

## **REVISED DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the revised draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The current adopted SCI needed to be updated to take into account changes in national planning guidance and to help shape consultation on the new Local Plan in the future. The Draft SCI was reported to the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee on 11 February 2016 and referred to Full Council on 23 February 2016 when the document was accepted, subject to changes requested by the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee and a 9 week consultation was agreed. This consultation took place between 16 March and 18 May 2016.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The requirement for a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is set out in Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The SCI's role is to outline how it will involve the community in plan-making and the consideration of planning applications. The SCI helps to ensure that local communities have greater ownership over local planning decisions and are better able to shape the places where they live.

### **3 THE NEED FOR A NEW DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- 3.1 The Council's existing SCI was adopted in January 2007. Whilst parts of the SCI remain largely up-to-date and do not need significant revision, a review of the document has been undertaken to provide an opportunity to ensure the Council's practices remain of the highest standard and remain up-to-date with national planning guidance.
- 3.2 All future planning consultations, particularly during the preparation of the new Local Plan, will be undertaken in accordance with the adopted SCI.

### **4 CONSULTATION ON NEW DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- 4.1 The new draft SCI reflects the latest consultation requirements for both planning policy and development management.
- 4.2 The programme of consultation commenced on 16 March 2016, for a nine-week period to 18 May 2016, providing for an additional period over and above the six week statutory minimum. The aim of this consultation was to seek views from the community and stakeholders on the draft SCI and whether it could be further updated before adoption to reflect these views.
- 4.3 The consultation has included 3,347 letters and emails sent to consultees on the Council's planning policy mailing list, press release to local media, publicity in

*Rochford District Matters*, use of social media (Twitter), a banner on Rochford District Council's website homepage, a link under *In Focus* on the homepage, a banner on screens in reception areas, articles in Parish/Town Council newsletters, where possible, and posters displayed by Parish/Town Councils on their notice boards. The document was made available to view, comment on and download via the District Council's online consultation system. It was also available on the Council's website and for inspection at local libraries, at the Council offices in South Street and the Civic Suite in Rayleigh. Online responses were the recommended method of response due to being able to input responses directly into the online consultation system and for instant confirmation, but the documents included details for submitting comments by other methods such as post. The consultation responses received have been considered by officers and used to propose modifications to the draft SCI where appropriate.

- 4.4 Appendix A (Feedback Report) attached sets out the consultation responses received from the public during revision of the SCI. The Feedback Report addresses all the comments and issues raised during the consultation, and provides details of the recommendations for change to the draft SCI, where appropriate. The complete draft SCI, amended post consultation in line with the Feedback Report, is attached at appendix B.

## **5 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 A revised draft SCI will ensure that the document remains up to date with current policies.
- 5.2 Adopting the revised draft SCI will help to avoid risks involved with consultation practices not being up to date.

## **6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council has a statutory requirement set out in Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

## **7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The SCI will ensure that all planning policy documents involve widespread consultation and the full participation of local stakeholders, residents and businesses. Their views, needs and aspirations can be reflected in plans and policies.

## **8 RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL**

- (1) That the draft Statement of Community Involvement 2016, as amended post consultation, be formally adopted.



Christine Lyons

Assistant Director, Planning Services

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**Background Papers:-**

None.

For further information please contact Xavier Preston on:-

Phone: 01702 318 3435

Email: [Xavier.Preston@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:Xavier.Preston@rochford.gov.uk)

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Rochford District Council is at the early stages of reviewing its local development plan – these are the policies which planning applications are determined against. As part of this wider policy review, the Council has reviewed and updated its Statement of Community Involvement, which was originally adopted in 2007. The Statement of Community Involvement is a planning document which sets out how the Council will involve the community in plan-making and the consideration of planning applications. The purpose of the review is to ensure the Council's practices remain of the highest standard and are up-to-date with national planning guidance.
- 1.2 The adopted Statement of Community Involvement was reviewed and updated, and was accepted at a meeting of Full Council on 23 February 2016 for public consultation. This Feedback Report sets out how local communities and other key stakeholders have been involved in its preparation.

## **2 Public Participation and Consultation**

- 2.1 Comments on the draft Statement of Community Involvement were invited between 16 March and 18 May 2016. The Council sought to engage with the community and other key stakeholders through the methods set out in Table 1 below. The Council also enlisted the aid of the Parish Councils in order for them to include a notice of the consultation within their respective leaflets, and posters in their noticeboards, as identified in the Consultation Note.

**Table 1** – Encouraging Public Participation on the Draft Statement of Community Involvement

Engagement / Consultation Method	Details
Letters and emails to stakeholders	<p>Letters and emails were sent on 16 March 2016 to local residents on the Council's planning policy mailing list and other key stakeholders set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.</p> <p>Those on the Council's planning policy mailing list – which comprises specific and general consultation bodies along with groups and organisations who may have interest in the development of the District, and members of the public who have requested to be kept updated with opportunities to participate – were written to informing them of the consultation period and encouraging them to submit views using the online system. Groups written to inviting comment included those representing sections of the society who have traditionally been underrepresented in the planning process. Mindful that the over-reliance on electronic communication may exclude some sections of society, the opportunity to comment through written correspondence was also made available.</p> <p>Letters and emails encouraging public participation were sent to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3016 members of the public;</li> <li>• 171 Statutory Consultees, Neighbouring Councils, Parish Councils;</li> <li>• 160 Agents.</li> </ul>
Advertisements in newspaper	A press release on the consultation was published in early April 2016.
Website	An advertising banner was placed on the home page of Councils website and a link under 'in focus' and 'Have Your Say' sections of the website. A copy of the poster was included on the Great Wakering Parish Councils website throughout the consultation.
Twitter	A tweet was composed and published on 29 March 2016 to alert all those members who follow RDC on the social media application. Information on the consultation was

Engagement / Consultation Method	Details
	regularly tweeted throughout the consultation.
Posters	<p>Posters were electronically sent to all Parish/Town Councils for display in their respective noticeboards where appropriate, and to libraries in order to promote the opportunity to participate in the consultation. These posters outlined the purpose of the consultation and provided readers with four convenient ways to respond; online, by email, post or fax.</p> <p>Officers sought feedback from the Parish/Town Councils on the location of posters across the District following the close of the consultation. Feedback from Parish/Town Councils confirmed that the poster was located in;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Wakering Parish Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ High Street</li> <li>○ Little Wakering Lane noticeboard</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ashingdon Parish Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Southview Road, Hockley</li> <li>○ Greensward Road, Hockley</li> <li>○ Ashingdon School Lane, Hockley</li> <li>○ South Fambridge</li> <li>○ Mace Stores, Ashingdon Road</li> <li>○ Junction with Ashingdon Road and Brays Lane</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Rayleigh Town Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ High Street</li> <li>○ Pavilion Wall</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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Engagement / Consultation Method	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rawreth Lane (ASDA)</li> <li>● Rochford Parish Council               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parish Rooms</li> <li>○ Southend Road</li> <li>○ Outside Sapwoods</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Officers did not receive a response from the other Parish Councils.</p>
Rochford District Matters	An article highlighting the consultation was included in the Spring 2016 edition of the Council's newsletter which was sent to all households in the District.
Parish Leaflets	<p>Parish/Town Councils were electronically sent an article on the consultation for inclusion in their respective leaflets. Officers sought feedback from the Parish/Town Councils on the inclusion of an article following the close of the consultation. Feedback from Parish/Town Councils confirmed that the article featured in the following leaflets;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rayleigh Town Council – Article in Rayleigh Review delivered to 14,000 houses.</li> <li>● Great Wakering Parish Council – Article in issue 80 of Community news delivered to every household.</li> </ul> <p>In addition Rochford Parish Council were unable to include the article as their leaflet was not published in time; and there was not enough space in Ashingdon Parish Council's leaflet. Officers did not receive a response from the other Parish Councils.</p>
Engagement events	Information on the draft Statement of Community Involvement and the consultation was available at the RRAVS (Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Service) event which was attended by an officer on 24 March 2016.
Reception Screens	A rolling advert featured on the Council's interactive screens in receptions areas in both Rayleigh and Rochford Council Offices. Paper copies of the consultation document and



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Engagement / Consultation Method	Details
	comment form were also available.
Libraries	Paper copies of the consultation document and comment form, as well as posters, were available in all libraries across the District.

A breakdown of responses received during the consultation is set out in Table 2 below.

**Table 2** – Numerical Breakdown of Consultation Responses

Section Name	Respondents	Objectors	Supporters	Object	Comment	Representations
Statement of Community Involvement 2016						
1. Introduction	14	7	3	4	16	26
1.2	1	0	0	0	1	1
2. Planning Policy						
2.1	1	1	0	1	0	1
2.3	2	0	0	0	2	2
2.5	2	1	1	1	0	2
2.8	1	0	0	0	1	1
2.11	1	0	1	0	0	1
2.15	2	0	1	0	1	2
2.17	1	0	0	0	1	1
2.19	2	0	0	0	2	2
3. Planning Applications						
3.1	1	0	0	0	1	1

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Section Name	Respondents	Objectors	Supporters	Object	Comment	Representations
3.3	1	0	1	0	1	1
3.5	1	0	1	0	1	1
Pre-Application Consultation	1	0	0	0	1	1
3.6	1	0	0	0	1	1
3.7	1	0	0	0	1	1
3.8	1	0	0	0	1	1
3.9	1	0	0	0	1	1
3.10	1	0	0	0	1	1
3.11	1	0	0	0	1	1
3.12	3	1	0	1	2	3
3.14	1	0	0	0	1	1
3.17	1	1	0	0	1	1
3.18	1	0	0	0	1	1
4. Resourcing, Monitoring and Review	0	0	0	0	0	0

### 3 Main Issues Raised at the Consultation Stage

3.1 The main issues highlighted at the consultation stage were;

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- Parish Councils would like to be consulted directly with regards to planning applications;
- The public are concerned at the impact their comments have on shaping policy documents;
- Requests for targeted involvement of organisations and service providers to be specific and include and mention by name all services – see Table 3; and
- There are concerns by some Parish Councils over the procedure for the use of displaying site notices. It is felt that site notices should be applied to all developments, not just major developments.

3.2 Table 3 compiles a list of proposed changes to the draft SCI based on consultation responses set out in Appendix 1.

**Table 3** - Proposed Changes to the Draft Statement of Community Involvement 2016

Page	Paragraph	Proposed Modifications
5	2.8	Amend sentence 1 as follows;  ...be provided in paper or <u>Word document</u> format on request...  In order that the proposed representations can be drafted by planning agents and issued to clients, prior to being formally submitted to Rochford District Council.
12	2.19 table, Evidence Base Preparation	Under the heading 'Engagement Opportunities' (column 3), under the sub title -"Targeted involvement of organisations and service providers"  Specifically include individual Schools, Doctors Practises, Hospital Trusts, Utilities etc. as well as Essex Highways, and other groups.
13	2.19 table, Regulation 13	Under the heading 'Engagement Opportunities' (column 3). Sub section Regulation 13, paragraph 3.  Amend sentence 2 ...Events / <u>exhibitions</u> may be undertaken, as...

<b>Page</b>	<b>Paragraph</b>	<b>Proposed Modifications</b>
16	3.12	Include a new bullet point – Consultation with Parish / Town Councils.
17	3.14	Change sentence 2 – ‘Comments can be made in writing...’ to ‘Comments <u>need</u> to be made in writing...’

## Appendix 1 – Issues Raised on the Draft Statement of Community Involvement 2016

	Issues Raised	Initial Officer Comments
<b>Introduction</b>		
1	The letter requests to make comments only - Not genuine 'consultation'. Past experience in dealing with the Planning Department has proved negative on 'consultation'.	Comment noted. The District Council undertakes public consultation in accordance with the current adopted SCI and seeks to go beyond the minimum regulatory requirements wherever possible, particularly for plan making.
2	States willingness to 'engage and consult with local communities'. Why is this a sudden change in attitude now as you did not bother before?	Comment noted. The District Council undertakes extensive public consultation in accordance with the current adopted SCI to positively inform its plan preparation.
3	This 2007 SCI is being reviewed? We believe this review should have taken place several years ago.	The reason for consultation is set out clearly in the consultation letter.
4	Once again you will only take comments from the community, but you do not mention 'consultation' in considering those comments.	Comment noted.
5	So can you please inform us why you request our co-operation now when you did not bother in the last 3 years?	Comments are an important part of both the decision making and plan making processes; any comments received during a consultation are taken into account by officers, as appropriate.
6	The residents have spoken to me about your letter which they have no understanding of and that they have never received this type of communication before, so your motives for this letter 'at this time' is being read as suspicious.	The reason for consultation is set out clearly in the consultation letter.
7	As you have not bothered to 'consult' with us before, we wonder how you are able to restore good faith with the	Comment noted. All comments are received and acknowledged, they are reviewed and taken into account

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	community with respect to the 'comments' you wish to receive. What difference would these 'comments' make when you had demonstrated that the previous exercise made none.	where possible.
8	Our Hullbridge Community are very aware that you have ignored all our submissions for the past 3 years and are very sceptical about your motives, that this is meant to show the Government Planning Department that you are at last asking for comments on a document which we know you should have put forward at least 18 months ago (we had written to you asking when you would be 'reviewing the local Development Plan, alas without response).	The reason for consultation is set out clearly in the consultation letter.
9	Please inform us if this letter was discussed with the whole Council including the 39 Councillors or has this been advised by the reduced committee of 13 Councillors.	The draft SCI was agreed at a meeting of Full Council on 23 February 2016.
10	Democracy - Councillors should be free to vote on planning matters and not be concerned that a no vote on a planning application may, in the future, have financial implications for the Council. They should be released from this unjust burden when making decisions	This is outside the remit of this consultation.
11	Decisions on planning matters should be made by all Councillors representing the Council and not just those on the Planning/Development Committee. This would, hopefully, stop decisions being based on Party Political lines.	This is outside the remit of this consultation.
12	Residents' views must be taken into account. They must also be given the time and opportunity to express their	There are various methods through which residents may be notified of a planning application as set out in the draft SCI.

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	Issues Raised	Initial Officer Comments
	concerns over any proposed developments. The recent passing of development in Rayleigh and Hullbridge were examples of where the objections of the majority of residents was overridden.	Comments received on planning applications are considered by officers in their reports when making decisions or recommendations to the Development Control Committee.
13	Green Belt Land - No further developments should be granted on Green Belt land. A staggering 274,292 houses are planned on green belt land in England, 25% more than the previous count (March 2015) and in contradiction to the Government's manifesto policy to "Protect the Green Belt".	<p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council will engage local communities and other key stakeholders in the plan preparation process, it is not a planning policy document. Green Belt issues will be considered as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan.</p> <p>Current Green Belt policy is set out in Policy GB1 of the Core Strategy. Proposals in the Green Belt will regulated through the development management process.</p>
14	Farm and Arable Land - This should also be protected as much as possible. The decision to build houses on prime arable land in Hall Road, Rochford was, in my humble opinion, a huge mistake.	Comment noted.
15	Services and Infrastructure - Before granting any proposed planning, the Council must ensure that both services and infrastructure are in place to cope with the development.	Consultation with infrastructure and service providers is undertaken throughout the plan-making and planning application processes.
16	It is already clear that our roads and our hospitals cannot cope with the pressures cased by the large number of housing developments in Essex. Presumably, a local Council takes into account other planning proposals within the County in order that we do not reach a gridlock situation.	Consultation with infrastructure and service providers is undertaken throughout the plan-making and planning application processes.
17	Air Pollution - This is a serious concern particularly with regard to the health of all people who live nearby to areas of	This is outside the remit of this consultation.

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	heavy traffic. No roadside checks on vehicles likely to emit pollution have been carried out for over five years so some other form of pollution check must be put in place. For instance, has any pollution measurements been taken on the main road from Hockley to Rayleigh and Rayleigh itself.	
18	Urban Sprawl - I have lived in Hockley for over 50 years and I would hate to see the place where I have enjoyed living becoming part of some large urban sprawl of development. The future quality of life for people living in Essex seems to be in severe jeopardy by the massive over development in the County (some 70,000 homes?).	This is outside the remit of the consultation.
19	Note, the street where I live is in its worst condition in all the years that I have lived here and nearby roads are in the same poor condition.	This is outside the remit of this consultation.
20	With regards to comment 19 above, suggestions to check on the existing infrastructure and the ability of how local services can cope with any future large developments under consideration.	Consultation with infrastructure and service providers is undertaken throughout the plan-making and planning application processes.
21	Basildon Borough Council welcomes the updated Statement of Community Involvement.	Noted.
22	Chelmsford City Council has no observations to make.	Noted.
23	Historic England identifies the Council's stated methods of communication all appear appropriate. Historic England is listed as a statutory body and a specific consultation body at paragraph 2.15 in respect of plan preparation, and at paragraph 2.19 in respect of consultations on the evidence	Noted.



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	base.	
24	Natural England has no specific comments to make about this consultation.	Noted.
25	Highways England has no comments to make as this Statement of Community Involvement has little impact on the Strategic Road Network.	Noted.
26	Belief that the 2007 SCI should have been reviewed several years ago.	Comment noted.
<b>Planning Policy</b>		
27	States willingness to 'engage and consult with local communities'. Why is this a sudden change in attitude now as you did not bother before?	As above (comment 2).
28	Level and means of consultation	Comment noted.
29	Recommendations to consider use of organisations which specialise in soft communication skills, to broaden the scope and provide more engagement with harder to reach groups (ethnic minorities and the youth). These groups often do not have their views captured.	Everyone in the local community has equal opportunity to make comment during the consultation period. Engagement techniques do include harder to reach persons. The use of these activities has been considered.
30	The letter requests to make comments only - how do you construe this to be genuine 'consultation'. Past experience in dealing with the Planning Department has proved negative on 'consultation'.	As above (comment 1).
31	Agree with the proposed methods for people to submit their comments.	Comment noted.

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32	The comments form should be provided as a WORD document in order that the representations can be drafted and issued to clients, prior to being formally submitted to RDC.	Noted. This suggestion will be implemented into the revised document as a proposed change considered for future consultations.
33	A key part of community involvement is the preparation of a report to demonstrate what consultation was undertaken, a summary of the comments received and critically how these comments have been addressed. This is considered to be important to demonstrate the transparency of the process.	The comments have been considered and recommendations made to the document where appropriate.
34	The mention of “targeted involvement of organisations and service providers” has to include individual schools, doctor’s practises, hospital trusts, utilities etc. as well as Essex highways and other groups.	Comment noted. The suggestion to expand explanation noted, examples of organisations and service providers the Council consult can be included as a revision to the document.
35	With regards to the ‘engagement opportunities’, it does not advise how RDC will select the agents and developers, in order to undertake their targeted engagement. Further information in respect of the selection of the agents/developers would be appreciated.	Agents/developers sign up to the Council’s planning policy mailing list to be notified of any future consultations.
36	Within the table, under the Section that deals with Regulation 13, with regards 'engagement opportunities', it is considered that events / exhibitions should be considered to be an appropriate publicity and engagement technique.	Suggestion noted. Exhibitions can be included as a potential engagement technique.
37	<p>“Targeted involvement of organisations and service providers”</p> <p>This HAS to include individual Schools, Doctors Practises, Hospital Trusts, Utilities etc. as well as Essex Highways, and</p>	As above (comment 34).

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	Issues Raised	Initial Officer Comments
	other groups.	
38	The Council's stated methods of communication all appear appropriate. We have noted that Historic England is listed as a statutory body and a specific consultation body at paragraph 2.15 in respect of plan preparation at a paragraph 2.19 in respect of consultations on the evidence base	Comment noted.
<b>3. Planning Applications</b>		
39	In terms of the reference to applications for Lawful Development Certificates, while we would agree that there is little benefit in consulting applications for proposed use or development. This is not necessarily the case for applications for 'existing use or development', as neighbouring properties may be able to provide useful information into the background of the site / development.	Applications for Lawful Development Certificates can easily be accessed on the Planning Portal website. These can be used to determine whether a proposal is permitted development or not, be it existing or proposed development.
40	We would agree that pre-application advice is particularly beneficial when developing major applications. In addition, the involvement of Members would further assist in refining the proposals prior to their formal submission and determination by Committee.	Comment noted. Members can be involved in pre-application discussions for development proposals, where appropriate.
41	We would agree that RDC should not undertake public consultation as part of a pre-application submission, as these discussions should be kept confidential. Instead when appropriate, the applicant will undertake its own public consultation exercise, which would then be summarised in the Statement of Community Involvement, which will form part of the planning application.	Comment noted.

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42	The RSPB, as Europe's largest wildlife conservation charity, and a significant landowner within the district at Wallasea is well positioned to provide specialist advice on matters relating to species and habitats. We would request that, along with Natural England, our advice is sought at the earliest stage of any development that is likely to have a significant effect on any designated sites or our landholdings, to assist the Council with their duty to "conserve and enhance biodiversity" (paragraph 118 of the NPPF).	Comment and suggestion noted. Rochford District Council recognises the importance of conserving and enhancing biodiversity in the district and the importance of its SSSIs as identified by Natural England.
43	Prior to the submission of a major planning application, proportionate pre-application consultation should be undertaken with the local community.	Comment noted. Agents/developers are encouraged to undertake their own community consultation as per the draft SCI.
44	In terms of the listed benefits for consulting affected communities, under the third bullet (3.7), in addition to public meetings, we would highlight the particular benefit of public exhibitions, where it is possible to get a range of the project consultants to attend in order to respond to specific questions.	Noted. Public exhibitions will be a recommended change to the draft SCI.
45	We would comment that a key aspect of the pre-application consultation with RDC is to obtain their advice on the level and method of public consultation that should be undertaken, including which stakeholders / local groups should be particularly consulted about the proposals.	Noted. Agents/developers are encouraged to undertake their own community consultation as per the draft SCI.
46	It is considered that dependent upon the proposals there would be benefit in consulting organisations like the County Council, Heritage England, Environment Agency and Natural England for advice on their development proposal. As part of	The need to contact the specified organisations is case dependent and the organisations should be approached when it is within their interest or area of expertise to be consulted.

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	their pre-application advice RDC should provide advice on the need to consult with these organisations.	
47	We consider that the benefits of a planning performance agreement should be highlighted in response to the initial pre-application request to major / strategic development proposals.	The added bonus of including the benefits of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) will be calculated and evaluated as to whether or not it would have a beneficial impact.
48	We would advise that given that most people would view planning application on RDC's website as opposed to visit the planning department, the details on the website should be compliant with the planning authority's requirement to maintain a statutory register of applications under consideration and planning decisions.	Comment noted.
49	The Parish Council is concerned with your proposals regarding site notices. It is felt that site notices should be displayed for all sites not just for major applications as for many this is still the method by which they become aware of proposed developments. Many people especially the elderly do not have or do not wish to have access to the internet.	Comment noted. All major applications will continue to have site notices. Minor applications will not have site notices, however members of the public such as a neighbour will have consultation letters sent to them.
50	The second bullet (3.12) deals with the issue of site notices and we consider that in addition to just referring to major applications, particular reference should also be made to applications accompanied by an EIA, those affecting rights of way and departures from the Local Plan.	Comment noted. As above (Comment 49).
51	The fifth bullet (3.12) deals with Public Access, which refers to RDC's online planning website, and as detailed in response to paragraph 3.11, the website should be compliant with the planning authority's requirement to	Comment noted. As above (Comment 48).

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	maintain a statutory register of applications under consideration and planning decisions.	
52	Hockley Parish Councils would like to see another bullet point added saying - consultation with Parish Town Councils.	Comment noted. The further bullet point requested shall be included in the revised SCI.
53	In light of the requirement to submit all comments in writing (or have them scribed on behalf of the respondent), the second sentence (3.14) should be reworded as follows: ...Comments <u>need</u> to be made in writing to the Council in the following ways: ...	The including of the specific word 'need' rather than 'can be' will be reviewed and included in the revised SCI as appropriate.
54	We are somewhat concerned by the reference that late comments may be accepted in exceptional circumstances, at the case officer's discretion. Unfortunately, as is often the case, parties that would be interested in a particular planning application are not always advised of it in the first instance and are reliant upon being informed by their neighbours or reading about it the local paper. They should not be denied the opportunity to comment on the application, and we would suggest that provided that the application is still under consideration by RDC, then representations should be considered.	Comment noted. The Council works to conform to statutory deadlines for determining planning applications. These deadlines are set to allow the maximum time possible for commenting to ensure that these are included and considered in the officer's report when making a decision or making a recommendation.
55	I would like to add to the comments that the actual planning committee is not a broad cross section of the community and as a result planning proposals are unfairly voted upon, the requirements for members should be reviewed and amended to have at least one woman per committee and to not have more than one retired person, this is a minimum	This is outside the remit of the consultation.

	<b>Issues Raised</b>	<b>Initial Officer Comments</b>
	requirement.	





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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council, as the Local Planning Authority, is required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement under Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). The purpose of the Statement of Community Involvement is to set out the principles for engaging and consulting with local communities – including residents, organisations and businesses – and other interested parties on planning matters. Consultation and engagement on planning matters set out in this Statement seek to go beyond the minimum regulatory requirements<sup>1</sup> for community involvement in the plan making process in particular, and are in line with the Council's corporate Consultation Guide for Staff<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.2 The first Statement of Community Involvement was adopted by the Council in 2007 to set out how local communities would be involved throughout the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF), and consultation on planning applications and planning enforcement. However, since its adoption there have been a number of legislative changes on how Local Planning Authorities should engage with local communities during plan-making and the planning application process. The 2007 Statement of Community Involvement goes beyond the minimum consultation requirements set out in the legislation, but a review is necessary to ensure that it reflects current best practice and is up-to-date prior to consultation on future local development documents.

## 2 Planning Policy

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 155) reiterates the need for positive and effective engagement with local communities at an early stage throughout the plan-making process to realise the sustainable development of the area. This Statement of Community Involvement will set out how and when local communities will be involved and what organisations and individuals will be consulted.
- 2.2 The Council has significant experience in the preparation of local development documents. As set out in the Local Development Scheme, the Council will prepare a new Local Plan and a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule. Prior to consultation, draft policy documents will be taken to Full Council to be approved for consultation.

### Notification and Engagement Techniques

- 2.3 Anyone may comment on the preparation of a planning policy document; however it is important to ensure inclusivity throughout the plan-making process. A range of notification and engagement techniques will be employed to raise awareness and encourage participation at each stage of plan preparation. The Council recognises that some potential participants in the consultation favour paper methods of communication; electronic media will therefore not be solely relied upon. The scale of techniques used however will be dependent on document stage and may be subject to time and resource constraints. The following techniques will therefore be employed as appropriate:

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<sup>1</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.rochford.gov.uk/community\\_and\\_people/have\\_your\\_say](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/community_and_people/have_your_say)

- Mailing list – The Council operates a database of individuals and organisations that have expressed an interest in the plan-making process, have previously been actively involved in policy development or are statutory consultees. Those who wish to be involved will be directly notified at each stage either through email or letter of opportunities to comment. Those who are interested in planning policy development and wish to be notified can be included on the Council's mailing list at any time<sup>3</sup>.
- Website – Each consultation stage will feature prominently on the homepage of the Council's website<sup>4</sup>. This will link directly to information on document production, providing access to the consultation material and advice on how and when comments can be made. Articles providing updates on plan production, which may include consultation and engagement opportunities, may be published in Rochford District Matters periodically but it will not be solely relied upon as a means of communication. Articles providing updates on plan production, which may include consultation and engagement opportunities, may be published in the Council's online news section periodically but it will not be solely relied upon as a means of communication.
- Libraries and Council reception areas – Paper copies of consultation material, including comment forms, will be available at local libraries and Council reception areas in Rayleigh and Rochford during normal opening hours.
- Adverts/public notices, and media briefings press releases – Notices will be placed in a local newspaper advertising consultation and engagement opportunities, where appropriate. Media briefings/press releases will also be issued to local media.
- Parish and Town Council and Community Group publications – These types of publications are distributed to local residents at least quarterly. The Council will work with relevant organisations to utilise these publications to notify residents of consultation and engagement opportunities, where possible. Consideration will need to be given to the timing of the consultation, and the timing and circulation of any publications outside the Council's control.
- Posters – Posters may be sent to relevant Parish and Town Councils to be displayed on notice boards to raise awareness of any public consultation and engagement opportunities. Posters may also be displayed in other appropriate locations across the District.
- Leaflets – Leaflets may be used to gain wider public awareness of a consultation or engagement opportunity, for example leaflets may be distributed at key attractors/destinations such as train stations and local schools.

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<sup>3</sup> Interested parties can sign up at <http://rochford.jdi-consult.net/localplan/newuser.php> or those without access to the internet can contact the Council directly for more information

<sup>4</sup> [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)

- Social media – Media such as Twitter will be used to highlight public consultations on planning policy documents with direct links to the Council's website and information on how to comment, and any engagement events. Such messages will be retweeted periodically throughout the consultation period ([@RochfordDC](#)). However, comments will not be accepted via social media.
- Events – Such events may include drop-in sessions, public exhibitions and/or targeted workshops. Parish and Town Council meetings will be utilised where possible. The type of event undertaken will be dependent on a number of factors, including the consultation stage, and time and resource constraints. Careful consideration will be given to the timing, venue and format of events to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

2.4 All consultation materials produced by the Council are prepared in the corporate format (Arial size 12), however to ensure inclusive access during consultations, information can be made available in alternative formats on request, including larger print, braille, audio tape and different languages.

### Submitting Comments

2.5 The Council operates an online public consultation system where comments may be made straightforwardly against relevant parts of the document being consulted upon. Electronic media, although the most quick and efficient method for submitting comments, is not the only acceptable method. Comments may be submitted during each stage of formal public consultation in the following ways:

- Online – using the Council's online public consultation system for planning policy available at <http://rochford.jdi-consult.net/localplan>
- Email – [planning.policy@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@rochford.gov.uk)
- Post – Planning Policy, Rochford District Council, Council Offices, South Street, Rochford, Essex. SS4 1BW.
- Fax – 01702 318181

2.6 For less formal public consultations, the Council may utilise a simple webform as an alternative to the online public consultation system.

2.7 The Council cannot take a written record of comments over the telephone as they cannot be verified as a true record of the consultee's opinion. Officers will, however, scribe for people who cannot make comments on their own due to literacy or disability issues.

2.8 Comment forms will normally be provided in paper or Word document format on request. Respondents will be encouraged to use these particularly during the pre-submission stage, as this will assist respondents in structuring their comments around the specific tests (in relation to soundness and legal compliance for the new Local Plan).

- 2.9 Comments must be made during the prescribed consultation period. Anonymous or confidential comments cannot be accepted. Late comments may be accepted in exceptional circumstances at the Council's discretion but may not be formally logged on the Council's consultation database. Any comments that are offensive, threatening, obscene, racist or illegal in any other way will not be accepted.
- 2.10 All comments accepted as duly-made will be logged on the Council's online public consultation system and will be available to view at the earliest opportunity.

### **Consultation Feedback**

- 2.11 A key aspect of community involvement in plan-making is providing feedback on how comments made have been taken into account in the development of a Plan or document. A report will be prepared following each consultation stage setting out the notification and engagement techniques employed, a summary of the main issues raised, officer's response to these issues and information on how these have been taken into account as appropriate. Such reports will be published on the Council's website. Following the final consultation on a Plan or document, the Council will prepare a Consultation Statement setting out which individuals and organisations have been consulted throughout the documents preparation, how they have been consulted, the main issues that were raised and how these issues have been addressed. The Plan or document and Consultation Statement will then be submitted to the Secretary of State, alongside other evidence, for independent examination.

### **Duty to Co-operate**

- 2.12 The Council is required by the Localism Act 2011 to effectively and constructively engage with relevant partners on strategic cross boundary matters on an ongoing basis – the Duty to Co-operate. This includes neighbouring local authorities and other statutory bodies. Consideration should be given to joint working and the preparation of shared evidence base work.
- 2.13 The Council is committed to continuing to work in conjunction with relevant partners throughout the plan making process on strategic cross-boundary issues.

### **New Local Plan – Who, How and When**

- 2.14 The new Local Plan will set out the Council's strategy for future development across the District; specific proposals and the allocation of specific sites to realise this strategy; and development management policies to support these. This document will be prepared in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The timetable for the preparation of the new Local Plan is set out in the Local Development Scheme.

2.15 Opportunities for engagement at each stage of plan preparation are set out in the table below.

Plan Stage	Assessment Stage <sup>5</sup>	Engagement Opportunities
<b>Evidence Base preparation – ongoing (Regulation 18)</b>		
Gathering and reviewing background information. Preparation of technical studies and topic papers.	Collate and review baseline social, economic and environmental data. Draft and publish SA/SEA Scoping Report.	Targeted involvement of organisations and service providers.  Informal consultation with key stakeholders, such as Parish and Town Councils, relevant interest groups, landowners and developers, as appropriate.  Formal consultation with Natural England, Heritage England and the Environment Agency on the SEA/SA Scoping Report.
<b>Issues and Options Document<sup>6</sup></b>		
Draft Plan considering a wide range of topics and issues, and different options to address these.	Initial draft SA/SEA Report – assessing each of the options, including reasonable alternatives, included in draft Plan.	Formal public consultation on the scope and content of the Issues and Options Document for a minimum of six weeks.  Formal public consultation on initial draft SA/SEA Report alongside Issues and Options Document.  Consultation and engagement techniques including public notices/adverts, posters, email and letter notifications, website, social media and availability of paper documentation in libraries and Council reception areas. Events including drop-in sessions and public exhibitions may be undertaken.

<sup>5</sup> Each published stage of a development plan document is required to be accompanied by a technical Sustainability Appraisal /Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) legislation. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be undertaken in accordance with the HRA legislation, including an Appropriate Assessment as necessary

<sup>6</sup> The Council is no longer required by legislation to prepare three formal documents for public consultation and engagement, however this is still considered to be the most appropriate approach for the preparation of the new Local Plan

Plan Stage	Assessment Stage <sup>5</sup>	Engagement Opportunities
<b>Preferred Options Document (Regulation 18)</b>		
Revised draft Plan setting out preferred options for each topic and reasonable alternatives.	Revised draft SA/SEA Report – assessing each of the preferred options and reasonable alternatives included in revised draft Plan.  Draft HRA – screening for likely significant effects on European sites.	Formal public consultation on the scope and content of the Preferred Options Document for a minimum of six weeks.  Formal public consultation on revised draft SA/SEA Report alongside Preferred Options Document.  Consultation with Natural England on the scope and content of the HRA.  Publicity and engagement techniques including public notices/adverts, posters, email and letter notifications, website, social media and availability of paper documentation in libraries and Council reception areas. Events including drop-in sessions and public exhibitions may be undertaken.
<b>Proposed Pre-Submission Document (Regulation 19)</b>		
Comments from previous stage informs final draft Plan – the Proposed Pre-Submission Document.  Responses to comments made are contained in a separate Interim Consultation Statement.	Final SA/SEA Report – taking into account comments received at previous stage and any amendments to draft Plan following consultation.  Final HRA – reassessing likely significant effects on European sites; undertaking an Appropriate Assessment as necessary.	Formal public consultation on the Proposed Pre-Submission Document for a minimum of six weeks.  At this stage representations must relate to specific tests of soundness and legal compliance to be considered by an Inspector during independent examination. However anyone may make representations (Regulation 20).



Plan Stage	Assessment Stage <sup>5</sup>	Engagement Opportunities
		<p>Formal public consultation on final SA/SEA Report alongside Proposed Pre-Submission Document.</p> <p>Consultation with Natural England on the scope and content of the final HRA.</p> <p>Publicity and engagement techniques including public notices/adverts, posters, email and letter notifications, website, social media and availability of paper documentation in libraries and Council reception areas.</p>
<b>Independent Examination (Regulations 22, 23 and 24)</b>		
<p>Submission of Proposed Pre-Submission Document and supporting documents, including SA/SEA Report and Consultation Statement, to Secretary of State for independent examination.</p> <p>Potential for Inspector to recommend modifications to make Plan sound ('Main Modifications' – those matters that materially affect the interpretation of policies in the draft Plan).</p>	<p>Addendum to submitted SA/SEA Report.</p>	<p>Public examination by Planning Inspector, considering all representations received during pre-submission consultation. Hearing sessions, as necessary.</p> <p>Written submissions carry the same weight to those presented at hearings.</p> <p>Public consultation on any proposed Main Modifications and, if needed, any addendum to the SA/SEA Report.</p>



Plan Stage	Assessment Stage <sup>5</sup>	Engagement Opportunities
<b>Inspector's Report and Adoption (Regulations 25 and 26)</b>		
<p>Publication of Inspector's Report, including recommendations of any proposed modifications to the submitted draft Plan.</p> <p>If found sound and legally compliant (subject to modifications), the Council may adopt the Plan.</p> <p>Preparation of Adoption Statement.</p>	Preparation of SA/SEA Adoption Statement.	Six week period for legal challenge following adoption of the Plan.

### Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule – Who, How and When

- 2.16 The Community Infrastructure Levy will set a charge per square metre of new floorspace which will be levied on new development across the District, where applicable. The Levy will be prepared in accordance with The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). The timetable for the preparation of the Community Infrastructure Levy is set out in the Local Development Scheme.
- 2.17 Opportunities for engagement at each stage of document preparation are set out in the table below.

Plan Stage	Assessment Stage	Engagement Opportunities
<b>Evidence Base preparation</b>		
Prepare key background documents, including Viability Assessment and Infrastructure Funding Gap Assessment.		<p>Informal targeted engagement with agents and developers in relation to the Viability Assessment.</p> <p>Informal engagement with Essex County Council and other service providers in the preparation of the Infrastructure Funding Gap Assessment.</p>

Plan Stage	Assessment Stage	Engagement Opportunities
<b>Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (Regulation 15)</b>		
<p>Publication of Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule setting out the proposed charge to be levied.</p> <p>Publication of draft Regulation 123 list detailing proposed infrastructure projects to be funded through S106 Agreements and the Levy.</p>	Draft Viability Assessment.	<p>Formal public consultation on content of Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule for a minimum of four weeks.</p> <p>Publicity and engagement techniques including public notices/adverts, email and letter notifications, website, social media and availability of paper documentation in libraries and Council reception areas.</p>
<b>Draft Charging Schedule (Regulation 16)</b>		
<p>Comments from previous stage inform Draft Charging Schedule.</p> <p>Responses to comments made are contained in a separate Consultation Statement.</p>	Viability Assessment – updated as necessary.	<p>Formal public consultation on content of Draft Charging Schedule for a minimum of four weeks.</p> <p>Publicity and engagement techniques including public notices/adverts, email and letter notifications, website and availability of paper documentation in libraries and Council reception areas.</p>
<b>Independent Examination (Regulations 19 and 20)</b>		
Submission of Draft Charging Schedule and supporting documents to the Secretary of State for independent examination.		<p>Public examination by Examiner (usually an Inspector), considering all representations. Hearing sessions, as necessary.</p> <p>Written submissions carry the same weight to those presented at hearings.</p>

Plan Stage	Assessment Stage	Engagement Opportunities
<b>Examiner's Report and Publication (Regulations 23 and 25)</b>		
Publication of Examiner's Report setting out recommendations and reasons.  If approved, the Council may adopt and publish the Charging Schedule.		

### Supplementary Planning Documents – Who, How and When

- 2.18 Supplementary Planning Documents are non-statutory documents that give further advice and guidance on the interpretation of policies and proposals set out in Development Plan Documents. These documents will be prepared in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The timetable for the preparation of any Supplementary Planning Documents is set out in the Local Development Scheme.
- 2.19 Opportunities for engagement at each stage of document preparation are set out in the table below.

Document Stage	Assessment Stage <sup>7</sup>	Engagement Opportunities
<b>Evidence Base preparation</b>		
Gathering and reviewing baseline information.  Preparation of technical studies, as necessary.	Screening to determine whether a SA/SEA is required.  Draft and publish SA/SEA Scoping Report, if necessary.	Informal targeted involvement of organisations and service providers.  Informal consultation with key stakeholders, such as Parish Councils, Schools, relevant interest groups, landowners and developers.  Formal consultation with Essex Highways, Hospital Trusts, Doctors Practises, Utilities, Natural England, Heritage England and the Environment Agency on the SEA/SA Scoping Report, if necessary.

<sup>7</sup> Each published stage will be accompanied by a technical Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) legislation, where required

Document Stage	Assessment Stage <sup>7</sup>	Engagement Opportunities
<b>Draft Supplementary Planning Document (Regulation 13)</b>		
Draft document setting out preferred options.	Draft SA/SEA Report – if required in exceptional circumstances.	<p>Formal public consultation on the scope and content of the Draft Supplementary Planning Document for a minimum of six weeks.</p> <p>Formal public consultation on initial draft SEA/SA Report alongside draft document – if required.</p> <p>Publicity and engagement techniques including public notices/adverts, email and letter notifications, website, social media and availability of paper documentation in libraries and Council reception areas. Events / Exhibitions may be undertaken, as appropriate.</p>
<b>Adopt Supplementary Planning Document (Regulations 12 and 14)</b>		
Publication of final document taking account of consultation responses.	Publication of SA/SEA Report (if required, in exceptional circumstances).	

## Neighbourhood Planning

- 2.20 Neighbourhood Plans are plans for guiding the future development and growth of a local area which can be produced – in the case of Rochford District – by Parish or Town Councils. The preparation of, and consultation on, Neighbourhood Plans is governed by the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The Parish or Town Council is responsible for undertaking consultation and engagement during the preparation stage of Neighbourhood Plans in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance. The District Council's role is to provide advice and support to the Parish or Town Council during Plan preparation and provide assistance during examination and referendum. The progress of any Neighbourhood Plans can be found on the Council's website<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/policy/neighbourhood-planning>

### Minerals and Waste Local Plans

- 2.21 The preparation and review of Minerals and Waste Local Plans is the responsibility of Essex County Council. The District Council is, and will continue to be, a consultee on such plans. The progress of the County Council's Minerals and Waste Local Plans and their Statement of Community Involvement, can be found on the County Council's website<sup>9</sup>.

### 3 Planning Applications

- 3.1 A planning application must be submitted to the Local Planning Authority – Rochford District Council – before development takes places. The exception to this is where certain types of development is automatically permitted by legislation, referred to as permitted development. An applicant can apply to the Council for a Lawful Development Certificate to determine whether a proposal is permitted development or not; more information on this process is available on the Planning Portal website<sup>10</sup>.

#### Pre-Application Advice

- 3.2 The Council offers a chargeable pre-application advice service. This service enables applicants to discuss their proposals with officers, understand how policies and guidance would be applied, and identify where any specialist input would be required early on in the process before submitting a formal planning application. The aim of this service is to ensure that valid, better quality applications are submitted to the Council which are more likely to have a greater chance of a positive outcome.
- 3.3 Pre-application advice is available for all types of development including householder applications; however it is particularly encouraged for major development proposals. This service includes options for a written generic response from officers to proposals, a meeting with written advice and a follow up meeting. Additional urban design advice is also available. Members can be involved in pre-application discussions for minor, major or strategic development proposals. More information on pre-application advice is available on the Council's website<sup>11</sup>.
- 3.4 Such advice will be based on the case officer's professional judgement and will not constitute a formal response or decision of the Council with regard to any future planning applications. Any views or opinions expressed, are given without prejudice to the consideration by the Council of any formal planning application, which will be subject to wider consultation and publicity. Although the case officer may indicate the likely outcome of a formal planning application, no guarantees can or will be given about the decision that will be made on any such application.
- 3.5 The Council will not normally undertake any public consultation for applicants that have sought pre-application advice for a proposal. This avoids unproductive involvement for local communities as no formal planning application has been submitted at this stage.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.essex.gov.uk>

<sup>10</sup> [www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/next/lawfuldevelopmentcertificate](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/next/lawfuldevelopmentcertificate)

<sup>11</sup> [www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/planning\\_applications/planning\\_pre-application\\_advice](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/planning_applications/planning_pre-application_advice)

## **Pre-Application Consultation**

- 3.6 Consultation with local communities is encouraged for applicants seeking permission for major development in particular. When such engagement takes place it is at the discretion of the applicant and can take place prior to seeking pre-application advice, if sought, or prior to submission of a planning application. The results of any public consultation should be provided to the Local Planning Authority with a planning application.
- 3.7 There are a number of benefits for consulting affected communities prior to the submission of a planning application, including:
- Providing local communities with accurate information on a proposal before a formal application is submitted;
  - Enabling local concerns and objections to be identified early in the process and be addressed, where possible;
  - Providing an opportunity for local communities to discuss proposals with the applicant (for example at public meetings);
  - Potentially avoiding the need to revise and / or resubmit proposals at an advanced stage;
  - Encouraging a transparent and inclusive application process;
  - Assisting in the submission of better quality applications.
- 3.8 The Council supports pre-application consultation with local communities but will not normally be involved in this process. However, the applicant may wish to seek advice on effective engagement techniques prior to submission of a formal application – such techniques may include; public meetings, public exhibitions, workshops, notices/articles in local media, and consultation letters.
- 3.9 Applicants should also consider consulting organisations such as Essex County Council (as the highways and education authority, and urban design advisor to the Council), Heritage England, the Environment Agency and Natural England for advice depending on the development being proposed.

## **Planning Performance Agreements**

- 3.10 The Council will, for some types of applications, enter into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with an applicant. A PPA is an agreement between the Council and an applicant setting out the process and timescales for considering some larger and more complex proposals from the pre-application stage through to the submission and determination of a full application. A PPA can include information on community involvement such as techniques for engaging with affected communities and how their views will be incorporated. Once a PPA has been entered into, the statutory time limit for the determination of the planning application no longer applies.

## **Planning Applications**

- 3.11 Copies of all valid planning applications are published on the Council's website<sup>12</sup> and are available to view at the Council offices in Rayleigh and Rochford during normal opening hours.
- 3.12 The Council will advertise planning applications in the following ways, depending on the type of application in accordance with, and where possible beyond, the requirements of the relevant legislation:
- Neighbour notification – Occupiers of properties most likely to be affected by a proposal will be notified by letter that an application has been received. Written comments will be invited and should be received within 21 days of the date of the letter. The extent of the neighbour notification process will vary depending on the type of proposal for which permission is being sought. This will be at or beyond the level specified by the legislation.
  - Site notices – These yellow notices will be displayed in the vicinity of the site where a planning application has been made. The site notice will list details of the application together with information on how plans and supporting information can be viewed and how comments can be made on the application. Site notices will be displayed for all major applications, and applications that are considered likely to affect a Listed Building or a Conservation Area. However, not all planning applications will be publicised with the use of a site notice.
  - Statutory consultees – The Council seeks to engage with a number of organisations who may have an interest in the planning process; including Essex County Council Highways and education departments, English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency. However, not all such organisations are consulted on each application – this will depend on the location, scale and type of planning application under consideration. Consultees are notified in writing and, as with local residents, have 21 days in which to respond. In addition bodies such as Natural England will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation.
  - Website – Major residential planning applications are publicised on the Council's home page. This will link to a dedicated page for each application providing more detailed information on the proposals, easy access to key plans and supporting documents and information on how comments can be made.
  - Public Access – All planning applications are available to view on the Council's e-planning system<sup>13</sup>. Planning applications can be searched by address, application reference number or geographically using the map of the District provided. This system provides access to submitted plans, supporting documents and statements, comments received, the officer's report and decision notice (depending on the status of the application).

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<sup>12</sup> [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)

<sup>13</sup> <http://maps.rochford.gov.uk/DevelopmentControl.aspx?RequestType=ParseTemplate&Template=DevelopmentControlSearch.tmpl>



- Social media – Planning applications may feature on the Council's Twitter feed for planning applications which are automatically tweeted from the Council's planning management system ([@RDCplanningapps](#)).
  - Local media – Applications classified as being major applications or those which could affect the character or appearance of a Conservation Area or Listed Building will be advertised in a local newspaper.
  - Consultation with Parish / Town Councils.
- 3.13 All planning applications can be examined on the Council's Public Access site. For those without access to the internet, all relevant information is available to view at the Council offices in Rochford and Rayleigh, during normal opening hours.
- 3.14 Anyone can comment on a planning application. Comments need to be made in writing to the Council in the following ways:
- Online – via the webform or planning application system following the instructions available at:  
[http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/planning\\_applications/comment\\_on\\_a\\_planning\\_app](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/planning_applications/comment_on_a_planning_app)
  - Email – [planning.applications@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:planning.applications@rochford.gov.uk)
  - Post – Planning Applications, Rochford District Council, Council Offices, South Street, Rochford, Essex. SS4 1BW.
  - Fax – 01702 318181
- 3.15 The Council cannot take a written record of comments over the telephone as they cannot be verified as a true record of the consultee's opinion. Officers will, however, scribe for people who cannot make comments on their own due to literacy or disability issues.
- 3.16 Those commenting on a planning application are encouraged to provide contact details, however anonymous comments will be accepted in most circumstances at the discretion of the case officer, but may be given less weight as the context within which the comments have been made (i.e. if the person commenting is neighbours the application site or not) may be less obvious. All comments received will be considered by the case officer and included in the officer's report; comments will also be redacted and published on the Council's Public Access site.
- 3.17 Comments must be made during the prescribed consultation period. Late comments may be accepted in exceptional circumstances at the case officer's discretion. Any comments that are offensive, threatening, obscene, racist or illegal in any other way will not be accepted.
- 3.18 Communication will not generally be entered into with objectors or supporters of an application once the comments have been submitted. However, the Council will endeavour to update those who have submitted comments on a planning application at several stages either through direct correspondence, the Council's website or other media, as appropriate:
- Mid-application – In the event that the application will be determined at Development Committee, members of the public who have commented on the application will be informed of this. They will be provided with the date, time



and venue of the relevant Committee. This information will be updated on the Council's website.

- Alterations – When an applicant makes changes to a proposal mid-application, depending on the scale of such changes, the Local Planning Authority will usually write to those who have commented previously inviting further comment. This information will also be updated on the Council's website.
- Post-application – Once the application has been determined the Council will update the Public Access site, and the website if applicable, detailing the outcome of the application and how to get further information if required. The agent (or applicant where there is no agent) will be sent the decision notice by email or post on the day of issue or the first working day following date of issue.
- Appeals – When an applicant appeals against the decision of the Council to refuse their proposal or against non-determination of an application, those that have contributed along with other neighbours who adjoin the site, will be informed that an appeal has been made. This will be done in writing and will include details on how to comment on the appeal application.

3.19 In addition to the Public Access site being updated following the determination of a planning application, the Council also publishes a monthly decisions register on its website<sup>14</sup>.

### Planning Enforcement

3.20 The Council's planning enforcement service investigates alleged breaches of planning control. Such alleged breaches may be reported by Members, other Council departments, other organisations or members of the public. The Council's Enforcement Policy is available to view on the Council's website<sup>15</sup>.

3.21 Alleged breaches of planning control can be reported in any of the following ways:

- Online – using the webform available at:  
[www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/enforcement](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/enforcement)
- Email – [planning.enforcement@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:planning.enforcement@rochford.gov.uk)
- Post – Planning Enforcement, Rochford District Council, Council Offices, South Street, Rochford, Essex. SS4 1BW.
- In person – at the Council offices in Rochford or Rayleigh during normal opening hours
- Phone – 01702 318191
- Fax – 01702 318181

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/planning\\_applications/monthly-applications-decisions-register](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/planning_applications/monthly-applications-decisions-register)

<sup>15</sup> [www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/enforcement](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/enforcement)

- 3.22 The Council does not accept anonymous enforcement complaints. Anonymous complaints will only be registered where the breach is extremely serious and/or can be readily detected. The identity of complainants is kept confidential.
- 3.23 Consultation is not undertaken for enforcement cases; however the Council will endeavour to update the complainant with all relevant details, including notification of any relevant planning applications submitted. The Council will, in most circumstances, do this over the phone or by writing to the complainant via email or post.

### Appeals

- 3.24 An applicant can appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against the decision of the Council where an application has been refused permission, or where a proposal has been granted consent with conditions that are considered to be unacceptable to the applicant. An applicant can also appeal against non-determination of an application within the statutory time limit, or the revised timescales if an extension of time has been agreed. Appeals can also be made against enforcements notices.
- 3.25 Those who were consulted on the original planning application, as well as those who made comments on the proposal, will be notified of the appeal. In the case of enforcement notices, it is the responsibility of the Council to notify everyone who it thinks is affected about the appeal. The Council may also publicise an appeal on the Council's website or in local media if considered necessary. Depending on the type of application and the reason(s) for the appeal, different appeal procedures may be followed; through written representations, a hearing or a public inquiry.
- 3.26 The Council will send the Planning Inspectorate copies of any comments received during consultation on the planning application. These comments will be considered by the Inspector who determines the appeal. Further written comments can be made, except in the case of Householder Appeals. Those who did not comment at the application stage can still comment on an appeal. Interested parties can also present their views verbally before a Planning Inspector during appeals that are decided by an informal hearing or public inquiry. More information on planning appeals can be found on the Council's website<sup>16</sup>.

## 4 Resourcing, Monitoring and Review

- 4.1 The implementation of the Statement of Community Involvement will require the use of the Council's resources – including finances and officer time.
- 4.2 Public consultation and engagement on the Council's planning policies will be undertaken primarily by planning officers, in conjunction with other departments where relevant. The Council will allocate money from its budget towards the preparation of the new Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy, taking into account the cost of implementing the requirements set out in the Statement of Community Involvement. The Local Development Scheme sets out the timescale for the production of these documents. This timetable factors in the time required for public consultation and engagement to be carried out at various stages.

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<sup>16</sup> [www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/planning\\_applications/planning\\_appeal\\_information](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/planning_applications/planning_appeal_information)

- 4.3 The Council's approach for consulting on planning applications have allowed for the timescales in which applications are required to be determined in accordance with the legislation.
- 4.4 The Council will monitor the effectiveness of the Statement of Community Involvement, through considering:
- The level of community participation that it generates, particularly from groups that may have found themselves excluded from the process in the past;
  - The degree to which the views of those participating translate into actual planning outcomes;
  - The level of feedback received by those participating from the Council
- 4.5 The Statement of Community Involvement does not specify in detail all the community participation activities that will be carried out in order to maintain a flexible approach. It is intended, however, that the level of engagement will be beyond the minimum level required by legislation, wherever possible.

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**Rochford District Council**  
Council Offices South Street  
Rochford Essex SS4 1BW  
Phone: 01702 546366  
[customerservices@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@rochford.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)



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