



West Dorset District Council

Statement of Community Involvement



Adopted 11 January 2007

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Summary

This statement of community involvement (sometimes referred to as an SCI) sets out how and when this council will involve people who are interested in West Dorset's future development with the preparing of planning policy and making decisions on planning applications. This document plays a key role in the new planning system, which aims to speed up the process of preparing plans and improve community involvement.

In preparing this document, we have complied with procedures set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

We want to make it as easy as possible for people to become involved in the planning system, and so have taken on board the guidance provided in the Dorset Compact, an agreement and code of good practice on consultation and involvement between the public sector and the voluntary and community sectors, in drafting this document.

To meet these aims, as a minimum we will publish all consultation documents, current applications and related information on the council's website and at the council offices, provide information at local libraries and through town and parish councils, as well as send consultation drafts to organisations that may be affected by the development. We will aim to set out documents and forms as clearly and as simply as possible. We will use different forms of publicity to try to raise awareness of what is proposed, and give advance notice whenever possible of forthcoming consultation, making it clear how and when you can make your views known. And we will provide feedback on what comments have been received, and how these have been taken into account.

This document provides more detailed information on how we will involve the community at the various stages of plan production, and how the council has considered whether there are sufficient resources to meet these aims. It also contains a list of organisations that will be consulted during the preparation of the local development framework, although by its nature this can only be indicative, as it is inevitable that organisations will change during the time this statement of community involvement is in use.

We will look to use existing networks and partnerships to help improve community involvement, such as the town and parish councils and local area partnerships that have developed as a result of community planning. We will also strive to improve our links with the "hard-to-reach" and under-represented groups that have not in the past engaged with the planning process.

In return, we ask that your comments are clearly made and that we receive them within the published timescale, and that you understand that your comments will be made publicly available and that, although we will treat all respondents equally, we cannot guarantee that your views will prevail. For example, planning policy documents need to conform in general with national and regional guidelines, and have regard to the council's community strategy. We cannot ignore these requirements.

We will collect information on how successful our approach has been through consultation feedback and surveys of customer satisfaction, and assess whether we need to revise our approach when we publish our annual monitoring report each December. Any changes will take on board emerging best practice guidance or changes in legislation, and will be subject to further public consultation.

Contact details for more information are in section 1.2 of this report.

1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose of this statement of community involvement

- 1.1.1. This statement of community involvement (sometimes referred to as an SCI) sets out how and when West Dorset District Council will involve the community in preparing its local development framework. It also explains how the council will involve the community in dealing with planning applications and the role of developers in that process. The council must comply with this statement of community involvement when preparing planning policy documents. Inspectors, in testing these documents, will determine whether the council has done so. Failure to do so could result in the inspector recommending that the document be withdrawn.
- 1.1.2. The statement of community involvement forms part of the new planning system that was introduced in 2004¹. The system aims to speed up the process of preparing plans, as well as improving community involvement. Further details of key changes are given in section 4.1. An explanation of terms used is provided in Appendix 1.
- 1.1.3. In preparing this statement of community involvement, the council has followed the procedures set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations, 2004.

1.2. Who to contact for further information

- 1.2.1. You can find out more about the new planning system in “Creating better places to live – a guide to the planning system in England”. This was published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now Communities and Local Government) and is available on www.communities.gov.uk. Further information and guidance on the planning system is available on the internet on the planning portal at www.planningportal.gov.uk. Alternatively, a simple “West Dorset District Council guide to the new planning system” is available from the district council or on-line at www.dorsetforyou.com, alongside information on the council’s local development framework documents and planning applications.
- 1.2.2. To find out more about this statement of community involvement, planning policy, or to have your details added to (or removed from) our consultation database, please contact the planning policy division at the address below:

Planning Policy Division
West Dorset District Council
Stratton House
58-60 High West Street
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 1UZ

Tel: 01305 252386
Fax: 01305 251481
Email: local.policy@westdorset-dc.gov.uk

¹ The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

- 1.2.3. For information and queries on planning applications please contact the development services division at the address below:

Development Services
West Dorset District Council
Stratton House
58-60 High West Street
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 1UZ

Tel: 01305 252223
Fax: 01305 251481
Email: devserv@westdorset-dc.gov.uk

- 1.2.4. Dorset County Council is the minerals and waste planning authority, and questions regarding its statement of community involvement which deals with participation on minerals and waste planning matters, should be addressed to:

Minerals and Waste Planning Policy Team, Environmental Services
Dorset County Council
County Hall
Colliton Park
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 1XJ

Tel: 01305 228585
Fax: 01305 224914
Email: mwds@dorsetcc.gov.uk

- 1.2.5. Planning Aid is a voluntary service offering free, professional and impartial advice on planning issues to community groups and individuals who cannot afford to employ a planning consultant. Planning Aid in West Dorset is provided by the South West regional team which can be contacted on 0870 850 9807 or via www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk.

2. Defining community involvement

2.1. Definition of community

- 2.1.1. By community we mean any person or organisation interested in West Dorset's social, environmental and economic future, or having information that will help us make decisions, and any person or organisation which makes decisions that will affect West Dorset's future development. This includes:

- The general public
- Parish and town councils, and other governmental organisations
- Local community and interest groups
- Voluntary and social organisations
- Businesses

- Landowners, developers and their agents
- Local service and utility providers (e.g. healthcare and water)
- Advisory bodies (e.g. Environment Agency)

2.2. Effective community involvement

- 2.2.1. A key objective of the new planning system is to strengthen community involvement in both the preparation of planning policy and the consideration of planning applications. The statement of community involvement is intended to ensure that there is active, meaningful and continued involvement of local communities and stakeholders throughout both processes.
- 2.2.2. Planning shapes the places where people live and work and so the essence of community involvement in planning is to give local people the chance to influence the type of place in which they live and work. We want to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity at an early stage to get involved in the planning process. Considering the views, wishes and local knowledge of the community at an early stage should encourage community ownership of planning policies and decisions. The continuing involvement of local people and other organisations in the planning process, together with improved feedback at appropriate stages on the issues raised and how these have been addressed, should help achieve consensus on potentially controversial issues.
- 2.2.3. Effective community involvement in the planning process means:
- Stakeholders and local communities can bring different knowledge and perspectives to the planning process, improving the quality of decision making.
 - Outcomes may be better understood and better reflect the views and needs of the community and there is likely to be a greater sense of “local ownership” of the planning process.
 - There are opportunities to promote regeneration and investment through working with landowners, developers and regeneration agencies.
 - All participants are more aware of how local government works, the planning system and the significance of guidance from the Regional Assembly or the Government.

A full list of those consulted about planning policy matters is contained in Appendix 2.

3. Commitment to consultation and involvement

3.1. What we can do, and what you can do

- 3.1.1. The council wants to make it as easy as possible for you to become involved in the planning system. The council already has a general consultation policy that states how it will manage its consultation function on a council-wide basis. It is available for viewing at www.dorsetforyou.com/consultation/west. The council has also signed up to the Dorset Compact, an agreement and code of good practice on consultation and involvement between the public sector and the voluntary and community sectors. The aims of the compact are to:
- Build on the existing relationships and good practice between the public sector and the voluntary and community sectors

- Strive to maintain and improve the quality of life for individuals and communities in Dorset
- Base our relationship on trust, openness, fairness and consistency.

3.1.2. This statement of community involvement follows the commitments of the compact (and broadens its application to include other types of organisation, such as business and commerce) and the council's general consultation policy as far as possible. Although it is not possible to comply with the minimum consultation timescales set out in the compact's code of good practice, as statutory consultation periods of four to six weeks on draft policy documents are set out in national legislation, there is flexibility to spend time ensuring widespread involvement at earlier stages subject to the timescales set out in the council's work programme, the local development scheme.

3.1.3. The following is what you can expect of us as a *minimum* when you are involved in consultation exercises:

- All draft documents published for consultation, current applications and related information will be available for viewing on the council's website and at the council offices, and copies will be available, either free of charge or at a charge reflecting the cost of production
- Copies of draft and final documents will be available for viewing at local libraries (ie: all public libraries in West Dorset, on the mobile library service and in the Weymouth Central Library)
- Copies of consultation draft documents will be sent to all town and parish councils in and adjoining the district or relevant area. The council will encourage town and parish councils to make these readily available to local residents
- Copies of consultation draft documents (in either electronic or paper form depending on consultees' preferences) will be sent to all statutory consultees (those the council is legally obliged to consult) and other organisations that the council considers may be affected by the policy document
- We will aim to provide enough information for you to understand and respond to the consultation
- We will publish all relevant background papers relating to draft policy documents at the beginning of the period of consultation and make them available at the council offices and on the council's website
- We will aim to set out documents and forms as clearly and as simply as possible. In particular, we will aim to use plain English and avoid acronyms, make alternatives / options explicit, make reference to relevant legislation, use diagrams and tables where these would improve understanding, and keep documents as brief as possible (and, in the case of lengthy documents, include a one-page summary and/or provide a summary version if practical)
- Large print and translated versions of documents will be available on request as well as versions in audio and Braille
- We will use different forms of publicity such as press releases, direct mail and the council's website

- We will publicise applications via town / parish councils, neighbour notification, press advertisement or site notice in accordance with an agreed approach²
- We will make it clear how and when you can make your views known
- We will give advance notice whenever possible of forthcoming consultation through press releases, website, Community Link and town and parish council newsletters
- We will ensure that buildings used for consultation events are accessible to those with disabilities
- We will treat all respondents equally, and the weight given to your comments will reflect their relevance to the matter in hand and relation to other factors and issues raised
- We will make your comments publicly available so that others with an interest in the same issue can view them
- We will publish a report of consultation on draft policy documents, which will summarise all planning related comments received in the publicised time period and how these have been taken into account. This will be made available in the council offices, local libraries and on the council's website. The council will also issue a press release highlighting key issues that have arisen through consultation, and how these have been addressed, on matters where there has been widespread community interest.

3.1.4. In return, to ensure that your involvement is effective, we will expect the following of you:

- You will provide comments in a clear and precise format related to the issues being considered and within the published timescale. If during formal consultation periods you wish to comment on more than one aspect of a draft policy document, you will use a separate form for each comment.
- You will be aware and accept that comments will be made publicly available.
- You will be courteous and respectful of other people's views.
- You will be aware that, in order to meet the test of soundness, planning policy documents need in general to conform with national planning policy and the regional spatial strategy, and have regard to the council's community strategy. Failure to do so could result in the inspector recommending changes (which would be binding on the council), or the document being withdrawn.
- You will accept that in considering comments on planning policy documents and applications we are unable to guarantee that views of individuals or organisations will prevail.

3.2. Role of elected members

3.2.1. District and county councillors are elected by the general public normally for a four year term, and their primary role is to represent their area (ward) and those who live in it. They also have a central part to play in making decisions that impact on their ward and across the whole council. They are involved in decision-making through a range of means, including their participation in full council meetings, regulatory committees such as development control, and membership of partnership boards. They can also contribute to

² approach agreed at 16 December 2003 Executive Committee (minute 997a)

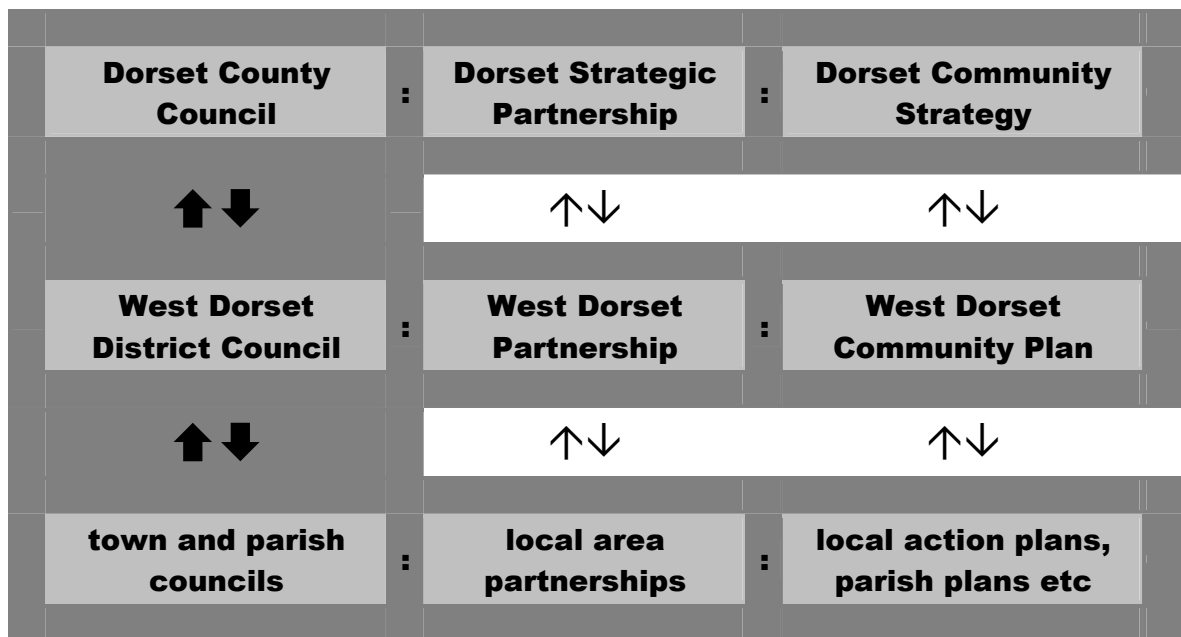
the policy process through, for example, their involvement in the overview and scrutiny function, advisory groups, and as representatives on local community groups.

- 3.2.2. Town and parish councils both within and adjoining the boundary of West Dorset play a key role as statutory consultees in the preparation of planning policy documents and consideration of planning applications. By their very nature, these councils maintain a close relationship with the local community, as they are made up of local people, elected by local people, and hold local meetings through which the public can raise issues of local concern. We will encourage town and parish councils to take part in relevant consultation events, and will send them copies of all consultation documents and ensure they are kept up to date with the process through correspondence and documents sent to the clerks. We will also support the use of parish newsletters and magazines for publicising consultation events and keeping local people informed of progress.

3.3. Links with existing networks and partnerships

- 3.3.1. Whenever possible, to involve the community, we will use existing networks and partnerships that we have access to.

Fig. 1 Community planning in West Dorset



- 3.3.2. The West Dorset Partnership is a group of local organisations committed to working together to improve the quality of life of the people of West Dorset. The partnership has produced a community plan that aims to help better coordinate and improve their actions. It draws its members from a wide cross-section of public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate across West Dorset, including democratically elected bodies such as the district and county councils, representatives of the local area partnerships, other service providers and organisations with specific areas of expertise. It therefore represents an important consultee on planning policy. There may be opportunities to combine consultation processes, at appropriate times, in order to share resources, make best use of officer time and avoid carrying out too many separate consultations at the same time. These links will also help ensure local planning policy can help meet the aspirations contained in the community plan.

- 3.3.3. Local area partnerships, based on the district's market towns and their surrounding parishes, aim to include all sections of the community, identify community needs and reflect the views of local people. They are represented on the district partnership and are a valuable way to consult with local communities, providing the district partnership with information on local opinion and issues. We will seek to develop the consultation role of local area partnerships and involve them in consultation, particularly where proposals for their areas are being developed.
- 3.3.4. The Dorset Strategic Partnership is an over-arching body covering the whole of rural Dorset to guide and support operational activity. This is achieved by implementing, monitoring and reviewing the Dorset Community Strategy, a long term plan focused on those big issues that are significant for a large number of people and cannot be tackled through local community plans alone. The West Dorset Partnership is represented at the Dorset Strategic Partnership so local issues are considered at the county level where appropriate.
- 3.3.5. We recognise the need to avoid too many separate consultation exercises, and so wherever possible we will link related consultation exercises to make it easier for consultees to respond.

3.4. Hard-to-reach groups

- 3.4.1. One of the Government's aims behind the new planning system is to address the needs of "hard-to-reach" and under represented groups that have not historically engaged with the planning process. These may include young people, ethnic minorities, disabled people and minority religious groups: people may also be under-represented as a result of poverty, rural isolation, nationality, sexual orientation, language and basic skill needs. In a rural district like West Dorset, hard-to-reach groups include those living in rural areas, and particularly the elderly.
- 3.4.2. There are a number of existing local forums and networks across West Dorset, including parish and town councils and the local area partnerships, that may enable us to reach people that may not have previously been involved with planning. The district council already regularly consults with the South West Dorset Multi-Cultural Network. Older peoples' forums and youth forums are being set up in the market towns. We will consider when and how it would be appropriate to consult these forums and will think about the location and time of any meetings, access and communication needs and childcare.

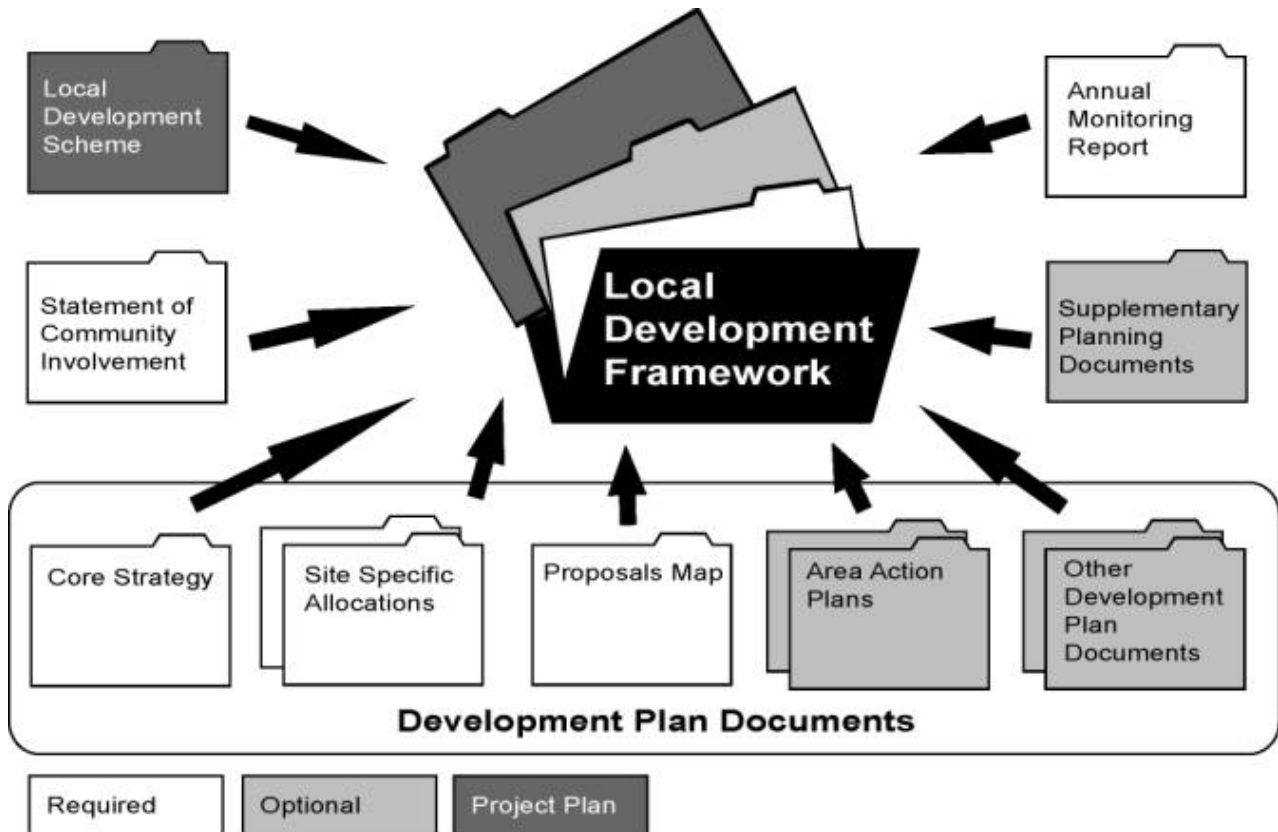
4. From local plan to local development framework

4.1. The new planning system and transition from the old

- 4.1.1. Under the new legislation the district council, as local planning authority, is responsible for preparing a range of new planning documents collectively known as the local development framework (sometimes referred to as the LDF) that in time will replace the local plan. These are shown in Figure 2. The local development framework will include development plan documents (DPDs) such as the core strategy, site specific allocations of land (either contained within the core strategy, action area plans or as a separate document), and a proposals map. It may also contain action area plans where these are needed, and supplementary planning documents (SPDs), such as development briefs for particular sites. The new planning system has also introduced three additional documents (this statement of community involvement, the local development scheme and an annual

monitoring report) that will form part of the local development framework, and help manage and provide clear guidance on the planning process. The county council will continue to deal with minerals and waste planning matters, and contact details regarding this service are provided in section 1.2.

Fig. 2: The New Planning System



4.1.2. The development plan, which consists of the regional spatial strategy prepared by the South West Regional Assembly (the regional planning body) and development plan documents prepared by this council (and, in the case of minerals and waste matters, by Dorset County Council), will continue to be the starting point in the consideration of planning applications for the development or use of land³.

4.1.3. The new planning legislation includes transitional arrangements to ensure a smooth changeover to the new system. In West Dorset where work was well progressed in preparing a new local plan, that local plan will form the majority of our local development framework until 2009. During this period, we will begin to prepare replacement documents under the new system. New supplementary planning documents will also be prepared as part of the local development framework.

4.2. Planning policy documents

4.2.1. Planning policy is set out in two types of local development documents (LDDs):

- Development plan documents (DPDs) – these set out the general and specific policies guiding development in the district and will be examined independently.

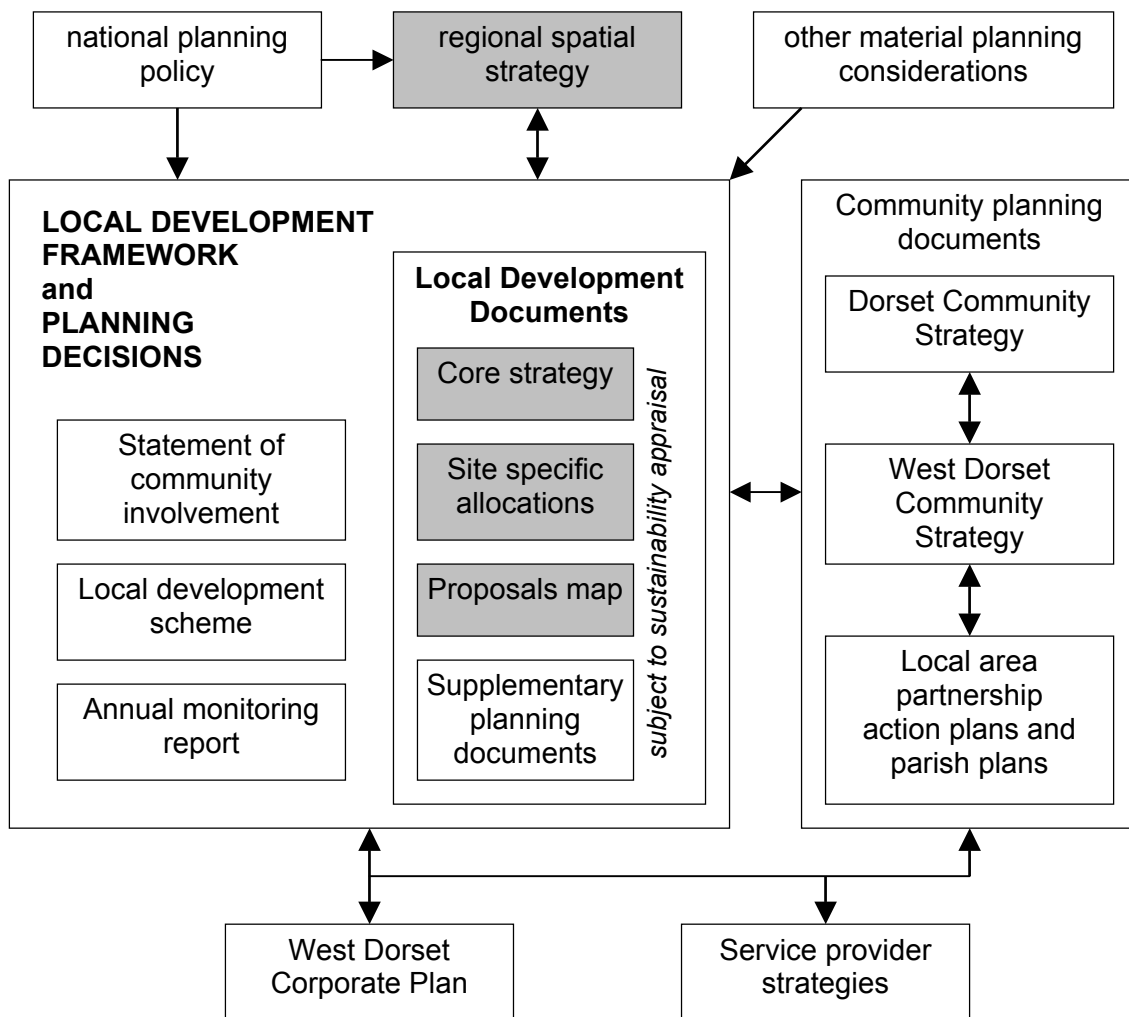
³ Section 38(6) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Development plan documents will need to conform in general with the regional spatial strategy (RSS), prepared by the South West Regional Assembly. The regional spatial strategy and development plan documents together form the development plan for the district, which is the primary consideration when determining planning applications.

- Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) – these expand on or provide more detail on the policies outlined in development plan documents. They do not form part of the development plan and are not subject to independent examination.

Figure 3 shows how these planning policy documents link with other relevant documents and what other factors may influence policy and decision making.

Fig. 3: Matters influencing planning policy and decisions



4.2.2. We must consult and engage with communities when preparing each development plan document and supplementary planning document, as is set out in this statement of community involvement. A statement of compliance will be produced alongside each of the documents showing how this has been done.

4.2.3. The specific local development documents that we will produce are set out in the local development scheme (LDS). This sets out our programme for preparing local development documents and includes proposed consultation times. The local

development scheme can be viewed at www.dorsetforyou.com and paper copies are available from the council (see section 1.2 for contact details).

4.3. Sustainability appraisals

- 4.3.1. A sustainability appraisal must be undertaken for each development plan and supplementary planning document. Sustainability appraisals are a way to assess the potential social, environmental and economic effects of policies and proposals and ensure they reflect sustainable development principles.
- 4.3.2. Community involvement is required during the production of sustainability appraisals. As they will be produced for each local development document, opportunities for involvement are likely to occur at the same stages as for the development plan document or supplementary planning document to which they relate.

4.4. Making comments and receiving feedback

- 4.4.1. It should be as easy as possible for you to make comments at all stages in the preparation of planning policy. When we are undertaking formal consultation stages you will be able to respond:
- By using paper forms which will be made available with all copies of the relevant documents and also at exhibitions / information days, the council offices and local libraries. These can be placed in the boxes at the event or returned by post, fax or by hand
 - By completing online forms and returning them electronically, or downloading forms from the website and returning them by post, fax or by hand
 - In writing to the council, clearly stating your name, contact details, the aspect of the policy document / application that you support or object to and why, and what related changes you would like made.

If you wish to comment on more than one aspect of a local development document you will be asked to use a separate form for each comment during the formal consultation stages. This helps to make your views clear to officers so that there can be no doubt about the detail of the changes you would like to see made to the policies or proposals.

- 4.4.2. Figure 4 outlines the ways the council will raise awareness and encourage community involvement. The following chapters include a more detailed breakdown of what methods will be used at each stage, and the resource implications that have been and will need to be considered.
- 4.4.3. Your comments will inform the decision making process but will have to be viewed alongside other information and constraints. Feedback will be given at or before the next milestone in preparing that local development framework document, as set out in the local development scheme. A report of the consultation will be produced which will include a summary of the comments received, possibly grouped into common themes, and the council's responses to them. Any findings will be considered by officers and members in the production and review of DPDs and SPDs. The report will be available on the council's website, public libraries and at the council offices.

Fig. 4 – Proposed methods of awareness raising and involvement

Methods – awareness raising	Description and issues	Possible resource implications
Letters to statutory consultees and those on the local development framework database	Letters will be used to advise of consultation exercises, how people can become involved and when. They will also advise of the publication of any documents for consultation, where and when they can be inspected and how comments can be made. They may also be used to provide feedback on consultation.	Relatively low cost (printing / postage). Staff resources are required to maintain the consultation database/s.
Emails	Emails will be used as an alternative to letters wherever possible and wherever this is acceptable to consultees, to provide information, send copies of documents and provide feedback.	No direct cost, although staff resources are required to maintain the email database/s.
Internet	Details of consultation exercises and the relevant documents will be available on the internet. There will normally be the opportunity to make consultation responses online during the formal consultation periods. The internet may also be used to provide feedback on consultation.	Updating the council website can be done internally at no additional cost.
Press coverage: local newspapers, television and radio	Press releases with details of local events and consultation exercises can be sent to local media. When consultation and participation events are due to take place or documents are due out for consultation, information will be placed in local newspapers.	Whilst press coverage can be free, broader advertising costs may arise.
Posters and leaflets	These will be used to raise awareness of the process and inform people of consultation exercises they can become involved in. Posters could be displayed at a range of locations including local / parish notice boards, libraries, council offices, supermarkets, doctors' surgeries, village shops, pubs and on local buses. House-to-house leaflet drops would only be used in those circumstances where this would be resource-efficient, for example, if it were limited to a small area in relation to a site specific proposals and the developer / local community were prepared to help.	Relatively low cost for printing / design, but requires cooperation of external parties to ensure effective and resource-efficient distribution.
Community Link	Council newsletter distributed to all homes and businesses in West Dorset.	No additional costs, although dependent on timing and available space.
Town and parish council newsletters and other community magazines	Many parish councils and community groups produce newsletters that could feature details about consultation events and dates. Their frequency and distribution will need to be taken into account in assessing whether to use this method.	No additional costs, although dependent on timing and available space.

Methods – awareness raising	Description and issues	Possible resource implications
Documents available for inspection and comment at council offices, libraries and on the internet	This method provides direct access to the documents and is particularly important during the preferred options stage and the submission stage for development plan documents.	The availability of documents at the council offices is a legal requirement. Updating the council website can be done internally at no additional cost, and access to the internet is available free in local libraries. A charge for hard copies of documents may be levied at the discretion of the council, in order to balance the need to promote consultation against the cost to the taxpayer. In addition, staff time will be needed to answer questions.
Exhibitions, displays and information events	Mobile exhibitions that may be manned by planning officers or for display purposes only could be situated at different locations in the district. These would normally have been held in town and village halls, but we will also explore the potential for attending parish and town council meetings and/or local area partnership events, as well as the use of alternative locations, such as libraries, youth centres, supermarkets, on-street, markets etc. Where possible consideration will be given to extending the times available to outside normal working hours in order to maximise the number of people able to attend.	Preparation costs (design and production of display material) and staff time can be significant, particularly if the exhibition is manned. However, this method can greatly increase understanding on planning issues.
Formal written consultation / surveys	Postal surveys can focus responses on key questions and provide views from a representative sample of the community provided care is taken in their design and distribution.	Significant costs can be incurred in the design, distribution and analysis of the survey, which may be reduced through using established panels (such as the West Dorset Residents' Panel) and/or sharing consultation exercises if timing permits and where this would not cause confusion.
One-to-one meetings, round table sessions / focus group discussions	Meetings with groups or individuals to discuss issues.	Primarily staff time and possibly venue hire.
Conference / seminar	Invite a range of organisations to come and learn about the local development framework preparation process and shape the vision, issues and options etc.	Staff time, and possibly venue hire and cost of speakers.
Workshops or 'Planning for Real' events	A range of more creative approaches to consultation – for example using a model or map of a town or area and inviting suggestions for change or improvement to be added by consultees.	Preparation costs and staff time can be significant. However, this method can greatly increase understanding on planning issues.
School involvement	We will explore the possibility of working with school children (11+) and how we could link with their studies to involve them in the process and obtain their ideas and views.	To be explored.

5. Getting involved in the preparation of development plan documents

5.1. Key stages

5.1.1. The process of producing a development plan document provides four key opportunities for involving communities:

- Gathering of evidence
- Considering issues and options
- Preferred options stage
- Submission stage.

5.1.2. There will be both informal (non-statutory) and formal (statutory) consultation, with the formal consultation taking place on the preferred options document and the submission document. The council will aim to explain the purpose of consultation at each stage, who is being targeted to respond, and how it fits within the overall programme, so the community can better understand when their involvement will be most effective. All points of view expressed will be considered in the preparation of the development plan document.

5.1.3. A table summarising the consultation stages, methods & resource implications appears below (Figure 5). For more detailed information about a specific planned document, please refer to the local development scheme which is reviewed on a yearly basis.

Fig. 5: Consultation stages, methods & resource implications for DPDs

Stage	Methods – awareness raising and consultation		Resource implications
Evidence gathering	Publicity	Website updates	Low / medium
	Letter	Mailshot to statutory consultees, local community representatives (in particular the relevant local area partnerships and town or parish councils)	
	Meetings	One-to-one meetings, round table sessions or focus group discussions will be arranged where the initial mailshot flags up the need for further discussions.	
	Workshop / surveys	Surveys may be undertaken if known to be required for the evidence base.	
	Other	Start of preparation shown in local development scheme	
Issues and options	Publicity	Local press coverage and website updates, use of the council's and community newsletters where timing allows. Posters / leaflets where appropriate.	High Use of posters / leaflets will depend on the local nature of the document and resources available. Emails will be used as an alternative to letters wherever possible and acceptable to consultees.
	Letter	Mailshot to statutory consultees, town / parish councils in and adjoining the area, West Dorset Partnership and local area partnerships. Other individuals / organisation on the database will be notified in writing.	

cont'd...

Issues and options	Meetings	Exhibitions, seminars or information days; involvement of town / parish councils and local area partnerships (combined or one-to-one meetings). Round table sessions / focus group discussions with groups or individuals may be used to discuss general or more specific issues.	The extent of meetings / workshops / surveys and other forms of consultation will be tailored according to the significance of the document and availability of staff resources. For example, a conference / seminar approach is likely to be particularly valuable at the early stages of developing the core strategy, whereas a 'planning for real event' is more suited to preparing area-based policies such as consulting on an action area plan which require a more creative and area-focused input. We will explore the possibility of working with school children (11+) and how we could link with their studies to involve them in the process and get their ideas and views.
	Workshop / surveys	Interactive workshops, 'planning for real' exercises or surveys where this would help explore and increase understanding of particular issues and alternative options.	
	Other	We may involve local schools in discussion of relevant issues.	
Preferred options	Publicity	Local press coverage and website updates. Use of the council's and community newsletters where timing allows. The draft document will also be available for viewing on the council's website, at the council offices and in local libraries. Posters / leaflets where appropriate.	Medium The internet will normally be used to provide on-line facilities for feedback. Emails will be used as an alternative to letters wherever possible and acceptable to consultees.
	Letter	Copies of the draft document will be sent to a range of statutory and other consultees, including town / parish councils in and adjoining the area, West Dorset Partnership and local area partnerships. Other individuals / organisations on the database will be notified in writing.	
	Meetings	Exhibitions and/or information days.	
	Workshop / surveys	Comment forms will be used to ensure that there can be no doubt about the detail of the changes to the policies or proposals requested.	
	Other	-	
Submission document	Publicity	(as preferred options stage above)	(as preferred options stage above)
	Letter		
	Meetings		
	Workshop / surveys		
	Other		
Adoption	Publicity	Local press coverage and website updates. The adopted development plan document and related reports will also be available for viewing on the council's website, at the council offices and in local libraries.	Low
	Letter	Mailshot to statutory consultees, town / parish councils in and adjoining the area, West Dorset Partnership, local area partnerships and those persons and organisations on the database.	
	Meetings	-	
	Workshop / surveys	-	
	Other	-	

5.2. Evidence gathering

- 5.2.1. The first stage is to gather evidence and factual information to help identify the issues and needs of the area. Evidence could come from reports, strategies, specific pieces of research and from a wide range of sources including organisations that operate at a local level in West Dorset or organisations that operate on a wider level but have specialist knowledge or expertise. We will also consider evidence of local issues and opinions, including parish plans, village appraisals, village design statements, surveys of local housing needs and other relevant surveys at this stage. We will use the results of the council's regular MORI residents' panel surveys to gain additional evidence of residents' views. The council will notify local community representatives (in particular the relevant local area partnerships and town or parish councils) that work on the development plan document is beginning, so that they can highlight information and/or be more involved in the early stages where beneficial. Meetings with various organisations / representative groups may be held during this stage if feedback from the initial mailshot indicates that these would be useful. Surveys may be undertaken where existing data is lacking and resources allow.
- 5.2.2. At this stage the council will prepare a scoping report for consultation⁴, which will consider what social, economic and environmental issues are relevant, and contain a 'sustainability checklist' that can be used to validate the policies that will be included in the development plan document. If when checking we find that a policy performs badly then we can make the necessary changes before the document is finalised. The council is required to consult Natural England,⁵ the Environment Agency and English Heritage for a five week period. The council will also consult other relevant bodies with environmental or socio-economic responsibilities if appropriate, and will publish the scoping report on the council's website.

5.3. Considering issues and options

- 5.3.1. When we have an evidence base we will involve communities in the development of issues and alternative options. We will also do an initial sustainability appraisal of the emerging issues and options.
- 5.3.2. At this stage a wide range of consultation methods will be used to consult the community on alternative options and issues. Effective and continuous participation is essential at this stage to ensure that the views of the community are fully considered by the council in determining the preferred issues and options. This stage will allow the community to become involved before decisions on key issues have been taken.
- 5.3.3. The consultation methods to be used at this stage will be interactive where this would help explore and increase understanding of particular issues and alternative options. These may be in the form of workshops, 'planning for real' exercises or surveys. The residents' panel may be used to answer specific questions about options for policy development, or we may carry out questionnaire surveys of the general public or more targeted groups. Other consultation methods used may include: exhibitions or information days; involvement of town and parish councils (either through a written consultation, combined or one-to-one meetings); and consultation with the West Dorset Partnership and local area partnerships. We may also hold a conference or seminar at this stage, round table

⁴ As required by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, 2004 and Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

⁵ Natural England was established through the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill, and brings together English Nature, parts of the Countryside Agency and most of the Rural Development Service.

sessions or focus group discussions, and may involve local schools in discussing relevant issues.

- 5.3.4. At this stage it will be important to ensure that people are aware of the opportunities they have to become involved. We will use the local press to inform people of the consultation methods and relevant dates. Other methods, such as posters, leaflets, use of the council's newsletter Community Link and articles and information in parish council newsletters and community magazines, may also be appropriate to publicise information. We will also consider how we could reach a wider audience by using local radio to publicise events and consultation details.
- 5.3.5. It is our intention to seek from developers and landowners, at this stage, the submission of alternative sites to be considered for allocation where appropriate to the type of development plan document. It is important that potential sites are highlighted as early in the process as possible, in order that they can be fully appraised and considered. Organisations will be written to and invited to make representations on the publication of alternative issues and options⁶. The council will also publicise these alternatives for comment. The council will notify all those on its consultation database of any published documents for consultation, detailing alternative issues and options, on which they can comment. Should you wish to have your name and contact details added to or removed from this database please contact us (see section 1.2). Relevant documentation will be available on the council's website and paper copies will be made available from council offices and libraries in the district, on the mobile library service and in Weymouth Central Library.
- 5.3.6. At all stages in the preparation of the local development framework there will be individual contact, with officers available to take calls and emails or meet with individuals, where appropriate and resources permit.

5.4. Preferred options stage

- 5.4.1. Having consulted on alternative issues and options, the responses and information gathered will enable us to come up with the "preferred options". There will be a statutory six week period for formal consultation on the preferred options document. At this stage the council will also prepare and publish the sustainability appraisal report, which will include an appraisal of alternatives, and proposals to counter adverse effects. Public consultation on this will take place over the same six week period, to determine the levels of local acceptability and invite comments.
- 5.4.2. The council will advertise the consultation by means of press releases and notices in local newspapers. Where timing and space permits, the council will use its own newsletter (Community Link) and relevant local community newsletters to further increase local awareness. Other methods may also be used to publicise the consultation period and get input from the community including posters, leaflets, exhibitions, information days, local radio and website updates. Statutory consultees, plus those on the consultation database will be notified of the consultation period and invited to make representations. Copies of the documents will be sent to a range of statutory and other consultees, including parish and town councils in and adjoining the area. The council will encourage parish and town councils to make these readily available to local residents. The documents will also be available for viewing on the council's website, at the council offices and in local libraries. Copies will be available to take away, either free of charge or at a charge reflecting the cost of publication.

⁶ in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

- 5.4.3. The comments received at this stage will be very important in helping us draft the final development plan document for submission. Although individual comments submitted at this stage will not be considered by the inspector during the subsequent examination, a consultation report setting out the main issues raised during this stage and how they have been addressed will be considered by the inspector.

5.5. Submission stage

- 5.5.1. When the representations received during consultation on the preferred options document have been considered, we will prepare a document that will be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. Where the submission document is simply a refinement of one of the preferred options, where it is strongly based on a combination of preferred options or strikes a mid position between them, the council will produce an annex to the sustainability appraisal report to explain the position. If the policy / approach taken in the development plan document has significant impacts which have not been previously appraised, the submitted sustainability appraisal report may need rewriting, or more extensive supplementation, to remedy this. At this stage there will be a further formal consultation period of six weeks. The same consultation measures outlined above for the preferred options document will be applied to the formal consultation on the submission document, although at this stage objectors should focus on why the document is not 'sound'.
- 5.5.2. Any representations made at this stage will be forwarded to the independent inspector who is appointed to conduct the examination. It is anticipated by this stage however that a degree of consensus will have been reached following earlier community involvement in the development of the draft documents, consultation and feedback. This will hopefully reduce the number of representations that the inspector will need to consider during the examination.
- 5.5.3. Where representations are submitted for alternative site allocations or to change a boundary of a site identified in the development plan document that have not been raised at an earlier stage, we will advertise these representations and the proposals they include, immediately after the period for representations on the submission document has expired. The period for representations will be six weeks. In these circumstances, it is the responsibility of the person proposing an alternative site or boundary change to indicate how the proposal complies with the tests of soundness set out in national policy and how the sustainability appraisal process has been or is to be carried out prior to consideration of the representation at the examination.
- 5.5.4. Following the above consultation periods and consideration of representations the examination will occur. This may take the form of a public hearing, or may be dealt with through written representations, depending on how those who have made representations wish to have their evidence considered. Where a public hearing is to take place, a pre-examination meeting will be held at least 12 weeks before the hearing so that all who have made representations have the chance to find out about how the hearing will be run.

5.6. Adoption

- 5.6.1. After the examination, the inspector will produce a report that is binding on the council. Once any amendments required by the inspector to the development plan document have been made, the development plan document will be adopted. There will no scope for the council to make changes other than directed by the inspector, and no scope for community involvement at this stage.

- 5.6.2. The council must also produce a statement to accompany the adopted development plan document outlining how we have taken the findings of the full sustainability appraisal process into account, and how sustainability considerations have been integrated into the document. It should also say how monitoring will be carried out during implementation of the development plan document.
- 5.6.3. The development plan document, adoption statement and sustainability appraisal report, including any revisions, will be published on the council's website and made available at the council offices and local libraries, and sent to the statutory consultees. Copies of the development plan document will also be sent to the West Dorset Partnership and relevant town / parish councils and local area partnerships, plus any other organisations that the council considers are affected by the document. Other consultees will be notified of the adoption and availability of the document.

6. Getting involved in the preparation of supplementary planning documents

- 6.1.1. Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) do not have development plan status but will form part of the local development framework. There will be community involvement in preparing supplementary planning documents but they will not be subject to independent examination. The council will seek to work closely with communities and landowners / developers when preparing and consulting on such documents where this can help build consensus and use resources efficiently. However, the council must retain overall responsibility during these stages to ensure that the resulting document meets the tests of soundness and the targets set in the local development scheme.
- 6.1.2. Consultation methods will vary depending on the nature and topic of the supplementary planning document being prepared. Many will focus on particular topics or areas – for example affordable housing policy or the details of proposed development for a particular site. We will aim to focus consultation on those most likely to be interested, for example relevant specialist organisations in the case of a topic based supplementary planning document, and the relevant town or parish council, local area partnership, civic societies and residents' groups in the case of site based supplementary planning documents. We will also consult on all draft supplementary planning documents for a six week period (it is not possible to comply with the minimum consultation timescales set out in the compact's code of good practice, as statutory consultation periods of four to six weeks are set out in national legislation).
- 6.1.3. A table summarising the consultation stages, methods and resource implications follows (Figure 6). For more detailed information about a specific planned document, please refer to the local development scheme which is reviewed on a yearly basis.
- 6.1.4. As with the development plan documents, a scoping report will be prepared for consultation during the evidence gathering stage and sent to the statutory consultees and any other relevant bodies with environmental or socio-economic responsibilities that the council considers appropriate. A sustainability appraisal report will also be prepared and published for consultation over the same six week period as the draft supplementary planning document, to determine the levels of local acceptability and invite comments.

Fig. 6: Consultation stages, methods & resource implications for SPDs

Stage	Methods – awareness raising and consultation		Resource implications
Evidence gathering	Publicity	Website updates	Low / medium
	Letter	Mailshot to statutory consultees, local community representatives (in particular the relevant local area partnerships and town or parish councils)	
	Meetings	One-to-one meetings, round table sessions or focus group discussions will be arranged where the initial mailshot flags up the need for further discussions.	
	Workshop / surveys	Surveys may be undertaken if known to be required for the evidence base.	
	Other	Start of preparation shown in local development scheme	
Preparing the draft (consideration of issues and options)	Publicity	Use of local press coverage and website updates, the council's and community newsletters, posters / leaflets where appropriate to highlight planned consultation events.	Medium / high Use of publicity will depend upon extent of planned consultation events and resources available. The extent of meetings / workshops / surveys and other forms of consultation will be tailored according to the significance and type / coverage of the document and availability of staff resources.
	Letter	-	
	Meetings	Involvement of town / parish councils and local area partnerships to elicit community involvement, either through meetings, exhibitions / information days, round table sessions / focus group discussions with groups or individuals.	
	Workshop / surveys	Use of interactive workshops, 'planning for real' exercises or surveys where this would help explore and increase understanding of particular issues and alternative options and timescale / resources allow.	
	Other	-	
Draft supplementary planning document	Publicity	Local press coverage and website updates. Use of the council's and community newsletters where timing allows. The draft document will also be available for viewing on the council's website, at the council offices and in local libraries. Posters / leaflets where appropriate.	Medium The internet will normally be used to provide on-line facilities for feedback. Emails will be used as an alternative to letters wherever possible and acceptable to consultees
	Letter	Copies of the draft document will be sent to a range of statutory and other consultees, including town / parish councils in and adjoining the area, West Dorset Partnership and local area partnerships. Other individuals / organisation on the database will be notified in writing.	
	Meetings	Exhibitions and/or information days.	
	Workshop / surveys	Comment forms will be used to ensure that there can be no doubt about the detail of the changes to the policies or proposals requested.	
	Other	-	
Adopt-ion	Publicity	Local press coverage and website updates. The adopted supplementary planning document and related reports will also be available for viewing on the council's website, at the council offices and in local libraries.	Low
	Letter	Mailshot to statutory consultees, town / parish councils and local area partnership in and adjoining the area, and those persons and organisations on the database.	
	Meetings	-	
	Workshop / surveys	-	
	Other	-	

7. Community involvement in planning and related applications

7.1. The council's approach to publicising applications and how you can comment

- 7.1.1. The council recognises the importance of community involvement in the planning application process, and applications for related consents (such as advertisement consent, Listed building consent, and conservation area consent), and actively seeks the views of the public.
- 7.1.2. The council publicises planning and related applications, in accordance with national legislation⁷, providing a level of publicity that is appropriate to the size and nature of the proposal. In many instances the council goes beyond what is legally required. For example, the council publicises reserved matters applications as it would a full application, even though this is not a required by law.
- 7.1.3. The council's approach to publicising applications and seeking the views of the public is detailed in Figure 7, which shows the different types of applications the council receives and the methods used for each.
- 7.1.4. A list of those applications registered by the council that week is circulated to a range of organisations. Applications are also referred to relevant consultees, organisations and statutory bodies for their views. For example, we may send applications to the Environment Agency, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset County Council (highways) and English Heritage for their comments. The weekly list is also available for viewing in the council offices, local public libraries and on the internet. The council also maintains a planning register, which is available for inspection at the council offices in Dorchester.
- 7.1.5. Public access to the working files on current applications and related information such as advice from consultees can be viewed at the council offices in Dorchester (all applications), Sherborne (if the application site is in the northern part of the district) and Bridport (if the application site is in the western part of the district), although only the hard copies of the planning applications and related drawings may be available to view at the local area offices unless prior notice is given. A table and map showing the parishes within each committee and local office area⁸ are detailed in Figures 8 and 9. Applications can also be viewed on the internet at www.dorsetforyou.com alongside external consultees' comments that have been received. The council is hoping to add further information from the working file to the website as an improvement to this service.
- 7.1.6. Comments about an application can be made by anyone and the council allows 21 days for those comments to be received. In addition, bodies such as Natural England will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation. Comments on an application can be submitted on-line, as well as by post. Comments may be in support of an application or objecting to it. However, only material planning considerations can be taken into account in the determination of applications, and the council provides guidance on what comments can be taken into account as material considerations to help ensure that local people understand this constraint and can make an informed and potentially more influential comment with this in mind. All

⁷ Article 8 of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995

⁸ Accurate at the time of adoption (January 2007) but may be subject to administrative change

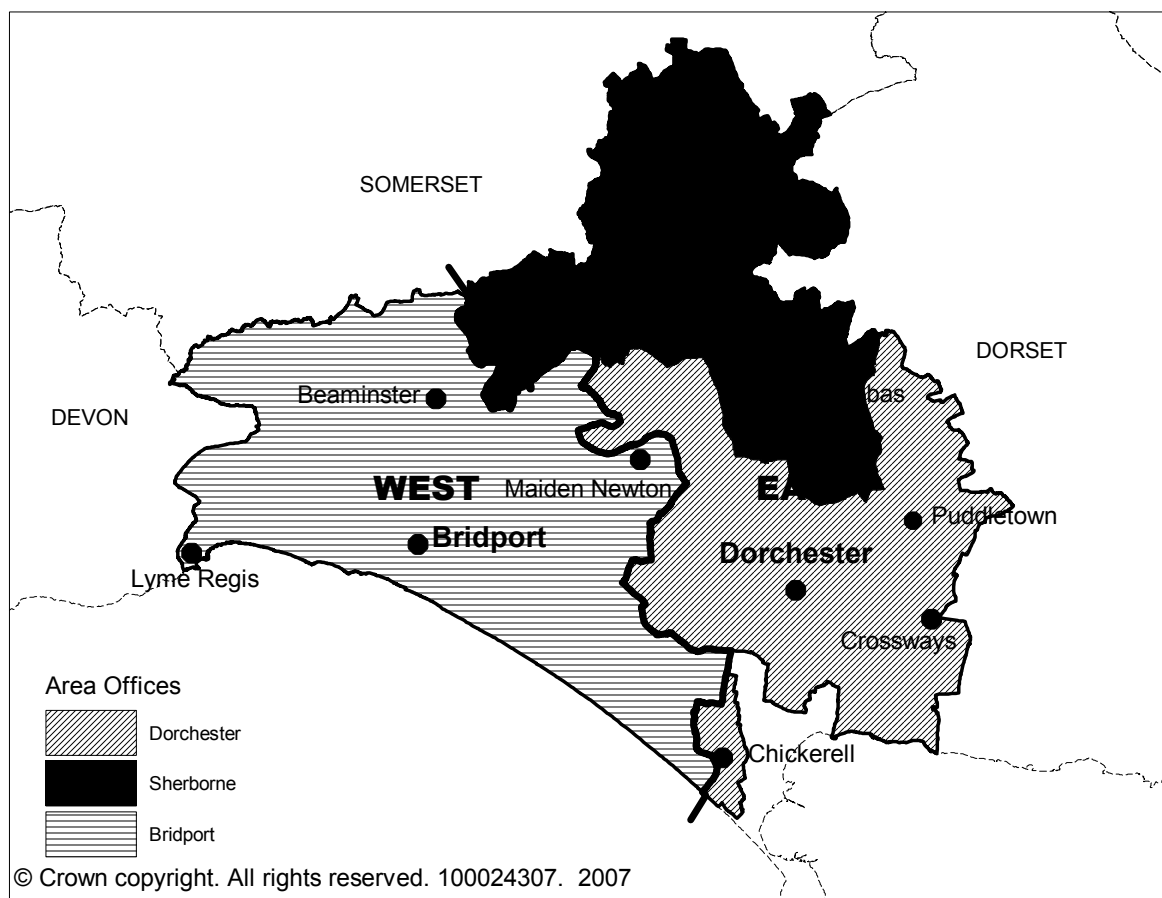
Fig. 7 – The council’s approach to publicising applications

Type of application / development	Consult / notify parish council	Application available for viewing on web	Neighbour notification	Press advertisement	Site Notice
Development that requires Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Development that conflicts with policies in the local development framework (known as a departure application)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Development affecting a public right of way	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Development affecting the character of a conservation area or the setting of a Listed building	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Major development, ie: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 10 or more houses or a housing site having an area of 0.5 hectare or more » a building or buildings where the total floor space will be 1,000 square metres or more » development of a site of 1 hectare or more 	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Change of use	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Officer discretion
Householder development, ie: an extension or alteration within the residential curtilage not resulting in a change in the number of dwellings	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Telecommunications masts planning applications	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Officer discretion
Minor development, ie: development that falls outside the above criteria	Yes	Yes	Yes	Officer discretion	Officer discretion
Hazardous substance consent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conservation area consent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Listed building consent (except for internal alterations to grade II buildings)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Advertisement consent	Yes	Yes	Officer discretion	No	No
Permitted development requiring prior notification to the council	Yes	No	Officer discretion	No	Officer discretion

Fig. 8 – Access to information on current applications (table)

Parish	(C'ttee) Office	Parish	(C'ttee) Office	Parish	(C'ttee) Office
Abbotsbury	(W) Bridport	Goathill	(E) Sherborne	Sandford Orcas	(E) Sherborne
Allington	(W) Bridport	Godmanstone	(E) Dorchester	Seaborough	(W) Bridport
Alton Pancras	(E) Sherborne	Halstock	(E) Sherborne	Sherborne	(E) Sherborne
Askerswell	(W) Bridport	Haydon	(E) Sherborne	Shipton Gorge	(W) Bridport
Athelhampton	(E) Dorchester	Hermitage	(E) Sherborne	South Perrott	(W) Bridport
Batcombe	(E) Sherborne	Hilfield	(E) Sherborne	Stanton St. Gabriel	(W) Bridport
Beaminster	(W) Bridport	Holnest	(E) Sherborne	Stinsford	(E) Dorchester
Beer Hackett	(E) Sherborne	Holwell	(E) Sherborne	Stockwood	(E) Sherborne
Bettiscombe	(W) Bridport	Hooke	(W) Bridport	Stoke Abbott	(W) Bridport
Bincombe	(E) Dorchester	Kingston Russell	(W) Bridport	Stratton	(E) Dorchester
Bishop's Caundle	(E) Sherborne	Langton Herring	(W) Bridport	Swyre	(W) Bridport
Bothenhampton	(W) Bridport	Leigh	(E) Sherborne	Sydling St. Nicholas	(E) Dorchester
Bradford Abbas	(E) Sherborne	Leweston	(E) Sherborne	Symondsburry	(W) Bridport
Bradford Peverell	(E) Dorchester	Lillington	(E) Sherborne	Thorncombe	(W) Bridport
Bradpole	(W) Bridport	Littlebredy	(W) Bridport	Thornford	(E) Sherborne
Bridport	(W) Bridport	Litton Cheney	(W) Bridport	Tincton	(E) Dorchester
Broadmayne	(E) Dorchester	Loders	(W) Bridport	Toller Fratrum	(W) Bridport
Broadwindsor	(W) Bridport	Long Bredy	(W) Bridport	Toller Porcorum	(W) Bridport
Buckland Newton	(E) Sherborne	Longburton	(E) Sherborne	Tolpuddle	(E) Dorchester
Burleston	(E) Dorchester	Lyme Regis	(W) Bridport	Trent	(E) Sherborne
Burstock	(W) Bridport	Maiden Newton	(W) Bridport	Up Cerne	(E) Sherborne
Burton Bradstock	(W) Bridport	Mapperton	(W) Bridport	Warmwell	(E) Dorchester
Castleton	(E) Sherborne	Marshwood	(W) Bridport	West Chelborough	(E) Sherborne
Catherston	(W) Bridport	Melbury Bubb	(E) Sherborne	West Compton	(W) Bridport
Leweston		Melbury Osmond	(E) Sherborne	West Knighton	(E) Dorchester
Cattistock	(E) Dorchester	Melbury Sampford	(E) Sherborne	West Stafford	(E) Dorchester
Caundle Marsh	(E) Sherborne	Melcombe Horsey	(E) Dorchester	Whitchurch	(W) Bridport
Cerne Abbas	(E) Sherborne	Minterne Magna	(E) Sherborne	Whitcombe	(E) Dorchester
Charminster	(E) Dorchester	Mosterton	(W) Bridport	Winterborne Came	(E) Dorchester
Charmouth	(W) Bridport	Nether Cerne	(E) Sherborne	Winterborne Herringston	(E) Dorchester
Chedington	(W) Bridport	Nether Compton	(E) Sherborne	Winterborne Monkton	(E) Dorchester
Cheselbourne	(E) Dorchester	Netherbury	(W) Bridport	Winterborne St. Martin	(E) Dorchester
Chetnole	(E) Sherborne	North Poorton	(W) Bridport	Winterbourne Abbas	(E) Dorchester
Chickerell	(E) Dorchester	North Wootton	(E) Sherborne	Winterbourne Steepleton	(E) Dorchester
Chideock	(W) Bridport	Osborne	(E) Sherborne	Woodsford	(E) Dorchester
Chilcombe	(W) Bridport	Osmington	(E) Dorchester	Wootton Fitzpaine	(W) Bridport
Chilfrome	(E) Dorchester	Over Compton	(E) Sherborne	Wraxall	(W) Bridport
Clifton Maybank	(E) Sherborne	Owermoigne	(E) Dorchester	Wynford Eagle	(W) Bridport
Compton Valence	(W) Bridport	Piddlehinton	(E) Sherborne	Yetminster	(E) Sherborne
Corscombe	(E) Sherborne	Piddletrenthide	(E) Sherborne		
Crossways	(E) Dorchester	Pilsdon	(W) Bridport		
Dewlish	(E) Dorchester	Portesham	(W) Bridport		
Dorchester	(E) Dorchester	Powerstock	(W) Bridport		
East Chelborough	(E) Sherborne	Poxwell	(E) Dorchester		
Evershot	(E) Sherborne	Poyntington	(E) Sherborne		
Fleet	(W) Bridport	Puddletown	(E) Dorchester		
Folke	(E) Sherborne	Puncknowle	(W) Bridport		
Frampton	(E) Dorchester	Purse Caundle	(E) Sherborne		
Frome St. Quintin	(E) Dorchester	Rampisham	(W) Bridport		
Frome Vauchurch	(W) Bridport	Ryme Intrinseca	(E) Sherborne		

Fig. 9 – Access to information on current applications (map)



respondents will be treated equally, with the weight given to each comment reflecting its relevance to the matter in hand and its relation to other factors and issues raised.

- 7.1.7. Comments about an application can be made by anyone and the council allows 21 days for those comments to be received. In addition, bodies such as English Nature will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation. Comments on an application can be submitted on-line, as well as by post. Comments may be in support of an application or objecting to it. However, only material planning considerations can be taken into account in the determination of applications, and the council provides guidance on what comments can be taken into account as material considerations to help ensure that local people understand this constraint and can make an informed and potentially more influential comment with this in mind. All respondents will be treated equally, with the weight given to each comment reflecting its relevance to the matter in hand and its relation to other factors and issues raised.
- 7.1.8. The progress of an application can be tracked on the internet. Planning decisions (including reasons given for refusal and approval), together with any officer report, can be viewed at the council offices in Dorchester (all applications), Sherborne (if the application site is in the northern part of the district) and Bridport (if the application site is in the western part of the district), as well as on the council's website (officer reports will normally be available on-line at least four working days prior to the relevant council meeting). The decisions are copied to the Parish / Town Councils. The council is setting in place a system which will provide an automated letter regarding the decision made to all those who have commented on the application.

7.2. Development control committee meetings

- 7.2.1. Most applications are determined by the Development Services Manager under delegated powers. Only a limited number are determined by councillors at development control committees. Where an application is to be determined by committee, letters are sent to the applicant or their agent if they have one, the relevant town or parish council and anyone who made comments on the application, advising them of the date, time and location of the meeting. The agenda for the meeting can be viewed on the internet or at the council offices.
- 7.2.2. Applications in the eastern half of the district are determined by the Development Control East Committee meetings in Dorchester. Those in the western half of the district are heard by the Development Control West Committee meetings in Bridport. In the case of a particularly contentious application due to be determined by committee and where there is a lot of public interest, the council will hold the meeting in the West Dorset town closest to the application site. The applicant or their agent, the appropriate town or parish council, the local councillor and anybody who has submitted comments in writing on the application are all able to speak at the committee meeting for a maximum of three minutes per person. This allows individuals the opportunity to make their views about specific proposals known. This is supplemented at the meeting by presentations by the planning officers on all items, including the display of plans and colour photographs.

7.3. Improving the quality of applications: pre-application advice

- 7.3.1. The council encourages pre-application discussions between planning officers and potential applicants in an effort to increase understanding of the planning considerations that would apply at an early stage and improve the quality of applications and decision-making. However, as such discussions may be perceived as part of a lobbying process, both officers and councillors abide by guidelines set out in a code of good practice adopted by the council in 2002. This includes the need for officers and councillors to clarify at the outset that the discussions will not bind the council to making a particular decision, encourages the taking of written notes of all potentially contentious meetings / telephone discussions, and also providing written acknowledgement when documentation is left. A duty planning officer is available at the offices in Dorchester, during office hours from Monday to Friday, to take telephone calls or answer queries at the planning reception. Area planning surgeries are also held in Bridport and Sherborne once a week when a planning officer is available for appointments.

7.4. Encouraging applicants to undertake consultation

Householder applications

- 7.4.1. The council encourages people submitting applications for extensions or alterations to their home to consult with their neighbours beforehand. This can often help to avoid potential conflict between the applicant and the neighbours later when the council is formally considering the application. While the council cannot require applicants to consult their neighbours before submitting an application, failure to do so could lead to objections being made by those neighbours, which could affect the outcome of the application.

Major applications

7.4.2. The Government sees a role, on major applications, for the applicant to engage in early discussions with the community before submitting a formal planning application. Major applications⁹ are defined as follows:

- 10 or more houses or, if the number of houses is not yet known, to develop a housing site having an area of 0.5 hectare or more
- Construction of a building or buildings where the floor space will be 1,000 square metres or more
- Development on any site having an area of 1 hectare or more.

The council also welcomes a similar approach from applicants on other applications where the impact of the development may be significant.

7.4.3. Those to be consulted by the developer should include statutory consultees, the town / parish council and local area partnership, neighbours, community groups, service providers and others likely to be affected by the proposals. Ways in which developers could involve communities include a presentation by the developer at a town or parish council meeting or local area partnership event with opportunities for comments and questions, one-to-one meetings with any organisations or individuals who have an interest in the proposal, public exhibitions, ideally using Planning for Real / workshop formats and questionnaires to enhance levels of interaction, as well as more formal written consultation and community surveys.

7.4.4. The developer will be invited to submit a consultation statement as part of the formal planning application, detailing the community involvement that has been undertaken. This should include:

- A list of those contacted by letter informing them of the proposals and where more details could be found
- Details of any press releases or advertisements in the local press
- The date, location and duration of any events held. Events should be held as close as possible to the site and be advertised by leaflet, letter and/or press release
- Details of what was available for comment, how the comments were dealt with and what happened next
- A summary of the comments received and the issues raised as a result of letters and events
- An indication of how the proposals have been amended in response to community involvement, and if not, why not.

7.4.5. Developers who do not undertake and provide details of appropriate early community involvement may be disadvantaged, in that issues that need to be taken into account may only be identified after the application has been submitted, which may delay the decision or affect the outcome of the application, or lead to objections being made by the community that could affect the outcome of the application.

⁹ as set out in The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (Statutory Instrument 1995 No. 419)

Telecommunications applications

- 7.4.6. The telecommunication industry's code of best practice already requires that applicants proposing telecommunication developments carry out a certain amount of consultation before submitting an application. The code advises that applicants should consult schools and hospitals near to the application site but does not specify the distance. In the past the distance used by applicants has often been a 100m radius from the site. The council considers that the distance for consultation should be greater and therefore asks applicants for telecommunication developments to consult all schools, pre-schools, day nurseries and hospitals within a 1,000m radius of the proposed site.

7.5. Annual agents' forum

- 7.5.1. The council is establishing an agents' forum that will meet on a regular basis to discuss issues relating to the development control work of the council.

7.6. Minor amendments

- 7.6.1. Attached as Appendix 3 is a minor amendments protocol that came into force on 1 November 2005. It details what is and is not acceptable as a minor amendment to a planning permission and who will be informed when a minor amendment is agreed.

8. Resource availability

- 8.1.1. This statement of community involvement is based on a realistic assessment of the resources that are likely to be available. The council does not have either the financial or staff resources to undertake consultation on a massive scale, and will not be able to use all the techniques mentioned in the preparation of every document. While the council may be able to conduct some one-to-one meetings with interest groups and other stakeholders, they are likely to be limited by the resources available. Particular efforts will be made though to meet requests for such meetings from hard to reach and/or minority groups. Similarly, the geographical area and population spread of a rural area such as this means that not all exhibitions / information days or other consultation events can be held at all towns and villages. However the council will ensure that in selecting venues, both town and village locations will be considered and that there should be a reasonable geographic spread throughout the district. Alternative ways of accessing the information that would be available at such meetings and exhibitions will be publicised.
- 8.1.2. The council is responsible for making appropriate resources available to implement the consultation measures set out in this statement of community involvement. It is envisaged that the proposed consultation measures can be met in-house by existing staff in the planning policy, development services and communications teams and using existing budgets, and that the council would only in exceptional cases investigate the possibility of using external resources, such as professional consultation facilitators. The Planning Policy Manager will be responsible for managing the overall consultation process for the local development framework. Public consultation in relation to planning applications will be the responsibility of the Development Services Manager.

9. Monitoring and reviewing the statement of community involvement

9.1.1. The way in which community involvement is carried out should be reviewed on a regular basis. We will monitor the success of methods of involvement proposed by this document and revise the statement of community involvement when it appears necessary, having regard to any particular problems or successes that we experience. Assessment will be through monitoring:

- Data collected through consultation feedback forms / general responses on local development documents
- Data collected through regular MORI survey on customer (general public) satisfaction
- Overall number of respondents and equality profile of population samples in relation to significance of issue and consultation method used
- Whether the consultation programmes are keeping within the programme set out in the local development scheme.

Revisions may mean that some techniques are excluded from future versions of this document and alternative techniques included. Regard will also be had to any emerging best practice guidance or changes in legislation.

9.1.2. The council will assess the success of its statement of community involvement in its annual monitoring report, which will be published each December. Any necessary changes will be made thereafter with appropriate public consultation.

Appendix 1: Explanation of terms

Annual monitoring report - a report that each council must prepare that forms part of the local development framework, showing how effective its policies and proposals have been in meeting the vision and core strategy for the district, and delivering the work programme in the local development scheme.

Community – any person or organisation interested in West Dorset’s social, environmental and economic future, or having information that will help us make decisions, and any person or organisation who makes decisions that will affect West Dorset’s future development.

Community plan - the over-arching policy document for the area, produced by a partnership of local service providers, voluntary and private sector organisations. The West Dorset Community Plan is prepared and reviewed by the West Dorset Partnership and will be an essential influence on the core strategy of the local development framework. There is also a county wide local strategic partnership which has prepared a Dorset Community Strategy.

Consultation database – a record of people and organisations who have requested to be kept informed of progress on the local development framework.

Core strategy – a development plan document setting out the vision and planning objectives for West Dorset, containing strategic and generic policies which will apply to all development proposals in the district.

Development plan document (DPD) - part of the local development framework (for example the core strategy), which has full development plan status and is independently examined before adoption.

Householder application – a planning application for extension or alteration to a private dwelling house.

Independent examination – an independent inspector will be appointed by the Secretary of State to consider the development plan document as a whole and to determine its soundness. In assessing its soundness, the inspector will consider all representations made on the submitted document and the changes that have been suggested.

Local development document (LDD) - the documents making up the local development framework, including both ‘development plan documents’ and additional ‘supplementary planning documents’.

Local development framework (LDF) - the replacement to local plans. The local development framework will comprise a ‘portfolio’ of ‘local development documents’, some of which have full development plan status (development plan documents) and some of which form supplementary guidance (supplementary planning documents).

Local development scheme (LDS) – the three-year rolling programme for the preparation of local development documents.

Major development - is defined as follows under The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995:

- 10 or more houses or, if the number of houses is not yet known, to develop a housing site having an area of 0.5 hectare or more;
- Construction of a building or buildings where the floor space will be 1,000 square metres or more;
- Carrying out development on any site having an area of 1 hectare or more.

Material Planning Consideration – in considering a planning application, the council has a legal duty to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and any other ‘material considerations’. The most common material considerations include the following, although the list is not exhaustive:

- Local, strategic, regional and national planning policies, including government circulars, orders and statutory instruments
- Previous appeal decisions
- Loss of daylight or sunlight, overshadowing/loss of outlook (but not loss of view), overlooking / loss of privacy
- Highway issues such as traffic generation, vehicular access and highway safety
- Disabled persons’ access
- Noise, smells, light pollution and other disturbance resulting from use
- Hazardous materials / ground contamination
- Risk of flooding
- Landscaping and loss of trees
- Nature conservation
- Effect on archaeology, listed buildings and Conservation Area
- Design, layout and density of buildings, visual appearance and materials

Matters which cannot normally be taken into account include matters controlled under Building Regulations or other non-planning laws, private issues between neighbours (such as land / boundary disputes, damage to property, private rights of way, covenants etc), loss of value of property and problems arising from the construction period of any works.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – the Government department previously responsible for planning matters, now the role of Communities and Local Government

Parish plan – a plan drawn up by the local community showing the issues they feel to be particularly important for their parish, and expressing their wishes for the future of the parish. These provide valuable input to the evidence gathering stage of preparing local development documents and will be taken into account in developing both development plan documents and supplementary planning documents. They also form an important input to and influence on the community plan for the district.

Regional spatial strategy (RSS) – the strategic plan establishing the policy and broad pattern of development for the region, including the allocation of housing numbers to districts. This will replace structure plans and regional planning guidance.

Reserved matters application – an application following the grant of outline planning permission for the subsequent approval of at least one or more of the following matters: siting, design, external appearance, means of access, landscaping, as defined in the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995.

Scoping report – a report undertaken in advance of a full sustainability appraisal, which considers what social, economic and environmental issues are relevant, and contains a ‘sustainability checklist’ that the council proposes to use to validate the policies that will be included in the local development document and steer any necessary changes before the document is finalised.

Soundness – although there is no definition for 'sound' in the legislation, it refers to 'showing good judgment' and 'able to be trusted'. National policy¹⁰ sets out tests of soundness against which the council's development plan documents and statement of community involvement are judged.

South West Regional Assembly – the regional tier of government for this area, and the statutory regional planning body responsible for preparing the regional spatial strategy. The regional assembly comprises councillors from local authorities within the region.

Stakeholders – organisations, service providers and voluntary groups that are actively involved in shaping the future of the district. Their activities and plans need to be taken into account in developing planning policies.

Statement of community involvement (SCI) – one of the required local development documents. This will set out the standards the council will achieve in involving the community in preparing and reviewing all local development documents, and in planning application decisions, and how the council intends to achieve these standards. It will not be part of the development plan but it will be subject to independent examination. This will need to take place at the start of the plan preparation process so that the agreed standards and arrangements are then followed in preparing the subsequent documents.

Statutory consultation – the process set out by the Government for consulting people and organisations, which the council must legally follow.

Statutory consultee – any body specified in the relevant Government regulations which the council must legally consult.

Supplementary planning document (SPD) – these will provide detailed supporting policy to specific policies of development plan documents or saved local plans, and must be consistent with those adopted policies. They do not require independent examination but should be produced with public involvement and consultation. They are an equivalent of current 'supplementary planning guidance' but have greater status as part of the local development framework.

Sustainability appraisal – an assessment of the impacts of proposed policies and allocations, to ensure that the most sustainable options are chosen. This assessment must be carried out as an integral part of the plan-making process. A sustainability appraisal report will be prepared at the issues and options consultation stage.

Village design statements - documents that describe the qualities and characteristics that people value in their village and its surroundings. They provide a context for new development, based on identification and analysis of local character.

¹⁰ Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks

Appendix 2: Consultees

Organisations will change during the time this statement of community involvement is in use. The following lists attempt to identify the consultees that the council is legally required to consult when preparing the local development framework, and the organisations or types of organisations who will also be consulted as necessary. Neither list is intended to be exhaustive. Please note, the list relates to successor bodies where reorganisation has occurred.

List 1

The following is a list of organisations that will be consulted during the preparation of the local development framework:

Government

Any unitary, county or district / borough council whose area is in or adjoins West Dorset (or, in the case of area-specific local development documents, whose area is in or adjoins that site)

- » Dorset County Council¹¹⁺
- » Devon County Council
- » Somerset County Council
- » East Devon District Council
- » North Dorset District Council⁺
- » Purbeck District Council⁺
- » South Somerset District Council
- » Weymouth and Portland Borough Council⁺

Any town or parish council (including parish meetings) whose area is in or adjoins West Dorset (or, in the case of area-specific local development documents, whose area is in or adjoins that site)

- » Beaminster Town Council
- » Bridport Town Council
- » Chickerell Town Council
- » Dorchester Town Council
- » Lyme Regis Town Council
- » Sherborne Town Council
- » Weymouth Town Council
- » Parish councils in West Dorset
- » Parish councils in East Devon, North Dorset, Purbeck and South Somerset adjoining the West Dorset boundary

Government Office for the South West⁺ / Communities and Local Government
South West of England Regional Assembly (the regional planning body)

Government and regional agencies

- » Natural England¹²⁺

¹¹

The following is a list of service providers that the county council will consult internally: Adult Services (education and social care & health for 18+), Archaeology and the Historic Built Environment, Children's Services (education and social care & health under 18's), Coastal Policy, Community Planning, Corporate Property, Countryside and Rights of Way, Development Control, Dorset AONB team, Ecology, Gypsy and Traveller Liaison, Legal Services, Libraries and Cultural Services, Local Transport Plan, Minerals and Waste, Probation Services, Spatial Planning, Sustainable Development, Tourism and Economic Development, Trading Standards, Transport Planning, Valuation & Estates, Waste Management

- » English Heritage¹³
- » Environment Agency⁺
- » Highways Agency
- » South West of England Regional Development Agency⁺
- » NHS South West - the Somerset Strategic Health Authority⁺
- » DfT Rail Group / Network Rail – the Strategic Rail Authority
- » Any Government departments or agencies which have significant landholdings within the district.

Utility companies

Gas, electricity, sewerage, telecommunications and water companies who own or control apparatus in West Dorset. The following list is not exhaustive

- » National Grid (incorporating Transco)
- » South West Water
- » Southern Electric
- » SSE Telecom
- » Wessex Water

Community groups

- » Dorset Strategic Partnership
- » West Dorset Partnership*
- » Bridport Local Area Partnership*] *in the case of area-specific local*
- » Dorchester Local Area Partnership*] *development documents, only*
- » Lyme Regis Local Area Partnership*] *the LAP whose area is in or closely*
- » Sherborne Local Area Partnership*] *adjoins that site will be consulted*

List 2

The following is a list of the type of organisations, with examples, which will be involved as needed in preparing the local development framework:

Local service providers

- » Health authorities (Dorset Primary Care Trusts^{**}, West Dorset General Hospitals NHS Trust)
- » Fire and rescue services (Dorset Fire and Rescue Service⁺)
- » Police (Dorset Police^{**} and Western Area Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership*)
- » Postal service (Royal Mail Group plc)
- » Local transport providers (Dorset Accessible and Responsive Transport⁺, bus and rail companies and port operators)
- » Road Haulage Association
- » Civil Aviation Authority

¹² Natural England was formally established through the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill, and brought together English Nature, parts of the Countryside Agency and most of the Rural Development Service.

¹³ The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England

Specialist advisors on environmental issues

- » British Geological Survey
- » Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- » Council for the Protection of Rural England
- » Dorset Archaeological Committee
- » Dorset Agenda 21** and West Dorset Friends of the Earth
- » Dorset AONB Partnership
- » Dorset Coastal Forum and World Heritage Steering Group
- » Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society
- » Dorset Wildlife Trust*
- » Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- » West Dorset Heritage Joint Advisory Committee*
- » Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission

Specialist advisors on social or economic issues

- » Economy (Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Economic Partnership⁺)
- » Education (Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Learning and Skills Council⁺)
- » Recreation and leisure (Dorset Playing Fields' Association, Sport England South West⁺)
- » Art and culture (Public Art South West, Arts Council England - South West, South West Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the Theatres Trust and local arts delivery organisations)

Bodies which represent the interests of people carrying on business in West Dorset

- » Local chambers of trade and commerce
- » Dorset Federation of Small Businesses**
- » Local trade union councils
- » Freight Transport Association
- » Health and Safety Executive
- » Major supermarket retailers
- » Village Retail Services Association

Bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic, religious or disabled groups in West Dorset

- » Equal Opportunities Commission and other local equality groups
- » Commission for Racial Equality, Dorset Race Equality Council and the Gypsy Council
- » Church Commissioners, Churches Together⁺
- » Disability Rights Commission, Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee and Dorset Association for the Disabled;

Other community and voluntary groups in West Dorset

- » Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils**
- » Dorset Community Action**
- » Volnet⁺
- » Organisations representing older people (Age Concern*, Help the Aged, Older Peoples Forums)

- » Youth organisations (Connexions*)
- » Local residents' associations
- » Local political groups
- » Civic societies

Landowners / developers and their advisors

- » English Partnerships
- » House Builders Federation
- » Housing Corporation
- » South West Registered Social Landlords Planning Consortium
- » Country Land & Business Association
- » Crown Estate Office
- » National Farmers Union
- » National Trust
- » Professional bodies e.g. RIBA, RICS and RTPI
- » Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment;

+ Board member of Dorset's Local Strategic Partnership (Dorset Strategic Partnership)

* Member of West Dorset's Local Strategic Partnership (West Dorset Partnership)

Appendix 3: Minor amendments protocol

Minor amendments will be determined by officers using the following guidance.

The case officer will consider each alteration against the following checklist and discuss the implications of the alteration with his/her line manager.

Where the original approval was made by officers under the council's delegation agreement and there is agreement that the alteration does not prejudice one or more of the criteria in the checklist, the case officer will advise the applicant that the alteration is acceptable as a minor amendment. The case officer will copy the letter of agreement to the local councillor(s) and send a copy of the amended plan to the parish council for information.

Where the original approval was made by the committee or on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate a fresh application should be requested regardless of the nature of the amendments proposed.

Where an alteration prejudices one or more of the criteria in the checklist, a fresh application will be requested.

Minor amendments checklist

To avoid doubt, the following examples would not be regarded as a minor amendment:

- » The change from an approved facing or roofing material to another (say from stone to render or tile to thatch), where the appearance of the whole building would change
- » An increase in the number of buildings approved
- » The complete re-positioning of a building outside the approved footprint
- » A significant increase in the height of a building or an element of the building.

An amendment is significant if it adversely affects:

- » The character of the original proposal
- » The compliance with planning conditions
- » The character of a conservation area
- » The setting of a listed building
- » The appearance of the area of outstanding natural beauty / heritage coast
- » The amenity of adjoining neighbours
- » Highway safety
- » Nature conservation interests.



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