

Involvement in planning applications and the Local Plan

Statement of Community Involvement



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Approved on 3 November 2015.

This document replaces the previous Statement of Community Involvement adopted in 2008.

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1. Introduction

What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

- 1.1 The Statement of Community Involvement explains how Bristol City Council involves the community in deciding planning applications and preparing planning policy documents.
- 1.2 'Community' refers to residents, businesses, community and interest groups, neighbourhood planning forums, landowners, developers, adjoining local authorities, government agencies and any other individuals, groups and organisations interested in the development and use of land in Bristol.

Aim and benefits of effective involvement

- 1.3 The council's aim is for the community to be able to shape and comment on new development proposals and its planning policy documents. This reflects the council's commitment to encourage every individual, organisation, business and community to play an active role in the life of the city.
- 1.4 Effective community involvement:
 - improves planning applications and planning policy documents as they will have been informed by the community's knowledge and expectations;
 - helps proposals and plans to be more accepted by communities affected;
 - assists in bringing forward sustainable development without unnecessary delay and expense by ensuring all relevant issues are addressed at the earliest stage.

Delivering effective involvement - use of ground rules

- 1.5 The ten 'ground rules' set out below are intended to ensure consistent and minimum standards in community involvement. Organisers of and participants in community involvement are expected to adopt and make reasonable endeavours to implement the ground rules. Failure to do so is likely to limit the validity and credibility of the involvement undertaken.
- 1.6 The ground rules apply to:
 - all prospective planning applicants carrying out pre-application community involvement on:
 - major development¹ proposals;
 - development proposals below the major threshold which are likely to have a significant impact due to the type and nature of the proposal and / or the sensitivity of the site or its surroundings²;
 - individual(s), community group(s), and / or organisation(s) having an interest in the planning application or planning policy document; and
 - the council preparing a planning policy document.

¹ Major development includes:

- residential development of 10 or more homes, or on a site of at least 0.5 hectares;
- non-residential development of 1,000 m² of floorspace or more, or on a site of at least 1 hectare;
- waste development.

The full definition of major development is set out in Article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010.

² As part of its pre-application advice service, the council will advise prospective planning applicants on whether their proposal falls within this category.

Ground Rules

1. Inclusive invitation

- a) Reasonable attempts should be made by prospective planning applicants and / or the council to ensure that a representative cross-section of the community is invited to the same community involvement event(s) to ensure that all participants are aware of each other's views. Where community groups or individuals are unable to attend events but nevertheless wish to participate, engagement by written dialogue should be pursued.
- b) Invitations should go to existing community groups (e.g. local residents associations, neighbourhood planning forums, amenity societies) where they exist or are formed as a result of the proposal.
- c) It may be necessary to hold additional events for those groups not traditionally involved in the planning process.
- d) Events should be held in accessible locations and inclusive premises. Accessible locations will enable the highest possible attendance by people affected by the proposal or plan; for example, in the area where a development scheme is being proposed. Inclusive premises are those able to be adequately accessed by all sections of the community.
- e) All participants in the involvement process should be provided with sufficient reasons for the development proposal or plan to allow for intelligent consideration and response. They should also be asked to provide their contact details to ensure they receive feedback on the results of involvement.
- f) To ensure all sections of the community are able to effectively engage in the involvement process, the use of accessible communication formats and methods should be considered, where appropriate.

2. Authorisation

- a) Those representing community groups, the prospective planning applicant and the council at community involvement events should be able to show that they are authorised to speak for their organisations.
- b) The scale and remit of those organisations should also be made clear.

3. Continuity

- a) Involvement should be a continuous process with the timetable for the period of preparing the plan or making the planning application made clear. The timetable should allow adequate time for participants to effectively engage in the involvement process. This includes providing participants with reasonable notice of events and an adequate time period in which to consider and respond to the development proposal or plan.
- b) Where involvement is intended to include a series of meetings or events then, as far as possible, the same individuals that represent the community, the prospective planning applicant and the council should continue to be involved throughout the process to ensure continuity of views. Nevertheless, it may be appropriate for other participants or advisers to be involved intermittently. However the process should not be re-run if or when representatives change.

4. Independent advice

- a) Where technical or professional advisers or private consultants are employed as independent facilitators to manage the involvement process, they should have a client duty of care to all parties equally and should be instructed to follow these ground rules, irrespective of the party employing them. Where facilitators or advisers are not independent, this should be declared.

5. Early Involvement

- a) Arrangements should be made for the community involvement process to begin and for all parties to meet at the early 'ideas' stage of the plan or development proposal process and to agree a proportionate community involvement process. This is before specific proposals are made, when significant options are still open and can be identified and while there is still the potential to make a difference to the final option selected. Where community groups or individuals are unable to attend the initial meeting but nevertheless wish to participate, engagement by written dialogue should be pursued.

6. Presenting options

- a) The aim should be to set out options or choices that are possible in the way that specific development is carried out, including those suggested by the community that reflect the community's needs, ambitions and experience.
- b) For development proposals, purely oral or written presentations should be avoided so that, wherever possible, options are also presented visually. This could include the use of three dimensional models and drawings, videos and aerial photographs.

7. Choosing between options

- a) The planning criteria for choosing between options should be made clear and transparent.

8. Consensus

- a) Best endeavours should be made to reach consensus, making it clear and specific how far the involvement has resulted in agreement to adopt or to alter proposals. Where agreement has not been possible, the reasons and the scale of disagreement should be made clear and specific.

9. Transparent records

- a) For major planning applications, a Community Involvement Statement is required to be submitted by the planning applicant to the council as a supporting document to their planning application. The statement will summarise:
 - the community involvement undertaken;
 - the main issues raised by the community;
 - how the proposal has been revised to take account of the issues raised and, where the proposal has not been revised, the reasons why not.
- b) For Local Plan documents, a consultation statement will be made available alongside the Local Plan published for representations. This will set out:
 - who was consulted when preparing the Local Plan;
 - a summary of the main issues raised by those persons; and
 - how those issues have been addressed in the Local Plan.
- c) For Supplementary Planning Documents, a consultation statement will be published alongside the draft document. This will set out:
 - who was consulted when preparing the draft document;
 - a summary of the main issues raised by those persons; and
 - how those issues have been addressed in the draft document.
- d) Participants may provide a written statement of omissions and corrections which will be reported and considered by the council along with the Community Involvement Statement and / or consultation statement.

10. Feedback on the outcome of community involvement

- a) For major planning applications, feedback is provided in the officer's report which recommends to the delegated officer or Development Control Committee whether planning permission should be granted. The report summarises the pre-application involvement undertaken by the applicant and how it has influenced the application. For applications below the 'major' threshold, the officer's report summarises the responses received to consultation on the planning application.
For applications being considered by Development Control Committee, when the officer's report to be considered by the Committee is available, the council notifies people who made comments on the application.
- b) For Local Plan documents, feedback is provided in the consultation statement referred to under 9b. For Supplementary Planning Documents this will be the consultation statement referred to under 9c.
- c) In making decisions on planning applications and planning policy documents, the council will carefully consider comments made during involvement and consultation on the application or plan.

2. Involvement in planning applications

Main stages in the planning application process

Before an application is submitted

Community involvement carried out by prospective planning applicant (the 'developer')

Decide appropriate involvement - Developer considers approach to pre-application involvement. This should reflect Statement of Community Involvement and good practice Guidelines for Pre-Application Community Involvement.

Involvement - Developer carries out community involvement.

Report on results of involvement - For major planning applications, developer submits a Community Involvement Statement which reports on the involvement undertaken and how it has influenced the proposed scheme.

For applications below major threshold, developers are strongly encouraged to submit a Community Involvement Statement.

Planning application submitted

Council publicises and seek comments on application

Publicity and consultation - Council publicises planning application (e.g. website, site notice, letter to neighbours and statutory consultees, press advert) and seeks comments for a period of normally 21 days.

Officer assessment - Development Management officer assesses application against development plan policies and all other relevant planning considerations including comments made.

Decision on whether to grant planning permission

Decision - Development Management officer makes decision on whether to grant planning permission using authority delegated by the council.

Larger scale and / or particularly sensitive or controversial applications may be decided by elected councillors at a Development Control Committee meeting. For these applications the officer's report will recommend a decision to the Committee.

Officer's report and council decision placed on council's website.

Appeals - A developer may appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against a refusal of planning permission. A Planning Inspector will decide whether to allow or dismiss the appeal. All comments made on the application are sent to the Planning Inspectorate. The council also notifies those parties consulted on the planning application about the appeal and of the opportunity to submit further comments to the Planning Inspectorate. The exception is appeals for householder and minor commercial development; for these the Planning Inspectorate will only consider comments made on the application.

Involvement before an application is submitted

Importance and benefits of pre-application community involvement

- 2.1 The Government's National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the importance of planning applicants carrying out involvement on their emerging proposals. Paragraph 66 states:

'Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favourably.'

- 2.2 The benefits of involvement are also made clear in the Government's Planning Practice Guidance. It sets out how pre-application engagement improves the quality and likelihood of success of planning applications by:

- working with interested parties at an early stage to identify, understand and seek to resolve issues associated with a proposed development;
- discussing the possible mitigation of the impact of a proposed development, including any planning obligations and conditions;
- identifying the information required to accompany an application, thus reducing the likelihood of delays in registering the submitted application.

Council's expectations for effective pre-application involvement

- 2.3 The council would like all sections of the community to be able to shape new development proposals. To achieve this aim and meet Government guidance, prospective planning applicants are expected to carry out effective pre-application community involvement.
- 2.4 The type of pre-application involvement undertaken should be in proportion to the potential impact of the proposal having regard to the type and nature of the proposal and / or the sensitivity of the site or its surroundings.
- 2.5 Recommended suggestions for effective and proportionate pre-application community involvement are set out in the following table. These include reference to the good practice 'Guidelines for Pre-Application Community Involvement' available to view on the council's website. These guidelines are recommended for major development proposals as well as those below the 'major' threshold which are likely to have a significant impact due to the type and nature of the proposal and / or the sensitivity of the site or its surroundings. As part of its pre-application advice service, the council will advise prospective planning applicants on whether their proposal falls within this category.

Type of proposal	Recommended pre-application involvement
<p>Householder development</p> <p>This is development within the curtilage of a house (or a single flat) requiring planning permission. For example, extensions, conservatories, loft conversions, dormer windows, outbuildings and fences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discuss proposal with neighbours and other nearby occupiers / owners of properties / land at earliest possible stage in developing the proposal. ■ Consider using the council's pre-application advice service, particularly for proposals within Conservation Areas or affecting Listed Buildings.
<p>Minor development</p> <p>This is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Less than 10 homes, including the change of use to flats; ■ Less than 1000 m² of non-residential floorspace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discuss proposal with neighbours and other nearby occupiers / owners of properties / land at earliest possible stage in developing the proposal. ■ Where the proposal is likely to have significant impact due to the type and nature of the proposal and / or the sensitivity of the site or its surroundings, implement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the Guidelines for Pre-Application Community Involvement; and ■ the ground rules on pages 2-3. ■ Use the council's pre-application advice service.
<p>Major development</p> <p>This is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 10 or more homes, or on a site of at least 0.5 hectares; ■ 1,000 m² or more of non-residential floorspace or on a site of at least 1 hectare; ■ Waste development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discuss proposal with neighbours and other nearby occupiers / owners of properties / land at earliest possible stage in developing the proposal. ■ Implement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the Guidelines for Pre-Application Community Involvement; and ■ the ground rules on pages 2-3. ■ Use the council's pre-application advice service.
<p>Other development</p> <p>Examples include advertisements and telecommunications masts.</p> <p>For wind turbine development involving more than 2 turbines or where the hub height of any turbine exceeds 15 metres Government regulations require prospective planning applicants to carry out pre-application consultation with the local community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discuss proposal with neighbours and other nearby occupiers / owners of properties / land at earliest possible stage in developing the proposal. ■ Where the proposal is likely to have significant impact due to the type and nature of the proposal and / or the sensitivity of the site or its surroundings, implement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the Guidelines for Pre-Application Community Involvement; and ■ the ground rules on pages 2-3. ■ Consider using the council's pre-application advice service, particularly for proposals within Conservation Areas or affecting Listed Buildings.

Encouraging effective pre-application involvement

- 2.6 The following methods and initiatives are also used by the council to encourage effective pre-application engagement.

Pre-application advice service

- 2.7 The council's pre-application advice service provides guidance on the merits of a proposed development as well as information on community involvement and the details to be submitted with a formal planning application. More information about this service is provided on the council's website.

Community Involvement Statement requirement

- 2.8 A Community Involvement Statement is required to be submitted to the council alongside planning applications for major development. It summarises:
- a) the community involvement undertaken;
 - b) the main issues raised by the community; and
 - c) how the proposal has been revised to take account of the issues raised and, where the application has not been revised, the reasons why not.

Notifying the Neighbourhood Planning Network and Councillors of pre-application enquiries

- 2.9 The council notifies the Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network of all enquiries made using the pre-application advice service. The Neighbourhood Planning Network then provides prospective planning applicants with details of local planning groups which should be involved in pre-application discussions and how effective community involvement could be carried out. This provides local planning groups with an opportunity to engage at the pre-application stage. Councillors are also notified of all enquiries. This enables them to seek and feedback constituents' views to prospective planning applicants.

Regular liaison with the development industry and community groups

- 2.10 The council utilises established liaison meetings to discuss pre-application engagement and the use of the most effective involvement methods. This includes regular meetings with the Bristol Property Agents Association, neighbourhood planning forums, the Neighbourhood Planning Network's member groups, the Planning User Group and Accredited Planning Agents. Informed by its Equalities and Community Cohesion team, the council will continue to keep under review the most effective involvement methods for engaging equalities groups.

West of England Planning Toolkit

- 2.11 Published by the four West of England local planning authorities and the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership, the toolkit provides practical steps which the authorities and developers can take to improve the way large scale and complex planning applications are prepared and determined. It includes the encouragement of effective pre-application community involvement by developers. The toolkit can be viewed on the council's website.

Planning Protocol

- 2.12 The Planning Protocol, drawn up with GWE Business West and the Bristol Property Agents Association, sets out how major planning applications can be most efficiently processed by providing clarity on the expected roles of the council, the development industry and the communities affected by the proposal. It includes the encouragement of effective pre-application community involvement by developers. The Protocol can be viewed on the council's website.

Involvement when an application is submitted

Publicity and consultation by the council

2.13 Once registered, the council publicises and seeks comments on the planning application. The period in which to make comments is normally 21 days.

2.14 The council publicises planning applications by:

- Placing them on the 'Planning Online' webpages of the council's website. As well as viewing the application's details, these webpages allow the public to submit online comments;
- Writing to properties neighbouring the application site and relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees;
- Displaying a site notice;
- Placing advertisements in local newspapers.

The method of publicity used depends on the type of planning application, as required by Government regulations³.

2.15 The council also compiles a weekly list of registered planning applications which is placed on the council's website and emailed to Councillors and other interested individuals, groups and organisations. Guidance on how to make comments on planning applications is provided on the council's website.

Making a decision on the application

2.16 Following the end of the consultation period, the council considers the comments received and makes a decision on the planning application having regard to development plan policies and all other relevant planning considerations.

2.17 Most applications are decided by Development Management officers using authority delegated by the council. Larger scale and / or particularly sensitive or controversial development proposals may be decided by elected councillors at a Development Control Committee meeting. This is a public meeting with the opportunity for members of the public to speak by prior arrangement. Further information is provided in 'Having your say at Bristol City Council's Development Control Committees', available on the council's website.

2.18 Officers' reports setting out delegated decisions or recommendations to the Development Control Committee summarise the comments received from consultation on the planning application. For major applications, officers' reports also summarise the involvement undertaken by the applicant and how it has influenced the proposed development.

2.19 Officers' reports and decision notices on whether to grant planning permission are placed on the council's website.

³ At the time of publication these are Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and Regulation 5 and Regulation 5A of the Listed Building and Conservation Area Regulations 1990 (as amended).

Community involvement in planning obligations

Planning obligations are legally binding agreements between the council and planning applicants. They secure measures which mitigate the site-specific impacts of development to make the proposal acceptable in planning terms. Examples include the provision of replacement trees and highways improvements such as new pedestrian crossings and traffic signals.

Pre-application stage

The council encourages prospective planning applicants to carry out effective pre-application involvement on their proposals. This can include seeking community views on planning obligations appropriate for their proposal. The council also notifies the Neighbourhood Planning Network of enquiries made to its pre-application service. The Neighbourhood Planning Network provides prospective applicants with contact details of local planning groups which should be involved in pre-application discussions. This provides further opportunities for the community to consider and suggest planning obligations.

Application stage

The council takes into account any comments received on planning applications regarding planning obligations sought by the community. Relevant national and local policy and guidance in the council's Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document are also considered. The council then, if appropriate, negotiates with the planning applicant on the type of obligations required. Draft planning obligations are placed on the 'Planning Online' pages of the council's website alongside other planning application documents.

After planning permission is granted

Once the planning obligation is agreed the council places the legal agreement on the 'Planning Online' pages of the council's website.

Information about planning obligations monies received and spent is reported on a monthly basis on the council's website. This includes information about the significant proportion of monies the council devolves to Neighbourhood Partnerships to spend on locally-identified priorities.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The council uses the Community Infrastructure Levy to raise funds from developers of new building projects. These funds contribute to the strategic infrastructure required across Bristol to support new housing and commercial development. Examples include major transport schemes such as Metro Bus (rapid transit) and the South Bristol Link, as well as strategic flood defence improvements. The levy is applied as a charge on each square metre of new building.

Information about Community Infrastructure Levy monies received and spent is reported on a monthly basis on the council's website. This includes information about the 15% of levy receipts which the council allocates to Neighbourhood Partnerships to spend on locally-identified priorities. In areas where a neighbourhood development plan has been brought into legal force, the council allocates 25% of levy receipts arising from development that takes place in those areas to the relevant Neighbourhood Partnership(s).

Planning applications with potential cross-boundary impacts

Depending on the location, scale and use proposed, certain planning proposals have the potential to have impacts in adjoining local authority areas. These can include traffic and transport-related issues such as parking, congestion and air and noise pollution. They can also include effects on community services and facilities such as schools, open spaces and health and recreational facilities, as well as impacts on issues such as flood risk and town centre vitality.

The council wishes to ensure that any affected neighbouring communities, organisations and local authorities are informed about and have opportunities to shape these proposals, including identifying any necessary mitigation. This will be achieved by effective engagement at:

1. Pre-application stage

Where a pre-application proposal is under consideration and there are likely to be cross-boundary impacts, the council will informally consult the relevant adjoining local authorities at the earliest practicable opportunity. The councils' planning officers will then discuss the proposals and identify how any issues of concern could be resolved and / or mitigated.

For major planning applications (i.e. 10 or more dwellings or 1,000 sqm or more of non-residential floorspace) where there are likely to be cross-boundary impacts, the council will expect prospective planning applicants at the earliest possible stage in developing their proposals to carry out effective engagement with local communities in adjoining local authority areas. This includes the relevant town/parish councils or elected members in unparished areas.

2. Receipt of planning application

When planning applications are received which could have cross-boundary impacts, the council will consult the affected adjoining local authorities.

For major planning applications the council will carry out the following actions:

- the council's application case officer will discuss the proposal with planning officers from the adjoining council(s) and identify how any issues of concern could be resolved and / or mitigated. These discussions will include the timescales for deciding the application and arrangements for joint meetings. Joint officer site visits will be arranged to consider the impacts on the adjoining area(s).
- Information presented to the planning committee making a decision on the planning application will include details of the impact of the proposal on the adjoining area(s). Where a neighbouring council has made comments, these will be reported to the committee and the proposed response to the comments will be set out in the committee report.
- Joint briefings and site visits by the planning committees of the relevant councils may be held when necessary.

Many impacts of development proposals likely to have cross-boundary effects can be mitigated through planning obligations. From the pre-application stage onwards, the council will work with adjoining councils to establish the impacts on their areas and identify appropriate mitigation. Where a planning obligation addresses impacts outside the council's area, the council will draft the agreement in consultation with the other council(s). The other council(s) will become a signatory when the agreement is made. The agreement will specify which council is to receive the relevant contribution.

3. Involvement in planning policy documents

Introduction

- 3.1 This section sets out how the council involves the community in preparing its planning policy documents: the Local Plan and any Supplementary Planning Documents produced to provide additional detail to Local Plan policies.

Who will be involved?

Consultation database

- 3.2 Members of the Local Plan Consultation Database are notified about opportunities for involvement. This database includes over 2,000 individuals, groups and organisations who Government regulations require the council to consult or who have expressed an interest in being informed about the Local Plan. It includes residents, neighbourhood planning forums, community groups, voluntary organisations, interest groups, landowners, developers, businesses, adjoining local authorities and government agencies.

Existing liaison meetings and initiatives

- 3.3 The council uses liaison meetings and initiatives with the community to raise awareness about the Local Plan and seek involvement. This includes:
- regular meetings with the Neighbourhood Planning Network's member groups; neighbourhood planning forums; the Bristol Property Agents Association; the Planning User Group; and the Conservation Advisory Panel.
 - seeking opportunities to present and discuss emerging policies at meetings of the Neighbourhood Partnerships and, where they exist, planning-related sub-groups. Neighbourhood Partnerships are made up of local residents, councillors, voluntary groups and public sector organisations. They set priorities for improving their areas and influence council and other public sector decisions which have local impacts.
 - consultation with Equalities Forums representing various communities in the city: Bristol Black Ethnic Minority Voice and Influence; Bristol City Youth Council; Bristol Disability Equality Forum; Bristol Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Forum; Bristol Multi Faith Forum; Bristol Older People's Forum; Bristol Women's Voice. The Forums are an important way in which the council engages those sections of the community who do not normally play an active part in planning policy-related consultations. They receive financial support from the council but are independent of it.

Cross-boundary involvement

- 3.4 For planning policy documents likely to have impacts on adjoining local authority areas, the council engages with relevant local authorities at the earliest possible stage in preparing the document. This helps ensure communities in the adjoining area are notified and have opportunities for involvement in preparing the document.

How will they be involved?

3.5 In order to effectively engage the community, the council uses a range of involvement methods in preparing its planning policy documents. These are set out in the following table.

Involvement method (A-Z)	Explanation
Citizens' Panel	This has around 2,000 members and is statistically representative of Bristol's population.
Consultation documents	These are produced at each stage in preparing planning policy documents and are placed on the council's website and in public libraries.
Council website	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planning Policy webpages – these provide information on consultation documents and opportunities to engage. 2. All council consultations are placed on the Consultation Finder. 3. Other online involvement methods include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Discussions through the Ask Bristol webpages; ii. Interactive mapping to allow, for example, the community to identify sites for development or safeguarding.
Discussion events, e.g. workshops	These events provide opportunities for feedback on emerging planning policy documents through, for example, round-table discussions.
Drop-in events / exhibitions	<p>These include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staffed drop-in events / exhibitions. They provide opportunities for people to gain information, ask council officers questions and provide feedback on emerging policies. 2. Non-staffed exhibitions containing consultation-related information. <p>They are held in accessible locations and at times aimed at encouraging maximum attendance.</p>
Emails and letters	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emails and letters are sent to the Local Plan Consultation Database. 2. The council's monthly email news bulletin, 'Our City', is used to notify subscribers about opportunities for involvement.
Local Councillors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meetings are held with local Councillors to discuss emerging planning policies. 2. Emails are sent to local Councillors seeking comments on planning policy documents published for consultation.
Meetings	<p>These are used to discuss and gain feedback on emerging planning policies. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Existing liaison meetings with, for example, the Neighbourhood Planning Network's member groups, neighbourhood planning forums and Bristol Property Agents Association; ■ Meetings with interest groups to discuss specific issues raised; ■ Meetings with the council's Equalities Forums.
Press releases	These are produced to raise awareness of opportunities to engage.
Questionnaires	These accompany consultation documents and drop-in events / exhibitions as a means of gathering feedback on emerging policies.
Social media	Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook can help to raise awareness and encourage feedback.

Involvement in preparing the Local Plan

Introduction

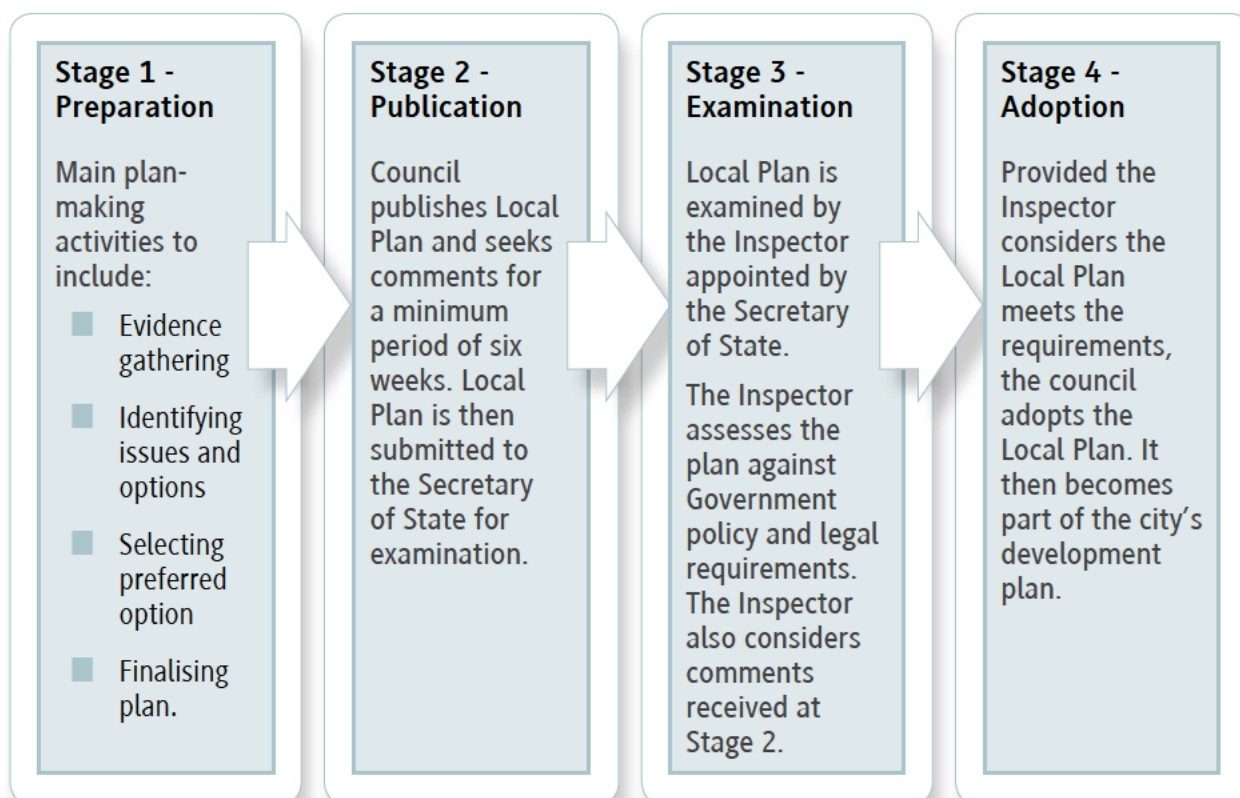
3.6 The development plan consists of:

- the Local Plan, prepared by the council; and
- neighbourhood development plans, prepared by neighbourhood planning forums.

3.7 Planning law requires that decisions on planning applications should be made in accordance with the development plan unless other relevant planning matters indicate otherwise. The development plan is therefore the starting point for when the council makes decisions on planning applications.

3.8 Information about the Local Plan documents to be produced is provided in the Local Development Scheme which is available on the council's website.

Main stages in producing the Local Plan



Community involvement in producing the Local Plan

Stage 1 – Preparation

3.9 The main plan-making activities undertaken by the council during the preparation stage are evidence gathering, identifying issues and options, and selecting preferred options.

3.10 To ensure the community is effectively involved in these activities, the council carries out a range of community involvement methods:

- 1) As required by Government regulations the council:

- a) invites statutory and general consultees⁴, residents and businesses in the Bristol City Council administrative area to comment on what the Local Plan should contain;
- b) consults bodies listed in the relevant regulations⁵ on the scope of the information and level of detail that should be included in the environmental report which accompanies the draft Local Plan. The environmental report addresses the requirements of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

In addition, the council:

- 2) Emails and writes to members of the Local Plan Consultation Database throughout the Local Plan's preparation;
- 3) Makes consultation documents and questionnaires available on its website, at City Hall and public libraries;
- 4) Holds meetings, discussion events and drop-in events / exhibitions;
- 5) Issues press releases and uses the 'Our City' email bulletin and its social media sites;
- 6) Considers the use of the Citizens' Panel and online involvement methods such as discussions and interactive mapping.

Stage 2 – Publication

3.11 Taking into account feedback from community involvement activities during the preparation stage, the council finalises and publishes the Local Plan.

3.12 At this stage the council carries out the following participation required by Government regulations:

- 1) Makes the Local Plan and supporting documents specified in the regulations available on the council's website and at City Hall for representations to be made for a minimum period of six weeks.
- 2) Sends notification to all those bodies invited to make comments at Stage 1 that the Local Plan and supporting documents are available for inspection and provide details about how to make representations.

Feedback on community involvement

3.13 Alongside the Local Plan, a consultation statement is published setting out:

- who was consulted in preparing the Local Plan;
- a summary of the main issues raised by those persons; and
- how those issues have been addressed in the Local Plan.

Stage 3 – Examination

3.14 The Local Plan, along with supporting documents and the representations received, is then submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination by a Planning Inspector.

⁴ As defined in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

⁵ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

- 3.15** At this stage the council carries out the following actions required by Government regulations:
- 1) Makes the Local Plan and supporting documents specified in the regulations available on the council's website and at City Hall.
 - 2) Sends notification to all those bodies invited to make comments at Stage 1 that the Local Plan and supporting documents are available for inspection.
 - 3) Notifies those who requested notification that the Local Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State.

Stage 4 – Adoption

3.16 Provided the Inspector considers the Local Plan meets Government policy and legal requirements, approval will be sought from Full Council to adopt the Local Plan as part of the council's development plan.

- 3.17** Following adoption the council carries out the following actions required by Government regulations:
- 1) Makes the adopted Local Plan, the adoption statement and other supporting documents specified in the regulations available on the council's website and at City Hall.
 - 2) Sends the adoption statement to those who asked to be notified of the adoption of the Local Plan.

Involvement in neighbourhood development plans

- 3.20** Neighbourhood development plans are prepared by designated neighbourhood planning forums. Preparation includes consultation on a draft plan. Following a successful independent examination and local referendum, neighbourhood development plans are brought into legal force and are 'made' part of the development plan. Their policies are then considered alongside Local Plan policies when the council makes decisions on planning applications.
- 3.21** Community involvement in the preparation of neighbourhood development plans is the responsibility of the neighbourhood planning forums producing the plan.

The Government's Planning Practice Guidance expects forums to ensure the wider community is kept fully informed of what is being proposed and has opportunities to be involved in shaping the emerging plan. The council will continue to offer advice to forums on how effective involvement can take place and, where resources allow, provide assistance in carrying out the involvement.

- 3.22 Whilst most community engagement in the preparation of neighbourhood development plans will be led by the neighbourhood planning forum, there are certain stages where the council carries out formal consultation:

Application to designate a neighbourhood planning area

- 3.23 The council publishes on its website the name and map of the proposed neighbourhood planning area, the name of the relevant body who applied for the designation and details about how to comment. It also notifies and seeks comment from members of the Local Plan Consultation Database. Following this consultation the council publishes on its website the decision to either designate or refuse the application (with reasons, if refusing).

Application to designate a neighbourhood planning forum

- 3.24 The council publishes on its website a copy of the application made by the prospective forum and details about how to comment. It also notifies and seeks comment from members of the Local Plan Consultation Database. If the council agrees to designate the forum, it will publish on its website the forum's name, its constitution and contact details. If the council decides to refuse the designation then it will publish reasons for the refusal on its website.

Submission of a neighbourhood development plan

- 3.25 Once the neighbourhood planning forum has submitted their finalised neighbourhood development plan following consultation on a draft, the council publishes on its website the plan and supporting documents, including details on how to make comments. It also notifies and seeks comment from members of the Local Plan Consultation Database. Copies of these documents are also made available at the main council offices.

Decision on a neighbourhood development plan

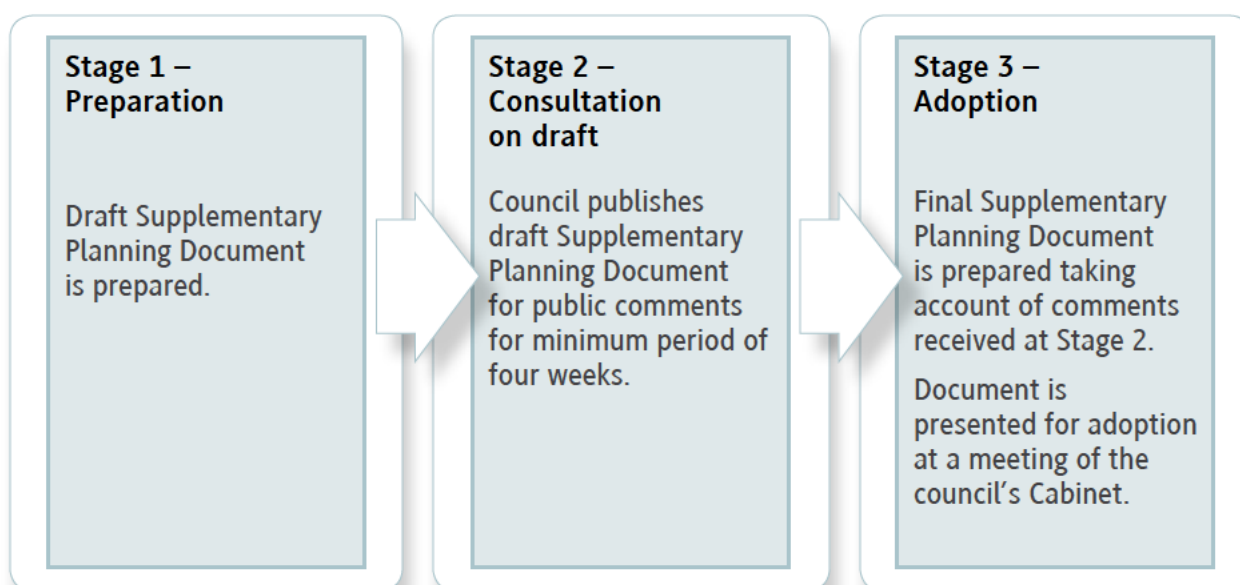
- 3.26 The council sends a copy of the submitted neighbourhood development plan, the supporting documents and comments received at the submission stage to an appointed Examiner for independent examination. Hearing sessions may or may not be required at the discretion of the Examiner.
- 3.27 The council then publishes the Examiner's report and decision statement on its website and makes it available to view at the main council offices. Subject to the Examiner's recommendation, the council then proceeds to arrange a referendum within the neighbourhood planning area on the plan.

Involvement in preparing Supplementary Planning Documents

Introduction

3.28 Supplementary Planning Documents add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide additional guidance for new development at specific locations or on particular topics. Supplementary Planning Documents can be a relevant consideration when the council makes decisions on planning applications but are not part of the council's development plan.

Main stages in producing Supplementary Planning Documents



Community involvement in producing Supplementary Planning Documents

Stage 1 – Preparation

3.29 The council carries out a range of involvement methods during this stage to ensure effective community engagement in preparing the document:

- 1) As required by Government regulations the council consults bodies listed in the relevant regulations⁶ as to whether the Supplementary Planning Document is likely to have significant environmental effects. This will assist in determining whether an environmental report should be produced to accompany the draft Supplementary Planning Document. The environmental report addresses the requirements of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

In addition, the council:

- 2) Emails and writes to members of the Local Plan Consultation Database about opportunities to be involved in preparing the Supplementary Planning Document;
- 3) Where appropriate, holds meetings, discussion events or drop-in events / exhibitions;

⁶ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

- 4) Issues press releases and uses the 'Our City' email bulletin and its social media sites;
- 5) Considers the use of the Citizens' Panel and online involvement methods such as discussions and interactive mapping.

Stage 2 – Consultation on draft Supplementary Planning Document

3.30 Taking into account the results from the community involvement activities during the preparation stage, the council finalises and publishes the draft Supplementary Planning Document. At this stage, as required by Government regulations the council:

- 1) makes the draft Supplementary Planning Document available on the council's website and at City Hall for representations to be made for a minimum period of four weeks.

In addition, the council:

- 2) Emails and writes to members of the Local Plan Consultation Database seeking comments on the draft document;
- 3) Issues press releases and uses its social media sites to raise awareness;
- 4) Considers holding meetings, discussion events and drop-in events / exhibitions to discuss the draft and seek feedback.

Feedback on community involvement

3.31 Alongside the draft Supplementary Planning Document, a consultation statement is published setting out:

- who was consulted when preparing the Supplementary Planning Document;
- a summary of the main issues raised by those persons; and
- how those issues have been address in the draft document.

Stage 3 – Adoption

3.32 Having regard to the comments received on the draft, the final document will be prepared. It will then be presented for adoption at a meeting of the council's Cabinet. Following adoption the council carries out the following actions required by Government regulations:

- 1) Makes the adopted Supplementary Planning Document and the adoption statement available on the council's website and at City Hall.
- 2) Sends the adoption statement to those who asked to be notified of the adoption of the Supplementary Planning Document.

Involvement in other non-statutory planning documents

3.33 The council may produce other planning documents to provide additional guidance for the implementation of Local Plan policies. These could include masterplans, development / site briefs or area frameworks. Community involvement on these documents produced by the council will be informed by the ground rules set out on pages 2-3.

3.34 Where these documents are produced by other parties, the council expects involvement carried out on them to also be informed by the ground rules on pages 2-3.

Contact information

Planning applications

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Web: www.bristol.gov.uk/planning

Planning policy

Strategic City Planning

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