

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

THE EXECUTIVE – 24 OCTOBER 2006

JOINT REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

11. CONSULTING COMMUNITIES - DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

RECOMMENDATION - that the Draft Statement of Community Involvement (as detailed in Appendix 'A11' of this report) be received, considered, and approved for the purposes of consultation in November 2006.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 The Council is legally obliged to produce a Statement of Community Involvement. This report seeks approval of the draft document prior to a statutory six-week public consultation period - 9 November to 21 December 2006.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Objectives

2.1 This report contributes to the corporate priority to "*Create opportunities for improving access to services and public involvement in Council business*".

3.0 Background

3.1 The Statement of Community Involvement is an important document that sets out how the Council will inform, consult and involve the community in the preparation, alteration and review of Council policies and decisions. The Council is legally obliged to produce a Statement of Community Involvement and to publicly consult on the document prior to submission to the Secretary of State.

4.0 Report

- 4.1 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Council is legally obliged to produce a Statement of Community Involvement, which will set out how the community and stakeholders can be informed, consulted and involved in the preparation, alteration and review of Council policies and decisions. This must be in compliance with the statutory requirements of the Town and Country (Planning Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004.
- 4.2 Although the Statement of Community Involvement derives from planning legislation, this Draft Statement of Community Involvement has been written to cover consultation undertaken by the Council as a whole. It was considered important and worthwhile to widen the scope of the Statement of Community Involvement in this way to ensure a consistent approach to consultation across the Council, which reflected the rigorous approach to consultation that is an important part of the planning system.
- 4.3 However, following consultation it is likely that the sections on planning policy and community involvement in development control will be separated out from the Council-wide consultation sections. This will enable the Statement of Community Involvement to be produced as a 'sound' document for the purposes of submission to the Secretary of State and subsequent examination.
- 4.4 The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the following key issues:
- What policies and decisions the Council will seek involvement on
 - When community involvement will be sought
 - Which groups, organisations and individuals should be involved
 - How involvement will be undertaken and feedback provided
- 4.5 The process of preparing the Statement of Community Involvement will take place over four phases:
- Phase 1 – produce the pre-draft issues and options document and undertake informal consultations
 - Phase 2 – produce the draft document, having taken the results from the informal consultations into account, and undertake statutory formal public consultation
 - Phase 3 – amend the draft document, taking into account the results following the formal public consultation. The revised document is then submitted to the Secretary of State

and another period of statutory formal public consultation is undertaken on the submission version of the document

- Phase 4 – Independent examination by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State and production of a legally binding report prior to adoption by the Council

- 4.6 The purpose of this report is therefore to seek approval of the draft documents associated with phase 2 – the Draft Statement of Community Involvement. A copy of the Draft Statement of Community Involvement is enclosed at Appendix 'A11' to this report (pages 11.06 -11.42). (Please note that the appendices for the Draft Statement of Community Involvement have not been attached to save resources, but are available in the Members' Library, from the Development Plans Team if required or on the Council's website).
- 4.7 In addition a Consultation Statement has been prepared to outline the results from initial informal consultations and how these have influenced the Draft Statement of Community Involvement. This is attached at Appendix 'B11' (pages 11.43 – 11.54) to this report.
- 4.8 The Draft Statement of Community Involvement also explains the statutory requirements for the production of planning policy documents within the Local Development Framework and the statutory consultation and decision-making procedures for planning applications.
- 4.9 The Executive will be asked to approve elsewhere on the agenda for the meeting of 24 October 2006, the setting up of a LDF Panel. The LDF Panel will provide an opportunity for Members to become involved in the production process and monitoring of the forthcoming Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 4.10 As stated earlier, it is anticipated that after the formal statutory public consultation period the document will be divided. The Statement of Community Involvement will then be linked to the updated Public Engagement Strategy to provide a basis for future community consultation and involvement in Council policies and services.
- 4.11 The sections on Planning Policy and Community Involvement in Development Control will then be produced separately. This will enable the production of a Statement of Community Involvement that conforms to the prescribed tests of soundness, and therefore satisfies the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory

Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 Informal consultation has taken place with the Regulation 25 Statutory consultees and via a questionnaire in the autumn edition of Link magazine. A Consultation Statement has been produced to outline the results from these consultations and to accompany the Draft Statement of Community Involvement. (See Appendix 'B11', pages 11.43 – 11.54, to this report for full details – please note that the appendices for the Consultation Statement Report itself have not been attached to save resources, but are available in the Members Library or from the Development Plans Team if required).
- 5.2 Information on the Statement of Community Involvement and the Local Development Framework has been put in the Local Plan section of the Council's website (see www.eastherts.gov.uk and click on the link for the Local Plan in the Planning for East Herts section of the homepage).
- 5.3 The Draft Statement of Community Involvement has also been circulated to various Members, Directors, Heads of Service and Officers for informal consideration.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council is legally required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and to produce a document that meets the requirements set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. When adopted the Statement of Community Involvement will supplement the Local Plan Second Review and be intrinsic to the production of 'sound' Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents within the Local Development Framework. It will also be an important document for consultation procedures throughout the Council.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 The preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement is a statutory requirement, prepared in-house, within current budgets. The costs of the consultation and publishing the draft document can be met from within existing budgets. There will be a cost in printing the final document, but this can also be met from existing budgets.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 None other than the use of existing staff to manage the project.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 The preparation of a Statement of Community Involvement is a statutory requirement. Failure to do so would have far reaching implications for the legal standing of Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents and the Local Plan Second Review.

Appendices

Appendix A11 – Draft Statement of Community Involvement

Appendix B11 – Pre-Submission Consultation Statement

Background Papers

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

The Town and Country Planning Local Development)(England)
Regulations 2004

Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12): Local Development Frameworks
(ODPM 2004)

Creating Local Development Frameworks: A Companion Guide to PPS12
(ODPM 2004)

East Herts Council Local Development Scheme (LDS) Version One (Spring
2005)

Consulting Communities – The Statement of Community Involvement
Appendices 1 – 6

Consultation Statement for Consulting Communities - The Statement of
Community Involvement Appendices 1 – 7

Contact Members: Councillor Mike Carver
Councillor Terence Milner

Contact Officer: Jackie Bruce – Planning Officer – Ext 1626

CONSULTING COMMUNITIES

East Herts Statement of Community Involvement

Preferred Options Paper
(DRAFT SCI)

Autumn 2006

*East Herts Council – improving the quality of people's lives and
preserving all that is best in East Herts.*

Draft Statement of Community Involvement Preferred Options

This version of the Draft Statement of Community Involvement will be subject to a six-week public consultation from 9th November to 21st December 2006. Please take the time to read and comment on this document, as it discusses a range of preferred options for involving the local community in consultations and seeks your views on their suitability. A questionnaire has been provided with this document and your feedback will contribute to the final version of the Statement of Community Involvement.

Any representations should be made on the form provided and returned via email or to the address below:

Development Plans Team
East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

Email: development.plans@eastherts.gov.uk

Website – www.eastherts.gov.uk

Tel: 01992 531626

Fax: 01992 531439

Thank you for your interest in the future of East Herts.

Contents:

Chapter:

	Page
1. Introduction to the Statement of Community Involvement	5
2. Overview and purpose of the Statement of Community Involvement	6
3. The Community and the Council's Priorities	8
4. Links to other Strategies / Policies	9
5. Community Involvement & Inclusion	10
6. What will the Council consult on?	12
7. When will the Council consult?	14
8. Who will the Council consult?	15
9. How will the Council consult?	17
10. Community Involvement in Planning Policy	19
11. Community Involvement in Development Control	31
12. Feedback Commitment	35
13. Estimate of resource requirement	36

Table 1 – Proposed Timetable for the Statement of Community Involvement	7
Table 2 – Proposed Consultations by Service / Department	13
Table 3 – Proposed Documents within the Local Development Framework	22
Table 4 – Proposed Consultation Methods and Stage of Use	24
Table 5 – Production Stages for Development Plan Documents	26
Table 6 – Proposed Consultation Methods for DPDs	28
Table 7 – Production Stages for Supplementary Planning Documents	29
Table 8 – Proposed Consultation Methods for SPDs	30
Table 9 – Methods used to involve the Community in Development Control	34
Diagram 1 – The Local Development Framework	20

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Glossary of Planning Terms
- Appendix 2 - Reg 25 Pre-submission Consultees
- Appendix 3 - Reg 26 Pre-submission Public Participation Consultees
- Appendix 4 - Table of Methods of Consultation
- Appendix 5 - Equality Monitoring Form
- Appendix 6 - SCI Response Form

Chapter 1 - Introduction to the Statement of Community Involvement

- 1.1 East Herts Council has always sought to involve the local community in its decision-making processes. Recent Government legislation seeks to reinforce this, and it is now a legal requirement for the Council to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement as part of its Local Development Framework.
- 1.2 Although the Statement of Community Involvement derives from planning legislation, this draft Statement of Community Involvement has been written to cover consultation undertaken by the Council as a whole. It was considered important and worthwhile to widen the scope of the Statement of Community Involvement in this way to ensure a consistent approach to consultation across the Council, which reflected the rigorous approach to consultation that is an important part of the planning system.
- 1.3 However, following consultation it is likely that the sections on planning policy and community involvement in development control will be separated out from the Council-wide consultation sections. This will enable the Statement of Community Involvement to be produced as a 'sound' document for the purposes of submission to the Secretary of State and subsequent examination.
- 1.4 East Herts Council recognises that effective communication between local people and the Council is very important, and has always taken a proactive approach that in many cases exceeds the minimum statutory requirements for consultation and community involvement.
- 1.5 The Statement of Community Involvement will set out the principles of community engagement, standards to be met, what methods of involvement would be most appropriate at each stage of policy development or decision making, and how the local community can become more involved. It will form an important part of the Local Development Framework and be used as the basis for any future consultations by the Council.
- 1.6 Consultation and engagement are a means to help East Herts Council understand the views and opinions of its various audiences. They will not replace or undermine the democratic process, but will support elected members in their role as community leaders in making informed decisions and representing local issues..
- 1.7 Not all parts of the community will want to give their views on every policy or decision. We need to be aware of areas of policy which could generate wide public interest and those areas which concern more specific groups, so that community involvement is undertaken in an appropriate and cost-efficient way.

- 1.8 By improving the opportunities for involvement and interaction, the Council aims to support our corporate value of focussing on the needs of the local community. However, we must be pragmatic and, in preparing the Statement of Community Involvement, we will have to assess the use and cost of resources so as to not unrealistically raise community expectations.

Chapter 2 - The Statement of Community Involvement - Overview and Purpose

What is a Statement of Community Involvement?

- 2.1 The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council will involve you in the preparation, alteration and review of Council policies and decisions.
- 2.2 The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the following key issues:
- What policies and decisions the Council will seek involvement on
 - When community involvement will be sought
 - Which groups, organisations and individuals should be involved
 - How involvement will be undertaken and feedback provided
- 2.3 The Statement of Community Involvement must be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, and will be subject to independent examination by an Inspector on behalf of the Secretary of State.

What do we mean by Community Involvement?

- 2.4 'Community Involvement' means interaction between the Council and the local community. This will include individuals, groups and various stakeholders within East Herts. There are many methods of community involvement – basically, these should involve people at three levels:
- Informing - providing information by a variety of methods, such as leaflets and the Council's website, to inform people of new or proposed policies and planning applications.
 - Consulting - finding out people's views on services provided, particular proposals, issues or other matters that need to be addressed.
 - Involving - enabling people to participate in activities, such as citizens' panel workshops, to identify issues and priorities that need to be addressed.

Stages of Production of the Statement of Community Involvement

- 2.5 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Council is legally obliged to produce a Statement of Community Involvement, which must be in compliance with the statutory requirements of the

Town and Country Planning Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004. Table 1 outlines the stages and proposed timetable for the production of the Statement of Community Involvement for East Herts.

2.6 The stages of production and relevant regulations involved in the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement are the same as for a Development Plan Document within the Local Development Framework. It is anticipated that the Statement of Community Involvement will take around a year to produce.

Table 1: Proposed timetable for the Statement of Community Involvement

Stage	Description	Regulatory Requirements	Timescale
Stage 1 Pre-production	- Scoping stage, used to gather evidence and suggestions.	No formal requirements.	Spring 2006
Stage 2 Production of Issues & Options	- Produce the Pre-draft Issues and Options Paper - Undertake informal consultations - Questionnaire in Link magazine	Reg. 25 applies - An informal consultation with Statutory Bodies	Summer 2006
Stage 3 Production of Draft Document (Preferred Options)	- Produce the Draft SCI Document, having taken into account the results from the informal consultations. - Document should be provided in paper and electronic formats, and be available at the Council's Offices, Libraries and on the Council's website.	Reg. 26 applies. - A six-week statutory public consultation period: 9 November to 21 December 2006	Autumn 2006
Stage 4 Amend the Draft SCI	- Having amended the draft document (taking received responses into account), the Council will agree a final version.	Reg. 27 applies - Non-consultative / participative part of the process	Winter 2006
Stage 5 Submission to Secretary of State	- The SCI is submitted to the Secretary of State. - Formal public notice must be given and a further six-week period of public consultation undertaken. - The SCI, response form and supporting documents must be made available as before.	Reg. 28 applies. - Statutory six-week public consultation. Reg. 29 Applies -All responses received at this stage will be submitted to The Secretary of State.	Spring 2007
Stage 6 Independent Examination	- Independent examination by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to test the soundness of the SCI and consider any responses received.	Reg. 34 applies. - All representations received will be subject to independent examination.	Spring 2007
Stage 7 Binding Report and Adoption	- The Inspector produces a legally binding report. - The Council adopts the final SCI as soon as is practical.	Reg. 24 / 36 applies. - The Council adopts and notifies those who asked to be advised of the adoption.	Summer / Autumn 2007

Draft Statement of Community Involvement - Preferred Options Paper

- 2.5 The proposals in this Draft Statement of Community Involvement follow on from the Council's consideration of informal consultations undertaken, the requirements of the legislation and the resources currently available to the Council. This is the first published draft of the Statement of Community Involvement produced for public consultation and comment. Details of how to comment on this document are shown on page 2 and on the questionnaire provided.

Chapter 3 - The Community and the Council's Priorities

- 3.1 Not content with accepting the status quo, the Council is keen to demonstrate that as a "good authority" it is always looking for further challenges. In preparation for 2006/07, East Herts revised its strategic targets and corporate priorities. Further information is available in the Best Value Performance Plan 2006, available on the Council's website or from the Council's Offices.
- 3.2 This has led to East Herts adopting a more focused and streamlined set of priorities, with clearer and more measurable objectives for each. Therefore the vision of the Council during 2006/07 will be:

To improve the quality of people's lives and preserve all that's best in East Herts

- 3.3 To do so East Herts Council will:
- Enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.
 - Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well-managed and publicly accountable organization.
 - Improve standards of neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.
 - Care for and improve our natural and built environment.
 - Safeguard and enhance our unique mix of rural and urban communities, ensuring sustainable, economic and social opportunities including effective development control and other measures.
 - Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public

Core Principles of Community Involvement

- 3.4 East Herts Council has developed a number of core principles for consultation and engagement initiatives through its Public Engagement Strategy. These core principles are listed below and the Statement of Community Involvement will build on these:

- Clarity and integrity will drive our public engagement. We will always be clear about the purpose of any initiative, what can and what cannot be influenced by it, how the public feedback will be used and how we will report back.
- We will ensure that our consultations maintain high standards of presentation, using clear and plain language.
- Our consultations will be accessible and will use the most appropriate methods to engage the whole of the community that we are seeking to reach.
- We will actively promote opportunities for people to engage with either formal or informal processes of the council.
- We will learn from our own experience and that of others in our public engagement, developing and trialing new techniques to increase participation.

Chapter 4 - Links to other Strategies / Policies

- 4.1 The Statement of Community Involvement builds on the objectives outlined in the Public Engagement Strategy and the ongoing work of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Voluntary Sector Compact.
- 4.2 Joint consultation will be sought wherever practical and the Statement of Community Involvement will build on these strategies and policies to ensure effective engagement of the whole community, including our traditionally hard-to-reach groups.

Public Engagement Strategy for East Herts

- 4.3 The Public Engagement Strategy for East Herts has been developed to enhance the opportunities for public involvement with the Council. The Statement of Community Involvement builds on the basis of this to enhance the strategic objective and primary goals of the Public Engagement Strategy with the following aims:
- To raise public awareness of the role of East Herts Council amongst local people, and the opportunities that exist to influence the decision making in the Authority
 - To build on our existing dialogue with the communities we serve, informing, involving, consulting and reporting back to them
 - To promote our core principles for public engagement with both members and officers at East Herts Council and to "live" these in all our engagement work
 - To enhance our reputation and public satisfaction
 - To support all members in their work as community representatives
 - To develop an inter-agency approach with partner organisations, consulting jointly where possible
 - To measure and evaluate the success of this strategy and specific consultation exercises.

Local Strategic Partnership and the Community Strategy

- 4.4 The Local Strategic Partnership is made up of various public sector agencies and their partners in the voluntary and private sector. The East Herts Community Strategy Action Plan was produced in 2004 by the Local Strategic Partnership to develop a shared vision for the future of East Herts to 2007.
- 4.5 The Hertfordshire Local Area Agreement was agreed in 2006 to promote better service delivery and community involvement, and ensure that the Local Strategic Partnership delivers the aims of the Community Strategy.
- 4.6 The Statement of Community Involvement will, together with the vision and strategic aims identified in the Community Strategy, provide a basis for future consultations and public engagement strategies. However, in order to avoid consultation fatigue, and a proliferation of consultations on different strategies at the same time, joint consultation will be undertaken wherever possible and appropriate.

East Herts Voluntary Sector Compact

- 4.7 The East Herts Voluntary Sector Compact is an agreement setting out the working relationship between the Council and the voluntary and community sectors. The Statement of Community Involvement will work along side the vision and values of the Compact to ensure these are maintained when involving the voluntary and community sector in any future consultation and engagement.

Other Strategies and Policies

- 4.8 A range of other existing strategies and policies have also been subject to extensive public consultation and input, and in many cases have been subsequently adopted by the Council and other public agencies. The Statement of Community Involvement will provide a basis for further consultation and public engagement on these and any future strategies and policies.

Chapter 5 - Community Involvement and Inclusion

- 5.1 East Herts Council intends to maintain a process of ongoing community involvement and aims to encourage early involvement in issues so that everyone feels that they have had a chance to influence local policy and decisions, and to encourage a better understanding of Council processes.

Ensuring Effective Consultation

- 5.2 We understand that not everyone finds it easy to participate in the decision making process and there are many perceived barriers to involvement such as:
- Not knowing that there is an opportunity to participate
 - Not knowing how or where to participate

- Cynicism towards the process
 - Feeling unable to participate due to a variety of reasons including lack of time, lack of access to technology, lack of mobility etc
 - Feeling excluded from the community, part of a minority group or having no formal groups that represent their views
- 5.3 To overcome some of these potential problems, and encourage participation from all parts of the community, it is important we understand the diversity of the area and recognise that everyone has the right to get involved if they wish.
- 5.4 The stage at which particular individuals, groups, organisations and stakeholders become involved will depend upon the actual document concerned and will take into account other important considerations, such as, where particular individuals, groups, organisations and stakeholders have relevant expertise in the area or if they have expressed a particular interest the subject concerned, and especially if their input would be useful in preparing a 'sound' document.
- 5.5 However, we recognise that some parts of the community have less chance to get involved and as a result are under represented in the consultation process. Therefore we will try to consult and engage through existing groups and existing meetings where possible, and try to hold community involvement events in different parts of the district and at different times and days of the week. We will aim to use venues with good access and transport links and will provide information in a way that is easily accessible for all. We will make special efforts to encourage hard-to-reach groups, especially village communities and rural residents, to become fully involved in all consultations from an early stage.

East Herts Council Members

- 5.6 The Statement of Community Involvement aims to ensure that all consultation is carried out in a professional, cost effective and coordinated way. It is not intended to replace the central role of elected Council Members as representatives of their community (as outlined in the Local Government Act 2000). Councillors are important as representatives of the Council and the local community. Their knowledge of, and role within, the community can be used to great advantage and should be regarded as central to the determination and implementation of both consultations and policy decisions.

East Herts Town and Parish Councils

- 5.7 The elected members of the Town and Parish Council's of East Herts have a vital role to play in their communities, putting forward their views on planning applications and providing a link to the District Council's policy and decision making process.

East Herts Council Staff

- 5.8 All staff of East Herts Council should be regarded as an important resource in themselves, and an important consultation group or target for community involvement, as they can be an invaluable source of local knowledge. Front line staff that have direct dealings with the local community can make a significant contribution to the design, undertaking and outcome of the processes of community involvement, and to the ongoing implementation of policy decisions. Therefore all staff need to be kept up to date with any consultations so as to be able to keep the public informed and to deal with any queries arising from them.

Chapter 6 - What will the Council consult on?

What should we involve the Community with?

- 6.1 The Statement of Community Involvement aims to be a corporate document for the whole council and set out in general terms how the community can be involved in the policy and decision-making processes.
- **Policy** – The Statement of Community Involvement aims to outline the main areas of Council policy that are subject to consultation and will expand on Planning Policy in a separate section.
 - **Decisions** – Planning and Licensing applications must be determined in accordance with the Council's policies and are subject to various legal requirements. The Statement of Community Involvement will expand on these and specifically on planning applications in the section on Development Control.

Community Involvement in Council Policy

- 6.2 In 2006/07 East Herts Council will undertake approximately 34 consultation and community involvement exercises both internally and externally, as summarised below. The exercise undertaken will vary according to the Service / Department carrying out the consultation and to the information required, as not all consultations are on Council policy or decisions. But as the consultations will change year on year it is not appropriate to expand in detail on each one here.
- 6.3 Councillors and Town / Parish Council Members can play an important role in ensuring active and ongoing community involvement in the preparation and implementation of Council policy.
- 6.4 The Council will continue to consult the community through MORI resident polls, Community Voice, our Citizens Panel and the national Best Value Performance Indicator General Survey, to ensure that what we are doing meets the needs of our residents.

Table 2: Proposed Consultations by Service / Department 2006/07

Service / Department	Number of Proposed Consultations 2006/07
Building Control	2
Communications	1
Community Projects	3
Contract Services	4
Economic Development	1
Environmental Health	4
Internal Audit	4
Leisure	2
Performance	6
Planning Policy	5
Revenues	2

Community Involvement in Council Decisions

- 6.5 The Council will seek to encourage further community involvement in the decision-making processes of Development Control and Licensing in line with Government recommendations and statutory legislative regulations. Again Councillors and Town/ Parish Council Members have an important role as the voice of their local communities can bring specialist local knowledge to the decision making process.
- 6.6 Community Involvement in Development Control is explained in further detail in Chapter 11.

Decisions made under the Licensing Act 2003

- 6.7 The Council is responsible for the determination and enforcement of a number of licences and regulations. The Council has approved the Joint Hertfordshire Licensing Enforcement Protocol to help us work in full co-operation with the Police and other organisations involved in licensing under the Licensing Act 2003.
- 6.8 The role of the Licensing Committee is to agree policies and procedures, and to determine certain applications that are contentious or where objections have been lodged. The Committee is also responsible for determining certain appeals for refusing to grant a licence or registration.
- 6.9 The majority of cases dealt with by the Committee concern applications relating to liquor licences, which are dealt with by the Licensing Sub-Committee. There are specific procedures for dealing with applications, and these include provision for objectors, including members of the public, and the emergency services to address the Sub-Committee and ask questions. Further details can be obtained from the Council's website www.eastherts.gov.uk

The Gambling Act 2005

- 6.10 The Gambling Act gave the Gambling Commission and Licensing Authorities a range of powers. East Herts Council as a Licensing Authority will be responsible for the issuing of gambling premises licenses and a number of other functions, including monitoring compliance with regulatory requirements and enforcement action as necessary. Further details on community involvement under the Gambling Commission's proposals will be made available on the Council's website and from the Council's Offices.
- 6.11 The Council will act upon any further Government legislation and future policy changes, as they become law. The Statement of Community Involvement will then be reconsidered by the Council to incorporate these and further improve community involvement and consultation on all Council decisions.

Future Consultation

- 6.12 East Herts Council takes the consultation process very seriously. Therefore it is anticipated that a Research and Consultation Officer will be appointed to co-ordinate, monitor and report the results of consultations carried by the Council. At this moment in time this is in its infancy, but will link strongly with the aims and measures set out in the Statement of Community Involvement. This will provide an opportunity to plan joint working on community involvement and consultation methods.
- 6.13 Consultation and engagement is not an end in itself. These activities are a means for East Herts Council to understand the views and opinions of its community and stakeholders. They will not replace the important role of elected members or the democratic process, but will improve opportunities for public involvement with East Herts Council, and support the corporate value of focusing on the needs of the community.

Chapter 7 - When will the Council involve the community?

When should we involve the Community?

- 7.1 Not all parts of the community will want to give their views on every policy or application. We need to identify which areas of policy generate wide public interest and which concern more specific groups so that community involvement is undertaken in an appropriate and cost-efficient way.
- 7.2 It is important that we remember the following points when considering consultation and community involvement in Council Policies and Decisions:

- Community involvement that is appropriate to the level of consultation
- ‘Front loading’ of involvement - early consultation to identify issues and enable a sense of ownership of local policy decisions
- Methods used to encourage involvement being relevant to the community and their experience
- Clearly setting out opportunities for ongoing involvement in the process as part of continuous community engagement programme
- Transparency and accessibility for all, especially hard-to-reach groups
- Planning for community involvement from the start of the process to enable timely involvement and interaction with other documents and strategies

7.3 The stage at which the community is invited to become involved will vary according to the consultation concerned. Wherever possible, we will consult and engage at the earliest opportunity to involve the community and stakeholders through existing groups and meetings, but our aim is to reach a wider audience through whatever methods are appropriate.

7.4 All Council policies and decisions will go through several stages before being agreed, and each stage represents an opportunity for the local community to get involved and influence the outcome.

7.5 Community Involvement in Planning Policy and Development Control will be explained in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 8 - Who will the Council consult?

8.1 The Statement of Community Involvement sets out in general the target groups for consultation. The individual Service Areas of the Council will be responsible for updating and maintaining their own consultation databases to conform to data protection regulations.

8.2 In addition to the statutory groups that we must legally consult we aim to give everyone the opportunity to become involved in the decision-making process and influence the future of East Herts. The Statement of Community Involvement provides an ideal opportunity to identify ‘hard-to-reach’ groups and to encourage greater participation in the consultation process.

Target Groups for Community Involvement

8.3 We are committed to involving as many individuals and groups as possible. Key target groups are:

- Hard-to-reach groups (including the elderly, young people, disabled people, rural communities and ethnic-minority groups)

- Residents
- Businesses
- Developers, agents and landowners
- Local interest groups
- Local community and amenity groups
- Parish and Town Councils
- Members of the Local Strategic Partnership
- Central, regional and local government departments
- National and regional bodies and organisations

Under-represented or Hard-to-reach Groups

- 8.4 East Herts Council has a duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to promote equality of opportunity and service, and to promote good relations with all its citizens.
- 8.5 In East Herts our 'hard to reach' groups may include young people, students, the elderly, ethnic minorities, gypsies and travellers, the homeless, single parent families, and people with disabilities, but may also include whole sections of the community living in the rural areas or more deprived areas of the district. We must also consider those who have difficulties accessing information and those with limited time to become further involved.
- 8.6 Therefore, the Statement of Community Involvement proposes the following steps to help them take part in community involvement activities. This extra support includes:
- Ensuring documents are clear, concise and available in plain English
 - Providing documents that have been translated, put on to tape or large print format on request
 - Making sure that all information is readily available on the website and from Council offices and libraries.
 - Making sure meetings are held at times and places convenient and accessible to all
 - Working in conjunction with the relevant support agencies and other Council service providers
 - Joint working with public and private sector organisations
 - Making a Portable Hearing Loop available

Equality Monitoring

- 8.7 The Valuing Diversity Action Group recommends that all services incorporate the standard monitoring questions of age, gender, ethnicity and disability into all customer surveys and questionnaires. This will ensure a standard approach to equality monitoring across the whole Council. See Appendix 5 for a standard example of an equality monitoring form. The Statement of Community Involvement will carry out this recommendation in all consultations.

Chapter 9 - How will the Council involve the Community?

9.1 There are many methods of community involvement, but basically these should ensure that people have access to information, have confidence with and can take an active part in the system, and are informed about the process and the outcome.

9.2 It is unlikely that one method alone will be appropriate for all stages of community involvement and engagement, as different methods achieve different results. The table in Appendix 4 sets out various methods for consideration, and gives a brief appraisal of the advantages, disadvantages and cost / resources implications for each.

9.3 We will only succeed in our aim of involving more of the community in the Council's processes if the methods we use are suited to their different needs and capabilities. However, any methods used should engage people at three different levels: informing, consulting and involving.

Informing People

9.4 The Council will seek to keep everyone up to date with: what it is doing; the stages of production of documents; where these documents can be inspected; how people can become involved and make representations; and the results of consultations. Ways in which we will keep people informed include:

- Updates on our website
- Press releases
- Articles in Link magazine.
- Information displayed in Council Offices and other main public places such as Libraries
- Information and presentations given to existing groups and meetings, such as Parish / Town Councils, the Local Strategic Partnership, Community Voice meetings and other community and voluntary groups etc.
- Informing interested parties on each Service Area's Database.
- Briefings and printed information to Councillors and East Herts Council Staff.

Consulting People

9.5 The Council will aim to find out what individuals / stakeholders think of proposals by using various consultation methods. This may be undertaken within a formal statutory consultation period to comply with relevant legislative regulations. The Council will aim to provide standard response forms for any consultation undertaken and will encourage these to be submitted online to enable easier analysis and reduce printing costs. The various methods proposed for consultation purposes are outlined and assessed in Appendix 4.

Involving People

- 9.6 The Council will encourage active involvement or participation with individuals / stakeholders from the outset to encourage positive discussion on the evolution of policy and to identify further needs and/or priorities to be addressed. In line with our Public Consultation Strategy, the methods used will be tailored around different people, groups, the particular policy or document and its stage of preparation.

Deciding on methods of community involvement

- 9.7 In order to identify which method, or combination of methods, would be most appropriate for each document we need to consider the following questions:
- What is the aim of the consultation exercise?
 - Who is the consultation aimed at?
 - What is the timescale for consultation?
 - What resources will be required, and where they will come from?
 - How will the exercise be monitored?
 - How will the results be evaluated?
 - How will the results be reported?
 - How and when will feedback take place?

Responses from Informal Consultations and Link questionnaire:

- 9.8 The first stage of preparing the Draft Statement of Community Involvement consisted of sending a questionnaire and a copy of the Issues and Options Paper to the organisations listed as Regulation 25 consultees – see Appendix 2 – Reg.25 Pre-submission Consultees.
- 9.9 In addition, the autumn edition of Link magazine contained a questionnaire asking for people’s views on the proposed Statement of Community Involvement, community involvement in the planning process and the best role for Community Voice. To encourage a greater response from the public, anyone returning a completed questionnaire by the consultation deadline was entered into a prize draw competition.
- 9.10 Further details of the results from these questionnaires, comments received in response to the Issues and Options Paper, and the way in which they have been taken into account, are set out in a separate document entitled “Draft Statement of Community Involvement – Pre-Submission Consultation Statement” which accompanies this document.

Accessible Information

- 9.11 It is now corporate policy to provide written information (leaflets, publications etc) in accessible formats such as large print, Braille, audio, electronic format or translated in to another language on request. This ‘strapline’ is now available, and printed as standard on documents, in both Polish and Portuguese to assist the needs of the growing ethnic communities of East Herts.

Providing Regular Feedback

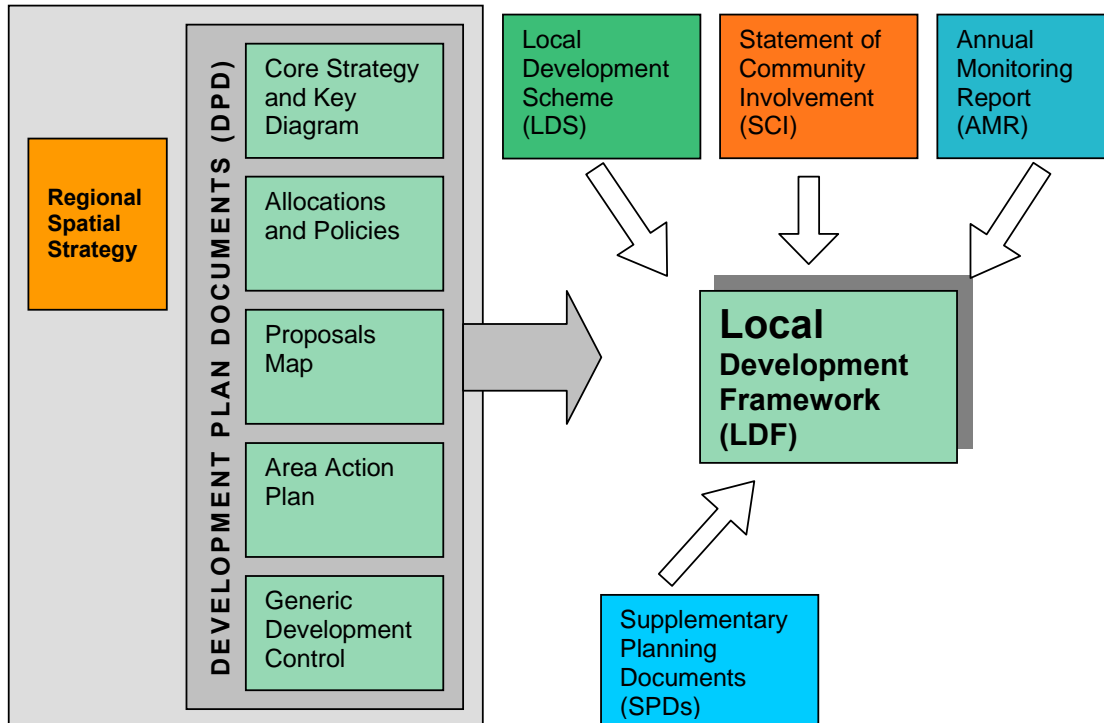
- 9.12 At the end of each consultation period we analyse the responses made and prepare a summary report that lists the comments made, the Council's response to these and how they have been taken in to account. This information is then made available on the Council's website and sent to respondents. Minimum feedback includes:
- An acknowledgement of your response to a specific consultation or document
 - A summary of how the process is going
 - How your information will be used

Chapter 10 – Community Involvement in Planning Policy

Brief Introduction to the New Planning System

- 10.1 Planning shapes the places where people live and work. It is extremely important that people are aware at the earliest opportunity of proposed developments and planning policies that may affect them in the future. East Herts Council has always sought to involve the local community in its decision making process and particularly the planning system. Recent Government legislation and regulatory changes seek to reinforce this and to expand on existing practices.
- 10.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, has set out a new two-tiered planning system for England that will transform the planning process and make major changes to the way planning works. It replaces the old Structure Plans and Local Plans system with new-style Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks.
- 10.3 The Regional Spatial Strategy is the responsibility of the Regional Planning Board (RPB), which for East Herts is The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA). Hertfordshire County Council will continue to be responsible for producing the Waste and Minerals Development Framework, which will replace the existing Waste and Mineral Local Plan.
- 10.4 The Local Development Framework is best described as a portfolio or 'folder' of Local Development Documents that collectively provide the spatial planning strategy for East Herts.
- 10.5 East Herts Council is currently in the process of working towards adopting the Local Plan Second Review in Spring 2007, which will become the foundation for future planning decisions. The provisions of the plan are based on an end date of 2011, however they will be gradually replaced as the Council moves toward implementing the Local Development Framework. Further details of the timescale involved are available in the Local development scheme

Diagram 1: Local Development Framework - The following diagram illustrates how the Local Development Framework is made up of various different documents:



East Herts Local Development Framework

- 10.6 The Local Development Framework will determine how the planning system will shape our future to 2021. It will eventually replace an existing document, the East Herts Local Plan Second Review, and will be the basis for making important decisions about sustainable growth and development in East Herts.
- 10.7 The East Herts Local Development Framework consists of the following Local Development Documents which fall in to the categories set out below:
- 10.8 **Local Development Documents**
- **Development Plan Documents (DPDs)**, which can deal with different issues or geographical areas, are subject to independent testing by a Government Inspector and have the weight of Development Plan status (Development Plan Documents take around three years to prepare).
 - **Core Strategy** – this will set out our long-term key themes and spatial vision for future development within the District, and the primary policies for achieving this. Its main aim is to promote sustainable development, to protect and enhance the environment, and should reflect the goals of the community strategy across the district covering all topics, such as housing, employment, transport, leisure etc.

- **Allocations and Policies** – this document will set out the allocation of sites for specific or mixed-use development and the policies relating to such development.
 - **Proposals Map** – shows the sites identified for future development and the areas to which policies apply.
 - **Area Action Plans** – the Bishop’s Stortford Area Action Plan will focus on Bishop’s Stortford and be used to guide new development.
 - **Generic Development Control Policies** – will set out criteria based policies required to ensure that all development within the district meets the spatial vision and objectives set out in the Core Strategy.
- **Supplementary Plan Documents** (SPDs) give further guidance to specific policy topic areas and support policies in the Development Plan. They are not subject to independent examination as they do not have Development Plan status, but are subject to community involvement and consultation (Supplementary Plan Documents take around a year to prepare).
 - **Supporting Documents:**
 - **Local Development Scheme** (LDS) – a ‘guide book’ or project plan document which identifies which Local Development Documents will be produced and in what order over a specific timetable.
 - **Statement of Community Involvement** (SCI) – sets out the Council’s policy for involving the community and stakeholders in the development of Local Development Documents and in considering planning applications.
 - **Annual Monitoring Report** (AMR) – produced annually by East Herts Council to monitor the progress of the Local Development Framework documents against the timetables set out in the Local Development Scheme, as well as looking at the implementation of existing policies and proposals.

10.9 In addition, a **Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA / SEA)** must be carried out for Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, although this is not required for the Statement of Community Involvement. The Sustainability Appraisal is a separate report that assesses the environmental, social and economic impacts of the planning policies proposed for the district.

East Herts Planning Policy

10.10 East Herts Council is in the transition phase of the new planning system, moving from the Local Plan Second Review towards preparing its Local Development Framework. The Draft Statement of Community Involvement will provide a guide for consultation for the Council as a whole and, especially in the production of Development Plan

Documents and Supplementary Plan Documents within the Local Development Framework.

When should we Involve the Community in the East Herts Local Development Framework?

10.11 There will be numerous opportunities for community engagement and consultation throughout the production of all documents within the Local Development Framework. Different statutory regulations apply to each type of document. These regulations vary depending on whether the Council is producing a Development Plan Document, a Supplementary Planning Document, or in this case, the Statement of Community Involvement.

Table 3: Proposed documents within the Local Development Framework

Status	Title
Development Plan Documents (DPDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Core Strategy and Key Diagram - Proposal Map and Inset Map - Allocations and Policies - Generic Development Control Policies - Bishop’s Stortford Area Action Plan - Gypsy and Traveller
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) (Linked to Local Plan Second Review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vehicle Parking Provision at New Developments - Landscape Character Assessment - Affordable Housing - Open space, Sport and recreation Facilities - Planning Obligation Requirements - Historic parks and Gardens
Other Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Statement of Community Involvement - Annual Monitoring Report - Local Development Scheme

10.12 The stage at which particular individuals, groups, organisations and stakeholders will be consulted will depend on the document concerned, the nature of their organisation, if they have expressed an interest, and where the Council considers their input will be useful in preparing a sound document.

10.13 Wherever possible, we will consult and engage through existing groups and existing meetings to informally involve the community and stakeholders at an early stage, but our aim is to also reach a wider audience through whatever methods are appropriate.

10.14 Further details and the timetable of the Local Development Framework are contained in the Local Development Scheme, available from The Council's Offices or the Council's website: www.eastherts.gov.uk

How should we involve the Community in Planning Policy and the Local Development Framework?

10.16 The Council will use a variety of methods at various stages in the planning process to enable community involvement in the Local Development Framework. These methods of consultation will vary depending on the type of document and its stage of production. These methods include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Documents available on the Council's website
- Documents being made available to inspect or buy at the Council's Offices
- Documents available for inspection at Libraries during consultation periods
- Documents made available to Town and Parish Councils
- Letters sent to statutory bodies and others on the Development Plans Database
- Adverts in local press
- Leaflets
- Public Exhibitions and displays
- Presentations to groups, organisations and stakeholders as appropriate
- Focus Groups
- Public Meetings, such as Community Voice
- MORI surveys
- Questionnaire surveys
- Targeted consultation by mail and/or email of statutory consultees, key stakeholders and hard-to-reach groups as appropriate

Methods of Community Involvement in Planning Policy

10.17 There are a number of methods to encourage and enable more community involvement in planning policy. Appendix 4 sets out a table showing various methods of consultation, the advantages and disadvantages for each method and the cost implications of each in staff time and resources.

10.18 Initial results from informal consultations indicate that the preferred method of consultation and interaction with the Council varies from one group to another and this shows the value of having a wide range of methods to meet different needs. The table below shows the preferred methods of consultation and how the Council proposes to use them to consult at each stage of the Development Plan process.

10.19 Further information on the results of initial consultations can be found in the Pre-Submission Consultation Statement, which accompanies this document.

Table 4: Proposed Consultation Methods and Stage of Use

Generic	Issues & Options Consultation	Preferred Options Consultation	Submission Consultation	Independent Examination
Specific consultation bodies, government bodies and other consultees	- Website - Document-inspection - Local Media - Letter to Development Plans Database Entries	- Website - Document inspection - Local Media - Letter to Development Plans Database Entries - Letter to all respondents to previous stage	- Website - Document inspection - Local Media - Letter to Development Plans Database Entries - Letter to all respondents to previous stage/s	- Website - Document inspection - Local Media - Letter to Development Plans Database Entries - Letter to all respondents to previous stage/s
Local groups and organisations, including hard-to-reach groups	- Leaflet - Meetings - Questionnaire - Targeted consultations Presentations - Exhibitions / displays	- Leaflet - Meetings - Questionnaire - Targeted consultations -Presentations - Exhibitions / displays - Letter to all respondents to previous stage	- Leaflet - Meetings -Presentations - Exhibitions / displays - Letter to all respondents to previous stage/s	- Letter to all respondents to previous stage/s

10.20 However this Draft Statement of Community Involvement is subject to a further six-week statutory public consultation, and the results from the responses received will be considered and used to amend the document if necessary.

Target Groups for Community Involvement in Planning Policy

10.21 We are committed to involving as many individuals and groups as possible in the planning policy process. Key targets groups are set out in Chapter 8:

10.22 However, under Government regulations we are required by law to consult with a number of ‘specific, general and government consultation bodies’ that are appropriate to the preparation of the Local Development Document in question. (See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for full listings of these)

10.23 These include

- The relevant Regional Planning Body (The East of England Regional Assembly)
- The Regional Development Agency

- Hertfordshire County Council
- East Herts Town and Parish Councils
- Adjoining County, District and parish Councils
- The Highways agency
- The Countryside Agency
- The Environment Agency
- The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England
- English Nature
- The Strategic Rail Authority
- People to whom the Electronics communications code applies
- The Strategic Health Authority
- Utility providers, including any person with a licence to transmit or distribute electricity in the district, a gas transporters licence, water and sewage undertakers
- Other key stakeholders e.g. The Stort Valley Project
- Individuals, groups or organisations identified from the Development Plans Database

10.24 The Council will also take into account National and Regional Government priorities by consulting with various Central Government Departments and the Government Office for the East of England. The exact department will vary according to the document being produced.

Development Plans Database

10.25 We cannot name every individual group here as these can change quickly and it is important that we do not list out of date information. The complete list for consultation on planning policy will be stored electronically in the confidential Development Plans Database and will be regularly updated. Any individual or group can ask to be added to this database, which will result in them being involved in future consultations as appropriate.

10.26 If you belong to a group that would like to take part in the planning policy consultation process, but are not sure whether we hold your details please contact us and we will check our database. Or if you know of any groups we have not listed above, or who have formed recently, please let us know so we can keep our records up to date.

Development Plan Documents Preparation and Consultation Methods

10.27 Development Plan Documents provide the Council with planning policies to guide future development decisions within the district whilst balancing social, environmental and economic issues. For the purposes of preparation and consultation the Statement of Community Involvement is classed as a Development Plan Document, although it does not require a Sustainability Appraisal or Strategic Environmental Assessment. Table 5 sets out the various stages of consultation

regarding, and the relevant regulatory requirement for, Development Plan Documents, and the Statement of Community Involvement.

Table 5: Production Stages for Development Plan Documents

Stage	Description	Regulatory Requirements
<p>Stage 1 Pre-production (Also known as the scoping stage)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is the stage prior to production of a draft document. - Used to gather evidence and suggestions. - It must consider the implications of other local strategies and initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No formal requirements, but may involve other groups to source further information, develop the evidence base and identify issues and options.
<p>Stage 2 Production - Issues and Options</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council will prepare an Issues and Options Paper, but will not have made any firm decisions at this stage. - Views received will be taken into account in the preparation of the draft document. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reg. 25 applies - An informal consultation with Statutory bodies and others to seek views on a range of consultation methods and to assist with development of the sustainability appraisal.
<p>Stage 3 Production - Draft Document (Preferred Options)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informed by the responses received at the previous stage, the council will decide what the preferred options are and produce the draft document. - A formal sustainability report must be published and consulted on, which considers the social, environmental and economic effects of the proposed preferred options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reg. 26 applies. - A six-week statutory public consultation must be undertaken. - Document should be provided in paper and electronic formats. - Advertisement must be placed in a local paper. - Documents, including a sustainability report, must be available for inspection at Council's Offices, Libraries and on the Council's website.
<p>Stage 4 Consideration of responses to Preferred Options and Proposals document</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary and analysis of all representations received will be considered and used to shape the Supplementary Planning Document. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reg 27 applies - Non-consultative / participative part of the process

<p>Stage 5 Submission of Development Plan Document</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having amended the draft document (taking received responses into account), the Council will agree a final document that will be submitted to the Secretary of State. - Formal notice will be given and representations may be submitted. <p>Representations received at this stage will go forward to an independent examination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reg. 28 applies. - Submission must be advertised and representations invited. - Statutory six-week public consultation. - Two copies of the document must be sent to the Planning Inspectorate along with the final sustainability report, any technical papers, and a copy of the SCI and a statement of Compliance. - The DPD and supporting documents must be made available, with a representation form, at principle offices, libraries and other suitable places, and on the Council's website. <p>Reg 29 Applies to responses.</p>
<p>Stage 6 Independent Examination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An independent Inspector, appointed by the Secretary of State, will consider the 'soundness' of, and representations received on, the submitted document to assist the examination process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reg. 34 applies. - All representations received within the statutory period will be submitted to the Secretary of State. - Even if no representations are received the Development Plan Document must be submitted to the Secretary of State.
<p>Stage 7 Binding Report and Adoption</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Inspector's report is binding on the Council and there are no further opportunities for public involvement. The report includes precise recommendations on any changes required. - The Council has two weeks to check the report for factual matters, and after this the final report is produced and adopted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reg. 24 / 36 applies. - The Council must adopt the document as soon as practical. - The Council must also prepare an adoption statement; advertise the adoption and where the documents may be inspected i.e. Council's offices and website. - The Inspectors Report and final Sustainability Appraisal must be made available as before. Anyone who asked to be notified must be informed and a copy of the Inspectors Report supplied.

Consultation Methods for Development Plan Documents

10.28 The following table shows the some methods proposed to involve the community in the preparation of Development Plan Documents. These proposed methods have been informed by informal consultations and the results of questionnaires sent to Regulation 25 consultees: Although the Statement of Community Involvement is a separate document within the Local Development Framework, it must be produced in line with the production stages outlined above, and the methods of consultation will be the same as for Development Plan Documents.

Table 6: Consultation Methods for Development Plan Documents.

Consultation Method	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7
Information on Council's website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Documents available at Council Offices and Libraries		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Letter		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Newspaper articles and/or adverts		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Leaflets		✓	✓		✓		
Questionnaires		✓	✓				
Presentations to individuals or groups		✓	✓		✓		
Targeted consultation / survey	✓	✓	✓				
Public exhibitions or displays		✓	✓		✓		
Relevant Regulation		25	26	27	28/29	34	24/36

Supplementary Planning Documents

10.29 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are used in deciding planning applications and as such will be subject to thorough processes of community involvement and public consultation. The nature of community involvement will depend on the subject of the document being produced. A consultation period of 4 – 6 weeks will take place for all Supplementary Planning Documents and once any representations have been received, considered and any necessary changes made, the Council will adopt the document. Supplementary Planning Documents do not require an independent examination but will include a Consultation Statement and a Sustainability Appraisal.

Table 7: Production Stages for Supplementary Planning Documents

Stage	Description	Regulatory Requirements
<p>Stage 1 Pre-production</p> <p>(Also known as the scoping stage)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is the stage prior to production of a draft document. - Used to research and gather evidence, it must consider the implications of other local strategies, initiatives and a sustainability appraisal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No formal requirements, but may involve other groups to source further information, develop the evidence base and identify issues and options. - Consult with statutory bodies to assist with development of sustainability appraisal
<p>Stage 2 Production of Draft Supplementary Planning Document</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council will decide what the preferred options are and produce the draft document. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A sustainability appraisal and a statement of how the Council has complied with the Statement of Community Involvement must be produced.
<p>Stage 3 Draft Supplementary Planning Document Consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council will publish the Draft Supplementary Planning Document and invite comments from the community and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reg. 17 applies - A six-week statutory public consultation must be undertaken, - Supplementary Planning Documents, including a Sustainability Report and a Statement of Conformity with the S CI, must be available for inspection at the Council's Offices, Libraries and on the Council's website and this information advertised in a local newspaper. - Copies must be sent to the Government Office and to all bodies set out in Reg. 17.
<p>Stage 4 Preparation of Final Supplementary Planning Document</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responses received from the public consultation period will be considered and the document amended as necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reg. 18 applies - Summary and analysis of representations produced - Process of public consultation reported
<p>Stage 5 Adoption</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supplementary Planning Document is presented to Full Council and adopted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reg. 19 applies - Formal adoption

Consultation Methods for Supplementary Planning Documents

10.30 The following table shows the some consultation methods proposed to involve the community in the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents. These proposed methods have been informed by informal consultations and the results of questionnaires sent to Regulation 25 consultees:

Table 8: Consultation Methods for Supplementary Planning Documents

SPD Consultation Method	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Information on Council's website	✓		✓	✓	✓
Documents available at Council Offices and Libraries			✓		✓
Letters			✓		✓
Newspaper articles and/or adverts			✓		✓
Leaflets			✓		
Questionnaires			✓		
Presentations to individuals or groups			✓		
Targeted consultation / survey	✓	✓	✓		
Relevant Regulation			17	18	19

Strategic Environmental Assessment / Sustainability Appraisal

10.31 We are required as part of the forthcoming Local Development Framework and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC), to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment and a Sustainability Appraisal of all Development Plan Documents (excluding the Statement of Community Involvement) and Supplementary Planning Documents.

10.32 Sustainability Appraisal assesses the social, environmental and economic effects of policies, whereas the Strategic Environmental Assessment looks at the various environmental impacts of policies. The Directive requires that both the public and relevant authorities are consulted and this will be carried out in parallel with the production stages of the Local Development Documents as set out in the Local Development Scheme.

Providing Regular Feedback

- 11.34 At the end of each consultation period we will analyse the responses made and prepare a summary report that will list the comments made, the Council's response to these and how they have been taken in to account. This information will be available on the Council's website and sent to respondents. Minimum feedback will include:
- An acknowledgement of your response to a specific consultation or document
 - A summary of how the process is going
 - Information on how information will be used
 - Notification of when a document is adopted (if requested by respondent)

Chapter 11 - Community Involvement in Development Control

- 11.1 Planning Decisions shape the future development of East Herts and the areas where people live, work and spend their leisure time. As all planning applications must be determined in accordance with national, regional and East Herts Council policies, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, we believe it is important that the local community be involved in the determination process. The Statement of Community Involvement provides an opportunity for East Herts Council to set out our minimum standards of service, the statutory requirements for publicising applications and our proposed approach to, and processes for, involving statutory bodies and the local community in determining planning proposals.
- 11.2 For many people their main contact with the planning system is through planning applications, either as an applicant or as someone who might be affected by an application. This section briefly explains the consultation procedures that we must follow for the three types of planning applications we receive to enable us to achieve Government targets - these are 'major', 'minor' and 'other':
- **Major applications** include:
 - Residential Development (including change of use): 10 dwellings or more, or if the number is unknown, or the site area is more than 0.5 hectares
 - For all other uses: where the floor space created is 1,000m² or more, or where the site area is 1 hectare or more
 - **Minor applications** include:
 - Residential Development: less than 10 dwellings
 - For all other uses: where the floor space created is less than 1,000m²
 - All development that is below the threshold of Major development, and does not fall within the classification of 'Other' development

- **Other applications** include:
 - Change of use involving no building or engineering work
 - Householder developments
 - Applications for tree works
 - Applications for advertising consent
 - Listed building applications
 - Conservation area consent applications
 - Certificates of lawfulness
 - Certificates of appropriate alternative development
 - Development by Government departments

How decisions are made:

- 11.3** The Government sets challenging targets for dealing with applications;
- To determine 60% of major applications within 13 weeks,
 - To determine 65% of minor applications within 8 weeks
 - To determine 80% of other applications within 8 weeks.

11.4 At East Herts we have exceeded these standards and have set our own higher local targets. In 2004/5 the East Herts Council determined approximately 2500 planning applications of all types.

11.5 The Council uses information provided at the application stage, along with national, regional and local planning policies to determine applications. The Development Control Committee, usually held every four weeks, deals with significant, controversial or staff applications. All other applications are determined by Planning Officers through delegated powers, unless required to go to Development Control Committee by Council Member recommendation.

Opportunities and Methods used to Involve the Community in Development Control:

11.6 As every planning application or proposal is unique and treated as such, the opportunities for community involvement and the consultation techniques will vary for each application. As it is impractical to list every type of planning application here, table 6 outlines the action taken by the Council at each stage to enable the community to put forward their views.

11.7 Pre-application Stage / Developer Consultation - The aim of pre-application discussions is to see if the principle of development is acceptable before any formal application is made so that adjustments to proposals can be made if required. Any advice given at this stage is not binding and there are no statutory requirements for pre-application discussions. However, the Council is always willing to enter into pre-application discussions with developers on all major or sensitive schemes. The Council relies on potential developers to engage with the community and can only encourage them to consult on their proposals prior to application.

- 11.8 Application Stage** - On receipt of a planning application, the Council will follow the statutory requirements for publicity as set out in Article 8 of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995. Table 6 sets out the Council's current practice, which exceeds the minimum required by the regulations. Other regulations set out the requirements for applications for listed buildings and conservation areas.
- 11.9 Decision Stage** - The basis for deciding each individual application is whether or not the proposed use, or development of the site, for which the application has been made would be acceptable in land use and environmental terms. The proposals must be satisfactory in relation to Local Plan policies and national planning guidance. (Only objections that raise relevant planning issues can be considered in relation to the application). If the application is in accordance with planning policy it is allowed by the Council's scheme of delegation.
- 11.10 Development Control Committee** - Committee meetings are usually held once every four weeks on Wednesdays, starting at 7.30pm, alternating between the Council offices at Bishop's Stortford and Wallfields, Hertford. Under new rules for public speaking, there is now an opportunity for one person to speak in support of an objection, and one person to speak in objection to each application at the meeting. Each person or group of people opposing or supporting the proposal is allowed up to three minutes to speak to the Committee. How to register to speak and the rules for these meetings are explained in greater detail on the Council's website www.eastherts.gov.uk and in a leaflet available from Council offices.
- 11.11 Post Decision** - Once a decision has been made, anyone who has submitted representations in respect of the application will be notified by letter of the outcome of the decision. Details of all decisions will be published on the Council's website and with the weekly list of applications. A full copy of the decision notice is also available to view on the council's website and on the statutory planning register in the planning department. A register of associated legal agreements (section 106 agreements) is also available for inspection by the public.
- 11.12 Appeals** - Once the decision has been made to refuse an application or permit it with conditions, the applicant has the right of appeal. The Council will notify all objectors if an applicant decides to appeal against a decision, and all who have commented on the application are invited to submit further comments to the Planning Inspectorate. Further information on the appeals process is available from Development Control and on the Planning Inspectorate website: www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk
- 11.13 Development Briefs / Master Plans** - Briefs for specific sites or areas can be produced either by the Council or the prospective developer. Council approval of the developers brief is required if it is to be used as

a material consideration in the planning application. The public can become involved through consultation on these.

Table 9: Methods used to involve the community in Development Control

Method	Pre-application Stage	Major & Departure Applications	Minor Applications	Other Minor Applications	Appeals
Advertise receipt of application on website		Always – weekly list posted on website	Always – weekly list posted on website	Always – weekly list posted on website	
Copy of application available for inspection at Council Offices		Always	Always	Always	Always
Erection of Site Notice		Always	Depending on Statutory Requirements – applicant voluntarily displays a Site Notice	Depending on Statutory Requirements – applicant voluntarily displays a Site Notice	If an inquiry is held
Letters sent to neighbours		Always if neighbour nearby	Always if neighbour nearby	Always if neighbour nearby	
Letters sent to statutory and non-statutory consultees		As appropriate	As appropriate	As appropriate	
Copy of application to appropriate Town or Parish Councils		Always	Always	Always	Always
Advert in local newspaper		Always	As appropriate	Listed Building Conservation Area or Right of Way	
Public exhibitions / displays	Occasionally depending on proposal	Occasionally depending on proposal	Occasionally depending on proposal		
Press release	Occasionally depending on circumstance	Occasionally depending on circumstances	Occasionally depending on circumstances		
Public Meeting – applicant presents proposal & answers public questions	Occasionally depending on circumstance * Undertaken by applicant	Occasionally depending on circumstances * Undertaken by applicant	Occasionally depending on circumstances * Undertaken by applicant	Very occasionally	
Application considered in public at Planning Committee		Always	Depending on the requirements of the Council's scheme of delegation	Depending on the requirements of the Council's scheme of delegation	

11.14 Taking your Comments in to Account

All written comments received by the Council in relation to planning applications will be acknowledged in writing and will be considered when deciding the application. The Council always takes on board local planning policies, relevant legislation and all comments received when deciding an application. The final decision might not be to everyone's satisfaction, but all comments received will have been taken into account during the process.

11.15 Enforcement

The Development Control Enforcement Service takes action if there has been a breach of planning control. This can involve the carrying out of development without the necessary planning permission or the failure to adhere to conditions imposed on planning permissions. The aim of this service is to ensure that development within the District is carried out in accordance with planning legislation and guidance; with the policies of the Local Plan; and with any permission granted by the Authority. In this way, the service seeks to remedy the undesirable effects of unauthorised developments; maintain the credibility of the planning system; achieve higher quality outcomes in the built environment; and protect and enhance the character and appearance of East Herts.

Chapter 12 - Feedback Commitment

12.1 Responses and comments made during consultation stages will be considered and the results used to inform decisions and/or shape the document concerned. The Council will:

- Produce a summary report or consultation statement for each consultation undertaken
- Outline key information received
- Report back on decisions made (and why)
- Identify how the document has been amended
- Identify how the process has benefited from community involvement
- Post this information on the Council's website
- Write to respondents to notify of adoption of documents as appropriate

Reviewing the Statement of Community Involvement

Reviewing the Statement of Community Involvement

12.2 The Statement of Community Involvement is flexible and designed to allow for suitable changes that will refine its community involvement activities. Monitoring of the Statement of Community Involvement will be undertaken within the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR). This will check that the target groups the Council wishes to involve and the techniques for engagement remain appropriate; and will ensure that the Council is achieving an effective and representative level of community

involvement across all sectors. A more formal review of the Statement of Community Involvement will be undertaken if recommended by the AMR.

- 12.3 This review would be in conjunction with the local community and relevant stakeholders, and may include an independent review into the effectiveness of the Statement. Any changes will then be incorporated into a revised Statement of Community Involvement to ensure it fulfils the Councils' vision, standards and commitments.

Chapter 13 - Estimate of Resource Requirements

- 13.1 Community Involvement can be costly in terms of resources and staff time. As the Council does not have unlimited resources, the consultation methods outlined within the Statement of Community Involvement are based on a realistic assessment of resources available in the foreseeable future. The Council will be responsible for making the appropriate resources available for this and the annual budget making process and medium term financial strategy will determine whether future resources are required to effectively deliver future consultations in line with the Statement of Community Involvement.
- 13.2 Development Plans Team, Development Control, Community Planning, Administration, Communications and Internal Customer Services will work together to produce a 'sound' Statement of Community Involvement and to undertake future consultations in the most efficient way. To maximise the resources available, the Council as a whole will seek to 'double up' or combine consultations with other Council initiatives or consultations as is appropriate to the subject and timescale involved. This will ensure the most efficient use of resources and staff, and will help to alleviate 'consultation fatigue' for the community.
- 13.3 The Council will also seek to work closely with District Councillors and Parish / Town Councillors as they have special knowledge of their local community's concerns and aspirations.
- 13.4 External facilitators and consultants may also be required for specific consultations or evidence gathering – the financial requirements for these will be considered and an assessment made of the likely resources required for each individual project.
- 13.5 The Council is keen to develop electronic means of involvement and communication, and will offer this as an option wherever possible. The Council's website will be updated to allow interactive consultation via online responses to proposals and documents. However it is important to note that this will not be a replacement for face-to-face communication or more traditional forms of consultation.

- 13.6 **Corporate Consultation Funding** - The Council has identified within its budget sufficient funding to undertake the production of the Statement of Community Involvement as a Council wide corporate document.
- 13.7 **Local Development Framework** - Staff within the Development Plans Team will primarily carry out the consultation processes for the preparation of documents during the transition from the Local Plan to Local Development Framework. An assessment of the likely resources required for each Local Development Document or Supplementary Planning Document is outlined in the Local Development Scheme. The Council has made in-house resources available for these and has identified sufficient funding from central Council budgets to fund any engagement activities as outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement.
- 13.8 **Development Control** - Staff within the Development Control Team will primarily carry out the public consultation processes associated with planning applications. The proposed developer will primarily fund pre-application consultation with guidance from planning officers and adequate funding for the decision making process will be incorporated in to the Development Control Budget.

NEXT STEPS

This version of the Draft Statement of Community Involvement will be subject to a six-week public consultation from 9th November to 21st December 2006. Any representations should be made on the form provided and returned to the Development Plans Team via:

E-mail to: development.plans@eastherts.gov.uk

Post to: Development Plans Team
East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

If you need any further information please contact the Development Plans Team on
Tel: 01992 531626

Or visit the Council's website – www.eastherts.gov.uk

If you would like a translation of this document in another language, large print, Braille, audio or an electronic format, please contact Communications at East Herts Council on 01279 655 261 or email communications@eastherts.gov.uk.

Jeżeli chciałbyś, aby ta informacja została przetłumaczona na język polski skontaktuj się z Działem Łączności przy Radzie Wschodniego Hertfordshire tel. 01279 655 261 lub wyślij e-mail communications@eastherts.gov.uk.

Se desejar esta informação traduzida em português, por favor contacte o departamento de comunicações do East Herts Council no telefone número 01279 655 261 ou via email communications@eastherts.gov.uk

CONSULTING COMMUNITIES

East Herts Draft Statement of Community Involvement

Pre-Submission Consultation Statement

Autumn 2006

*East Herts Council – improving the quality of people's lives and
preserving all that is best in East Herts.*

DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT Pre-Submission Consultation Statement

Contents:	Page
Section 1: Introduction	3
Section 2: Regulation 25 Consultation	4
Section 3: Briefings to The Local Strategic Partnership and East Herts Parish and Town Councillors	7
Section 4: Link Magazine Questionnaire Consultation	8
Section 5: Conclusions on the informal consultations	11

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Regulation 25 Questionnaire and covering letter
- Appendix 2: Issues and Options Briefing Paper
- Appendix 3: Responses to Regulation 25 Questionnaire
- Appendix 4: LINK Magazine Questionnaire
- Appendix 5: Responses to Link Magazine Questionnaire

SECTION 1:

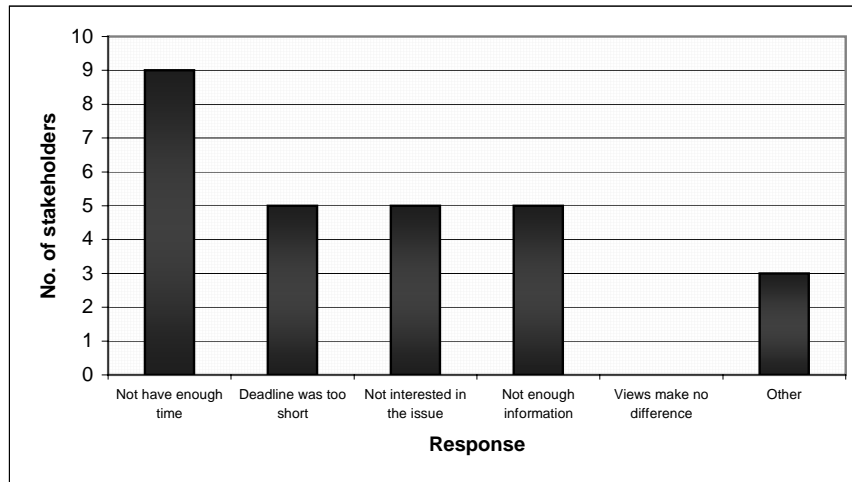
1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and the associated Regulations, require every Local Planning Authority to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement as part of the Local Development Framework.
- 1.2 The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how East Herts Council will involve the community in the preparation, alteration and review of Council policies and decisions. It sets out the following key issues:
 - What policies and decisions the Council will seek involvement on
 - When community involvement will be sought
 - Which groups, organisations and individuals should be involved
 - How involvement will be undertaken and feedback provided
- 1.3 There are three main stages for consultation during the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement:
 1. Issues and Options (Pre-production) (Regulation 25)
 2. Preferred Options (Draft Document) (Regulation 26)
 3. Submission (Regulation 28)
- 1.4 This consultation report document has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. It accompanies the Draft Statement of Community Involvement and sets out for each stage of consultation:
 - The consultation undertaken
 - The responses received
 - How the responses have been taken into account in the preparation of the Draft Statement of Community Involvement
- 1.5 Section 2 provides information on the informal consultation carried out under Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.
- 1.6 Section 3 provides information on the briefings given to the Local Strategic Partnership and East Herts Parish and Town Councils, and additional consultations undertaken
- 1.7 Section 4 provides information on the questionnaire in the Autumn 2006 edition of Link magazine.
- 1.8 Section 5 provides conclusions on the overall results of initial informal consultations so far and how these have been incorporated in to the Draft Statement of Community Involvement.

SECTION 2:

2.0 **Regulation 25 Consultation**

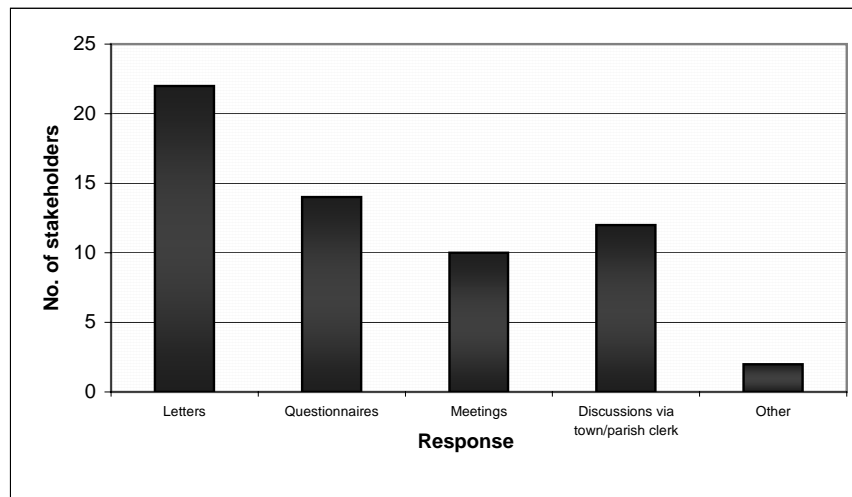
- 2.1 This informal consultation consisted of sending a questionnaire and covering letter to all regulation 25 statutory consultees, together with the Issues and Options Briefing Paper outlining the scope and timescale of the Statement of Community Involvement.
- 2.2 Under Regulation 25 the statutory consultees are the relevant Regional Planning Body (The East of England Regional Assembly), the relevant County Council (Hertfordshire), East Herts Parish and Town Councils, neighbouring County Councils, District Councils, Parish and Town Councils, and the Highways Agency. (The Statement of Community Involvement Appendix 2 gives a full list of these Statutory Consultees).
- 2.3 The consultation material was sent out on 28th July 2006 to a total of 89 Regulation 25 consultees. The consultation period ran until 30th September 2006, to give time for response over the summer period.
- 2.4 Of the 89 questionnaires sent out 35 were returned, giving a 39.3% return rate. Of these, 3 were returned blank from adjoining Parish Councils, but still used when analysing the final results.
- 2.5 The questionnaire asked for the views of the recipients on the processes and outcomes of consultations as experienced by the consultees, the proposed Statement of Community Involvement, community involvement in the Planning process and the best role for Community Voice.
- 2.6 **Results** - The issues and options stage consultations as outlined above, provided a range of mostly positive feedback and confirmed that there is not one single solution to meeting the differing consultation and community involvement expectations of the people of East Herts. (See Appendix 3 for a percentage analysis of the responses to the Regulation 25 questionnaire).
- 2.7 The majority of respondents preferred early involvement in the processes of consultation and engagement, together with a variety of consultation methods. Making consultation material available on the Council's website and the ability to respond online, as well as by post, were highlighted by the responses received. The Draft Statement of Community Involvement reflects these views and also confirms the request for feedback on consultations to be made in writing.
- 2.8 **Processes and Outcomes of Consultations** – 65.6% of respondents had received four or more consultations from East Herts Council in the last year, of these the majority had responded on more than one occasion. However of those who did not respond the main reason given was 'not enough time' at 28.1%.



Why did you not respond to our consultations?

2.9 43.8% of those who did respond to consultations felt that their views had been ‘taken in to account’ and 71.9% had received written feedback on the outcome of the consultation. The majority (78.1%) thought that written feedback should be provided on consultations and 18.8% thought it depends on the consultation itself.

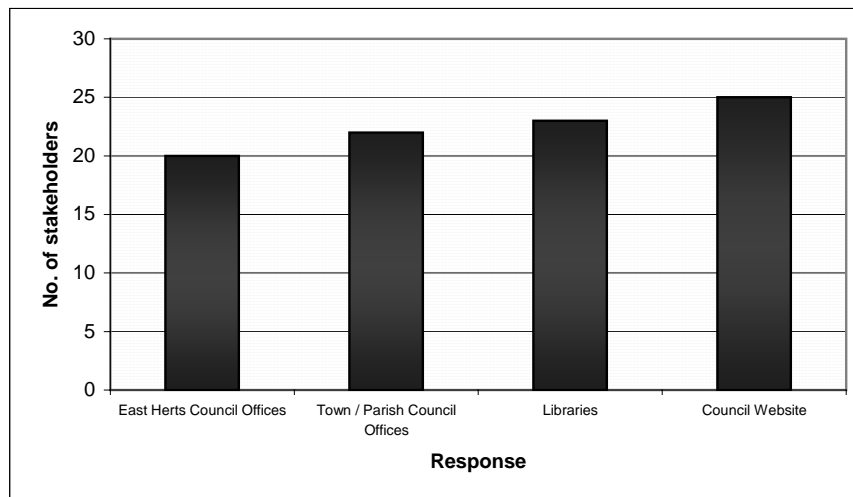
2.10 The preferred way of consulting the respondents was by letters (62.9%), followed by questionnaires (40.0%) and ‘discussions via your Town / Parish Clerk’ (34.3%).



What methods of consultation do you think best meet the needs of your Council?

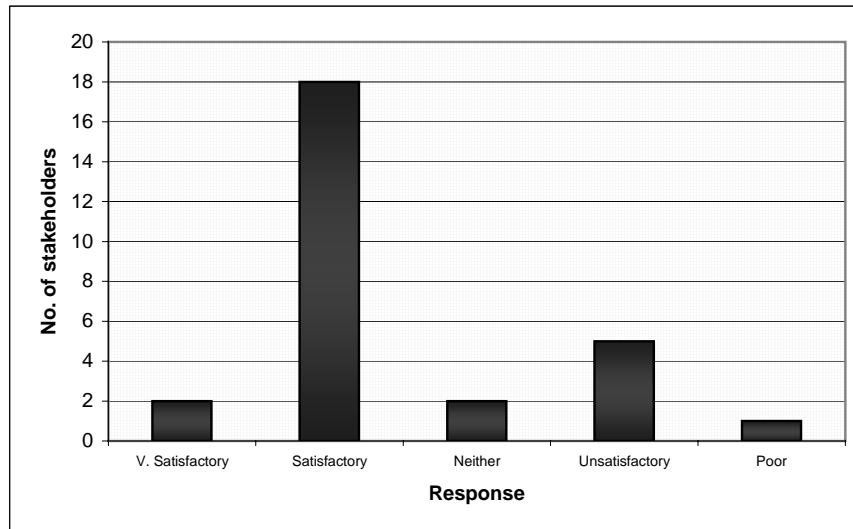
2.11 This preference for written consultation methods was supported by the respondent’s first choice of receiving consultation material by post (80%), closely followed by e-mail (37.1%).

- 2.12 'Completing a response form and returning by post' (65.7%) was the most popular way of responding to consultation material received. However the next preferred way was 'completing a response form online' (27.7%).
- 2.13 Encouragingly 40% of respondents thought that East Herts Council spent 'about the right amount' on consultations, with only 14.3% saying 'too much' was spent.
- 2.14 **Statement of Community Involvement – Issues and Options Paper –** 77.1% of respondents felt that this gave them 'a good introduction to the Statement of Community Involvement', with only 8.6% saying 'no'.
- 2.15 The majority of respondents favoured consulting the community, of these 47.8% of respondents thought that the community should be consulted 'only when firm proposals have been developed', and 37.1% thought that the community should be consulted 'throughout the process from initial issues and options onwards'. Only 2.9% of respondents replied 'don't consult, just keep the community informed'.
- 2.16 The most popular place for consultation material to be made available for the public was the Council's website (71.4%), followed by Libraries (65.7%), Town / Parish Council Offices (62.9%), and East Herts Council Offices (57.1%).



Where should consult consultation material be available for the public?

- 2.17 **Community Involvement in Planning -** The majority (74.3%) were aware of how we consult on planning applications, with 51.4% being satisfied with the current consultation procedures. Only 2.9% felt that the current procedure was 'poor'.



How do you feel about our current consultation procedure for planning applications?

2.18 Community Voice – Of those attending Community Voice meetings the majority felt that they were ‘good’, although some commented that they were poorly attended. The poor attendance could be explained as 11.4% of respondents were ‘too busy to attend’ and 8.6% ‘had never heard of it’. However the majority of comments received felt that Community Voice works well as a way of communicating with local people (31.4%).

2.19 It must be remembered that these initial results have been obtained from informal consultations with Regulation 25 Consultees and the responses received reflect the views of the bodies concerned.

SECTION 3:

3.0 **Local Strategic Partnership and East Herts Town and Parish Councillor Briefings**

3.1 A briefing was held for the Local Strategic Partnership Officers Group on 14th June 2006, at which a PowerPoint presentation was given. This outlined the scope and timetable of the Statement of Community Involvement and outlined the Regulation 25 consultation and proposed Link Magazine questionnaire. Positive verbal feedback was received from members of the group.

3.2 As part of the briefings given by Development Control to East Herts Parish and Town Councillors an outline of the forthcoming Local Development Framework was given and the scope and timescale of the Statement of Community. Again positive verbal feedback was received from those attending.

3.3 **Additional Consultations / Information on the Statement of Community Involvement**

- 3.4 Information relating to the Local Development Framework and the Statement of Community Involvement was put on to the Council's website (www.eastherts.gov.uk) during the summer of 2006. This provided information on the scope and timescale of the Statement of Community Involvement and how to get involved.
- 3.5 The Draft Statement of Community Involvement was subject to Internal consultation by selected Elected Members, Directors, Heads of Service and Officers within East Herts Council (including Building control, Communication, Community Protection, Development Control, Development Plans and Policy service sections of the Council).

SECTION 4:

4.0 **Link Magazine Questionnaire Consultation**

- 4.1 A questionnaire was produced to be part of the autumn edition of Link magazine, which is distributed free to all households within East Herts in September, approximately 56,000 copies. (See Appendix 4).
- 4.2 Anyone returning a completed questionnaire was entered into a prize draw competition to win a voucher for £25 and a £25 donation to a charity of their choice. Entry to the draw provided the opportunity for the entrant to be consulted at the next stage in the production of the Statement of Community Involvement unless they opted out by ticking a box on the prize draw entry slip.
- 4.3 The deadline for returning the completed questionnaire and entering the prize draw was set at 30th September 2006, and as of Monday 9th October 2006 81 questionnaires had been returned, giving a response rate of 0.15%.
- 4.4 The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section asked for preferences from the community on what they would like to be consulted on, how and where this should take place and who should be involved. The second section asked for the respondents individual preferences for becoming more involved, what they would be willing to attend or participate in, where and when these events should take place, and finally what the respondent thought of East Herts Council spending on consultation. The Third section concerned Community Voice.
- 4.5 **Results** – The responses received from the 81 questionnaires returned have been analysed to give the following results. Overall, when compared to other Councils undertaking consultation on community involvement, the response rate from this exercise can be considered as good, although a greater response rate had been expected due to the prize draw

competition element of the questionnaire. (See Appendix 5 for the percentage results from the Link magazine questionnaire).

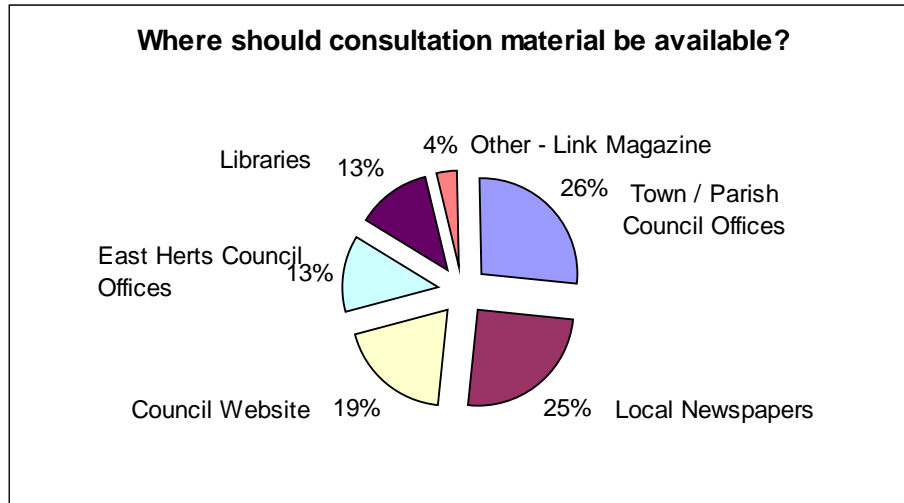
4.6 Section 1 - Community preferences for consultation - this section asked for preferences from the community on what they would like to be consulted on, how and where this should take place and who should be involved.

4.7 The questionnaire asked which of nineteen subject areas the respondents would like to be consulted on. These subject areas were ranked in the following order by the respondents:

POSITION / RANKING	PREFERENCES FOR CONSULTATION
1	Own village / town
2	Transport / parking
3	Refuse / recycling services
4	Open / green spaces
5	New housing developments
6	Town centre developments
7	Budget / spending priorities
8	Leisure / sports facilities
9	Environmental policy
10	Community safety
11	Planning policy and applications
12	Retail developments
13	Cultural and recreational services
14	Council performance / reputation
15	Housing policy
16	Gypsy / traveller sites
17	Affordable housing
18	Licensing policy and applications
19	Employment areas

4.8 How should we consult the community? - The respondents were asked to nominate their top three ways of consulting the community. Link magazine came out in first position, followed by 'postal surveys and questionnaires' in second place and 'articles in newspapers, radio and TV' in third place.

4.9 Where should consultation material be available? - 26% of respondents ranked 'Town / parish council offices' first, with information in local newspapers second and information on the Council's website in third place. Libraries and East Herts Council Offices tied fourth position and Link magazine was mentioned by 4% of respondents.

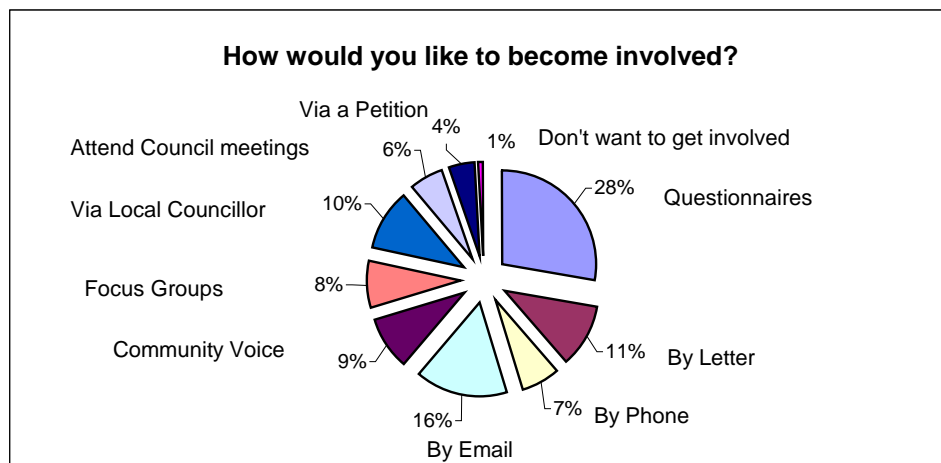


4.10 When asked if anyone or group had been forgotten as a target consultee, several responses were received, including regular visitors to the area, schools and East Herts Council staff and employees.

4.11 92.5% of respondents stated that they were involved with one or more local groups or organisations. Of these respondents 21% being involved with residents groups, followed by 14.8% with community groups, 14.8% with sports groups, and 11.1% with youth groups.

4.12 Section 2 – Individual Preferences for consultation - - this section asked for the respondents individual preferences on ways of becoming more involved in consultations, what they would be willing to attend or participate in, and where and when such events should be held. It also asked what the respondent thought of East Herts Council spending on consultation.

4.13 The following table shows preferences for becoming more involved, the percentages have been rounded up, but a clear preference was shown for written communications.



- 4.14 An overall preference was clearly shown for written communication and consultation. However, a significant percentage favoured contacting a Local Councillor and this has been incorporated into the statement of Community Involvement.
- 4.15 The majority of respondents were willing to attend small focus groups (43.8%), followed by public meetings (40%), and stakeholder / community workshops (16.3%).
- 4.16 The overall preference of respondents was for these events to be held in the evening (77.8%), either at Schools or Libraries (38.9%), or at local Community centres (35.2%).
- 4.17 When asked about east Herts Council spending on consultation 15.8% of respondents thought it was 'about right', 13.2% thought it was 'too much' and 6.6% thought it was 'too little'. However, 64.5% ticked the box marked 'don't know'.
- 4.18 **Section 3 - Community Voice** – the majority of respondents (63.8%) had never attended a Community Voice meeting, with the main reasons being 'never heard of it' (3.9%), followed by 'not aware of when it meets' (19.8%). However of the 36.3% who had attended, the overall experience was rated as positive (78.1%) and the majority thought Community Voice worked as a way of communicating with people (66.7%).

SECTION 5:

5.0 **Conclusions on the overall results of the informal consultation**

- 5.1 The Draft Statement of Community Involvement has been produced to take in to account the views and responses from these informal consultations. Therefore, increased emphasis has been placed on early community involvement in the preparation, alteration and review of the Council's policy and decision-making processes.
- 5.2 A variety of consultation methods are to be made available for consideration, and greater emphasis placed on including as many individuals, groups and organisations as possible in the consultation and community involvement process.
- 5.3 As the many respondents to these informal consultations expressed a preference for written and electronic consultation and communication, more consultation material is to be made available on the Council's website and the option to respond online to these will be explored.
- 5.4 The Statement of Community Involvement has been amended to take into account the important responsibility of elected Councillors as the 'voice' of the local community and the intrinsic role they play in community involvement and engagement.

- 5.5 The section on Community Involvement in Development Control in the Draft Statement of Community Involvement has been expanded to provide a table setting out how and when consultation is undertaken in response to planning applications.
- 5.6 The Draft Statement of Community Involvement will be subject to a further six-week public consultation period from 9th November to 21st December 2006. This will be linked to consultation on other planning policy documents to enable more efficient and cost effective community engagement for both the Council and the local community.
- 5.7 Only statutory consultees will be provided with a 'hard copy' of the draft documents for consultation. All other consultees on the Local Development Framework database will be written to individually to inform them of when the consultation is taking place, and to advise them of where and when the documents can be inspected. This has been undertaken to take into account preferences for electronic communication and consultation, and will enable the Council to conserve resources and be more cost effective.
- 5.8 All responses received from the formal statutory six-week consultation period will be analysed and the Statement of Community Involvement amended as required.