



Rochford District Council

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

REGULATION 26 CONSULTATION

December 2005



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Cantonese

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Gujarati

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1. THE COUNCIL'S VISION & OBJECTIVES

This initial section outlines Rochford District Council's (RDC's) vision, corporate objectives and the planning objectives for the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S VISION

The Council's vision for the District is a simple one...

...to make Rochford the place of choice in the County to live, work and visit

PRINCIPAL AIMS

To help realise that vision, the Council has adopted six principal aims, some of which can be delivered directly by the authority, others which can only be delivered through working with other organisations in the District. These aims are to:

- . provide quality cost effective services;
- . work towards a safer and more caring community;
- . promote a green and sustainable environment;
- . encourage a thriving community;
- . improve the quality of life for people in the District; and
- . maintain and enhance local heritage and culture.

SCI OBJECTIVES

The following are the SCI Objectives:

1. To engage effectively with all sections of the community;
2. To use appropriate engagement techniques targeted at the area of concern to ensure that resources are used effectively and efficiently; and
3. To use the engagement process to improve the quality of decision-making in the district with regard to planning.

The Statement of Community Involvement is laid out for ease of reading. It contains an introduction, an explanation of the new planning system (as brought in by recent legislation) and the public engagement techniques that are considered appropriate. There then follow sections dealing with engagement on planning policy, development control and planning enforcement. A list of consultees and contacts can be found at the end of the document.

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2. INTRODUCTION

The Statement of Community Involvement is one of a number of documents that Rochford District Council is required to prepare as part of the new planning framework for the district.

Major changes to the planning system have recently been undertaken, driven by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). At the heart of the changes is the desire for greater community involvement and giving people the chance to have a say in how their district is planned.

Under the Planning and Compulsory Act (2004) Rochford District Council is required to prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF). This is a folder of documents explaining the policies that will affect development in the district. A key component of the Local Development Framework is the Statement of Community Involvement. This will set out how Rochford District Council will involve people in the decisions that affect the planning of the district.

In its role in determining planning applications, carrying out planning enforcement and in preparing planning policies, the Council is considered to be the Local Planning Authority (LPA). This does not apply to all waste or minerals planning issues where Essex County Council is usually the Local Planning Authority.

Rochford District Council will endeavour to give all sections of the community, from individuals to representative organisations, an opportunity to participate.



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2.1 WHY HAVE A STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT?

The Statement of Community Involvement is being produced as part of the Local Development Framework for Rochford District. The production of Rochford District Council's Statement of Community Involvement is a requirement of the new planning system, a requirement that Rochford District Council welcomes as it believes that the Statement of Community Involvement will have numerous benefits, which include those detailed in Box 1:

BOX 1: The benefits of community involvement

- A chance for local people to influence the decisions that affect how land is used, and what development takes place, in their district
- A more democratic form of planning
- A greater sense of ownership of the district for local people
- Development of the district that better reflects the views of affected people
- Improving the sense of community and inclusion within the district
- An increased understanding of the issues and concerns that people have with regard to the district
- An input of local knowledge and expertise into the planning system

2.2 WHO CAN GET INVOLVED?

Everyone.



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The Council recognises that not everyone finds it equally as easy to participate in planning process. People may perceive a number of barriers to having their voices heard, including those outlined in Box 2.

Box 2: The perceived barriers to involvement

- Not knowing that there is an opportunity to participate
- Not knowing how and when to participate
- Invitations from the Council to participate being inaccessible or not easily understood
- Cynicism towards the process – feeling that their views will not be acted upon
- Feeling unable to participate due to any of a variety of reasons such as having other commitments at times when involvement is invited, lack of access to technology, lack of mobility etc
- Feeling excluded from the community, part of a minority community that won't be listened to, or that there are no formal groups that represent their views

Rochford District Council firmly believes that members of all the various communities that have an interest in the planning of the district should be able to have their voices heard in the decision making process and will attempt to break down the perceived barriers to involvement. The Council will place special attention on trying to engage with people and groups who may have felt excluded from the process in the past. This will be done by a range of methods as outlined in Box 3.



Box 3: How the Council will encourage the involvement of all communities in planning

- Using a wide range of media to promote, advertise and explain what the planning system is, and that people have the opportunity to voice their views
- Being accessible to members of the public through a variety of media in order to explain to people how and when they can have their say
- Using simple, jargon-free language.
- Having documents and information available in a variety of formats, including:
 - Large print
 - Audio, spoken-word, format
 - Languages other than English
- Recognising that not everyone has access to electronic communications. Therefore, although the Rochford District Council will seek to maximise the potential of electronic communications, the Council will not solely rely on this format
- Providing feedback as to how people's views have been taken into account and how they have influenced the decision making process
- Explaining the degree to which people can influence the planning of the District and explaining the limitations imposed by government
- Having officers available to speak to during office hours who can provide information and answer questions on planning
- Seeking to consult a wide a range of organisations and people as possible within time and resource constraints on planning issues, and seeking the views of individuals, not just representative groups

The following sections explain how and when people can get involved in the various different areas of planning: the **Local Development Framework**; **Planning Applications**; **pre-application discussions**; and **Enforcement**. These sections also outline how the Council will encourage and enable people to participate fully.

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4. THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (LDF)

The new planning system requires the preparation of a strategic framework for the East of England region called a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), or the East of England Plan. The Local Development Framework (LDF) will consist of a number of documents, including the Statement of Community Involvement, that outline how Rochford District will develop in the future and how the district will meet its requirements for the region outlined in the Regional Spatial Strategy. Policies and strategies within the Local Development Framework are required to conform to the Regional Spatial Strategy and to government planning policy statements (PPSs). Figure 1 below illustrates the structure of the Local Development Framework, showing the various documents that relate to and comprise it.

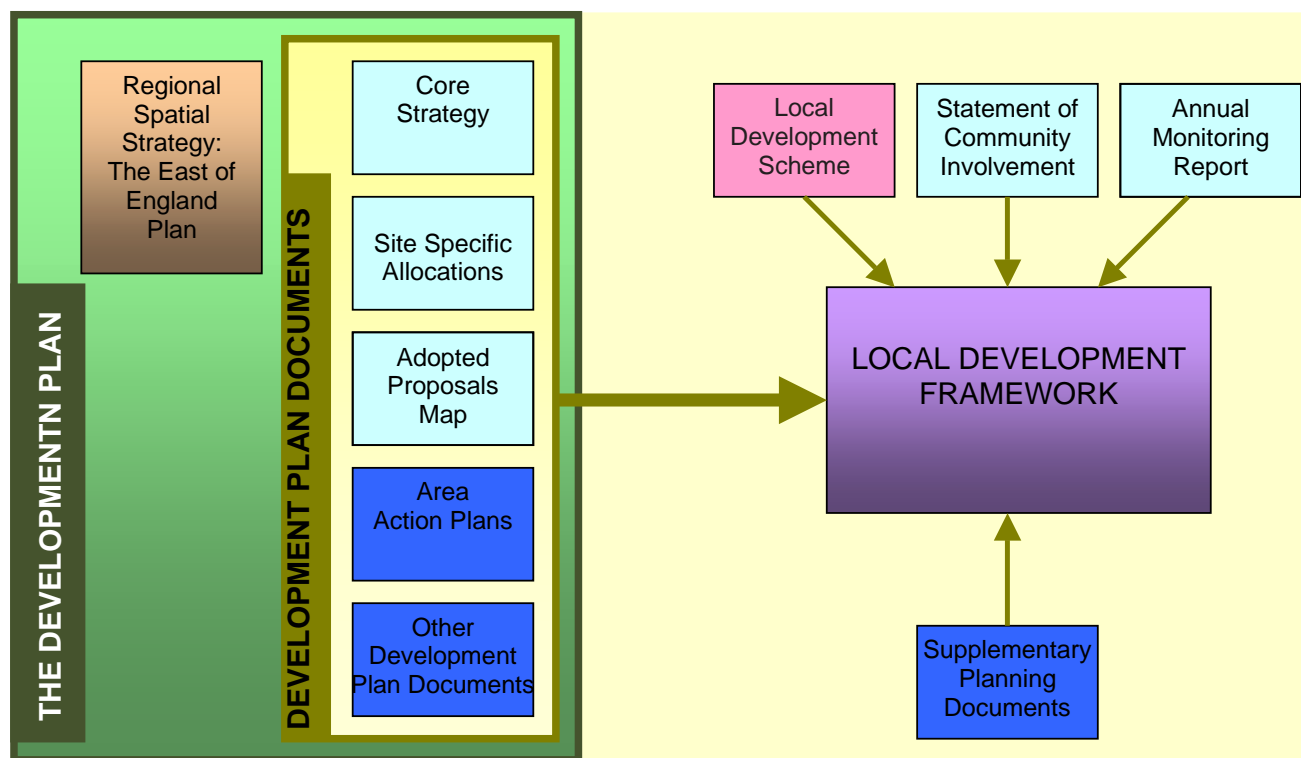


Figure 1: Illustration of structure of Local Development Frameworks

A timetable for the production of the Local Development Framework has been prepared and published. For the documents that form part of the Local Development Framework there will be an opportunity for members of the public to participate in the direction these documents will take. This timetable is called the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and this is available from Planning Reception or via the Council's website. The timetable for public consultation for each document is laid out in the Local Development Scheme. ANYONE may comment on these documents.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) state the detailed policies resulting from the directions outlined in other Local Development Framework documents that have been prepared taking into account the results of public participation. As such there will be no

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public participation in the initial preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents, but the public will still be consulted on the draft versions produced.

Table 1 outlines when people will have the opportunity to put forward their views on the various documents that will comprise the Local Development Framework.

Table 1: Timetable of community participation			
DOCUMENT	DESCRIPTION	INITIAL, PRE-DRAFT, PARTICIPATION PERIOD	CONSULTATION ON DRAFT VERSION
Core Strategy	Will set out the vision, objectives and spatial strategy for the district and the primary policies for achieving the vision.	March – April 2006	November – December 2006
Allocations	Will identify the sites proposed for housing, employment, cemetery and country park development to meet the vision identified in the core strategy. It will also set out the policies that refer to the development of allocated sites.	February – March 2007	December 2007
Development Control Policies	Will contain policies which whilst not being strategic or site specific will ensure that development in the district meets certain criteria and contributes to the achievement of the vision and core strategy.	April – May 2007	January 2008
Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	Will set out the standards and approach to involving people and organisations in the production of the Local Development Framework.	August-September 2005	November – December 2005
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)	Car parking standards; housing design; rural settlement areas; playing pitch strategy	N / A	December 2005- April 2006
	Design, landscaping and access statements; design guidelines for conservation areas; shop fronts; educational contributions	N / A	March – April 2006

Rochford District Council recognises the need to enable people to participate, to put in place mechanisms that allow people to have their voices heard. A variety of techniques will be used in an attempt to engage with as wide a range of people as possible, subject to time and resource constraints. The Council will consider the use of the following techniques:

Public meetings. When using public meeting careful consideration will be had to the timing and venue to ensure that the meeting is as accessible as possible. Preferably, for issues that are likely to be of significant interest, there will be several public meetings in various locations at various different times of the day and week to try and appeal to as many people as possible. The layout and structure of meetings will be such that people feel free to put forward their views. 'Us and them' layouts with rows of seats facing a speaker at the front do not encourage people to voice their opinions – these types of meetings will be avoided.

Public exhibitions. Where planning issues are likely to attract significant interest from the public, the Council will consider the use of public exhibitions to raise awareness and get feedback on such issues. As with public meetings, careful consideration will be had to the location and timing of exhibitions. Exhibitions should place a strong emphasis on the use of images and there will be mechanisms in place for members of the public to put forward their ideas and concerns. Some issues will require the use of the Council's mobile exhibition unit and displays may be mounted in libraries and shops.

Existing community groups and voluntary organisations. Rochford District Council recognise that community groups and voluntary organisations can, in particular, provide a link between the Council and groups who may feel excluded from the decision making process. Rochford District Council will consult various representative organisations on the Local Development Framework. A list of the groups that will be consulted is included in Table 4. A list of other representative groups is included in Table 5.

Rochford District Matters is a quarterly newsletter that is produced by the Council and sent to every household in the district. This newsletter will be used to keep people in the district up-to-date with the latest planning issues and provide information on how they can get involved.

Other local media. The Council will use other local media to keep people informed of planning matters, this will be primarily through notices in local newspapers. Rochford District Council acknowledges that notices placed in local newspapers will not be seen by everyone and will use this as a method of informing the public in conjunction with other techniques.

Electronic media. The Council's website provides a mechanism through which the public can be kept informed of planning matters. The Council will also use electronic media to receive comments from members of the public. Rochford District Council does, however, recognise that not everyone has access to electronic media and will therefore use this method only in conjunction with other forms of participation.

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Access to Planning Officer advice. The Council will provide a member of staff to discuss planning matters with, either in person or on the telephone, during office hours at the Council offices in Rochford. The Council will also respond to planning questions submitted by letter or email.

Representative groups and bodies. Rochford District Council will directly consult in writing a number of bodies and groups in the preparation of the Local Development Framework. These include elected representative bodies such as Parish Councils. The Council will also make use of the Rochford and Castle Point Citizens Panel. Such groups can be useful source of local opinion and information. The Council recognises that not all members of a community will share the same views and opinions. Therefore, it will not rely simply on comments from bodies to speak for the people they represent, but will also seek the views of individuals.

Planning Aid is an organisation that provides independent planning advice free of charge and is a valuable resource to those who may not otherwise have access to a planning consultant. Rochford District Council will promote the use of Planning Aid to members of the public as a way of helping people to understand planning and as a vehicle through which they can voice their views. Details of how to contact Planning Aid can be found under 'Useful Contacts' section of this document.

Table 2: Which techniques will be used for which parts of the LDF

	Core Strategy	Allocations	Development Control Policies	SCI	SPDs
Public meetings	✓	✓			
Public exhibition	✓	✓	✓		
Existing community groups and voluntary organisations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rochford district matters	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other local media	✓	✓	✓		✓
Electronic media	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to planning officer advice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Representative groups and bodies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Planning aid	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

6. HAVING YOUR SAY ON THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Previous sections of the Statement of Community Involvement have described when public involvement will take place and how the Council will engage with local communities. This section details the ways in which people can put forward their views.

Public meetings and exhibitions will include the opportunity for people to put across their views. This will be done through questionnaires available at these events.

Questionnaires on the various aspects of the Local Development Framework will be made available on the Council's website, at the Council's offices and will be sent out by post on request. Questionnaires will be available in large print and in languages other than English on request. Questionnaires will use simple language and make use of images where possible.

Members of the public will also have the opportunity to submit their opinions and views on any matters that may not be covered by questions on a questionnaire.

Comments can be submitted by email to planning.policy@rochford.gov.uk; or by writing to:

Rochford District Council,
Council Offices,
South Street,
Rochford,
Essex,
SS4 1BW

For comments to be formally considered they should be submitted in writing and should include the senders name and address. If someone wishes to submit a comment on the Local Development Framework but is unable to put it in writing then the Council will allow verbal comments, which will be recorded by officers.

6.1 FEEDBACK

Rochford District Council recognises the importance of maintaining dialogue between contributors to the planning process and the Council. The Council will seek to keep the public informed on all planning matters. In particular the Council will keep those involved in the process up to date and will explain how their views have contributed to the final decision reached. This will usually be done by producing a compilation of all comments received and stating how the Local Planning Authority has reacted to each one.

Feedback will primarily be provided by electronic correspondence. The Council will also use written methods and will regularly update the website and through the Council's newspaper, *Rochford District Matters*.

Sections 4 to 6 of this Statement of Community Involvement dealt with how the local community of Rochford District will be involved in the drafting and evolution of the planning policies and proposals that shape the development and use of land in the district. The following sections deal with planning applications, the development control process, and how local people can influence the decision making process on individual planning applications.

Planning applications are made to Rochford District Council by individuals or organisations for activities that require planning permission. In general terms all types of development or change of use of land will require planning permission either from the Council or the Government. Flowchart 1 details the process used for processing planning applications.

7.1 PUBLICATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

In its role in dealing with planning applications, where Rochford District Council is the Local Planning Authority, the Council will publicise the details of all planning applications. No system for publicising planning applications can be foolproof, however extensive. The system that Rochford District Council uses is a balance between consideration of cost, speed of decision making and providing a reasonable opportunity for public comment. The way in which the Local Planning Authority will publicise and seek the views of local people is outlined below.

The Council will use a variety of techniques to publicise planning applications depending on the circumstances of the application. The following methods will be used:

Notification of Neighbours: Occupiers of properties most likely to be affected by a proposal are notified individually by letter that an application has been received. They are invited to inspect the application and make any written observations within 21 days. If the occupier is disabled or elderly and unable to get to the Council Offices copies of the plans can be provided free of charge. Plans will also be available to view on the internet at www.rochford.gov.uk.

As a general rule, the adjoining occupiers to a proposal are notified. In practice, this means properties bordering an application site will receive individual notification of that application. This may be different for householder applications.

Within rural or isolated areas there may not be any neighbouring dwellings, or it may be unclear as to who the neighbours affected are. In such cases, it is left to the case officer's judgements to whom the neighbour notification should apply. Additionally site notices may be posted.

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: A site notice consists of a bright yellow A4 size notice. It is 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 for the proposal can be viewed and how to make comments 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 whole range of bodies who may have an interest in the planning process. The Council will consult a whole range of statutory consultees. Not all bodies are consulted on each application. The bodies and organisations consulted will depend on the type of proposal and its location. Consultees are notified in writing and, as with local residents, have 21 days in which to respond.

Local media: Applications classified as being major applications or those thought to affect the character or appearance of a Conservation Area or Listed Building will be advertised within the Southend Standard, Evening Echo and / or the Yellow Advertiser newspaper.

Other Forms of Publication: All major applications and applications that are thought to affect the character or appearance of a listed building or conservation area will be publicised within the Evening Standard newspaper.

A list of all planning applications currently being considered by the Local Planning Authority is available on the Council's website (www.rochford.gov.uk).



Copies of all plans of applications being considered by the Council are available to view at the Council Offices in Rochford. Plans are also available to view at the relevant Parish Council Offices in Hullbridge, Rochford or Rayleigh Civic Suite depending on the location of the application site. At these outlying offices, unlike the main Council Offices in Rochford, there are no officers to give advice.

Plans of applications likely to generate a large amount of public interest will also be available to view on the Council's website, www.rochford.gov.uk. Plans of all applications will be able to view through Public Access on the Council's website from 2006.

Planning Officers are available to during office hours to provide information on planning applications, either by telephone or in person at Council Offices in Rochford. Queries can also be submitted by email at any time, although responses can only be made during office hours.

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8 HAVING YOUR SAY ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Council will seek the views of the public through the methods outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Public involvement techniques for Planning Applications				
	Large scale applications likely to generate considerable controversy	Applications contrary to policy	Applications broadly in accordance with policies, but likely to generate some controversy	Householder applications
Notification of Neighbours	✓	✓	✓	✓
Site Notices	✓	✓	✓	
Statutory Consultees	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local media	✓	✓		
Other Forms of Publication	✓	✓	✓	

Anyone can put forward their views on any planning application that is under consideration by the Council. The Council, in determining the planning application, can only take into consideration comments that are relevant to planning, known as material planning considerations.

For help and guidance on what matters can be considered relevant to a planning application please contact the Council's planning department during office hours where a Planning Officer will be available to assist. Rochford District Council has also produced a guidance leaflet on making comments that is available from the Council Offices. This leaflet is also available electronically on the Council's website (www.rochford.gov.uk). Planning Portal also provides information and can be accessed via the Council's website. Other possible contacts and references that may be of assistance include Planning Aid and the Royal Town Planning Institute's website (www.rtpi.org.uk).

Rochford District Council is committed to providing an open and transparent planning system. The Council also has to be able to justify its decisions and defend them in an appeal situation when necessary. For these reasons anonymous comments cannot be considered, views must be submitted in writing and will be open to the public to view. In addition to this, the Council is currently examining the possibility of giving members of the public the opportunity to speak at Planning Services Committee.

If you wish put forward your views on a planning application and are unable to put them in writing then contact the planning department to put your views across verbally and an Officer will record them in writing.

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A diagram illustrating the decision making process for planning applications is shown in Appendix A at the end of this document.

8.1 FEEDBACK

The Council will endeavour to respond to all who have submitted comment on a planning application at several stages:

On receipt of the comment: Rochford District Council will write to the contributor confirming receipt of their submission. This letter confirms that the contributor's views will be taken into account and that the Council will keep them updated with the progress of the planning application.

Mid-application: In the event that the application will be determined at Planning Services 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.

Alterations: When alterations have been made to a proposal mid-application, depending on the scale of such alterations, contributors may be written to informing them that the proposal has been revised and inviting further comment.

Post-application: Once the application has been determined Rochford District Council will write to all contributors detailing the outcome of the application and how to get further information if required.

Appeals: When an applicant appeals against the decision of the Council to refuse their proposal 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.



9 PRE-APPLICATION

When an applicant proposes a development that may have a significant impact on local communities, the applicant will be encouraged to engage in public participation and consult with affected communities prior to submitting a planning application.

The applicant should submit the results of pre-application consultation and public participation to the Council with the planning application. The Council cannot insist that the applicant carries out pre-application consultation. However, the results, or lack thereof, of pre-application consultation are likely to be material to the determination of the proposal.

Pre-application consultation has a number of advantages for affected communities and the applicant, a list of some of these is outlined in Box 4:

Box 4: The benefits of pre-application consultation and public participation

- Allows for local concerns and objections to be identified early and resolved prior to the application stage.
- Ensures an inclusive and transparent approach to planning.
- Provides local communities with accurate information on a proposal up front, avoiding possible fear and suspicion that may arise if a planning application is submitted 'out of the blue'.
- Saves developer time and resources by avoiding the need to revise proposals at an advanced stage, which in turn leads to resource savings for local authorities.
- Allows a developer to submit better quality applications that are straightforward and can be processed more efficiently.

There are a number of techniques available to applicants in undertaking pre-application community involvement. Many of the methods outline earlier in this Statement of Community Involvement in relation to the Local Development Framework are applicable in the case of pre-application consultation. The Council, at will consider working in partnership with applicants in aiding their efforts in engaging with local communities prior to submitting an application.

Table 4 outlines a range of techniques that a developer should use in order to effectively engage with local communities prior to submitting a planning application. The type of proposal being considered will determine which techniques should be used. The list is by no means exhaustive or exclusive.

In addition to the promoting the use of the techniques outlined in Table 4, the Local Planning Authority will also encourage developers to take into account any local community led plans (e.g. Parish Plans, Village Design Statements, Market Town Initiatives etc) that may have be in place and of relevance to the proposal.

Table 4: Pre-application public involvement techniques

	Large scale applications likely to generate considerable controversy	Applications contrary to policy	Applications broadly in accordance with policies, but likely to generate some controversy
Public Exhibition	✓	✓	
Public meetings	✓	✓	✓
Workshops	✓		
Consultation Panel	✓		
Notice on Council Website	✓	✓	
Notice in Local Media	✓	✓	✓
Consultation Letters	✓	✓	✓

9.1 PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION ON RDC APPLICATIONS

The vast majority of applications to develop land in Rochford District are made by private individuals or groups. These are assessed by the Council, who as part of the assessment, will seek the views of affected people and organisations as outlined in this Statement of Community Involvement.

When applications are made to develop land by the Council, it will be subject to the same minimum requirements as any other applicant and will aim for the maximum level of public engagement appropriate for the type of development proposed, as outlined in Table 3. In any event this will be at or beyond the level required by legislation. When Rochford District Council is the applicant it will explore the possibility of delegating a significant level of power over development to people who will be most affected by it.



View over Rochford rooftops from St Andrew's church

10 ENFORCEMENT

Rochford District Council's planning enforcement service investigates alleged breaches of planning control that are brought to light by Council Members, other departments within the authority, other organisations or members of the public.

Members of the public can report alleged breaches of planning control through any of the following methods:

- **Telephone**, by calling the planning department on 01702 318191
- **Writing** to the planning department at:

Rochford District Council
Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BW
- **Email** planning enforcement at planning.enforcement@rochford.gov.uk
- **Webform** on the Council's website at <http://www.rochford.gov.uk>
- **In person**, by coming into the Council offices at the above address

We do not usually accept anonymous enforcement complaints. Anonymous complaints will only be registered where the breach is extremely serious or can be readily detected. The identity of complainants is kept confidential.

There is no general public consultation with the public on enforcement cases but 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 by e-mail or by writing to the complainant.

The enforcement team will pursue any breach of planning control to its resolution so far as it is considered reasonable and expedient to do so, and will prioritise cases in accordance with published criteria.

11. THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND OTHER COUNCIL STRATEGIES

The Statement of Community Involvement, as with the Local Development Framework in general, does not sit in isolation but integrates with other strategies of Rochford District Council to achieve benefits to the District, in particular the Community Strategy and the Social Inclusion Policy

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Council's community strategy, *A Community Strategy for Rochford District* (April 2004), illustrates how local businesses, statutory agencies and the community and voluntary sectors work in partnership. The Local Development Framework will be developed as a key component in the delivery of the Community Strategy, setting out its spatial aspects and providing a long-term spatial vision. The Local Strategic Partnership – a single body that consists of numerous public and private organisations working together in the interests of the district – is responsible for the preparing and delivering the community strategy for Rochford District. The Statement of Community Involvement will help meet a number of the aims of the community strategy such as:

- Promoting active and responsible citizenship through the involvement of the public in the planning process
- Enabling everyone to participate in activities that affect their life by engaging in communities with an interest in the district so that they can have their say on planning decisions
- Creating a more inclusive community by having a planning system that reflects the views of all people in the District.

The development of the Rochford District Youth Assembly to feed into the Essex-wide Youth Assembly is one of the actions that will be undertaken through the Community Strategy. In the past, Young people have had a very limited input into the planning process. The Youth Assembly will be able to represent the views of young people in the district, acting as a medium through which the youth of the District can voice their concerns on a variety of issues including planning and development.

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Council is part of the Rochford District Local Strategic Partnership. Local Strategic Partnerships were introduced as a result of the Local Government Act 2000 and have a critical role to play in delivering the Community Strategy Action Plan, particularly in relation to coherent service provision and the development of genuinely sustainable communities for the Rochford district.

A Steering Group is responsible for the development and implementation of the Community Strategy, membership of the Steering Group includes representatives from:

- Rochford District Council
- Rochford and Castle Point Primary Care Trust

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- South Essex Partnership Trust
- Essex County Council and the district's Parish and Town Councils
- Business Representatives
- Essex Learning and Skills Council
- Essex Police
- Rayleigh and Rochford District Association of Voluntary Services (RAVS)
- Thames Gateway South Essex
- Faith groups
- Schools

In preparing the LDF development plan documents it is essential that there is close collaborative working with the LSP to ensure that the spatial aspects of the Community Strategy are implemented to best effect for the district. Therefore, the LSP will be involved at all stages of the preparation of development plan documents.

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS

A key part of the developing strategy for enabling better public services to be delivered more effectively locally is to provide a new framework for the relationship between central and local government. Local Area Agreements are a new way of working to build a more flexible and responsive relationship between central government and a locality on the priority outcomes that need to be achieved at local level. Achieving this new relationship will require a significant shift in the way central and local government relate to each other and to other local partners.

Rochford District Council is working with all the authorities in Essex to develop a Local Area Agreement that will achieve a step change in the delivery of public services in the County and this new agreement will influence the planning strategy and policies in the Local Development Framework.

THAMES GATEWAY SOUTH ESSEX

Thames Gateway is a national priority for regeneration and growth and is identified in the Government's Sustainable Communities plan as one of the growth areas for new housing in the South East. The vision for Thames Gateway South Essex is focussed on the creation of sustainable communities that make the most of the unique characteristics of South Essex. Rochford is recognised as an area for the developing leisure, recreation and tourism activities and in particular is key to the development and expansion of the green grid.

SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

The Statement of Community Involvement will help achieve the aims of the Council's Social Inclusion Policy, *Making sure no-one is left out*, by ensuring that planning services are more easily accessible to all who want or need them.

The Council's community participation and consultation activities will be conducted in line with the Social Inclusion Policy, taking into account and overcoming barriers to participation that can lead to social exclusion such as:

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- Difficulties in physically accessing sites where community participation activities are being undertaken.
- Difficulties in communicating e.g., limited literacy and numeracy.

COMMUNITY LED PLANS

In addition to documents prepared by the Council, community led plans such as Parish Plans, Market Town Initiatives and Village Design Statements, have the potential to involve people at a local level in the decisions that affect their community. Successful community led plans should be socially inclusive and can lead to a detailed action plan that outlines the aspirations of community at a very localised level. Although Parish Plans are unlikely to be able to be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), community led plans may still make a contribution to the planning system: elements of them may be taken and transplanted into an SPD, providing it conforms to other policies.

Exercises such as the formation of community led plans can also encourage people to take an interest in the issues that affect their community.

OTHER POLICIES

The Statement of Community Involvement takes account of the policies, programmes and strategies prepared by Rochford District Council. It will be amended as necessary as new documents and legislation dictate. Other documents produced by Rochford District Council can be found on the Council's website or they can be viewed at the Council's reception.

12 REVIEWING THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The draft version of the Statement of Community Involvement is subject to consultation as part of the Local Development Framework. The final version of the Statement of Community Involvement will be produced taking into account comments received during the consultation process.

The Council will endeavour to monitor the effectiveness of the Statement of Community Involvement. The measure of the success of the Statement of Community Involvement will include:

- 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

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, allowing participation exercises to be undertaken to meet the particular circumstances of the planning issue in hand. It is intended, however, that the level of engagement will be at or beyond the minimum level required by legislation.

The Council will monitor the effectiveness of the various community participation exercises that it carries out as part of the review of the Statement of Community Involvement. Information on this will be available to the public in written and electronic format on request. This monitoring will be used to ensure that the Statement of Community Involvement is revised appropriately.



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13 CONSULTEES

The following is a list of the representative groups and organisations that will be directly consulted on the various aspects of the Local Development Framework.

The list of consultees contains groups that have shown, or are known to have, an interest in the planning of the district in the past and therefore will be consulted (see Table 4).

The consultee list is by no means exclusive - if the Local Planning Authority becomes aware of a group who have an interest in the planning of the district we will endeavour to involve them in the decision making process. If you know of a group who you believe should be involved then please contact us.

TABLE 4: Consultees

WE WILL CONSULT:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Parish Councils within Rochford District • All adjacent Parish and District Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Commission • County Archaeologist • CPREssex • Crime Prevention Officer • Crown Estates Commissioners • Defence Estates (East) • DEFRA • Diocesan Board Of Finance • East of England Tourist Board • EEDA • EERA • English Nature • Environment Agency • Essex Autistic Society • Essex Bridleways Association • Essex Chamber of Commerce • Essex County Council (Fire and Rescue Service) • Essex County Council (Highways) • Essex County Council (Listed Building & Conservation Area Advisor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essex County Council (Petroleum Licensing Officer) • Essex County Council (Planning) • Essex County Council (Schools Service) • Essex County Council (Social Services) • Essex County Council (Trading Standards) • Essex Libraries • Essex Police • Essex Region, Federation of Small Businesses • Essex Wildlife Trust • Essex Youth Service • First Essex Buses • Forestry Commission • Friends Of The Earth (SE Essex Group) • The Georgian Group • GO-East • Gypsy Council for Education, Welfare & Civil Rights • Health & Safety Executive • Highways Agency
AND:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient Monuments Society • Anglian Water Services Ltd • Area Highways Manager • Arriva (bus company) • Basildon Sewage Treatment Works • British Gas • British Horse Society • British Telecom • British Wind Energy Association • Civil Aviation Authority • Council for British Archaeology • Council for the Protection of Rural England • Countryside Agency 		
		Continued...

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TABLE 4 continued

- Historical Buildings & Monuments Commission for England
- HM Prison Service
- Hockley Chamber of Trade
- Hockley Parish Council
- Hockley Residents Association
- H O R S E
- House Builders Federation
- The Housing Corporation
- Inspire East
- Land Use Consultants (for English Nature)
- Local Strategic Partnership
- London Southend Airport Co Ltd
- Ministry of Defence
- National Farmers Union
- National Wind Power
- Network Rail
- Post Office

- Ramblers Association
- Rayleigh Chamber Of Trade
- Rayleigh Civic Society
- R.I.B.A. South Essex Chapter
- Roach Valley Conservation Zone
- Rochford and Rayleigh Citizens Advice Bureau
- Rochford District Access Committee
- Rochford & District Chamber of Trade & Commerce
- Rochford Hundred Amenity Society
- Royal Commission for the Historical Monuments of England
- RSPB
- Rural Community Council of Essex

- Rural Development Commission
- SEETEC
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
- South East Essex Chamber of Commerce
- South East Essex Health Authority
- Southend Community Care Services
- Southend Hospital NHS Trust
- South Essex Natural History Society
- Sports Council (Eastern Region)
- Sport England
- The Twentieth Century Society
- The Victorian Society
- The Woodland Trust

ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING DEPARTMENT:

Telephone: 01702 318191
Email: plan@rochford.gov.uk
Fax: 01702 318181
Address: Rochford District Council
Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BW

OTHER CONTACTS / SOURCES OF INFORMATION

ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE

Telephone: 020 7929 9494
Email: online@rtpi.org.uk
Address: 41 Botolph Lane, London, EC3R 8DL
Website: www.rtpi.org.uk
Fax: 020 7929 9490

PLANNING AID

General

Telephone: 0121 693 1201
Email: info@planningaid@rtpi.org.uk
Address: Unit 419, The Custard Factory, Gibb Street,
Birmingham, B9 4AA
Website: www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

East of England:

Telephone: 0870 850 9801
Email: eecw@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk
Address: PO Box 289, Redgrave, Diss, IP22 1WZ

15 SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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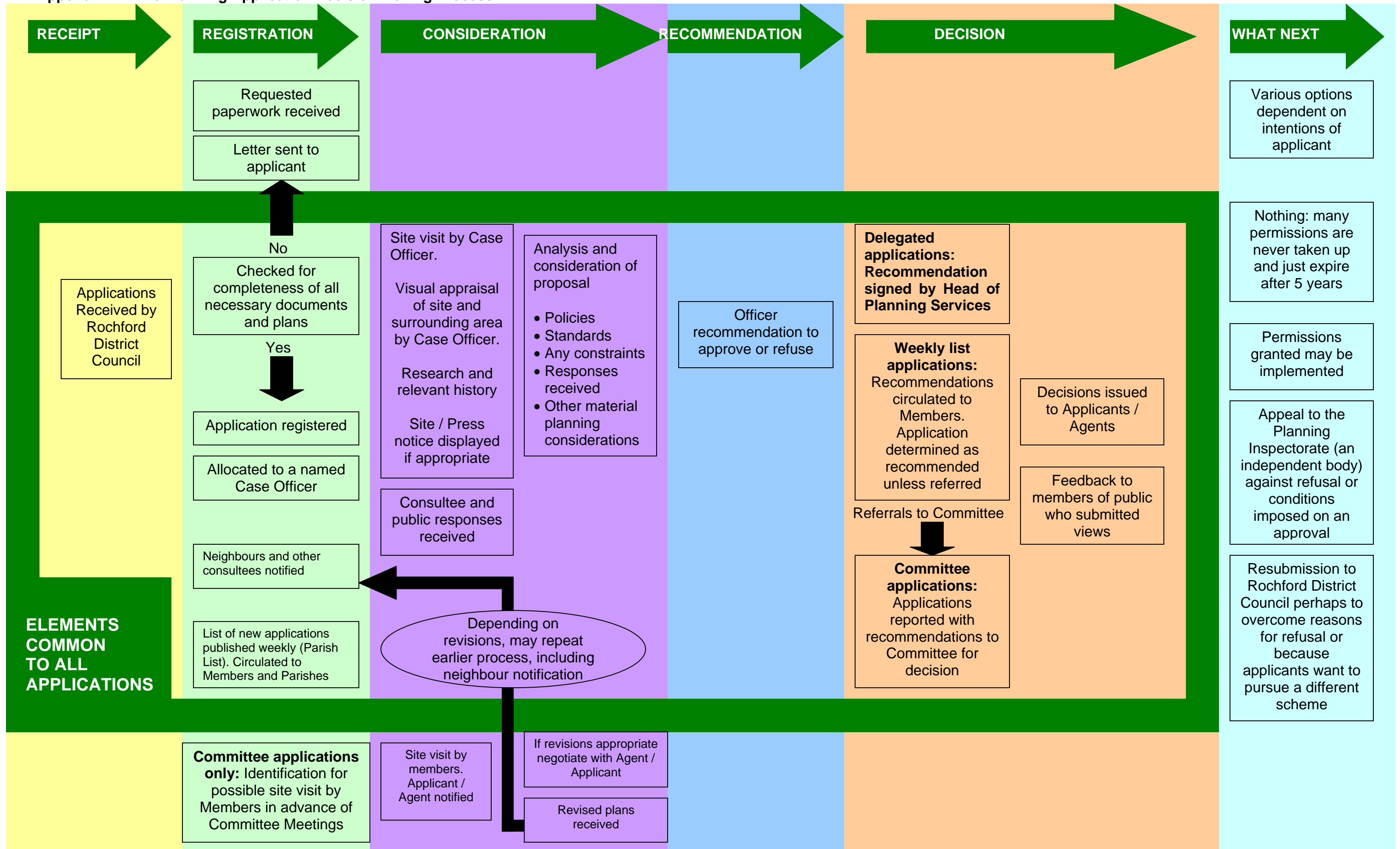
Dundee City Council (2004) *Community engagement toolkit*
East of England Regional Assembly (2005) *Draft East of England Plan*
Home Office (2004) *The benefits of community engagement*
I&DeA (2004) *A toolkit for facilitating rural delivery*
ODPM (2002) *Making plans*
ODPM (2004) *Community involvement in planning*
ODPM (2004) *Creating Local Development Frameworks*
ODPM (2004) *Statements of Community Involvement and Planning Applications*
ODPM (2005) *Diversity and equality in planning*
Scottish Community Development Centre (2002) *Models of community engagement*
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (2004) *Hard to reach groups*
United Kingdom (2004) *Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act*

WEBSITES:

Government Office for the Eastern Region – <http://www.go-east.gov.uk>
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – <http://www.odpm.gov.uk>
Planning Aid - www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk
Planning Inspectorate – <http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk>
Planning Portal – <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/>
Royal Town Planning Institute – <http://www.rtpi.org.uk>
Rural Community Council of Essex – <http://www.essexrcc.org.uk>

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Appendix A – The Planning Application Decision-Making Process





**PREPARED BY THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLANNING POLICY TEAM**



E-mail

Website

01702 318002

planning.policy@rochford.gov.uk

<http://www.rochford.gov.uk>

**Rochford District Council, Council Offices,
South Street, Rochford, Essex SS4 1BW**