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Having Your Say

Every citizen has the right to take an active part in decisions affecting them and their communities. Personal and community involvement in planning requires access to information and a willingness to contribute an opinion, either as an individual or in a group.

The most common concern at a local level is about Planning Applications, usually for new housing or industrial development. These can be very controversial, especially if they involve building on open spaces. People are often very unsure about the planning system so a well-organised community group can play a key part in helping people deal with the systems.

Planning Applications - Finding out about developments

After a planning application has been made, the local planning authority will post notices near the site and/or write letters to those closest to the proposed development, inviting comments. Larger developments will also be advertised in a local newspaper. In some cases, local authorities also keep local civic, community and environment organisations informed of all applications in the area. Make sure your group is on this list. Alternatively, the local authority may operate provide information on their website. The details of the proposals, including architects' drawings, will be available for inspection at the local council offices.

There will be a limited amount of time in which to send comments to the local planning office. It is very important to meet any deadline or your submission may not be taken into account. It is possible to attend committee meetings dealing with planning applications. In many cases members of the public can speak briefly to ensure that the committee is aware of their views. However, only elected members of the council can vote on the application decision itself. It is often useful to know the names of the development control officers dealing with your area and your local Councillors.

Local and regional plans

Community involvement in planning is one of the key aspects of the government's commitment to reforming the planning system. As mentioned above, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004 requires that both local and regional planning bodies prepare a statement of community involvement, which set out their policy on involving the community in preparing regional spatial strategies, local development documents and consulting on planning applications.

Don't be shut out!

If you think that your group is not getting treated well or getting the information you require. Get help. Both Friends of the Earth, www.foe.org.uk, and Planning Aid (www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk) can help. Freedom of Information laws are there to help you – don't be afraid to use them.

Planning – the Local Development Framework (LDF) and other documents

The Local Development Framework (LDF) is a non-statutory term used to describe the set of documents which set out how planning will be managed in your area. It contains all the local planning authority's **Local Development Documents (LDDs)** that collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the local planning authority's area. These include:

- Development Plan Documents (which form part of the statutory development plan)
- Supplementary Planning Documents (which do not form part of the statutory development plan).

Development Plan Documents (DPDs) (Required)

Development Plan Documents form an essential part of the Local Development Framework. They are prepared by local planning authorities and outline the key development goals of the local development framework. They include the core strategy, site-specific allocations of land and, where needed, area action plans. They also include an adopted proposals map which illustrates the spatial extent of policies that must be prepared and maintained to accompany all DPDs. Once adopted, development control decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan Documents them unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (Optional)

A Supplementary Planning Document is a Local Development Document that may cover a range of issues, thematic or site specific, and provides further detail of policies and proposals in a 'parent' Development Plan Document.

The local development framework will also comprise of:

- the Statement of Community Involvement (Required)
- the Local Development Scheme (Required)
- the Annual Monitoring Report (Required) and
- any Local Development Orders (Optional) or Simplified Planning Zones (Optional) that may have been added

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (Required)

The Statement of Community Involvement is an essential part of the Local Development Framework.

It sets out the processes to be used by the local authority in involving the community in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all local development documents and development control decisions.

Local Development Scheme (LDS) (Required)

The local planning authority's time-scaled programme for the preparation of Local Development Documents that must be agreed with government and reviewed every year.

Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) (Required)

A report submitted to the government by local planning authorities or regional planning bodies assessing progress with and the effectiveness of a Local Development Framework.

Local Development Order (LDO) (Optional)

An order made by a local planning authority extending permitted development rights for certain forms of development, with regard to a relevant Local Development Document.

Simplified Planning Zone (Optional)

An area in which a local planning authority wishes to stimulate development and encourage investment. It operates by granting a specified planning permission in the zone without the need for an application for planning permission and the payment of planning fees.

Find out what your Local Planning Authority's Local Development Framework proposes in your area or site. There may also be other types of plan, such as how to deal with minerals and waste. These are usually prepared by County Councils. These different types of plan are usually available from your local library or details may be on the Council's website.