

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 (SCI) is split into three parts, plus Appendices:

Part 1 Explains what the SCI is and how it can help you participate 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 tackling them and monitoring and reviewing our effectiveness

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Part 1

What is the SCI, and how can it help you participate 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). An SCI is a statement of the Authority's policy regarding what involvement communities and other stakeholders can expect when decisions on 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 meet the needs of local communities, businesses and investors in Leeds and to do it sustainably. A Local Plan is developed to understand what this looks like. The plan describes what can be built and where, what the quality and design of the development should be, and what measures should be put in place to minimise any negative impacts of the development or make it acceptable. Balancing all these competing and sometimes conflicting priorities is difficult. However, through the consultation process on the Local Plan and individual applications, the planning process acts in the broader public interest.**
- 1.1.3 This document has been prepared by reviewing the effectiveness of the previous SCI and recent planning consultations. We also undertook early engagement to find out the opportunities and challenges to consultation in Leeds. This process has been greatly helped by creating an 'SCI Engagement Group', which comprises local community representatives, business and other stakeholders. The Engagement Group has provided invaluable insights that have helped to shape this document.
- 1.1.4 Consultation is essential to good planning and a successful and inclusive city. 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 will work with you. Notification, consultation and engagement are different but inter-linked activities that the Council will use 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 ongoing process involving publicity and education, so people are properly informed about what we do and how they can influence change, and the creation of links and relationships, so people feel included and comfortable expressing their views.

- **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 a commitment to supporting communities and businesses in preparing neighbourhood plans.
- Express a commitment to ensuring that the planning process is as accessible, inclusive and responsive as possible.

2. HOW CAN YOU BE MORE INVOLVED IN PLANNING?

1.2.1 We want more people to be involved in planning in Leeds, particularly those parts of the city that rarely get involved in planning matters (generally the inner-city and more deprived communities), to reflect the diversity of the city we live in fully. 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 requirements such as how many homes should be developed in an area, what they should look like, and the protection of green space and 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 developments 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 You can view planning applications and register to track applications, and be notified of the outcomes via [Public Access](#).

➤ **Plans prepared by local communities (Neighbourhood Development Plans)**

1.2.7 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 and set out opportunities for sustainable development. You can become a member of your local

neighbourhood planning group to help prepare the plan for your area, or you can comment on plans that are being prepared by others in your community.

- 1.2.8 For the latest neighbourhood planning information in your area, please visit [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 use those views to influence decisions.

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 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

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, as well as targeted to those most affected where necessary

INCLUSIVE

- Consultations will be open and accessible to engage with different sectors of the community
- There will be a commitment to eliminating discrimination and advancing equal opportunities

TRANSPARENT

- The results of each 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, particularly what can and cannot be influenced.**
- **Feel free 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' provide clarity on what we can do now. They also offer pointers on how we can continue improving and doing more in the future. This will depend 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, and Supplementary Planning Documents. 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.
- 2.1.2 The Local Plan includes long-term strategic policies that will guide the amount and location of development in the district. It also includes more detailed topic-specific policies that will guide specific types of development, sites and areas. Made Neighbourhood Development Plans prepared by local communities also form part of the Local Plan 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 specific to a particular area or neighbourhood.

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 in this database by emailing localplan@leeds.gov.uk** . Through other notification methods and awareness-raising we are committed to increasing this number to 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 preparing 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. • We will publish a Consultation Statement that will set out what the consultation was about, who was 	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
	involved, the main issues raised and our response to them.	
Stage 2: Publish the Pre-Submission Draft Plan (Regulation 19).	<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. 	This is a further opportunity to consider the issues that have been prepared in response to the early consultation.
Stage 3: Publication of Proposed Submission Document and Submission to the Secretary of State	<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. 	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.
Stage 4: Examination in Public	<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. • We may use a variety of ways to raise awareness of the examination, including dates, times and place 	The Examination in Public is a public opportunity to make your previous views heard. Depending on whether the Inspector recommends modifications to the Plan, there may be a

	<p>where the hearing will be held, and the name of the examiner, and will publish all documents on our website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	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 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. 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. • We will make a paper copy of the document available at Merrion House and provide paper copies upon request 	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
	<p>(there may be a fee). We may also provide paper summaries in libraries and Council hubs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
<p>Stage 2: Adoption Consultation (Regulation 13)</p>	<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 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. 	<p>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.</p>
<p>Stage 3: Publishing the Adopted SPD (Regulation 14)</p>	<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. 	<p>This is a notification stage.</p>

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 that the online 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 the 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 are 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 (Councillors), 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. You need to make sure you follow-up with a written response via the consultation portal or using 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 preparation. 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 land use or building changes. In Leeds, our Development Management service manages the planning process, which deals with around 5,000 planning applications per year.

Planning application publicity

2.2.2 To comply with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, all planning applications are required to have some form of publicity. Once a valid application has been submitted 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 The table below shows the statutory requirements and the methods used by Leeds City Council for the various types of planning application.

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	✓						✓
Advertisement applications	✓						✓

	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
Telecommunication notification	ü	✓					✓
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	✓			✓			
Hazardous substance consent	✓			✓	✓		

	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
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 applications 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 on 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 to engage with communities for most types of planning applications. Still, 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 supporting them.

2.2.6 The Local Planning Authority welcomes pre-application enquiries from developers, and a [service](#) exists for this. Involvement of local communities and elected ward members is highly recommended at the pre-application stage; however as it is not a statutory part of the

planning process for most types of development, there is usually no legal requirement for developers to engage at this stage.

- 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. Having your say on specific planning applications can help shape how your local environment looks and works and you can use the opportunity to express concerns if you have them or indicate support for a development.
- 2.2.9 We would prefer 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). 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 and statutory documents such as the National Planning Policy Framework, the Leeds Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents, the National Design Guide etc., to support your comments.
- 2.2.10 Petitions and proforma letters are accepted. However providing individual comments via Public Access or in writing is better. 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 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 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 and will not go onto other people's land to understand any impacts or visit 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

planning [Local Development Plan](#) and site-specific issues. These matters are called **material considerations**. Only comments relating to material planning considerations can be considered when determining whether a proposal is acceptable, 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 on what harm would arise from non-compliance with the policy so we can justify our decision if an appeal is made, not just based on the number of objections. Typically **planning balance** is applied - whether the positive aspects of the application outweigh the perceived harm.

Keep informed about applications of interest

2.2.15 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 at Leeds, officers make most decisions on planning applications (98%) under the Chief Planning Officer's delegation scheme. The Plans Panels determine applications which cannot be dealt with under the scheme and detailed in the "Exceptions" in the delegation scheme. 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. 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 occurs, 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 on [Public Access](#) within 5 working days. The officers report will summarise 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 disagrees with the decision to refuse an application or a condition imposed on a permission, they 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 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 Enforcement team. If you have a concern regarding a development write to or email the team to give details of the issue. You can also 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. If there has been no breach of planning control, or 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 complex as communities want. Still, they should be based on a sound understanding of local issues 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 its policies will 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 with 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 offer 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 for evidence gathering, including sharing strategic evidence used by the Council to prepare the local plan;
- Advice 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 or 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 use 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:

[OBJ]

[OBJ]

[OBJ]

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 impact 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 we must do our best to ensure that all those who wish to learn about planning or contribute to the planning process can 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 collaborate with the [Communities Committees](#) to better understand the profile of an area, 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 the primary language. To ensure inclusivity, we will provide clear and concise information in an electronic format that can be translated into any language using the relevant software. We will take advice from the [Equalities Assembly](#) to effectively 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. We will work with Children’s Services to develop an engagement strategy to help ensure future consultation and engagement activity is accessible and relevant to the needs of younger people across the district. This will include the use of social media and apps to appeal to and target younger people and the continuation of positive

relationships with the [Youth Council](#), Youth Ambassadors, schools, colleges and youth groups.

- **Economically disadvantaged communities** – Over 170,000 people in Leeds live 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 use the best methods and networks for each community to maximise involvement. We will also encourage and support neighbourhood planning activity in inner-city and more deprived neighbourhoods to help people shape the growth of their local area.
- **Low internet access** – While digital consultation and engagement is a focus for the Council moving forward, not everyone is online or feels confident/competent in using online tools for research or engagement. We will ensure that people without computer access can take part, view proposals and plans, and make comments, 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 places.
- **Older people and those with disabilities** – We will effectively 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 clear and concise information 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. 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 ongoing and the possibility of future training programmes/planning camps will be explored.
- **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 and make the most of digital formats, including websites and social media. We will make our web content mobile-phone friendly 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 targets to assess whether we are increasing our reach with

engagement within different communities around the district. We think some measurable and deliverable targets are:

1. We will receive responses from every neighbourhood on district-wide plan-making consultations.
 - We will seek to achieve this by targeting promotions within neighbourhoods, piggybacking on events within neighbourhoods and close working with locality teams and Community Committees.
 2. We will increase the positive feedback received on the accessibility and clarity of consultation from all groups, particularly from those rarely engaged in planning.
 - We will seek to achieve this by carrying out plain-English checks, having summary versions of consultation material, clarity on what can and cannot be influenced from the consultation and a focus on priority neighbourhoods
 3. We will ensure that young people feel engaged and included in planning consultations and have been able to make their views known in a way that that is easy, accessible and fun.
 - We will seek to achieve this by working with Children's Services on a Youth Engagement Strategy to involve the Youth Council, Youth Ambassadors, schools, colleges and youth groups. This may involve workshops, the use of videos, social media/apps and newsletters/bulletins via the City's youth network.
- 3.2.2 We will use these indicators to review the success of different approaches to consultation, listen to feedback, and consider whether the consultation responses received have led to changes in planning documents. This assessment will be published in the annual Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).
- 3.2.3 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 the 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