



Statement of Community Involvement

Update March 2015

How to use this Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

Chapter 1 introduces Wiltshire Council's SCI and the planning system.

Chapter 2 contains details of the Wiltshire community to identify who will be consulted on planning matters.

Chapter 3 introduces the methods of consultation which Wiltshire Council will use and how these will be resourced. This chapter is concerned with how Wiltshire Council will consult you on planning matters.

Chapter 4 explains how and when you can become involved in the production of planning policy documents for Wiltshire.

Chapter 5 explains how and when you can become involved in the determination of planning applications in your area.

Chapter 6 outlines how Wiltshire Council will monitor the success of consultation initiatives, and sets out how and when Wiltshire Council will review the SCI.

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Glossary of terms

A brief explanation of the key terms in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is provided in this glossary. We have tried to keep the use of acronyms to a minimum throughout the document. All those acronyms which have been used are identified and explained below.

Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) Wiltshire Council is required to continually monitor the effectiveness of the development plan and publish monitoring information on the website as soon as practicable.

Core Strategy A core strategy is a key planning document for the area. It sets out the long-term vision for the area and provides the strategic policies and proposals that will deliver that vision. The core strategy is a development plan document.

Development plan The development plan consists of the Development Plan Documents produced by Wiltshire Council (or jointly with neighbouring authorities). Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan Document (DPD) A document setting out Wiltshire Council's planning policies and proposals. DPDs are subject to community involvement, consultation and independent examination.

Independent examination Development Plan Documents are subject to an examination by a planning inspector to rigorously test legal compliance and overall 'soundness'.

Local Development Documents (LDD) The individual documents that make up the Local Plan. They can take the form of Development Plan Documents or present guidance in the form of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

Local Development Scheme (LDS) The LDS sets out the timetable for preparing the Local Plan. This includes details of the topics to be covered by individual DPDs.

Local Plan This is simply the term used to describe the 'folder' of documents which form the local spatial planning framework for Wiltshire. Formerly referred to as the Local Development Framework (LDF).

Local Transport Plan (LTP) The LTP is a statutory document that steers the development of national transport policies at the local level.

Material consideration A material consideration is any planning matter which is relevant to a particular case.

Minerals and waste development plan documents Jointly prepared DPDs that set out the planning policy and proposals for Wiltshire and Swindon with regards to minerals extraction and waste management.

Neighbourhood Planning A new tier of the planning system, introduced under the Localism Act 2011, to give communities more control over the future of their area.

Neighbourhood Plan A type of Neighbourhood Planning, which can establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a defined neighbourhood area. A Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the Local Plan, undergo Examination and a Referendum. After adoption, they are part of the statutory development plan and are used (alongside other policy documents) to determine planning applications.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It provides guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers, both in drawing up plans and making decisions about planning applications. It must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Planning Inspectorate (PINS) The Planning Inspectorate holds independent examinations to determine whether or not DPDs are 'sound'. The Planning Inspectorate also handles planning and enforcement appeals.

Policies Map Wiltshire Council must produce a policies map which illustrates all of the policies contained within adopted DPDs. The policies map must be revised every time a new DPD is adopted.

Planning Practice Guidance The Government's detailed on-line, web based guidance on national planning policies, which adds detail to the NPPF.

Sound/soundness This describes where a DPD is considered to 'show good judgement' and also to fulfill the expectations of legislation, as well as conforming to national policy.

Spatial Planning An approach to planning that uses land in the most effective way to promote 'sustainable development'.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) The SCI is a document explaining to the community how and when they can be involved in the preparation of the Local Plan and the determination of planning applications, and the steps that will be taken to encourage this involvement.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) An SEA is an iterative assessment of the environmental effects of policies and proposals contained in Local Plans.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) SPDs do not have 'development plan' status, but are intended to elaborate upon the policies and proposals in DPDs. They can be used as a 'material consideration' in the determination of planning applications.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) An SA is an assessment of the social, economic and environmental effects of policies and proposals within Local Development Documents.

Sustainable Development This is defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

Wiltshire Community The Wiltshire community is made up of all the people who live, work, or have an interest in Wiltshire and its continued development. Wiltshire Council keeps a database of all the people and organisations interested in the Local Plan or planning applications. This database is continually evolving as organisations are added or removed.

Wiltshire Compact This is a joint initiative between the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Statutory Sector in Wiltshire. It aims to improve the quality of life in Wiltshire by improving joint working arrangements between these sectors

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Wiltshire Council's vision is to "create stronger and more resilient communities". This vision is taken from Wiltshire Council's Business plan 2013-2017. A key part in achieving and maintaining the relevance of this vision will be ensuring that these communities are involved in decision making. The SCI describes how Wiltshire Council will involve the community in planning for the future use of land in their area and how planning can achieve local, open, honest decision-making in Wiltshire.
- 1.2 Wiltshire Council's first SCI was adopted in February 2010. Since this time, the Government has introduced a series of changes to the planning system. These were principally through the Localism Act 2011 and the issue of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012. This was followed by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which complements the NPPF. Changes were also brought about through the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010.
- 1.3 These changes have resulted in the streamlining of plan preparation, as well as a number of other relevant changes. The changes have also introduced a duty to cooperate with neighbouring local authorities and other organisations on matters of strategic, cross-boundary significance. The Localism Act 2011 also led to the revocation of the regional strategies and Structure Plans.
- 1.4 In recognition of these reforms, the Government has published revised local planning regulations in 2012. These are currently set out in the Town and Country Planning Local Planning (England) Regulations 2012¹.
- 1.5 This SCI takes account of these changes and replaces the February 2010 version of the SCI.
- 1.6 The Localism Act 2011 also introduced neighbourhood plans, neighbourhood development orders and the community right to build. These are community-led documents, prepared by a Town or Parish Council. The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012² set out the statutory requirements for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans and Development Orders. Consultation during the preparation stage of these plans is undertaken by the Town or Parish Council and does not therefore need to meet the requirements of this SCI. However, it may provide useful guidance for Town and Parish Councils undertaking consultation and engagement on their draft plans. Further guidance can be found on the Wiltshire Council's web page³.
- 1.7 The SCI is here to provide the community with clarity on the levels of involvement that they should expect in planning processes. The SCI explains in

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/767/pdfs/ukxi_20120767_en.pdf

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/637/contents/made>

³ <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/neighbourhoodplanning.htm>

detail Wiltshire Council's policy for engaging the community in the preparation of the Wiltshire Local Plan and in the consideration of planning applications. The principles in the SCI will also guide consultation on the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

- 1.8 Wiltshire Council is committed to using new and innovative ways of involving the community in the planning system. Wiltshire Council will use a combination of methods, such as public exhibitions and meetings and online consultations. Further details of the methods Wiltshire Council will use are provided in appendix 1. Wiltshire Council wants to ensure that everyone with an interest in planning understands how they can contribute to, and influence, the planning decision-making process.
- 1.9 Wiltshire Council's commitment is to provide opportunities for you to influence planning decisions that affect you or your community directly.

The planning system

- 1.10 The current planning policy system consists of:
- National policy in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which encourages a culture in which development plays a key role in meeting the needs and aspirations of the area. The NPPF still promotes a plan-led system whereby decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
 - Local policy in the form of the Local Plan.
- 1.11 The documents which will form the statutory development plan for Wiltshire are illustrated in diagram 1 overleaf. These documents will outline the spatial planning strategy for Wiltshire (and Swindon in relation to minerals and waste matters). Further details on the contents and timetable of these documents are set out in the Wiltshire Local Development Scheme (available at: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/localdevelopmentscheme.)
- 1.12 Planning applications are determined according to the policies in the development plan for the area unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations may include site specific details, emerging planning policy and relevant local planning guidance and strategies, such as village design statements or conservation area management plans.

Spatial planning and development management in Wiltshire

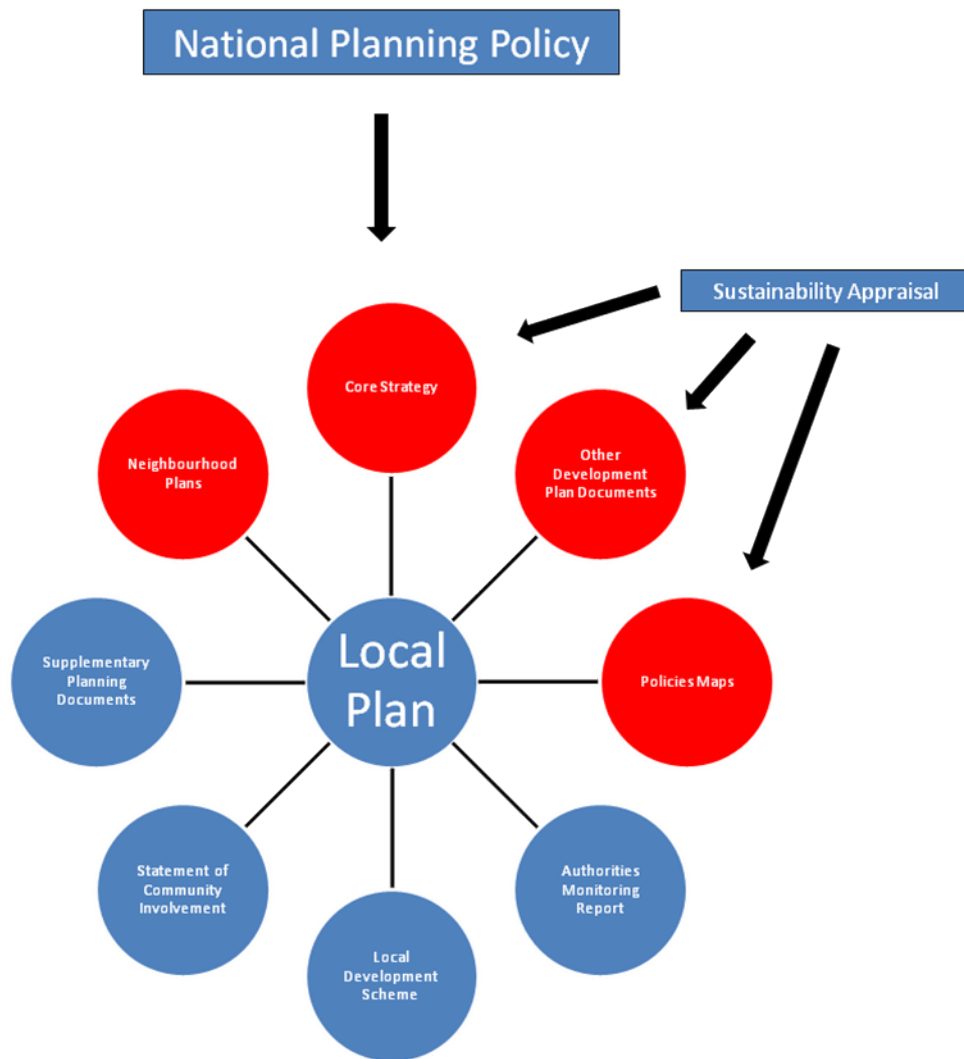
- 1.13 Planning in Wiltshire is delivered by the spatial planning and development management services, which are part of the wider Economic Development and

Planning Service. The spatial planning service has four broad functions:

- Preparing the Local Plan , a group of planning policy documents that act together to guide development in Wiltshire (and Swindon in relation to minerals and waste matters)
- Working with local communities on the preparation and review of Neighbourhood Plans / Neighbourhood Development Orders
- Preparing, implementing and reviewing Wiltshire Council's Community Infrastructure Levy in cooperation with other service areas
- Monitoring the effectiveness of existing planning policies and collating information that informs the review of these policies

1.14 The development management service is concerned with determining planning applications, site monitoring and enforcing planning control over unauthorised development. This includes a specialist minerals and waste development management team, which is concerned with the determination of applications for minerals extraction and waste management facilities across the county. Contact details for the teams within the spatial planning and development services are provided at the end of this SCI.

Diagram 1: The Wiltshire Local Plan



 Statutory Development Plan

2 The Wiltshire community

2.1 Wiltshire Council is committed to open and honest dialogue with the community and will endeavour to include as many bodies, organisations and individuals in the planning process as possible. This chapter details who and what we consider to be the Wiltshire community. In addition to this we detail how we will link in with some of the existing community initiatives in Wiltshire. The aim of this SCI is to allow opportunities for involvement in the planning process by all sections of the community.

Who do we consult?

2.2 Wiltshire Council has undertaken work to define our 'community'. A list of consultees has been developed based on past experience and previous consultation exercises. This list also draws on central government advice, previous local plan processes, the Sustainable Community Strategy, and other community planning processes.

2.3 The consultees in Wiltshire Council's community database have been identified through consolidation and evaluation of the existing consultee databases. The database will be the first point of reference that Wiltshire Council will use when determining which groups should be consulted in relation to each Local Plan document.

2.4 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out a list of 'specific' and 'general' consultation bodies, to be involved in the consultation process (see below). Under these Regulations (Regulation 18), Wiltshire Council has to consult with specific consultation bodies which they consider may have an interest in the subject of local plan preparation and the general consultation bodies which it considers appropriate to the specific scope of each local plan. As well as the "specific" and "general" consultation bodies, the Wiltshire Council will also consult "such residents or other persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area from which the local planning authority consider it appropriate to invite representations".

2.5 The specific consultation bodies include:

- The Coal Authority
- The Environment Agency
- English Heritage
- The Marine Management Organisation
- Natural England
- Network Rail
- The Highways Agency
- A relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the local planning authority's area
- Relevant telecommunications companies
- Relevant health providers
- Relevant gas and electricity companies

- Relevant water and sewerage undertakers
- Homes and Communities Agency

2.6 The general consultation bodies include:

- Voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the local planning authority's area
- Bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the local planning authority's area
- Bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the local planning authority's area
- Bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the local authority's area
- Bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area

2.7 Wiltshire Council is committed to undertaking regular reviews of the Wiltshire community database. We will write to all the members on the database to check that they wish to continue to be contacted by Wiltshire Council in regard to planning matters. In addition, any interested groups or bodies may contact the spatial planning policy team by telephone, email or post with a request to be added to or removed from the community database.

Area based involvement

2.8 In some cases it may not be appropriate to consult the whole Wiltshire community, for example if the issue is likely to have only a localised impact within a certain parish. In these cases, consultation may be undertaken on an area basis, subject to this fulfilling the minimum legal requirements. Conversely, when a proposed policy or development is likely to have an impact on a wider area it will be important to ensure that all those who may be affected have a chance to have their say. This may apply, for example, when development is planned in a town, but would have an impact on the outlying villages. Wiltshire Council will therefore carefully consider the appropriate area for consultation in all cases.

Duty to Cooperate and cross-boundary working

2.9 There is now a duty to cooperate in the plan making process. This was introduced through the Localism Act 2011, with Section 110 of the Act requiring councils and public bodies to "engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis" in the preparation of Local Plan documents, including in the preparation of evidence to underpin these documents. The intention of the duty to cooperate is that, in the absence of regional government offices and regional development agencies, those local authorities, in cooperation with neighbouring authorities and other public bodies, take the lead in tackling the big issues that cut across administrative boundaries.

2.10 The new duty relates to sustainable development or use of land that has a significant impact on at least two local planning areas. Issues that may not be able to be wholly addressed by one local planning authority working alone are set in paragraph 156 in the NPPF, and could include:

- housing where a wider housing market area has been identified
- provision of major retail/or employment sites
- the provision of infrastructure for transport, waste treatment, minerals, energy generation, telecommunications, water supply and water quality
- the measures needed to address climate change, including the management of flood risk
- the provision of open space and recreational facilities.

- 2.11 The NPPF states Local Authorities should consider producing joint planning policies to address some of these strategic matters, as well as informal strategies such as joint infrastructure and investment plans. A joint approach will not be required where an issue can be addressed adequately within one administrative boundary.
- 2.12 When compiling its scheme of work (Local Development Scheme), Wiltshire Council consider and discusses with neighbouring authorities whether production of joint documents is a sensible course of action. The decisions of such considerations will be carefully recorded, clear justification by way of an explanation of the strategic context behind the course of action taken will be set out and, where necessary, a 'memorandum of understanding' (or such similar document) between the bodies may be published.
- 2.13 Wiltshire Council works jointly with Swindon Borough Council to prepare joint minerals and waste planning policy documents, as well as the preparation of evidence to inform other development plan matters. In the future, this may lead to the preparation of other joint planning policy documents. Consideration will therefore be given to the Swindon Borough Council SCI when undertaking consultation on these documents and consultation will also involve the Swindon community. Collaboration with adjoining councils may also be relevant for other planning policy documents and in these cases consultation will extend beyond the Wiltshire community.

Complete community involvement

- 2.14 In addition to the consultees above we are proposing to increase the scope of public consultation and directly engage with groups in our community who do not normally get involved, or who have limited opportunity to be involved with the planning system in Wiltshire.
- 2.15 Those groups which have been under-represented within the planning process in Wiltshire include the following:
- Children and young people
 - 25-40 year olds (especially those in employment)
 - Lone parents
 - Those who don't speak English as their first language
 - Older people
 - Black and minority ethnic people
 - GRT (Gypsy Roma Traveller) community / Traveller community / Irish Traveller and Romany Gypsy community
 - Liveaboard boaters / boat dwellers
 - The military
 - People and community groups facing rural isolation
 - Residents who work outside Wiltshire

- People who work in Wiltshire but live elsewhere
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGRT) community
- Carers
- Good representation from men and women

2.16 In order to reach the groups above, and those not identified, a continual process of fostering and creating relationships is being established. Initiatives such as partnership and cross-team working with relevant external bodies and internal council departments responsible for these groups will ensure Wiltshire Council actively engages with these groups. Examples of some of the methods we will use to encourage the involvement of under-represented groups are provided in table 1 below. We will monitor the extent to which we are succeeding in involving the groups listed above and review our methods on a regular basis.

Table 1: Examples of methods for involving under-represented groups

Method	Groups targeted
Use of techniques such as forums and interactive sessions.	Young people and 25-40 year olds.
Information to be available in electronic format and consultation responses able to be submitted online.	Isolated rural people, children and young people, and people who may not have time to attend events, such as working people.
Provide copies of consultation materials in large print, Braille, and audio format on request. Hold exhibitions and events in locations with easy access.	Older people and people with specific access needs.

Engaging with landowners, infrastructure providers and developers

2.17 Wiltshire Council will seek to involve landowners, infrastructure providers and developers in the production of DPDs. For example, landowners and developers may be involved in the evidence gathering stages of DPDs through 'call for sites' exercises, in which developers and landowners are invited to put forward potential development sites for consideration through the DPD process.

Links with existing community groups and partnerships

2.18 Planning has a role as a facilitator for a number of other plans, strategies and community ambitions. The following paragraphs describe how the planning teams will work with other community groups and partnerships when promoting community involvement.

Community area boards

2.19 Across Wiltshire, there are 18 area boards providing devolved democratic governance arrangements across the County. The area boards provide an opportunity for Wiltshire councillors and statutory public service partners, including the police and the NHS, together with key representatives of the community area (such as town and parish councils, housing associations, businesses and voluntary groups) to take decisions affecting the area, shape local service

provision and respond to issues of concern within the context of the geography, character and identity of local places.

- 2.20 The area boards also provide a valuable way of identifying local priorities, discussing proposals, collecting evidence, publicising information and involving the community and its elected representatives in the development of spatial planning policy. They may also provide an appropriate forum to discuss the detail of community infrastructure that forms part of major planning proposals, such as the nature of traffic calming measures and the nature and location of public open space to be provided within a proposed development. Further details on pre-application discussions are provided in Chapter 5 of this SCI. Planning applications are considered through area and strategic planning committees. More information about the area boards can be found on Wiltshire Council's website.

Community area partnerships

- 2.21 Community area partnerships have developed in Wiltshire over a number of years, with membership including town and parish councils, representatives of business, the voluntary sector, local people and community leaders. Community area partnerships are independent of the council and work with the area boards to develop community-led action plans based on the information contained in Wiltshire's 18 community area, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSA) and these plans form part of the evidence base for the Wiltshire Local Plan. Community area partnerships through the area boards will be consulted in the development of planning policy as appropriate, but are not involved in the scrutiny of planning applications.

Strategic Partnerships

- 2.22 Within Wiltshire there are a range of strategic partnership bodies. These include the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Wiltshire Children's Trust Commissioning Executive, the Wiltshire Community Safety Partnership, Action for Wiltshire, the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Transport Body, the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Nature Partnership and the Wiltshire Health and Wellbeing Board. Often these bodies have responsibilities set out in statute but all bring together a range of partners that work together to develop strategies and actions to improve the wellbeing of the people of Wiltshire.

Town and parish councils

- 2.23 Town and parish councils are the most local tier of democratic representation and, as such, they provide a key link with local communities. They are a specific consultation body under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Regulation 18 requires that Wiltshire Council has to consult with specific consultation bodies which they consider may have an interest in the subject. Wiltshire Council is committed to continuing to consult with the local councils. Town and parish councils are often involved in the production of parish plans, village design statements and similar documents.

Further details on how these documents can be integrated within the Local Plan are provided in chapter 4.

- 2.24 Town and parish councils also have the power to prepare neighbourhood plans that once made (i.e. in effect adopted by Wiltshire Council) become part of the development plan for Wiltshire. Wiltshire Council has produced guidance for councils on neighbourhood planning (<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning-a-guide-nov-13.pdf>) and advocates that Steering Groups be set up to take forward the preparation of neighbourhood plans. These include a cross section of representatives from the local communities working alongside the parish council and may be useful groups to involve in the preparation of Wiltshire Council's planning policy documents.

Wiltshire Assembly

- 2.25 Wiltshire Assembly brings together around 300 partners to identify and agree actions to tackle topical issues of importance to Wiltshire. Public, business, and voluntary and community groups, MPs, area boards, community area partnerships, town and parish councils and local specialist groups all form part of Wiltshire Assembly. Topics recently considered include support for young people, support for older people, military-civilian integration and army rebasing and child sexual exploitation. Wiltshire Assembly typically meets two times a year.

Other plans and strategies

- 2.26 Alongside links with the groups set out above, the spatial planning team will also seek links with other plans and strategies. This includes the Wiltshire Compact, which is referred to below.

The Wiltshire Compact

- 2.27 The Wiltshire Compact is a joint initiative between the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Statutory Sector in Wiltshire. It aims to promote community engagement and improve the quality of life in Wiltshire by improving joint working arrangements between these sectors.

Links with the Local Transport Plan

- 2.28 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is made up of a long-term strategy, including transport objectives and policies, and a shorter-term implementation plan of transport schemes and measures and a number of supporting sub-strategy documents (e.g. car parking, freight, cycling etc). The LTP is an important tool to help local authorities work with partners and stakeholders to strengthen its role in promoting the general well-being of a community and its citizens. In particular, the LTP can help to support and facilitate the development growth that is being proposed through the Local Plan and the economic growth set out in the Swindon and Wiltshire Strategic Economic Plan.
- 2.29 The government requires local authorities to involve the community in the preparation of LTPs. While the LTP preparation process is different to that

employed for the Local Plan, Wiltshire Council is fully committed to ensuring that the preparation of the Wiltshire LTP will continue to involve comprehensive and widespread consultation with the community based on the principles set out in this SCI.

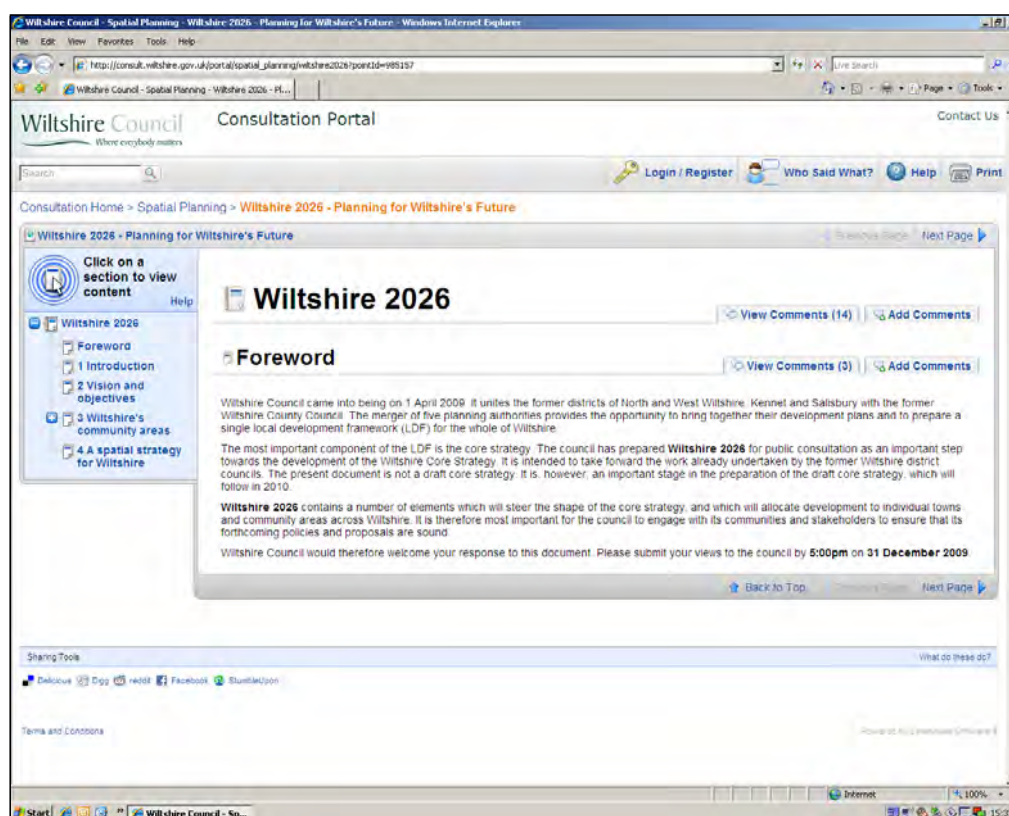
The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 2.30 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a tariff system that allows local authorities to raise funds from developers to contribute towards the funding of infrastructure to support growth. The CIL preparation and consultation process is different to that set out for the Local Plan and is set out in the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 (as amended). Regulations 15 and 16 require local authorities to undertake a clearly defined consultation procedure prior to adopting a CIL Charging Schedule.
- 2.31 Two rounds of consultation must be undertaken on the proposed charging schedule. The CIL Draft Charging Schedule and relevant documents must then be submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination by an appointed examiner. The examination into the Wiltshire CIL took place in January 2015, and at the time of writing, the Inspector's Report is expected imminently.
- 2.32 Although the CIL consultation process is subject to these CIL Regulations, rather than the procedure for consultation and preparation of Local Plan documents, the Wiltshire Council has, and will continue to ensure that the CIL consultation process will be based on the principles set out in this SCI.

3 Methods of consultation and resources

- 3.1 This chapter introduces the methods of consultation which we will use and how these will be resourced. It explains how we will consult you on planning matters.
- 3.2 Various consultation techniques will be used to obtain feedback during the development of local planning policy, relating to the type and scope of the document. At each stage of policy preparation there will be different levels of consultation. We will also use various techniques for consultation on planning applications.
- 3.3 There are three basic categories that these techniques fall into, dependent upon the required outcomes and appropriate level of engagement:
- Awareness raising – informing the Wiltshire community of the consultation and signposting access to that consultation
 - Existing networks – using established forums, partnerships and other networks to gather opinions on the consultation
 - Direct involvement – using public participation events and face-to-face meetings to consult with the Wiltshire community.
- 3.4 Details of the consultation methods we will use are presented in appendix 1. The list in appendix 1 is not exhaustive and not all of the methods are necessarily appropriate for consultation at all stages of planning policy preparation, or for all planning applications.
- 3.5 The process of planning policy preparation and consultation has been made more efficient with the use of specialist computer software provided by a company called Objective. All documents prepared by the Wiltshire Council are available to view and comment upon via the Wiltshire Council's website. Wiltshire Council is aiming to conduct all correspondence on policy documents electronically through the web. This will reduce costs by significantly limiting the amount of paper produced and distributed during consultations, as well as generally helping to speed up the processes of document preparation and consultation activity.
- 3.6 Documents will be made available on the web for people to view and comment upon electronically via a simple series of standard, easy to use representation forms. Anyone who has previously submitted representations to the Wiltshire Council and provided an email address will be automatically set up as a user of the Objective software and notified about how to operate the system. However, as all the Wiltshire Council's documents will primarily be available on the website, anyone with an interest in submitting representations electronically can also register to use the Objective software.

Sample screen showing Objective software in use



- 3.7 Wiltshire Council's website provides full support to all those wishing to use the electronic consultation system.
- 3.8 However, the Wiltshire Council recognises that not all people with an interest in planning matters within Wiltshire have access to a computer, or the desire to submit comments on documents electronically. Therefore paper copies of documents are made available and representation forms can be sent to those people who prefer such methods of engagement. Wiltshire Council will also receive representations in a number of forms and will make the options for response as transparent and as easy as possible to allow all parts of the community to respond at any stage of the planning process.
- 3.9 The resources that will be made available to provide and support consultation during the Local Plan process will principally comprise the staff from within the spatial planning policy team. Support may be provided from other council teams, including from the Community Area Managers, particularly relating to issues of housing, economic development, regeneration, climate change, countryside, environmental health, urban design and historic buildings. The development management (planning applications) element of the SCI will be implemented by staff from the development management teams. Specialist consultants may be used as part of the process and will also possibly provide training sessions, specialist sessions and forum facilitation where required.

4 Community involvement in the Local Plan

- 4.1 This chapter sets out when and how we plan to involve you in the preparation of Local Plan documents. The box below sets out the minimum legal standards Wiltshire Council must achieve when preparing Local Plan documents.

Minimum legal standards

The legal requirements for consultation on LDDs are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Wiltshire Council is obliged to meet these basic standards, which can be summarised as follows:

- Notification and invitation to make representations to specific consultation bodies which Wiltshire Council considers would have an interest in the subject matter (Regulation 18)
- Notification and invitation to make representations to general consultation bodies, residents and local businesses as Wiltshire Council considers appropriate (Regulation 18)
- Make information available on Wiltshire Council's website
- Make information available at the principal Wiltshire Council office, and at other places in the area as Wiltshire Council considers appropriate
- Formal consultation at publication stage for a defined period: this must be for a minimum of six weeks for DPDs and not less than 4 weeks for SPDs
- Publish a statement setting out who has been consulted during preparation of DPDs and SPDs and how this consultation was undertaken: this statement will include a summary of any issues raised and details as to how these issues have been addressed

- 4.2 Wiltshire Council will endeavor to exceed the minimum requirements for consultation where possible. Wiltshire Council recognises the guidelines set out in the Wiltshire Compact which indicate consultation periods in excess of 8 weeks. However, in the interest of expediency in plan making consistent with Government policy (8-12 weeks) is seldom possible to achieve. The Local Development Scheme, which sets out the Wiltshire Council's timetable for the preparation of DPDs will indicate when consultations are programmed to take place and for how long. Every effort will be made to undertake consultations outside August and the end of year holiday periods. However, where this is unavoidable, due to the need to make progress on development plan preparation, Wiltshire Council will seek to ensure that a reasonable part of the consultation period extends beyond these.
- 4.3 The following sections will identify the ways in which you can be involved at different preparation stages of Local Plan documents. There are three different types of Local Plan document which we will ask your opinion on:

Development Plan Documents (DPDs); Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs); and Sustainability Appraisal (SA). These are covered, in turn, beginning with DPDs.

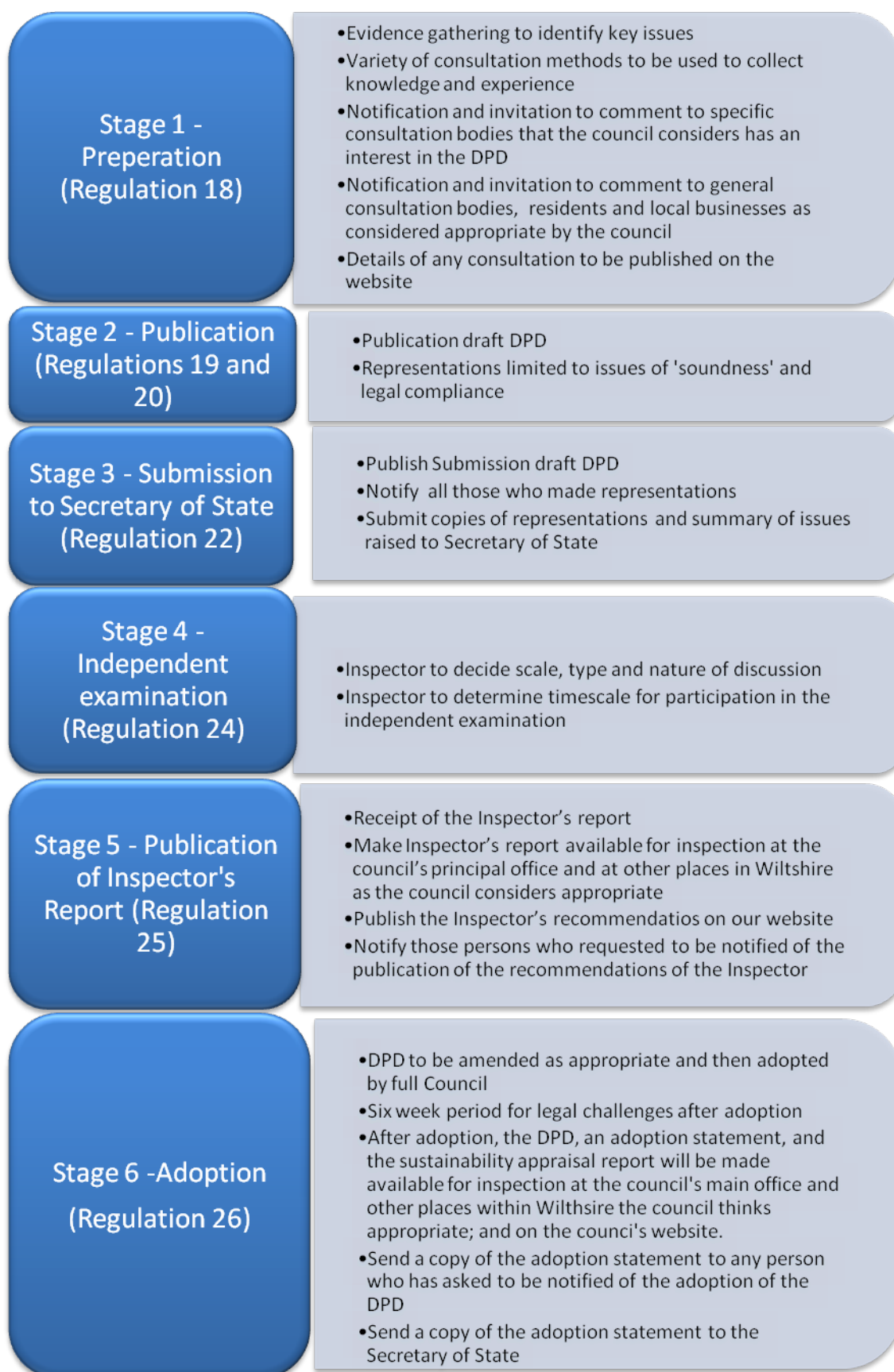
Development Plan Documents (DPDs)

4.4 There are various opportunities for the community to influence the policies in DPDs. It is important for us to get your opinion on these policies as planning applications in your area will be determined with reference to them. The process for preparing a DPD can be broadly split into informal and formal stages:

- Informal stages – These include evidence gathering, early community involvement and the production of draft DPD/consultation documents where appropriate. Wiltshire Council is required to notify certain bodies that it intends to produce a DPD and must invite comment from these bodies as to what the DPD should contain. This notification and invitation for comment is the only formal requirement at the early stages of DPD production and further involvement at these stages is carried out at the Wiltshire Council's discretion. However, early involvement is vital in ensuring the DPD fulfils the community's needs and these early stages are your opportunity to comment on the content of the DPD.
- Formal stages – These include publication, submission to the government, independent examination and adoption of the DPD. There is a formal requirement for a consultation lasting at least six weeks at the publication stage. Consultation at this stage has a different purpose to that at the early stages and representations should focus on whether or not the DPD is 'sound' and has been produced in accordance with legislation.

4.5 Diagram 2, on the next page, outlines the opportunities for community involvement during DPD preparation. Further detail on each of the six stages is provided in the supporting text below.

Diagram 2: Community involvement during DPD preparation



The informal stages in detail

Preparation Stage: Evidence Gathering and Scoping Consultation (Regulation 18)

- 4.6 In order to ensure the policies in our DPDs are based on evidence, a period of gathering together relevant information on specific issues will be undertaken. This may be collated from internal sources and teams within Wiltshire Council, or we may use external expertise such as private consultants or national bodies, such as the Environment Agency. This evidence will be used to identify the key issues associated with planning for future development in Wiltshire.
- 4.7 To ensure that you are aware and able to influence our evidence base we will:
- notify relevant groups, organisations and individuals where appropriate
 - update our website regularly with details of the evidence we are collecting and the finalised reports displaying the results⁴.
- 4.8 This stage of DPD preparation can provide as an opportunity to undertake more open and wider consultation with the whole community, including the local community, seeking to gather wider community views and to ensure they are taken into account when producing the DPD.
- 4.9 Methods of involvement at this stage could include the following:
- Focussed questionnaires, working groups and/or specialist sessions seeking views on particular issues.
 - Forums for particular groups if they have specific knowledge of an area or subject. For example we may seek the views of one particular community area board on local issues, or possibly an environmental group such as the Wiltshire Environmental Alliance if the issue is relevant to them.
 - Where we want to gather a wider community view it may be appropriate to hold a public exhibition and/or surgeries or interactive sessions to raise awareness of a certain issue.
 - If necessary full use will be made of external and internal media sources, both broadcasting and written, to publicise issues and generate interest. The exact use of media will depend on the scope and range of the consultation exercise.
- 4.10 Once this initial evidence gathering stage has taken place, a scoping consultation will take place with certain specific and general consultation bodies, in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. These bodies will be invited to make representations about what the DPD ought to contain.

Consultation documents

- 4.11 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations

⁴ Details of our current evidence and the projects we are undertaking can be found at: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planningpolicyevidencebase

2012 are flexible as to the level of consultation at this Preparation Stage, other than inviting representations on what a DPD ought to contain, and there is no statutory requirement to consult on a full draft version of a document at this stage. However, during the preparation of some DPDs, it may be necessary for Wiltshire Council to consult on various proposals, whether this is a draft of the whole DPD or a targeted consultation relating to certain sections of the DPD. For example, this could assist in a thorough examination of the options before submission of the DPD.

- 4.12 Various techniques will be used during consultations on draft documents and different groups will be targeted. Flexibility will be employed to take account of the type of DPD. This is in line with the national guidance that the level of involvement should be 'appropriate' to the DPD concerned.
- 4.13 At every consultation exercise and/or in correspondence with the community, we will state the current stage of the document, its importance and the next stages in its development. Any comments received will be fully considered and taken into account before progressing to the next stage.

Formal stages

Publication stage (Regulation 19)

- 4.14 Unlike the previous stages of the preparation process, the publication stage is the first formal period for representations and the way we involve you is dictated by regulations. Where appropriate, we may hold exhibitions and attend Area Board meetings during this stage of the process.
- 4.15 By this time in the document's preparation, all options will have been considered and we will produce a draft DPD identifying the proposed policies for development in Wiltshire.

What you need to know: legal compliance and ‘soundness’

The DPD must be produced in accordance with relevant legislation. This includes the requirements that the DPD:

- Has been prepared in accordance with Wiltshire Council’s Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement
- Has been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate
- Has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning (England) Regulations 2012
- Has been subject to a sustainability appraisal
- Has regard to the Sustainable Community Strategy

To be sound, the DPD must be:

- Positively prepared – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development
- Justified – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence
- Effective – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities
- Consistent with national policy – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework

(paragraph 182, National Planning Policy Framework)

4.16 The nature of how you can comment changes at this stage. The consultation and involvement carried out during the plan preparation stage should ensure that all appropriate issues have already been raised. Representations at this stage relate to the ‘soundness’ and legal compliance of the DPD. Details of the requirements for legal compliance and soundness are outlined in the box above.

4.17 Notification of the Publication stage will be by letter and/or email to everyone on the consultation database and will give details of how to respond to Wiltshire Council.

4.18 At this stage we will:

- invite formal representations to be made within a specified period of at least six weeks
- ensure all representations on the DPD are catalogued in a database, in preparation for the submission stage.

- 4.19 Wiltshire Council will review all the representations made and summarise the main issues. Wiltshire Council will then respond to the main issues in a report that will be submitted to the Secretary of State alongside the submission draft of the DPD.
- 4.20 Only in exceptional circumstances will changes be made to the DPD at this stage. If Wiltshire Council does wish to make significant changes based on the comments received, it will consider whether or not these changes can be addressed through an addendum. Where the changes can be addressed through an addendum, this will be published for further comment, and will then be submitted with the DPD to the Secretary of State. Ultimately it will be the inspector who will decide, during the public examination, whether or not these recommended changes will take place (see the next stage and the box below).
- 4.21 If issues are raised at this stage, which necessitate fundamental changes to the DPD, then Wiltshire Council may decide to delay submission of the DPD in order to undertake further work as required. This would necessitate further consultation with relevant specific consultation bodies, followed by publication of the altered DPD for formal representations.

Submission of the DPD to the Secretary of State and independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) (Regulations 22 and 24)

- 4.22 Following the steps above, the DPD will be formally submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) (acting for the Secretary of State). At this stage we will:
- submit copies of all representations received during the publication stage and a summary of the main issues identified; we will also submit a statement outlining consultation exercises undertaken during the earlier stages, and the ways in which this has influenced the DPD
 - publish the submission draft DPD and such associated submission documents (evidence base) as are appropriate
 - notify, by letter and/or email, the current position to all those who made representations, we will also update our website, and will publish a local advertisement setting out the time and location of the examination, and the name of the inspector.
- 4.23 The inspector will at this point consider the conformity of the DPD preparation process with Wiltshire Council's SCI. If it fails to comply, the DPD may have to be withdrawn.

Independent examination

What you need to know – the independent examination

The purpose of the independent examination is to ascertain whether the DPD is sound and legally compliant. The examination usually involves informal discussions. Round table sessions are held to discuss specific issues before the inspector.

At this stage, it will be up to the discretion of the inspector to decide the scale, type and nature of discussions, as well as the timescale for participation in the independent examination. The inspector will have access to all representations made at the publication stage and will also have a report written by Wiltshire Council summarising the main issues and its response to them. Details and timescale will be made available at a pre-examination meeting.

Post-submission and adoption (Regulations 25 and 26)

- 4.24 Following the independent examination, the inspector will prepare a report advising of any changes to the DPD which are considered appropriate in order to make it sound. Alternatively he may find the document unsound.
- 4.25 Once in receipt of the Inspector's report, we will:
- Make Inspector's report available for inspection at Wiltshire Council's principal office and at other places in Wiltshire as Wiltshire Council considers appropriate
 - Publish the Inspector's recommendations on our website
 - Notify those person who requested to be notified of the publication of the recommendations of the Inspector
- 4.26 On the basis of this report, Wiltshire Council has the option to adopt the DPD as soon as is reasonably practicable. There is a six week period for legal challenge after adoption.
- 4.27 At adoption stage we will:
- Make available the DPD, an adoption statement, and the sustainability appraisal report for inspection at Wiltshire Council's main office and other places within Wiltshire that Wiltshire Council thinks appropriate; and also on Wiltshire Council's website.
 - Send a copy of the adoption statement to any person who has asked to be notified of the adoption of the DPD
 - Send a copy of the adoption statement to the Secretary of State

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

- 4.28 The process for preparing and adopting SPDs is different from that for DPDs, as there is no requirement for SPDs to undergo independent examination. This means that the opportunities for community involvement in the preparation of SPDs are slightly different, particularly in the later stages.

- 4.29 The degree of community involvement will inevitably vary according to the nature of the SPD, and the methods used will be proportionate to the SPD concerned. Consultation will generally be focused on the area covered by the document. As with DPDs, however, there are plenty of opportunities to become involved. Diagram 3 below demonstrates the opportunities available at the four main stages. Further detail of the consultation to be undertaken during the preparation of SPDs is provided in the following paragraphs.

Informal stages

Evidence gathering and early community involvement

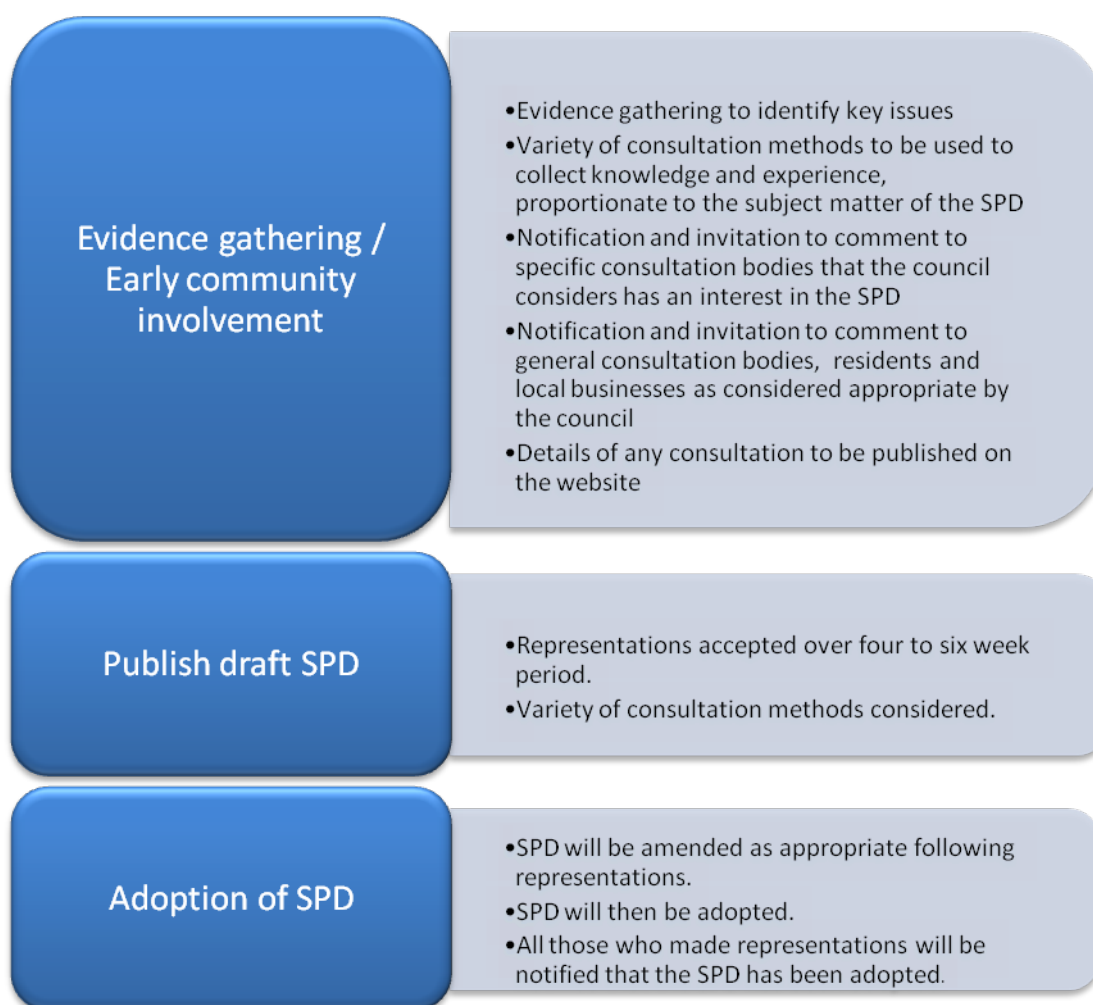
- 4.30 In terms of the evidence gathering and early community involvement stages, Wiltshire Council will normally follow similar processes to those used for DPDs, as set out above. However, any consultation will be proportionate to the subject matter of the SPD, and may be limited to the local area which is most likely to be affected by the contents of the document.

Formal stages

Publish draft SPD

- 4.31 The formal public participation that is required by the regulations is to publish the draft SPD and invite representations. This consultation is not limited to issues of soundness and legal compliance, and the draft SPD may be changed in the light of the representations received. The draft SPD will be published together with a statement setting out how any consultation was undertaken during preparation of the SPD and summarising the main issues that emerged. Representations will be invited during a four to six week period; the regulations require that consultation is for not less than 4 weeks.
- 4.32 In addition to the minimum requirements at this stage we will:
- where possible attend meetings of the organisation/groups or bodies making up the community members directly affected by the SPD
 - make appropriate use of the media to publicise the consultation.
- 4.33 At the end of all community consultation exercises, comments received will be fully considered and taken into account before progressing to the next stage.

Diagram 3: Opportunities for community involvement during SPD preparation



Adoption

4.34 After this period, we will amend the draft SPD, taking into account appropriate representations received. The SPD will then be placed before the relevant council committee for adoption. Upon adoption of the SPD we will:

- send a letter and/or email to all those who have made representations, explaining what we have done in relation to their comments
- publish a statement which contains a summary of the representations received and outlines how the SPD has been altered as a result of the representations
- make copies of the amended adopted document available on Wiltshire Council's website
- make copies of the amended adopted document available at the principal Wiltshire Council office and at libraries and other information points as appropriate

- if necessary, produce a briefing note to accompany the adopted document and explain its content.

Other supplementary documents

- 4.35 Alongside SPDs, there are other documents which may have an influence on planning policy and are regarded as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. These documents may be produced by other teams within Wiltshire Council, for example conservation area appraisals and management plans, or by local communities and parish councils, for example parish plans and village design statements, or by external bodies, for example Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) management plans.
- 4.36 Supplementary documents may be endorsed by Wiltshire Council as 'supplementary guidance', and may subsequently have weight as a material consideration in planning decision-making processes. Details of the approach to be followed for consultation on village design statements, parish and town plans and conservation area appraisals and management plans are provided below.

Village design statements

- 4.37 Village design statements are based on an analysis of the design characteristics of the village. They aim to influence the design of future development, so that it is in keeping with the existing local character. The statements are produced by the local community, with only advisory input from Wiltshire Council. A key element of village design statements is that they should represent the views of the whole village community and early community involvement is therefore encouraged.
- 4.38 The approach outlined below gives an indication of best practice when preparing a village design statement:
- An initial consultation should be undertaken to identify the characteristics of the village which are felt to be important by the local community. This could include a 'village character workshop' and a questionnaire delivered to every household.
 - The local community should be kept informed as the village design statement progresses. A range of methods should be used and sufficient time should be allowed for responses at each stage. This may involve exhibitions/meetings to discuss draft documents at various stages of production. Details of progress should be provided on notice boards/at information points within the village. It may also be appropriate to notify each household of progress using leaflets/newsletters and to publish details of any consultation in the local press.

- Planning officers, parish councils, and the Wiltshire councillor for the area concerned should be kept informed throughout the process. Planning officers will not attempt to direct the development of the village design statement, but may be able to provide useful help and advice on the relevant planning processes.
- Clear records should be kept of all consultation events and responses.

4.39 Further guidance on preparing village design statements can be found on the Wiltshire Council's web page.⁵

4.40 The final village design statement should include details as to the consultation which has been undertaken, the responses received and how these have influenced the content of the document.

Parish and town plans

4.41 Parish and town plans set out a vision for the future of the community, and the actions which are needed to achieve this. The production of parish and town plans is led by town and parish councils, and should reflect the views of the whole community. Consultation during the preparation of town and parish plans should follow similar principles to those set out above for village design statements. It is important that the local community is involved in the process of producing the plan, that council officers and Wiltshire councillors are kept informed, and that clear records are kept of any consultation events. If the parish or town plan is to be adopted as an SPD then a formal consultation led by Wiltshire Council will be required.

Conservation area appraisals and management plans

4.42 Conservation area appraisals and management plans differ from village design statements and parish and town plans in that they are produced by the Wiltshire Council development management teams. Conservation area appraisals give an overview of the history and development of the conservation area and define the distinctive characteristics of the area. Conservation area management plans identify measures to maintain or improve the conservation area and may include details of suggested boundary changes. Wiltshire Council will follow a similar process for consultation on both conservation area appraisals and management plans, as set out below.

4.43 Before preparing a conservation area appraisal or management plan, the officer responsible for the document will:

- notify the relevant Wiltshire councillor, area board manager, and parish council of the intention to prepare an appraisal or management plan
- contact other relevant individuals and groups, such as local history or interest groups and internal council departments, as appropriate

⁵ <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/villagedesignstatements.htm>

- publish details of the likely timetable for production of the document on the Wiltshire Council website, and consider holding a public meeting.
- 4.44 A draft document will then be produced, following best practice guidance. Consultation on the draft appraisal or management plan will be focused on the area covered by the document, and will include:
- hard copies of the draft document made available at the local library and at the local Wiltshire Council offices
 - direct notification to identified consultees
 - discussion of the document at a public meeting if considered necessary
 - direct notification and leaflet drop to any properties affected by proposed changes to the boundaries
 - site notices displayed in a number of locations within the conservation area
 - notices published in the local newspaper
 - details provided on the Wiltshire Council website.
- 4.45 The consultation will run for at least six weeks, after which the draft document will be amended as appropriate. A consultation summary will be produced at this point, setting out who was consulted, how the consultation was undertaken, which issues were raised and how these issues were addressed. Any revisions which affect the boundary of a conservation area will be subject to a further consultation with those people affected, with at least four weeks for responses to be received.
- 4.46 If the proposals involve designation or changes to the boundary of a conservation area then this needs to be approved by the appropriate council committee. If the document is approved, all those who responded to the consultation will be notified, site notices will be displayed and the Wiltshire Council website will be updated accordingly. If the conservation area boundary has been revised, then English Heritage should be notified, and notices must be published in the London Gazette and at least one local paper.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

- 4.47 Current legislation requires that all DPDs are subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and that a report on the findings of the SA is published alongside the DPD. An SA performs a key role in providing a sound evidence base for the DPD; it assesses the social, economic and environmental effects of plans and ensures that sustainable development is treated in an integrated way in the plan preparation process.
- 4.48 The SA of a DPD fully incorporates the requirements of the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment, which requires that an assessment of the environmental effects of the DPD should be undertaken through a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 4.49 Supplementary Planning Documents do not require a sustainability appraisal but may in exceptional circumstances require a Strategic Environmental Assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan.

4.50 The legal requirements to carry out an SA and SEA are different. However, they are combined into a single process, meeting the requirements of both because of similar stages and requirements. For ease of reference, this SCI will refer to both processes as Sustainability Appraisal (SA). A number of key stages can be identified for community involvement in the preparation of the SA. These are presented in diagram 4 below.

Context, objectives and baseline

4.51 The first stage of SA is the establishment of an evidence base for the SA which is often referred to as the scoping stage.

4.52 When developing the evidence base during the scoping stage, the following actions will be undertaken:

- identifying other plans and programmes and sustainability objectives that are relevant to the DPD
- collecting information on the current state of the area and its evolution without the DPD
- identifying the sustainability issues and the appraisal objectives

4.53 This scoping stage will establish a set of sustainability objectives against which DPDs can be assessed. These sustainability objectives will be included in an SA Framework to be used in undertaking appraisals.

Consulting on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal

4.54 The scoping report sets out the conclusions from the 'context, objectives and baseline' stage, and includes the SA Framework mentioned above.

4.55 As part of DPD preparation, the SEA Consultation Bodies as defined by Regulation 4 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, will be consulted on the information and level of detail contained within the scoping report (which will cover the SEA Directive's environmental report requirements).

4.56 We will also work together with, and consult members of our community, adjacent local authorities and other established groups, such as the local strategic partnerships, in this important initial stage of the SA. This consultation will involve stakeholders concerned with social, environmental and economic issues.

Assessing the effects of options for policies and proposals against reasonable alternatives

4.57 At this stage, the sustainability effects of the DPD in preparation⁶, and reasonable alternatives to the proposals, are identified, described and evaluated. Mitigation measures are considered at this stage and measures proposed to monitor any significant effects highlighted in the SA Report.

4.58 We will integrate consultation on the SA Report with consultation on the

⁶ This is at Regulation 18 stage of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

DPD in preparation. Consultation at this stage will therefore incorporate similar methods to those used for consultation on the DPD in preparation, as set out above.

- 4.59 Public participation in consultation on the SA Report will help to ensure the SA is comprehensive and robust enough to support the DPD during the later stages of public consultation and examination.

Consulting on the Publication DPD and the SA report

- 4.60 At the publication stage of the DPD⁷, we will produce and publish the SA report alongside the DPD. The SA report will set out how the appraisal was carried out and how options were assessed and carried forward. It will also indicate clearly which options were not taken forward, drawing on the evidence base and appraisals to show why they were not pursued.
- 4.61 At this stage, consultees, will be invited to consider both the DPD and the accompanying SA report. Consultation will follow the same methods as those detailed for the publication stage of the DPDs. We will consider each representation made in relation to the SA report and amendments will be made as appropriate.

Changes to the DPD with significant sustainability effects

- 4.62 The more robust the consultation and engagement processes, the less likely it is that changes will later be needed to the DPD and accompanying SA. However, where proposed changes to a DPD have significant sustainability effects, relevant sustainability appraisal information will be made available in the form of a revised SA report and published to provide an opportunity for representations to be made on the changes.

Final report

- 4.63 The final SA report will be submitted with the DPD to the Secretary of State as a submission document, along with any revisions or supplements to it. The SA report will be relied upon by Wiltshire Council as evidence that the DPD has taken into account social, environmental and economic effects with a view to achieving sustainable development in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

SA statement to accompany adopted DPD

- 4.64 When a DPD is adopted (incorporating any changes required by the inspector), we will issue a statement summarising, in relation to the SA:
- sustainability considerations and how these have been integrated into the development plan document
 - consultation responses and how any responses received at all stages to the SA reports have been taken into account
 - alternative options and reasons for the choice of alternatives in light of other reasonable alternatives considered in the SA

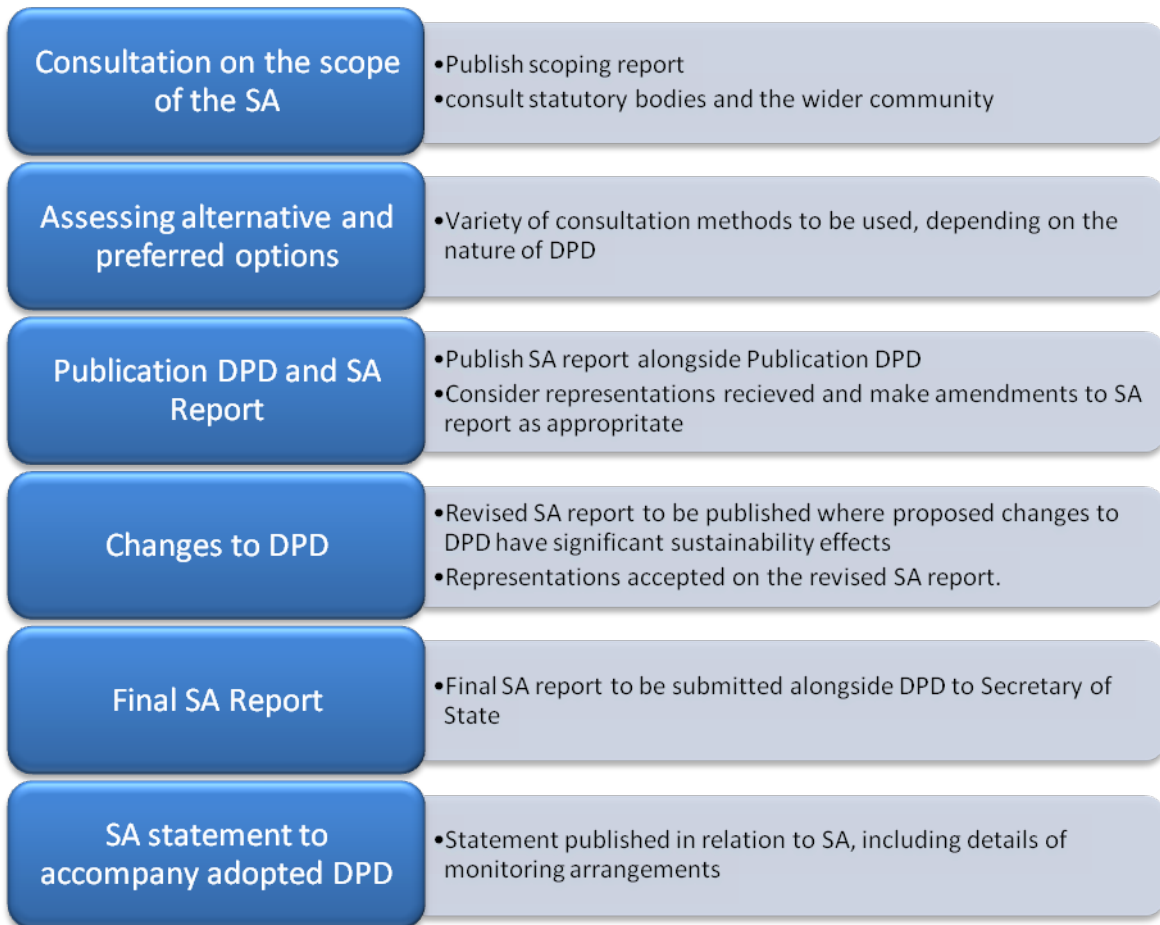
⁷ This is at Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

- measures to be taken to monitor any significant sustainability effects of implementing the development plan document

Monitoring significant sustainability effects

- 4.65 SA requires arrangements to be set up for monitoring the significant effects of implementing an adopted DPD. Monitoring arrangements should be designed to provide information that can be used to highlight specific performance issues and significant effects, and should lead to more informed decision-making.
- 4.66 The SEA Directive specifically requires monitoring to identify 'unforeseen adverse effects' and to enable appropriate remedial action to be taken. The results of significant effects monitoring will be published annually in Wiltshire Council's "Authority's Monitoring Report" (AMR).

Diagram 4: Opportunities for community involvement in the SA



5 Community involvement in planning applications

- 5.1 This chapter explains how and when you can become involved in the determination of planning applications in your area.

How can I find out about planning applications in my area?

- 5.2 Wiltshire Council is responsible for handling all planning applications in Wiltshire, ranging from householder extensions to large applications dealing with employment, residential development and minerals extraction/processing and waste management. The degree of community involvement will inevitably vary depending on the nature of the individual application.
- 5.3 Wiltshire Council takes the following steps to promote involvement on each planning application:

Online details

Details of each application received are displayed on our website. Once the application is determined, copies of the decision notice and the officer's report are also made available. The website facility allows individuals to submit comments electronically.

Site notices

All planning applications are advertised by a site notice displayed on or close to the site, allowing 21 days for a response.

Neighbour notification

Where appropriate, neighbours are notified by letter that an application has been received. Further detail on this is provided below.

Town/parish council notification

Town/parish councils are sent details of every application in their area and given 21 days to respond, or longer by agreement in exceptional circumstances. The consultation period is limited to 21 days in order to meet the statutory deadline for determination of the application.

Weekly lists

Weekly lists of applications received are produced and are available both online on Wiltshire Council's website and on request via email to local organisations. They are also sent to Wiltshire councillors.

- 5.4 In addition, Wiltshire Council advertises in the weekly local press all applications that fall within the following criteria:

Applications advertised within the weekly local press:

- Applications which affect the character or appearance of a conservation area
- Applications for works to listed buildings and developments likely to affect the setting of listed buildings
- Developments affecting public rights of way
- Developments of ten or more houses or employment development with 1,000 square metres or more floorspace
- Developments on sites which have an area of one hectare or more
- Waste management development and development relating to minerals extraction
- Other developments likely to be of wider interest to the community, such as planning applications for telecommunication masts or wind turbines
- Developments that are a departure from the policies of the development plan.

- 5.5 The cost of advertising in the weekly local press is high, whilst circulation levels are falling as content moves online onto digital platforms. Research undertaken by Wiltshire Council indicates that the most effective form of public consultation on planning applications is via neighbour notification and site notices, with no evidence of any response from newspaper advertising. If the government amends the legislation to remove the requirement for newspaper advertising, Wiltshire Council will review whether to continue this form of public engagement, based on an assessment of the costs and benefits to local residents and taxpayers.

- 5.6 Wiltshire Council recognises that many people are most interested in applications that directly affect them, such as householder applications, which constitute almost 50% of all planning applications received in Wiltshire. Wiltshire Council endeavours to notify occupiers of premises which adjoin the application site and may be affected by the proposed development individually by letter that an application has been received. They are invited to view the application and make any written observations within 21 days⁸. Residents whose dwelling does not adjoin an application site cannot expect to be notified individually. Wiltshire Council displays a site notice for each application to publicise proposals more widely, and in addition advertises major applications and those affecting the character or appearance of a conservation area or the setting of a listed building in the weekly local press.

Are other organisations notified of planning applications?

- 5.7 Wiltshire Council also recognises the need to involve other organisations, both local and national. Statutory consultations are carried out on many

⁸ This is to enable the Wiltshire Council to determine the application within the statutory period

applications with bodies such as the Environment Agency (flood risk); the regional offices of English Heritage (important listed building/conservation area/ancient monument issues) and Natural England (biodiversity issues). However, involvement also takes place with local non-statutory bodies that can offer valuable advice, such as community area boards, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), local civic societies and local branches of national organisations such as the Ramblers Association. Whom we consult will vary with the nature of the proposal and the location. Consultees have 21 days in which to respond.

Involving your community group

Your community group is welcome to comment on applications. If you wish to be alerted about planning applications in a particular area please contact Wiltshire Council to receive a regular electronic copy of the weekly list.

- 5.8 To minimise both costs and carbon footprint, most consultations are carried out electronically.
- 5.9 To assist parish/town councils and community groups, Wiltshire Council will, on request, provide advice and training on how planning applications are determined and what issues can be taken into account in deciding a planning application.

How can I comment on a planning application?

- 5.10 The best way to express your views on a planning application is to contact the Wiltshire Council electronically. There is an online system on the Wiltshire Council's website or you can email. You may also wish to contact your local councillor, who has the ability to request that the application is determined by the relevant planning committee. You can also send a letter.
- 5.11 Oral, anonymous or defamatory comments cannot be taken into account. You should ensure that your comments relate to relevant planning matters.
- 5.12 Wiltshire Council has an established procedure which enables members of the public to speak at Wiltshire Council planning meetings. The details of this are set out in paragraph 9.5 of The Planning Code of Good Practice, which is available online⁹.

⁹ The Planning Code of Good Practice can be accessed at:
www.wiltshire.gov.uk/code_of_good_practice_for_members_30_04_09.pdf

Relevant planning matters include:

- the effect of the proposed development on the appearance of the area
- the quality of design
- significant overbearing impact and loss of outlook (e.g. significant overshadowing from a new building)
- the economic benefits of the proposal
- highway safety issues
- loss of important trees
- intrusion into the countryside
- significantly increased noise and disturbance
- national and local planning policies.

Concerns which are not normally relevant to the planning process:

- loss of private view
- loss of property value
- breach of private covenant
- loss of trade to a competitor
- the level of profit a developer might make
- personal circumstances of the applicant (other than in exceptional cases)
- moral objections (e.g. to uses such as amusement arcades and betting offices)
- conflict with private access rights.

5.13 Wiltshire Council will carefully take any comments made into account before a decision is made. All comments are scanned and added to the web site once email addresses and hand written signatures have been removed (it should be noted that typed names and addresses remain visible).

5.14 Wiltshire Council may negotiate changes to applications where these are expedient. Re-consultation (usually for 14 days) will take place on amendments if Wiltshire Council considers that they raise new issues that could lead to further comment¹⁰.

5.15 On many major applications, Wiltshire Council encourages applicants to carry out public consultation in the local area before submitting a planning application. This may take the form of a public meeting and display of their initial suggestions. Wiltshire Council may also suggest that the relevant parish

¹⁰ This is to enable Wiltshire Council to determine the application within the statutory period.

or town council and/or community area board is specifically consulted at this stage. In these cases, you may be able to make your views known directly to the developer before the plans are finalised and submitted to Wiltshire Council.

Who decides whether planning permission should be granted?

- 5.16 Planning applications are usually determined by officers using delegated powers. The circumstances under which an application can, or cannot, be determined using delegated powers are set out in Wiltshire Council's Scheme of Delegation, which is subject to regular review.
- 5.17 Applications which cannot be determined under delegated powers are referred to either the Strategic Planning Committee or one of the area planning committees for a decision. The Strategic Planning Committee determines larger applications which are of relevance beyond the local area.

Area planning committees

There are area planning committees where local decisions on planning applications are made by local members. These committees determine non-delegated applications which are outside the remit of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Area planning committee meetings are held on an area basis, making it easier for people to attend.

The committees usually meet once every three weeks. Agendas are published in advance of each meeting, and can be viewed online.

If the application that you have expressed a view on is determined at a planning committee, we will endeavour to let you know the time and date of the meeting so you are given the opportunity to attend. You may have the opportunity to address the committee before the application is decided.

What public involvement is undertaken on major development applications?

- 5.18 Wiltshire Council understands that many people have an interest in major applications that affect a wide area. Wiltshire is largely a rural area and fewer than 4% of the applications received fall within the government's definition of major applications (10 or more houses; 1,000 square metres of floor space; development relating to minerals extraction; waste management development; or development on a site with an area of one hectare or more)¹¹.
- 5.19 The applications that often provoke the most widespread interest are those that have an impact over a wider area summarised in the box below.

¹¹ As defined in the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995.

Examples of major development proposals

- Large or significant new housing or mixed use developments
- Large or significant new retail developments
- Waste disposal sites
- Large road schemes
- Mineral extraction
- Tall wind turbines

5.20 For proposals of this nature, Wiltshire Council will encourage prospective developers to undertake more extensive public involvement at an early stage, before a planning application is submitted. It will expect the developer to discuss with Wiltshire Council's planning officers details of how the community should be involved in the decision making process. The purpose of these discussions will be to:

- identify the groups/individuals that should be involved
- agree how they should be involved
- agree a timetable for their involvement
- establish how the feedback from the consultation will be provided
- discuss how the feedback from the consultation exercises will be incorporated into the development proposal.

5.21 The level of community involvement agreed will aim to reflect the scale and complexity of the proposal and will be the responsibility of the developer. Good practice will involve organising a meeting at a local venue at a convenient time which all residents and businesses in the immediate area likely to be affected by the development are invited to attend. Residents' groups, the local town/parish council and elected members should also be invited to attend, with the event publicised in local media.

5.22 The proposal should not be presented as a completed project, but should cover the options that can be considered. Feedback should be encouraged both at the event and subsequently.

5.23 When the planning application is submitted Wiltshire Council will expect the applicant to provide evidence that sets out how the community has been involved. This should take the form of a statement of community involvement outlining what public consultation has been carried out and how the results of the exercise have been taken into account in the submitted application. Where there is a local validation checklist for submission of the planning application, and where a statement of community involvement is a requirement of this checklist, the application will not be registered without one.

Masterplanning

- 5.24 Community involvement in the development of a masterplan for a site is essential, more so now as the Localism Act has empowered local communities to influence how the built environment around them takes shape. The extent and type of community involvement may vary depending on the type and scale of development that is coming forward, but should be based on tripartite working arrangements between developer, the community and the Council.
- 5.25 The collaborative approach should be employed when there are proposals being promoted for larger areas of development on the fringe of settlements, or areas of brownfield redevelopment within towns, where it is important that an overall strategy must be agreed which takes account of physical, social, economic and environmental needs of the area.
- 5.26 There is no prescribed way of how each master plan should be developed, but it is considered that there are three broad stages of production with each requiring collaborative working from the parties involved. Therefore the community involvement in the process of producing a master plan can be divided into three broad stages:

Inception and scoping stage - The masterplanning process starts with an inception meeting with all relevant community groups as an initial meeting to start to identify their requirements from the development. This will be done at an early stage of the process to ensure the community has a meaningful input. From this inception a series of ongoing partnership meetings will be arranged to take the project forward. This should be an iterative process with developers responding to the request and putting forward options for the group to consider. Following the inception meeting a clear critical path with milestones will be produced, either by the developer, Wiltshire Council or community steering group. This critical path will ensure that momentum is retained, that all parties have certainty over their involvement and roles, and that negotiations do not drag on or fetter delivery of the jobs and housing unnecessarily.

The design stage - The tripartite working team should evolve the spatial master plan through a process of analysis, consultations, testing and refinement. At the end of this stage, a plan is produced which presents proposals for buildings, street blocks, public spaces, streets and landscaping. This is in the form of diagrams, land use plans, models, illustrations and words, indicating how stage three below can be physically achieved.

The implementation stage – All aspects of delivery must be addressed, such as programme, risk, funding, procurement, review and monitoring. There is a significant overlap between this phase and the earlier prepare and design stages and it is essential to the success of the master plan that the process of implementation is considered right from the start and that a framework is put in place to ensure the community is kept updated on progress and also have a say on any suggested revisions to the approved master plan.

Pre-application discussions

- 5.27 Pre-application discussions are encouraged for all types of applications – major, minor and others. The objective of pre-application discussions should be to confirm whether the principle of development is acceptable and to clarify the format, type and level of detail required to enable Wiltshire Council to determine an application. For major applications it will also enable the applicant to discuss with Wiltshire Council details of how the community should be involved in the decision-making process.
- 5.28 It is recognised that at the very early stages of considering a development proposal applicants may wish for any discussions with Wiltshire Council to be confidential. However, applicants are encouraged to involve the local community as early as possible in the process of preparing their proposals. The community area boards may provide an appropriate forum for pre-application discussions for major applications which are of wider community interest. Wiltshire Council has pro-actively encouraged parish and town councils to take advantage of offers of pre-application discussion from prospective developers.

Mineral extraction and waste management development

- 5.29 Applications relating to mineral extraction and waste management are dealt with through the processes outlined above. Mineral extraction and waste management developments are regarded as temporary uses of land, but can last for many years. In some cases it can take decades to work out and restore a quarry, during which time the active site will become part of the local context.
- 5.30 If planning permission is granted, Wiltshire Council will encourage mineral and waste site operators on larger sites to form liaison groups. Such groups facilitate regular liaison meetings between the site operator, Wiltshire Council and the local community, providing a forum in which representatives of the local community can raise any issues or concerns the community has.

6. Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 This final chapter sets out how Wiltshire Council will review the implementation of the SCI in planning decision-making across Wiltshire.
- 6.2 Wiltshire Council will actively monitor the success of community involvement techniques, ensuring that the procedures for involving the community are achieving a representative level and that they are making best use of resources. This monitoring review will occur within the Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) (formerly the Annual Monitoring Report) after a major consultation exercise, when the extent to which the SCI is being successfully implemented will be assessed. The success of community involvement initiatives will be measured by:
- how successfully the community and other interested groups are able to find information on the Local Plan documents
 - the level of involvement of under-represented groups
 - respondents' satisfaction with Wiltshire Council's overall consultation standards.
- 6.3 Monitoring will identify the key challenges and opportunities to the SCI enabling adjustments and revisions to be made. Monitoring will be a continuous process and the AMR will be updated annually and published by the end of December each year. Wiltshire Council will consider revising the SCI if monitoring concludes that one or more of the following indicators has/have been triggered:
- where there is substantial dissatisfaction with the community involvement process for developing local planning policy.
 - where there is substantial dissatisfaction with the consultation process for planning applications.
 - Wiltshire Council resolves that the Statement of Community Involvement will be revised.
- 6.4 This will not preclude any minor adjustments to the methods of consultation or updates to the consultation database provided that such changes do not undermine the SCI in a significant way.
- 6.5 Following any review of the SCI, a report will be produced outlining the findings. We will then use the findings to refine methods in the future as required. If a review of the SCI proposes changes, these will be considered by Wiltshire Council through the appropriate committee process.

Contacts for further information

Wiltshire Council website

Further detail on the planning processes discussed in the SCI can be accessed on the Wiltshire Council website at: www.wiltshire.gov.uk

Local Plan

For information about the Local Plan contact the Wiltshire Spatial Planning Policy Team:

Email: spatialplanningpolicy@wiltshire.gov.uk

Phone: 01225 713223

Address: Wiltshire Council, Spatial Planning Policy Team, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JN

Minerals and waste

For information about minerals and waste policy contact the Wiltshire Minerals and Waste Policy Team:

Email: mineralsandwastepolicy@wiltshire.gov.uk

Phone: 01225 713429

Address: Wiltshire Council, Minerals and Waste Policy Team, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JN

Development management

For information about the process of applying for planning permission contact one of the following teams:

Minerals and waste development management

For information about minerals and waste planning applications contact the Minerals and Waste Development Team:

Email: mineralsandwastedevelopment@wiltshire.gov.uk

Phone: 0300 456 0102

Address: Wiltshire Council, Minerals and Waste Development, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JN

Development Management North (based in Chippenham):

Email: developmentmanagement@wiltshire.gov.uk

Phone: 01249 706444

Address: Wiltshire Council, Development Management, Monkton Park, Chippenham, SN15 1ER

Development Management South (based in Salisbury)

Email: developmentmanagement@wiltshire.gov.uk
Phone: 01722 434541
Address: Wiltshire Council, Development Management, PO Box 2281, Salisbury,
SP2 2HX

Development Management Central (based in Trowbridge)

Email: developmentmanagement@wiltshire.gov.uk
Phone: 01225 770344
Address: Wiltshire Council, Development Management, County Hall, Bythesea
Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JN

The areas covered by Wiltshire Council North, South, and Central Development Management teams are indicated on the map overleaf.

Area boards and community governance in Wiltshire

For information about area boards and community governance, contact Wiltshire Council's Community Governance Team:

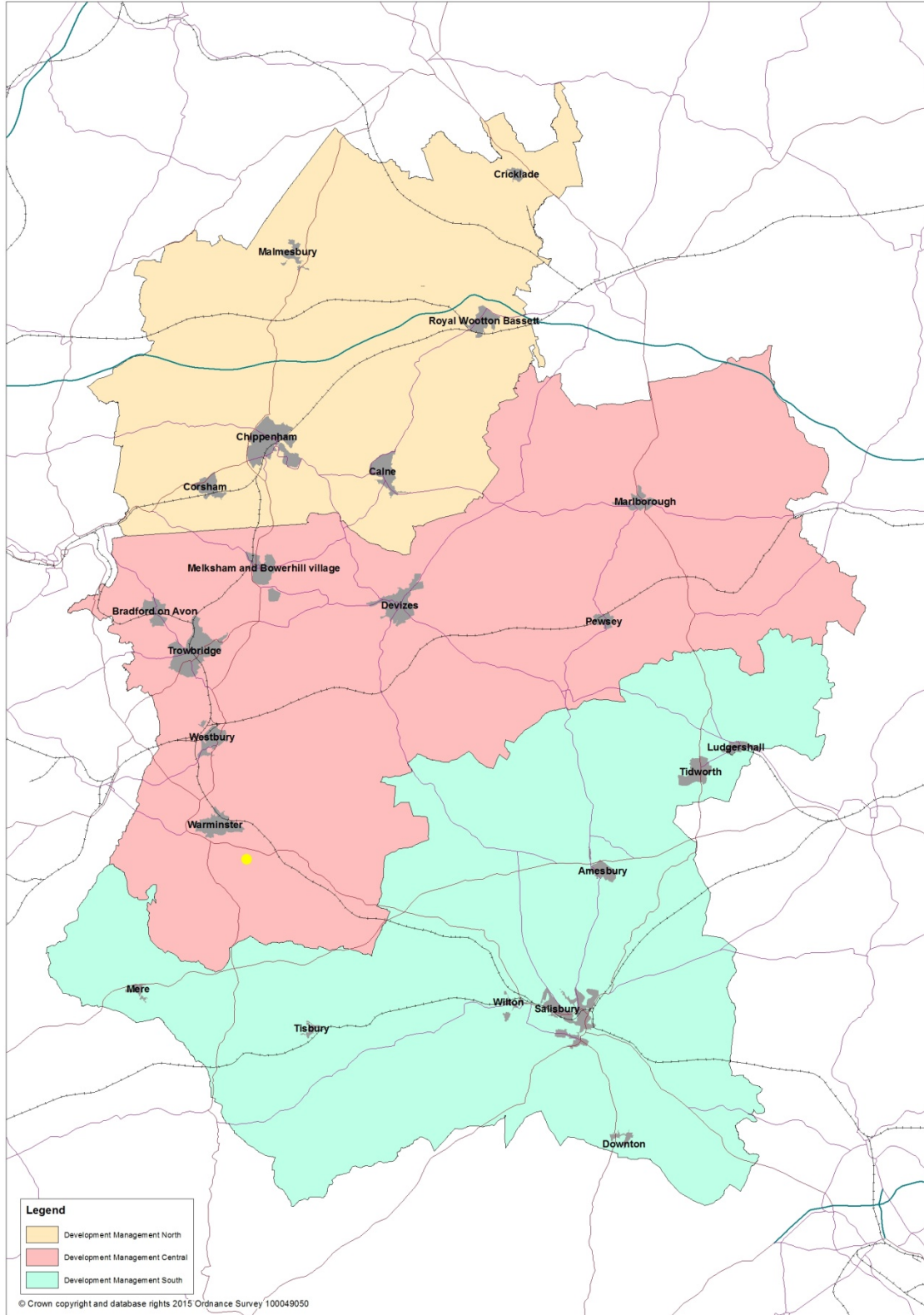
Email: areaboards@wiltshire.gov.uk
Phone: 01722 434255
Address: Wiltshire Council, Community Governance Team, County Hall,
Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JN

Planning Aid

Planning Aid is a nationwide charitable body providing free help and advice on planning matters to groups and individuals who cannot afford to pay a planning consultant. Further details are available on the Planning Aid website at:

www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk.

Map showing areas covered by Wiltshire Council's North, South, and Central Development Management teams



Appendix 1: Methods of consultation

Consultation method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses	Cost	Staffing resources
Methods of involvement in the Local Plan					
Documents available at principal Wiltshire council office and for purchase	At certain stages of consultation Wiltshire Council will publicly display documents at the principal Wiltshire Council office and at libraries and information points where this is considered appropriate. This is to allow the general public and interested parties to view planning documents without internet access. Wiltshire Council will also make these documents available for purchase at a reasonable	Access for all. All documents and any other relevant publications available in full. Purchased documents can be taken away and examined at leisure.	Available only during certain hours. May exclude groups and individuals with specific access needs.	Minimal. Printing costs may be high for purchased documents but could be covered by purchase cost.	Low
Online consultation (through Objective)	All new planning documents and consultation periods will be displayed on Wiltshire Council's website. Objective allows comments and feedback to be submitted	Available 24 hours a day and can be accessed anywhere. All documents available in full.	Not everyone has internet access.	Minimal once system is established.	Low once system is set up.

Consultation method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses	Cost	Staffing resources
Notification and issue of information to specific consultation bodies and notification of other consultees as appropriate	A formal letter will be sent to all specific consultation bodies which the council considers would have an interest in the subject matter of a DPD or SPD. The letter will form part of the formal consultation process. In addition letters will be sent to other consultees on Wiltshire Council's community database, as considered appropriate.	Gives direct information to specific consultation bodies and to other consultees who are already on Wiltshire Council's community database.	Is generally limited to those who have already interacted with the planning process. Does not engage the wider community who are not already involved. Mail shots can be expensive and labour intensive if accompanied by a large amount of information.	Expensive with postage costs directly related to the amount of information sent; however emails are much less expensive.	High for letters. Low for emails.
Email to consultees on Wiltshire Council's community database	Wiltshire Council may use emails as opposed to letters for groups that regularly use their email accounts.				

Consultation method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses	Cost	Staffing resources
Media advertising	Radio – Where appropriate local radio stations will be sent press releases to publicise key planning documents of high public interest. TV – Where appropriate planning documents of high public interest may be promoted by press releases to local news television. Newspaper – Consultation periods and new planning documents will be advertised in advance of publication and/or consultation where this is considered appropriate.	Notifies a wide range of people. Gives accessibility to all parts of the community.	Some local papers are not widely read. Lack of detail on hand and lack of opportunity for questions.	Low in terms of producing and disseminating notices. However, cost will relate to number of press outlets used and their charges. These can be quite high.	Low
Training sessions for specific groups	Training sessions may be provided for specific groups, such as town and parish councils. These sessions will be used to explain planning processes, thereby enabling attendees to respond effectively to consultation.	Leads to improved understanding of the planning process and the limits and constraints which apply when making planning decisions.	Limited to specific invitees. High staffing resources.	Expensive for venues and staff time.	High

Consultation method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses	Cost	Staffing resources
Focussed questionnaires	Focussed questionnaires may be used by the council as a valuable form of data collection to assess views and opinions. The information gathered from the questionnaires will directly feed into the production of new planning documents.	Gives opportunity to gather specific information from the wider community. May reach some people who would not normally engage in planning.	Limited to those questioned. Can only provide a snap shot of public opinion which may be affected by location, time or other factors.	Expensive if verbal questionnaires are used, as likely to be carried out by external company. Lower cost for written questionnaires.	Medium
Focus groups, working groups, and specialist sessions	Forums may be held to discuss relevant issues at key early stages in the production of new planning documents. This is in line with the government's objective of early consultation at the beginning of document production. Where a document has particular relevance a focused 'specialist' session may be undertaken to empower a particular target group.	Provides a forum for debate and for issues to be examined in public. Focuses on particular issues ensuring relevant consultees are engaged.	Limited community coverage. Requirements on staff resources could be high depending on time/number of sessions held.	Expensive for venues and staff time. Use of consultants could also be expensive.	Medium/high

Consultation method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses	Cost	Staffing resources
Surgeries, presentations, exhibitions and public meetings	<p>These may be held in the main towns of the county and in other locations where appropriate, to ensure as many people as possible are able to participate. Officers will attend with the expectation of explaining documents and increasing public awareness. Where possible, officers will also attend and address meetings of groups and organisations within the community during major consultation stages, although this will depend upon the time and resources available.</p>	<p>Allows display of information in different styles. Officers are on hand to help explain and interpret documents.</p>	<p>Involves large amount of advertising to provide information to community. Distance and location can be problematic to community. High staffing resources.</p>	<p>Expensive for venues and staff time.</p>	<p>High</p>

Consultation method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses	Cost	Staffing resources
Methods of involvement in planning applications					
Online details	All new and a large number of historic planning applications can be viewed online on the council's website. Wiltshire Council is seeking to develop a system with an easy interface for users so they are able to comment and give feedback online.	Available 24 hours a day and can be accessed anywhere. The whole planning application and all supporting documents are available in full.	Not everyone has internet access.	Minimal. Although developing a new online system may be expensive.	Low once system is set up
Neighbour notification letters	If Wiltshire Council receives a planning application that it feels may affect neighbouring properties then it will notify persons affected by writing to them directly. Recipients of neighbour notification letters have 21 days in which to respond.	Gives direct information to those targeted and ensures they are aware of potential changes in their area.	Is limited to notifying neighbours and may not inform all those who have an opinion on the application.	Minimal. Major applications might require a large mail shot.	Medium/ High

Consultation method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses	Cost	Staffing resources
Site notices	All planning applications are publicised by a site notice, displayed on or close to the site. Site notices contain basic information about the application and also information about where more details can be obtained. A site notice will be placed in time to give respondents the statutory 21 day period for responses.	Site notices are designed to be placed in a position where the public can easily read them to allow anyone who is in the vicinity of the application site to become aware of the application.	Site notices can often be missed and they notify only persons in the vicinity, although some applications may affect wider sectors of the public.	Minimal	Minimal
Statutory notices in the weekly local press	Local planning authorities are required to publicise certain applications by notice in a local newspaper. The newspaper in which the advertisement will appear will depend on the area in which the application is made.	Notifies a wide range of people. Gives accessibility to all parts of the community.	Some local papers are not widely read. Lack of detail on hand and lack of opportunity for questions.	Low in terms of producing and disseminating notices. However, the cost will relate to the number of press outlets used and their charges.	Low

This document was published by Wiltshire Council, Economy and Enterprise, Spatial Planning.

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