

LEEDS STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

CONSULTATION DRAFT

The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how and when the Council will consult and engage with the local community on local planning policy documents and planning applications

For ease of reference, this Statement of Community Involvement is split into 3 parts, plus Appendices:

Part 1 Explains what the SCI is and how it can help you to take part in consultation and engagement

Part 2 Sets out the notification, consultation and engagement that the Council will undertake on local plan preparation, planning applications and neighbourhood planning

Part 3 Sets out the opportunities and challenges for consultation and engagement in Leeds and how we propose to tackle them and monitor and review our effectiveness

Contents

LEEDS STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI).....	1
Part 1.....	3
What is the SCI and how can it help you to take part in consultation and engagement?.....	3
1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. HOW YOU CAN YOU BE MORE INVOLVED IN PLANNING?.....	4
➤ Plans prepared by the Council	4
➤ Planning applications	4
➤ Plans prepared by local communities (Neighbourhood Development Plans).....	5
3. CONSULTATION PRINCIPLES	5
What you can expect from us	5
Getting involved – what we would like to expect from you	6

Ambitions.....	6
Part 2.....	7
How will we consult you on local plan preparation and planning applications and support the preparation of neighbourhood development plans?	7
1. THE LEEDS LOCAL PLAN.....	7
Introduction	7
Who will we involve?	7
Notification and consultation stages	8
How can you be involved?	11
Making comments	12
Feedback	12
2. PLANNING APPLICATIONS.....	13
Planning application publicity.....	13
Applications not publicised.....	15
Applicant/developer community involvement and pre-application enquiries	15
How to comment on planning applications.....	16
Keep informed about applications of interest.....	17
Plans Panel	17
Changes to proposals after an application has been submitted	18
The decision	18
Appeals.....	18
Enforcement of planning controls	18
3. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING	19
Our Approach to Neighbourhood Planning	19
2.3.9 For further advice and guidance on neighbourhood planning you can also look at:	20
https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/	20
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2	20
Planning Portal - neighbourhood planning.....	20
Part 3.....	21
The opportunities and challenges for consultation and engagement in Leeds and how we propose to tackle them and monitor and review our effectiveness	21
1. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES.....	21
2. MONITORING AND REVIEW	22
3. FURTHER HELP	23

Part 1

What is the SCI and how can it help you to take part in consultation and engagement?

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Every local planning authority in England is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which is a statement of the Authority's policy regarding the involvement of communities and other stakeholders when decisions on planning strategy (how and where future growth of the city will take place) are made and planning applications are considered.

1.1.2 To understand the SCI and how it can be used, it is necessary to understand planning:

Planning exists to ensure that the right type of development takes place at the right time and in the right place to meets the needs of local communities, businesses and investors to Leeds and to do it in a sustainable way. To get a sense of what this looks like a Local Plan is developed which describes what can be built and where and what the quality, design and measures should be put in place which minimise any negative impacts of the development or make it acceptable. Balancing all these competing and sometimes conflicting priorities is difficult, but through the consultation process on the Local Plan and on individual applications, the planning process acts in the wider public interest.

1.1.3 This document has been prepared by reviewing the effectiveness of the previous SCI and recent planning consultations and by undertaking early engagement on the opportunities and challenges to consultation in Leeds. This has been greatly helped by the creation of an 'SCI Engagement Group', made up of local community representatives, business and other stakeholders. The Engagement Group have provided invaluable insights which have helped to shape this document.

1.1.4 Consultation is essential to good planning and a successful and inclusive city. However, it is not only about asking you what you think about a future planning strategy or a development proposal, it is also about when and how we notify you about what planning matters we are making decisions on, and how we work with you more generally. Notification, consultation and engagement are different but inter-linked activities which will be used by the Council at different times and in different ways:

- **Notification** is the process by which we will let the public know when they can be involved in decision-making, for example when we publicise a new planning application.
- **Engagement** is the process of encouraging the public to be interested in the work of the Council, ensuring that people want to be involved in any decision-making. It is an on-going process, involving publicity and education, so people are properly informed about what we do and how they can influence change, and also the creation of links and relationships, so people feel included and comfortable giving their opinion.

- **Consultation** happens when the public's input on matters affecting them is sought and involves the formal action of information and opinion exchange.

1.1.5 This SCI will:

- Set out how the Council will **notify** and **consult** local communities, businesses and other stakeholders on planning documents and planning applications.
- Show how local communities, businesses and other stakeholders can be **engaged** in the planning process.
- Provide an assurance to supporting communities and businesses in the preparation of neighbourhood plans.
- Express a commitment to ensuring that the planning process is as accessible, inclusive and responsive as it can be.

2. HOW YOU CAN YOU BE MORE INVOLVED IN PLANNING?

1.2.1 We want more people to be involved in planning in Leeds, particularly from those parts of the city that rarely get involved in planning matters (generally the inner-city and more deprived communities). We want those who don't normally get involved in planning to take part in engagement and consultation, to fully reflect the diversity of the city that we live in. This will take time, but the SCI sets out the Council's commitment and direction of travel for planning engagement and consultation.

1.2.2 There are three ways that we would like you to get involved in planning matters:

➤ **Plans prepared by the Council**

1.2.3 You can have your say on Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents. These set out the policy framework that will allow us to make decisions on future planning applications. These frameworks set out issues such as how many homes should be developed in an area, what they should look like, the protection of green space and how to minimise flood risk.

1.2.4 Information on our Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents can be found [here](#).

➤ **Planning applications**

1.2.5 You can make comments on planning applications that have been submitted to the Council for a decision. This could include major development such as new homes, employment or retail uses or something smaller in scale such as an extension to an existing building or a change of use.

1.2.6 Lots of useful planning information can be found on the [Planning Portal](#).

1.2.7 You can view planning applications and register to track applications and be notified of outcomes via [Public Access](#).

➤ Plans prepared by local communities (Neighbourhood Development Plans)

- 1.2.6 Local communities have a right to prepare a neighbourhood development plan for their area. This can indicate where new development should be located and what it looks like, as well as setting out opportunities for sustainable development and protecting heritage. You can comment on plans that are being prepared or become a member of your local neighbourhood planning group.
- 1.2.7 For the latest on neighbourhood plan consultations and neighbourhood planning activity in your area please go to <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning>.

3. CONSULTATION PRINCIPLES

What you can expect from us

- 1.3.1 We worked closely with the 'SCI Engagement Group' to establish a set of consultation principles that will guide consultation and engagement activity undertaken by the Council. This will help us to hear as many views as possible and to make decisions that are informed.

OUR CONSULTATION PRINCIPLES

TRUST

- Commitment to working with partners and communities in a joined-up way
- There will be honesty about what can and can't be influenced and achieved
- Officers will consult with residents/other stakeholders in a respectful manner

TIMELY

- Local Plan and Neighbourhood Planning consultations will be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage to give people maximum opportunity to influence outcomes ('frontloading')
- An adequate length of time will be allocated for the consultation period
- All relevant information will be provided in a timely fashion to inform a meaningful response

VISIBLE

- There will be clarity about the aims, purpose and scope of the consultation
- The use of plain English at all times will ensure accessible consultations
- Consultation and engagement activity will be promoted as widely as possible making the best use of technology and other methods, as well as targeted to those most affected where necessary

INCLUSIVE

- Consultation will be open and accessible to engage with different sectors of the community
- There will be a commitment to eliminating discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity

TRANSPARENT

- The results of consultation will be used to show how it has influenced decisions

- **The findings of the consultation, meaningful feedback and outcomes will be easily accessible**
- **Value for money will be achieved by ensuring that consultation is effective and proportionate to the issues being considered and the communities affected**

Getting involved – what we would like to expect from you

1.3.2 We want your involvement in consultation and engagement to be a positive experience, whatever the outcome. Being aware of the following will help you to achieve this:

- **Take part in the consultation in a respectful way, being aware that there may be many different views.**
- **Take time to understand the purpose of the consultation, in particular what can and cannot be influenced.**
- **It may be worthwhile to ask questions and speak to others before forming your view.**
- **Provide comments that are clear and concise.**
- **Restrict your comments to the issue/s that are being consulted on.**
- **Draft comments with an understanding that they will be made publicly available.**
- **Ensure that your comments are made on time and that it is clear who has made them.**

Ambitions

1.3.3 The 'Consultation Principles' developed with the 'SCI Engagement Group' provide clarity on what we can do now but they also provide pointers to how we can continue to improve and do more in the future. This will be dependent on resources, what is practicable at the time and the extent the Council can influence the outcome. Section 3 of this document describes how we will monitor and review the effectiveness of the SCI moving forward.

Part 2

How will we consult you on local plan preparation and planning applications and support the preparation of neighbourhood development plans?

1. THE LEEDS LOCAL PLAN

Introduction

- 2.1.1 In this section you can learn how the Council involves the community in preparing development plan documents, set out in the Local Plan or Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 2.1.2 The Local Plan includes long term strategic policies that will guide the level of development in the district and where it will take place, as well as more detailed topic specific policies that will guide specific types of development, sites and areas. Neighbourhood Development Plans prepared by local communities also form part of the Local Plan once made and are covered in more detail in part 2, section 3. Please click on the links if you wish to look at these documents in more detail.

[Leeds Core Strategy, with Selective Review \(2019\)](#)

[Leeds Site Allocations Plan \(2019\)](#)

[Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan \(2017\)](#)

[Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan \(2015\)](#)

[Saved policies of the Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review \(2006\)](#)

[Made Neighbourhood Plans](#)

- 2.1.3 [Supplementary Planning Documents](#) (SPDs) are important considerations in determining planning applications as they add detail/technical guidance to the policies in the Local Plan. Current SPDs include documents such as the Accessible Leeds SPD, the Householder Design Guide and the Tall Buildings Design Guide.
- 2.1.4 Other Documents, such as [Conservation Area Appraisals](#) and [Area Design Statements](#) provide detailed information or guidance that is specific to a particular area or neighbourhood.
- 2.1.5 The Local Plan programme is set out in the [Local Development Scheme](#) (LDS). This provides details on what we will be consulting on and when.

Who will we involve?

- 2.1.5 We would like to hear as many views and suggestions as possible when we are making decisions on new development plan documents, while being mindful of the need to make

prompt decisions and use resources efficiently. We keep a database of all people who have expressed an interest in being involved and/or informed about planning policy engagement and consultation, including local residents, community groups, neighbourhood planning groups, town/parish councils, businesses, statutory consultees and neighbouring local planning authorities. **Currently you can register to be included on this database by emailing localplan@leeds.gov.uk** . Through other notification methods and awareness raising we are committed to increasing this number so we can reach other groups, businesses and individuals in neighbourhoods around the district.

Notification and consultation stages

2.1.7 The Council must comply with the Town & Country Planning (Local Plans)(England) [Regulations 2012](#) (as amended) regarding the stages of consultation to meet statutory requirements of community involvement when producing Development Plan Documents. The tables below show the different stages of preparation of these documents in more detail.

Table 1 Stages of involvement in the preparation of Development Plan documents

Stage	What we will do	How you can be involved
Stage 1: Scoping/Issues & Options consultation (Regulation 18).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence gathering and research will be carried out to inform the draft Plan. • We will notify neighbouring/joint authorities under duty to co-operate, along with statutory consultees as specified in the regulations. • We will give notice to stakeholders/the public on our website and/or via email. • We will consult for a minimum of 4 weeks (in practice it will always be at least 6 weeks). • We will consider opportunities to improve equality and social inclusion • We will send email/letter to consultees where necessary. • We may issue a press release or communications bulletin. • We will publish the consultation material on our website • We will provide electronic access to documents at Merrion House/Libraries/Community Hubs. • We will make a paper copy of the document available at Merrion House and will provide paper copies upon request (there may be a fee). We may also provide paper summaries in libraries and Council hubs. • An online survey, consultation portal or email address will be available for comments. • All comments made will be fully considered. 	This is an opportunity to be involved at the earliest stage of plan preparation, where you can input your ideas and evidence to help shape the emerging plan.

Stage	What we will do	How you can be involved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will publish a Consultation Statement that will set out what the consultation was about, who was involved, the main issues raised and our response to them. 	
<p>Stage 2: Publish the Pre-Submission Draft Plan (Regulation 19).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will draft the plan, considering the comments and evidence received at Stage 1. We will consult for a minimum of 4 weeks (in practice it will always be at least 6 weeks). We will send email/letter to consultees where necessary, including those on the planning policy consultation database. We will notify neighbouring/joint authorities under duty to co-operate, along with statutory consultees as specified in the regulations. We will publish the Pre-Submission Draft document on our website. We will issue a press release. We will provide electronic access to document at Merrion House/Libraries/Community Hubs. We will make a paper copy of the document available at Merrion House and will provide paper copies upon request (there may be a fee). We may also provide paper summaries in libraries and Council hubs. An online survey, consultation portal or email address will be available for comments. All comments made will be fully considered. We will publish a Consultation Statement that will set out what the consultation was about, who was involved, the main issues raised and our response to them. 	<p>This is a further opportunity to consider the issues that have been prepared in response to the early consultation.</p>
<p>Stage 3: Publication of Proposed Submission Document and Submission to the Secretary of State</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will publicise the submission document on our website. We will submit the plan to Secretary of State for independent examination. 	<p>There is no consultation at this point but if you have asked to be kept informed of progress then you will be notified that the Plan has been submitted for examination.</p>
<p>Stage 4: Examination in Public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretary of State will appoint an independent examiner. The draft Plan is examined by the Planning Inspector taking into consideration the key issues raised through comments received at stage 2 and the Council's responses. An Examination in Public takes place, to which the public is invited to attend and take part. 	<p>The Examination in Public is a public opportunity to make your previous views heard. Depending on whether the Inspector recommends</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We may use a variety of ways to raise awareness of the examination, including dates, times and place where the hearing will be held, and the name of the examiner, and will publish all documents on our website. The Inspector may make recommendations for any changes that are needed to make the plan 'sound' and legally compliant. We will invite comments on the Inspector's recommended modifications for a six-week period. 	modifications to the Plan, there may be a further opportunity to be consulted on these (if so, this will be as Stage 2).
Stage 5: Adoption (Regulation 25 and 26) and publish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will publish a copy of the Inspector's report and make a copy of it available on the Council's website. We will make a paper copy of the document available at Merrion House and will provide paper copies upon request (there may be a fee). We will also notify you about the report if you have asked to be notified. The Local Plan, Sustainability Appraisal Report and Adoption Statement will be published and made available on the Council's website and paper copies will be available for inspection at Merrion House. A copy of the Adoption Statement will be sent to the Secretary of State. 	This is an awareness stage - no further consultation opportunities apply. If you have asked to be kept informed of progress, you will be notified when the Plan has been adopted.
Stage 6: Monitoring and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will monitor the Plan for policy effectiveness. We will monitor the Plan for equality impact or other likely effects on different groups. We will review the Plan where necessary 	Opportunity to advise us on effectiveness, equality or any other relevant issue which will be used when a review takes place.

Table 2 Stages of involvement in the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

Stage	What we will do	How you can be involved
Stage 1: Developing the evidence base and Scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence gathering and research will be carried out to inform the draft Plan. We will notify neighbouring/joint authorities under duty to co-operate, along with statutory consultees as specified in the regulations. We will give notice to stakeholders/the public on our website and/or via email. We will consider opportunities to improve equality and social inclusion We will consult for a minimum of 4 weeks. We may issue a press release or communications bulletin. We will publish the consultation material on our website We will provide electronic access to documents at Merrion House/Libraries/Community Hubs. 	This is an opportunity to be involved at the earliest stage of plan preparation, where you can input your ideas and evidence to help shape the emerging document.

Stage	What we will do	How you can be involved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will make a paper copy of the document available at Merrion House and will provide paper copies upon request (there may be a fee). We may also provide paper summaries in libraries and Council hubs. An online survey, consultation portal or email address will be available for comments. All comments received will be fully considered. We will publish a Consultation Statement that will set out what the consultation was about, who was involved, the main issues raised and our response to them. 	
Stage 2: Adoption Consultation (Regulation 13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before adopting the SPD, we will consult for a minimum of 4 weeks We will invite views and comments on the draft document, the Sustainability Appraisal Screening Report (if required) and the Consultation Statement. We will notify neighbouring/joint authorities, statutory consultees, other stakeholders and anyone who requested to be notified, via email. We may issue a press release or communications bulletin. We will publish the documents on our website We will provide electronic access to documents at Merrion House/Libraries/Community Hubs. We will make a paper copy of the documents available at Merrion House and will provide paper copies upon request (there may be a fee). We may also provide paper summaries in libraries and Council hubs. An online survey, consultation portal or email address will be available for comments. We will fully consider all comments received prior to the adoption of the SPD. 	This is a final opportunity to be involved, to consider whether you think the comments that you have made have been taken on board or make comments about any other relevant issues.
Stage 3: Publishing the Adopted SPD (Regulation 14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will adopt the SPD and publish the document, alongside an adoption statement, on the Council's web site. We will send a copy of the adoption statement to any person who has asked to be notified of the adoption of the supplementary planning document. A copy of the SPD and adoption statement will be available for inspection at Merrion House. 	This is a notification stage.

How can you be involved?

2.1.8 To inform in a fast, efficient and cost-effective way our preferred method of engaging and consulting with you is via our website as an online portal to access information and submit comments. Feedback shows this method is not for everyone so we will always ensure that our consultations are accessible to all. For people without access to the internet, local libraries and Council offices can provide access to the online portal. An address for written responses will also be provided.

2.1.9 As we are committed to ensuring inclusive engagement there are several other methods that we may use, when appropriate for the scale and nature of a consultation, and dependant on resourcing, including:

- A dedicated consultation webpage on Leeds City Council website. Web content will be clear, engaging and accessible (in html format) and mobile-friendly.
- Where appropriate we will provide choice - providing shorter non-technical formats and summary questionnaires alongside the full material.
- Paper copies of material will be deposited in libraries/community hubs or can be made available on request.
- Email bulletins will be sent to individuals on our consultation database.
- Notices in local newspapers.
- Posters displayed in community hubs or around neighbourhoods.
- Engagement with existing local area events, community meetings, focus groups or workshops to present information about a plan.
- Briefings to Ward Members, community committees and locality meetings will be carried out to increase local reach.
- Outreach and networking will be used to take advantage of opportunities presented by working with established contacts, such as the Equality Hub, Leeds Voice & Influence Team etc.
- Town & Parish Council and Neighbourhood Forum briefings will be used to provide information and signposting.
- Digital communication and social media ads (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Digital communication targeting (by age or location etc.).
- You Tube videos
- Interactive maps
- Visual displays and exhibitions
- Webinars with Q&A sessions
- Planning newsletters

Making comments

2.1.10 When we are consulting on new policies and plans you will need to submit your comments formally to us in writing for them to be considered. Our preferred way of receiving comments is by the **online consultation portal/survey** or you can email them to us. We will also accept comments by post.

2.1.11 Where we hold engagement/consultation events or advertise consultations via social media, comments made to officers at meetings or on Facebook/Twitter etc. can't be logged as formal responses so you need to make sure you follow-up with a written response via the consultation portal or another method. Please note that a petition will be logged as a single response, regardless of how many people have signed it.

Feedback

2.1.12 We will prepare a 'Consultation Statement' or a 'Report of Consultation' at each statutory stage of the Local Plan. This will provide details of who was consulted, how the consultations

were undertaken, and a summary of the main comments made. We will set out how comments have influenced the Plan and if they have not been taken into account we will say why.

2. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

2.2.1 Planning permission is required for many new buildings, alterations or extensions, and changes of use of land or buildings. In Leeds, the planning process is managed by our Development Management service which deals with around 5,000 planning applications per year.

Planning application publicity

2.2.2 Once a valid application has been submitted, the public is invited to submit comments, should they wish to. To comply with the [Town & Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#), our approach to publicity and consulting on a planning application is:

- Notify and invite comments for a minimum of 21 days
- Consult statutory consultees
- Publish relevant applications on the Council’s website via Public Access.
- Depending upon application type, send letters to adjoining neighbours, allowing 21 days for comments, or display a site notice in a suitable nearby location and/or newspaper advert where necessary
- Consult various specialist organisations and public bodies, when appropriate
- Consult various technical consultees, such as Highways or Environmental Health, when appropriate

2.2.3 Article 15 of the [Development Management Procedure Order](#) requires that all planning applications should have some form of publicity. The table below shows the statutory requirements and the methods used by Leeds City Council.

Table 4 Publicity on applications (as at the date of adoption of the SCI)

	Public Access on the Website	Site Notice	Neighbour notification	Site notice by applicant	Newspaper notice	Parish and Town Council notification (their area only)	Applications available online in libraries
Certificate of existing/ proposed lawful use	✓						✓
Agricultural determination	✓						✓

	Public Access on the Website	Site Notice	Neighbour notification	Site notice by applicant	Newspaper notice	Parish and Town Council notification (their area only)	Applications available online in libraries
Advertisement applications	✓						✓
Telecommunication notification	✓	✓					✓
Householder Application	✓	✓				✓	✓
Prior approval larger house extensions	✓		✓				✓
Prior Approval notifications	✓	✓					✓
Major** Planning applications - full, outline and reserved matters	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Non-major planning applications - full, outline and reserved matters	✓	✓				✓	✓
Applications requiring an Environmental Assessment	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Applications not in accordance with the Local Plan (Departures)	✓	✓			✓		✓
Listed Building consent	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Applications affecting the setting of a conservation area	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Affecting the setting of a Listed Building	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Demolitions	✓			✓			

	Public Access on the Website	Site Notice	Neighbour notification	Site notice by applicant	Newspaper notice	Parish and Town Council notification (their area only)	Applications available online in libraries
Hazardous substance consent	✓			✓	✓		
Permission in principle	✓	✓					
Review of Old Mining Permissions	✓						✓

Please note:

- Neighbours are those who occupy land and property immediately adjacent to (share a boundary) or directly opposite the application site.
- The legislation defines major applications as those comprising owners/occupier's development of more than 10 dwellings or covering more than 0.5 hectares (for outline residential schemes only), or commercial properties of over 1,000 square metres of floor space or a site area of one hectare.

Applications not publicised

2.2.4 There are some types of application where we are not required to notify the public, because they are assessed against different legal tests set out in planning legislation. While they may appear on Public Access there is no mechanism to consider public comments on these types of applications:

- Certificate of lawfulness of proposed use or development
- Certificate of lawfulness of existing use or development
- Condition discharge applications
- Non-material minor amendments applications
- Applications to carry out works to trees
- Review of Old Mining Permissions without Environmental Impact Assessment development

Applicant/developer community involvement and pre-application enquiries

2.2.5 There is no legal requirement for developers and applicants to engage with communities and/or neighbours for most types of planning application, but it may assist in avoiding delays through the formal planning application process by addressing concerns and securing public support before the application is submitted. We strongly encourage applicants to positively engage with immediate neighbours, the local community and key stakeholders/groups before preparing the application and where necessary during the application process if changes are required. Applicants do have a statutory requirement to notify certain bodies, such as utility providers. We have produced a [planning protocol](#) which details our expectations of developers and how we will commit to support them.

- 2.2.6 The Local Planning Authority welcomes pre-application enquires from developers and applicants and a [service](#) exists for this. The advice provided to applicants is made without prejudice to any decision made at the planning application stage (which means the Council cannot legally be held to any informal advice given at pre-application stage). Involvement of local communities and elected ward members is highly recommended at the pre-application stage, although it is not a statutory part of the planning process for most types of development.
- 2.2.7 When applicants have consulted with communities before making their application, we recommend that they produce their own Consultation Statement to submit with their application, setting out what engagement took place, what the responses were from the public and how the scheme was amended to take into account these responses. Useful groups to contact as part of the developer engagement process include (but are not limited to) Town/Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Planning Forums, tenant/resident associations, Leeds Civic Trust etc.

How to comment on planning applications

- 2.2.8 Anyone can comment on a planning application, regardless of whether you are directly affected by the proposed development or not. We would prefer that you submit these comments online via [Public Access](#) (where you can view all the relevant information on any application, register your details and get updates on applications).
- 2.2.9 By having your say on specific planning applications you can help shape the way your local environment looks and works and use the opportunity to express concerns if you have them, or alternatively indicate support for a development. Comments should:
- Be made within 21 days from the date of notification.
 - Be submitted online via [Public Access](#) or emailed to us. If you do not have access to a computer you can use libraries or other community hubs, or you may send us a postal letter.
 - Address material planning considerations and wherever possible refer to policies statutory documents such as the National Planning Policy Framework, the Leeds Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents and the National Design Guide etc. to support your comments (see box below).
- 2.2.10 Petitions and proforma letters are accepted, however it is better to provide individual comments via Public Access or in writing. Your comments will not be personally acknowledged, but any submissions made via Public Access will receive an automatic acknowledgment that your comments have been received.
- 2.2.11 Please note that if we consider any comments to be defamatory or offensive, we will not publish them, and representations may be redacted (part of the text obscured) for legal or security reasons.
- 2.2.12 Planning officers may carry out a site visit to have a detailed look at the site and the surrounding area more generally to assess the potential impacts of a proposed development. It is important to note that a case officer will observe the relationship

between neighbouring properties from the site address but does not go onto other people's land to understand any impacts or visit/contact people who submit comments on an application.

- 2.2.13 Planning applications can only be determined by considering matters which are relevant to planning, such as compliance with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), the adopted [Local Development Plan](#) and site-specific issues. These matters are called **material planning considerations**. Only comments relating to material planning considerations can be considered when determining whether a proposal is acceptable or not, so comments submitted should only refer to these. Further information on material planning considerations can be found on the [Planning Portal](#).
- 2.2.14 Objection comments are taken into consideration by the planning officer who will assess if the comments raise material planning concerns, the degree of weight (importance) to be attached to these concerns, and whether, if significant to the acceptability of the development, these concerns can be overcome through changes to the proposal or other measures, such as the use of conditions to the permission. Applications which have received objections cannot be refused purely based on the public making objection comments. Reasons for refusal must be robust and centred what harm would arise from non-compliance with policy so we can justify our decision if an appeal is made, not just based on the number of objections. Normally **planning balance** is applied - whether the positive aspects of the application outweigh the perceived harm.

Keep informed about applications of interest

- 2.2.15 In order to be informed of applications being made in a specific area or ward, Public Access should be used. You can use [Public Access](#) to track an application or request notification of all applications in a particular area.
- 2.2.16 After registering on Public Access and setting up a **saved search**, emails will be sent to you automatically each time an application in that area is received or when a decision has been reached. There is also a feature on Public Access which allows you to **'track'** specific applications. This means you will be informed automatically via email when new documents are uploaded and about the progress of that application as it goes through the planning process.

Plans Panel

- 2.2.16 Due to the high volume of planning applications dealt with at Leeds most decisions on planning applications (98%) are made by officers under the Chief Planning Officer's delegation scheme. Applications which cannot be dealt with under the scheme and detailed in the "Exceptions" in the delegation scheme are determined by the Plans Panels. In Leeds there are three Plans Panels which comprise a number of elected members (Ward Councillors) from all political parties and decisions are made by majority vote.
- 2.2.17 The Plans Panel meetings are open to the public who can observe proceedings and are live streamed on the Council's You Tube channel. Normally meetings are held in-person, but

occasionally they may be on-line or subject to a hybrid approach where necessary. We also offer the public and applicants an opportunity to apply to speak at the Plans Panels, which is very effective in bringing representations to life for Members of the Plans Panel. Details of upcoming and previous Plans Panel meetings and information on how to request to speak at a meeting and what to expect if you attend can be found at [Plans Panel Meetings](#).

Changes to proposals after an application has been submitted

2.2.18 Where material amendments to a live application have been made (in most instances changes are made to meet objection comments), we will consider the following before deciding whether to re-consult:

- Were the earlier objections substantial?
- Are the changes significant?
- Did the earlier views cover the matters now under consideration?
- Do the changes mean others not previously consulted might now be concerned?

2.2.19 If re notification takes place, the time in which people must respond will usually be shorter, 7 or 14 days.

The decision

2.2.20 Once a decision has been made the decision notice and officer's report will be available to view on [Public Access](#) within 5 working days. The officers report will provide a summary of the comments relating to material planning considerations and the case officer's response to these.

2.2.21 If you have chosen to track the application on Public Access you will receive an update email of the decision.

Appeals

2.2.22 If the applicant does not agree with the decision to refuse an application or a condition imposed on a permission, they do have the right to lodge an appeal against the decision to the Secretary of State via the Planning Inspectorate. If an appeal is made the consultees and/or neighbours that were notified at the application stage will be notified again and can submit comments to the Planning Inspectorate. Appeal decisions are published and can be viewed on our website.

2.2.23 Information on making or commenting on an appeal can be found on the [Planning Portal](#).

Enforcement of planning controls

2.2.24 Reports that a development or change of use may not have planning permission or might not be built or operated in accordance with a valid permission, are investigated by the Council's Planning Compliance team. If you have a concern regarding a development write

to or email the team to give details of the issue, submit details via a form on our website or you can provide the information over the telephone. Your details will remain strictly confidential as part of the investigation.

- 2.2.25 Officers will keep you informed if there is a significant development in the case, and what action is being taken. Where there has been no breach of planning control, or where it has been decided that enforcement action cannot be justified, we will explain to you why that is the case.
- 2.2.26 It is important to understand that a lot of householder development and some changes of use are 'permitted development' (i.e. do not require planning permission). If these developments comply with the [General Permitted Development Order](#) the Council **cannot** take action against them.
- 2.2.27 Further information on how to report an issue of concern and our range of enforcement powers regarding a breach of planning control can be found in the [Enforcement Plan](#).

3. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- 2.3.1 Neighbourhood Planning is a way for local communities to help shape the future of the places where you live and work by having a say in where new development takes place, what it should look like and other key planning policy issues that are locally important.
- 2.3.2 Neighbourhood development plans can be as simple or more complex as communities want but should be based on a sound understanding of local issues which have been identified through comprehensive consultation and engagement with all sections of that community.
- 2.3.3 Once a neighbourhood plan is adopted (Made) it becomes part of the 'statutory development plan' and the policies contained in it will be used to help determine planning applications.
- 2.3.4 The Council will advise local communities in the preparation of neighbourhood development plans as well as guide you through the key statutory stages, which are:
- Designation of neighbourhood area (the area the neighbourhood plan will cover)
 - Designate the neighbourhood forum, if an unparished area (this is the forum that will be responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan)
 - Organise, manage and pay for the Independent Examination
 - Organise, manage and pay for the Referendum
 - Making (adopting) the neighbourhood plan

Our Approach to Neighbourhood Planning

- 2.3.5 We take a positive and proactive approach to supporting neighbourhood planning groups. It is clear from experience that the most successful neighbourhood plans are in areas where there is a good level of collaboration between the local community, the Council and other key stakeholders (e.g. landowners). We are keen to continue this positive collaboration with

all neighbourhood planning groups in Leeds. In addition to undertaking statutory duties, we currently provide additional support to groups, such as:

- Appointing a named officer as the primary point of contact between neighbourhood planning groups and Leeds City Council. The officer will provide support to the group in preparing the plan, and will also provide advice on other planning policy matters and co-ordinate communication with other services in the Council to help build up relationships;
- Provide advice and assistance in preparing the neighbourhood plan;
- Support on evidence gathering, including sharing strategic evidence used by the Council to prepare the local plan;
- Advise on consultation and engagement; and
- Additional support as appropriate.

2.3.6 Offers of support will be made on a case-by-case basis depending on the circumstances of the neighbourhood planning group and available Council resources. Key considerations will include the capabilities of the group, the level of consultant involvement, whether the plan is seeking to allocate sites for development, shape strategic allocations and whether the area is a disadvantaged or high growth area.

2.3.7 It is expected that neighbourhood planning groups will make use of this SCI to help guide and shape engagement and consultation activity.

2.3.8 You can check if there is a Neighbourhood Plan for your area, or if there is one being produced, and how to get involved [here](#).

2.3.9 For further advice and guidance on neighbourhood planning you can also look at:

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

[Planning Portal - neighbourhood planning](#)

Part 3

The opportunities and challenges for consultation and engagement in Leeds and how we propose to tackle them and monitor and review our effectiveness

1. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- 3.1.1 Leeds is a wonderfully diverse City and one which is constantly changing. The total population estimate for the Leeds district in 2020 was 798,786 people, and it is predicted that by 2033 Leeds will have a population between 930,000 and one million. This predicted growth for Leeds will have an impact on all aspects of the district, including housing, social infrastructure (health, education and employment) transport, water, waste, energy infrastructure and the natural environment and conservation. We are confident that the wealth of different communities, cultures, opinions and lived experiences of the population in Leeds can help the district respond positively to growth, if we can support and encourage a diverse range of people to get involved in planning and have their say.
- 3.1.2 Leeds is no different to other parts of the country where there are some communities who may not feel engaged with the planning process or do not feel confident in making their views heard. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for the City and it is important that we do our best to ensure that all those who wish to learn about planning or contribute to the planning process are able to do so. This will be achieved by ensuring that we are positive and pro-active in the following ways when considering how we might engage with people about planning:
- **Understanding an area** – Each area of Leeds has its own priorities and challenges. We will use the [Leeds Observatory](#) and work in collaboration with the [Communities Committees](#) to better understand the profile of an area, in order to tailor locally specific solutions and work out the best methods to reach those communities.
 - **Language barriers** – The population of Leeds is very diverse, with more than 140 ethnic groups, representing nearly 19% of the total population (2011 Census). In 2018 12.6% of the population was born outside of the UK and 2011 records indicated that 4.5% of households contained no-one with English as a main language. To ensure inclusivity, we will provide information that is clear and concise and available in an electronic format that can be translated into any language, using the relevant software. We will take advice from the [Equalities Assembly](#) in order to involve ethnic-minority and religious community groups effectively in policy decision making.
 - **Children and young people** – If we want to future-proof the direction of travel we are taking as a city we need to make sure the voices of the young can be heard. Where possible we will use modern consultation tools, such as social media or apps to appeal to younger people, and we will tap into existing resources such as the

[Youth Council](#) and Youth Ambassadors or involve schools, colleges and youth groups with consultations in their area.

- **Economically disadvantaged communities** – There are over 170,000 people in Leeds living in areas ranked amongst the most deprived 10% nationally. Involving the Localities Teams and Community Committees early in decision making on consultation methods will ensure that we are using the best methods and networks for each community to maximise involvement.
- **Low internet access** – While digital consultation and engagement is a focus for the Council moving forward, not everyone is online, or feel confident/competent in using online tools for research or engagement. We will ensure that people without access to computers are able to take part, view proposals and plans, and make comments, either by providing easy access to computers at libraries and communities hubs, or by making paper copies of the materials available in certain locations. Any in-person events will be held at accessible times and locations.
- **Older people and those with disabilities** – We will involve older people’s forums and disability/mobility groups effectively in policy decision making, creating strong links. We will also use accessible facilities and venues and provide information that is clear and concise and available in an electronic format, that can be put into larger print or used with audio readers etc. using the relevant software.
- **Education** – Planning matters are often complicated, and it can be difficult for people to understand how they can get involved, or influence decisions. We will promote and explain the use of email alerts and Public Access in local magazines, web news articles and mailings to targeted groups. We may use training sessions within the community or online guidance notes to encourage involvement, and where possible we will improve the accessibility and ease of submitting comments using the Council website and Public Access. The relationship with Leeds Beckett University Planning School is on-going and the possibility of future training programmes/planning camps will be looked at.
- **Students** – Leeds has a relatively young age profile, with 18.7% of the population aged 20-29 years old; compared to an average of 12.8% for the whole of England (2020 estimate), thanks in part to the number of well-regarded universities within the City. We will create links with UNIPOL, landlord organisations, Student Unions and the Universities themselves, as well as making the most of digital formats, including the website and social media, and will make our web content mobile-phone friendly in order to appeal to this section of the population.

2. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 3.2.1 We would like to monitor the effectiveness of the Statement of Community Involvement by considering a series of indicators to assess whether we are increasing our reach with engagement within different communities around the district, reviewing the success of

different approaches to consultation and listening to feedback, and considering whether the responses received have led to changes in planning documents. This assessment would be published in the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).

- 3.2.2 We intend to review the SCI every 5 years from the date of adoption and/or if there are changes in legislation, changes to communication/digital technologies, significant changes to demographics etc.

3. FURTHER HELP

- 3.3.1 There are a variety of different sources of help available regarding the planning matters discussed in this SCI:

- **Leeds City Council website** – Information on planning application process, our adopted planning documents, current consultations and access to planning applications and planning history.
<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/planning>
- **The Planning Portal** – Information on plans, appeals, applications, contact details and research areas.
<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>
- **Planning Practice Guidance** – Guide to all aspects of the planning process.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
- **Planning Aid** – Offers free, independent professional advice on planning issues, particularly to disadvantaged groups.
<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/>
- **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman** – A service that investigates complaints from the public about Councils and some other public services.
<https://www.lgo.org.uk/>
- **Our Address**
City Development, Merrion House, 110 Merrion Centre, Leeds, LS2 8BB
- LCC's Pre-application service– contact with queries or questions regarding development – telephone (0113) 2224409 or email planning@leeds.gov.uk
- Planning Compliance team – report possible breaches of planning control - email planning.enforcement@leeds.gov.uk