



Draft Statement of Community Involvement

PART 1

Getting Involved
in Shaping our
Future

INTRODUCTION

Vale of White Horse District Council is committed to working in a clear and transparent way, and is keen to assist anyone who may wish to get involved in the planning process. This Statement of Community Involvement (**SCI**) reflects the Government's latest Planning Policy guidance and changes to legislation.ⁱ It sets out how we wish to engage the community who can influence new Planning Policy documents and the ways to comment on planning applications for development.

Community engagement and Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that, in relation to plan-making:

“Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that local plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area, including those contained in neighbourhood plans that have been made”.

We will engage existing groups across our district, many of whom are already familiar with and involved in the planning process, as well as exploring ways to work closer with groups who are less involved in the process.

We want to ensure everyone has their voice heard, as it is important that we capture views from the whole community.



Community engagement and planning applications

National policy asks local planning authorities to play a key role in encouraging developers and other parties to take advantage of the range of opportunities to engage in the planning process, and involve local communities and stakeholders as soon as possible. For example, at the pre-application stage, we encourage applicants to carry out early engagement with the local community, before submitting a planning application.

We will continue to explore ways to reach the community to ensure that their views are heard when making decisions for development.

Structure of this document

This SCI comprises three parts:

Part 1: (This document) sets out the council's overall approach to community engagement and involvement in the planning process.

Part 2: Community Involvement – Getting Involved in the Preparation of the Local Plan and Planning Policy:

- This provides information on how to get involved with and influence the Council as it prepares its Local Plan and other Planning Policy documents

Part 3: Community Involvement – Getting Involved in Planning Applications:

- This provides information on how to become involved with planning applications

ⁱ The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents>; CLG (2012) The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf; CLG (2014) The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), available at: <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/>

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OUR VALUES AND VISION FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

This SCI complements the council's strategic objectives and priorities set out in its **Corporate Plan** (<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/corporate-plan>) and our **Customer Engagement Charter** (<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/about-us/have-your-say/our-commitments-engaging-customers>). It also recognises the needs of different groups within our community, the value of equality and the diversity that our communities represent.

We strongly encourage and will support local communities who wish to prepare Neighbourhood Plans (**See Part 2, Neighbourhood Planning**).

We wish to ensure that people are involved at the early stage of Local Plan preparation and in the consideration of planning applications. We want them to feel that they can make a real difference to the future of the areas in which they live and work.

Our aspiration is that:

“The community of the Vale should be enabled to participate meaningfully in the development of planning policies and proposals contained in the Local Plan and in the consideration of planning applications in the district”.

We want our planning decisions to take proper account of local views. We will do this in various ways and the methods we use to engage with people will vary depending on the nature of the planning issue, stage or process that they are involved with. It is crucial we engage effectively with our local communities in order that they can fully influence decisions for development. We will use the following principles as guidance:

OUR PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING

Communicate clearly

- We will keep the process simple by writing our documents in plain English and explaining any planning terms that we need to use
- We will explain clearly what we are consulting you on and the reasons why we want to involve you

Early Involvement

- We will ensure early involvement with our local communities in the preparation of our Planning

Policy documents so that we are engaging with you 'from the beginning'

Recognising the needs of different groups in the community

- We will communicate in ways that are relevant and accessible to all sections of our community and proportionate to the task
- We will endeavour to engage with groups in our community that can find us less accessible (e.g. disability groups and ethnic groups – these are sometimes referred to as 'hard to reach' groups) or those likely to be particularly affected by a proposal
- We will encourage involvement from groups that have traditionally not been involved in the planning process (for example, younger people – through targeted events with schools etc.)

Providing clear opportunities for involvement

- We will provide clear and up-to-date information on our consultation processes that we may use in preparing our policy documents
- We will ensure information is provided at the earliest opportunity and give you time to respond

Ease of access to information

- We will involve you in all stages of plan making
- We will maximise the use of the internet in our consultation procedures
- We will also recognise that other forms of engagement are necessary for those who do not have access to the internet
- We will be inclusive by providing our information in an accessible format
- We will make our information publicly available (for example, information on the progress of proposals) and will provide feedback on your comments)

Providing feedback and sharing information

- We will make our planning documents, background studies and responses to consultations readily available to the public on our website and in hard copy at our local deposit points (e.g. local libraries and council offices)
- We will keep you informed of progress and explain decisions and/or outcomes
- We will check to see if we already have information that we can use
- [We will always protect the personal details of respondents in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998](#)

WHY INVOLVE YOU IN PLANNING?

We want everyone to have the chance to influence the outcome regarding our new plan-making documents and planning applications.

We keep an up to date database of individuals, groups and stakeholders who we regularly contact on planning matters. This database is updated continuously and if you would like to be added to the database or need to amend your details please contact the **Customer Service Team** by phone **01235 422600** or email **planning@whitehorsedc.gov.uk**.

HOW WILL YOU INVOLVE ME?

We want our plan making and planning decisions to take full account of community views. We will continue to explore different methods in which to carry out consultations and learn from what is and isn't successful when engaging with our communities. The methods we use will depend on the nature of the planning issue and the stage that is being consulted on.

We will clearly identify a responsible officer/team for the policy or the planning application.

All of the documents we publish are made available electronically. We will also make information available in other ways if appropriate.

The methods we will use to engage people will include:

- Public exhibitions – staffed (e.g. market stalls) and un- staffed (static exhibitions)
- Questionnaires and response forms
- Public meetings and discussion groups
- Focus groups or workshops
- Targeted work with community and voluntary organisations (e.g. access groups)
- Letters and emails to groups and individuals e.g. Vale Community, email bulletins
- Press releases and statutory notices – formal notices in newspapers and informal notices in other newspapers circulating in the District
- Press releases to local media – town and parish newsletters, local radio and television
- Our website pages at: **<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building>** (at the time of publication of this document)
- Social media - follow us on Twitter (at: **<https://twitter.com/whitehorsedc>**) or Facebook (at: **<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Vale-of-White-Horse-District-Council/140018516043397>**) (at the time of publication of this document)
- Email alerts

HOW WILL WE RESPOND TO YOU?

- We are committed to providing clear and timely responses to our customers and dealing with all enquiries in a friendly and courteous manner
- Our **Customer Service Standards** set out how we will deal with correspondence by letter, email and telephone, as well as those that visit our office
- Further information on our Customer Service Standards can be accessed via our website at: **<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/customer-service-standards>**
- Further information regarding 'how we respond' is set out in Parts 2 and 3

WHERE CAN I VIEW PLANNING DOCUMENTS?

All planning documents and planning applications are available to view and access from our website: **<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building>**.

In addition, paper copies of Planning Policy documents are available to view at:

Our office (**at the time of publication of this document**):

Vale of White Horse District Council
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton
Park
Milton
OX14 4SB

Opening hours

Monday – Thursday, 8.30am – 5pm
Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm

Local libraries including:

- **Abingdon Library**
- **Botley Library**
- **Didcot Library**
- **Faringdon Library**
- **Grove Library**
- **Kennington Library**
- **Wantage Library**
- **Oxford Central Library, Castle Quarter (at the time of publication of this document)**

Copies of draft Planning Policy documents for consultation will be made available free of charge to towns and parishes and statutory bodies (one per body). Charges will apply for printed copies and background paper requests. Please see our website for further information at: **www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/planning-policy**.

We can make documents available in alternative formats on request. This can include large print, Braille, audio, email, easy read and alternative languages. Please contact the Planning Service for further information and assistance.

WHO CAN HELP EXPLAIN PLANNING ISSUES TO ME?

In most instances, the information you will need in relation to plan-making and planning applications can be found on the Council website. If you still have questions after looking at that information, you may wish to contact our Customer Services Team by phone **01235 422600** or email **planning@whitehorsedc.gov.uk**.

Teams that can explain planning issues include:

Planning Policy (plan-making) which is:

- Responsible for producing the planning documents that make up the Development Plan and can be contacted for advice on Planning Policy.
- Responsible for organising and leading the consultations on draft council planning documents. The team considers consultation responses and incorporates, where appropriate, any amendments into the council's final version for councillors to consider and approve (**see Part 2**).

Development Management (Planning Applications) which is:

- Responsible for assessing planning applications in accordance with the adopted development plan, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) and any other material considerations including consultation responses.
- Contactable for advice on pre-application enquiries and planning applications (**see Part 3**).

You may also wish to contact your local councillor, to discuss your views, or seek their help with a planning proposal in your area. Contact details of local ward councillors are available at: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/local-democracy/councillors-committees-meetings-and-agendas>

What other support for planning is available to me?

Useful websites that provide information on the planning system include:

- Planning Portal – www.planningportal.co.uk
- National Planning Practice Guidance – <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk>
- Plain English Guide to the Planning System – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plain-english-guide-to-the-planning-system>

Planning Aid England

'Planning Aid' England is an independent voluntary organisation linked to the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). This includes a network of professional Chartered Town Planners. The organisation offers impartial advice and independent support. For further information, contact them online by visiting www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid or call **020 7929 9494**.

Occasionally you may feel the need to be professionally represented on a planning issue that affects you. The RTPI keep a list of accredited planning consultants that may be able to help.

- i The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents>; CLG (2012) The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf; CLG (2014) The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), available at: <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/>



GLOSSARY

KEY TERM	DEFINITION
Consultation	A process by which people and organisations are asked their views about planning decisions, including the Local Plan
Data Protection Act 1998	This Act controls how personal information is used by organisations, businesses or the government.
Development Management	<p>The Development Management team is responsible for assessing planning applications in accordance with the adopted development plan, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) and any other material considerations including consultation responses.</p> <p>The team can be contacted for advice on pre – application enquiries and planning applications.</p>
Development Plan	This includes adopted Local Plans, neighbourhood plans and the Oxfordshire Waste and Minerals Local Plan. It is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Planning applications have to be decided in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
Local Plan	The plan for the local area that sets out the long – term spatial vision and development framework for the district and strategic policies and proposals to deliver that vision. This replaces the Local Development Framework.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	<p>This sets out Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied at a local level. The NPPF is a material consideration when deciding on planning applications or appeals.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2</p>
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)	<p>The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is a planning practice on-line resource covering a range of planning issues.</p> <p>http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/</p>
Neighbourhood Plans	A plan prepared by a Town or Parish or a Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
Planning Policy	The Planning Policy team is responsible for producing the planning documents that make up the Development Plan.
Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	The SCI sets out standards to be achieved by the council in relation to involving the community in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and in determining planning applications for development

Alternative formats of this publication
are available on request

These include large print, Braille, audio,
email, easy read and alternative languages

Please contact Planning on 01235 422422

Planning Policy Team
135 Eastern Avenue,
Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB
Tel: 01235 422422
Email: planning.policy@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk