

Sedgefield Borough Council

Local Development Framework:
Submitted Draft Statement of Community
Involvement

September 2005

**THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE A LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENT
AND WILL FORM PART OF THE COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
FRAMEWORK**

This document is a revision of a draft Statement of Community Involvement consulted on in April – May 2005. It has been changed to reflect comments we have received.

Sedgefield Borough Council telephone number: **01388 816166**

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If you would like to make any comments on this submission document, please use one of the following methods:

- Completing the form at the back of this document (Appendix 6) and returning it to:
Forward Planning Team
Neighbourhood Services
Sedgefield Borough Council
Council Offices
SPENNYMOOR
Co. Durham
DL16 6JQ; or
- Sending comments by Fax: (01388) 824200; or
- Sending comments via e-mail to: cmyers@sedgefield.gov.uk

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all Local Planning Authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI must set out the Local Planning Authority's policy for involving the community in the preparation and revision of all Local Development Documents, and in development control decisions within its local area.

An initial draft of the SCI for Sedgefield Borough Council has already been subjected to a six-week period of public consultation (Spring 2005). This version of the SCI ("the Submission draft") will be subjected to a further period of public consultation prior to independent public examination. During the independent public examination (anticipated Winter 2005) a Government appointed Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate will test the document for soundness as prescribed within "*Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks*". The criteria for testing the soundness of the SCI are set out below. The Inspector will then prepare a report outlining the findings of the examination and make any recommendations for change if these are considered necessary. These recommendations will be binding and the Borough Council will therefore be obliged to amend the SCI in line with the recommendations prior to formally adopting the document.

The Sedgefield Borough Council Submission SCI will be in the public realm for a further six-week period, during which time representations can be made using one of the methods highlighted above. Any person or organisation who has an interest in matters relating to the development of Sedgefield Borough area are welcome to make representations on the submitted SCI. All comments must be received by **15th November 2005** on the response form provided. Unfortunately we will not be able to accept late representations.

It would be helpful if responses from representative groups could give a summary of the people and organisations they represent.

If you require any assistance or would like to discuss any aspects of the production of a Local Development Framework please contact one of the following:

- Chris Myers (cmyers@sedgefield.gov.uk)
(Forward Planning Manager)
- Thomas Bennett (tbennett@sedgefield.gov.uk)
(Planning Policy Officer)

Sedgefield Borough Council requests that all those who wish to make representations on the statement of community involvement state:

- Whether the representation is in support of the statement of community involvement or seeking to change it;
- Whether the statement of community involvement fails the test of soundness and if so how;
- If change is sought, exactly what change is required;
- How they would like their representation dealt with.

The criteria the Planning Inspector will apply to test the soundness of the statement of community involvement are as follows:

- Does the SCI show that Sedgefield Borough Council is meeting legal requirements;
- Does the SCI set out Sedgefield Borough Council's strategy for community involvement links with other community involvement initiatives, e.g. Sedgefield Borough Council's Community Strategy;
- Does the SCI identify which local community groups and other bodies need to be consulted;
- Does the SCI demonstrate how local people, community groups and other bodies can be involved in a timely and accessible manner;
- Does the SCI show that the methods to be used to involve people, community groups and other bodies are suitable for the different stages in the preparation of Sedgefield Borough Council's Local Development Documents;
- Does the SCI show that Sedgefield Borough Council can resource and manage the process effectively¹;
- Does the SCI show how the results of the community involvement are to be fed into the preparation of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents;
- Set out the mechanism for reviewing the procedures in the SCI; and
- Does the statement clearly describe the planning authority's policy for consultation on planning applications.

¹ The resource and management arrangements for the SCI can be found in the Local Development Scheme

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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FORWARD

One of key objectives of the new Planning system, established through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is to strengthen communities and the involvement of interested parties in the planning system. Under the new system, the Council is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which sets out how the Council intends to involve interested parties and the local community in the planning process.

This submission draft SCI has been published to provide the opportunity for interested parties to comment. Before the Borough can formally adopt the SCI, it must proceed through an independent examination. Once the SCI has been adopted, it will set out how the Council will consult with the community on the planning system. The adopted SCI will help to ensure a transparent and open planning process, which enjoys the support of the community and involves local people in planning the future of their communities.

Councillor Kester Noble
Regeneration Portfolio Holder

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why involve the community in Planning

- 1.1.1 The Government is committed to a planning system in England that is flexible and responsive to the interests and demands of today's society. Key to the Government's objective of creating sustainable communities is the need to provide opportunities for local people to actively participate in decisions that affect their local area.
- 1.1.2 To find out about the Planning in the UK, the Government has produced a plain English guide on their ODPM website. A link to this document is provided: http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_031449.hcsp
- 1.1.3 Planning Policy Statement 1 highlights that Planning must work as a partnership and engage with the community to deliver sustainable development in the right place at the right time. The planning system has the potential to affect everyone, and subsequently those involved in the system have a role to play in delivering effective and inclusive planning. Sustainable development requires the community to be involved with developing the vision for their areas. Communities should be able to contribute to ideas about how that vision can be achieved and have the opportunity to participate in the process for drawing up specific plans or policies and to be involved in development proposals.
- 1.1.4 This document details the way in which Sedgefield Borough Council proposes to ensure that the most appropriate methods of public engagement are applied when considering issues relating to its statutory planning functions. This includes the preparation of the Local Development Framework (replacing Local Plan) and the determination of Development Control planning applications.
- 1.1.5 The Sedgefield Borough community is made up of many different interest groups, who are affected by different issues, values or religion. Whilst some of these groups are well represented, many are less equipped to engage with the process. An inclusive group is required to ensure that different groups have the opportunity and are not disadvantaged in the process. Government guidance highlights that effective community involvement requires processes for:
- Notifying and informing communities about policies and proposals in good time;
 - Enabling communities to put forward their own ideas and participate in developing proposals and options, rather than simply commenting when they are fixed;
 - Consultation of formal proposals; and,
 - Feedback.
- 1.1.6 It is not sufficient to provide information only, or consult on proposals that have already been developed to the point where it is difficult to take on other views. Community involvement procedures should provide opportunities for participation in identifying issues and debating options from the earliest stages. Community involvement should occur at a point when the public recognise that they have the potential to make a difference and, crucially, to experience a

sense of ownership of local policy decisions. The Sedgefield Borough Council process for involving the community is clear so that people know when they will be able to participate, and the ground rules for doing so. Community involvement should extend beyond those who are familiar with the planning system so that difficult to reach groups are included in the process. The Government believes the benefits of community involvement in planning are as follows:

- Involvement leads to outcomes that better reflect the views and aspirations and meet the needs of the wider community in all its diversity;
- Public involvement is valuable as a key element of a vibrant, open and participatory democracy;
- Involvement improves the quality and efficiency of decisions by drawing on local knowledge and minimising unnecessary and costly conflict;
- Involvement educates all participants about the needs of communities, the business sector and how local government works; and,
- Involvement helps promote social cohesion by making real connections with communities and offering them a tangible stake in decision-making.

1.2 Purpose and benefits of statement of community involvement

1.2.1 The Government's planning objectives are intended to produce a planning system, which is more responsive, flexible, pro-active and less time consuming. The new requirements are intended to build on the existing opportunities for community involvement. Sedgefield Borough Council intend to take forward these Government objectives, with the overall aim that people (irrespective of age, sex, ability, ethnicity or background, or disability), business, the voluntary sector and others have the opportunity to make their views known and have their say in how their community is planned and developed.

1.2.2 Government guidance highlights that community involvement in planning should not be a reactive, tick-box, process. It should enable the local community to say what sort of place they want to live in at a stage when this can make a difference. Sedgefield Borough Council believes that this SCI puts in place an accessible system with clear informal and formal approaches to participation, which reaches out to groups that have not, historically, easily engaged with planning. Information about plans and policies affecting the Borough will be made readily available, in a form that is easy to understand and encourages participation. Inclusive community engagement means that both stakeholders and developers acquire a clearer understanding of each other's concerns and intentions. Stakeholders are able to voice their opinions and contribute their views to issues that affect them and at the same time, developers can gain from a broader input. Including interested parties at an early stage can identify problems before they arise and prevent problems caused by misunderstandings.

1.3 Which sectors of the community to involve in Planning

1.3.1 The Borough's SCI is tailored to meet the specific needs and characteristics of the area and engage with representatives of all groups and individuals that are interested in the planning for their area. In particular, the Borough Council promotes race equality and does not discriminate against disabled people who

wish to participate in the planning system. The people and organisations we intend to consult can be divided into three sections:

1.3.1.1 *Statutory consultees*

These are bodies which the Council will be required to consult. They include bodies such as Government agencies and local authorities and are listed in **Appendix 1**.

1.3.1.2 *Non-statutory consultees*

This group includes people who represent organisations whose support of or opposition to a development would be significant, or who have particular expertise. Examples include Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) or Friends of the Earth (FoE) and are listed in **Appendix 1**.

1.3.1.3 *Community stakeholders*

This group includes individuals or organisations that are interested because they either live in the community affected by a proposal, or they represent a housing association, club or church group in the area. These include CAVOS (Community and Voluntary Organisations Sedgefield) and CEN (Community Empowerment Network) and again are listed in **Appendix 1**.

1.4 How we intend to consult, communicate and involve these groups in the planning process

1.4.1 The SCI sets out the various methods that the Borough Council will use to enable people to contribute to the planning process, in regard to both Development Control and Forward Planning. These methods will be customised to suit specific circumstances to enable the process to be as productive as possible.

1.5 Summary of the types of Local Development Documents the Council will seek community involvement before their production

1.5.1 The Sedgefield Borough Council Local Development Framework will comprise a range of Local Development Documents consisting of Development Plan Documents (subject to public examination) and Supplementary Planning Documents (not subject to public examination).

The key Development Planning Documents that will be produced include:

- Local Development Scheme – The Local Development Scheme sets out what Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents will form part of the Local Development Framework and also specify their nature and extent;
- Core Strategy – This key document will set out the Council's vision for its area and the primary policies to achieve that vision;
- Major Allocations – Sites proposed for development to meet the Council's vision and core strategy will be identified within this document;
- Proposal Map – The Proposals Map will illustrate policies in the Local Development Documents on an Ordnance Survey base. It will also show factual information such as environmental designations. Inset map will show areas of greater detail; and
- Development Control Policies – These will be contained within a separate development plan document, and will cover matters such as

the protection of the natural and built environment, highway safety and design.

1.5.2 The Supplementary Planning Documents that may be produced include:

- Conservation Areas;
- Residential Extensions;
- Planning Briefs for Major Allocations; and
- Residential Design Guide;

1.5.3 Although Supplementary Planning Documents are not subject to independent examination and will not form part of the statutory development plan, they will be subject to community involvement.

1.5.4 The preparation, examination and review of each Local Development Document need not run concurrently. They should be shorter, simpler, and quicker to adopt and therefore more reactive to changing circumstances than the previous Local Plan. The Council will provide the community with opportunities to get involved in the preparation of these Local Development Documents. In general terms, more community involvement will take place in the preparation of Development Plan Documents than Supplementary Planning Documents.

1.6 Sustainability Appraisal

1.6.1 A Sustainability Appraisal is a mandatory and integral part of the process of preparing a Local Development Framework. All Local Development Documents are to be subject to a sustainability appraisal. Sustainability appraisal is integral to document preparation as a means of assessing their potential social, environmental and economic effects. The sustainability appraisal report will set out the likely significant effects of each draft Local Development Document and, where appropriate, what amendments will be required. The Council's Sustainable Communities Team, which is based within Neighbourhood Services, will be responsible for carrying out the Sustainability Appraisals.

1.7 Strategic Environmental Assessment

1.7.1 Local Planning Authorities must comply with European Union Directive 2001/42/EC which requires a high level, strategic assessment of Local Development Documents and other programmes that are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

1.7.2 To ensure that legislative requirements are met, the Forward Planning Team will consult on the scope of the appraisals to be undertaken and publish Sustainability Appraisal reports concurrently with Environmental Reports (as required by the SEA Directive) at both the pre-submission and submission stages of Development Plan Document preparation. This will allow full and appropriate consideration to be given to the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of policies and proposals.

1.7.3 Prior to the publication of Key Issues, Alternative Options and Preferred Option documents, the Forward Planning Team will consult with statutory bodies and

the wider community (as appropriate) to consider the background, content, detail, methodology and monitoring required to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) for each Development Plan Document.

1.7.4 The Forward Planning Team will produce, publish and consult on draft and final Sustainability Appraisal Reports (incorporating the Environmental Reports produced in accordance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive) at both the pre-submission and submission stages of Development Plan Document preparation.

1.8 Resources and management of the process

1.8.1 The majority of the work involved in undertaking community involvement will be the responsibility of the Council's Forward Planning Team. Assistance from other staff within Neighbourhood Services and other Council departments may also be required. The results of community involvement and key decisions relating to the Local Development Framework process will be taken by the Council's Cabinet. Each individual consultation exercise will be tailored to ensure effective consultation in light of available staff and financial resources at that time.

1.9 Review of the SCI

1.9.1 The consultation procedures used by the Council detailed in this SCI will be kept under review. Where the procedures prove to be unsuccessful or where revised procedures are needed to meet new circumstances, a formal review of the SCI and re-submission to the Secretary of State will be undertaken. The Council will actively monitor the success of community involvement techniques by assessing:

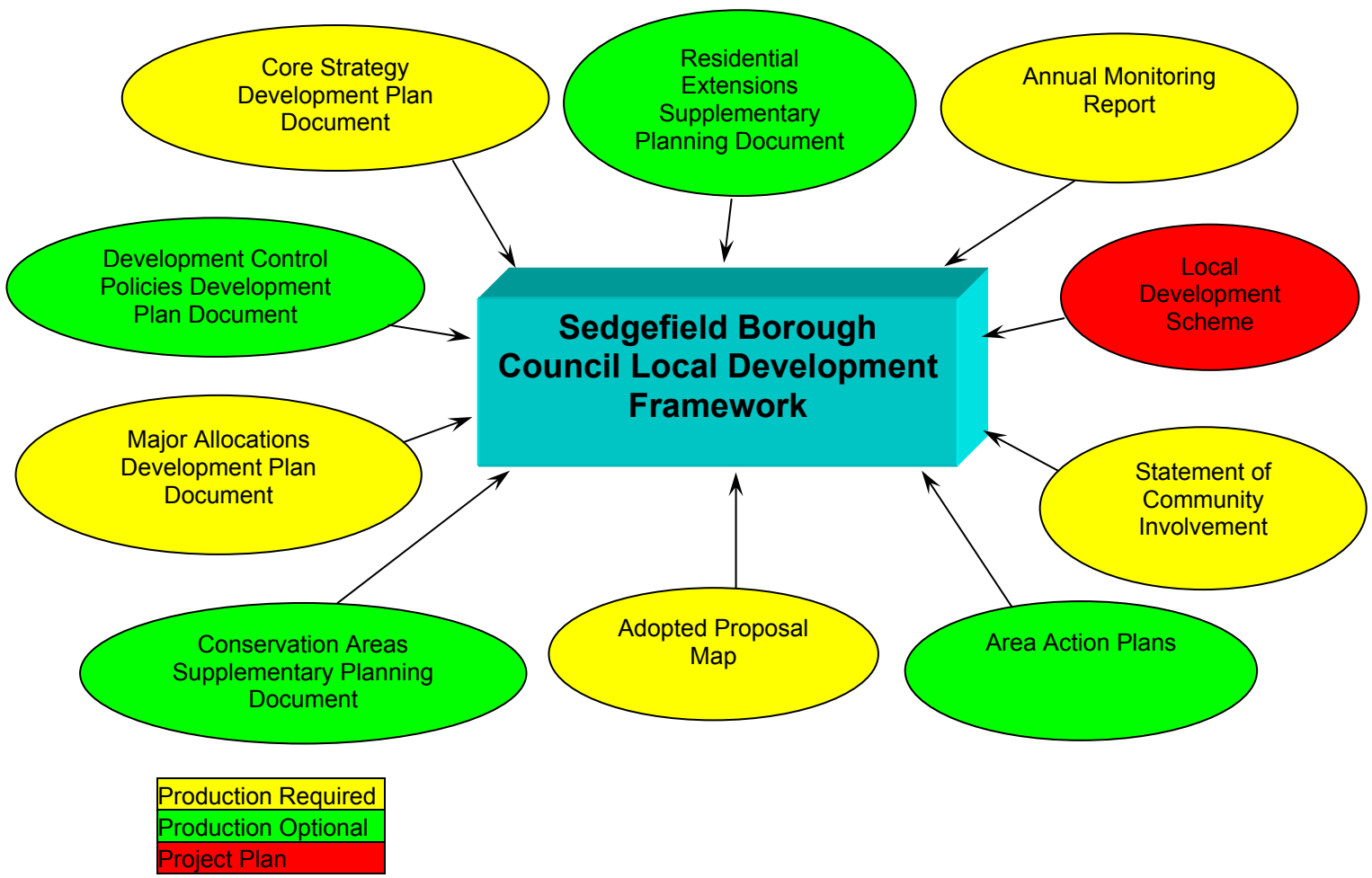
- How successfully the community and other stakeholders are able to find and comment on information regarding the Local Development Framework documents;
- The level of involvement of 'hard to reach' groups; and
- Respondents' satisfaction with the Council's overall consultation standards.

1.9.2 The Council has to produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) as part of the Local Development Framework process and this will include information on what stage documents have reached in their preparation. Furthermore, we intend to formally review the SCI every three years to correspond with the beginning of the early community engagement stage for the next round of Local Development Documents.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT DURING PRODUCTION OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

2.1 Forward Planning Team

2.1.1 The Planning Service provides a strategic vision for the co-ordination of land use with the principles of sustainable development embedded throughout. The Forward Planning Team is responsible for producing the portfolio of documents that will comprise the Local Development Framework (see illustration below). The documents that will comprise the Local Development Framework will provide policies to guide where and when development takes place in the Borough, set out how the Borough will engage with its Community in bringing forward these documents and establish monitoring arrangements to review the effectiveness of the policies produced. The timetable for the development of the Local Development Framework is set out in the Local Development Scheme, which provides the works programme for the next three years. This Local Development Scheme can viewed on our website at www.sedgefield.gov.uk. The Forward Planning Team also is responsible for design, conservation and landscape planning matters.



2.1.2 Sedgefield Borough Council as Local Planning Authority want to improve the way we involve different sectors of the community in making planning policy, and want to encourage more people to get involved. This section details who

we consider to be the appropriate target audience for community involvement, and the consultation methods which the Forward Planning Team proposes to use to ensure that the appropriate level of public engagement takes place and aids the production of the Local Development Framework. We are committed to identifying new methods of involving the community more effectively in the planning system at a local level and seek to ensure that all people with an interest in planning understand how they can contribute to and affect the outcomes of developing the Borough.

2.2 How Statement of Community Involvement links with the Community Strategy

2.2.1 The Community Strategy for Sedgefield was adopted and formally published by the Local Strategic Partnership in July 2004. A separate document identifying the links between the community strategy and the Local Development Framework will be produced.

2.3 Access to Information

2.3.1 Information relating to the drafting of the Local Development Documents will be available to the community through a number of methods:

- Information will be made available in both paper and electronic formats via email and both the Sedgefield Borough Council and Sedgefield Borough Business Services website;
- Copies of all documents will be made available to view at Council buildings;
- Upon request, the information will be available in Braille, large print or translated into another language;
- The Forward Planning Team will offer advice and assistance over the telephone; and
- The local community can request at a reasonable cost that information be sent to them by post.

2.4 Advisory Panel

2.4.1 The Local Development Framework forms part of the Borough Council's Policy Framework and it is important that the Local Development Framework preparation process is lead by the Council's Cabinet. However, it is equally important that all Council Members as well as other stakeholder partners have an opportunity to influence the Local Development Framework. Such engagement is also a prerequisite of Government to ensure that the Local Development Framework reflects local community aspirations and needs.

2.4.2 To help with this process, an Advisory Panel will guide the preparation of the Local Development Framework, whom will in turn advise Cabinet in the development of the Local Development Framework. It has been agreed that this Panel will comprise of:

- the Regeneration Portfolio Holder;
- the Chair of Development Control Committee;
- a minority group Member;
- the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3;
- two representatives nominated on behalf of all the Borough's Town and Parish Councils; and,

- three representatives from the Local Strategic Partnership's Community Empowerment Network (CEN).

2.5 Councillor Involvement

2.5.1 To keep all Council Members informed of about the preparation of the Local Development Framework, a progress report will be taken on a regular basis to the Development Control Committee.

2.6 Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings

2.6.1 Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings will be kept fully informed of progress throughout the review process and made aware of opportunities for their input and arrangements for local public participation. Planning Officers will engage with these groups on a regular basis to discuss emerging planning issues and seek their views as to how they would like them to be addressed in the Local Development Framework.

2.6.2 It is also important that there is commitment to consulting adjacent Town/Parish Councils where development or new policies are proposed that are likely to affect land at or near Sedgefield's Borough boundary.

2.7 Target Groups

2.7.1 Sedgefield Borough Council understands that a wide variety of groups should be targeted for consultation. The key groups are listed below:

- General public – Hard to reach groups
- Councillors
- Town/Parish Councils (including those bordering the Borough boundary and located within the administrative area of a different Council)
- Ward members
- Businesses
- Developers / Agents / Landowners
- Central, regional and local government
- Statutory bodies and groups
- Interested parties (for example, CPRE, RSPB)
- The Media
- Local Community Groups / Organisations (for example, CAVOS, CEN)
- Interest Groups (Residents Associations)
- Neighbouring Local Planning Authorities
- Internal consultation with Officers from other sections

2.8 Consultation methods Sedgefield Borough Council could use during each stage of the production of the Local Development Documents to engage the Target Groups

2.8.1 *Draft documents*

All draft Local Development Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents will be available for inspection at Sedgefield Borough Council buildings and Local Libraries during the set consultation period. The document will provide details of how and when people can make representations.

2.8.2 *Letters to statutory bodies*

Sedgefield Borough Council will identify and maintain a database of all statutory consultees who will be consulted in writing when key documents are released in draft form.

2.8.3 *Briefing workshops*

Briefing workshops are simple, easy to organise working sessions held to establish a project agenda or brief. They can simultaneously:

- introduce people to the project;
- help establish the key issues;
- get people involved and motivated;
- identify useful talent and experience; and
- identify the next steps needed.

Briefing workshops are useful at the start of a project or action planning event and can act as a public launch. Potential users of the project will be invited to attend a workshop to discuss either a range of subjects or just a single issue. Similar workshops may be helpful on different topics (for example housing, jobs or areas of open spaces).

These will be held in accessible locations and may need to be held over a number of days and varying times to ensure all sections of the community have an opportunity to attend.

2.8.4 *Newspaper Supplement – Inform Magazine/Paper/‘Business in Focus’ Magazine*

Newspaper supplements are one of the most effective ways of spreading planning and development ideas to large numbers of people and generating public debate. They are particularly useful for presenting proposals from action planning events. The Borough Council’s free publication ‘Inform’ that is sent to every household in the Borough, and the ‘Business in Focus’ magazine will be used to disseminate information about the Local Development Framework process, emerging issues and consultation events.

2.8.5 *Planning for Real*

“Planning for Real” can be used to help communities develop simple models to put forward and prioritise ideas on how their area can be improved. It is a highly visible, hands on community development and empowerment tool, which people of all abilities and backgrounds find easy and enjoyable to engage in. A large 3 dimensional model of a neighbourhood is constructed, preferably by local people, using cardboard cut outs for buildings pasted onto a base plan fixed to polystyrene or cardboard. This could be used specifically to address areas where major change is proposed (for example, housing renewal areas). It may be appropriate for the Council to attend special events organised by the community with the aid of external facilitators with expertise in the “Planning for Real” field. The use of an external facilitator will increase the credibility of the conclusions of a “Planning for Real” exercise.

2.8.6 *Review Session*

Review sessions are a useful way of monitoring progress and maintaining momentum. They can be held weeks, months, or even years after an action

planning event or other community planning initiative. All those involved in previous activity are invited back to a session, lasting up to one day. Invitations can also be sent to those who may wish to become involved in the future. A programme is designed to review progress, evaluate earlier initiatives and determine the next steps. A report of the session is written up and circulated.

2.8.7 *Masterplanning*

Masterplanning combines a series of workshops, exhibitions and seminars to generate professionally produced urban design proposals that can be influenced by local opinion. They are a good way of generating significant public debate and providing an impetus for implementation.

An overall design concept is agreed by the organisers (such as vacant sites or rundown estates). Teams of professionals are selected by open competition to prepare improvement schemes for each of the selected sites. The chosen teams facilitate design workshops with local residents, prepare proposals and present them in an interactive exhibition. A final, highly publicised seminar is held to debate the results and generate momentum for the scheme's implementation.

2.8.8 *Planning Focus Meeting*

The planning focus meeting includes one or more meetings between the development industry and Local Planning Authorities. It provides a forum for the development industry to introduce projects and explain their various components and considerations. Planning focus meetings are valuable because they deal at an early stage with matters that might otherwise delay the assessment process. They help clarify the main policies, criteria and guidelines that will be used by the Local Planning Authority in assessing and determining projects. Their purpose is to establish a sound basis that ensures projects are adequately described and their implications are properly identified and addressed. The Local Planning Authority will be able to suggest the areas and groups the developer needs to engage with regarding their proposal before formal submission of their scheme (**Further guidance is contained in Chapter 4**).

2.8.9 *Focus Groups*

Made up of local people to discuss planning issues. Focus groups can help authorities to gain more understanding of public concerns.

2.8.10 *Public Meetings - area, town and village meetings*

Public meetings can help Local Planning Authorities to present information and proposals within a framework that enables immediate discussion and feedback. These will be particularly relevant to core strategies, area action plans and planning applications. These meetings represent an open and inclusive way for people to engage in robust debate on the key issues. Public meetings will be used in conjunction with other techniques and not as the only consultative tool as the participants do not always reflect the views of the wider community.

2.8.11 *Web-based consultation – bulletin board/discussion groups*

The Internet provides quick and efficient opportunities for interested stakeholders to engage in the planning process. The Internet offers the following potential uses:

- o Timely, accurate information on site plans, opportunities, constraints, commissioned studies;
- o A platform on which organisations can respond to issues known to be of community concern;
- o A way for organisations to invite stakeholders to comment on the specific proposals and a means of receiving feedback; and
- o An interactive medium allowing discussion and debate.

All formal consultations undertaken by the Borough on the production of the Local Development Framework will be published on the Borough website at www.sedgefield.gov.uk, and a link to these documents will be located on the Sedgefield Borough Business Services website. Members of the public will be able to make representations on this web page or alternatively comments can be emailed to either:

- o cmyers@sedgefield.gov.uk; or
- o tbennett@sedgefield.gov.uk.

This presents people with the opportunity to respond on-line, and provides the Local Planning Authority with a facility to provide feedback to consultation exercises.

2.8.12 *Press and public relations*

The Council will inform the community of key consultation dates during the production of the Local Development Framework by releasing appropriate press releases.

2.8.13 *Community Forums*

The Council will use the Area Forums that are already established in the Borough to widen the community involvement in the Local Development Framework process. These Forums will be used as a channel to inform the local community of the stage reached in the review process, to provide opportunities for their input and participation and to explain key issues affecting local areas.

2.8.14 *Public Exhibitions*

As part of the formal consultation exercises for the Local Development Framework preparation, it is proposed that a series of exhibitions or roadshows are held throughout the Borough. These will be held at accessible venues throughout the Borough. Planning Officers will be available to answer community questions.

2.8.15 *Existing networks*

There are a range of existing meetings and forums, which can be tapped into, including Sedgefield and Local Strategic Partnerships Economy Policy Group, Town Centre Forums, Chambers of Trade, Parish Councils/Area Forums, CEN, and CAVOS. There are a number of Forums covering particular sections of the community which can be used to engage 'hard to reach' groups.

2.9 Opportunities for Public Participation

2.9.1 The principle opportunities for public participation in the plan making process will be at each key stage reached in the production of documents that comprise the Local Development Framework. The proposed dates of each key consultation stage are set out in the Borough's Local Development Scheme.

2.9.2 At each key consultation stage, consultation will be carried out over a statutory six-week period. During these periods, the Council will consider only duly made representations received in writing or by e-mail.

The details of when and how the key target groups will be consulted are shown within Appendix 2 (Consultation Method Matrix for the Local Development Framework).

2.10 Response to Community Participation – Reporting Back

2.10.1 At the end of each consultation period, Officers will prepare a summary of written representations received. This summary will be made publicly available in both paper and electronic form. At the same time, the Council will make publicly available how the community has been involved. In due course, the Council will provide a response to all the responses received during the statutory consultation exercises. Again, these will be made publicly available in paper and electronic form. Revised Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents will be produced after consideration of representations made to the Council on both draft documents and at different community involvement exercises.

2.11 Planning Aid

2.11.1 The Government is providing financial support to Planning Aid in its programme of providing advice and assistance to community groups. Planning Aid is an independent voluntary service offering free, independent and professional planning advice to community groups and individuals who cannot afford to employ a planning consultant. It aims to give people the confidence to deal with the planning system and to become involved in wider planning issues.

2.11.2 Planning Aid can help the community to:

- Comment on planning applications;
- Get involved in the preparation of Development Plans;
- Draw up your own community plan; and,
- Apply for planning permission or appeal against the refusal of permission.

2.11.3 Planning Aid is an independent organisation which is not part of the Local Planning Authority. It is a separate service that complements the advice given by Local Planning Authorities.

2.11.4 The RTPI Northern Branch Planning Aid covers the areas of Tees Valley, County Durham, Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear. Chartered

members of the RTPI, co-ordinated by the Branch's Planning Aid staff, give advice on a wholly voluntary basis. Contact details are as follows:

Planning Aid North
Joint Professional Centre for Planning and Landscape
3rd Floor, Claremont Tower
University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Claremont Road
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE1 7RU
Tel: 0191 222 5776
Fax: 0191 2225669
Email address: ntco@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk
Website address: www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk
Planning Advice Helpline: 0870 850 9803

2.11.5 If you qualify for Planning Aid you will be given advice over the telephone or you will be allocated a volunteer. Planning Aid is aimed at community groups and individuals who cannot afford to employ a planning consultant. Planning Aid does not means test but it does apply a set of criteria to help determine whether someone qualifies for Planning Aid help. If your local Planning Aid service decides that you do not qualify for Planning Aid you will be sent a leaflet with details of planning consultants in your area.

2.11.6 If your enquiry is straightforward it may be possible to give you an answer straight away. If it is more complicated it will be passed to a volunteer who will contact you separately. The volunteer will advise you over the telephone, in writing or by a meeting, depending on the circumstances.

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ON DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MATTERS

3.1 Development Control Team

3.1.1 Development Control is a statutory function of Local Government; this means that relevant provisions relating to such control, including the legal rights of citizens are set out in various Acts of Parliament and related statutory instruments. Development Control is a key part of the Planning System, being the process by which society, represented by locally elected councils, regulates changes in the use and appearance of the local environment. The work of the team is therefore primarily focused on carrying out statutory duties placed on the Council by Government for the benefit of society in general.

The Development Control team is responsible for:

- o Processing and determining planning applications including Listed Building Applications, hazardous substances applications and advertisement applications;
- o Advising on planning issues including a comprehensive pre-application advisory service;
- o Carrying out planning consultation;
- o Dealing with planning appeals; and
- o Dealing with alleged breaches of planning control (Enforcement).

3.1.2 Community involvement involves notifying and engaging both the wider community and the individual. With regard to development control matters, there needs to be a balance between considering the cost, speed of decision making and providing the general public with a reasonable opportunity to comment. Consultation involves not only the public but also statutory consultees. Whom to consult will vary with the nature of the proposal and location and subsequently not all bodies are consulted on each application. Statutory consultees are given a period of 21 days in which to respond to consultation. As a result of these consultations, the responses may require the Case Officer to contact the applicant to request more information or to seek amendments. All correspondence received on a particular planning application will be placed on the application case file (which remains in the public domain) and can be viewed (at the Green Lane offices) by any member of the public requesting to do so.

3.2 Involvement of the Community when a Planning Application is first received

3.2.1 All planning applications and past decisions are recorded in a statutory planning register, which is available for inspection during normal office hours. The Council recognises that these arrangements may not be convenient for everyone, and therefore to involve the wider community, the Council's website, available at www.sedgefield.gov.uk, is being updated and enhanced to make the planning register more accessible. At present a list of all planning applications and decisions is published weekly on the Council's website and in the future the statutory planning register will be accessible on line.

3.2.2 Finding out what members of the public think about new development is a fundamental part of the Council's Development Control Service and provides every planning application with a level of publicity that is commensurate with

the size and nature of the proposal. In many instances the Council goes beyond what is legally required under Article 8 of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995. For example, the Council frequently extends the consultation beyond adjoining owners or occupiers and undertakes consultation in relation to Reserved Matters applications (i.e. approval of details following the granting of outline permission) despite the fact that this is not a statutory requirement.

3.2.3 Occupiers of premises most likely to be affected by a proposal are notified individually by letter that an application has been received, and they are made aware that they can inspect the application at the Council offices and make any written comments within 21 days. For more major applications (including departures from the development plan, proposals affecting the setting of a listed building or the character or appearance of a conservation area, proposals affecting a public right of way or those accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment) a site notice and/or publicity in the form of a press notice will be placed in a local paper.

3.2.4 For applications in isolated locations, where there are no neighbouring properties, a site notice will be displayed and in some cases a press notice will be placed in a local newspaper advertising the application in question. The case officer, on request, may visit at home those people who are unable to visit the office, such as disabled or elderly people or parents with young children, to explain the planning process.

3.3 Involvement of the Community during the processing of a planning application

3.3.1 The development control planning officers often undertake a considerable amount of negotiation on a large number of planning applications, particularly the complex ones. This will often result in planning applications being amended. This is a vital procedure of the development control process, guiding development from potentially being unacceptable towards an acceptable form. Sedgfield Borough Council encourages its planning officers to actively engage in negotiations with developers and their professional advisors.

3.3.2 There is no statutory requirement to re-notify neighbours on amendments and it is at discretion of the Council whether to re-notify neighbours. The Council does not re-notify neighbours on minor amendments (unless a letter of objection was received on the original submission and/or the proposed amendment may resolve the objection), as it is not considered appropriate and this process significantly delays consideration of an application. Circumstances where the Council is unlikely to re-notify neighbours include amendments relating to minor alterations to the design of extensions or houses, where the amendment results in a proposal of a more acceptable scale or where the alteration has no material change in the appearance and/or form of the proposal that was applied for and consulted on. The Council will re-notify neighbours where a letter of objection has been received and where the amendments are significant resulting in the character and impact of a proposal being changed.

3.3.3 In essence, the question of re-notification will be for the individual case officer to decide, taking into account what amendments have already been made, and whether further alterations are still required to transform the application into an acceptable scheme. If it is necessary to re-consult, the development control case officer will normally stipulate a reduced consultation period, usually no more than 14 days. For significant alterations to plans the relevant consultees will be re-consulted.

3.4 Involvement of the Community when an application goes to committee

3.4.1 Any comments received from a Parish or Town Council about a planning application within 21 days of the consultation letter will be reported to the Development Control Committee. A copy of the committee agenda is sent to the Parish or Town Council. All neighbours who make representation to the Council regarding a planning application will be made aware of the date/time/location of the committee meeting, the officer recommendation and are offered the opportunity to register to speak at the meeting. Essentially you can speak at the Committee meeting:

- If you are the objector and have concerns over a current planning application;
- If you are the applicant speaking in response to an objector;
- If you are the agent of someone who has submitted a planning application;
- If you are the applicant and have requested to speak at Committee as your application is recommended for refusal.

3.4.2 The agenda for the Committee meeting can be accessed from the Sedgefield Borough Council website prior to the meeting. **(For more detailed information see Appendix 5 – Public Speaking at Development Control Committee).**

3.5 Involvement of the Community after a decision is taken on a planning application

3.5.1 A letter is sent to any Parish or Town Council who made representations on a planning application and any statutory consultee that objected to a planning application or requested a copy of the decision notice, advising them of the decision that has been reached. This letter is sent for applications that are determined at committee, and also by officers under delegated powers.

3.5.2 All neighbours who made representation on a planning application are advised in writing of the decision on the planning application.

3.6 Involvement of the Community if an appeal is received on a planning application

3.6.1 Government legislation stipulates that only applicants have the right to appeal a local authorities planning decision. There are no third party rights to appeal a decision.

3.6.2 When an appeal is received, the relevant Parish or Town Council, those neighbours originally consulted on the application and any objectors are notified in writing of the appeal, and told how to make representations to the Planning Inspectorate. This could either be in writing if it is a written representations

appeal, or they could be made in person if the appeal is to be heard by the way of an informal hearing or public inquiry. Additionally, it should be noted that any letter of representation made in response to the original application would automatically be forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate. For informal hearings/public inquiries the Council displays a site notice publicising the date/time and location of the hearing/inquiry. We have on occasions placed a notice in the press for a major public inquiry.

- 3.6.3 Community involvement for the following applications will be treated in previously described way:
- Householder;
 - Full Detailed applications (for example, Industrial, commercial, major residential developments);
 - Applications for Change of Use;
 - Outline applications;
 - Reserved Matter applications;
 - Works to trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order and works to trees within a Conservation Area;
 - Listed Building and Conservation Area Consent;
 - Amendment, Variation, Removal of a Condition;
 - Advertisements; and
 - Prior approval for telecommunications and agricultural development.

The following applications are subject to different consultation procedures. They are as follows:

3.7 Demolitions

- 3.7.1 There is no statutory requirement to consult on these types of applications. No public consultation or publicity is required for a determination if prior approval is required. It is for the developer to post site notices before making an application. In some cases it may be necessary to consult with other departments in the Council.

3.8 Lawful Development Certificates

- 3.8.1 No public consultation or publicity is required as these applications do not relate to the planning merits of the development. The Council will, however, contact neighbouring residents to gather information where appropriate.

3.9 Involvement of the Community on Enforcement Issues

- 3.9.1 All enforcement complaints will be registered and given a file reference number and dealt with by the Council's Enforcement Officer. All cases will, as far as possible, be dealt with in confidence. Complaints are treated confidentially and no public consultation is currently undertaken on enforcement cases. **(For more detailed information of procedures please see Appendix 4 – Sedgefield Borough Council Planning Enforcement Charter)**

**CHAPTER 4: RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY DEVELOPERS AND AGENTS
(ADVICE BY SEDGFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL)**

4.1 When should a developer start to consider Community Involvement?

4.1.1 Sedgefield Borough Council encourages developers to undertake pre-application discussions and early community consultation on significant applications as early as possible in the design of their scheme. Consultation discussions before a formal application is made can help to avoid unnecessary objections being made at a later stage.

4.2 What are the benefits to the developer of a Community Involvement Exercise?

4.2.1 A genuine exercise can:

- Provide an ideal opportunity for the developer to explain their proposal, prior to the general public formulating unfavourable opinions based on inaccurate information;
- Potentially save the developer time in obtaining a decision on a planning application;
- Produce more certainty about the outcome;
- Create a more sustainable and acceptable development;
- Avoid appeals and call-in procedures.

4.3 What type of development would benefit from a Community Involvement Exercise?

4.3.1 Developers should regard Community Involvement as an opportunity to explain and refine their proposals rather than a process that acts as a restraint on their intentions. People who live within an area are often very interested to learn about proposals that may have an affect on them. They also understand that new development can bring many advantages in addition to the disadvantages. These may include an increase in jobs or more local facilities for the community to use and enjoy. Therefore Sedgefield Borough Council believes that the following proposal types would benefit from the involvement of the community to some degree. These include:

- Medium and large scale industrial and commercial development (Development with a floor area of 1000sqm or more, or a site area of 1 hectare or more);
- Medium and large scale residential development (10 or more homes or consideration of the principle of residential development on a site of at least 0.5 hectares);
- New education or institutional buildings;
- Major infrastructure projects such as roads, pipelines or overhead power lines;
- Smaller developments on sensitive sites;
- Changes of use of buildings or land for purposes which are likely to be controversial;
- Developments where opportunities for community benefits may be available;
- Waste processing schemes;
- A development which needs an environmental assessment;

- A significant development that conflicts with the policies in our development plan or with more up-to-date government planning policy;
 - Medium and large scale wind turbine farms; and
 - A development which proposes closing or altering a public right of way.
- 4.3.2 Small-scale proposals such as house extensions or advertisements will not normally require a Community Involvement Exercise.
- 4.4 Example of a method to involve the community – Open house event
- 4.4.1 Open house events allow those promoting development initiatives to present to a wider public and secure reactions in an informal manner. They are less structured than a workshop and more informal than a traditional exhibition. Open house events can be organised at any stage of the design and development process by any of the parties. They can last from a few hours to several weeks. It is recommended that a venue be arranged with a number of displays on the proposals and options. Organisers should be present to deal with queries and engage in informal debate. The material collected on this day should be analysed afterwards and used to further develop the initiative.
- 4.5 Additional advice from Sedgefield Borough Council Planning Department
- 4.5.1 The Planning Officers at Sedgefield Borough Council are happy to be contacted to give guidance on whether your proposal would benefit from a Community Involvement Exercise and how it may be achieved.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Details of who are the Consultees.

The Council will hold a database of bodies, organisations and individuals and these will be informed throughout the Local Development Framework production process. Planning Policy Statement 12 suggests that the following should be consulted in the preparation of the Local Development Framework:

Specific Consultation Bodies (These are specific consultation bodies and must be consulted in accordance with the Act and Regulations)

- The regional planning body
- Any local planning authority for an area adjacent to the area covered by the proposals
- The Countryside Agency
- The Environment Agency
- Highways Agency
- The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England
- English Nature
- The Strategic Rail Authority
- Regional Development Agency whose area is in or adjoins the area of the local planning authority (One NorthEast)
- Any person to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a directive given under Section 106 (3) (a) of the Communications Act 2003
- Any person who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the area of the local planning authority; and
- Any of the bodies from the following list who are exercising functions in any part of the area of the local planning authority:
 - I. Strategic Health Authority;
 - II. Person to whom a licence has been granted under Section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986;
 - III. Sewage undertaker; and
 - IV. Water undertaker.

Government Departments

- The First Secretary of State (through Government Office for the North East)
- Home Office;
- Department for Education and Skills (through Government Office for the North East)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- Department for Transport (through Government Office for the North East)
- Department of Health (through relevant Regional Office of NHS Executive)
- Department of Trade and Industry (through Government Office for the North East)
- Ministry of Defence
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Department of Constitutional Affairs
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Office of Government Commerce (Property Advisers to the Civil Estate)

General Consultation Bodies

- Voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the authority's area;
- Bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the authority's area;
- Bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the authority's area;
- Bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the authority's area; and
- Bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the authority's area.

Other Consultees (Sedgefield Borough Council will where appropriate consult with the following agencies and organisations in the preparation of local development documents)

- Age Concern
- Airport operators
- British Chemical Distributors and Traders Association
- British Geological Survey
- British Waterways, canal owners and navigation authorities
- Campaign to Protection of Rural England (CPRE)
- CAVOS (Community and Voluntary Organisations Sedgefield)
- CEN (Community Empowerment Network)
- Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- Chambers of Commerce, Local CBI and local branches of Institute of Directors;
- Church Commissioners
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Coal Authority
- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
- Commission for New Towns and English Partnerships
- Commission for Racial Equality
- Crown Estate Office
- Diocesan Board of Finance
- Disability Rights Commission
- Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee
- Electricity, Gas, and Telecommunications Undertakers, and the National Grid Company;
- Environmental groups at national, regional and local level, including:
 - I. Council for the Protection of Rural England
 - II. Friends of the Earth
 - III. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; and
 - IV. Wildlife Trusts;
- Equal Opportunities Commission;
- Fire and Rescue Services
- Forestry Commission
- Freight Transport Association
- Friends of the Earth (FoE)
- Gypsy Council
- Health and Safety Executive
- Help the Aged

- Housing Corporation
- Learning and Skills Councils
- Sustainable Communities Team including:
 - I. Civic Societies
 - II. Community Groups
 - III. Local Transport Authorities
 - IV. Local Transport Operators; and
 - V. Local Race Equality Councils and other local equality groups;
- Local Strategic Partnership Economy Group
- National Playing Fields Association
- Network Rail
- Passenger Transport Authorities
- Passenger Transport Executives
- Police Architectural Liaison Officers/Crime Prevention Design Advisors;
- Port Operators
- Post Office Property Holdings
- Rail Companies and the Rail Freight Group
- Regional Development Agencies
- Regional Housing Boards
- Regional Sports Boards
- Road Haulage Association
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- Sedgefield Business Forum Steering Group
- Sport England
- The House Builders Federation
- Transport for London
- Traveller Law Reform Coalition
- Water Companies; and
- Women's National Commission

Appendix 2 – Consultation Method Matrix for the Local Development Framework

TYPE OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENT

| | Development Plan Documents | | | Supplementary Planning Documents | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|
| | (Core Strategy, Generic Development Control Policies, Proposals Map) | Site specific allocations & policies | Area Action Plan Development Plan Documents | Site Specific (Conservation Areas, Planning Briefs) | Topic (Residential Extensions; SUD's; Commuted Sums; and Renewable Energy etc) |
| General Public | Council Website; Public Exhibitions; Community Forums; Briefing workshops; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Planning for Real; Press Release; Masterplanning. | Council Website; Public Exhibitions; Community Forums; Briefing Workshops; Inform Magazine / Paper; Focus Group; Draft documents; Planning for Real; Press Release; Masterplanning. | Council Website; Public Exhibitions; Draft documents; Briefing Workshops. | Council Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Press Release; Draft documents. | Council Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Press Release; Draft documents. |
| Hard to reach groups | Council Website; Public Exhibitions; Community Forums; Briefing workshops; Focus Group; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Masterplanning; Press Release; Planning for Real. | Council Website; Public Exhibitions; Community Forums; Briefing Workshops; Inform Magazine / Paper; Focus Group; Draft documents; Masterplanning; Press Release; Planning for Real. | Council Website; Public Exhibition; Focus Group; Draft documents; Briefing Workshops. | Council Website; Focus Group; Inform Magazine / Paper; Press Release; Draft documents. | Council Website; Focus Group; Inform Magazine / Paper; Press Release; Draft documents. |
| Councillors | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Development Control Committee; Workshop/ seminar. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Development Control Committee; Workshop / seminar. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Development Control Committee. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Development Control Committee. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Development Control Committee. |

TARGET GROUPS

| | Development Plan Documents | | | Supplementary Planning Documents | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (Core Strategy, Generic Development Control Policies, Proposals Map) | Site specific allocations & policies | Area Action Plan Development Plan Documents | Site Specific (Conservation Areas, Planning Briefs) | Topic (Residential Extensions; SUD's; Commuted Sums; and Renewable Energy etc) |
| Ward members | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Public Exhibition; Workshop / seminar. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Public Exhibition; Workshop / seminar. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Public Exhibition; Workshop / seminar. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. |
| Town/Parish Councils | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. |
| Neighbouring Town/Parish Council within different Council's administrative boundary | Email; Council Website; Draft documents. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents. | Email; Council Website; Draft documents. |
| Businesses | Council Website; SBBS Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Business in Focus Magazine; Press Release; Sedgefield Business Forum; LSP Economy Policy Group; Town Centre Forums; Chambers of Trade; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; SBBS Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Business in Focus Magazine; Press Release; Sedgefield Business Forum; LSP Economy Policy Group; Town Centre Forums; Chambers of Trade; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; SBBS Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Business in Focus Magazine; Press Release; Sedgefield Business Forum; LSP Economy Policy Group; Town Centre Forums; Chambers of Trade; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; SBBS Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Business in Focus Magazine; Press Release; Sedgefield Business Forum; LSP Economy Policy Group; Town Centre Forums; Chambers of Trade; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; SBBS Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Business in Focus Magazine; Press Release; Sedgefield Business Forum; LSP Economy Policy Group; Town Centre Forums; Chambers of Trade; Workshop / seminar. |

| | Development Plan Documents | | | Supplementary Planning Documents | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| | (Core Strategy, Generic Development Control Policies, Proposals Map) | Site specific allocations & policies | Area Action Plan Development Plan Documents | Site Specific (Conservation Areas, Planning Briefs) | Topic (Residential Extensions; SUD's; Commuted Sums; and Renewable Energy etc) |
| Developers / Landowners / Agents | Council Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Inform Magazine / Paper; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. |
| Central, regional & local government | Draft documents; Meetings / informal discussions. | Draft documents; Meetings / informal discussions. | Draft documents; Meetings / informal discussions. | Draft documents; Meetings / informal discussions. | Draft documents; Meetings / informal discussions. |
| Statutory bodies & groups | Draft documents; Meetings / informal discussions. | Draft documents; Meetings / informal discussions. | Draft documents; Meetings / informal discussions. | Draft documents; Meetings / informal discussions. | Draft documents; Meetings / informal discussions. |
| Interest groups (Residents Associations) | Council Website; Public Exhibition; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Public Exhibition; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Public Exhibition; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. |
| Local community groups / organisations | Council Website; Public Exhibition; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Public Exhibition; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Public Exhibition; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. | Council Website; Draft documents; Workshop / seminar. |
| Neighbouring Local Planning Authorities | Meetings / Informal discussions; Draft documents. | Meetings / Informal discussions; Draft documents. | Meetings / Informal discussions; Draft documents. | Meetings / Informal discussions; Draft documents. | Meetings / Informal discussions; Draft documents. |

Appendix 3 – Sedgfield Borough Council Development Control Service Charter

The Development Control Team aims to provide a helpful and courteous service with minimum delay, which is fair and of the highest standard within the constraints of the resources available.

The purpose of the Development Control Service Charter is to explain, as simply as possible, how planning applications are dealt with and other development control related matters handled and the standards of service that can be expected by customers of the service, whoever they may be.

The following deals with the various stages in the processing of a planning application and sets out the standards which the Charter is a guide for users of the service, especially the general public and is therefore worded accordingly.

Pre-Application Discussions: Asking for Information and Advice

Discussions are welcomed before an application is submitted so as to encourage high quality applications and to ensure that they can be dealt with as efficiently as possible. To assist applicants and their agents the Council operates a multi-disciplinary One Stop Shop, which is designed to provide a single point of contact within the Council. The One Stop Shop meets once a week to discuss enquiries and to highlight any concerns, objections or comments. The meeting is not open to members of the public but where a large proposal is proposed applicants and their agents will be given the opportunity to make a brief presentation.

The advice given will be accurate and objective, but will be without prejudice to the formal consideration of an application. Information, where appropriate, will be given about relevant planning policies and previous decisions and about the Council's requirements for common types of development. An explanation of how an application is submitted and considered, how the decision is made, people's right of access to information and documentation and the standards of development quality the Council expects will be given at this stage.

Copies of the Council's planning policies and other relevant documents will be made available if necessary as will general leaflets or design guidelines to assist in this process. Council procedures, Committee dates and Membership can also be made known. Advice will also be offered on any other approvals or consents which may be necessary, such as Building Regulations approval.

Submitting a Planning Application

It is the applicant's responsibility to make sure that the application is submitted correctly. (An applicant may engage an agent to act on his or her behalf, For the purpose of this Charter both shall be referred to as the applicant.) However, if needed, help or advice will be available for completing the applications forms. The applicant will be told what fee is payable.

Each valid application will be registered and its receipt acknowledged within 3 working days.

The acknowledgement letter to confirm registration of the application will explain the rights of the applicant with regard to the statutory eight-week period (16 week period if accompanied by an environmental assessment) for determination. The case officer dealing with the application will be identified on the acknowledgement.

If the application is incomplete or invalid the applicant will be notified within 3 working days with an explanation of how this deficiency can be remedied. If the application is for a proposal which is permitted development, or for which planning permission is not otherwise required, it will be returned within 3 working days and the fee refunded.

Dealing with an Application

The case officer will make an early visit to the site, usually within 7 days of receiving the made-up application file. If access to the site is required, but not freely available, a suitable appointment will be made where necessary in order to gain entry.

If the need for further information arises while the application is being dealt with, the applicant will be notified of that need and the reason for it.

If the submitted proposal is unacceptable but amendments could be made to overcome its deficiencies, suitable revisions will be suggested to the applicant.

This request will normally be made within 21 days of the receipt of the application in order that amendments can be submitted and a decision made within the eight-week statutory period. Applicants will be informed about the progress of the application. Where officers are minded to refuse a planning application the applicant or the applicant's agent will be notified in advance of a formal decision being made. This will enable an applicant to decide whether to withdraw the application or to allow the application to be determined thereby enabling an appeal to be lodged with the Planning Inspectorate. Where an application is refused, officers will provide advice on the appeal procedures.

Notifying the Public

The Statutory Register, which lists all current planning applications and past decisions will be available for public inspection during normal office hours.

The Council's Publicity Code of Practice will be made available to members of the Public.

An officer will usually be available during office hours to provide information and advice. Information about planning applications received will be provided weekly. Those people notified about a specific planning application will be advised how they can make comments on it and will be allowed a minimum of

21 days in which to do so. The notification will also give advice on speaking at committee. Advice will be given on the type of comments which can be taken into account. If material revisions, i.e. significant changes are to be made to the application, interested parties will always be re-notified and allowed a further 7 to 14 days for comment depending upon the extent of the revisions.

The case officer, on request, may visit at home those people who are unable to visit the office, such as disabled or elderly people or parents with young children, to explain the planning proposals.

Appendix 4 – Sedgefield Borough Council Planning Enforcement Charter

- ◆ The Council recognises the importance of establishing effective controls over unauthorised development and reasonable resources will be committed to ensure effective implementation and maintenance of planning enforcement control.
- ◆ We will acknowledge all complaints in writing within 3 working days giving the name and telephone extension number of the Enforcement Officer to whom all further correspondence should be addressed.
- ◆ All complaints will be registered and given a file reference number and allocated to the Planning Enforcement Officer.
- ◆ All complaints will, as far as possible, be dealt with in confidence.
- ◆ The case officer will make an initial visit to the site within a maximum of 10 working days (Subject to the Priority Checklist) to establish whether or not there has been a breach of planning control.
- ◆ Complaints will be prioritised by those cases involving:
 1. Immediate and unacceptable harm to the residential amenity of more than one household.
 2. Road safety, and other public safety issues.
 3. Adverse effects on the character of Conservation Areas, the fabric and setting of Listed Buildings, scheduled monuments, historic parks & gardens, battlefields and sites of nature conservation interest.
 4. The potential loss of mature trees or hedgerows which are important for their visual amenity.
 5. Severely degraded environment in a prominent location.
 6. Development proposals where conditions designed to protect the amenity of the area have either been breached or not been discharged.
 7. Impacts on the amenity of one household.
 8. Possible breach, having low impact on the residential amenity of one or more household.
- ◆ Where a complaint relates to alleged unauthorised use of land or buildings a minimum of 3 site investigations will be made within 25 working days.
- ◆ We will reach an initial conclusion and tell the complainant of the decision which has been made in writing within a maximum of 25 working days.
- ◆ Where a case requires further consideration, investigation, research or seeking a legal opinion the complainant will be advised of any significant developments. Complainants may also be provided with monitoring sheets where appropriate.

- ◆ We will notify complainants of the authority's decision to take formal action within 7 working days of the decision being made.
- ◆ Where a complaint results in the submission of a retrospective planning application all complainants will be notified within 7 working days of its receipt and the standards set out in the Development Control Service Charter will apply.
- ◆ Action will not normally be taken against minor or technical breaches of planning control, which cause no harm to residential amenity or highway safety.
- ◆ Information will be shared with other Council departments and other bodies where appropriate to ensure that a 'joined up approach' to planning enforcement is secured.
- ◆ All new complaints will be reported to the Council's Development Committee on a monthly basis and an update will be produced bi-annually.
- ◆ We will notify all complainants of the decision to close a file within seven working days of the decision being made.
- ◆ Temporary Stop Notices will only be used when it is considered that there is a particularly urgent or serious case requiring the cessation of an unauthorised activity that has implications for public safety or related issues.
- ◆ Anonymous complaints will only be investigated where resources allow. In cases that are investigated these would not be given such a high priority (in accordance with the priority checklist) as a complaint that has been received with a completed complaint form that provides further information regarding the alleged breach.

Appendix 5 - Sedgfield Borough Council – Public Speaking at Development Control Committee

Do you want to have your say?

About Development Control Committee Meetings

Sedgfield Borough Council recognises the need to be open and accessible and has introduced public speaking at its Development Control Committee meetings to enable applicants, their agents and members of the public to make their views known to the Committee. The procedures have been designed to ensure that the Council satisfies the requirements of the Human Rights Act which came into force on 2nd October 2000 and seeks to ensure that everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing.

Who can speak at Development Control Committee?

You can speak at the Committee meeting:

- o If you have concerns over a current planning applications;
- o If you have submitted a planning application yourself;
- o If you are the agent of someone who has submitted a planning application.

What do I do if other people share my views on an application?

If you know of others who share your views, e.g. neighbours, you should try to nominate a spokesperson to represent the group to save repeating the same concerns. Ideally, you should try to arrange this prior to the Committee Meeting.

How can I find out when the Committee meetings are?

If you have made written representation to the Council you will be sent a letter setting out the date and venue of the Committee Meeting which will be considering the planning application that you are interested in. Alternatively, detail can be obtained from the Schedule of meetings located under Development Control Committee or by telephoning the Council Democratic Services on extension 4237 or you may wish to contact the planning officer. Meetings are normally held in the Council Chamber in the Council Offices, Green Lane, Spennymoor and are held approximately once every month. You should report to the Main Reception on arrival at the Council Offices.

How do I let the Council know I wish to speak?

To help ensure the Committee Meetings run smoothly, it would be helpful to let the Council know in advance that you wish to speak.

Please contact the Planning Case Officer at least two working days before the date of the Committee Meeting, indicating the issues that you intend to raise. This may be done by phone, fax, e-mail or letter.

If you turn up to speak without letting the Council know beforehand, you will still be entitled to speak, but may have to wait until your item is reached and officers may not be in a position to fully respond to your concerns.

Go to 'What are the procedures at Committee?' to find out at what point in the proceedings you will be invited to speak.

What can I speak about?

You should limit your comments to planning matters only. These are the only matters that the Council is allowed to consider in making decisions on planning applications.

As a guide you should at least tell the Committee:

- o Whether you object to, or support the application;
- o What particular aspects of the planning application you object to or support and why

Comments must not contain anything of defamatory or discriminatory nature.

How long should I speak for?

Normally not more than 5 minutes. It will be up to the Committee Chairperson to decide whether you can speak for longer, should you wish to do so.

The Committee members may also wish to ask you questions following your speech.

Remember that you may not be the only person speaking about a particular planning application, and that the application that you are interested in will not be the only one being considered at that Committee Meeting. The Committee will be much more likely to understand a short, ordered speech than a long, rambling one.

What are the procedures at Committee?

In order to ensure that Committee Meetings are conducted in a fair and open manner the following procedure has been adopted:

1. The planning officer will present his report outlining the main issues.
2. Committee members, where necessary, will ask questions of the planning officer.
3. Objectors and/or supporters will then be invited to speak by the Committee Chairperson.
4. Committee members will then be able to ask objectors and/or supporters questions.
5. The applicant or his/her agent will then speak.
6. Committee members will be given the opportunity to ask the applicant or his agent questions.
7. The Committee will then debate the matter. They will not hear any additional representations or comments, but may seek to check their understanding of the matters raised with the Borough Solicitor or Planning Officers.
8. When the Chair considers that there has been sufficient debate he/she will call for a decision.
9. Occasionally, the Development Control Committee may postpone making a decision on an application in order to make a site visit to clarify a particular issue.

Will I be able to make further representations if a site visit is agreed?

Where a site visit is agreed:

- o Objectors and/or supporters and the applicant or their agent will be notified of the date and time of the site visit.
- o Representations from objectors, supporters and applicants or their agents will not normally be allowed at the site visit unless Chairperson considers that factual information would help the Committee understand a particular issue.
- o Committee members will not make a decision on site but will return to the Council
- o Offices where the procedure for public speaking as outlined above will be adopted.

Does Committee determine all applications?

No. Under present arrangements the Head of Planning Services is able to determine small-scale proposals, such as house extensions, small industrial extensions and advertisements. These applications are known as delegated applications and are not normally considered by Committee. However, under the current scheme of delegation Members of the Council may request that an application which they consider raises significant issues, is presented to the Council's Development Control Committee.

Is there anything else I need to know?

- o You are present at the meeting as an observer, until such time as the Chairperson of the Development Control Committee invites you to speak.
- o Committees are open to the public. There may also be representatives from the local press present.
- o You are free to join or leave the meeting whenever you wish. Please try to do so quietly, so as not to disturb the rest of the meeting.


How will I find out what decision was made?

Once a decision is made all objectors and supporters will be notified in writing of the decision. Where an application is approved the letter will give full details of the conditions, which have been imposed, and in the case of a refusal, the reasons for refusal.

Where can I get more information and advice?

You can either contact the case officer by post, e-mail or by telephone at the following address:

Director of Neighbourhood Services
 Council Offices
 Spennymoor
 County Durham
 DL16 6JQ
 Tel. No. 01388 816166
 Email: development-control@sedgefield.gov.uk

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|--|--|
| <p>Appendix 6 - Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)</p> <p>Submission stage representation form</p> |  |
| <p>Office Use only:</p> | <p>Ref. No.:</p> <p>Date received:</p> <p>Date acknowledged:</p> |

Comments can be submitted by posting this form to the Forward Planning Team, or by completing via the website

Personal details

Title.....

First Name

Last Name

Job Title

Organisation (if applicable).....

Address

.....

.....

.....

.....

Post Code

Tel.....

Fax.....

Email.....

Agents details (if applicable)

Title.....

First Name

Last Name.....

Job Title

Organisation

Address

.....

.....

.....

.....

Post Code

Tel.....

Fax.....

Email.....

Nature of representation

Please select one of the following:

Are you either: Supporting part of the SCI;

If so to which part of the SCI does your representation relate:

Section.....

Paragraph.....

 Or: Objecting to part of the SCI;

If so to which part of the SCI does your representation relate:

Section.....

Paragraph.....

 Or: Objecting to the omission of a section or text

| |
|---|
| <p>If so where should the new section or text go in the SCI (please be as precise as possible):</p> |
|---|

Reason for objection

If you are objecting to the SCI please specify on which of the following tests of soundness you consider that this part of the SCI fails (see accompanying guidance notes):

- it complies with the minimum requirements for consultations as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004
- its strategy for community involvement links with other community involvement initiatives (e.g. the community strategy)
- it identifies in general terms which local community groups and other bodies will be consulted
- it identifies how the community and other bodies can be involved in a timely and accessible manner

- the methods of consultation to be employed are suitable for the intended audience and for the different stages in the preparation of local development documents
- resources are available to manage community involvement effectively
- it shows how the results of community involvement will be fed into the preparation of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents
- it sets out a mechanism for reviewing the SCI
- it clearly describes the policy for consultation on planning applications

Changes to the SCI

Please give details of what change(s) you would like to see to the SCI and why, having regard to the tests of soundness listed above (please be as precise as possible):

(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Can your representation be considered by written representations or do you consider it necessary to attend the Examination

- Either:
- Written Representations
 - Attend Examination, if so please outline why you consider this to be necessary:

The Inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to attend the Examination.

Signature **Date**.....

Please return form to:
Forward Planning Team
Neighbourhood Services
Sedgefield Borough Council
Council Offices
Spennymoor
Co. Durham
DL16 6JQ

Comments must be received on or before *th November 2005****