented to the District Council's Planning Policy Advisory Panel. As a result, the vision and relevant action points from the Community Strategy will be incorporated into the

new documents that the Council will produce as part of the Local Development Framework.

- 7.7 As highlighted in paragraph 3.19, meetings between the Local Strategic Partnership, Council Officers and / or the Planning Policy Advisory Panel will take place to discuss possible development options and to facilitate effective discussion on particular key issues of interest. As Table 1 on page 20 shows, these meetings will take place at Stages 1 and 2 of the DPD preparation process, and possibly at Stage 1 of the SPD process.
- 7.8 The work of the Community Strategy team has created an excellent database of contacts within the District for a wide variety of voluntary groups, organisations and people. This database will be fully utilised when consultation on the various Local Development Documents is undertaken.
- 7.9 The Community Strategy will be reviewed in 2006 prior to a new document being produced in 2007. Whilst the Council would wish to undertake joint consultation exercises wherever possible, unfortunately the timescales of the two processes mean that this will probably not be possible for the key stages of DPD preparation. Stages 1 & 2 of the DPD process, as identified in paragraphs 2.17 & 2.18, are proposed during the first and last three months of 2006 in the Council's approved Local Development Scheme. The Community Strategy Review public consultation process is however likely to occur earlier on during 2006. Whilst joint consultation is unlikely to occur, the Council will incorporate the results of the Community Strategy public consultation into Stage 2 of the DPD preparation.

#### **St.Albans District Compact**

- 7.10 A Compact is a written understanding between statutory bodies and the Voluntary and Community sectors. The aim of such a document is to improve communication, collaboration, trust and respect between the different bodies. Principles are also set out for developing working relationships, whilst agreement is reached on definitions, shared values and joint undertakings.
- 7.11 St.Albans City and District Council signed up to support the Hertfordshire Compact, published in 2001, endorsing it as a framework document to help foster and encourage the development of local compacts within district and borough localities.
- 7.12 A number of statutory and voluntary partners within St.Albans District have recently produced a Draft St.Albans Compact for public consultation purposes. This document contains a wide variety of commitments and principles with the common aim of achieving more for the community by working together. As a statutory partner, the Council is committed to adhering to the working standards outlined in the St.Albans Compact. The consultation techniques and processes outlined in this Statement of Community Involvement reflect the information within the Draft Compact, for example actively seeking to obtain the views of both individual and representative voluntary and community organisations.
- 7.13 As the Draft St.Albans Compact progresses and reaches its final form, there could be amendments to the aforementioned principles and commitments. Should any such changes require the Statement of Community Involvement to be updated, then this will occur at the next possible formal review of the SCI.

## 8.0 Reviewing the Statement of Community Involvement

8.1 This Statement of Community Involvement has been subject to a comprehensive public consultation process prior to its adoption. The views and comments of the community were sought on the techniques and issues discussed in the document. It is considered that the SCI represents a clear picture of how people can get involved in the planning process, however the appropriateness of the content may change over time and the Council must be able to react to this.

8.2 Government guidance states that Local Development Frameworks should be continually reviewed and revised. The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) that the Council is required to produce will be the main mechanism for reviewing the relevance of Local Development Documents including the SCI and identifying any changes necessary. The Government guidance in Planning Policy Statement 12 also advises that:

*“The SCI should be reviewed as appropriate in the light of joint working experiences and consultation with stakeholders. This might include changes to reflect best practice in community/stakeholder involvement, managing stakeholder expectations more effectively or addressing specific problems or concerns in relation to joint working with stakeholders.”*

8.3 This Statement of Community Involvement will be kept under review to ensure that the procedures set out are engaging the local community as effectively as possible. In advance of the first formal review of the SCI (see paragraph 8.4), additions and deletions to the non-statutory consultees lists will be considered as well as any new consultation techniques considered appropriate for the Development Plan Documents.

8.4 As mentioned above, the first formal review of the SCI will be undertaken following the adoption of the first St Albans Development Plan Documents in 2009. This will enable the Council to consider whether the techniques within this SCI have been successful in actively involving the community in the preparation of the District's policies.

8.5 A variety of consultation techniques will be used when the SCI is reviewed in 2009, and these will replicate the consultation process that this document has been through. Please refer to Section 3 for further details of the different techniques, however those that will be used in the first SCI review are as follows:

- Copies available at Council Offices
- Copies available at libraries
- Copy posted on Council website
- Local media / press release
- Consultation with relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees
- Internal meetings / liaison
- Report to Planning Policy Advisory Panel

## **9.0 Resource implications of the proposed Community Involvement**

- 9.1 Staff within the Council's Planning Policy Team will primarily carry out the consultation processes for the preparation of DPDs and SPDs. Development Control Officers and Officers from the Corporate Policy team who are involved in the Community Strategy may provide assistance where required, for example at public exhibitions.
- 9.2 Given the potential scale of consultation, it may be necessary or beneficial to use consultants for certain pieces of work. Examples of such are listed below, however these are by no means exhaustive and serves as an indication of where the Council may look for outside assistance if required:
- Staging and running of public meetings / workshops
  - Publication of summary leaflets / flyers
  - Development of any on-line, interactive exhibitions
- 9.3 Staff within the Council's Development Control and Technical Administration Teams will primarily carry out the public consultation processes associated with planning applications.
- 9.4 Funding of the procedures laid down by this SCI will be incorporated into the Planning Policy and Development Control budgets for the forthcoming financial years. The annual budget making process and the medium term financial strategy will determine whether further resources are required to effectively deliver the Council's programme of community involvement.
- 9.5 Planning Delivery Grant funds may be used to help implement the SCI consultation processes. For example, this may be through either the creation of short-term posts within the Planning Policy and/or Development Control Teams or to assist in the production of any of the consultation documents.
- 9.6 As mentioned in paragraph 9.1, Council Officers in other departments such as Corporate Policy may also be involved in some of the consultation processes. For example, there may be an opportunity for joint consultation exercises to run in line with the production of the new Community Strategy. The advantages of this would be in the saving of time and resources and avoiding 'consultation fatigue' for members of the public.
- 9.7 Finally, the Council will take into consideration the capacity of all the organisations and bodies involved in the consultation process. This will include other Council departments and any consultants assisting in the consultation exercises being carried out. Wherever possible, as much advance notice will be given of work to be undertaken. For those bodies being consulted, if the Council considers that their capacity to respond or be involved will be adversely affected, then as much flexibility as possible will be applied to the timescales for response, as long as the regulations and Local Development Scheme timetable can still be adhered to.

## Appendix A - List of statutory consultees

The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 state that the following “specific consultation bodies” must be consulted if the local planning authority thinks that the proposed subject matter of the Development Plan Document (DPD) in question affects the body. St Albans District Council will consult all the following statutory consultees on the DPDs. In addition, relevant organisations will be consulted on SPDs. When consulted, these organisations will receive a free copy of the full document in question.

- Government Office for the East of England (GO-East)
- Regional Planning Body (East of England Regional Assembly)
- Regional Development Agency (East of England Development Agency)
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Adjoining / neighbouring local planning authorities (Three Rivers District Council, Dacorum Borough Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Welwyn Hatfield Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, Watford Borough Council, South Bedfordshire District Council)
- Adjoining county councils (Bedfordshire County Council)
- All town and parish councils in St.Albans District
- Parish Councils in other Districts, where the Parish Council boundary adjoins St.Albans District
- The Countryside Agency
- The Environment Agency
- The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England
- English Nature
- Strategic Rail Authority
- Strategic Health Authority
- Water undertakers
- Sewage undertakers
- Gas companies
- Electricity companies
- Telecommunications companies

All of the organisations and companies above are held on the Council’s consultee database. Any additions / deletions to the list above provided by Central Government in amended regulations will be implemented immediately. Official confirmation of any changes will form part of the review of the SCI.

## Appendix B - Non Statutory Consultees

The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 state that certain “general consultation bodies” must also be consulted where the local planning authority considers it appropriate. The regulations define this group as voluntary bodies whose activities benefit any part of the district and other bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic, national, religious, business and disabled persons groups. Below is a provisional list of all the types of national and local groups St.Albans District Council considers to fall into these categories. Any type of group or organisation not listed who wish to be consulted on any part of the planning process should respond to this draft document as such. The list will be updated as the SCI is reviewed.

The Council will consult all the following types of non-statutory consultees on the DPDs and SCI. Relevant non-statutory consultees will also be consulted on SPDs.

- Local Members of Parliament
- Internal Consultees at St.Albans District Council
- County Councillors representing St.Albans District wards
- Other Local Authorities
- National & Regional Conservation / Preservation Groups
- Local Conservation, Preservation and Amenity Groups
- Ethnic Minority Groups
- Housing / Design Interest Groups
- Housebuilders / Developers
- Local Residents Associations (could provide a link in the unparished areas of St.Albans City)
- Planning Agents
- Youth groups, schools, colleges
- Disability Groups
- Local Businesses / Business Groups
- Older Persons Groups
- Other National / Regional Organisations
- Other Local Organisations
- Public transport operators
- Public transport Users Groups
- Recreational User Groups
- Local Constabulary

All of the types of organisations, associations, businesses and individuals above are held on the Council’s consultee database. Requests for any amendments to contact details or additions / deletions can be sent in writing at any time to the Planning Policy Team.

## Appendix C - Definitions of types of planning application

Planning applications received by the Council are split into 3 main categories, major, minor and other. The definitions of each are set out below:

### Major

- Dwellings - 10 or more or more than 0.5 hectare
- Offices/ research and development/light industry
- Heavy industry/storage/warehousing
- Retail, distribution and servicing
- Agricultural, leisure, clinics, parking, education

*Where floorspace created is 1,000 square metres or more (including any change of use)*

### Minor

- Dwellings - less than 10
- Offices/ research and development/light industry
- Heavy industry/storage/warehousing
- Retail, distribution and servicing
- Agricultural, leisure, clinics, parking, education, telecomms

*Where floorspace created is less than 1,000 square metres*

### Other

- Minerals
- Change of use
- Householder developments
- Advertisements
- Alterations / extensions to Listed building
- Demolition of Listed Building
- Conservation Area consent