

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH

Local
Development
Framework

Residents' Workshops – March 2005 **(Draft Statement of Community Involvement Preparation)**

Contents

- 1 INTRODUCTION..... 1**
- 2 PURPOSE AND OUTLINE OF THE WORKSHOPS 1**
 - INITIAL EXERCISE 2
 - MAIN ACTIVITY 3
 - FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION 4
 - FINAL EXERCISE 6
- 3 OUTCOME FROM THE WORKSHOPS 8**
 - APPENDIX 1: DETAILED SUMMARIES OF GROUP FEEDBACK..... 1

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Borough Council's objective is to develop a reasonable and realistic process that is seen to be fair and open for involving residents, amongst others, in preparing a Local Development Framework for the Borough that accords with national and regional planning policy and helps to deliver local objectives. Therefore, during March 2005, two evening workshops for residents were held at the Camden Centre in Royal Tunbridge Wells (21 March) and the Paddock Wood Day Centre (22 March). A letter had been sent out at the beginning of March to a random sample of 300 addresses, taken from the ratings register, inviting one person aged 18 or over from the address to attend one of the two workshops. About 30 people could have attended each workshop, which was scheduled to last two hours. A total of 37 people attended the two workshops, 25 at the Camden Centre and 12 at the Paddock Wood Day Centre.

2 PURPOSE AND OUTLINE OF THE WORKSHOPS

2.1 The purpose of the workshop was to involve residents in assessing ways of involving residents in the preparation and review of the different documents (Local Development Documents) that would set out the framework for the future shape of the Borough. Required under the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this framework is formally called the Local Development Framework.

2.2 The workshop outline was as follows:

- Initial exercise - (i) something about you; and (ii) previous involvement with town & country planning in Tunbridge Wells Borough (see table 2)
- Brief outline of the new planning system following the enactment of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- Brief outline of the importance of community involvement in making and reviewing the new Local Development Framework

- Main activity: Involving residents in town & country planning
- Feedback and discussion session
- Final exercise – feedback & comments

INITIAL EXERCISE

2.3 For the initial exercise, the attendees were invited to provide some information about themselves and their previous involvement in town & country planning. The exercise was not obligatory. The results are set out in table 1.

Table 1: Something about the Residents attending the Workshops

	Age				Time resident in Tunbridge Wells Borough			
	Under 35	35-59	60 or over	Non-respondents	Less than 5 years	5-15 years	16 years or more	Non-respondents
Camden Centre	6	7	8	4	2	6	14	3
Paddock Wood Day Centre	0	7	4	1	2	1	8	1
	Previous experience of town & country planning matters							
	None		A little		A lot		Non-respondents	
Camden Centre	17		6		0		2	
Paddock Wood Day Centre	2		6		2		2	

MAIN ACTIVITY

2.4 Following a brief outline of the new town & country planning system and the importance of community involvement in plan-making and review, the residents formed a number of groups for the main group activity about involving residents in town & country planning. The residents formed four groups at the Camden Centre and three groups at the Paddock Wood Day Centre. Each group had to consider how to involve residents in town & country planning. The residents were advised that the outcomes of their discussions would be taken into account in the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement.

Group 1 had two tasks:

- (A) To identify the general principles they would want to see applied, regardless of the subject of the document being prepared, so that residents can be involved and/or residents' interests taken into account as follows:
- (1) List the key points that they would want the Borough Council to take account of when devising ways of involving residents;
 - (2) What they would see as the pros and cons of the selection of commonly used techniques for involving people in plan-making processes; and
 - (3) To add any ideas of their own and to think about the pros and cons for these
- (B) To listen to the other groups' proposals for involving residents and comment on each of them in the light of the outcomes of their discussion

For advice, the Group was given:

- (1) A few ideas they might want to think about including:
- Whether "residents" fit into one category
 - If there are any groups that might represent residents
 - What arrangements the Borough Council should make to give residents a good opportunity to get involved, e.g. certain times of day /days of week
 - Is it important to hear and consider others views?
 - Is it important to share views and ideas?
 - What they would expect to see from their involvement
- (2) A brief summary of some of the techniques used for involving the community as follows:

- Website – putting all documents, information about events, opportunities to comment such as questionnaires on the Borough Council’s website
- Publicity – press releases, articles offered to local press, articles in Borough News, leaflet distribution
- Exhibitions (manned by technical & professional staff) – e.g. in libraries
- Presentations with question & answer sessions – as part of public meetings
- Making consultation documents available in Council Offices & libraries for viewing and comment
- Questionnaires and surveys
- Various types of workshop including discussion forums and detailed area design or planning exercises, such as Planning for Real®
- Citizens’ Panel/Focus Group – a representative sample of the population of Tunbridge Wells Borough (about 1,000 people) regularly used to respond to questionnaires or small focus groups selected from the sample to take part in more detailed face-to-face discussions

Groups 2 – 4 decided on a range of techniques for involving residents in preparing a Core Strategy (Group 2 at both workshops), Land Allocations (Group 3 at both workshops) and an Area Action Plan (Group 4 at the Camden Centre only as more residents attended that workshop). The techniques were as given to Group 1 but Groups 2 – 4 were given a budget and a notional cost was placed against each technique. The groups were advised that some consultations were essential at certain stages in the process to prepare their document and those costs had to be deducted, leaving a residual to use as they saw fit to encourage participation in the preparation of their Local Development Documents.

- 2.5** To supplement the brief summary of the new planning system given earlier in the workshop, each group was given a briefing sheet and, when sought, technical support by officers from the Strategy & Development Service of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. However, each group took responsibility for its proposals and reported back on their discussions. Group 1 scrutinised the proposals of the other groups in the light of their own discussions before the proposals were discussed generally. A summary of the key points coming out of the exercise was agreed at the end of the session.

FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION

- 2.6** The techniques for involving residents chosen by the groups at the two workshops are set out in table 2. All the groups weighted their use to the early stages of the preparation of the various documents. Generally, the groups felt that these techniques should be supplemented by extensive use of the following, again, especially at the early stages in plan preparation:

- Leaflets
- Publicity and prominent advertising
- Mailshots
- Preparation of clear summary documents

Table 2: Methods of Engagement by Subject of Consultation

Subject of engagement	Method of Engagement					
	Facilitated workshop sessions (could include techniques such as Planning for Real ®)	Exhibitions staffed by planning staff	Presentation by planning staff with questions & answers	Citizens' Panel/Focus Group	Questionnaires & surveys	High profile events e.g., interactive exhibitions or other events
(1) Developing a vision or core policies (the Core Strategy)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
(2) Identifying issues and commenting on proposals to identify sites where specific uses should go (Land Allocations)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
(3) Identifying issues and commenting on proposals and priorities for a specific area (Area Action Plans)	✓	✓	✓		✓	

2.7 Participants at both workshops recognised that most people only become interested in planning matters when, and if, they made a planning application or objected to one in their neighbourhood. They acknowledged that it would be difficult to

engage people in the more strategic debate needed to prepare a Core Strategy although Land Allocations and Area Actions Plans could be easier because they were more clearly area-based. Consequently, people could identify their issues and concerns more easily. The main points to come from the discussions and exercises at the two workshops were that:

- Involvement should begin at the evidence gathering stage;
- Information should be shared in plain english not obscured by jargon;
- The Borough Council should make clear from the outset the constraints placed upon them, for example by national planning or the strategy for the region;
- Most effective engagement is at the earliest stages and this is where resources should be focussed; however
 - Involvement should be maintained by good communications and feed back, including information on the outcomes of residents' involvement;
- Documents should be summarised (in plain english) and publicised and made widely available at places people visit routinely, such as shops, schools or leisure centres as well as at Council Offices and libraries;
- More use should be made of media other than the local papers, i.e., local television and radio and the Borough News;
- More use should be made of the free newspapers;
- If the Borough Council's website is to be used, it should be used well, that is, kept up to date and presented in a user-friendly way; and
- A few high profile events could help to stimulate interest amongst residents

2.8 The detailed summaries from each group's main activity are attached as Appendix 1.

FINAL EXERCISE

2.9 As a final exercise, everyone was invited to provide comments on the evening under the headings: Concerns before the workshop; something positive from the workshop; things still to be resolved; and other comments (see table 3).

Table 3: Final Exercise – Some Thoughts from the Workshops

	Concerns at the start of the evening	Something positive from the discussions	What still needs to be resolved	Other Comments
Camden Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Unsure what to expect ◆ Whether our voices are going to be heard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Excellent opportunity to feel involved ◆ Good listening skills; thorough airing of views; lots of ideas generated; an understanding of the pressures and demands of town & country planning ◆ Communication is the key to local involvement ◆ It would be reassuring to think that attempts are being made to explain planning strategies to the local population – FEEDBACK & EXPLANATION The discussions were most informative and worthwhile ◆ Voices to be heard by communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Any community involvement needs follow-up – we need to see how our comments (not just tonight) are used ◆ How is planning divided between Borough and County Councils? ◆ Enlarge & update website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hand-drawn flipcharts are not the most effective way of making presentations ◆ The key is to get people to feel that their views are valued – rather than thinking that these are people going through the motions ◆ If people are consulted at the early stages it will stop a lot of rumours and scare-mongering
Paddock Wood Day Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Not sure what to expect ◆ May not be listened to ◆ Time needed to understand what was expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ We may make a difference ◆ Someone is listening – very instructive ◆ Most informative meeting – useful information ◆ Better informed on process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Communication opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Interesting – and nice to be involved

3 OUTCOME FROM THE WORKSHOPS

3.1 The discussions at the two workshops advanced the Borough Council's understanding of the role of, and issues relating to, residents' involvement in the preparation of the documents that will make up the Local Development Framework for the Borough. As one of the key stakeholder groups in the Borough, residents' involvement will be vital to the preparation of a robust Framework. The proposals and discussions from the workshops have been incorporated into the draft Statement of Community Involvement. Table 4 is a schedule of the main points to come out of the workshops and the Borough Council's response, as indicated in, and through the proposals in, the Statement of Community Involvement.

Table 4: Workshop Recommendations and Outcomes

Workshop Recommendations (Table 2 & Para 2.7 above)	Outcomes (Actions and Review)
Core Strategy - Use facilitated workshops, exhibitions, presentations, questionnaires and surveys, Citizens' Panel and, possibly, a high profile event	Draft Statement of Community Involvement proposals (see section 5 & tables 1 & 2)
Land Allocations - Use facilitated workshops, exhibitions, presentations, questionnaires and surveys and possibly Citizens' Panel/Focus Group	Draft Statement of Community Involvement proposals except for Citizens' Panel/Focus Group (see section 5 & tables 1 & 2) Will review situation early in 2006 following initial use of the Citizens' Panel (Autumn 2005)
Area Action Plan – Use facilitated workshops, exhibitions, presentations, questionnaires and surveys,	Draft Statement of Community Involvement proposals
Involvement should begin at the evidence gathering stage	Approach reflected throughout the draft Statement of Community Involvement and used in the preparation of the draft Statement itself
Information should be shared in plain english not obscured by jargon	General principle (1) in the draft Statement of Community Involvement Use of technical terms minimised but Glossary provided to support use where essential

Workshop Recommendations (Table 2 & Para 2.7 above)	Outcomes (Actions and Review)
Borough Council should be make clear from the outset the constraints placed upon them, for example by national planning or the strategy for the region	Information giving, as well as sharing, fundamental to evidence gathering stage to achieve reasonable & realistic options (See para 5.6)
Most effective engagement is at the earliest stages and this is where resources should be focussed	Approach reflected throughout the draft Statement of Community Involvement
Involvement should be maintained by good communications and feed back, including information on the outcomes of residents' involvement	General principle (3) in the draft Statement of Community Involvement
Documents should be summarised (in plain english) and publicised and made widely available at places people visit routinely, such as shops, schools or leisure centres as well as at Council Offices and libraries	<p>Summary of draft Statement of Community Involvement to be prepared for circulation during formal consultation period in May/June</p> <p>Will pilot circulation via shops & other outlets as well as Council offices and libraries during formal consultation on the draft Statement</p>
More use should be made of media other than the local papers, i.e., local television and radio and the Borough News	<p>Articles have been in Borough News – will continue practice – highlighted in Para 4.10 of draft Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>Liase with Corporate Communications & Marketing Department re coverage of key events and consultations in media</p>
More use should be made of the free newspapers	<p>Liase with Corporate Communications & Marketing Department re coverage of key events and consultations in media</p> <p>Test greater use of adverts in free newspapers for subsequent stages in preparation of the Statement of Community involvement</p>

Workshop Recommendations (Table 2 & Para 2.7 above)	Outcomes (Actions and Review)
If the Borough Council's website is to be used, it should be used well, that is, kept up to date and presented in a user-friendly way	Requirements of E-government that should be used and fundamental principle that should be as user-friendly and accessible as possible General principle (3) in the draft Statement of Community Involvement Website improvements continuing

APPENDIX 1: DETAILED SUMMARIES OF GROUP FEEDBACK

Camden Centre – 21 March

Group 1

- There is more public interest in single issues (e.g., a major planning application) than in borough-wide issues
- The Council's website not visited often by Group members and was not kept up-to-date
- Should be more publicity – leaflets/newsletters most useful but should not be too frequent and should include summary documents & identify Borough Council “champion”
- All other techniques should follow from initial publicity
- Supported use of workshops & focus groups
- Want proposals publicised early and in understandable form
- Must include information-sharing and spell out what Borough Council must do
- Should be feedback on decisions and why taken – residents need to know the outcome of their issues/concerns
- Borough Council should ask for feed back on value of publicity, e.g., leaflets

Group 2

- Underpinning work on particular documents there should be regular publicity from the Town Hall on Councillors and surgeries – e.g., leaflets with Council Tax or other regular mail-outs to encourage more exchange between residents and Councillors
- Mobile exhibitions to stimulate interest & allow involvement in preparation of Core Strategy a high priority for use of resources
- Use Community Noticeboards in schools and popular locations (e.g., shopping centres, retail parks)
- Localised community meetings and workshops in all wards tailored to likely local impacts

Group 3

- Use questionnaires and surveys in areas likely to be affected at the evidence-gathering stage in preparation of Land (site specific) Allocations
- Publicity, including adverts, to lead up to follow-up presentation with question & answer session
- Use Citizen's Panel/focus group
- Exhibition +FEEDBACK to decide issues and options
- Detailed documents available to all interested with summary documents at formal public participation stage (printing & postage)
- Feedback (printing & postage) on outcomes to all participants at submission stage
- Exhibition of final plans with press releases & articles in Borough News

Group 4

[Group identified a need to acknowledge differences between urban & rural areas in allocation of resources and most suitable methods for involving people in preparing area action plans]

- “plain english” leaflet drop and questionnaire (most useful in urban areas, would need wider distribution in rural areas)
- Adverts on local papers and press releases (for editorials) including better advertisement of library access & try posters on lamp posts in urban areas
- Use internet and local libraries for non-internet users
- Use public meetings with questions & answers BUT need strong chairperson to allow wide exchange of views
- Need access to Council Offices at weekends
- Mobile exhibitions & surgeries e.g., in shopping areas & local shops
- In rural areas make use of schools and parish councils
- Use other local media, e.g., radio – how many people read the local papers?
- Undertake detailed assessment with random sample of residents from relevant areas

[Group also suggested that planning applications should go into rural libraries]

Paddock Wood Day Centre – 22 March

Group 1

- Door-to-door leaflet drops to advertise preparation of documents especially where no free papers [TWBC need to follow this up, as anticipated full coverage]
- Use free newspapers to advertise events
- Arrange events for daytime, evenings and weekends to enable wide range of residents to get involved
- Use supermarkets, D-I-Y stores and shopping centres for advertisements and staffed mobile exhibitions
- Prepare interesting documents in plain english
- Clear advice on where can get involved
- Availability of documents and use of libraries not seen as a priority – need to go where most people are

Group 2

At evidence gathering stage on Core Strategy:

- Involve children and through them parents and their network groups

- Open meetings at relevant village halls and schools to discuss issues
- Use website and questionnaires
- Use local media, e.g., local radio & TV (Meridian) and allow local interest groups to comment on issues
- Prepare summary documents for circulation

At issues/options stage:

- Surveys & questionnaires in shopping centres
- Focus groups to follow from surveys
- Quarterly workshops/public meeting with question & answer sessions
- High profile event to stimulate interest and identify options

At later stages:

- View documents at libraries etc
- Local press releases/editorials
- Summary documentation with a reply sheet to gauge opinions
- Maximum use of website

Group 3

In preparation of Land (site specific) Allocations:

- Continuing publicity in local papers and Borough News and use of website

At earlier stages:

- Exhibitions & workshops in local facilities and libraries
- Involve cross-section from Citizens' Panel (Focus Group?) to discuss issues
- Public meetings with question & answer session
- Survey & questionnaires

At later stages:

- Maintain interest of people involve by progress reports and feedback
- Keep a contingency fund in reserve for detailed work on main outstanding issues

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH

Local
Development
Framework

Statement of Community Involvement

Draft

April 2005

Contents

PREFACE 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION 2

2.0 THE IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY IN THE PREPARATION OF A LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK 3

3.0 PREPARING A SOUND STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT 4

4.0 PROPOSED APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PREPARATION OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – GENERAL PRINCIPLES 5

5.0 PROPOSED APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ON THE PREPARATION OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS 8

DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS 9

Stage 1 – Preparation and Engagement 9

Stages 2-3 – Consultation on Preferred Options to Preparing Submission Draft Document 10

Stages 4-7 – Submit Development Plan Document to Adoption and Publication 10

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS 10

Stage A – Preparation and Engagement 11

Stage B – Consultation 11

Stage C – Consider Representations and Finalise 11

Stage D – Adopt and Publish 11

CONCLUSIONS 11

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL AND THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT 14

7.0 CONSULTATION ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS 15

8.0 WHERE CAN YOU GET ADDITIONAL HELP AND ADVICE? 17

APPENDIX 1A – QUESTIONNAIRE TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS i

APPENDIX 1B – RESIDENTS’ WORKSHOPS vii

APPENDIX 2 – CONSULTEES (TAKEN FROM ANNEX E OF PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 12: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS) x

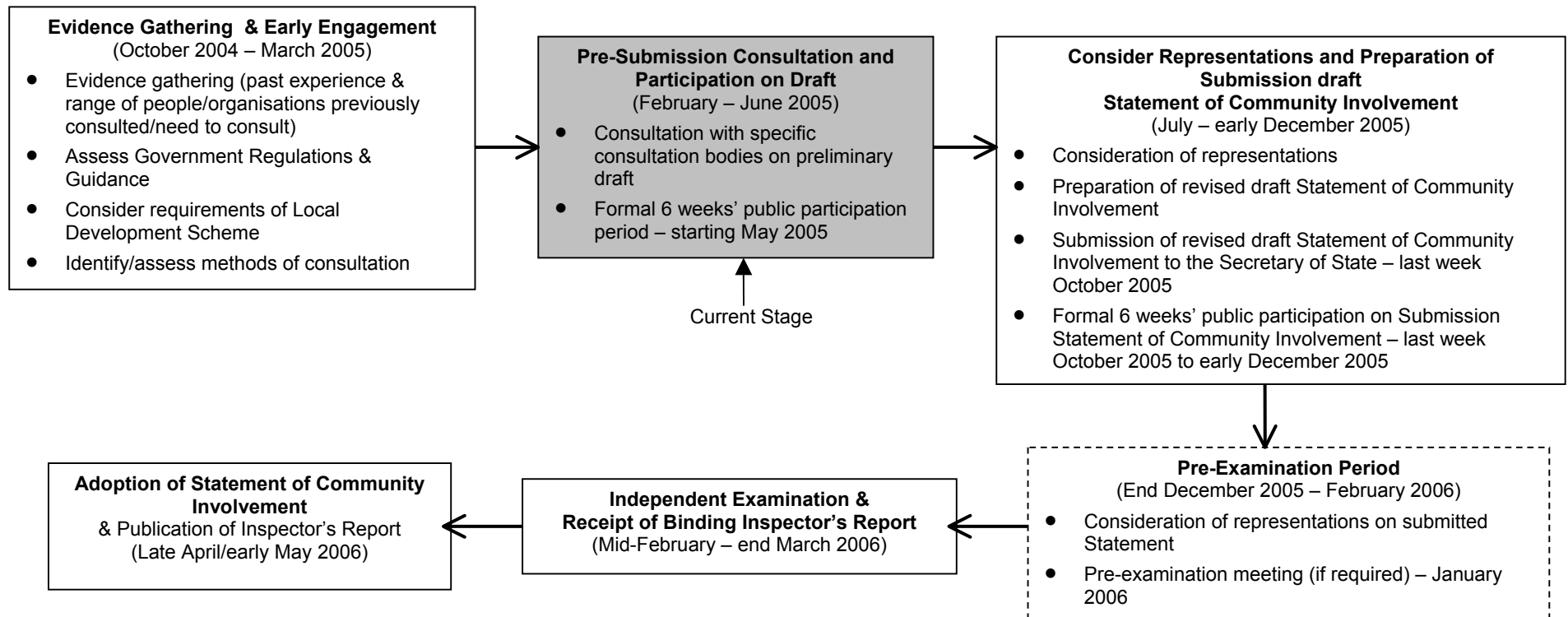
APPENDIX 3 – GLOSSARY OF TERMS xiii

Preface

The process for preparing and adopting a Statement of Community Involvement is set out below. The flowchart indicates the point we have reached in the process and likely dates for the later stages, as set out in the Local Development Scheme. The full Local Development Scheme is posted on the Council's website (www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk) and is available on request.

The timing of the periods from the submission of the Statement of Community Involvement to (1) receipt of the Inspector's report and (2) adoption is estimated using (1) the stated aim of the Planning Inspectorate and (2) guidelines in Fig 3.1 of Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks.

STAGES IN THE PREPARATION OF THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** This statement sets out how the Borough Council will involve the community in the preparation and review of the Local Development Framework. It outlines how the Council will seek to promote consensus on the form and content of the Local Development Documents (that is, both Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents) forming the Framework. These will gradually replace the Kent Structure Plan/draft Kent and Medway Structure Plan, the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance. It also shows how the community will be consulted when the Council receives planning applications.
- 1.2** Called formally the Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement, it is accompanied by a number of appendices setting out supplementary information.
- 1.3** The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) sets out new standards for community involvement that go beyond the statutory duties to consult with members of the public and statutory bodies. They are intended to encourage a more active, comprehensive and inclusive approach to plan making.
- 1.4** The timetable for the preparation and adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement is included in the Council's first Local Development Scheme and summarised in the preface to this document. Until it is adopted, any consultation undertaken in the meantime must meet minimum standards laid down in Regulations.
- 1.5** The Borough Council's Stakeholder Engagement Plan has already identified specific areas for improvement in the way the Council works with its partners. As a result, where the aspirations of the draft Statement and the Council's wider community consultation objectives are fulfilled, the Council will be seeking to apply best practice, rather than the statutory minimum requirements, in advance of publication of the adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

2.0 The Importance of Involving the Community in the Preparation of a Local Development Framework

2.1 There are many aspects to the community interests in Tunbridge Wells Borough. There are local residents of all ages; people working locally; people with special needs; those from different racial, ethnic and national groups, including the gypsy and traveller communities; people of different faiths; business groups; statutory and other agencies and service providers with responsibilities in the area; adjoining authorities; and the many, varied voluntary organisations active locally. All have their areas of interest and consequent understandings and concerns.

2.2 The Borough Council aims to ensure that the views of this diverse community are sought, considered and taken into account when evolving the policy framework that guides development here. The Local Development Framework will be robust if the Borough Council continues to strive to do this effectively. Clear guidance and information also helps to promote an inclusive plan-making process. Ultimately, one of the tests of the soundness of a Development Plan Document is whether the Borough Council has complied with the Statement of Community Involvement, which will be checked by an independent inspector.

3.0 Preparing a Sound Statement of Community Involvement

3.1 Since October 2004, the Council has been researching the range and variety of organisations within the community that might have an interest in being involved in the plan-making process and the contacts it has already. Additionally, the scope for using existing structures, such as the Parish and Town Council's in the Borough, and umbrella groups, such as the Access Group to advance community involvement in planning has been explored. The Council has also been seeking views on how best to involve people at various stages in the plan-making process and on different documents to ensure that the best use is made of resources and peoples' time.

3.2 Views have been sought in a number of ways, including:

- A questionnaire sent to voluntary organisations in the Borough including those covering the arts, children and young people's activities, environmental interests, residents' associations, community, civic and amenity societies, voluntary action and support networks and organisations for people with disabilities; (see Appendix 1A, which includes a summary of the findings)

- Attendance at a number of workshops set up to initiate the preparation of the Economic Development Strategy to gauge the reactions of various business interests to engagement;
- Attendance at various meetings including the Youth Council and the Royal Tunbridge Wells' Civic Society's "Town Forum";
- Involvement in seminars for Parish Councils; and
- Organising two workshops for a random sample of residents (See Appendix 1B).

4.0 Proposed Approaches to Community Involvement in the Preparation of the Local Development framework – General Principles

4.1 Regulations associated with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) identify a range of specific and general consultation bodies that should be involved in the plan-making process. Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks supplements this with a list of other bodies that councils should consider involving. These various consultees are set out in Appendix 2. They range from those conversant in planning processes to those likely to have had little or no previous involvement. The Borough Council, therefore, will follow a number of general principles in its community involvement to ensure that there are wide-ranging opportunities for engagement and that there is clarity as to when and how that engagement will be facilitated.

(1) Recognise the needs of different groups in the community by making communication relevant and accessible

4.2 Many individuals and a lot of small local organisations do not get involved in planning decision-making until they become aware of a particular planning application that affects their interests. Whilst it is important to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for them to get involved at this stage (see section 7), it is also clear that it would have been valuable and beneficial to have their concerns raised during plan making. The complicated and complex nature of the process is a disincentive for many people. By acknowledging that opportunities for involving the community should be communicated in ways that are

relevant and accessible to potential interested groups, it is hoped to improve early involvement in the process.

4.3 Following this principle could also help the Council to reach those groups least likely to get involved in planning matters, often described as “harder to reach”. These could include young people, some groups of older people within the community, those on low incomes, people from minority racial, ethnic or national communities and disabled people who wish to be involved independently in the plan-making process.

(2) Provide for community involvement in ways that make best use of people’s time and available resources

4.4 The specific consultation bodies identified in the regulations are generally frequently involved in planning matters. However, as they must be consulted by a number of authorities and agencies, time is often at a premium. Equally, many voluntary and business organisations need to arrange meetings and canvas opinion to represent their members’ views adequately. They too may have limited resources. The Borough Council will aim to provide clear and up-to-date timetables for participation exercises and consultation periods to give them a fuller opportunity to comment and engage in consultations.

4.5 To support this principle, wherever possible, links will be made between consultations on Local Development

Documents and other plans and strategies. This year the Council will commence the review of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Community Plan. The preparation of the Core Strategy will coincide with this. This is particularly valuable, as the Local Development Framework should be the spatial expression of the Community Plan. Therefore, service users of partner organisations may also have a valuable contribution to make.

- 4.6** More active community involvement will require additional resources. However, the Council will work towards more creative partnership working, particularly through existing bodies (such as the Parish and Town Councils, the Community Safety Partnership and the Youth Council) and seeking to build new ones, learning from and using their skills and strengths in order to optimise the use of existing resources.
- 4.7** Feedback from the questionnaire to voluntary organisations strongly supported joining with other organisations to discuss issues of common interest, combining consultation exercises and using existing structures and umbrella groups wherever possible. Reactions from the other sources set out in paragraph 3.2 echoed this. However, in both cases, a few organisations were less confident of this approach. In one case the respondent felt that they had particular specialist knowledge and views that needed to be discussed directly with the Borough Council. Another commented on the lack of a town council for Royal Tunbridge Wells and the need, consequently, to make use of other existing forums. Other views expressed included concern that their independent voice might be lost; a fear that one group might dominate debate; that it might form a barrier to the involvement of some organisations, especially those representing harder

to reach groups; and it could result in more “events”, which could be difficult for some organisations to resource.

- 4.8** The Borough Council will be mindful of these concerns when organising and facilitating involvement in the preparation of Local Development Documents. As indicated in paragraph 4.1, the intention is to provide a range of opportunities for involvement. However, whilst it is resource intensive, the Borough Council may agree to meet with individual organisations where this could genuinely advance understanding of particular issues or support and encourage the engagement of groups generally under-represented in plan making.

(3) Provide good quality and timely information and feedback

- 4.9** It is important to give people confidence that the Borough Council is progressing plan-making effectively and efficiently and that they will have access to good information and feedback. Publicity and information are vital to maintain interest, understanding and trust. Use will be made of the Borough Council’s website (www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk) to post documents, progress reports and advice on opportunities for participation and consultation periods.
- 4.10** The Borough News, which is distributed to every household in Tunbridge Wells Borough, will be used wherever possible to publicise events and provide progress updates. Press releases as well as any necessary statutory notices and advertisements will supplement this. The Council will also explore the use of a wider range of facilities used by the community if this helps to spread such information more effectively.

4.11 In dealing with the outcome of statutory consultations during the preparation of Development Plan Documents the Borough Council will:

- Acknowledge all responses made;
- Contact you if we need to clarify any points you have raised;
- Summarise all responses and make the summary available on the Borough Council's website and in the offices at Royal Tunbridge Wells and Cranbrook, in all public libraries and on the mobile library;
- Prepare a report on all responses and set out the Borough Council's views on these, including recommendations on the way forward. This report will be made publicly available on the website and will be placed in public libraries; and
- Send you a letter setting out the Borough Council's summary of your comments and its response, telling you when and where the report on the outcome of the consultation is available and advising you of the next stage in the process.

4.12 The Council has established a Local Development Framework Members' Working Party to steer the preparation of the Local Development Framework. Reports and documents for consultation will be reported to Cabinet and on to Full Council where this is necessary to meet statutory requirements or to emphasise Council endorsement.

4.13 The Council will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provisions in the Statement of Community Involvement in informing the preparation and review of Local Development Documents and providing the community in the Borough with effective and continuing opportunities for involvement.

4.14 As part of this monitoring and evaluation, the Council has to prepare a "statement of compliance" with each Document to show how the Statement of Community Involvement has been followed and what benefits have accrued from its use.

5.0 Proposed Approaches to Community Involvement on the Preparation of the Local Development Framework – Local Development Documents

5.1 The Borough Council has been considering the work that needs to be done in the first three-year work programme, the Local Development Scheme. As well as completing the review of the Local Plan and the requirement an annual monitoring report, the Scheme puts forward the following work:

- Preparing and adopting the Statement of Community Involvement;
- Preparing and adopting a Core Strategy;
- Preparing and adopting Land (site-specific) Allocation Documents – the site for a new primary school at Benenden and, potentially, sites for affordable housing in villages; and
- Preparing a number of Supplementary Planning Documents, which include several planning briefs and conservation area appraisals together with detailed advice on recreation open space, affordable/key worker housing, alterations and extensions, new housing in urban areas, and re-use of rural buildings.

5.2 The proposed approaches to community involvement set out in this Statement reflect the requirements of these different documents. However, the Statement also indicates how the community will be involved in the preparation of any other Local Development Documents that may be introduced into the process during the course of the annual review of the Local Development Scheme, or as circumstances necessitate.

5.3 As part of initial research and information-sharing in the preparation of the Statement, the Council asked voluntary organisations for their assessment of the most useful methods for consultation for different types of document. The methods of consultation identified in the questionnaire were: facilitated workshops; presentations by planning staff with questions and answers; Planning for Real ¹ (to represent the range of techniques aimed at involving communities in detailed plan preparation); staffed exhibitions; consultation documents available for viewing; questionnaires and surveys; and high profile events. The findings (set out in Appendix 1A) have been supplemented by discussions with the Parish Councils, the Youth Council and various business and tourism interests, feedback from other meetings and the results of two residents' workshops (set out in Appendix 1B). The residents' workshops sought

¹ a registered trademark of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, is a process of community involvement where local communities come together to consider a matter of local interest using models and other techniques to develop understanding and agree outcomes (see Glossary, Appendix 3).

suggestions for involving residents from the earliest stages in the preparation of the documents in the Local Development Framework. This extensive engagement has resulted in a clearer understanding of how different groups wish to be involved in the various stages in the plan-making process.

- 5.4** Equally, the Borough Council must ensure that the arrangements for community involvement can be resourced and maintained and are manageable. A key objective of the new planning system is to minimise costs and delay at the later stages in the process by seeking to identify and address issues and concerns at the early stage. The proposals in this Statement of Community Involvement are intended to achieve this objective.
- 5.5** Extensive use will be made of publicity and the Council's website throughout the process of preparation to adoption of any Local Development Document.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS

- 5.6** Early engagement must identify issues and concerns and establish options in order to attempt to minimise the number of objections to address and negotiate on before submission. Information giving and sharing are essential at this early stage so that reasonable and realistic preferred options are identified. The residents' workshops, in particular, emphasised the importance of early engagement and the giving and sharing of information. The summary below for the various stages in the process and Table 1 (see page 11) interprets the findings of the evidence gathering and early engagement to indicate which methods of engagement the Borough Council

proposes to use for each type of Development Plan Document at each stage in the process.

Stage 1 – Preparation and Engagement

- 5.7** Presentations by planning staff with a question and answer session scored highly for all types of document and will be used accordingly. Planning for Real ® types of technique scored relatively highly for developing a core strategy, land allocations and area action plans. Practitioners see this technique as most useful for detailed local area work and less suited to developing the issues and options in relation to a core strategy. However, there is some overlap with the facilitated workshop technique that could be explored for development of the Core Strategy, which was the only area where facilitated workshops were seen by consultees as useful or very useful. The Borough Council believes that this technique could also be helpful when preparing other Development Plan Documents, such as development control policies.
- 5.8** At the early stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy, the Borough Council proposes to combine presentations by planning staff with facilitated workshop sessions. In preparing Land Allocation Development Plan Documents and Area Action Plans, the Borough Council proposes to combine presentations by planning staff with community involvement exercises such as Planning for Real ®/facilitated workshop sessions.
- 5.9** The least regarded method overall in the questionnaire was high profile events. However, at the earliest stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy, an event of this sort can raise awareness and stimulate debate, perhaps attracting some groups that might not otherwise become involved.

This view was expressed at the residents' workshops. The Borough Council intends to combine the review of the Community Plan with the development of the Core Strategy and there are sound reasons for an event of this sort.

5.10 Questionnaires and survey were thought by the voluntary organisations to be very useful for the preparation of Land Allocation Development Plan Documents and Area Action Plans. The use of questionnaires and surveys was recommended by the residents' workshops for the earlier stages of the preparation of all development plan documents. They also felt that the Citizens' Panel could be used for the testing of land allocations. The Council has agreed as part of its Stakeholder Engagement Plan to form a Citizens' Panel. Consequently, questionnaires and surveys as well as a Citizen's Panel will also be used primarily at the early stage of developing the Core Strategy as a means of gauging the public's views on issues and possible options.

Stages 2-3 – Consultation on Preferred Options to Preparing Submission Draft Document

5.11 Making consultation drafts of documents available for viewing was consistently scored by the voluntary organisations as being a very useful or useful method of consultation. This bears out a view by Parish Councillors that they wanted something to comment on. Exhibitions staffed by planning staff were reasonably highly regarded as a method for involving the community in Land Allocation and Area Action Plan Development Plan Documents. These are both traditional methods of consultation. Many of the voluntary groups that responded to the questionnaire are used to getting involved in planning matters and appear to be satisfied to continue to be involved in this way.

Familiarity with this process is likely to be significant in its choice.

5.12 These two methods of engagement together are certainly useful at these later stages of the development of a Development Plan Document. The Borough Council will aim to have pre-submission consultation documents available before the formal six-week consultation period commences.

5.13 Between the consultation on issues and options and the preparation of the submission draft document, negotiation with stakeholder groups and individuals about particular matters will be used where common ground and a mutually acceptable conclusion is achievable.

Stages 4-7 – Submit Development Plan Document to Adoption and Publication

5.14 The provision of consultation drafts of documents and supporting material will continue to be the mainstay of these later, statutory stages in the preparation of Development Plan Documents of all kinds.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

5.15 The summary below for the various stages in the process and Table 2 (see page 12) interprets the findings of the questionnaires and other research to indicate which methods of engagement the Borough Council proposes to use for each type of Supplementary Planning Document at each stage in the process.

- 5.16** The process for these documents does not include submission and independent examination. However, there are important similarities at the early stage.

Stage A – Preparation and Engagement

- 5.17** The Planning for Real® types of technique scored relatively highly for developing planning briefs and Conservation Area Appraisals. Practitioners agree that this technique is most useful for detailed local area work.
- 5.18** Presentations by planning staff with a question and answer session scored highly for all types of document. The Borough Council proposes to combine presentations by planning staff with working sessions at the early stages of preparation of planning briefs and Conservation Area Appraisals. There may also be benefit from undertaking questionnaires and surveys to support evidence gathering and identify issues and options.

Stage B – Consultation

- 5.19** As with Development Plan Documents, making consultation drafts of documents available for viewing was consistently scored as being a very useful or useful method of consultation for Supplementary Planning Documents. The Borough Council will use this method, combined with publicity, as the principle way of involving the community at this stage.

Stage C – Consider Representations and Finalise

- 5.20** Between the consultation stage and finalisation of the Document, negotiation with stakeholder groups and individuals about particular matters will be used where

common ground and a mutually acceptable conclusion is achievable.

Stage D – Adopt and Publish

- 5.21** The provision of documents and supporting material will continue to be the mainstay of this stage. Extensive use will be made of publicity and the Council's website to advise the community.

CONCLUSIONS

- 5.22** The proposals outlined in tables 1 and 2 focus on providing a wide range of methods for community involvement at the earliest stages in the process for each type of document. The Borough Council believes that this is a reasonable and realistic approach aimed at reconciling aspirations and objectives for community involvement with the time, staff and financial resources available.

Table 1: Methods of Engagement by Types of Development Plan Document at Different Stages in the Plan-making Process

Subject of engagement (see Glossary – Appendix 3)	Stage in Process (as outlined in the Local Development Scheme)			
	(1) Preparation & Engagement	(2) Consultation on Preferred Options	(3) Consider Reps & Prepare Submission Draft	(4) – (7) Submit Document and Invite Reps, Pre-examination Reps & meeting, Examination & Production of Binding Report and Adopt and Publish
(1) Developing a vision or core policies (the Core Strategy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officer presentations with facilitated workshops for stakeholder groups expressing an interest in the process High Profile Events for key stakeholders Questionnaires & surveys Citizens' Panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation document available for viewing and comment Staffed exhibitions Media Publicity & advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to negotiate with stakeholder groups & individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft documents available for viewing and comment Media Publicity & advertising
(2) Identifying issues and commenting on proposals to identify sites where specific uses should go (Land Allocations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officer presentations with facilitated workshops/Planning for Real® types of community engagement exercise for stakeholder groups expressing an interest in the process Questionnaires & surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation document available for viewing and comment Staffed exhibitions Media Publicity & advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to negotiate with stakeholder groups & individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft documents available for viewing and comment Media Publicity & advertising
(3) Identifying issues and commenting on proposals and priorities for a specific area (Area Action Plans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officer presentations with facilitated workshops/Planning for Real® types of community engagement exercise for stakeholder groups expressing an interest in the process Questionnaires & surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation document available for viewing and comment Staffed exhibitions Media Publicity & advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to negotiate with stakeholder groups & individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft documents available for viewing and comment Media Publicity & advertising
(4) Reviewing and agreeing policies against which proposals for development would be tested (Development Control Policies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officer presentations with facilitated workshops for stakeholder groups expressing an interest in the process Questionnaires & surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation document available for viewing and comment Staffed exhibitions Media Publicity & advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to negotiate with stakeholder groups & individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft documents available for viewing and comment Media Publicity & advertising

Table 2: Methods of Engagement by Types of Supplementary Planning Document at Different Stages in the Plan-making Process

Subject of engagement (see Glossary – Appendix 3)	Stage in Process (as outlined in the Local Development Scheme)			
	(A) Preparation & Engagement	(B) Consultation	(C) Consider Reps & Finalise Document	(D) Adopt and Publish
Commenting on detailed proposals or advice about specific sites or areas, e.g., planning briefs or Conservation Area Appraisals (Supplementary Planning Documents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officer presentations with Planning for Real @ types of community engagement exercise /facilitated workshops for stakeholder groups expressing an interest in the process • Questionnaires & surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation document available for viewing and comment • Staffed exhibitions • Media • Publicity & advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to negotiate with stakeholder groups & individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make document available • Media • Publicity
Commenting on detailed proposals or advice about specific types of development, e.g., affordable housing (Supplementary Planning Documents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officer presentations with facilitated workshops for stakeholder groups expressing an interest in the process • Questionnaires & surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation document available for viewing and comment • Staffed exhibitions • Media • Publicity & advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to negotiate with stakeholder groups & individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make document available • Media • Publicity

6.0 Sustainability Appraisal and the Strategic Environmental Assessment

6.1 The Borough Council is required to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment of the various Local Development Documents it produces. The Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment will identify and report on the likely significant effects of the policies and proposals in the Document and the extent to which their implementation will achieve the social, environmental and economic objectives by which sustainable development can be defined.

6.2 The Borough Council will involve the community in the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment process. Consultants will be commissioned to develop the Sustainability Appraisal Framework in conjunction with at least the relevant statutory consultation bodies. Each Local Development Document will then be assessed against the framework during community involvement in the preparation of that document. This will be done at the early, preferred options stage for all Local Development Documents and then, for a Development Plan Document, at the stage when it is submitted to the Secretary of State and, for a Supplementary Planning Document, during the public participation stage. If significant changes are made prior to submission of a Development Plan Document to the Secretary of State, these will be subject to an appraisal.

6.3 Responses to consultation on the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment will be taken into account during the preparation of Local Development Documents. When a Document is adopted, a statement will be made available on the Borough Council's website and in the offices in Royal Tunbridge Wells and Cranbrook, in public libraries and on the mobile library summarising how the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment has been taken into account in the Document's preparation.

7.0 Consultation on Planning Applications

7.1 The Borough Council will continue to publicise planning applications in various ways to meet its objective of involving the community in the planning application decision-making process. These are as follows:

- A copy of the application will be sent to the appropriate Town or Parish Council;
- Occupiers of properties having a common boundary with the application site will be written to advising them of the application;
- All applications will be advertised on the Borough Council's website;
- Certain applications will be advertised by site notice and press advertisement. These are:
 1. Major development (10 or more dwellings or 1000 square metres of floorspace);
 2. Proposals which will have a wider impact than just immediate neighbours;
 3. Applications subject to Environmental Impact Assessment;
 4. Departure applications;
 5. Applications affecting public rights of way;
 6. Development affecting Listed Buildings, or their setting;
 7. Development affecting Conservation Areas.
- Site notices will be posted where there is open land, such as agricultural land, next to the application site; and

- All applications for telecommunications masts will be advertised in the press.

You do not need to have received a consultation letter to make a comment on a planning application.

7.2 The Borough Council will continue to provide advice in leaflet form to assist anyone wishing to comment on planning applications. The leaflet "Making Your Opinion Count" gives further information on how to comment on planning applications and contains advice on issues that are relevant to decisions on planning applications.

7.3 Where developers are proposing a major development, the Borough Council will encourage them to involve the local community at an early stage before they make an application. Further details on this are contained in the leaflet entitled "Guidelines for involving the community before submitting a planning application".

7.4 During 2005/6, the Borough Council proposes to introduce a Planning Applications Forum for certain major applications. This will bring together residents affected by a proposed development and the applicants. There will be an opportunity for the applicants to explain the proposals and for residents to raise any issues of concern at an earlier stage in the planning application process.

- 7.5** Both applicants and those making comments have an opportunity to speak at the Borough Council's Planning Committee meetings. Anyone wishing to speak must register with the Committee Section by 4pm on the last working day prior to the Committee meeting. Full details of the procedure are contained in the leaflet "A Guide to Public Speaking".
- 7.6** The Borough Council has published a Planning Services Charter, which describes the way services are provided and how planning decisions are made. It sets out in more detail how the Borough Council intends delivering its service objectives.
- 7.7** In addition to consulting on individual planning applications, the Borough Council seeks feedback from customers on the way the planning service is provided. We do this in the following ways:
- Seminars for Parish Councils;
 - A focus group for planning agents (architects, surveyors and others who regularly submit applications); and
 - Questionnaire surveys for applicants, agents and consultees.

The feedback is used as part of the regular monitoring and review of planning services.

- 7.8** As part of the questionnaire sent out during January 2005, voluntary groups were asked how satisfied they were with the way the Borough Council consults on planning applications and provides advice and seeks feedback on planning services. They were also invited to advise the Borough Council of what it could do to improve consultations on planning applications.
- 7.9** The responses indicated that most of the organisations wanted to be involved in considering planning applications. However, there was generally limited knowledge of the various advice leaflets produced by the Borough Council and the Planning Services Charter. Over half were either fairly (50%) or very satisfied (7.5%) with consultation arrangements.
- 7.10** Comments were also sought on how the Borough Council might improve the way it consults on planning applications. Some of the detailed responses to this question, taken together with the apparently limited knowledge of the advice on the processes involved in dealing with planning applications, suggest that better dissemination of the current arrangements for consultation is a priority.

8.0 Where can you get Additional Help and Advice?

- 8.1 The principal Government documents relating to the new planning system are the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and its associated regulations and Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks. The Government is gradually preparing other supporting documents. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, as the department responsible for planning and local government, is leading the changes in the planning system. The relevant Government website is www.odpm.gov.uk. The Government Office for the South East represents central Government in the South East and has useful information and worked examples of aspects of the new planning system. Their website is www.go-se.gov.uk.
- 8.2 If you want independent help and advice on any planning matter you can contact:
Planning Aid for the South East
Regional Co-ordinator: Jackie Thompson
Kent Architecture Centre
1st Floor, Admirals Offices
The Historic Dockyard
Chatham
ME4 4TS
Tel: 01634 831167
E-mail: sec0@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk
- 8.3 Useful general information on the planning system can be found on the Planning Portal (www.planningportal.gov.uk).

Appendices

APPENDIX 1A – QUESTIONNAIRE TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Summary of findings

1 INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of January 2005, just over 250 questionnaires were sent out to voluntary organisations covering the several broad areas of interest.

1.1 By the middle of February some 56 responses had been received as follows:

Type of Organisation	No. sent out	No. Returned
Arts & Education	23	5
Children & Youth	34	5
Civic & Amenity	3	3
Community	27	6
Disabilities	22	5
Environmental, Wildlife & Preservation	20	11
Residents	41	9
Rural	2	2
Sports	31	5
Voluntary Action & Social Support	50	13*

* One returned as Clerk to Parish Council

- 1.2 The purposes of the questionnaire were fourfold. First, to ascertain the most up-to-date information possible about the organisations active in the Borough. This included contact details, the areas they draw their membership from, the number of members they had, and their interests. Second to find out whether they wished to be involved in the new plan-making process and consulted about planning applications. Thirdly, to help in the assessment of methods of involving people in plan making; and finally, to ask for possible suggestions for improving consultations on planning applications.
- 1.3 The contact details provided by the respondents has been used to update the Borough Council's mailing lists. The contact details for organisations not sent the questionnaire is currently being updated. These organisations are:
- The Specific Consultation Bodies;
 - The Other Consultation Bodies;
 - Organisations representing different race, ethnic and national groups; and
 - Organisations representing different faith groups.
- (See Appendix 2 for more detail.)
- 1.4 Organisations representing business interests have been contacted already about the preparation of an Economic Development Strategy for the Borough. Those contacted will be given the opportunity to engage in the preparation of the Local Development Framework and the work coming out of the preparation of the Economic Development Strategy will inform its preparation.

2 QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS – PLAN MAKING

- 2.1 Nearly all of the organisations responding (90.2%) wanted to be involved in preparing the Local Development Framework and four-fifths (81%) wanted to be consulted about planning applications. The organisations were asked whether they would be prepared to join with others to discuss common issues and develop ideas with Borough Council officers. Again, nearly all respondents (90.3%) were willing to do this, although concern was expressed by one supportive organisation that meetings might be held at short notice. Another stressed the need to ensure that organisations of disabled people are fully engaged by making all events inclusive and independently accessible by all. The reasons given by the organisations that were not supportive of the approach can be summarised as follows:
- Fear that one group might dominate debate;
 - Concern that should be able to maintain their independence; and
 - Concern that it could be difficult for some organisations to resource because of commitments.

- 2.2 A further question was asked about combining consultations. This was whether the organisations agreed that existing structures, such as Town and Parish Councils, and umbrella organisations, such as the Council for Voluntary Service, should be used for combined consultations on matters of common interest. The lack of a town council for the Royal Tunbridge Wells area was flagged up. Nonetheless, a substantial majority (86.8%) agreed with the suggested approach. The concerns raised by those who did not agree were as follows:

Particular specialist knowledge and views should be considered directly “by those determining the Local Development Framework”;

That they should only be used where appropriate;

That it might be an “indecisive talkshop” and less effective than “freestanding consultations”

Concern that it might be a barrier to the involvement of some organisations;

Were not aware of the structure and umbrella groups;

Would only agree to combine with other organisations of disabled people when discussing matters of access, service provision facilities and the built environment; and

That it could be difficult for some organisations to resource because of commitments.

- 2.3 The final question about plan making sought to assess how valuable organisations felt different methods of engagement would be for different types of Local Development Document. The findings are summarised in table A2.1 below. For each method and each subject the “very useful” and “useful” scores were added together, as were those for not very useful and useless. Where methods were scored 60% -70% as useful or very useful, they have been given one tick. Where the score is 70% or more, there are two ticks.
- 2.4 Making consultation drafts of documents available for viewing was consistently scored as being useful or very useful as a method of consultation. Presentations by planning staff with question and answer sessions also scored highly. These are both traditional methods of consultation. Many of the voluntary groups that responded to the questionnaire are used to being involved in planning matters and appear satisfied to continue to be involved in this way. Familiarity with the process is likely to be significant in the methods they chose to highlight. Certainly, these two methods are useful at later stages in the plan-making process.
- 2.5 One of the techniques referred to was Planning for Real ®. This was used to represent a range of techniques for involving the community in detailed plan-making. It scored relatively highly for developing a core strategy, land allocations and area action plans

as well as, amongst the Supplementary Planning Documents, planning briefs and conservation area appraisals. Practitioners see this technique as being most useful for detailed local work and less suited to developing a core strategy. However, there is some overlap with some of the techniques for facilitated workshops. This method scored relatively well for developing a core strategy.

- 2.6 Staffed exhibitions were seen as useful for land allocations and area action plans. However, overall, less scope was seen for alternatives to the more traditional methods of consultation for developing other Development Plan Documents, such as generic development control policies, and more theoretical Supplementary Planning Documents, although questionnaires and surveys were reasonably highly regarded for these subjects.
- 2.7 High profile events were least well-regarded overall. Generally, the preparation of land allocations and area action plans were seen to have most scope for alternative methods to the traditional consultation drafts and staffed exhibition approaches.

Table A1.1: Methods of Engagement by Subject of Consultation

Subject of engagement (see Glossary – Appendix 3)	Method of Engagement						
	Facilitated workshop sessions	Exhibitions staffed by planning staff	Planning for Real® exercises (see Glossary – Appendix 3)	Presentation by planning staff with questions & answers	Consultation drafts of documents available for viewing	Questionnaires & surveys	High profile events e.g., interactive exhibitions or other events
(1) Developing a vision or core policies (the Core Strategy)	✓		✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓		
(2) Identifying issues and commenting on proposals to identify sites where specific uses should go (Land Allocations)		✓	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	
(3) Identifying issues and commenting on proposals and priorities for a specific area (Area Action Plans)		✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	
(4) Reviewing and agreeing policies against which proposals for development would be tested (Development Control Policies)				✓ ✓	✓ ✓		
Commenting on detailed proposals or advice about specific sites or areas, e.g., planning briefs or Conservation Area Appraisals (Supplementary Planning Documents)			✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓		
Commenting on detailed proposals or advice about specific types of development, e.g., affordable housing (Supplementary Planning Documents)				✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓	

Key: ✓ Well-regarded method of engagement ✓ ✓ Very well-regarded method of engagement

3 QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS – CONSULTATIONS ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The voluntary groups were asked how satisfied they were with the way the Borough Council consults on planning applications and provides advice and seeks feedback on planning services. They were also invited to advise the Borough Council of what it could do to improve consultations on planning applications.
- 3.2 The responses indicated that most of the organisations wanted to be involved in considering planning applications. However, there was generally limited knowledge of the various advice leaflets produced by the Borough Council and the Planning Services Charter. Over half were either fairly (50%) or very satisfied (9%) with consultation arrangements.
- 3.3 Comments were also sought on how the Borough Council might improve the way it consults on planning applications. The responses to this can be summarised as follows:
- The Weald of Kent Preservation Society’s “planning scrutineers” were generally pleased with recent improvements and decisions
 - Consultation should be early enough to make a difference
 - Consultations should be broader than at present
 - Consult a representative cross-section of parties likely to be affected by an application
 - The website facilities should be improved
 - There should be more well publicised [local] public meetings with good prior notice
 - Objectors should be advised when planning applications are to be considered
 - Objectors should be given more than 3 minutes to speak at Committee meetings
 - More weight should be given to consultations in committee reports
 - There should be feedback to those who have commented and reasons for granting permission given
 - Publish reasons for advertisement of applications
 - Publicity should be consistent
 - There should be more advisory leaflets and the media used to explain the planning process
 - There should be higher profile in the local press with more space dedicated to planning information with comment slips or easy ways of commenting
 - The information leaflets should be available on audio tapes
 - The Kent Reference Panel and Independence and Access Matters should be consulted on planning applications
 - As there is no Town Council for Royal Tunbridge Wells, the Civic Society should be used in a similar manner
 - Have evening meetings for Western Area Committee
 - Documentation should always be available at Cranbrook offices

APPENDIX 1B – RESIDENTS’ WORKSHOPS

Summary

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Borough Council’s objective is to develop a reasonable and realistic process that is seen to be fair and open for involving residents, amongst others, in preparing a Local Development Framework for the Borough that accords with national and regional planning policy and helps to deliver local objectives. Therefore, during March, two evening workshops were held for residents, one at the Camden Centre in Royal Tunbridge Wells and one at the Paddock Wood Day Centre. The residents had been contacted by letter, their addresses derived from a random sample of the ratings register.

2 SUMMARY FINDINGS

- 2.1 A total of 36 residents attended the workshops. The purpose of the workshop was to involve residents in assessing ways of involving residents in the preparation of different Local Development Documents. Groups of residents considered different techniques for involving the community in plan making. They were asked to assess how useful each might be for different types of Local Development Document and the resource and management implications of their use. The residents were advised that the outcomes of their discussions would be taken into account in the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement.
- 2.2 One group at each workshop looked at the general principles they would wish to see applied to the involvement of residents. Other groups decided on a range of techniques for involving residents in preparing a Core Strategy (both workshops), Land Allocations (both workshops) and an Area Action Plan (Camden Centre only as more residents attended that workshop). The techniques were:
- Website – putting all documents, information about events, opportunities to comment such as questionnaires on the Borough Council’s website
 - Publicity – press releases, articles offered to local press, articles in Borough News, leaflet distribution
 - Exhibitions (manned by technical & professional staff) – e.g., in libraries
 - Presentations with question & answer sessions – as part of public meetings
 - Making consultation documents available in Council Offices & libraries for viewing and comment

- Questionnaires and surveys
- Various types of workshop including discussion forums and detailed area design or planning exercises
- Citizens' Panel/Focus Group – a representative sample of the population of Tunbridge Wells regularly used to respond to questionnaires or small focus groups selected from the sample to take part in more detailed face-to-face discussions

They were also encouraged to add any suggestions of their own. A notional cost was placed against each technique and the groups were advised that some consultations were essential at certain stages in the process and those costs had to be deducted, leaving a residual to use as they saw fit to encourage participation in the preparation of their Local Development Document.

- 2.3 Each group reported back on their discussions and the “general principles” group scrutinised the proposals of the other groups in the light of their own discussions before the proposals were discussed generally.
- 2.4 Residents at both workshops recognised that most people only become interested in planning matters when, and if, they made a planning application or objected to one in their neighbourhood. They acknowledged that it would be difficult to engage people in the more strategic debate needed to prepare a Core Strategy although Land Allocations and Area Actions Plans could be easier because they were more clearly area-based. Consequently, people could identify their issues and concerns more easily. The key principles that came from both workshops were that:
- Involvement should begin at the evidence gathering stage;
 - Information should be shared in plain English style not obscured by jargon;
 - The Borough Council should be make clear from the outset the constraints placed upon them, for example by national planning or the strategy for the region;
 - Most effective engagement is at the earliest stages and this is where resources should be focussed; however
 - Involvement should be maintained by good communications and feed back, including information on the outcomes of residents' involvement;
 - Documents should be summarised (in plain English) and publicised and made widely available at places people visit routinely, such as shops, schools or leisure centres as well as at Council Offices and libraries;
 - More use should be made of media other than the local papers, i.e., local television and radio and the Borough News;
 - More use should be made of the free newspapers;
 - If the Borough Council's website is to be used, it should be used well, that is, kept up to date and presented in a user-friendly way; and
 - A few high profile events could help to stimulate interest amongst residents

2.5 The most useful techniques for involving residents, as identified by the residents' workshops are set out in table A1.2. The residents felt that these techniques should be supplemented by extensive use of the following, especially at the early stages in plan preparation:

- Leaflets
- Publicity and prominent advertising
- Mailshots
- Preparation of clear summary documents

Table A1.2: Methods of Engagement by Subject of Consultation

Subject of engagement (see Glossary – Appendix 3)	Method of Engagement						
	Facilitated workshop sessions	Exhibitions staffed by planning staff	Community engagement techniques such as Planning for Real ® exercises (see Glossary – Appendix 3)	Presentation by planning staff with questions & answers	Citizens' Panel/Focus Group	Questionnaires & surveys	High profile events e.g., interactive exhibitions or other events
(1) Developing a vision or core policies (the Core Strategy)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
(2) Identifying issues and commenting on proposals to identify sites where specific uses should go (Land Allocations)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
(3) Identifying issues and commenting on proposals and priorities for a specific area (Area Action Plans)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

APPENDIX 2 – CONSULTEES (TAKEN FROM ANNEX E OF PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 12: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS)

(1) Specific Consultation Bodies (as listed in regulations)

Countryside Agency
East Sussex County Council
Electronic communications, electricity, gas, water and sewerage providers
English Nature
Environment Agency
Government Office for the South East
Highways Agency
Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (English Heritage)
Kent County Council
Kent & Medway Strategic Health Authority
Neighbouring Local Authorities
Parish and Town Councils
South East of England Regional Assembly
South East of England Development Agency
Strategic Rail Authority

(2) General Consultation Bodies (as classified in the regulations)

- (i) Bodies representing business interests in the area, e.g. Local Traders Groups, Chamber of Commerce, Local CBI, local branch of Institute of Directors, local branch of NFU, Country Landowners Association, Heart of Kent, Tourism South East
- (ii) Bodies representing the interests of disabled people in the area, e.g. Access Group, Alzheimers Disease Society, Headway, Kent Association for the Blind, Mencap, Tunbridge Wells Access Group, Tunbridge Wells Mental Health Resource Centre
- (iii) Bodies representing the interests of different faith groups in the area, e.g. local churches, Islamic and Cultural Association, Salvation Army
- (iv) Bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the area, e.g. Romany Guild
- (v) Voluntary bodies, some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the area

(3) Other Bodies (taken from Planning Policy Statement 12)

AONB Unit
British Geological Survey
Church Commissioners
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
Commission for Racial Equality
Council for Voluntary Service (responded to questionnaire)
Crown Estate Office
Diocesan Board of Finance
Disability Rights Commission
Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee
Educational Partners – local schools, West Kent College, etc
Equal Opportunities Commission
Forestry Commission
Freight Transport Association
General Aviation Awareness Council
Health & Safety Executive
Help the Aged
Housing Associations (all locally active)
House Builders Federation
Housing Corporation
Hospice in the Weald (responded to questionnaire)
Kent Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Kent Fire & Rescue Service
Kent High Weald Project
Kent County Constabulary including Crime Prevention Design Advisors
Learning & Skills Council for Kent & Medway
Local transport operators, e.g. Arriva Southern Counties, Southeast Trains
Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust
Maidstone Weald NHS Primary Care Trust
National Playing Fields Association
National Trust
Network Rail
Post Office Property Holdings
Rail Freight Group

Road Haulage Association
South West Kent NHS Primary Care Trust
Sport England
Traveller Law Reform Coalition
Women's National Commission

APPENDIX 3 – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Annual Monitoring Report: is a key aspect of the Government's 'plan, monitor, and manage' approach to the planning system and seen as crucial to the successful delivery of the spatial vision and objectives of the local development framework. The annual monitoring report must be based on the period 1 April to 31 March. It must assess the:

- (i) implementation of the local development scheme; and
- (ii) extent to which policies in local development documents are being achieved.

Area Action Plans (AAP): will be used to provide a planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation of areas is needed.

Core or Spatial Strategy: will set out the long-term spatial vision for the local planning authority area and the strategic policies and proposals to deliver that vision. Broad locations for development may be set out in a key diagram.

Development Control Policies: policies that set out the criteria against which planning applications for the development and use of land will be considered. Such policies are intended to ensure that development accords with the spatial vision and objectives set out in the Core Strategy.

Development Plan: will consist of the regional spatial development strategy and development plan documents contained within the Local Development Framework.

Independent Examination: The local authority must arrange for an independent examination of a submitted development plan document whether or not representations have been received. The reason for this is that the independent examination must consider the "soundness of the development framework".

Land allocations (see Site-specific allocations)

Local Development Documents (LDD): will comprise development plan documents and supplementary planning documents.

Development Plan Documents (DPD): prepared by the relevant plan-making authority. They will be spatial planning documents and subject to independent examination. There will be a right for those making representations seeking change to be heard at the independent examination.

The development plan documents which local planning authorities must prepare include:

- i. Core Strategy (Spatial Strategy);
- ii. Site-specific allocations of land;
- iii. Area Action Plans (where needed);
- iv. Proposals Map (with inset maps, where necessary); and
- v. Generic development control policies.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD): will cover a wide range of issues on which the plan-making authority wishes to provide more detailed advice or guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in development plan documents. They will not form part of the development plan or be subject to independent examination.

Local Development Framework (LDF): will comprise a portfolio of local development documents, which will provide the framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for the area.

Local Development Scheme (LDS): will set out the programme for the preparation of the local development documents. All plan-making authorities must submit a local development scheme to the First Secretary of State for approval within six months of the commencement date of the Act regardless of where they are in terms of their current development plan.

Local Plan: A Borough or District-wide statutory development plan, which sets out the Council's policies for the development and use of land. The Government intends to replace local plans with local development frameworks.

Planning for Real ®: A registered trademark of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, Planning for Real ® is a process of community involvement where local communities come together to consider a matter of local interest using models and other techniques to develop understanding and agree outcomes. It is one of a number of techniques used to involve communities in detailed plan-making.

Planning Policy Statement (PPS): an expression of Government policy on an individual planning topic, e.g. PPS12 deals with local development frameworks. The Government intends to replace its current set of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) with Planning Policy Statements.

Proposals Map: A graphical illustration of the policies and proposals contained in development plan documents and saved policies.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS): will be prepared by the regional planning body. The regional spatial strategy will set out the policies in relation to the development and use of land in the region and will be approved by the First Secretary of State.

Saved Policies: The transitional arrangements allow for existing adopted plans to be saved for three years from the date of commencement of the Act and plans in the process or being reviewed and replaced to be saved for a period of three years from the date of adoption. The whole plan or policies and proposals from the plan may be saved.

Site-specific allocations: the allocation of land for specific uses (including mixed uses) founded on a robust and credible assessment of the suitability, availability and accessibility for particular uses or mix of uses.

Soundness of the Development Framework: the soundness of a development plan document will be assessed by considering whether:

- (i) It has been prepared in accordance with:
 - (a) the Local Development Scheme; and
 - (b) the Statement of Community Involvement (or minimum requirements in the regulations if there is no adopted Statement of Community Involvement);
- (ii) It is consistent with national policy and generally conforms to the Regional Spatial Strategy;
- (iii) It has regard to the Community Plan;
- (iv) Its strategies/policies/allocations are coherent and consistent, including with neighbouring authorities where there are cross-boundary issues;

- (v) Its strategies/policies/allocations are the appropriate in the circumstances and are founded on a robust and credible evidence base;
- (vi) There are mechanisms for implementation and monitoring; and
- (vii) There is reasonable flexibility to deal with changing circumstances.

Spatial Planning: requires greater integration between the various strategies produced by local authorities and other agencies and the land-use planning system. This is intended to achieve the most efficient use of land and to create areas that have a sense of identity, thus improving the ability of the planning system to promote sustainable development.

Statement of Community Involvement: is a document that will set out the standards that the plan-making authority intends to achieve in relation to involving the community in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all local development documents and in significant development control decisions. It will also set out how the local planning authority intends to achieve those standards. The Statement of Community Involvement will not be a development plan document but will be subject to the minimum consultation requirements set out by Government and to independent examination. A consultation Statement showing how the local planning authority has complied with its Statement of Community Involvement will be required for all local development documents.

Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal: a generic term used to describe environmental assessment as applied to policies, plans and programmes. The European 'SEA Directive' (2001/42/EC) does not, in fact, use the term strategic environmental assessment. It requires a formal 'environmental assessment' of certain plans and programmes, including those in the field of planning and land use. The Sustainability Appraisal covers wider objectives than the Strategic Environmental Assessment, but in practice both procedures will be combined. These processes feed into, and are intended to improve, the content of the Local Development Framework.

Supplementary Planning Documents: will cover a wide range of issues on which the plan-making authority wishes to provide more detailed advice or guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in development plan documents. They will not form part of the development plan or be subject to independent examination but will be part of the Local Development Framework.