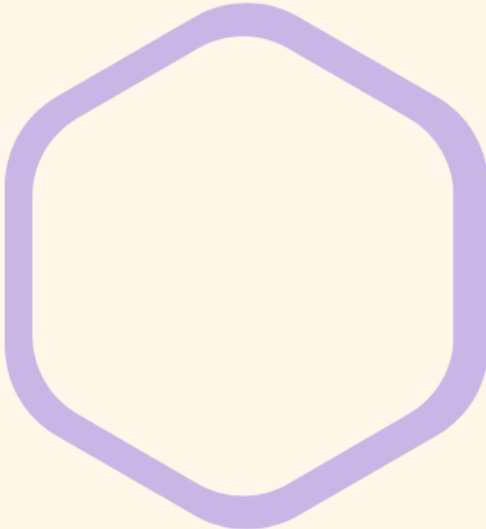


# East Herts SCI 2025

## Statement of Community Involvement



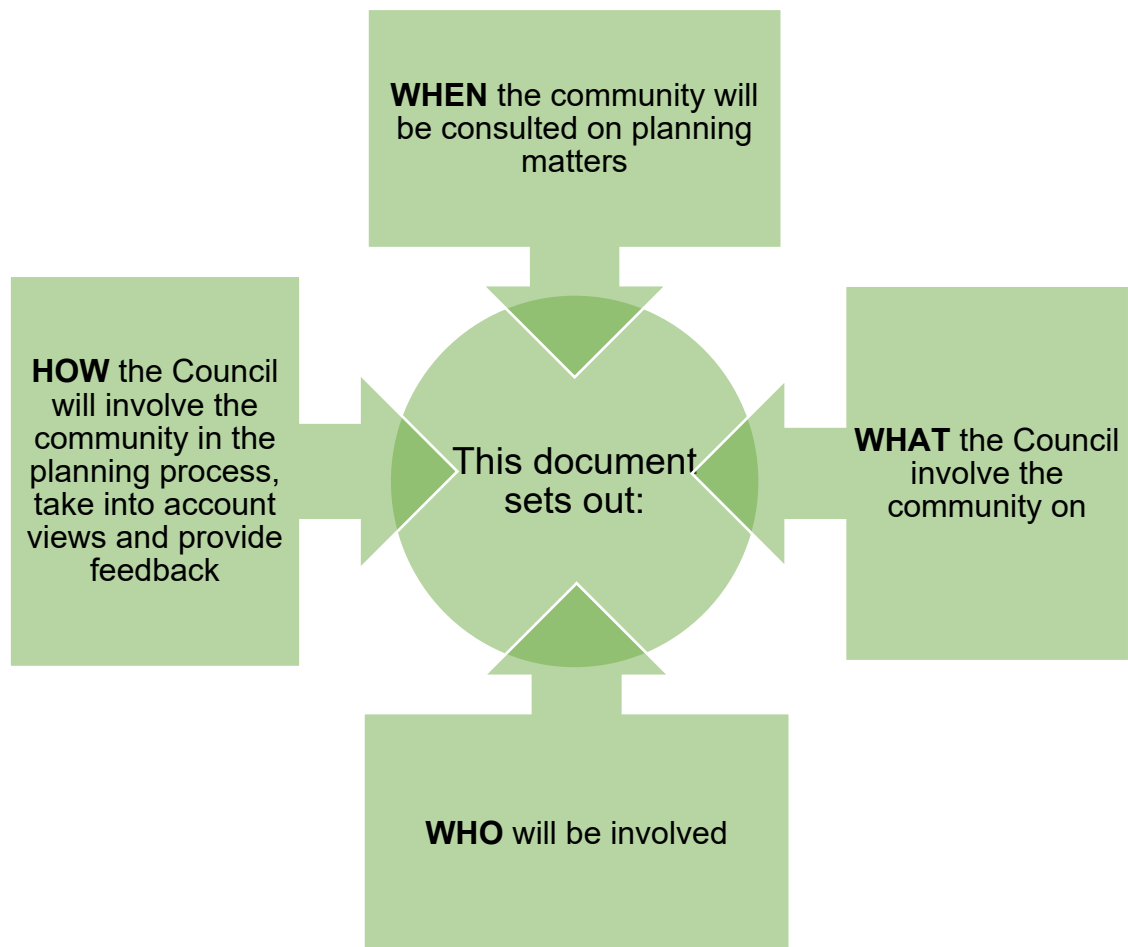
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# 1.0 Introduction

## What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) explains how East Herts District Council will involve the community and stakeholders in plan making, neighbourhood planning and in the consideration of planning applications, including master planning. The planning system can be complex and the SCI aims to address uncertainty by setting out how the Council will engage with people at the various stages of the planning process.



## Why prepare an SCI?

1.2 Planning shapes the places where people live and work. Community engagement is fundamental to ensuring that stakeholders and the local community are involved with the planning system and can influence a wide range of planning decisions. The NPPF requires that local planning authorities engage early, proportionately and effectively.

1.3 The Council wants to involve all sectors of the community in the planning process and is committed to always either meeting or exceeding the minimum legal requirements for consultation set out in the Planning Regulations<sup>1</sup>. This approach is in accordance with East Herts District Council's Corporate Plan (2024-2027)<sup>2</sup>, which has a priority to listen, be open and transparent in decision making and actions, as well as making improvements to consultation, engagement and conversations with our communities. As the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the Council has a legal duty to prepare an SCI in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (section 18<sup>3</sup>).

### **Why revise the current SCI?**

1.4 The Council's first SCI was published in 2008 and later revised in 2013 and then 2019. In 2020 an Addendum updated the SCI to reflect Covid-19 restrictions. Under the current system there is a statutory requirement to review the SCI every five years and also to include policies for giving advice or assistance on making and modifying neighbourhood development plans.

### **Contacting us and more information**

1.5 You can get in contact with the planning team on the email address below:

- For questions relating to this document and planning policy matters contact the planning policy team - [planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk)
- For questions relating to the planning application process please contact the development management service – [planning@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:planning@eastherts.gov.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Currently the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012; the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017; The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended); Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012; Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015; The Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2017; The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Corporate Plan 2024-27 - [www.eastherts.gov.uk/about-east-herts-0/vision-and-corporate-priorities](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/about-east-herts-0/vision-and-corporate-priorities)

<sup>3</sup> As amended by the Planning Act 2008, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.

1.6 Both teams can be contacted on 01279 655261 or by post at East Herts District Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8EQ.

1.7 You can also keep up to date by following the Council's social media accounts below:

- Facebook @EastHertsCouncil;
- Instagram @EastHertsCouncil;
- X @EastHerts;
- LinkedIn @EastHertsDistrictCouncil;
- YouTube @EastHertsDistrict.

## 2.0 Principles of consultation

### What has informed the principles?

1.8 The 'Gunning Principles' set out four consultation principles that have been recognised through the courts as the basis for a fair public consultation. These are that:

Proposals are at a formative stage and a final decision has not been made or predetermined;

There is sufficient information to give intelligent consideration i.e. the information provided is related to the consultation, available, accessible and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response;

Adequate time is given to consultees for consideration and response;

Conscientious consideration must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made. For example, providing evidence that consultation responses were taken into account.

1.9 The Council will ensure that these principles are incorporated into all consultations. This commitment is illustrated through the Council's [Corporate Plan 2024-2027](#) which agreed the LEAF priorities for the Council, these include a number of planning matters such as the District Plan, Community Forums and Neighbourhood Plans. The priorities for the Council are:

- Listening, opening and transparent;
- Environmentally focused;
- Acting with the community;
- Fair and inclusive.

1.10 This further highlights the Council's agreed commitment to work with and engage with communities and stakeholders in decision making in the district. In addition to this commitment the Council consulted and adopted 'A Listening

Council' document in 2024, setting out principles for information giving, engagement and consultation, this includes:

- Transparency;
- Straightforward, jargon free messaging;
- Involvement methods tailored to the locality, community and topic;
- A genuine desire to listen;
- Multi-channel involvement;
- Reaching out to those whose voices can sometimes go unheard;
- Allowing people to be able to get the information from the Council at the level of detail they prefer;
- Councillors being fully involved;
- Listening to feedback.

### **What are the guiding principles?**

1.11 Taking account of all of the principles set out above, table 2.1 below sets out the guiding principles for consultations on planning matters. There are however statutory requirements that the Council needs to fulfil when consulting on planning applications which may set out different parameters, such as the length of time to consult. The specific process undertaken for planning applications is set out in section 6. Further details on the process and consultation methods used will be set out in section 3.

Table 2.1: Guiding principles of consultations

Principle		How will this be achieved?
1	Consultation publications will be clear and concise, making them accessible to all groups and individuals, including those with little to no knowledge of the planning process.	Consultations will clearly state what is being proposed, how and when you can get involved. Planning jargon will be avoided as far as possible.
2	Effective consultation is used as early as possible in the process.	Where possible, consultations will be programmed early in the planning process, ensuring enough time is given for responses to be analysed effectively and feed into decision making.
3	Consultations clearly highlight how responses will be taken into account and the next stages in the planning process.	The Council will highlight what consultations will inform and how they can view the Council's response to issues they have raised.
4	Planning decisions are carried out in a transparent way.	Planning decisions will be easily accessible to view to all and will be available to view on the Council's website.
5	We welcome a wide range of views from all and will involve representatives of a cross-section of stakeholders, ensuring that different needs and a view of different sections or groups of the community are considered.	Anyone can respond to planning consultations regardless of background and personal circumstances. Where proposals are likely to impact a certain group within the community, a targeted approach may be used.
6	Consultation material will be made accessible for those with different needs.	We will ensure communication materials represent a diverse range of people, including different ethnic backgrounds, genders, sexual



	Principle	How will this be achieved?
		orientations, disabilities and ages. We will ensure, wherever possible, that digital content (websites, social media, online resources) meets accessibility standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), screen reader compatibility, etc.). For non-digital material, we will consider requests for translation services, including Easy Read, Braille and multi-language formats.
7	We will adhere to legislative requirements in all planning matters.	We will monitor emerging legislative requirements as well as ensuring all planning regulations and acts are followed. We will also handle personal data in the Council's Data Protection Policy and Guidelines, which are designed to ensure that the activities of the Council comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) which came in to force on 25th May 2018.
8	We will reach out to our communities in the most direct and resource efficient manner possible, so that we can deliver cost-effective mechanisms for consultation in planning matters.	We promote electronic methods of consultation, including email, website and social media, to make involvement easier, quicker and more cost effective. This may also include the use of emerging digital technology.
9	Appropriate consultation methods are used in order to maximise opportunity for community involvement, including those who are hard to reach or seldom heard.	We will use inclusive engagement methods (making use of current guidance and good practice), encouraging participation by people of all backgrounds. Examples of 'hard to reach' or 'seldom heard' groups may include young people, students, the elderly, ethnic minorities,

Principle		How will this be achieved?
		Gypsies and Travellers, homeless people, single parent families, people with disabilities, rural communities and more deprived areas of the district.
<b>10</b>	We will set out clear expectations in relation to how we want developers to engage with our communities throughout the planning process.	Processes such as master planning will be clearly set out so the community and developers both understand how the Council wishes for engagement to be undertaken.

## **Other consultation considerations**

1.12 The SCI aims to ensure that all consultation is carried out in a professional, cost effective and coordinated way. The central role of elected Council members as representatives of their community is unaffected by the SCI; 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.

1.13 It is important to note that the Council reserves the right not to consider or include in its documentation any inappropriate comments submitted from the consultations. These may include, but not be limited to:

- Discriminatory comments;
- Offensive or inflammatory remarks;
- Personal information - this will be redacted where needed.

## **3.0 Consultation techniques and participation**

### **Consultation techniques**

1.14 There are various methods of consultation that we can use to notify communities and stakeholders about consultations as well as methods to engage throughout consultation periods. These can come in different forms such as written word, face to face events and social media.

1.15 We will use various techniques to consult on planning matters. The amount and type of consultation techniques deployed will depend on the scope, scale and topic that is being consulted on. Table 3.1 below provides examples of different consultation techniques that may be utilised.

Table 3.1: Examples of consultation methods

Method	Examples	How they may be used
<b>Traditional written methods</b>	Emails, letters, noticeboards, posters, advertisements in local press, website, surveys, site notices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All information relating to consultations on planning policy documents, planning applications and supporting information will be available on our website, and, where possible, in pdf format so they can be downloaded.</li> <li>• We will notify relevant parties on consultations and where relevant keep them updated on progress of proposals e.g. examination and adoption. This will be through email in the first instance and then letters where that is not the preferred method.</li> <li>• For proposals affecting a large number of people, we will provide the local press with consultation details in advance or within the first few days of its launch to ensure broad public awareness.</li> <li>• Written advertisements or site notices will be used in appropriate locations, dependant on the proposal/consultation.</li> <li>• Depending on the consultation, surveys may be made available online for people to respond.</li> </ul>
<b>Face to face</b>	Public meetings, community forums, the development management forum, steering groups, focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where appropriate we will meet with communities and stakeholders to discuss proposals in more detail.</li> <li>• We may facilitate workshops or focus groups to get more specific views on proposals.</li> <li>• Community forums or steering groups may be used to gather different stakeholders to discuss matters relating to strategic sites or issues. Details of the different forums we have can be found at Appendix A.</li> </ul>

Method	Examples	How they may be used
	groups, workshops, drop-in sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some cases, drop-in sessions may be provided for the public to discuss issues with the Council.</li> </ul>
<b>Social media</b>	Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, NextDoor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council's social media accounts may be used to notify and signpost the public to consultations.</li> <li>• Local advertisements on social media may be used to help reach a larger demographic than traditional methods.</li> <li>• Explanatory videos may be utilised to help explain complex planning matters.</li> <li>• Formal Council meetings or planning events such as hearing sessions may be webcast and available to view online.</li> </ul>
<b>Digital technology</b>	AI, GIS, online meetings and workshops.	The use of digital technology in planning is expanding with technology being used more widely. Where appropriate, these will be utilised to help visualise proposals, summarise responses to consultations and aide consultation on planning matters.

## Digital technology

- 1.16 The Council will seek to utilise digital technologies where appropriate to help improve access to planning and reach a wider audience through consultations, as well as streamlining the process and removing barriers to planning. We will also encourage developers to use these methods where appropriate when consulting on proposals to help improve engagement and get greater input from the community. This area of engagement is under rapid development as innovation and techniques emerge and improve. The Council will seek to harness methods, such as some of those discussed below, where we believe it can bring benefits and improvements to our own engagement exercises.
- 1.17 A digital transformation in planning is underway, with new technologies being created to help make planning more accessible to the public, diversify the ways that consultations are undertaken to reach a wider audience, illustrate complex proposals and issues in a clearer way, make responding to consultations easier and reducing the time required to process responses.
- 1.18 The Government set up the Digital Planning Programme, to help deliver better services, increase productivity within the public sector and use digital technology to modernise the planning system. East Herts has already utilised this programme through the ‘call for sites’ process which was undertaken in 2024. This helped develop a new online mapping technology for site submissions to be made directly online, allowing for more accurate boundary mapping of sites and reducing the amount of time taken to process responses. Building upon this we will look to see how digital technology can further help make consultations more inclusive, effective and clearer.
- 1.19 Below provides some examples of how technology has and could be used in the future to make planning more accessible and inclusive, whilst reducing the amount of internal resources used on processing information which in turn could be used more effectively on other planning matters.

### *Accessibility and inclusivity*

- 1.20 Technologies such as pdf readers and translate services can make planning documents more accessible to different audiences. There is also a growing rate of online planning events and exhibitions which were more traditionally held in person, accessible online for those who may not want to or be able to make in person events.
- 1.21 AI software is increasingly being used to help answer specific questions that the public may have, this has been demonstrated in the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town project where an AI chat is set up on the website to allow people to ask direct questions about the project and get instant responses.
- 1.22 Emerging virtual reality technology and mapping is helping to create more visual proposals which can help make proposals easier to understand compared to traditional 2D maps. This can help empower those to make informed responses to proposals as they can clearly visualise the impact that a proposal may have to the wider area, such as impacts to landscape, design etc. It may also help to eliminate concerns that the public may have from such proposals.
- 1.23 GIS and mapping technology has improved helping to present multiple layers of planning data visually allowing individuals to interact with the data themselves and identify issues relating to particular locations that may impact them more clearly. This can be seen on the East Herts website through on the Policies Map<sup>4</sup>.

#### *Council resources and productivity*

- 1.24 Surveys using interactive mapping are becoming the norm as this allows comments to be pinpointed onto a map. This helps to identify where key issues are located more accurately and could reduce the amount of time processing responses into a consistent format.
- 1.25 New technologies are also emerging that can help to summarise key issues raised through consultations. This can help to reduce the amount of time spent

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<sup>4</sup> Policies Map - <https://cadcorp.cloud/963e0553-5238-483f-8fa7-005650c16546/webmap/1/en-gb/PublicMap/Planning#/>



processing responses and allow the Council to use that time saved for other matters. Consultation software has also progressed to help create instant reporting to provide key statistics and charts from responses instantly, helping to present general, high-level views on certain matters quickly.

1.26 The use of AI is being investigated to see how this can help speed up the planning application validation process. The Government highlighted that up to 50% of planning applications are invalid on submission, which can lead to an estimated 34-day delay per invalid planning application<sup>5</sup>. This has implications for the speed of the planning process as well as officers time. The use of AI to help automate some aspects of validation will help to reduce the chance of invalid applications and speed up the overall process.

### Levels of participation

1.27 The level of participation from the community and different stakeholders will vary depending on the nature of the proposal/project and how advanced the proposal/project may be. We will use a range of methods and activities to involve a variety of stakeholders at different stages.

1.28 Table 3.2 will be used to help identify the level of participation required for the specific project or proposal being consulted on. This will help inform the type of consultation methods that may be used at that stage.

*Table 3.2: Objectives and examples of the levels of participation*

Level of participation	Objective	Promise to the public	Examples
<b>Empower</b>	Devolving or taking joint responsibility for	We will support you to make informed decisions and	Ballots, delegated decision making, referendums

<sup>5</sup> Digital Planning Programme Overview - <https://www.localdigital.gov.uk/digital-planning/digital-planning-programme-overview/>

Level of participation	Objective	Promise to the public	Examples
	decision making.	implement what you decide.	
<b>Collaborate</b>	Working in partnership with stakeholders to shape outcomes.	We will look to you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into decisions.	Neighbourhood Plan Group, steering groups.
<b>Involve</b>	Work with the public to understand aspirations and concerns, ensuring they are understood and considered.	We will work with you ensuring that your feedback is incorporated into proposals and projects.	Workshops, focus groups, interviews, masterplanning, the development management forum, community forums.
<b>Consult</b>	Obtaining feedback and views from the public.	We will take account of your views and feedback.	Surveys, public meetings, website, social media.
<b>Inform</b>	Sharing information on plans, projects and/or progress.	We will keep you informed about what we are doing and how we have considered your opinions/ responses.	Websites, social media posts, newspapers, noticeboards.

## 4.0 Planning Policy Documents

### Introduction

1.29 This section outlines when, how and who the Council will consult on planning policy documents.

1.30 The current planning policy framework for East Herts is set out in two types of documents - Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents – as well as supporting documents. Table 4.1 sets out the purpose of the different documents.

1.31 Development Plan Documents are the basis upon which planning applications will be decided, unless there are material planning considerations that indicate otherwise. They are subject to various stages of community involvement and examination by an independent Inspector. They must accord with national planning policy, be supported by technical evidence and informed by the views of residents, businesses and stakeholders, as appropriate.

Table 4.1: Types of planning documents

Type of document	Document	Description
Development Plan Document	Spatial Development Strategy (joint plans)	A Spatial Development Strategy is a document that is prepared between two or more local planning authorities. A Spatial Development Strategy will set the strategic framework and shared priorities within the wider area within which individual local plans can be prepared.
Development Plan Document	Local Plan (District Plan) and Policies Map	The Council is responsible for producing a Local Plan, which will set out how the district will develop in the future. The Local Plan is locally referred to as the District Plan. The most recent District Plan was adopted in October 2018. It contains strategic policies and site allocations alongside detailed policies for determining planning applications. These are set out spatially on a Policies Map.
Development Plan Document	Minerals and Waste Local Plans	Minerals and Waste Local Plans are produced by Hertfordshire County Council so East Herts Council is a statutory consultee but not directly involved in their production. The County Council has produced its own SCI for matters to which it is responsible.
Development Plan Document	Adopted Neighbourhood Plans	Neighbourhood Plans are led by Parish and Town Councils or designated Neighbourhood Plan Groups. However, East Herts Council has a legal responsibility to advise or assist in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. Consideration of this role and the consultation involved is set out in section 5 of this SCI.

Type of document	Document	Description
Supplementary Planning Documents	Supplementary Planning Documents	These provide guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in the District Plan. They are not part of the development plan, but are a material consideration in planning decisions. SPDs cover a range of issues including topic based advice and site development briefs. They are subject to consultation but not to examination.
Supporting documents	Local Development Scheme	A timetable setting out when documents will be produced.
Supporting documents	Authority Monitoring Report	An annual report setting out the Council's progress against targets and policies.
Supporting documents	Statement of Community Involvement	This sets out how the Council will involve the community and stakeholders in planning matters.

## Who will we consult?

1.32 The Council wants to know the opinions of the people who live, work and visit East Herts. We are required to consult a wide range of statutory organisations and stakeholders during the process of preparing our planning policies. However, the Council is also committed to involving as many local people, groups and organisations as possible in the preparation of planning policy documents.

1.33 We are legally required to consult a range of specific and general consultees when preparing planning policy documents. These are groups with specialist knowledge in certain areas or those that represent specific interest groups. These will be specific and general consultation bodies that may have an interest and/or the local planning authority consider appropriate to the consultation document being prepared. Examples of these consultation bodies include:

- Hertfordshire County Council;
- Adjoining local authorities;
- Parish or town councils within or adjoining the district;
- Organisations that represent business interests in East Herts;
- Organisations that represent the interests of specific parts of the community;
- Infrastructure providers;
- National agencies or bodies.

1.34 Legally the Council must also notify and consult such residents or other persons carrying out business as they consider appropriate. This includes those that have asked to be consulted. The Council recognises that the views of the wider community are important and consults a range of groups and individuals as relevant to the scope and subject of the planning document. These may include the following:

- Residents' Associations and designated Neighbourhood Plan Groups;
- Social, economic and environmental organisations;
- Developers, agents and landowners.

1.35 The Council maintains a database of people and organisations and will consult them where relevant. Individuals, groups and organisations who want to

be involved in future planning policy consultations can be added to the database. They can register on the Council's consultation portal <http://consult.eastherts.gov.uk/portal> or contact the Planning Policy Team. Consultees on the database will also be emailed copies of the District Planning Bulletin as new editions are published.

### **How will we consult?**

1.36 The Council will use a variety of methods to engage and consult with the community and stakeholders. The principles for consultation will be used as a basis for all consultations and a variety of consultation techniques set out in section 3 will be used as and where appropriate. The scope of the planning document and the availability of resources will influence how the Council consult on a case-by-case basis. In all scenarios the Council will meet its statutory duty in regard to consultation.

1.37 For particular stages of consultation on planning policy documents an engagement strategy will be prepared, which will set out the scope of the consultation, timeframes, key messages, the materials required and the methods that will be undertaken in the specific consultation. A template engagement strategy can be found in Appendix B.

1.38 In relation to planning policy consultations we will:

- Meet all of the consultation principles set out in section 2 of this document;
- Directly contact those individuals or organisations we have a statutory duty to contact;
- Directly contact those organisations and individuals in our planning policy database, as appropriate;
- Publicise consultations on our website. We will also use an appropriate combination of other methods set out in table 3.1, to let individuals know that the consultation is underway;
- Make consultation materials available on the Council's website and where appropriate at the Council offices and other deposit locations in the district.

### **How should people respond to consultations?**

- 1.39 Consultation material will clearly highlight how people can respond to consultations. Comments can usually be made as follows:
- the Council's online consultation portal <http://consult.eastherts.gov.uk> ;
  - by email [planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk) ;
  - by post to Planning Policy, East Herts District Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8EQ.

1.40 It is easy to register and respond via the online consultation portal and all the consultation documents and sections can be easily viewed and downloaded in pdf format. You can then submit comments against the relevant part of the document. The portal is particularly useful for managing a high volume of consultation responses efficiently. The Council can provide help on how to use it if required.

### **How will consultation responses be dealt with?**

1.41 Following consultation periods, it is essential to have a feedback loop to keep consultees and the public aware of how their comments have informed the process, what the next stages to provide comments is, and how the Council is progressing on planning policy documents. Following consultations on planning policy documents we will:

- Send confirmation that comments have been received;
- Publish all comments received as soon as feasible, usually planning policy consultations will publish responses in full, unless there is a reason to redact information, for example for GDPR purposes or if comments are discriminatory;
- Comments received in hard copy format will be made available online in an appropriate format where practicable (either scanned or typed up), or if not practicable, the original documents will be available for viewing at the Council offices upon request;
- Petitions will be addressed in accordance with Council policy. Details about the process are set out on the website: [www.eastherts.gov.uk/petitions](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/petitions);
- Standard responses will be considered collectively;



- We will address comments or provide a summary of the main issues raised by the comments, explaining how these have been considered. This process will be reported to either the District Planning Executive Panel (DPEP) or Executive and subsequently recommendations will be agreed by Full Council;
- At the required stages we will produce a consultation statement setting out who was consulted, the main issues raised and how those issues have been addressed;
- We will inform all those people who have requested to be notified of the adoption of future development plan documents and SPDs, when they have been adopted, including details of where and when they can be inspected.

### **How will the public be kept informed following consultations?**

1.42 To ensure that the planning process is transparent, it is vital that the community and stakeholders are kept up to date on how the Council are progressing with planning policy documents and clear communications are provided. Therefore, in addition to consultations and providing feedback we will:

- Update our website, social media and issue press releases highlighting the next steps in the process, if appropriate;
- Notify those that have requested to be kept up to date of key milestones e.g. adoption of documents;
- During examination periods, the Council's website will be kept up to date on progress of the examination, relevant documentation and relevant consultees will be kept informed of the process;
- When a document has been adopted by the Council, the document will be published on the Council's website and when required will be made available in hard copy at relevant locations in the district and relevant consultees will be notified that it has been adopted.

### **East Herts District Plan**

1.1. The District Plan is the local plan for East Herts. It sets out the framework for development in the area and involves various opportunities for public consultation. There are certain regulations that the Council must follow when consulting in the District Plan process, such as the length of consultation and some of the stakeholders with whom consultation is required.

1.2. Table 4.2 illustrates the District Plan making process. The process set out below is based on the new plan making system proposed through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. These are the key steps anticipated in preparing the District Plan. It also highlights the level of participation that is expected at each stage based on table 3.2 in this document.

Table 4.2: District Plan Process and expected consultation at each stage

Stage	Level of participation	Actions
<b>Scoping and early participation</b>	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	In the early phases of plan making we may consult with communities and stakeholders to inform research on matters that might shape the direction of the Plan. The level of consultation that may occur at this stage will depend on what information is being sought.
<b>Plan visioning and strategy development</b>	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	Once formal plan making has commenced a formal public consultation will be held, building on the outputs from the early participation at the scoping phase. Understanding what the issues are in the area will help to shape what should be included within the District Plan and what further research and/or evidence work is required to support the emerging plan. At this stage we will hold a minimum 8 week consultation, and prepare and agree an engagement strategy (as set out in Appendix B) setting out consultation methods that will be used.
<b>Engagement, proposing changes and submission of the Plan</b>	Inform Consult Involve	<p>Following a period of evidence gathering a draft District Plan will be prepared. At this stage the draft District Plan will be formally consulted on with the community, statutory bodies and other key stakeholders. This is the Plan that the Council is seeking to submit to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.</p> <p>At this stage we will hold a minimum 6 week consultation, and prepare and agree an engagement strategy (as set out in Appendix B), setting out the consultation will be undertaken. The Council will have an opportunity to make changes prior to submission of the Plan following consultation.</p>
<b>Examination</b>	Inform Consult	An examination in public on the draft District Plan will be held by an independent Inspector. They will examine if the Plan meets the tests of soundness and is legally compliant. Those who made a

Stage	Level of participation	Actions
		representation in relation to the draft District Plan will be given an opportunity to appear before the Examiner. The Council will ensure that the details of the examination will be available to view on the Council's website and advertised, where appropriate.
<b>Adoption</b>	Inform	The District Plan is finalised, and the Council formally adopts the District Plan. Details of the adoption and the District Plan will be available on the Council's website.

## Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

1.3. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) do not have to go through the formal examination process, but consultation with stakeholders and the wider community is still a vital part of the preparation process. The scope of the consultation and decision on who will be consulted will reflect the nature of the SPD.

1.4. At this point in time the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 has been introduced and does not include the continuation of SPDs. We are currently awaiting secondary legislation before this legislation can be implemented. Therefore, it is likely that during the lifetime of this document SPDs will no longer be in use, and this will be picked up within a future review of this document.

1.5. Table 4.3 sets out the current process in creating SPDs and the level of participation expected at each stage.

*Table 4.3: Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) process*

Stage	Level of participation	Actions
<b>Preparation and evidence gathering</b>	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	Depending on the content and scope of the SPD, early consultation with relevant stakeholders may be used to inform research and evidence gathering.  If consultation is required at this stage then the length of consultation will depend on what information is being sought.
<b>Public participation</b>	Inform Consult Involve	Once an SPD has been drafted comments will be sought on the draft SPD from relevant stakeholders. An engagement strategy will be prepared and agreed with key information about the consultation, a copy of the template can be found at Appendix B.

Stage	Level of participation	Actions
		A minimum 4 week consultation will be undertaken.
<b>Adoption</b>	Inform	Following consultation the SPD will be updated and the Council will formally adopt the SPD and notify those who have asked to be notified of adoption.

## 5.0 Neighbourhood Planning

### Introduction

1.6. Neighbourhood planning is a tool to allow local people to have more control over the planning process. It gives communities statutory powers to identify local priorities and policies that shape development in their area. In East Herts neighbourhood planning is led by parish and town councils, but Neighbourhood Plan Groups may also be designated to lead the work. Neighbourhood Planning consists of:

- Neighbourhood Development Plans - a local framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area;
- Neighbourhood Development Orders - a way for Town and Parish Councils or designated Neighbourhood Plan Groups to grant planning permission for certain kinds of development within a specified area;
- Community Right to Build Orders - a special kind of Neighbourhood Development Order, which grant planning permission for certain development schemes.

1.7. East Herts District Council has a legal responsibility to advise or assist in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. As of April 2025 there are 15 adopted or 'made' Neighbourhood Plans in East Herts and three currently in development. Details about the production of all Neighbourhood Plans is set out on the Council's Neighbourhood Planning webpage<sup>6</sup>, which is updated regularly. There have not yet been any neighbourhood development orders or community right to build orders in East Herts.

1.8. A Neighbourhood Development Plan must follow a similar process to that carried out by the Council for the District Plan, including public consultation and an examination process. However, there is an additional step of a local referendum whereby if more than half the vote is in favour, the plan must then be adopted by the Council. Once brought into legal force, a Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Development Plan, as set out in table 4.1, and decisions on whether or not

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<sup>6</sup> [www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning-activity-east-herts](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning-activity-east-herts)

to grant planning permission in the Neighbourhood Area will need to be made in accordance with it, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **When and how are we involved in plan consultation?**

1.9. The process for preparing Neighbourhood Plans and Orders is set out in the Regulations<sup>7</sup>. We have published our own guidance on Neighbourhood Planning which is available on the Council's website<sup>8</sup> and outlines the key stages of the preparation process and how the Council will work with groups to prepare Neighbourhood Plans. The Locality Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide also provides additional advice and is available on its website<sup>9</sup>. A summary of the plan preparation process and how we guide and assist the neighbourhood planning process is set out in table 5.1. Where the Council consults on the Neighbourhood Plan, the consultation principles outlined in section 2 will be applied, with the level of participation expected at each stage highlighted in table 3.2 in this document.

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<sup>7</sup> Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012; The Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2017.

<sup>8</sup> [www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning)

<sup>9</sup>

[www.neighbourhoodplanning.org/?gad\\_source=1&gclid=EAlaIqobChMI\\_Pvj8v3eiwMV4IBQBh2jlhowEAAYASAAEgLapvD\\_BwE](http://www.neighbourhoodplanning.org/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIqobChMI_Pvj8v3eiwMV4IBQBh2jlhowEAAYASAAEgLapvD_BwE)



Table 5.1: Stages in advising and assisting Neighbourhood Planning

Stage	Level of participation	Consultation opportunities and who leads on the consultation
Regulation 6 & 9 - Receipt of a Neighbourhood Area Designation	Inform Consult	No consultation is required where the whole of the parish is proposed. For other proposed areas the Council will consult for a minimum of 6 weeks. We will publish the application on the website and inform local people in the relevant locality.
Regulations 7 & 10 - Publishing designation of Neighbourhood Area/ Forum	Inform	If the Council approves the application, we will publicise the decision on the website.  If refusing, the Council will publish the reasons for the decision and details about where it can be viewed.
Regulation 14 - Publicity of a Neighbourhood Development Plan prior to submitting to the Council	<u>Led by the Parish/ Town Council or designated Neighbourhood Plan Group.</u>	The Neighbourhood Forum can determine how to consult at this stage, but they will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw up a consultation statement, setting out who and how they have consulted for the next stage of the process.</li> <li>• Consult for a minimum of 6 weeks.</li> <li>• Ensure that they consult the relevant consultation bodies and bring the plan to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the area the plan relates to.</li> <li>• Send the Neighbourhood Plan to East Herts District Council. The Council will advise on the content of the Neighbourhood Plan and provide advice on key assessments.</li> </ul>
Regulation 15 & 16 - After Neighbourhood	Inform Consult	Where a draft neighbourhood plan is submitted to the Council and the Neighbourhood Plan meets the legal requirements we will publicise the final version of the Plan for a minimum of 6 weeks.

Stage	Level of participation	Consultation opportunities and who leads on the consultation
Plan is submitted to the Council.		At this stage the Neighbourhood Plan and all representations (comments) made through consultations will be submitted to the Examiner for their consideration.
Examination, referendum and adoption	Inform Empower	<p>The Plan will be examined by an independent Examiner and a report issued.</p> <p>The results of the examination will be published. The Council will decide if the Plan should move forward to a referendum, publicise that decision and the reasons for it and then coordinate a referendum, where necessary.</p> <p>Following a successful referendum the Council will adopt the Neighbourhood Plan and notify any person that has asked to be notified.</p>

## Reviews and updates to Neighbourhood Plans

1.10. There is no requirement to review or update neighbourhood plans. However, policies in a Neighbourhood Plan may become out of date over time, for example if they conflict with policies in a local plan that is more up to date or where a policy has been in force for a while and new material planning considerations have emerged. Currently, three neighbourhood plans in East Herts have been updated. Once adopted, these revised plans replace the previous neighbourhood plans.

1.11. National Planning Guidance outlines that when updating a neighbourhood plan there are currently three types of modifications that can be made. The level of changes proposed will have implications for the level of consultation that may be undertaken and whether an examination or referendum is required. The different types of modifications are set out below:

Minor (non-material) modifications	Are those which would not materially affect the policies in the plan or permission granted by the order. This could include correcting minor errors such as typos or broken links. These would not require any consultation, or an examination or referendum. Changes must be made by the local planning authority following consent from the qualifying body (Parish/Town Council);
Material modifications	Which do not change the nature of the plan or order would require examination but not a referendum. An example could be the production of a design code which builds upon the existing design policies. A Regulation 14 and Regulation 16 consultation would take place for these proposed modifications. An examination would be required for any material modifications, it is unlikely that this type of modification would lead to a referendum, however this is to be decided by the Examiner;
Material modifications that change the nature of the plan or order	Such as allocating a significant site for development. This type of modification would require the same process as for new neighbourhood plans: a Regulation 14 and Regulation 16 consultation, an examination and a referendum before the plan or order is to be adopted.

1.12. The principles of this document will be used when consulting on neighbourhood plans and order reviews. In all instances the Council will keep the [‘Neighbourhood Planning Activity in East Herts’](#) webpage up to date.

### How does the Council make decisions at each stage?

1.13. The District Council needs to make a number of decisions to support a Neighbourhood Development Plan through the process. Figure 5.1 below clearly sets out the different decision-making process behind each of the steps. The non-key decision process is explained in the glossary.

*Figure 5.1: Stages in advising and assisting Neighbourhood Plan groups*

Regulation 7 & 10	• Executive Committee
Regulation 14 - Council Consultation Response to Neighbourhood Plan	• Non-key decision
Supporting documents e.g Environmental Outcome Reports Screening	• Non-key decision
Consideration of Examiners report & decision to proceed to referendum	• Non-key decision
Making the Neighbourhood Plan	• Full Council

### How do I respond to a Neighbourhood Plan consultation?

1.14. During Council led consultations, comments must be made in writing either in hard-copy form or digitally via email, these can be sent to:

- [planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk) ;
- Planning Policy, East Herts District Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8EQ;
- Via the online consultation portal.

## 6.0 Planning Applications

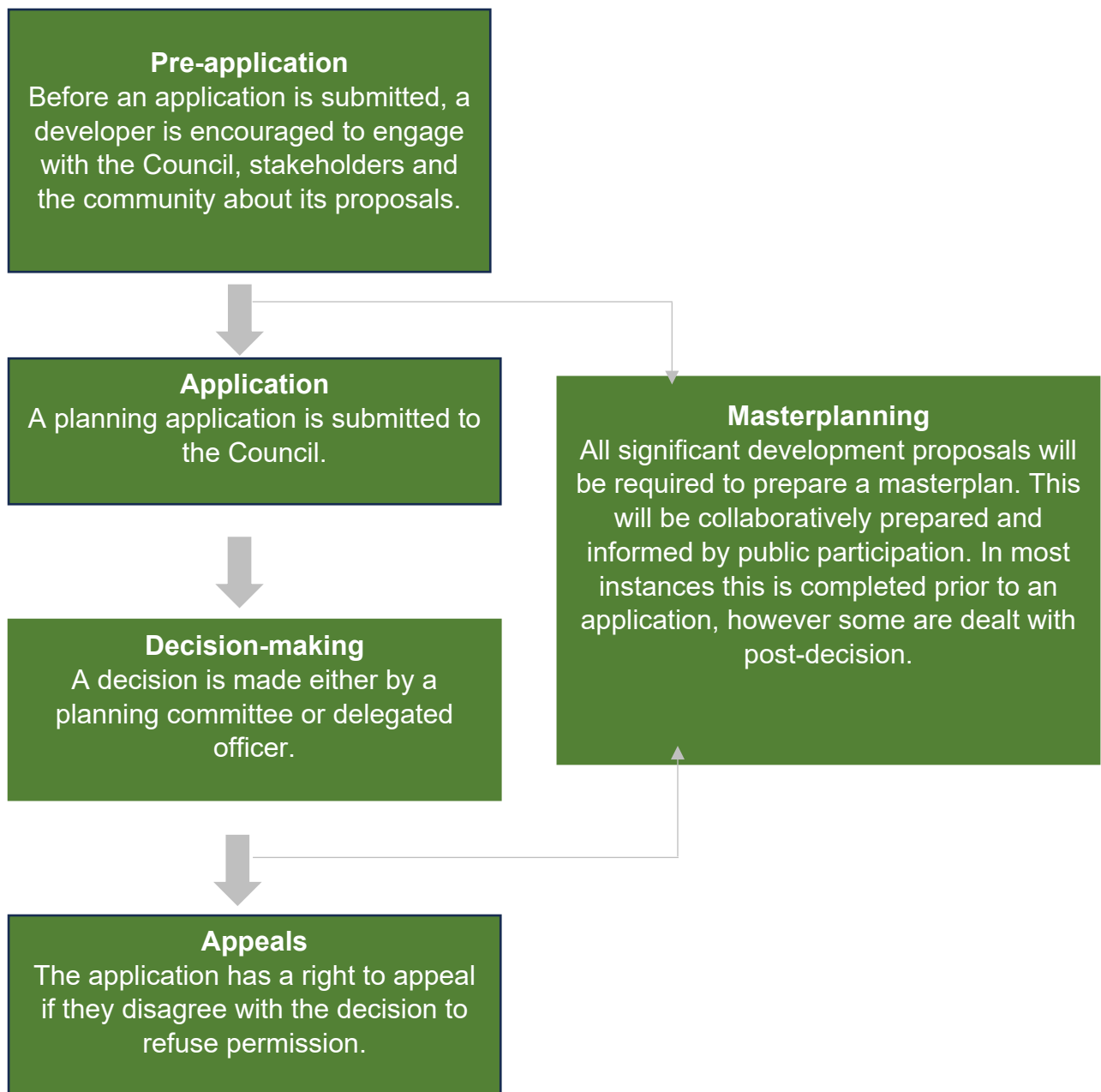
### Introduction

- 1.15. For many people, the submission of a planning application is the first experience of the planning system, either as an applicant submitting an application, or in relation to applications on a neighbouring or nearby site. While some development can be carried out as Permitted Development<sup>10</sup>, a significant amount of new development in East Herts will require planning permission.
- 1.16. There are a number of different types of planning application, with the type of application determined by the size, scale and nature of the proposed development. Whilst the process for consulting on all types of planning application is similar, there are some differences. As a minimum the relevant statutory requirements will always be met.
- 1.17. The key stages to the planning application process are illustrated in figure 6.1.
- 1.18. This section of the SCI therefore sets out the Council's approach to consulting and notifying statutory bodies and the wider community as part of the application processes.

*Figure 6.1: Stages in the planning application process*

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<sup>10</sup> Permission to carry out certain limited forms of development without the need to make an application to a local planning authority, as granted under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order. The Planning Portal website is a useful resource for explaining when planning permission is required.



### Who will we consult?

1.19. The Government sets out minimum requirements for consultation in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) and The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 (as amended).

1.20. The legislation identifies statutory consultees that the Council must engage with. These currently include environmental organisations (such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England) and local services and infrastructure providers (including Highways Agency, Hertfordshire County

Council and utilities companies). The local community is also engaged as appropriate. The scale of consultation reflects the type and stage of the planning application.

## **How and when will we consult?**

### **Masterplan process**

- 1.21. All significant development proposals in the district are required to prepare a masterplan because the Council is committed to delivering well designed growth. They should deal with a range of issues including land use, infrastructure and design and once endorsed by the Council they are used as the basis by which planning applications on site will be determined.
- 1.22. Policy DES1 of The East Herts District Plan (2018)<sup>11</sup> outlines the approach that will be taken to masterplanning. The significance of a development will be measured not only on its scale, but on the potential impact on the community and the local character of a place.
- 1.23. Masterplans must involve collaboration with East Herts District Council, other stakeholders and the local community, including town/ parish councils. Engagement from an early stage should inform the development of the master plan. Steering groups have been established for certain towns in the district to help inform the development of strategic sites allocated in the adopted District Plan. These often comprise of East Herts councillors, town and parish councillors, representatives of the local community and other interested groups, where appropriate. Membership of the steering groups will be determined on a site by site basis, depending on the local issues and circumstances. Wider public participation should also be undertaken as appropriate.
- 1.24. Many of the strategic sites within the District Plan have prepared masterplans prior to a planning application being submitted. However, in some cases it has been appropriate for some speculative applications and larger sites, such as the Gilston Area to prepare a masterplan following the grant of planning permission. In such cases, a planning condition is applied to a planning decision which

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<sup>11</sup> [East Herts District Plan 2018](#)

requires a masterplan to be prepared and submitted to the Council for approval. The amount of collaboration in creating masterplans should not differ on whether the masterplan is prepared prior to or post a decision. The Council's website provides further guidance on the process.

### **Pre-application advice**

- 1.25. Before submitting a planning application, we advise and encourage potential applicants to seek pre-application advice from the Council.<sup>12</sup> It is not a statutory requirement, but it allows for the identification of any issues, concerns and constraints at an early stage. This may help avoid delays or a refusal once a planning application has been submitted.<sup>13</sup>
- 1.26. This service allows the Council to provide advice and guidance to potential applicants on development proposals prior to the submission of any application. Subsequently, in accordance with the advice provided, amendments can be made to proposals prior to the submission of a planning application. Free advice may be available depending on the application type. However, for other application types there is a charge due to resource implications. Details of the pre-application process is set out on website:  
<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/preapplicationservice>
- 1.27. The advice provided by case officers during the pre-application process is based on the professional judgement of the officer and is therefore informal and not binding on any subsequent formal decision made by the Council. If a scheme progresses to a formal submission it will be subject to consultation and any formal decision will take the results of that consultation into account.
- 1.28. Except where required by legislation, submitted information and advice is not made available to the public via our online portal of applications, nor are any

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<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that, in respect of the pre-application service, any advice given at this stage is not binding and there are no statutory requirements for pre-application discussions. Because of the resources involved in providing pre-application advice, in many cases it is necessary to charge a fee for this service.

<sup>13</sup> It could also be helpful to have pre-app discussions with other relevant agencies including Hertfordshire County Council, Thames Water, and the Environment Agency.



surrounding neighbours notified. Therefore, the public and third parties are generally not provided with the opportunity to comment upon such enquiries.

1.29. In some instances, such as large, complex schemes, it may be appropriate for a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) to be put in place. These are resourcing and management agreements between applicants and the Council, to enable the Council to adequately resource and provide an open dialogue on such applications, with an agreed programme. Further details on the PPA process can be found on the Council's website<sup>14</sup>.

### **Pre-application (pre-app) consultation**

1.30. We do not tend to consult statutory consultees on requests for pre-application advice. However, there may be instances where consultation with other teams within the Council or County Council may be required to aid the advice provided, for example on proposals which relate to Listed Buildings or major development proposals.

1.31. Pre-app consultation is not legally required for most types of development. It is however strongly encouraged that applicants involve the community in formulating their proposals as early as possible, particularly if the site is particularly sensitive or would have a significant impact on local communities. This is advised to assist in addressing any issues that may arise from the community and may help to avoid unnecessary objections during the consideration of a planning application.

1.32. For large scale major developments, it is expected that the applicant carries out pre-application consultation which may involve:

- Public meetings and exhibitions;
- Individual letters or leaflets;
- Engagement with parish/ town councils;
- Engagement with Design Review Panels;

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<sup>14</sup> Planning Performance Agreements - [www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-performance-agreements-ppas](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-performance-agreements-ppas)

- Social media.

### Application stage

- 1.33. Once an application has been submitted, East Herts District Council will meet its statutory consultation requirements as a minimum. The formal consultation period will normally last for 21 days.
- 1.34. Formal consultation on planning applications will be undertaken in accordance with article 15 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) and regulations 5 and 5A of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 (as amended) or any amending orders, and any relevant consultation directions <sup>15</sup>. Table 6.1 sets out the consultation methods used by the Council.
- 1.35. All new applications can be viewed on the Council's website. People can also use pre-set searches to see weekly lists of planning applications received or determined.
- 1.36. People can respond to applications online. Alternatively, comments can be made by email or post.
- 1.37. The Council holds regular Development Management Forums (DMFs) which provides residents the opportunity to present their views on complex or sensitive major planning applications to councillors, planning officers and the applicant in the early stages of the planning application process. Further details on DMFs can be found in Appendix A.

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<sup>15</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) includes powers for the Secretary of State to direct local planning authorities that additional consultation must take place in specific circumstances. These are referred to as 'consultation directions'.

Table 6.1: Consultation methods used to publicise planning applications

Type of application	Site notice	Site notice OR neighbour notification letter/email	Press notice in local paper	Parish Council notification	Website	Ward member notification
Major development	X	X	X	X	X	X
Minor Development		X		X	X	X
Householder Applications		X		X	X	X
Applications subject to EIA which are accompanied by an Environmental Statement	X		X	X	X	X
Applications that do not accord with the development plan	X		X	X	X	X
Listed Building applications and applications affecting the setting of a Listed Building	X		X	X	X	X
Applications relating to an advertisement				X	X	X
Applications which would affect a right of way	X		X	X	X	X
Applications for development which would affect the setting of a listed building, or affect the character or appearance of a conservation area.	X		X	X	X	X

1.38. Where an application falls within a Conservation Area, a site notice may be required where it may affect the setting of a listed building or the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Prior Notification applications will be publicised as set out in the relevant regulations<sup>16</sup>.

1.39. There is no statutory requirement to consult on the following types of applications:

- Certificates of Lawfulness of proposed use or development;
- Certificates of Lawfulness of existing use or development;
- Approval of details/ discharge of conditions;
- Non-material amendments.

### **How will the Council deal with consultation responses?**

1.40. All comments received will be made publicly available online alongside the planning application documents, in line with the Council's [Corporate Privacy Notice](#). It is important to note that the Council reserves the right not to consider or include in its documentation any inappropriate comments submitted as a result of its consultations.

1.41. The Council will take account of all responses received as a result of its consultations on planning applications where the issues raised are material planning considerations. These comments will be considered in the officer's report.

1.42. All relevant planning issues raised within the consultation period will be taken into account in the Planning Officer's report to help inform the recommendation.

### **Amendments to applications during the consideration of the application**

1.43. The Council have set out where amendments to planning applications and requests for extensions of time for planning applications may be appropriate. Details of this can be found in the [Amendments and Extensions of Time Protocol](#).

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<sup>16</sup> [Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015](#) (as amended)

1.44. Where an application has been amended following the initial period of consultation, it may be that additional consultation on the changes submitted by an applicant is considered necessary prior to a decision being made. In these cases, it is up to the Council to decide whether further publicity and consultation is necessary, and the requirement to consult will be determined based on whether the proposed changes are significant and whether there were objections or concerns raised in the original consultation stage. Where it is decided that re-consultation is necessary, it is open to the Council to set the timeframe for responses which is likely to be for a period of 14 days or less.

### **Decision stage**

1.45. Once the consultation period has concluded, the Council will determine the planning application. It is therefore important to make comments before the statutory deadline for the end of the consultation period.

1.46. The Council typically deals with around 2,600 applications per year; most of these (over 90%) are determined by planning officers under delegated powers granted to them, as set out in the [Council's Constitution](#).

1.47. The remaining applications are determined by the Development Management Committee. This Committee generally meets every four weeks and handles the larger and more complex applications, in accordance with the criteria set out in the Council's Constitution. If the application is to be considered by the Development Management Committee, we will inform anyone who responded to the consultation before the meeting takes place.

1.48. The Council allows supporters, objectors and town/parish council representatives to make a short oral statement to the Development Management Committee on any of the planning applications which are being considered by

the Committee <sup>17</sup>. Further details on public speaking at Development Management meetings can be found on the website<sup>18</sup>.

1.49. Development Management Committee meetings are webcast<sup>19</sup>.

### After a decision is made

1.50. The Council will:

- Publish the decisions on all planning applications on its website;
- Write back to respondents (by email if possible and by post where no email address is available) to inform them of the Council's decision;
- In relation to applications that have been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, notify the public of the decision by reasonable means, including by local advertisement if deemed necessary. A copy of the decision notice, officer report and legal agreement (if relevant) will be placed on the planning portal.

### Appeals

1.51. An applicant may appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against a refusal or contest any of the conditions imposed to the granting of permissions or the non-determination of an application. The Council will inform all those people who responded to the consultation on the original planning application (although the rest of the appeal procedure will be handled by the Planning Inspectorate)<sup>20</sup>

### Implementation

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<sup>17</sup> One person may be allowed to speak in support of an application, and one person to speak in objection to each application at the meeting. Each person or group of people opposing or supporting the proposal will be allowed up to three minutes (or 6 minutes for strategic sites allocated in the District Plan) 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 <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees/public-speaking-development-management-meetings>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees/live-meetings-online>

<sup>20</sup> Further information on the appeals process is available on the Planning Inspectorate website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate>

1.52. Following a planning application, it is essential that the application is implemented to a high standard, ensuring that the best quality outputs are achieved. Below describes what may happen post an application decision to support delivery of an application.

### *Community Forums*

1.53. A number of community forums have been set up to assist with the delivery of some strategic sites and implementing the sites on the ground. These are public and open to residents and other stakeholders interested in the delivery of sites. The Council acts as the facilitator in bringing residents and developers together in order to resolve delivery issues as new developments progress. Examples include the Gilston Garden Town community forum. Further details on community forums can be found in Appendix A.

### *Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT)*

1.54. Harlow and Gilston was designated as a Garden Town in 2017. The proposed development lies within East Herts, Epping Forest and Harlow Districts. The three local authorities, together with Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils are working together to deliver growth at the Garden Town which reflects local priorities.

1.55. Due to the scale of the project, some of the processes and governance arrangements differ to other strategic sites and applications within East Herts, and these have been implemented to oversee the progression of the development. The individual Councils remain the decision-makers for plan making and planning applications within their local authority area.

1.56. A Joint Committee has been set up for this project, which consists of one elected councillor from each of the five authorities. The purpose of the Joint Committee is to oversee the vision and delivery of the Garden Town, to enable collaboration and joint decision making by the Garden Town partners and to enable them to work together to respond to issues which may have an impact on the scale and quality of delivery, where these occur.

1.57. There are also a number of working groups that support the day to day work of the HGGT such as officer groups, the quality review panel and the developer forum. These help to provide up to date information to guide the implementation of the HGGT.

1.58. A designated website<sup>21</sup> has been set up which provides the latest updates to the project, it also includes details on latest consultations and how to subscribe to updates.

1.59. The Gilston Area developers have also set up a website<sup>22</sup> to provide updates relating to construction activity and for residents to inform the developers of issues arising relating to construction and development matters through an interactive mapping tool.

#### *Future Stewardships Groups*

1.60. As implementation of the Gilston Area development progresses, it is essential to ensure that the long-term stewardship and management arrangements secured through the Section 106 Agreement are implemented. These require that a Stewardship Body is formed which includes representation on behalf of local residents. Its role will be to ensure that the community assets delivered in the Gilston Area that are transferred to the body are maintained to a high standard for years to come.

#### *Enforcement*

1.61. Planning Enforcement is concerned with works which have taken place in breach of normal planning controls. Where a breach of planning control is reported, an officer will investigate and assess the complaint, gather evidence and establish what, if any, the most appropriate course of action should be. Many investigations result in the submission of a planning application to potentially regularise a breach. This means the community will be involved in the same way as any other planning application. If a breach cannot be regularised the Council will consider formal enforcement action. Officers are delegated to

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<sup>21</sup> Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Website - <https://hgggt.co.uk/>

<sup>22</sup> Gilston are developer website - <https://gilston.info>



make these decisions on behalf of councillors. The Council will ensure that the complainant is informed of decisions made in relation to the case. Further details about the process are set out in the [Planning Enforcement Plan](#).

## 7.0 Review

- 7.1 In 2023 the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act<sup>23</sup> came into force. Part 3 of this legislation sets out large changes to the planning system, in particular, changes to the way in which local plans are made, the requirement for design codes and the introduction of Supplementary Plans. We are currently awaiting secondary legislation that will set out in more detail how the changes will be implemented.
- 7.2 Once secondary legislation is released there may be implications to the way in which consultations are undertaken, it therefore may be the case that this SCI will need to be updated to reflect these changes at that time.
- 7.3 In the meantime, in all instances, the Council will, as a minimum, meet the statutory requirements for consultation at any time.

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<sup>23</sup> Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 Part 3 Planning

## Appendix A: Forums and Steering Groups

There are a number of forums which the Council uses to engage with communities and stakeholders to share information and views on particular proposals. Details on the different forums and their purpose is set out below:

### Agent Forum

This forum has been set up to create an open dialogue between the Council and the development industry. It allows information to be shared and discussed, creating a channel to keep the development industry up-to-date to any changes to the planning service and procedures at the Council. This will help to create applications that meet the Council's requirements, reducing time spent processing incorrect information.

### Community Forums

These forums have been created to bring together residents, community groups, Town and Parish Councils, local councillors, developers and other interested parties to engage with each other about development proposals and aide the delivery of sites. The Council acts as the facilitator, with the Forums providing an opportunity for residents to share any topics, concerns and community projects as new communities are developed on the ground. It also provides regular, accurate and timely information to residents regarding relevant developments. There are currently active community forums for the Gilston Area and Stortford Fields where permission has been sought. Further community forums are likely to start in other locations where strategic allocations in the District Plan are based. Further details on the community forums and how to get involved can be found on the Council's website.

## Development Management Forum

This is a meeting where petitioners can present their views to councillors, planning officers and the applicant before a planning application is determined. The aim of this forum is to allow for early discussion of the planning issues raised by petitioners and to explore the scope for building consensus and resolving concerns. It is an informal meeting and does not determine the application. Further details on the process and requirements for a Development Management Forum can be found on the Council's website.

## Garden Town Developer Forum

Comprising landowners, developers and promoters active in the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, for discussion and engagement in relation to planning policies, guidance, evidence and the sharing of information in respect of masterplans and planning applications.

## Site Specific Steering Groups

These are set up where there are strategic sites that require a masterplan. It brings together different organisations, groups and the community to discuss the specific site, key issues and guide the masterplan process.

## Further Information

- Community Forums - [www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/community-forums](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/community-forums)
- Development Management Forum - [www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/development-management-forum](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/development-management-forum)

## Appendix B: Engagement Strategy Template

Disclaimer- This template is an example of how the engagement strategy could be filled out. This will be completed at the relevant stage of creating planning policy documents.

<b>Engagement Strategy</b>	
Consultation	<i>Example Title</i>
<b>Content</b>	
What is being consulted on?	<i>Draft District Plan</i>
What is being sought through the consultation?	<i>The Council is looking for comments on the soundness and the legal compliance of the draft District Plan</i>
Key messaging	<i>This is a technical consultation on the draft District Plan. This is the stage before the Plan is submitted for Examination.</i>
Length of consultation	<i>6 weeks</i>
Stage of consultation	<i>Publication of District Plan</i>
<b>Audience</b>	
Define the area that is being consulted	<i>The whole district and surrounding areas are within the scope of the consultation</i>
Who will be consulted?	<i>Duty to co-operate bodies, local organisations, local communities, planning policy database, developers, local businesses and residents</i>
Will the planning policy document or consultation impact any specific groups? If so, will different methods be used to reach them?	<i>The draft District Plan impacts the entirety of the borough. The consultation is open to everyone and will be publicised widely.  If it becomes apparent during the consultation that particular groups have not engaged e.g. younger people, then the Council may implement further measures to try and increase participation in those groups such as targeted methods e.g. going to colleges and schools.</i>
<b>Consultation methods</b>	

<p>How will be people or organisations be directly notified?</p>	<p><i>Where contact information is held, notifications will be sent via email in the first instance, and if that is not possible then a letter will be sent at the beginning of the consultation period.</i></p> <p><i>If no direct contact information is held then indirect methods of consultation will be used through the promotion set out below.</i></p>
<p>How will the consultation be promoted?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Social media posts</i></li> <li>• <i>Email newsletter</i></li> <li>• <i>Press release</i></li> <li>• <i>Community noticeboards</i></li> <li>• <i>Local media advertising</i></li> <li>• <i>6 x Public drop in sessions</i></li> <li>• <i>2 x online public meeting</i></li> <li>• <i>Online exhibitions</i></li> </ul>
<p>Will any digital technologies be used in this consultation? If yes, what technologies?</p>	<p><i>There will be 2 online public meetings that will be held on Microsoft Teams, these will be open to all.</i></p> <p><i>An online exhibition will be available to view from the Council's website.</i></p> <p><i>AI software will be used after the consultation to help summarise key issues and help report writing.</i></p>
<p>How can the consultation material be accessed?</p>	<p><i>The draft District Plan and supporting evidence base will be available on the Council's website and hard copies will be available at the Council offices and local libraries.</i></p>
<p><b>Next steps</b></p>	
<p>What will happen with responses?</p>	<p><i>Responses will be analysed and sent to the Inspector examining the District Plan. These responses will be made available to view on the Council's website with a report setting out how they have informed the Plan.</i></p>

Additional considerations	
1	<i>Further public drop-in sessions may be necessary if there is high public demand, these will be widely publicised via all communications channels.</i>
2	<i>Responses will be made public on the Council website, therefore those that respond will need to confirm their name is to be published alongside their name. Other personal information will be in compliance with the Council's privacy notice.</i>

## Appendix C: Glossary

- Deposit or Inspection Point: Locations across the district where consultation documents can be viewed.
- Development Plan: This includes adopted Local Plans, Mineral and Waste Plans and Neighbourhood Plans and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- Development Plan Documents: A generic term for the different plans that constitute the Development Plan.
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): A procedure to be followed for certain types of projects to ensure that decisions are made in full knowledge of any likely significant effects on the environment.
- Local Development Scheme (LDS): The Local Authority's timetable for the preparation of Development Documents.
- Local Plan: The District Plan which sets out the Council's planning framework for the district. It consists of a Written Statement and Policies Map.
- Masterplan: A plan that shows an overall development concept that includes urban design, landscaping, infrastructure, service provision, movement, present and future land-use and built form.
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- Neighbourhood Plan: A plan prepared by a Parish/ Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area.
- Non-key Decision: Executive decisions taken by Executive Members and Officers on less significant matters, rather than using the relevant committee process.
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs): Documents which add further details to the policies of the Local Plan (District Plan). These documents are not part of the development plan but are material considerations in planning decisions.
- Disclaimer- This glossary is neither a statement of law nor an interpretation of law, and its status is only as an introductory guide to planning issues and it should not therefore be used as a source for statutory definitions.



