

**EAST SUSSEX STATEMENT
OF
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Consultation Draft

November 2005

Development Minerals and Waste Group
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STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Consultation Draft

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1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to planning

1.1 Planning is the process by which the community makes decisions about the future. It starts with the setting of planning policies for the area, and includes the consideration of planning applications in the light of those policies. The County Council is responsible for:-

- setting policies for minerals and waste development;
- dealing with planning applications for minerals and waste development; and
- dealing with planning applications for its own service developments such as schools and libraries.

Policies for general land use and other activities are set by the District and Borough Councils, who also deal with all other types of planning applications.

1.2 The County Council is keen to involve all sections of the community in setting policies and in dealing with planning applications. The purpose of this draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is to set out the County Council's proposals to achieve this. These proposals reflect the government's principles for community involvement, which are:

- community involvement that is appropriate to the level of planning. Arrangements need to be built on a clear understanding of the needs of the community and to be fit for purpose;
- front loading of involvement. There should be opportunities for early community involvement and a sense of ownership of local policy decisions;
- using methods of involvement which are relevant to the communities concerned;
- clearly articulated opportunities for continuing involvement as part of a continuous programme, not a one-off event;
- transparency and accessibility; and
- planning for involvement. Community involvement should be planned into the process for the preparation and revision of local development documents.

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

1.3 This draft SCI is a formal statement of East Sussex County Council's proposals and arrangements for involving the community. Views on this draft statement should be received by the County Council by 23 December 2005. Comments can be made online via the website (www.eastsussex.gov.uk/.....); in writing to Philip Stephenson, Transport & Environment Department, East Sussex County Council, County Hall, St. Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1UE; by e-mail to transenv@eastsussex.gov.uk; or by fax to 01273 – 479536. Please use the form available for comments if possible.

1.4 The County Council is consulting a wide range of range of bodies and organisations with interests in East Sussex. Comments received on this draft SCI will be taken into account in revising this document. A revised SCI will be published and submitted to the government for independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. There will be a six week consultation period in which comments can be made on the submitted document. It will then be independently examined by the Planning Inspectorate who will specify any changes needed to the document. The County Council will then make these changes and adopt the final SCI.

1.5 Once adopted the SCI will be used to check that the way in which the County Council involves the community in setting policies and considering planning applications is in line with the adopted methods and procedures.

County Council Planning

1.6 The County Council is the local planning authority in East Sussex for minerals and waste matters. It prepares the Minerals Development Plan Document and the Waste Development Plan Document, together with any necessary Supplementary Planning Documents, all of which set the framework for dealing with the development of minerals and waste facilities. The County Council determines planning applications for minerals and waste development. It also handles planning applications for its own service development such as schools and roads.

1.7 Setting the policy frameworks and handling planning applications are part of the planning system for which the rules and regulations are set at national level.

1.8 A new planning system was introduced through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Under the Act, old style 'Structure Plans' are replaced by 'Regional Spatial Strategies' (RSS). The County Council is involved in the preparation and consultation on the regional spatial strategy for the south east (known as 'The South East Plan'), on behalf of the South East England Regional Assembly. This SCI does not include the RSS because it is the Regional Assembly, rather than the County Council, which is responsible for preparing the RSS.

1.9 Old style local plans are replaced by Local Development Documents. These include Development Plan Documents (such as those for minerals and waste) which are part of the statutory development plan, and Supplementary Planning Documents which expand on the details of policies or provide advice. These Documents make up the County Council's Local Development Framework and this is set out in the Local Development Scheme for the County (the "Minerals and Waste Development Scheme 2004 – 2007"). The Scheme is available on the website (www.eastsussex.gov.uk/...) or in hard copy.

1.10 The new system involves some changes to the planning applications system but does not alter the balance of responsibilities between county councils and borough/district councils.

2. COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS AND PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Local Development Documents

2.1 The County Council's Minerals and Waste Development Scheme 2004 - 2007 sets out when the County Council intends to prepare the following Local Development Documents:-

- Minerals Development Plan Document
- Minerals Proposals Map
- Supplementary Planning Document on Construction and Demolition Waste
- Waste Development Plan Document

2.2 Work has started on the Minerals Development Plan Document and Minerals Proposals Map, and on the Construction and Demolition Waste Supplementary Planning Document. As the County Council is in the later stages of finalising a Waste Local Plan under the old planning system, it will be progressed to adoption. Work will then be started on the Waste Development Plan Document under the new system.

2.3 The Minerals Development Plan Document and the Waste Development Plan Document will each consist of two separate documents; one dealing with the core strategy (the key elements of the minerals and waste planning framework for East Sussex), and the other dealing with site specific allocations of land. Both the Minerals and the Waste Development Plan documents will be accompanied by Sustainability Appraisals. These will appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of plan strategies and policies so that decisions can be made which accord with the objectives of sustainable development.

2.4 Each of the Development Plan documents must pass through a number of stages in their preparation and adoption. These are:-

- * informal consultation and involvement on a scoping report;
- * informal consultation and involvement on an issues and options report;
- * formal consultation on a preferred option;
- * formal consultation on a document submitted to the government;
- * independent examination of the submitted document; and
- * adoption of a document.

2.5 Supplementary Planning Documents, such as the County Council's on Construction and Demolition Waste, expand on policies or provide greater detail than can be included in a Development Plan Document. They are also accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal. They pass through all the stages listed above in their preparation and adoption, except that they are not subject to independent examination.

2.6 Different types of community involvement will be appropriate for all of these documents and at each of the stages. This is embodied in the description of community involvement below. The Supplementary Planning Document on Construction and Demolition Waste, and the Waste Development Plan Document will be produced jointly by the County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council. The

Councils will ensure that the SCIs for East Sussex and for Brighton and Hove are consistent with each other for these documents.

Planning Applications

2.7 The County Council receives about 25 planning applications for minerals and waste development each year. Many of these involve large scale works and virtually all raise significant local issues.

2.8 The County Council receives about 100 planning applications for its own development each year. These are mainly for schools, roads, libraries and social services buildings, and include the provision and retention of temporary buildings. The majority of these are small scale, but all have the potential to raise local issues.

3. TYPES OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT : LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS

3.1 This section sets out the methods the County Council will use to involve the community in the preparation of Local Development Documents. In each case there is an indication of which methods are likely to be appropriate for different documents and stages. The preamble describes briefly the current methods used by the County Council.

3.2 The County Council has recently prepared a Waste Local Plan under the old planning system. The methods used in its preparation were typical of the County Council's approach to involving the community. They provide a basis against which to consider the proposed future methods.

3.3 For the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Waste Local Plan the County Council (together with Brighton & Hove City Council) did the following:

- A number of research and information activities took place before preparation of the Plan, including a waste conference, a local plan opinion survey sent to local groups and made widely available, and discussion workshops with local groups.
- A pre-deposit consultation draft of the Plan was published in 1998 and made available in council offices and in public libraries. A free leaflet was widely distributed. Consultees on the Plan included government departments, amenity and community groups, other local authorities, local businesses and organisations, politicians and political groups and individuals. The Plan was advertised in the local press and in other publications. Staffed public exhibitions were held at fifteen venues. A series of focus groups were held.
- The First Deposit Waste Local Plan was placed on deposit for six weeks in 2000 and made available in council offices and in public libraries and on the councils' websites. Documents were made available for purchase and a free leaflet was widely distributed. All consultees for the consultation draft were re-consulted on the First Deposit Plan, together with all people who wrote commenting on the consultation draft Plan. The Plan was advertised in all local papers and articles on it were published. Staffed public

exhibitions were held at twelve venues. An independent waste forum of members of the public was arranged to comment on the Plan. Overall this exceeded statutory requirements.

- In 2002 the Second Deposit Plan was subject to similar procedures, and all objectors to the First Deposit Plan were notified. A public inquiry on the Plan took place in 2003.
- The County Council's proposed modifications to the Plan were made available at sixteen deposit points, and on the County Council's website. The modifications were advertised in the local press, and all objectors to the Plan were notified.

Proposed Methods

3.4 There are statutory minimum requirements for consultation on Local Development Documents. These are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. The requirements are, in summary:

- making relevant documents and material available for inspection at County Council offices and other suitable places for a six week consultation period
- putting the documents on the County Council's website together with other information to help people comment
- sending copies of the relevant documents and material to the government office and statutory consultees
- advertising by standard notice in at least one local newspaper the details of the consultation process
- giving notice to anyone who wishes to be kept informed of the document.

3.5 The County Council will exceed these minimum requirements for community involvement where appropriate. Following is a list of the methods that will be used for Local Development Documents. The County Council will chose methods which are most appropriate for each stage of each Local Development Document. Table 1 shows which methods are most likely to be used at different stages of each Local Development Document.

Documents available for inspection at local authority offices and libraries

The County Council will make documents available for inspection at consultation and deposit stages in the places and for the periods required by legislation. In addition libraries, the County Council's area offices and information offices will be used. Separate arrangements will be made for documents to be studied in more depth away from reception points.

County Council website

Documents and information will be provided in the planning section of the County Council's website. This will include an explanation of the Local Development Documents process, information and details on particular documents, and the means for people to consult and comment on them online. There will also be information on how to contact the County Council by e-mail, telephone or letter for further information and advice.

Hotline

A hotline telephone number will be publicised in all documents and in other relevant information sent out. It will be staffed in normal office hours and will also be available at any time so that requests for documents and information can be taken.

Press advertisements and articles

As well as statutory advertisements, the County Council will issue press releases and carry out press briefings to try and ensure that the coverage in newspapers, local radio and local television is as informed and as wide ranging as possible. This will include promoting and informing debate through information on key aspects of plans and proposals.

Formal written consultation

The County Council will maintain a mailing list of all statutory and other consultees for Local Development Documents. This will include people who have asked to be kept informed.

County Council magazine "Your County"

Where the Local Development Document timetable allows, information on plans and proposals, consultation and other processes will be published in the County Council's magazine which is distributed free to all households in the County. Information will be made available to the Borough and District Councils for inclusion in their own newsletters where possible.

Leaflets and brochures

Summary leaflets and brochures will be used to present information on plans and proposals, and on responses and opinion, in a way which provides a quick and easily understood summary. For example, this may be for a complete Local Development Document, for particular topics or proposals, to set out arrangements for a consultation process, or an analysis of feedback from consultation. The aim would be to provide non-technical information for a wide audience but ensuring that it explained how to access more in depth or detailed information.

Public exhibitions and roadshows

Exhibitions and roadshows will be provided at selected venues, usually staffed to enable on hand explanation, discussion and feedback. Unstaffed small displays may also be suitable in libraries or other offices for general publicity or information.

Public meetings

Open public meetings will be held to discuss and debate issues and/or particular proposals for an area.

Face to face meetings

Meetings will be arranged with organisations or individuals to discuss specific or detailed issues.

Surveys

Surveys of individuals will be carried out, based on standard questions, usually focusing on key issues. The surveys could be random postal, telephone or interview surveys. Where appropriate, residents or citizens panels maintained by the County Council could play a part in such surveys.

Focus groups, Discussion groups, Stakeholder meetings

Meetings will be arranged with representatives of key organisations with an interest or involvement in a single or related set of issues, topics or proposals. This would usually take the form of a workshop designed to gather and exchange views.

Consultation with strategic partnerships

Existing partnership arrangements at county, borough/district and town/rural level will all be used to inform, to promote and carry out consultation, and to generate views and ideas.

Public surgeries

Local premises could be used as a drop in point for information and/or discussion. This is more likely to be used for site specific proposals.

Action planning exercises

Generally these are workshops used to stimulate and produce ideas and suggestions on the general planning of an area. The County Council could use them for some other specific activities; to generate ideas and explore the type and location of waste facilities for example.

Planning Aid

The County Council will recommend and publicise the use of the Planning Aid organisation as additional and independent help for people who want to be involved in the planning process, with the particular aim of increasing involvement by hard to reach groups. It will also consult Planning Aid about its possible involvement in the various stages of Local Development Documents.

3.6 Table 1 shows the likely use of the above methods for different stages of the Local Development Document process. For each stage of each document the County Council will consider the most appropriate methods, taking into account the issues, policies or proposals under consideration, which sections and areas of the community are affected, and the resource costs of methods. At each stage the proposed methods

will be checked against this table to assess whether the County Council was abiding by, and making reasonable judgements on, its SCI.

TABLE 1 – LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS

MINERALS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (MDPD), MINERALS PROPOSALS MAP & SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

WASTE DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (WDPD) & SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION WASTE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Stage 1 : SCOPING REPORT – Informal consultation over a limited period to inform the framework for the MDPD or WDPD. Consultation with statutory and other consultees.

Methods - Informal written consultation

County Council website

Hotline

Focus Groups, discussion groups, stakeholder meetings

Meetings with strategic partnerships

Stage 2 : ISSUES AND OPTIONS – Gathering information followed by informal consultation on Issues and Options report over a limited period. Consultation with statutory and other consultees and the general public.

Methods – Documents available for inspection

Informal written consultation

County Council website

Hotline

Press advertisements and articles

County Council magazine

Leaflets and brochures

Face to face meetings

Surveys

Focus groups, Discussion groups, Stakeholder meetings

Meetings with strategic partnerships

Action planning exercises

Planning Aid

Stage 3 : PREFERRED OPTION – Formal consultation for six weeks with statutory and other consultees and the general public.

Methods – Documents available for inspection

Formal written consultation

County Council website

Hotline

Press advertisements and articles

County Council magazine
Leaflets and brochures
Face to face meetings
Surveys
Focus groups, discussion groups, Stakeholder groups
Meetings with strategic partnerships
Public surgeries
Planning Aid

Stage 4 : SUBMITTED DOCUMENT - Formal consultation on submitted MDPD or WDPD for six weeks with statutory and other consultees and the general public.

Methods : Documents available for inspection
Formal written consultation
County Council website
Hotline
Press advertisements and articles
County Council magazine
Face to face meetings
Focus groups, discussion groups, stakeholder groups
Meetings with strategic partnerships
Planning Aid

Feedback

3.7 At each stage of a Local Development Document the County Council will produce and make available a report on the comments and representations received on the document. Where appropriate the report, or a separate report, will identify the County Council's response, and the changes to be made to the document and/or the actions to be taken.

3.8 Where focus, discussion or stakeholder groups, or face to face meetings have taken place the County Council will produce a summary report of the proceedings. This will be made available and will be sent to those attending the meeting. For open public meetings the County Council will produce and make available a report summarising the proceedings.

3.9 In all these cases reports will be made available on the County Council's website and in hard copy whether or not they form part of a formal report to a County Council Committee. The County Council reserves the right to make a charge for copies of some reports in some circumstances.

3.10 Where decisions have to be taken on a document or other material by a County Council committee, as part of the Local Development Document process, a report will be considered and a decision made by

- the Lead Member for Transport and the Environment, or
- the Planning & Highways Sub Committee, and
- will be scrutinised by the Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee

3.11 For each Local Development Document the County Council will produce and make available a statement of compliance with the SCI. This will set out how the preparation and consideration of the document has met the requirements for community involvement set out in this SCI.

4. TYPES OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 This section sets out the methods the County Council will use to involve the community in the consideration and determination of planning applications. Which methods are likely to be appropriate for different stages of a planning application are indicated. The preamble describes briefly the current methods used by the County Council.

4.2 The County Council currently does the following when each planning application is received. These arrangements exceed the statutory requirements:

- Places site notices confirming the description of the development and how interested persons can inspect plans and make representations. These are posted around the site so that they can be seen from public land, and where appropriate notices will be placed at each access point to the site.
- Properties adjoining the site are written to and invited to comment, together with any neighbouring properties that may be affected by the proposals.
- For all waste and mineral planning applications, and some major County Council applications where certain criteria apply, an advertisement is placed in a local weekly newspaper to confirm the receipt of an application, where it can be inspected and where representations should be sent to. Additional information is provided where any application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement.
- Statutory and other consultee organisations, and neighbours who may be affected by the proposals are written to and invited to comment.
- Organisations and individuals are given a minimum of twenty one days to respond. This timescale is doubled for any application accompanied by an Environmental Statement.
- All planning applications are made public and available to view at the relevant Borough or District Council and a list is published on the County Council's website.
- The leaflet "Planning – Development Control Service" describes the service and is available in hard copy and on the County Council's website.

4.3 The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (as amended) and other legislation sets out the statutory requirements for publicity for planning applications. In summary this is:

- All minerals and waste applications and other major applications – advertisement in a newspaper (and on a website, where possible) and either a site notice or neighbour notification;
- Other applications accompanied by an Environmental Statement; proposals which depart from the development plan; development affecting

a right of way – advertisement in a newspaper (and on a website, where possible) and a site notice;

- Minor applications – either a site notice or neighbour notification;
- Development affecting the setting of a listed building, or the character or appearance of a conservation area – advertisement in a newspaper and a site notice.

4.4 The County Council is required by legislation to consult other local authorities and various statutory bodies and organisations on planning applications.

4.5 The County Council considers that the involvement of the community should start at the pre-application stage; particularly for major applications. The County Council will encourage developers to propose an appropriate programme of local publicity and activities to inform and involve the community in their proposals. This will be aimed at reducing inaccurate information about proposals, allowing developers and local authorities to hear the views of the community and to discuss issues at the earliest possible stage, and giving developers the opportunity to consider whether their proposals should be modified before making a planning application.

4.6 The County Council will continue to carry out the publicity and consultation activities for each planning application as set out above, and will therefore continue to exceed these statutory requirements. It will use a wide range of methods to ensure community involvement. All the methods available for information, publicity, consultation and involvement are listed below.

Proposed methods

Applications available for inspection

Applications and appropriate supporting documents will be made available for inspection at County Council, Borough and District Council planning offices including the District Councils' area offices. In certain circumstances with major development proposals this may be extended to local libraries. Parish and Town Councils will be encouraged to make their copies of applications available to the public at their offices.

Advertising applications

In addition to the statutory requirements, the County Council will continue to notify adjoining and affected neighbours about applications.

County Council website

The publication on the website of a list of current applications will be extended in the future, to provide more information on the applications (e.g. plans and supporting information), and on-line interrogation, as the development of the website takes place. This will also include the ability to comment on applications and to trace their progress on-line. Links to Borough/District Council planning websites will be explored.

Hotline

A contact and telephone number will be included in all publicity and consultations on an application. On the website there will be a contact telephone number and e-mail address. Members of the public who have a query on any planning application will be able to telephone officers within normal office hours and expect a response from a member of the development control team or the case officer. Arrangements will be made for messages left out of office hours to receive a response from the contact officer or an alternative as quickly as possible. Where a local resident is unable to write to the Council for reasons of literacy, an officer will take down comments and record them on the appropriate file.

Formal written consultations

Statutory and other consultees will be sent copies of applications and appropriate supporting information. The case officer will determine relevant consultees in accordance with this SCI. Where the County Council is seeking a view from a consultee on a particular aspect of an application, the nature and reasons will be set out in advice to the consultee. A database of local community groups will be maintained so that they may be consulted on any relevant planning application.

Public exhibitions and meetings

The County Council will encourage applicants to hold exhibitions, public forums and/or community meetings, to explain, discuss and seek public feedback on their proposals. This will be particularly useful at an early stage and for major or controversial proposals, including before the submission of a planning application. This will be in addition to any pre-application discussions between applicants and the County Council.

Focus and Discussion Groups and meetings

In exceptional circumstances discussion with groups of local organisations may be useful where there is a particular issue or set of issues raised by a proposal or applications, or the level of interest makes it appropriate.

Liaison groups

The County Council will encourage and facilitate the establishment of liaison groups to monitor and disseminate information locally on the progress of any subsequent major development. Liaison groups will normally be related to major or controversial applications and provide a link between the community and local authorities, applicants and developers.

Public surgeries

The use of local premises as a drop in point for information and/or discussion may be appropriate for some major or controversial applications.

Public speaking at County Council committees

The County Council is considering introducing a scheme for the public to speak at committees, which would be piloted in the first instance. An opportunity could be provided for the public or appropriate parties to give presentations on issues of concern on applications when a County Council committee considers them. The general arrangements for public speaking at committee would be publicised on the website and in a leaflet detailing committee procedure on planning applications. These arrangements would include the time, the permissible arrangements, and general nature of public involvement in the committee meeting.

Planning Aid

The County Council will recommend and publicise the use of the Planning Aid organisation as an additional and independent help for people who want to be involved in the consideration of proposals and/or applications, with the particular aim of facilitating the involvement of hard to reach groups.

4.7 Table 2 shows the likely use of the above methods for each stage of the different types of planning application. These are elaborated in the section on feedback below.

4.8 For each application the County Council will consider the most appropriate methods, taking into account the nature of the proposal, which sections of the community are affected, what planning issues it raises, the extent to which it is likely to be controversial, and the resource costs of methods. The proposed methods will be checked against this table to assess whether the County Council was abiding by, and making reasonable judgements on, its SCI.

TABLE 2 - PLANNING APPLICATIONS

MAJOR AND/OR CONTROVERSIAL APPLICATIONS

Stage 1 : PRE-APPLICATION – Discussions by developers with the County Council and the community. At this stage developers will be encouraged to take the initiative in discussions with the community and the County Council would maintain a watching brief in such discussions.

- Leaflets and brochures
- Public exhibitions and roadshows
- Public meetings
- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups, discussion groups, stakeholder meetings
- Action planning exercises

Stage 2 : APPLICATION – Formal consultation by the County Council with statutory and other consultees and the general public. The County Council will encourage other information and consultation activities by applicants.

Applications available for inspection

Advertising applications
County Council website
Hotline
Formal written consultations
Public exhibitions and meetings
Focus and discussion groups and meetings
Liaison groups
Public surgeries
Planning Aid

Stage 3 : DECISION – Formal consideration and determination by a County Council committee or by an officer under delegated powers.

County Council website
Hotline
Formal written notification
Liaison groups
Public speaking at County Council committees

MINOR APPLICATIONS

Stage 1 : PRE-APPLICATION – Discussions by developers with the County Council and the community. At this stage developers will be encouraged to take the initiative in discussions with the community and the County Council would maintain a watching brief in any such discussions.

Public meetings
Face to face meetings
Action planning exercises

Stage 2 : APPLICATION – Formal consultation by the County Council with statutory and other consultees and consultation activities by applicants.

Applications available for inspection
Advertising applications
County Council website
Hotline
Formal written consultations
Planning Aid

Stage 3 : DECISION – Formal consideration and determination by a County Council committee or by an officer under delegated powers.

County Council website
Hotline
Formal written notification
Public speaking at County Council committee

Feedback

4.9 On matters related to proposals and applications, the County Council will provide feedback to individuals, organisations and the community generally in the following ways. These are in addition to, or an expansion of, the methods set out above and in Table 2.

- Progress on an application, including responses and representations by consultees and the public, reports to Committee, and decisions, will be available through the enhanced website service.
- Comments received on applications will not normally be acknowledged for resource reasons.
- All applications reported to the Planning and Highways Sub-Committee (or other committee) will be the subject of a report by the DTE. This will include a summary of the consultation responses and representations received and how they have been taken into account, an analysis of the issues raised by the application, and a recommendation to the committee by the DTE. Reports will be made public at least five working days prior to the committee meeting.
- Applications determined by DTE under the County Council's scheme of delegation ("delegated decisions") will also be the subject of a report by the DTE. These reports will be made available at the County Council's offices or on the website, together with the other documents related to an application.
- The County Council will notify by letter the decision on an application to all those people or community organisations which submitted comments. This will include a summary of the reasons for refusal or permission.
- Copies of the decision notice for an application will be sent to the relevant Borough/District Council and will be made available for inspection at County Hall, Lewes. This will include any legal agreement associated with a permission.
- The County Council will produce an annual report which will monitor the effectiveness of the methods of community involvement.

5 COMMUNITIES AND STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Communities

5.1 The County Council's main planning responsibilities are for minerals and waste policies, proposals and planning applications. Minerals and waste policies raise issues which are relevant to the whole population of East Sussex, for example, the level and methods of recycling of waste, and the extent of environmental restrictions on minerals developments. Therefore all sections and geographical areas of the population of East Sussex should have an opportunity to be involved in such decisions. Planning applications for minerals and waste and for the County Council's own development tend to be more site specific, although they sometimes raise more wide ranging issues, particularly for waste applications.

5.2 Therefore the County Council considers it important to both ensure that those with a previous and/or direct interest in minerals and waste matters have the opportunity to play a full part in the planning process, and also to extend the opportunity to be involved as widely as possible to the population of East Sussex.

Inclusive consultation

5.3 A key objective of the planning process, and one of the reasons for the production of this SCI, is to encourage more participation in planning by those sections of the community which, historically, have not done so. These so called 'hard to reach' groups have not been participating for a variety of reasons. Information may not have been provided through the networks they use, or in the wrong language or format. They may be living in relatively remote areas. It is easy to focus on particular groups of people who may be commonly thought of as minority groups or socially excluded groups, but, at best, this can only be a general indicator of where to try and encourage more participation. For each part of the County Council's planning process a more directed approach will be needed, using sources of local information and advice to ensure that participation is as inclusive as possible. This is elaborated in paragraph 5.9 below.

5.4 The population of East Sussex in the 2003 government mid year estimates was 496,100. The following analysis of the population is taken from the 2001 census.

Children: 0 – 15	18.6%
Working age: 16 – pensionable	55.6%
Retired: pensionable age and over	25.7%
Very elderly: aged 85 and over	3.5%
Ethnic groups	
East Sussex : Non-white	2.3%
England : Non-white	9.1%

5.5 In 2001 there were about 11,500 people in the non-white ethnic groups in East Sussex. Ten years previously non-white groups made up 1.3% of the population; about 6,100 people. Whilst East Sussex has a lower proportion of people in these groups than the national average, it is important to consider to what extent they are prevented or discouraged from being involved in planning.

5.6 The County Council has published an Equality of Opportunity and Diversity Statement and this provides the context for participation in the County Council's planning activities. It has also produced and updated an Equalities Scheme (currently the Equalities Scheme – revision 2005) which extends the County Council's duties under the Race Relations Act so that they promote equality for everyone living, working and visiting East Sussex. The means of implementing the Scheme includes the appointment of officers to oversee the County Council's activities both corporately and for individual functions. There is an officer in the Transport and Environment Department.

5.7 For both Local Development Documents and for planning applications legislation defines bodies and organisations that the County Council must consult and those that

it is advised to consider consulting. These are set out in Appendices 3 and 4 and the County Council will meet these requirements.

5.8 The list of consultees will be maintained and updated and made available on the County Council's website. The list has already been updated to take account of response from organisations to the initial informal scoping consultation on the SCI (see Appendix 1). The list forms the basis of a longer and more detailed list of bodies and organisations. This list will be taken to represent potential stakeholders in the County Council's planning activities at a point in time. It has been, and will continue to be maintained and updated by:

- advice and exchange of information with District/Borough Councils
- advice and exchange of information with other departments of the County Council
- experience from previous consultation exercises involving community and other organisations
- responses from consultees

To do this the County Council will consider providing a nominated officer within the Transport and Environment Department, to take responsibility for maintaining the list of planning consultees and liaising with other departments of the County Council.

5.9 For each stage of each Local Development Document the County Council will identify from the list of stakeholders those appropriate and willing to be approached. In addition it will consider whether there are hard to reach sections of the community which are likely to be unrepresented in the list for that stage of that document. In doing this it will take into account the need to ensure as broad access as possible. Those stakeholders or individuals who have responded on a document will automatically be informed of future stages of that document. For planning applications appropriate stakeholders will be identified where the methods of involvement require it (e.g. for liaison or discussion groups). In all cases the County Council will seek the advice of Borough/District Councils, other departments of the County Council, Town/Parish Councils, and other relevant local organisations, particularly to identify hard to reach groups within their areas.

Local Strategic Partnerships

5.10 There are strategic partnerships for the county of East Sussex and for the areas of its five constituent boroughs and districts; Lewes, Wealden, Eastbourne, Rother and Hastings. Information on the East Sussex Strategic Partnership, including a list of its members, is in Appendix 4. The County Council will use these strategic partnerships for advice on public involvement in its planning activities. The strategic partnerships have members of organisations from the public, voluntary and community sections of society. This will provide both a good overview of participation activities in the county, and a starting point for more detailed advice on inclusive consultation and other aspects of the participation process.

Community Strategy

5.11 The East Sussex Strategic Partnership has adopted and published a Community Strategy. The Strategy has priority areas targets for improving the quality of life in East Sussex. The targets are in the local Public Service Agreement (PSA) negotiated

with government. The progress on the Strategy and its targets are reviewed and published annually.

5.12 The PSA is between the County Council and the government thereby making a direct link between the County Council's functional responsibilities and its efforts, in cooperation with the other strategic partnerships, to improve the quality of life. The Community Strategy's priorities are all relevant to community involvement in planning:

- * building a prosperous local economy by: regenerating rural communities; tackling the problems of the most deprived communities; raising educational aspiration and achievement; and modernising communications (transport infrastructure and broadband)

- * improving support for older people

- * creating faster and easier joint access to services for all citizens

- * improving community safety

- * protecting and promoting the environment.

5.13 Among the specific targets in the Strategy, some of the most relevant to community involvement in planning are:

- * increasing the number of community help points

- * providing computers in local libraries (now established as the People's Network)

- * developing a plan for shared customer access

6 RESOURCES

6.1 The extent and nature of the community involvement in Local Development Documents and planning applications has been and will be influenced by the current staffing arrangements in the County Council. These will be kept under review.

6.2 Production of minerals and waste Local Development Documents are the responsibility of the Development, Minerals and Waste Group of the Transport & Environment Department. This Group also deals with all County Council planning applications. There is corporate responsibility for the County Council's overall consultation, engagement and participation activities with the population and organisations in the County.

6.3 The County Council operates a flexible management system for the allocation of staff to work areas and priorities. Whilst it is possible to adjust timetables and staffing to allow for peaks of work on Local Development Documents and on major planning applications, it is not possible to guarantee a particular level of resources for community involvement. For each Local Development Document and for planning applications, the County Council will determine this level of resources by taking into account:

- the appropriate and desirable community involvement as set out in this SCI,
- the staffing situation at the time (e.g. the level of vacancies and the budget for employing outside staff),
- other group and departmental work priorities,

- the extent to which timetables for Local Development Documents can, and should be arranged to allow the maximum possible resources for community involvement,
- the possible use of staff allocated to related or other areas of work within and outside the department
- the likely level of response from the community

7 REVIEW OF THE SCI

7.1 The County Council will monitor the implementation of the SCI. It will use feedback from stakeholders, community groups and others. The results will be used to update and review the methods of community involvement and other procedures. The County Council will consider using a questionnaire survey to seek formal views on the SCI. Adoption of the SCI is programmed for 2006 and the County Council intends to review it in 2007. To make best use of a review its exact timing will be related to progress on the Local Development Documents.

APPENDICES

- 1. Scoping consultation and response**
- 2. Types of planning application**
- 3. Consultees for Local Development Documents**
- 4. Members of the East Sussex Partnership**

APPENDIX 1 - SCOPING CONSULTATION AND RESPONSE

The County Council carried out an informal scoping consultation in August and September 2005. A questionnaire and accompanying explanatory notes was sent to 388 bodies and organisations. These included all East Sussex borough/district councils and town/parish councils; adjoining county, unitary, borough/district/town and parish councils; government departments and agencies, minerals and waste operators; and community, faith and disequality groups. Information on the scoping consultation was provided on the County Council's website.

A total of 111 individual responses were received; a return of around 30% of those sent out. The database was updated with new addresses and contacts for existing organisations. In addition 5 other organisations were recommended to be contacted by respondents. These were added to the consultation database or amended from current records.

The breakdown of responses received by sector was as follows (percentage figures are rounded):

<i>Sector Consulted</i>	<i>Number of responses Received</i>	<i>Percentage of responses returned by sector</i>	<i>Percentage share of total response.</i>
Major Businesses and Confederacies in East Sussex	7	15%	6%
Organised Faith Groups	4	19%	4%
Parish, Town, District and Bordering Councils	54	35%	49%
Local special interest groups and residents associations	7	37%	6%
Government, statutory and other national level organisations and bodies	9	29%	8%
Transport and utility firms, groups and operators	3	13%	3%

Groups representing Race Gender and Disequality both voluntary and professional	4	27%	4%
Minerals and Waste Operators and groups asking for specific consultation following the Waste Local Plan consultation	11	32%	10%
Other voluntary organisations	12	24%	11%

The main conclusions from the scoping consultation for the content of the draft SCI were:

- **The importance of the use of e-mail by a range of organisations.**

The request for increased consultation by e-mail was raised in the comments section of just under a fifth of representations. There was a high incidence of requests for e-mails to notify consultees of updates to Local Development Documents.

- **Increasing reliance on the use of the County Council's website for information.**

There was a significant trend toward use of the County Council's website for information gathering on planning matters, with more than 35% of respondents identifying this as a key resource. The preference for use of web resources was also identified as of primary importance for business, voluntary and special interest groups surveyed.

- **Race, gender and disequality groups considered involvement to be at best fringe to their activities and responsibilities**

Of those groups who were involved in this initial consultation, none of the respondents sought further information or involvement in the County Council's planning processes at this time. This is clearly an important field for further investigation, and it is hoped that through wider consultation at the draft SCI stage the needs of these types of groups will be further assessed.

- **The continuing importance of formal written consultation, especially by government bodies and agencies, and local authorities.**

Written consultations clearly still form a vital component of the County Council's interaction with public bodies, with around 95% of all councils and national statutory consultees reporting a preference for this form of communication and response.

- **Requests to be involved only in local matters by town/parish councils, and by some community groups**

The desire for selectively targeted information was shown particularly strongly in question seven, with around a quarter of respondents indicating in some way that whilst they seek to be consulted they would prefer to receive policy and application information tailored for their own locality.

A brief analysis of the questionnaire returns follows:

Question 1

Of the bodies and individuals consulted, only 8 of the 111 reported that they would *not* like to be kept informed and/or involved in the preparation of any Development Plan and/or Supplementary Planning Documents. The breakdown of positive responses was as follows: 86% ticked Waste Development Plan Documents, whilst a slightly lower response of 69% was recorded for Minerals Development Plan Documents and 75% of respondents indicated interest in Supplementary Planning Documents.

Whilst there was a predictably high response to question one from local authorities and government and other agencies, with more than 80% asking for information on all three forms of documentation, there was also strong interest from the business community. In regard to Waste Development Plan Documents, all respondents affirmed their interest in these matters.

Question 2

Question two sought to research the media through which respondents would prefer to receive information. The various methods suggested elicited different responses from the various sectors. Formal written consultations were, perhaps unsurprisingly, the most popular with government bodies and local councils; both of whom indicated this in over 95% of cases. Other responses were fairly evenly spread amongst all groups, although there was a significant trend of reliance on website updates and press advertising as information resources across all respondents, especially minerals and waste operators and special interest groups.

Responses to the questionnaire demonstrated limited interest in the use of staffed telephone hotlines, with only five responses, all from local councils indicating they would use such a service.

Question 3

Question three considered the ways in which individuals and bodies would like to participate in the preparation of plans and framework documents. The most popular method proved to be responding to consultation documents, with just over 70% of all completed forms recording this. However there was a high level of interest in focus groups and stakeholder meetings shown by both special interest organisations and the wider voluntary sector, who indicated that this was as important a method of involvement as commenting on received documents. In this survey none of the respondents indicated a preference for involvement with Planning Aid. This may be an area which requires further clarification and publicity since some comments seemed to suggest confusion as to what “Planning Aid” entails.

Question 4

Of the bodies and individuals consulted, 12 of the 111 reported that they would *not* like to be kept informed and/or involved in the preparation of any waste, minerals or county planning applications. The break down of positive responses was as follows: 73% ticked waste planning applications, whilst a slightly lower response of 63% was recorded for minerals planning applications and 68% of respondents indicated interest in planning applications for the County Council’s own service development.

Responses to this question were fairly even throughout each sector consulted, with no definite trends emerging in the types of development each group sought to be consulted on.

Question 5

As with question two, question five investigated the methods by which respondents would like to be kept informed of the progress of planning applications. The most popular method remains formal written consultation amongst councils and government bodies (80% of returns indicated this), although usage of the website is also an important factor, particularly for business, voluntary and special interest groups who ranked web use as equal with formal written measures for information gathering. Once again, the use of hotlines performed poorly with only a slight preference for these resources displayed by a small number of parish councils. Overall, hotlines were indicated as a useful form of information by only 3% of participants.

Question 6

Question six considered methods of involvement in planning applications. All respondents reported high levels of preference for responding to applications on deposit (69% of all questionnaires indicated this). Secondly, there was a significant preference for public exhibitions and meetings, especially from minerals and waste operators and businesses. Once again there was little indication of the use of Planning Aid.

Question 7 - Comments

There was a relative good response to the further comments section, especially for non-council and non-governmental groups. Around a fifth of these made the suggestion that there should be greater use of e-mail to alert groups to the development of new documents or major applications. A large number of responses from parish councils also called for information to be sent to them selectively and only when policy or applications were likely to affect their areas.

Question 8 - Identification of other groups

Around 2% of forms submitted included some discussion on the inclusion of other groups within the consultation. Although in all these cases the groups mentioned had already been approached by the County Council for this consultation, the question proved useful in obtaining more up-to-date contact information from local sources.

APPENDIX 2 – TYPES OF PLANNING APPLICATION

The Town & Country (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 defines the types of planning applications for the purposes of publicity and advertisement. These are:

Major applications

- The winning or working of minerals or the use of land for mineral working deposits;
- All waste developments, meaning any development designed to be used wholly or mainly for the purpose of treating, storing, processing or disposing of refuse or waste materials;
- applications accompanied by environmental statements;
- departures from the development plan;
- the erection of ten or more dwellings, or, if this is not known, where the site area is 0.5 hectares or more;
- in other cases, where the floorspace to be created is one thousand square metres or more, or the site area is one hectare or more;

Minor applications

- all other proposals

‘Controversial’ applications

Local authorities are asked to consider whether any development falling outside the “major” category is likely to create a wider concern, and may therefore warrant a newspaper advertisement in addition to a site notice or neighbour notification. Such ‘controversial’ developments are likely to be those which:

- affect nearby property causing noise, smell, vibration, dust or other nuisance
- attract crowds, traffic and noise into a generally quiet area
- cause activity and noise during unsocial hours
- introduce significant change, for example particularly tall buildings
- result in serious reduction or loss of light or privacy beyond adjacent properties.

The County Council will continue to both place site notices and notify neighbours for all applications. For ‘controversial’ applications the County Council considers that this is a better way of publicising them than advertising in a newspaper.

APPENDIX 3 – CONSULTEES FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS

When preparing Minerals and Waste Development Documents the County Council:

- (a) must consult each of the specific consultation bodies to the extent that the Council thinks that the proposed subject matter of the Development Plan Document affects the body;
- (b) should consult the Government Office for the South East and any Government Departments or agencies where those departments or agencies have large land holdings in the area;
- (c) must consult such of the general consultation bodies as the Council considers appropriate; and
- (d) should consider the need to consult a list of other agencies and organisations (the other consultees).

Set out below are the lists of these consultation bodies which the County Council must use in meeting the requirements in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. A more detailed list of named organisations will be maintained and updated by the County Council. These lists will provide the basis for consultation at the different stages of Local Development Documents.

Specific Consultation Bodies

The Countryside Agency
English Nature
The Environment Agency
Highways Agency
The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage)
The South East England Regional Assembly
The South East England Development Agency
The Strategic Rail Authority
Surrey and Sussex Strategic Health Authority
Borough, District, Town and Parish Councils within East Sussex
Unitary, County, Borough, District, Town and Parish Councils adjoining East Sussex
Any person to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under Section 106 (3) (a) of the Communications Act 2003
Any person who owns or controls electronic communication apparatus situated in East Sussex
Any person to whom a licence has been granted under Section 7 (2) of the Gas Act 1986
Sewage Undertakers
Water Undertakers

Government Departments

Government Office for the South East
Home Office

Department for Education and Skills (through Government Office)
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Department for Transport (through Government Office)
Department of Health (through Regional Public Health Group)
Department of Trade and Industry (through Government Office)
Ministry of Defence
Department of Work and Pensions
Department of Constitutional Affairs
Department for Media, Culture and Sport
Office of Government Commerce (property advisers to the Civil Estate)
The Countryside Agency

General Consultation Bodies

Voluntary bodies, some or all of whose activities benefit any part of East Sussex
Bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in East Sussex
Bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in East Sussex
Bodies which represent the interests of different disabled persons in East Sussex
Bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in East Sussex

Other Consultees

Age Concern
Airport Operators
British Chemical Distributors and Traders Association
British Geological Survey
British Waterways, canal owners and navigation authorities
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Chambers of Commerce, Local CBI and local branches of Institute of Directors
Church Commissioners
Civil Aviation Authority
Coal Authority
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
Commission for New Towns and English Partnerships
Commission for Racial Equality
Crown Estate Office
Diocesan Board of Finance
Disability Rights Commission
Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee
Electricity, Gas, and Telecommunications Undertakers, and the National Grid Company
Environmental groups at national, regional and local level, including Council for the Protection of Rural England, Friends of the Earth, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and Wildlife Trusts
Equal Opportunities Commission
Fire and Rescue Services
Forestry Commission
Freight Transport Association

Gypsy Council
Health and Safety Executive
Help the Aged
Housing Corporation
Learning and Skills Councils
Local Agenda 21 including Civic Societies, Community Groups, Local Transport Authorities, and Local Race Equality Councils and other local equality groups
National Playing Fields Association
Network Rail
Passenger Transport Authorities
Passenger Transport Executives
Police Architectural Liaison Officers/Crime Prevention Design Advisors
Port Operators
Post Office Property Holdings
Rail Companies and the Rail Freight Group
Regional Development Agencies
Regional Housing Boards
Regional Sports Boards
Road Haulage Association
Sport England
The House Builders Federation
Transport for London
Traveller Law Reform Coalition
Water Companies
Women's National Commission

APPENDIX 4 – MEMBERS OF THE EAST SUSSEX STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The East Sussex Partnership has twenty partner organisations representing local councils, health, police and fire, business, community and voluntary and other interests. The members of the partnership are:

Action in Rural Sussex

Bexhill & Rother Primary Care Trust

Churches Together in Sussex

Eastbourne Borough Council

Eastbourne Association of Voluntary Services

East Sussex County Council

East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust

East Sussex Economic Partnership

East Sussex Fire Brigade

Federation of Small Businesses

Hastings Borough Council

Hastings Voluntary Action

Lewes District Council

Rother District Council

Sussex Association of Local Councils

Sussex Enterprise

Sussex Learning and Skills Council

Sussex Police Authority

Sussex Police

Wealden District Council