



PLANNING for our FUTURE

Draft Statement of
Community Involvement



Stafford
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Draft Statement of Community Involvement

Contents

Section	Title	Page
1	What does the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) do?	1
2	Statement of Community Involvement - Vision	2
3	Criteria for a sound Statement of Community Involvement	2
4	Compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement	4
5	Relationship between the LDF and the Stafford Borough Community Plan	4
6	Community Groups in Stafford Borough	5
7	Role of Members in the engagement process	6
8	Communication with Stafford Borough's local community	6
9	Equality and Opportunity in Participation	8
10	Consultation Feedback 'Tests' and Performance Indicators	8
11	Links between the LDF and other Council Services	9
12	How to use the Statement of Community Involvement	9
13	Statement of Community Involvement - LDF Implications	10
14	Statement of Community Involvement - Significant and Fast Track Planning Application Implications	13
15	Techniques for publicising Significant and Fast-Track Planning Applications	16
16	Guides to making Representations on Significant and Fast Track Planning Applications	17
17	Continuous Community Involvement (Community Capacity Building)	18
18	Further Information	19

Draft Statement of Community Involvement

1.0 What does the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) do?

- 1.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out Stafford Borough Council's commitment to engaging with the local community in Stafford Borough (see Appendix) in preparing a Local Development Framework (LDF) and for publicising and inviting comments on Significant Planning Applications (see section 14 on page 13).
- 1.2. It gives clarity and certainty to the general public and key stakeholders as to how they can get involved at each stage of the plan-making process and in determining significant planning applications, in a similar way to that of a Customer Charter. Further information regarding terminology and stages of the plan-making process are set out in Appendices 2-3.
- 1.3. The aim of this Statement of Community Involvement is to ensure, as far as possible, that all sections of the community and other interested parties have at least a reasonable opportunity to engage with the plan-making process, in determining significant planning applications, and are not precluded from taking part in the process should they wish to do so.
- 1.4. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the standards that Stafford Borough Council intends to achieve in relation to involving the community in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all development plan-making and significant planning application decisions. A list of documents that will be open to consultation is included below, the timing of which is set out in the Local Development Scheme.

Type Document being consulted on	Abbreviated Term
Development Plan Documents (5 types include: Core Strategy, Policy based DPDs', Site specific DPDs', Jointly prepared DPDs' and Area Action Plans)	DPD
Area Action Plans (whether DPD or SPD)	AAP
Supplementary Planning Document	SPD
Significant Planning Applications Tier 1 (Major)	Tier 1
Significant Planning Applications Tier 2 (Major)	Tier 2
Significant Planning Applications Tier 3	Tier 3
Significant Planning Applications Fast Track	FT

1.5. This Statement of Community Involvement performs several roles. It:

- Explains to stakeholders and the community, how and at what stage in the Local Development Framework process they will be involved in the preparation of Local Development Documents (LDDs) and in the process of determining significant planning applications.
- Describes how the Council intends to achieve certain standards and facilitate this involvement, detailing the methods used to enable people to contribute to the process of preparing the LDDs and in the process of determining significant planning applications. It will set out how the approaches to consultation may vary in relation to different topics, different types of LDDs or at different stages in the LDD preparation process, and sets out techniques for significant planning applications.
- States which bodies or types of bodies, both statutory and non-statutory, will be involved at different stages of Local Development Document (LDD) preparation and in respect to different types of LDD, and for major planning applications.
- Includes reference to long-term community capacity building exercises to improve representation and the balance of involvement between the Council and the community.

1.6. This Statement of Community Involvement is part of Stafford Borough Council's step change from community consultation to community involvement. The table in Appendix 4 outlines an Audit of Consultation Techniques used to implement this step change.

2.0 Statement of Community Involvement - Vision

2.1. This Statement of Community Involvement shares the vision set out in the Development Control Customer Service Charter, this vision being:

'To provide an excellent service which –

contributes to a positive future for Stafford Borough by enhancing and maintaining the economic and environmental health of the Borough, enables the provision of appropriate and sustainable facilities for living, working and leisure and prevents inappropriate development, takes account of all appropriate views and policies, and arrives at decisions using an open and transparent process'.

3.0 Criteria for a sound Statement of Community Involvement

3.1. The Government has prepared a set of criteria for 'testing the soundness' of Statements of Community Involvement that are prepared by local authorities to ensure all communities have an equal opportunity to get involved in the new planning system. These criteria are defined in the Government's Consultation Draft document 'Local Development Frameworks, A Guide to Procedures and

Code of Practice' (paragraph B13). These 'tests of soundness' will be used to examine the Statement of Community Involvement.

3.2. The Secretary of State will appoint an independent Planning Inspector to hold an Examination into the proposed SCI. During this Examination the Inspector will consider the Council's SCI against the following 'tests of soundness'. If the Inspector deems that the Statement of Community Involvement does not fully meet the tests changes may be required.

3.3. The test criteria are as follows;

- Show that the Council is meeting its legal requirements;
- Set out the Council's overall Vision and Strategy for Community Involvement and its links with other community involvement initiatives e.g. The Community Plan;
- Identify in general terms which local community groups and other bodies that need to be consulted;
- Show an understanding as to how local people, community groups and other bodies can be involved in a timely and accessible manner;
- Show that the methods or purposes of consultation to be used to involve people, community groups and other bodies are suitable for different stages in the preparation of the Council's Local Development Documents and for the key target Consultee Groups within the community;
- Show that the Council can resource and manage the process effectively, including Member and Officer Roles;
- Show how the results of community involvement are to be fed into the preparation of Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents;
- Set out the mechanisms for reviewing the procedures in the Statement of Community Involvement to learn from experience and to retain the ability to implement continuous improvement measures;
- Set out the policy for consultation on significant planning applications.

3.4. Furthermore Stafford Borough Council has compiled the Draft Statement of Community Involvement to comply with the standards for community involvement set out in the legislation and guidance material detailed in Appendix 5.

4.0 *Compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement*

- 4.1. Local Planning Authorities have a statutory requirement to comply with their Statement of Community Involvement when preparing any Local Development Document (LDD).
- 4.2. A Statement of Compliance with the SCI will need to be submitted alongside the formal submission of Development Plan Documents (planning policy documents replacing former Local Plan policies) for Examination. This Statement of Compliance will set out, in detail, exactly how the Authority has met the requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement (see Appendix 6 to see a proforma for such a Statement).
- 4.3. If there has been a fundamental failure to comply with the SCI or the Regulations in a way that undermines the soundness of a policy or proposal, the Inspector will be able to recommend the Development Plan Document (DPD) be withdrawn.
- 4.4. Significant Planning Applications will also need to be accompanied by a completed Statement of Compliance. Pre-application community consultation undertaken by an external body (e.g. by a planning applicant) will need to comply with the requirements in Stafford Borough's Statement of Community Involvement (see Appendix 6 to see a proforma for such a Statement).

5.0 *Relationship between the LDF and Stafford Borough Community Plan*

Stafford Borough Community Plan 2003-2006

- 5.1. Within Stafford Borough many bodies and organisations provide a range of services and activities needed to maintain and improve quality of life. There is a requirement under the Local Government Act 2000 to prepare a Community Plan for Stafford Borough to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being and contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development.
- 5.2. The Stafford Borough Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), known as the Stafford Partnership, was formed in September 2001 and includes over 300 key organisations from the public, private, voluntary, community and environmental sectors in Stafford Borough. This Partnership identified present and future needs of the community and agreed appropriate action needed in order to meet these needs. The Stafford Borough Community Plan 2003-2006 is the resulting framework that outlines various aims and objectives for the development of the community, identifies a number of projects to be undertaken during the life of the plan until 2006, and sets out how the Partners will work with other organisations to improve quality of life.

5.3. The vision of the Community Plan is:

'to create a Borough in which people and organizations can face the 21st Century with confidence, a place that is prosperous with a community that cares'.

6.0 Community Groups in Stafford Borough

6.1. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) has identified 14 types of community group categories under which a database of contacts is maintained. In order to strengthen and reinforce the links between the LSP and the plan-making mechanisms of consultation, it is prudent to take the same categories on board for the Local Development Framework. Consultation and community involvement will therefore take place with the community group categories listed below at the appropriate stage during the preparation of Local Development Documents and consultation for significant planning applications.

6.2. COMMUNITY GROUP CATEGORIES

- Stafford Governance Partnership
- Elected Representatives and Borough Council Officers
- Public/Private Agencies (General)
- Press and Media
- Community Safety Partnership (including tenant and resident groups)
- Public Transport and Utilities
- Business and Council Sector
- Private Businesses
- Housing Associations
- Churches and other Religious Groups
- Environmental Groups
- Schools
- Parish Councils
- Hard to Reach Groups

6.3. In addition to these groups Stafford Borough Council also engages with various key stakeholders and other sectors of the community, recorded on the LDF Consultee databases, including the following;

- Stafford Borough residents with an interest in the plan-making process
- Landowners
- Planning consultants, agents and developers
- Statutory organisations
- Community Groups

6.4. For Development Control purposes a list of Standard consultees, including consultees from within Stafford Borough Council and external bodies and organisations, will be used to publicise and invite comments / representations on proposals comprising Significant Planning Applications. This list has been attached as Appendix 7.

7.0 *Role of Members in the engagement process*

- 7.1. Members of Stafford Borough Council (i.e. Councillors) will have their community leadership roles enhanced by the launch of this new Statement of Community Involvement and will serve as automatically appointed 'Ambassadors of the Stafford Borough SCI'.
- 7.2. Ambassadors will have a specific role in acting as key community leaders for their local areas, assisting in keeping the local community up-to-date, co-ordinating and enabling the community to engage as effectively as possible in the LDF process. This will reinforce ongoing community liaison and promote the status of Members within the local community, to act as prominent key stakeholders to strengthen community links between policy formulation and the community.

8.0 *Communication with Stafford Borough's local community*

- 8.1. Stafford Borough has a resident population of approximately 120,000 people covering an area of approximately 230 square miles, as shown in Appendix 1.
- 8.2. Census data recorded at 2001 provides a baseline of information about the local Stafford Borough community. It is vital that the Statement of Community Involvement addresses the requirements and needs of the area's local population in order to successfully engage with the community in a meaningful way.
- 8.3. Stafford Borough's population has a large white ethnic majority within its total population of 120,653, most of whom are of Christian religion. Stafford Borough is home to approximately 721 residents who consider their ethnic origin to be Indian and over 500 Muslim residents. Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist religions are also recognised by the Census 2001.
- 8.4. These latter residents are recognised as being within minority ethnic groups whom comprise a hard to reach sector of the community. Extra effort will be made to include these residents within the participatory process. Extra resources may be required to ensure that residents of ethnic or religious minority are given at least a reasonable opportunity to engage within the plan-making process, and are not precluded from taking part in the process should they wish to do so.
- 8.5. This approach will promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups. Stafford Borough Council will prepare a Race Equality Impact Assessment for each Strategy and Plan, including the Local Development Framework. The following section on 'Equality and Opportunity in Participation' provides the standards used in monitoring fairness and equality within this Statement of Community Involvement.

- 8.6. Stafford Borough has a transient student population that reside near Staffordshire University during the academic year. These students also comprise part of the Borough's hard to reach group as it is difficult to establish links with people who may have no fixed permanent address in the area. Measures to involve hard to reach groups will include the student population. Young people are also specifically identified as a hard to reach group for participation within Stafford Borough's wider population.
- 8.7. About 19% of households do not own a car, and nearly 8% of households are occupied by lone parents (of a total of circa 50,025 households). These statistics alone may be indicators of barriers to participation, with no convenient access to public meetings, forums etc. and a lack of suitable childcare arrangements preventing some residents from actively participating in the plan-making process.
- 8.8. Communication between Stafford Borough Council and the wider community can be harnessed through the established links that have developed between Council departments and various recognised community groups. Examples include links between Stafford Borough's Tenant Participation Officer and the Recognised Tenant's Associations, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and community group representatives. Where this is set up as an established mechanism in the Council, the Forward Planning team will use this service as appropriate.
- 8.9. However, simple mechanisms and techniques are adequate tools for encouraging the community to take a more active role within the planning system, although sometimes a greater steer from key community leaders is required to manage the exchange and flow of information.

<i>Hard to Reach Groups</i>	<i>Mechanisms for Seeking Engagement</i>
<i>Young People</i>	<i>Citizenship and Planning in Schools lessons, Member of the Youth Parliament for South Staffordshire (UK Youth Parliament Representatives)</i>
<i>Transient population e.g. new residents, students, commuters</i>	<i>Articles in Stafford Borough Council publications, website</i>
<i>Ethnic minority groups</i>	<i>Contact with existing groups via Local Strategic Partnership links</i>
<i>Disabled people</i>	<i>Local Strategic Partnership links to Stafford District Access Group</i>
<i>Lone parents</i>	<i>Appropriate timing and venues for events, to maximise engagement</i>

9.0 Equality and Opportunity in Participation

9.1. Stafford Borough Council seeks to be an equal opportunity service provider and employer and is committed to providing equal opportunity to all, and to opposing and preventing discrimination. The following Statement was adopted by Stafford Borough Council in July 2003.

Statement of Commitment to Equality;

9.2. *'This Authority is committed;*

- *In service delivery and the development and use of employment procedures and practices not to discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, or other non-objective reason such as economic status,*
- *To promote equality of opportunity,*
- *To promote good race relations,*
- *Recognising and challenging institutional racism and any other forms of discrimination'.*

9.3. This Statement of Community Involvement is fully compliant with the following key policies and Management Plans relevant to the preparation of fair Plans and Policies:

- Stafford Borough Council's Equality Policy (July 2003),
- Stafford Borough Council's Race Equality Scheme (July 2003),
- A matrix for 'Assessing functions relevant to the General Duty' prepared in order to comprise a Racial Equality Impact Assessment (July 2003),
- Forward Planning Service Management Plan (Sept 2003).

9.4 The SCI Statement of Compliance (proformas of which are contained in Appendix 6) cover the basic requirements for addressing equality in community engagement and these must be met in full, with evidence submitted where relevant.

10.0 Consultation Feedback 'Tests' and Performance Indicators

10.1. Performance indicators will be used to measure the effectiveness of Stafford Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement and the degree to which the community has had the opportunity to influence the scope and form of each plan-making stage, and Significant Planning Applications.

10.2. The following performance indicators will be measured:

- Number of people participating in consultation
- Number of people logging onto website
- Number of people commenting online
- Ratio between survey coverage and returned questionnaires

- Breakdown analysis of whether respondents are representative of Stafford Borough's resident community
- Number of Ambassadors engaging with community on LDF related issues
- Comparison with past annual trends (Annual Monitoring Report)
- Qualitative feedback analysis (tick boxes of issues raised that comprise implementable and realistic suggestions)

10.3. These indicators will be used in any review of the SCI and where it is identified that there has been a particularly low level of community participation the review process will try to address these matters. There will be a constant drive to improve levels of participation from all sections in the community, focussing on those community groups or consultation areas that have experienced poor performance levels in the past.

11.0 *Links between the LDF and other Council Services*

11.1. There is a relationships diagram in Appendix 8 that illustrates the inter-relationships between the Local Development Framework (including this Statement of Community Involvement) and other Stafford Borough Council services and mechanisms for consultation.

11.2. Established consultation mechanisms used by Stafford Borough Council for engaging with the Community are set out in Appendix 9. In order to make efficient use of resources, these existing mechanisms will be utilised in joint collaboration with other sections of the Council to implement parts of this Statement of Community Involvement. Appendix 10 identifies a list of Stafford Borough Council's publications that will be considered to publicise stages of consultation for the Local Development Framework.

11.3. The Forward Planning team will work closely with the Consultation Officer in the Policy & Improvement Team and the Tenant Participation Officer within Stafford Borough Council. Through these key links, and other opportunities, the Forward Planning team will seek to identify opportunities for joined-up approaches to community involvement with other Services, how timing of consultation can be co-ordinated and resources made available to deliver. It is anticipated that the greater the level of collaboration, the less resource intensive the consultation and involvement process will be to facilitate.

12.0 *How to use the Statement of Community Involvement*

12.1. Appendix 11 sets out the individual types of Local Development Documents (LDDs), the different stages for preparing these LDDs, who is being involved and how. The level of involvement and number of techniques deployed reflects the type of LDD being prepared. As a general rule more techniques will be used for specific sites or area LDDs because the direct implications for the local community in that area are more obvious.

- 12.2. At certain stages key sectors of the community will be specifically targeted for their contribution to the plan-making process. However this does not exclude the wider community from participating. This approach is an acknowledgement that at certain stages of the plan-making process additional resources need to focus on engaging with these groups within the local community more specifically so as to ensure that they are not unreasonably excluded from participating in the process e.g. outreach visits to local schools to inform and encourage young people to take active roles in participation.
- 12.3. This Statement of Community Involvement is not a timetable of when each plan-making stage will take place, nor is it intended to be. The timetable of plan-making is set out in a sister document, the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

13.0 Statement of Community Involvement - LDF Implications

13.1. The Local Development Framework contains a number of individual Local Development Documents (LDDs). There are different types of Local Development Documents:

- Development Plan Documents - contain planning policy and are statutorily tested through an independent Examination process
- Supplementary Planning Documents - non-statutory untested documents
- Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

13.2. There are five different types of Development Plan Documents (DPD), as listed below:

- Core Strategy DPD
- Policy based DPD
- Site Specific DPD
- Area Action Plan DPD
- Jointly prepared DPD

13.3. Appendix 11 identifies for each type of Local Development Document what techniques are proposed for each particular stage of preparing through to adopting these documents. For the purposes of consultation the Statement of Community Involvement will be treated as if it were a policy-based Development Plan Document. A brief introduction and explanation about the broad consultation and community involvement focus for these Local Development Documents is set out below.

Core Strategy DPD

13.4. The Core Strategy Development Plan Document sets out the Vision, Sustainable Development Statement, Objectives and Strategy for the spatial development of the area.

13.5. As this Development Plan Document is strategic, setting out broad principles for development, a comprehensive and inclusive community involvement approach will be adopted, with particular engagement targeted at the Local Strategic Partnership for the Stafford Borough area. As there are no specific sites or areas involved, this document identifies the main thrust of policy and it is appropriate to engage with the whole community, covering as wide an area as possible.

Policy Based DPDs'

13.6. Policy Based Development Plan Documents provide planning policies for specific topics such as the historic environment, Green Belt, natural environment and economic development.

13.7. As these Development Plan Documents deal with particular policy areas it is important that key stakeholders and groups in the community with a specific interest in these topics are targeted and engaged in the preparation of relevant policy documents. Therefore, as well as a comprehensive and inclusive community involvement approach it is important that targeted consultation techniques are deployed in order to raise awareness with the specific community groups concerned. For example, Civic Society groups will be approached when the Historic Environment Development Plan Document is being consulted upon and Environmental groups engaged during the consultation process for the Natural Environment Development Plan Document.

13.8. It is anticipated that a number of Policy Based Development Plan Documents will include policies which have boundary implications for settlements within the Borough area. Therefore as well as a comprehensive and inclusive community involvement approach for these types of documents, local community representatives such as Parish Councils and village committees will be specifically targeted for their views.

Site Specific DPDs'

13.9. Site Specific Development Plan Documents identify the sites allocated for employment, residential and other types of development to satisfy the provision and strategic policies set out in the Core Strategy Development Plan Document.

13.10. As these Development Plan Documents identify specific areas of land for future development it is important that the local community is made aware of these areas. Therefore in addition to comprehensive and inclusive community involvement approach, it is important that targeted consultation techniques are deployed in order to raise awareness with the specific local communities in the vicinity of the proposed development sites.

Area Action Plan DPDs'

- 13.11. Area Action Plan Development Plan Documents identify areas of change or conservation in a particular local area as well as identifying proposed development sites for different types of future use.
- 13.12. As these Development Plan Documents identify specific areas of land and particular boundaries it is important that the local community and interest groups within these locations are made aware of the Development Plan Documents. Therefore as well as a comprehensive and inclusive community involvement approach it is important that targeted consultation techniques are deployed in order to raise awareness with the specific local communities in the vicinity of the proposed Area Action Plans to achieve a high level of participation and input for the local area.

Jointly Prepared DPDs'

- 13.13. Jointly prepared Development Plan Document could be prepared by a number of local planning authorities to provide policy guidance on issues across administrative boundaries, and may be either policy based or site specific.
- 13.14. Therefore as well as a comprehensive and inclusive community involvement approach for each local planning authority's stakeholder and general consultee's base it is important that targeted consultation techniques are deployed in order to raise awareness with the specific local communities or interest groups relevant to the topic area being considered. For example a jointly prepared Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Development Plan Document should engage with groups such as Friends of Cannock Chase AONB, principal landowners in the area, Parish Councils and local environmental groups.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs')

- 13.15. Supplementary Planning Documents will be subject to the same level of consultation and involvement as the Core Strategy Development Plan Document, unless they contain site or area specific proposals/policies.
- 13.16. Where DPD's contain site or area specific proposals/policies, consultation will target the local community in a similar way to Site Specific DPDs' or Area Action Plan consultations. Generally Supplementary Planning Documents will be targeted at identified interest groups for the particular topics covered in the material.

14.0 Statement of Community Involvement - Significant Planning Applications

- 14.1. Significant Planning Applications fall into 3 categories (Tiers 1-3) for the purposes of community involvement. The Government has set a target deadline of determining Major Planning Applications (Tiers 1-2) within 13 weeks, which Stafford Borough Council will seek to achieve. In addition to these 3 Tiers, Significant Planning Applications can also be determined under a system of 'Fast-Track'. The definitions for Major Planning Applications are set out below, with further information in Appendix 12.
- 14.2. We will operate a Fast-Track system for those industrial and commercial applications which we consider important in terms of the contribution the proposed development could make to the prosperity of the Borough. A more proactive approach will be taken with these few applications to ensure a decision is reached as quickly as possible within the timescales to remove some of the uncertainty that can exist during the application process.
- 14.3. Where a planning application falls into one or more categories, public engagement will need to comply with the highest level and most comprehensive criteria for public involvement.

Definitions and criteria of Types of Significant Planning Application
Tier 1 – Major Planning Applications
<p>1. Planning applications constituting a departure from the Development Plan, as defined in Circular 07/99, and Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) (Departures) Directions 1999. See Appendix 12.</p> <p>2. Schedule 1 Developments as defined in the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(England and Wales) Regulations 1999). See Appendix 12.</p> <p>For example, it includes schemes such as waste disposal facilities, aggregates extraction (quarrying), and major developments, especially major industrial developments.</p> <p>3. Development Proposals subject to the Town and Country Planning (Shopping Development) (England and Wales) Direction, (Annex D of PPG6 and substituted by Circular 15/93). See Appendix 12.</p> <p>Includes proposals over 20,000 sq. m of gross shopping floorspace.</p>

Definitions and criteria of Types of Significant Planning Application

Tier 2 – Major Planning Applications

1. Schedule 2 Developments as defined in the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(England and Wales) Regulations 1999). See Appendix 12.

Includes developments likely to have a significant effect on the environment by virtue of their nature, size and location, but less significant than those under Schedule 1.

2. Development proposals which fall within the Town and Country Planning (Residential Development on Greenfield Land) (England) Direction 2000. See Appendix 12.

Includes proposals for 150 or more homes, or residential sites over 5 hectares, on Greenfield land.

3. Development proposed on playing fields as set out in the Town & Country Planning (Playing Fields) (England) Direction 1998. See Appendix 12.

Proposals for local authority owned playing fields, or one used by an educational institution, as specified.

4. Development proposals that require a full Transport Assessment. This includes proposals that are considered likely to have significant transport implications, reflecting the scale of development.

Definitions and criteria of Types of Significant Planning Application
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Tier 3 – Significant Planning Applications

The significance of the following types of application is likely to be determined on a 'site by site' basis at a local level.

- 1) Development proposals which fall into any of the categories below, as determined by Stafford Borough Council;
 - A) Fall marginally below the thresholds of Tiers 1 and 2,
 - B) require an element of affordable housing,
 - C) require any developer contributions,
- 2) Development proposals that are for sites 'sensitive' to development pressures, such as;
 - A) near a Listed Building,
 - B) demolition in a Conservation Area,
 - C) loss of allotment land,
 - D) loss of employment land for housing,
 - E) development on windfall sites.
- 3) Other sites as determined by Stafford Borough Council for specific proposals for non-conforming change or development in an area.

Definitions and criteria of Types of Significant Planning Application
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Fast Track Applications

Development proposals that falls under any of the categories below:

- 1) New buildings and extensions to buildings of 4,500 sq. m and above,
- 2) creating 30 jobs or more,
- 3) high tech companies (e.g. IT)
- 4) within local clusters, (e.g. IT, logistics)
- 5) within a high growth cluster,
- 6) Creating less than 30 jobs but otherwise significant employer, e.g. satellite office of large overseas company seeking to locate or relocate in Stafford Borough, including proposals with potential for promoting regeneration sites,
- 7) Other business development proposals considered important by virtue of their employment generation, whether direct or indirect.

Planning Applications of Special Interest
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Term used on the planning web page
<http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/planning> (on-line Public Access web site link)
that includes all current planning applications going to Development Control Committee and current Fast-Track (FT) Applications.

15.0 Techniques for publicising Significant and Fast-Track Planning Applications

15.1. Each type of Significant Planning Application will be subject to public involvement as set out in the tables in Appendix 13. Evidence of this will be included as part of the SCI Statement of Compliance (Appendix 6) to be submitted with each Significant Planning Application. More detailed information on the consultation techniques referred to in Appendix 13 are set out:

Media

15.2. **Press releases** will be issued for every Major Development Application (Tiers 1 and 2). Where Press releases are sent out Stafford Borough Council cannot guarantee their publication, as the press, i.e. local newspaper publishers, will retain their Editorial rights to select information for publication. Press releases on Major Planning Applications will be sent to the local media organisations.

15.3. A **Public Notice** will be published in a local newspaper for every Major Development Application (Tiers 1 and 2). Stafford Borough Council currently uses the Staffordshire Newsletter (published on a Thursday) for this purpose.

Site Notice

15.4. Once a Significant Planning Application has been validated Stafford Borough Council will display a site notice within the immediate vicinity of the application site for a period of 21 days. The aim is to put this up between 3-10 days.

Internet / Website

15.5. The details of Significant and Fast Track Planning Applications are publicised on the Stafford Borough Council planning web page until the end of the consultation period, through the on-line Planning Public Access web site link. These planning applications termed 'Special Interest' Applications include both Significant Planning Applications and Fast-Track (FT) Applications. Comments may be submitted 'on-line' via the site before the consultation end date.

Community Interest Consultees

15.6. Community groups will be able to sign up for inclusion on a database recognising their interest in Major Planning Applications per ward(s). These groups would be consulted in the same way as statutory consultees, should it be considered that the proposal is relevant either to their specialist interest or the specific local area.

Pre-application Discussions and Front Loading the Process

- 15.7. There is an emphasis on front-loading the determination of planning applications. Front loading means involving the community and stakeholders at an early stage, in advance of formal submission, with the aim of building in a degree of support or consensus for the proposal, or at least addressing controversial aspects before the planning is submitted.
- 15.8. It is at the pre-application stage of the planning process that local people can have the most effect in influencing development proposals and feel engaged in the process.

Parish Councils

- 15.9. Parish Councils will be invited to assist in making information with regard to Major Planning Applications available for viewing by the general public.
- 15.10. It is hoped that an increased number of local residents will become engaged in the planning process as opportunity is increased. Local people, especially residents who commute out to work and whom may be unavailable during the day, or less mobile members of the community, will be able to access information and view the planning application within their own locality at a time suitable to them, should the Parish Council enable that facility.

Statement of Community Involvement Ambassadors

- 15.11. SCI Ambassadors are ideally placed to engage with their local communities and listen to residents and businesses about any concerns they have about Major Planning Applications, or even before any planning application is submitted.
- 15.12. It is suggested that a suitable and accessible time for the general public to view plans for Major Planning Applications Tiers 1 and 2 may be Councillor Surgeries. This opportunity could, subject to time and venue, provide a unique community engagement role and enable the Ambassadors to gauge local public opinion with regard to Tiers 1 and 2 Major Planning Applications, prior to any decision that is made.

16.0 *Guides to making Representations on Significant Planning Applications*

- 16.1. A guide with helpful hints on how to make representations in an effective way is available from the Planning & Engineering Department reception at the Civic Offices, Stafford or on the website <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/planning>. It is called 'Important Information for Planning Applicants' in the Development Control Service Charter. Alternatively you can ring the Planning Support Team on (01785) 619337 for a copy.

16.2. Stafford Borough Council Development Control Service Customer Charter outlines standards of customer service that the public can expect to receive.

17.0 *Continuous Community Involvement (Community Capacity Building)*

West Midlands Planning Aid Service

- 17.1. Stafford Borough Council Planning Services will encourage and support the community capacity work undertaken by West Midlands Planning Aid Service especially where Stafford Borough's recognised community groups are promoted and supported in their involvement, or new / minority groups are established in the Borough.
- 17.2. For further information contact the Community Capacity Building (CCB) team. Malcolm Reid MRTPI can be contacted direct at the offices of the West Midlands Planning Aid Service;

West Midlands Planning Aid Service;

Unit 319,
The Custard Factory
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Citizenship Lessons in Stafford Borough Schools

- 17.3. A pilot study has been undertaken as a partnership between the Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council Quality Learning Services funded by the Staffordshire Partnership.
- 17.4. Representatives from the partnership including two teachers representing Rising Brook High School and Blessed William Howard RC (A) High School, both in Stafford, were seconded to work on the project and together formed a project steering group.
- 17.5. A module of freestanding lessons was prepared to meet the National Curriculum requirements of Key Stage 3 for the subject of Citizenship. These lessons focus on the role of town planning and examples of decision-making at the local authority level. The lessons have been prepared in order to encourage teachers across Stafford Borough to be able to teach young people about the role and work of the local planning authority and the opportunities open to them to take an active part in local decision-making and reinforcing civic pride in the built environment.

- 17.6. These lessons support ongoing community links with local schools and are available to download free from Stafford Borough Council's website, although visits and support will only be offered to schools within the Borough at no cost.

18.0 Further Information

- 18.1 Any part of the Draft Statement of Community Involvement can be provided on request in large print, on CD, by e-mail or as spoken word on tape. More detailed information can be accessed via the Borough Council web site **www.staffordbc.gov.uk/forwardplanning**
- 18.2. All libraries within the Borough hold a file that is available to view on the Statement of Community Involvement's progress to date. If you wish to discuss the Draft Statement of Community Involvement or anything raised in this publication please contact the Forward Planning Team on 01785 619541. Further information sources and planning guidance is also available on the Internet:

*The **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act** can be viewed on the Parliament website at <http://www.parliament.uk/index.cfm>*

*The **Government Regulations, Guidance papers and National Planning Policy Statements / Guidance** notes can be viewed on the website of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister at www.planning.odpm.gov.uk/index.htm*

***Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands** can be viewed at www.go-wm.gov.uk/RPG*

*The **Planning Portal** is a Government site providing information and advice on the planning system in a user-friendly form. The Portal can be accessed at www.planningportal.gov.uk*