

[Appendix A]
WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Consultation Draft

March 2006

Contents

Glossary of Terms

1. Introduction
2. Our Values and Principles
3. Methods we will use and support
4. How to get involved
5. Community Involvement and the new Planning System
6. How We Will Monitor and Evaluate Progress
7. Conclusion and Next Steps

Appendices:

- Statement of Public Involvement
[‘Making Sense of Community Engagement’ Workshop (Annex 1)
Community Engagement Event (02.12.05) (Annex 2)
Focus Group Meeting (09.12.05) (Annex 3)
Questionnaire Results (Annex 4)
The Council’s Questionnaire (Annex 5)]
- Criteria for testing the soundness of the SCI
- LDF Consultees
- Key Contacts
- Public Participation at Council Meetings – Guidance
- The Local Strategic Partnership
- The Local Development Framework Programme
- Tenant Participation Compact

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Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation

- AMR** **Annual Monitoring Report:**
Part of the *Local Development Framework*, the Annual Monitoring Report assesses the implementation of the documents detailed in the *Local Development Scheme* and the extent to which policies in the *Local Development Documents* are being successfully applied.
- AAP** **Area Action Plan**
A *Development Plan Document* that focuses on a specific location or area subject to significant change or conservation.
- Community strategy**
A strategy prepared by a *Local Strategic Partnership* that would include local authority representatives to help deliver local community aspirations.
- Core Strategy**
A *Development Plan Document* that sets out the long-term *spatial vision* for the local planning authority area, the *spatial objectives* and strategic policies to deliver that vision, having regard to the *Community Strategy*.
- Development Brief** A document produced by the Local Planning Authority or a developer providing guidelines and setting principles for the development of a particular site. Such documents are often given additional weight, by being adopted as *supplementary planning documents*.
- DPD** **Development Plan Document** A document setting out the Council's planning policies and proposals. The DPDs the council must prepare include the *Core Strategy*, site –specific allocations and where needed *Area Action Plans*. They are subject to community involvement, consultation and *independent examination*. A *sustainability appraisal* is required for each development plan document.
- Development Provisions and Allocations Documents**
A site – specific *Development Plan Document* which will allocate sites required to meet development requirements.
- Evidence Base**
Information collected by the City Council on key aspects of the social, economic and environmental characteristics of the district, which is used to inform the formation of planning policies.
- Front-loading**
The concept of involving the community at an early stage of the policy formation process. The aim is to seek consensus on essential issues and to give a sense of ownership of local policy decisions. It is a key principle of the new planning system.
- Independent Examination**

The process by which a planning inspector may publicly examine a Development Plan Document (DPD) or a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The findings set out in the Inspectors Report are binding upon the local authority that produced the DPD or SCI.

- LADS** **Local Area Design Statement**
A supplementary planning document which provides detailed guidance on the character, layout and design of new development in specific local areas.
- LDD** **Local Development Document**
*These include *Development Plan Documents* (which form part of the statutory development plan) and *Supplementary Planning Documents* (which do not form part of the statutory development plan).*
- LDF** **Local Development Framework**
*The name for the portfolio of Local Development Documents. These consist of *Development Plan Documents*, *Supplementary Planning Documents*, a *Statement of Community Involvement*, the *Local Development Scheme* and *Annual Monitoring Report**
- LDS** **Local Development Scheme** This sets out the programme for preparing *Local Development Documents*. It is reviewed annually as part of the *Annual Monitoring Report*.
- LSP** **Local Strategic Partnership** a partnership comprising of public, private and voluntary groups who work together with the aim of improving the quality of life in the Winchester City District. Their work involves identifying local priorities and actions, which inform the community strategy.
- NDS** **Neighbourhood Design Statement**
A supplementary planning document which provides guidance on the character and design of new development to be accommodated within a neighbourhood.
- One Compact for Hampshire**
*The Compact agreement for Hampshire. A Compact is an agreement, drawn up between voluntary groups, community groups and public bodies , setting out guidelines for how they should behave towards each other in order to deliver mutual benefits. For further details go to:
www3.hants.gov.uk/compact.htm*
- Preferred Options**
A key consultation stage of the Development Plan Document process. It indicates the option favoured by the Council where there are alternative options available. In making representations, respondents will either support the Council's choice of preferred option, or object to the option being chosen.
- PPG** **Planning Policy Guidance Note** A series of documents setting out the Government's national land use planning policies e.g. housing, transport, employment. They are currently being replaced by *Planning Policy Statements*.
- PPS** **Planning Policy Statement** These are statements prepared by the Government on a range of planning issues. *The Local Development Documents* should accord with guidance set out in the statements. They are

intended to replace the existing series of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs).

Public Examination

See *Independent Examination*

- RPB** **Regional Planning Body** The Regional Planning Body is responsible for drafting the new *Regional Spatial Strategy*, in addition to other functions. In the South East of England, the RPB is the South East England Regional Assembly
- RSS** **Regional Spatial Strategy** This is an overarching strategy prepared by South East Regional Assembly with involvement at a sub-regional level from the County Councils, covering the period up to 2021. It provides a spatial framework to inform the *Local Development Framework*. It forms part of the statutory development plan and must be taken into account in local planning decisions.
- Spatial Planning** Includes economic, social and environmental issues as well as the physical aspects of location and land use.
- SCI** **Statement of Community Involvement** This sets out the planning authority's proposals for involving the local community in plan-making and development control (significant applications). It is not a DPD but it is, however, subject to independent examination.
- Statutory Register**
The Local Planning Authority maintains a register relating to development in the district. It has two sections, one part provides details of all current planning applications and the other part provides details of all decisions, Planning Obligations (section 106 agreements) and appeal decisions relating to past applications.
- Stakeholder:** Any person, group or business that has an interest or will be affected by a particular activity, plan or project.
- SEA** **Strategic Environmental Assessment** An appraisal of the impacts of policies and proposals on economic, social and environmental issues. It is required by European legislation.
- SPD** **Supplementary Planning Document** This is a local development document which provides additional information and guidance in regard to a specific policy or proposal in a development plan document (DPD). It does not have DPD status and will not be subject to independent examination.
- SPG** **Supplementary Planning Guidance** Additional advice issued by the Local Planning Authority relating to policies in the Adopted Local Plan. To be replaced by *Supplementary Planning Documents* (see above).
- SA** **Sustainability Appraisal** An assessment of the impacts of policies and proposals on economic, social and environmental matters contained within the *Local Development Framework*.
- WDLPR** **Winchester District Local Plan Review** The replacement Development Plan for the district which is due to be adopted in 2006. It will be saved under

transitional provisions for a period of time before being replaced by *development plan documents*.

VDS

Village Design Statement

A supplementary planning document which provides guidance on the character and design of new development to be accommodated within villages. It is usually produced by the local community, working closely with the City Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is more important than ever that we understand what local people and organisations want for the future of our District, and that everyone is clear about how they can participate and contribute. We are building an 'evidence base' of information to guide our work and the views and aspirations of local communities form part of this evidence. The achievement of many of our objectives requires the active involvement of local people and organisations to bring about change.
- 1.2 Part of the City Council's role is to provide the right kinds of opportunities to enable people to help to get involved in ways that best suit their needs, and to help them to learn how to participate. Involving people in this way provides Councillors with a greater understanding to inform their decision-making.
- 1.3 We have asked both our residents and organisations how they would prefer to be engaged and involved in our work (see Appendix1). Our research shows that the way we involve people can be even more important than the number of opportunities we provide. People want us to choose the most appropriate ways to involve them bearing in mind their needs, and the topics we are discussing. We also need to be very clear about the extent to which people's input can make a difference when we contact them. Sometimes we will just want to inform them or ask their opinion – sometimes we will be inviting them to work alongside us and help us to develop ideas over time, or explore a number of options (see Diagram 1). The important thing is make sure people understand the impact their ideas can have at any particular time.

[Diagram 1 is currently awaiting copyright authorisation, a specimen is attached]

- 1.4 The work of the Council is very diverse. This Statement sets out how we will invite your involvement. It also discusses how we will reach out to those groups in our communities who are often left out, such as young people, very elderly people, people with disabilities and people from ethnic minorities.

Why we are producing a Statement of Community Involvement

- 1.6 We believe that it is important that local people and organisations are able to influence and play a part in the future of the places where they live and work. There are a range of methods for ensuring this happens, in ways which are open and fair to all parts of the community. Getting involved should also be enjoyable for those who give up their time to help in this way. It is important that we set out in our Statement of Community Involvement what methods we will use, how we will tell people about these opportunities, and how their involvement will influence us and our commitment to running fair, open, and high quality processes.
- 1.7 The Government has recently passed legislation which is changing the way councils plan for the future needs of local communities. We are now required to involve other organisations, to a much greater extent, and to achieve our objectives by working in partnership with them. In particular, there have been changes to the way in which we plan how land will be used and the way that decisions are taken on individual planning applications (for example, house extensions or new buildings). The Government has asked all local councils to create a Statement of Community Involvement, to explain how local people and organisations can participate, particularly in these land use matters. The different stages involved in producing a Statement of Community Involvement are set out in Diagram 2, below.

2. OUR VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

2.1 The Council has the following set of core values which guides all our work:

The Council strives to be an organisation which:

- *provides the highest standards of service to all our customers*
- *is efficient and offers value for money*
- *listens to local people and takes full account of their wishes*
- *is creative and innovative in all that it does*
- *works with partners to improve quality of life in the district*
- *seeks to promote sustainable communities through all its actions*
- *seeks to be an employer of choice*

These values form part of the Council's Corporate Strategy, which is reviewed annually.

2.2 For the Statement of Community Involvement the Council has identified some further values to guide us. These are:-

- *People have a right to participate in the decisions which affect their lives*
- *The contribution of local people and organisations can add value to public policy and services (and similarly in the voluntary and private sectors).*
- *Involvement of local people and organisations should lead to change for the better*

2.3 We are bound by principles of inclusivity as set out in the Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act. The following principles will also guide the way we involve local people and organisations. Involvement opportunities must:

- Make a difference – The purpose of involvement is to achieve change around a specific topic. It can also make a difference to all those involved in terms of learning, confidence and a sense of active citizenship.
- Be voluntary – People may be encouraged to be involved, and even paid for their involvement, but they must choose to be involved.
- Be transparent, honest and clear about the purpose, and the limits of what can and what cannot be changed, who can be involved and how/what happens as a result.
- Be adequately resourced for an effective process, and to deliver results.
- Be accessible so that no participant is excluded (eg consider method of involvement, choice of meeting places, timing of meetings, childcare provision etc)
- Be accountable to all those involved. This requires good record keeping and communication of what is happening and why.
- Be given the authority to achieve their objectives
- Help everyone involved to learn and develop
- Include feedback mechanisms for informing people of decisions, or other actions that were the result.

2.4 We will monitor our work on community involvement as we go along, and ensure these values and principles inform all we do (see Section 6).

3. METHODS WE WILL USE AND SUPPORT

- 3.1 This section sets out a range of methods, from which we will select depending on circumstances, and the resources we have available. There will always be constraints on the number of community involvement processes we can run due to the cost. It is very important that we choose the right methods to meet the needs of the people we are involving, and for what we are trying to achieve. It is equally important to optimise our opportunities and get the most out of each one.
- 3.2 For example, a major development area of 2,000 new homes would need to involve councillors, local communities, residents, developers, and a very wide range of organisations. It would continue over a long period with many opportunities for people to make their contributions. We would also need to communicate what is happening in a way which keeps everyone in that area up to date. On the other hand, a new policy or service likely to affect just one part of the community will require a different approach for giving out information and keeping in touch. Here, involvement might happen over a short time but with the aim of achieving maximum impact.
- 3.3 We recognise that not everyone needs to be involved in everything, all the time. Our research showed that many organisations, particularly parish councils, are often overwhelmed by the extent to which they are currently consulted and that we need to rationalise the consultation we do and share these processes with other organisations where possible. There are also limits to the numbers of people who can participate in certain involvement methods. We will use our best judgement to involve appropriate people and we will monitor how successful we have been by asking for feed back. In addition, we will comply with appropriate legislation and the specific requirements of the new planning system (see Section 5).
- 3.4 Although different techniques will be needed for different purposes, all public involvement processes need to be well planned. We will ensure that we prepare properly in each case by asking ourselves the following questions:
- Scope – how much can really change in response to people’s suggestions? What level of involvement are we asking for? Do we have the resources to do this well?
 - Purpose - What do we want to achieve by the end of the process? (the outcome). What will we produce along the way which will help to achieve this? (the output). Is the purpose clearly defined and easy to communicate, so that everyone understands?
 - Who to Involve – Who is directly responsible for decisions on these issues? Who is influential in the area, community or organisation? Who will be affected by decisions on the issue? Who runs organisations with relevant interests? Who is influential on this issue? Who can obstruct a decision if not involved? Who has been involved in this issue in the past? Who has not been involved, but should have been? Are the participants able to get involved? What can we do to make it easier for them?
 - How will the outputs and outcomes be used to inform the work of the Council and our partner organisations?

- 3.5 Our research shows that we need to continue to listen to the way local people and organisations want to be involved as their needs, and technologies change. In the mean time, the following methods will form the basic menu we will use to select the right type of involvement. Some of these methods are familiar but others have not been used by the Council in the past. We will develop skills at the Council to ensure we are confident we can use these methods well. This section also refers to initiatives such as Parish and Town Plans, and Village Design Statements, which are initiated and run by communities themselves. These are methods supported and encouraged by the City Council. The outputs from these methods will form part of our evidence base and influence our plans for the future.

Flexible Techniques

Results Based Accountability – An interactive action planning method which can be used by local communities to identify priorities, gather and analyse data, and mobilise resources behind an agreed way forward. Very dynamic and interactive approach which can be combined with other methods such as Parish Plans. Skills to use this method are being introduced at the Council.

Planning for Real® - A very interactive method usually based at the local level. Involves a 3D model of the area or maps where people can place suggestions about the way they would like to see their community to develop. Planning for Real® is a registered trademark of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation. Requires trained facilitators. Community Action Hampshire has officers trained to assist.

Participatory Appraisal – A facilitated approach in which local people from a village or neighbourhood identify their own priorities, and work together to find common ground and a way forward for the future. Uses accessible tools which are good for involving social groups who do not usually participate. Might be developed for urban neighbourhoods in the city over time. Requires trained facilitators. Some expertise already within the Council.

Consensus Building Approach – a method which brings together representatives of a range of interest groups to share ideas and issues, identify common ground, and find a shared understanding on the best way forward. Usually takes place during a single event, or a series of linked events. Requires trained facilitators (some training already undertaken by Council officers, and partner organisations. Hampshire Facilitators' Network already in existence to share expertise and skills - Winchester City Council officers participate.)

Linking community involvement processes with other events such as arts, heritage, sports and cultural events (to be developed).

Use of modern technology, such as the internet or mobile phone text messaging. This is particularly useful for involving children and young people. The relevant software to use this method is already in place at the Council.

Community led Involvement Processes

Market Town Health Check – A process trialled and recommended by the Countryside Agency and supported by SEEDA, and by Hampshire County Council. The process is supported by the Town Council which delegates the process to a steering group representing all the interest groups within the town. The process assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the town, including its role in serving surrounding rural communities, through a detailed look at the local economy, environment, community and transport. A holistic plan for the future is developed across the full range of quality of life issues. Can include detailed design guidelines to guide development control. Very inclusive and evidence based. Some examples in the district. Council officers able to offer support, particularly during the action planning stage. Councillors can be helpful in accessing information and support to the process.

Parish Plan – Similar to a Town Health Check but suitable for smaller rural communities. Initiated and supported by the local parish council but run by a steering group drawn from a range of interests across the parish. Funding is available from DEFRA via Community Action Hampshire which also provides support and advice. Some parish plan projects underway in the district and some early examples of completed plans e.g. Micheldever, Whiteley, Wickham and Otterbourne.

Village Design Statement – A process whereby local people research and articulate the views of the local community to describe the distinctive character of the village and the surrounding countryside. They then draw up design principles based on the distinctive local character, working in partnership with the local planning authority in the context of existing local planning policy. The Design Statement can also influence future policies. A similar approach can be used to generate Town Design Statements, and Neighbourhood Design Statements within larger urban settlements.

Neighbourhood Action Plans – Holistic action plans generated by neighbourhoods within larger urban settlements such as the city of Winchester. No examples so far. Appropriate methodology is being investigated.

Existing networks and initiatives

Winchester Local Strategic Partnership (see Appendix?) – The various partnerships and forums of the Local Strategic Partnership are based on a range of quality of life themes involving communities of interest. These partnerships and forums are consulted by the City Council. They also conduct consultation and community involvement processes of their own. These processes and their outputs could be better shared in the future. We will work with our partners to share processes and information through our **evidence base**.

The Winchester Local Strategic Partnership Network is an emerging electronic information-sharing network which connects people working on all kinds of issues to do with quality of life in the district. This network can be used to alert people about forthcoming community involvement processes, and to share information. This early 'alert' gives the best possible notice to ensure that the involvement of the right people at the right time. This approach has been recommended by Planning Aid to ensure that planning policies are truly '**spatial**' and integrate with other plans, policies, and services. We will continue to build this network and use it to best advantage.

Linking with Citizenship Education – The National Curriculum includes specific

education on democracy and active citizenship. This provides opportunities for the Council to work in partnership with schools and participate in these lessons to explain to young people about how to get involved locally, and to listen to their views on specific issues. Classes can also be invited into the Council for special events linked to Citizenship Education. A pilot has been undertaken with 2 Winchester district secondary schools and further decisions will be needed as to how this is pursued in future.

Work to develop a young people network which would link youth councils, schools councils, students' unions, youth clubs, youth sections of sports clubs, other youth culture and entertainment organisations etc. Young people could also join as individuals. The network would work best if linked to a well-maintained website (possibly via the Winchester City Council website). This is likely to develop alongside the partnership that will emerge in response to the Hampshire Children & Young People's Plan.

Link to existing networks for people with disabilities, and groups and organisations that serve members of the community with specific needs. Harness the communication methods already existing within these networks to ensure that barriers to involvement are overcome and that participation is an option available to all.

Develop new networks for the involvement of black and ethnic minorities. The City Council is participating in a project initiated by voluntary organisations to do just this.

3.6 Reaching out to people who do not usually get involved

It is well known that some sections of our communities tend not to be involved in dialogue about their local areas. This is partly because of past inadequacies in the approaches adopted by central and local government, and partly due to people's lack of capacity to understand the purpose and find the time to get involved. These groups include some young people, some people with disabilities, and some people from black and ethnic minorities. We understand that we must make special efforts to reach out to some groups to ensure we understand their needs and aspirations and this is set out in our values and principles (see Section 2). We will constantly review our success in this regard but will begin by adopting the methods detailed above.

3.7 Developing Parish 'Clusters'

We will, of course, continue to consult with all Town and Parish Councils on a regular basis. Precisely how these contacts are maintained and improved in the future must, however, be in tune with local circumstances and must be relevant and helpful to people at the local level. One way in which the Council's relationship with parishes might develop is through the concept of parish 'clusters'. The aim here would be to encourage cooperation and co-working between groups of adjoining, or nearby, parishes and their Parish (or Town) Councils, in order to increase local collaboration and give a geographical or 'area' focus to issues such as community planning, sustainability and the provision of services. Such groupings may also help to develop local structures based on these clusters with, perhaps, a representative panel or forum made up of members drawn from the parishes concerned. We will explore further whether this approach is appropriate for the Winchester district.

4. HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- 4.1 The information in this section is mainly about the City Council. For a list of other key contacts, see Appendix 4. See also Appendix 6 on the Local Strategic Partnership.

Information and Communication

- 4.2 If you have access to the Internet you can find out about consultations, opportunities for involvement and planning applications on the Council's website at www.winchester.gov.uk. We may contact you directly to invite your views on proposals affecting your area. We will also try to keep you up to date about Parish and Town Plans happening in your area, and other consultations being run by our partner organisations. We will make sure that our website is kept up to date with all the information you need to contact us with your ideas.
- 4.3 We will use our residents' magazine '*Perspectives*' to let you know of forthcoming opportunities and issue information to all other media, including the press, radio and television, as appropriate.
- 4.4 We will use plain English in all we do to ensure people understand what we mean and to help them to communicate with us. We will also make information available in Braille and in other languages upon request.

Local Councillors

- 4.5 City Councillors play a vital role in representing your interests. This means that they set out a long term direction for the District and agree which services are to be provided, and how and where these are to be delivered. City Councillors also act as a voice for their community, and have an interest in all things affecting their local Ward area - not just what is under the control of the City Council. You can contact your ward Councillor directly by either emailing or telephoning them. Councillors also hold 'surgeries' where they are available for face to face meetings. Details of these will be publicised in your area or you can contact the City Council or look at our website www.winchester.gov.uk.

Speaking at Committee

- 4.6 You can also take part in the public participation sessions which take place at the beginning of the City Council's public meetings and have your say on an item which is on the agenda. Public Participation allows you the opportunity to make a statement or ask questions during a 15 minute period prior to the formal business of the meeting. Appendix 5 sets out guidance about the Council's public meetings and what you need to do if you want to speak. It should be noted that these particular arrangements for speaking at the Council's public meetings are those currently in operation. They may be subject to adjustment or other changes in the future and, therefore, in order to maintain a reasonable degree of flexibility in carrying out public meetings, such arrangements are not included as a formal part of the SCI.

Parish/Town Councils

- 4.7 If you live outside of Winchester town, you will have an elected Parish or Town Council with whom you can get involved and which will represent your area to the City Council. For the contact details of your Parish or Town council, please contact the City Council or see our website.

Winchester Town Forum

- 4.8 Although the Winchester town area doesn't have a parish council, it does have the Winchester Town Forum. This is made up of the City Councillors who represent the Winchester town Wards. The Forum considers local town issues and recommends proposals for action to the Council. The Forum holds special themed meetings where all residents are welcome to attend the meetings to have their say on that theme. Previous meetings have looked at the Silver Hill development in Winchester, the evening economy and air quality. Forum meetings are held in the Guildhall in Winchester, and start at 7:00pm. For more information on the dates of the meetings, please contact the City Council or see our website.

Scrutiny

- 4.9 Principal Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Panels are the main way by which the Cabinet is held to account in public for delivering the City Council's objectives. The Panels and Principal Scrutiny Committee have four main roles:

- Holding Portfolio Holders to account for the services within their areas of responsibility
- Contributing to the development of key Council policies and programmes
- Challenging decisions made by Cabinet or Portfolio Holders
- Reviewing the overall benefit to the public from services provided by the City Council and other organisations

- 4.10 You can get involved in scrutiny in several ways:

- Suggest a topic for in-depth review by the scrutiny panels and Principal Scrutiny Committee
- Speak at one of the public scrutiny meetings. This works in the same way as public participation for all public City Council meetings
- Giving evidence to a scrutiny Councillors during a scrutiny review

- 4.11 For more information on which scrutiny reviews are currently being carried out, what type of topics you can suggest for scrutiny review, or to find out when the public scrutiny meetings will be held, please contact the City Council or see our website.

Council Housing Tenants

- 4.12 The City Council is committed to ensuring that Council tenants have a variety of opportunities to get involved in how the council housing service is run. If you are a Council house tenant in the Winchester District, there are several ways in which you can have a say on how the City Council runs its housing stock and acts as a landlord.
- 4.13 TACT ('Tenants and Council Together') is an independent group of tenants and leaseholders working in partnership with Winchester City Council. TACT's aims are to:

- Represent the interests of all tenants and leaseholders of the City Council
- Promote and encourage discussion over all housing-related matters
- Encourage the process of tenant and leaseholder consultation
- Monitor the standard of services supplied by the Council
- Ensure that tenants' and leaseholders' voices are heard

4.14 The City Council supports TACT and encourages Council house tenants to get involved in the Council's work through their representatives on TACT. For more information on TACT, contact the Tenant Participation team on 01962 848204, on Freephone 0800 716987 or see TACT's pages on the Council's website. Information regarding Tenant Participation Compacts, which are locally negotiated agreements between the Council as landlord and its tenants and leaseholders, setting out how they can participate in decisions that affect their homes and community, is attached to the Statement at Appendix 8.

City Council services

4.15 Individual services will also offer opportunities to have your say on what is delivered throughout Winchester District. These opportunities will be publicised on the website and through the City Council's newspaper '*Perspectives*'.

4.16 At the beginning of each financial year (April), the City Council will also publish its annual consultation plan. This will set out what consultations the City Council will be undertaking that year. The publication of this plan will be advertised on the Council's website.

Complaints System

4.17 The City Council aims to provide good-quality, cost effective services, but recognises that, at times, things can go wrong. We have a comprehensive complaints procedure in place which you can use if you are unhappy with something the Council has done. Contact the City Council on 01962 840222 for a copy of the complaints leaflet, or see our website for more information.

Voluntary and Community Organisations

4.19 Residents' Groups and Community Associations provide opportunities to influence the services provided by the Council in their areas of benefit. These do not exist in all areas of the District, but in those where a significant level of resident interest already exists. These organisations will often lobby councillors on issues of concern to local people.

4.20 The Council has signed up to the 'One Compact for Hampshire' initiative which guides the way we relate to voluntary and community sector organisations. More information about the One Compact for Hampshire is included in Section 6 below.

5. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND THE NEW PLANNING SYSTEM

Introduction

- 5.1 Some of the things the City Council does are governed by legislation and regulations which affect the way we involve and consult people. This is particularly the case with Planning matters, where regulations cover the way the Council must produce and consult on planning policies and how it must deal with planning applications. The Council will adopt the principles and methods discussed earlier in this SCI, as appropriate, but this Section sets out in more detail how it will deal with consultation on planning issues.

The New Planning System - A Key Part of the SCI

- 5.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 brought in major changes to the planning system. These are aimed at promoting better integration between the various strategies produced by local authorities and other agencies and the land use planning system. Under the new system, planning policies will reflect a wider and more inclusive approach to planning, to achieve the most efficient use of land and create areas with a strong sense of identity.
- 5.3 These changes will be achieved through the production of 'spatial plans', which go beyond the grant or refusal of planning permission, and will include a broader range of policies than had previously been contained in development plans. This will be devised and delivered, at the local level, by a portfolio of Local Development Documents (LDDs). The City Council is required to prepare such a portfolio, known as the Local Development Framework (LDF), which sets out a detailed planning strategy for the District. Diagram 3 illustrates the components of the Development Plan and how these interrelate with the Local Development Framework.
- 5.4 Included among the key aims of the new planning system, are the need to:
- strengthen community and stakeholder involvement and make residents and others aware of planning proposals that affect them at the earliest possible stage, through an improved flow of information;
 - develop improved methods of achieving a dialogue which can incorporate all relevant views and so help to avoid misconceptions and possible conflict.
- 5.5 The City Council is fully committed to ensuring that the views of the District's communities, partners and other stakeholders are integrated into the policy framework which guides development in the District. In this way, issues and obstacles can be identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity, with the aim of resolving conflicts that may arise.

Who will be consulted on Local Development Documents?

- 5.6 Strengthening community and stakeholder involvement in planning is a main objective and principle of the new planning system. Essential to this will be a more proactive approach to consultation on the part of the Council, which values contributions from all sections of the community, as well as the full range of stakeholders and partners.

- 5.7 Anyone can have their say on planning in the area. We will ensure so far as possible that opportunities to input into planning documents are well publicised through the local media (newspapers, the free press, local radio). A database of individual consultees will be maintained and anyone can register an interest in the preparation of individual Local Development Documents in writing, by telephone, by fax, by e-mail and through the Council's website and be kept informed of progress.
- 5.8 In addition, the Council has to consult certain 'statutory' and 'non-statutory' consultees, at particular stages of the LDD process. These stages are laid down in Government regulations. A list of the stakeholders which we must consult when preparing a Local Development Document can be found at Appendix 3. We will, however, consult more widely with all relevant stakeholders, depending on the nature and content of the LDD and issues of relevance.
- 5.9 The City Council will also consult with a range of community groups and other stakeholders, such as:
- Local amenity groups;
 - Bodies representing the interests of the business community in the area;
 - Voluntary groups operating within the District;
 - Bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the area;
 - Bodies representing the interests of disabled people in the Winchester District;
 - Bodies representing the interests of different religious groups in the area.
- 5.10 The Council will generally seek to direct consultation towards those most likely to be affected or with particular knowledge of the issues/area, for example by setting up workshops on particular topics, or by holding events in particular areas. You can have your say on an individual basis, or through contact with/assistance from, any of the following groups, as relevant:
- Town and Parish Councils
 - The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)
 - Interest Groups
 - City Councillors / Officers
 - Neighbouring Local Authorities
- 5.11 Due to statutory consultation periods that form part of the planning process, it will normally be impossible to adhere to the minimum 12-week consultation period expected under the 'One Compact for Hampshire'. However, given the 'front-loading' of consultation that will occur and the fact that there are often several opportunities to be involved, in practice, there are likely to be more than twelve weeks for involvement.

How will we consult on Development Plan Documents?

- 5.12 There are two main types of documents in the Local Development Framework: Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. There are different ways in which you can be involved in the creation of these (A Consultation Structure and a table setting out the different methods of consultation are set out in Diagrams 4 and 5, below. There are several stages in the production of Development Plan Documents, as described below.
- **Pre-production Stage:** This is very much part of the Council's 'front-loading' approach and gives people the chance to get involved in Plan-making from the

- beginning of the process. As a result, this first stage will focus on initial community involvement, particularly on identifying issues and concerns, as well as 'scoping' and evidence gathering.
- We will draw on the 'evidence base', including the results of community initiatives, such as Parish Plans and Village Design Statements.
 - Meetings or other events will be arranged, as necessary, involving consultees, stakeholders and focus groups to consider specific topic areas.
 - Town and Parish Councils and the Winchester Town Forum will be kept up to date with progress throughout this period and encouraged to submit their views on any issues arising.
 - 'Statutory' and other consultees will also be consulted on relevant matters, in accordance with the planning regulations.
 - The Council will liaise with statutory and non-statutory consultation bodies, to discuss issues or concerns emerging at this pre-production stage.
- **Production Stage:** This stage involves producing options and consulting on them. The intention here will be to publicise the issues identified at the Pre-Production stage and the potential measures for addressing them.
 - Prior to the formal participation process, there will be an early opportunity to be involved and to participate in developing and refining suitable options. The methods of doing this will depend on the type of Development Plan Document and the area it covers, but may include a 'Preferred Options Report', or 'Issues Report', or a Summary Leaflet which can be distributed within areas particularly affected. This will enable an informal stage of consultation, prior to the statutory stage (see below), which will allow the Council to assess comments and responses to its Preferred Options report.
 - A variety of consultation and engagement methods will be used, as appropriate to the type and subject matter of the DPD. Such methods might include focus group meetings, leaflets, seminars and exhibitions/displays at relevant and accessible locations within the District.
 - The statutory consultees will be notified and invited to make contributions, in accordance with Regulation 25.
 - **Formal Consultation:** The production stage will be followed by a six-week statutory period for pre-submission public participation (Regulation 26). This gives the first opportunity for formal representations to be made.
 - The Council will advertise and publicise this stage widely, making it clear that the consultation documents are available for inspection at various locations throughout the District, and that comments must be made within a clearly specified period.
 - The Council will publish information on its website to draw attention to the fact that these documents are available to view online.
 - This will be further supplemented by information in the Council's 'Perspectives' magazine and in the Council's monthly Parish Newsletter.
 - In circumstances where it is appropriate, and helpful, further local exhibitions may be held.
 - In line with Regulation 26, copies of the consultation document will be sent to all statutory consultees and appropriate non-statutory consultees and formal notices will be published.
 - Other groups, companies and individuals will be able to purchase copies, or view/download the document from the Council's website.
 - **Submission to the Secretary of State:** Under Regulation 28, the DPD must now be formally submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. There is a six week period, from the date when the Council submits the DPD to the Secretary of

State, for submitting any formal representations to be considered by an independent Inspector at the subsequent examination stage. This is when the Council's Document will be assessed against the 'Tests of Soundness' laid down by central government (a copy of those 'tests' is attached to this Statement, at Appendix 2. It is important at this stage that people link their comments to one or more of the 'tests'. This is because the Public Examination Inspector is appointed to judge the soundness of the DPD against these tests, not necessarily to respond in detail to each representation.

- The Council will use statutory notices to advertise the DPD and issue Press Releases so as to maximise publicity at this stage.
 - In accordance with the Regulations, all statutory consultees and other relevant consultees (as identified above) will be notified that the DPD has been submitted to the Secretary of State and sent a copy of the document, if they have indicated that they require a hard copy. Otherwise, their attention will be drawn to the Council's website.
 - The Council will also consult everyone who has been involved in earlier stages, as well as people on its database with an interest in that LDD.
 - Other groups, companies and individuals will be able to purchase copies, or download the document from the website.
- **Examination Stage:** This stage involves examination of the DPD by an independent Inspector whose role is to test the 'soundness' of the Plan, and to consider this in the light of representations which have been made. At this stage, matters are largely determined according to Regulations, or how the Inspector decides to programme proceedings and the Council may have limited control over events.
- If a formal hearing is needed there will be a Pre-Examination Meeting at which the Inspector will discuss, with people who have made representations, how their representations will be considered.
 - The majority of representations will be considered by written submissions, but there is a right to be heard.
 - The majority of any issues which need to be examined in public will be considered at informal or 'roundtable' sessions.
- **Adoption Stage:** Following on from the completion of the examination process, the Inspector will submit a binding report to the City Council. The Council will be required to adopt the LDD in accordance with the Inspectors' recommendations.

How we will consult the community on Supplementary Planning Documents

- 5.13 The process for preparing Supplementary Planning Documents is similar to the process for preparing Development Plan Documents, except that the Council does not need to produce 'Preferred Options' and there is no Public Examination (A Consultation Structure for Supplementary Planning Documents is set out in Diagram 6, below.
- 5.14 Details of the Supplementary Planning Documents the Council intends to produce and the timetable for their preparation are set out in the Local Development Scheme (and summarised in Appendix 7, attached to this Draft Statement). The main elements of the Supplementary Planning Document preparation process are summarised, below.
- **Participation and Production Stage:** In some cases the production of a SPD may be undertaken by the local community, such as in the case of Village or Neighbourhood Design Statements. Supplementary Planning Documents may relate to a particular locality, for example a Village Design Statement, or may

relate to a specific topic such as Affordable Housing. SPD will require an associated Sustainability Appraisal to be carried out.

- There will be ‘front-loaded’ community and stakeholder participation, prior to a draft Supplementary Planning Document being published. The level and scope of the involvement will vary according to the nature of the SPD (Regulation 17).
 - Participation and early consultation will be comprehensive, though perhaps localised. In many cases it may be the local community that has taken the initiative and will be influential in deciding a draft Document’s content, programme and early consultations.
 - The production stage must be followed by a formal public consultation period, lasting between four and six weeks (Regulation 18), see below.
- **Public Consultation Stage:** At this stage there is formal consultation on a draft Supplementary Planning Document.
 - A draft SPD will be published for formal comments to be made, for a period of 6 weeks.
 - The draft SPD will be placed on the Council’s web site and notices will be placed in local papers (Regulation 18).
 - We will consider all comments made on draft Supplementary Planning Documents, during the period referred to above, and will go on to make any changes that are considered appropriate.
 - A summary of the main issues raised during consultation will be published, explaining how these have been dealt with.
 - A ‘Statement of Participation’ will be produced explaining what consultations have been undertaken and how the Council has dealt with representations.
 - The Sustainability Appraisal will also be produced and published, either as part of the SPD or as a separate report.
 - **Adoption Stage:** An SDP can then move forward to adoption by the Council (Regulation 19).
 - Everyone who commented on the draft SPD will be notified of the adoption of the SPD, along with statutory consultees.
 - Copies of the document will be placed on the Council’s web site and made available to view or purchase.
 - The ‘Statement of Participation’ and ‘Sustainability Appraisal’ will be published, either as part of the SPD or separately.

Planning Applications: getting involved in the process

5.15 The City Council believes that it is important to provide the local community with the opportunity to be involved in helping to shape development within the District. However, it is important to also bear in mind that the Council is required to operate its planning function within a clearly defined and nationally applicable legal framework, in terms of determining all planning applications and other related applications for consent.

5.16 Whilst the Council has the responsibility for determining planning applications within the District, transparency in all such matters, together with genuine involvement, calls for notifying and properly engaging with individuals, business interests and the wider community, in carrying forward that process. The outcomes of community engagement can sometimes be contradictory. The Council must make clear and defensible decisions on planning applications, taking proper account of all relevant representations, including both objections and expressions of support, as well as national and local planning policies and ‘other material planning considerations’.

- 5.17 This is often extremely challenging, but the Council has to carry out its duties in regard to development control as part of a 'quasi-judicial' process. This does not, therefore, allow applications to be determined simply on the balance of representations for or against any particular proposal. Planning law requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan and other material considerations.

The methods we will use and the role of the applicant

- 5.19 The latest advice from Government recommends an adaptable approach to assessing the most appropriate degree and extent of community involvement, which is related to different scales of development and/or potential public concern. It also sees the planning application as the end of a process of public involvement and consultation, not the beginning. The consultation that has already been carried out, such as the 'Shape, Create, Improve' questionnaire and stakeholder events, have helped shape the requirements for the developer and the Council, which are set out below and in Diagrams 7 and 8. These will be refined further in the light of formal consultation.
- 5.20 For small-scale or minor applications, it may be sufficient to rely on neighbour notification and other means of attracting local attention such as site notices, the Council's web site, published lists of planning applications received each week and direct notification to Town and Parish Councils. More significant planning proposals, which are likely to give rise to degrees of controversy, are located on sensitive sites, or are of a significant scale, will require more extensive community consultation and involvement. In such cases, consultation should be undertaken by the prospective applicant before an application is made.
- 5.21 The Council expects all applicants to carry out pre-application discussions and early community involvement, appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposed development, and to provide evidence of this with an application. To achieve this will require cooperation and participation on the part of the applicant or developer. It will be necessary for the Council be satisfied that the applicant has maintained an open approach in carrying out notification and consultation and that any concerns or issues discussed by participants have been fairly considered and responded to. In order to demonstrate this, the Council may require reasonable access to information resulting from such involvement exercises, to be satisfied that the procedures followed have complied with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
- 5.22 There are already examples in the District where developers have initiated and/or participated in community engagement both before, and during, the course of their planning application and these now need to become normal practice. In terms of the upper tier of major developments, the Council, working with applicants and its partners, has taken a firm lead, both in consulting and involving the local community and other stakeholders from the outset, and in using the latest techniques for achieving a meaningful dialogue and direct engagement. Instances where this has happened are the proposed Major Development Area at West of Waterlooville and the proposed city centre redevelopment in the Silver Hill area of Winchester.
- 5.23 Although this Statement does not seek to be prescriptive about the types of community involvement techniques that applicants should be adopting for different types of application, we do expect such practices to become far more widespread and will encourage developers to adopt more innovative and 'fun' approaches so as to encourage wide involvement. We will expect all applicants to provide reliable and

comprehensive information, in order to help local communities consider and address issues at an early stage in the planning process. In terms of the quality and effectiveness of planning decisions subsequently being made, it is in the interests of all concerned that time and effort should be invested at the beginning of the process, to help to clarify misunderstandings, approach and discuss schemes in a constructive way and resolve potential difficulties, where possible.

- 5.24 Most applications, especially those for planning proposals of a significant size or potential for controversy, should be accompanied by a supporting statement of public participation. This should set out what initial consultations were carried out in the area likely to be affected by the scheme or proposal, and how the results of this have been reflected in the planning application. Failure by a developer to conduct adequate or appropriate community consultation could lead to matters being raised or objections being made which could be material to the eventual determination of the application.
- 5.25 Everyone submitting a planning application receives an information leaflet regarding planning applications, which sets out the Council's 'Development Control Charter' and includes details of its standards of service and measures for notifying neighbours, together with transparent targets for dealing with, and deciding, all applications. This leaflet will be updated to include any relevant information regarding further community involvement measures. The table, at Diagram 7, gives examples of the kinds of community involvement exercises that developers should undertake for applications of various types/scales.

Ways for the applicant to involve the community

- 5.26 Different ways in which early community participation can be carried by applicants are outlined below. These methods of involvement can include:
- Informing/working with Parish Councils and Local Groups
 - Public Meetings
 - Workshops
 - Public Exhibitions
 - Seeking assistance from Planning Aid
- 5.29 Planning Aid is an initiative which provides free, impartial and professional advice and support on planning issues, particularly to disadvantaged people and communities who may not be able to employ a planning consultant on a commercial basis. The Planning Aid service, therefore, enables individuals and groups to become more involved in the planning process and, in providing this valuable service, is fully supported by the City Council. As a way of making contact, the Council's website contains a link to Planning Aid at www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

The steps we will take when a planning application is received by the City Council

- 5.30 Legislation already requires and provides for a wide range of consultations on planning applications. Nevertheless, concerns about development have raised the public profile of planning, with more interest in the environment and quality of life issues resulting in greater levels of public participation. This has resulted in a need for more information, which is both reliable and widely available, and delivered at the right time.

5.31 Minimum standards for publicity, information and consultation are set out in planning legislation, together with the statutory requirements contained in the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order and other, similar arrangements which apply to listed building and conservation area consents. The paragraphs below set out how we already implement these requirements at the local level and, in a number of areas, exceed them. Diagram 8 also illustrates the Council's notification and consultation procedures.

5.32 The Council will meet and exceed the minimum consultation requirements through the following measures:

The Council's Web-site

5.33 The City Council publishes notices and lists all planning applications on its website www.winchester.gov.uk and through its 'Public Access' facility. The Public Access system also allows people to:

- view the details of planning applications including accompanying plans and supporting documents,
- follow the progress of an application,
- submit comments relating to the application,
- search a regularly updated list of planning applications received and determined each week,
- view details of previously decided applications and
- view property details by reference to an on-line map.

5.34 The website lists the dates of forthcoming Development Control Committee meetings and also has links to the Planning Portal, which contains further information regarding the planning system. The Council intends to further develop its document management systems so that, progressively, all files on planning applications become available through its web site.

Publicity

5.35 We will ensure that effective publicity is given to all planning applications. The Council's Statutory Register contains details of all current applications and past planning decisions. It is available for inspection by the public, at Planning Reception, Avalon House, during the period from 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday – Friday.



Newspaper Advertisements

5.36 Those types of planning application which are required to be advertised in the local press will be displayed, on a weekly basis, in the Hampshire Chronicle. All 'Major' planning applications (e.g. residential development of more than 10 dwellings, industrial development of over 1000 sq.m.), applications for Listed Building Consent and applications in Conservation Areas are advertised in this way. Any such entries will include the date by which all comments should be received by the Council.

Press Releases

5.37 We will use press releases or statements, if appropriate, to inform the community of planning proposals which are likely to be of particular community interest.

Neighbour Notification

- 5.38 We currently have a policy of notifying the occupier(s) of neighbouring properties, of the receipt of any planning application. Notifications are sent to the occupiers of neighbouring property, according to the allocating officer's assessment of which properties may be affected by the proposed development. In addition, further notification may be carried out, following a case officer's visit to the site in question.

Site Notices

- 5.39 These notices will be displayed for 21 days on, or close to, the site of all planning applications. In the majority of cases applicants, or their agents, are expected to erect such notices and, in practice, are given a period of up to 28 days in which to make the necessary arrangements and for the notice to then be displayed for at least 21 days. The operation of this important system is carefully monitored and the Council will, in the case of genuine difficulty for an applicant, make an alternative arrangement for the display of the notice.

Responding and influencing the planning decision

Making Comments

- 5.40 If you want to make a representation on any planning application you should send this in writing, by e-mail, fax or letter explaining your views. We also have online and paper forms available which will help you set out your comments. Written representations are taken into account when the application is determined. However, account can only be taken of comments concerning planning issues. Representations cannot be treated in confidence and will form part of the planning application file. This will be available to view at Avalon House, by the applicant/agent, or by members of the public and will also be available to view on the Council's web site. Representations available to be viewed in this way will not, however, display the writer's telephone number, fax number, e-mail address or signature.
- 5.41 All site notices and newspaper advertisements will give 21 days in which to make comments. All written representations are acknowledged, although the Council has ceased the practice of sending a further reply giving the outcome of the Council's decision. The outcome of applications is published in the Council's weekly list of decisions and displayed on the web site.

Making the Planning decision

- 5.42 The Council's Director of Development, under his powers of delegation, can determine planning applications. This accounts for the majority of all applications for planning permission and related consents received by the Council. However some applications are referred to the Council's Development Control Committee for decision, for one or more of the following reasons:
- At the request of a City Councillor (based on material planning reasons)
 - Due to a Town or Parish Council's reasoned representations, contrary to officer recommendation
 - The Officers consider the application to be controversial or potentially controversial
 - The application is for a major development

- Six or more representations contrary to the Officer's recommendation have been received
- The application has been submitted by or on behalf of a Member / Officer of the Council, which they have notified to the Director of Development.

Relevant Planning Issues

5.43 Relevant planning considerations may vary from application to application but, in general terms, the following issues can be considered 'relevant':

- Government legislation and guidance
- Development Plan policies
- Case law
- Development briefs
- Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents e.g. Village and Neighbourhood Design Statements
- Design, appearance and layout
- Conservation of the built and natural environments
- Impact on the enjoyment of neighbouring properties (the effect on outlook, privacy or daylight)
- Trees
- Highway safety and traffic
- Pollution
- Flooding
- Planning History

The following are examples of matters which are NOT relevant planning considerations:

- Effect on property values
- Possible future development
- Loss of a view over other people's land
- Competition between businesses
- An applicant's motives
- Matters covered under other legislation (i.e. building regulations, legal covenants, alcohol licences)
- Private property rights
- Private disputes concerning property ownership or boundaries.

Planning Development Control Committee

5.44 We encourage public participation at the Development Control Committee. We have a section at the start of the Committee's agenda where Town and Parish Councils, Amenity Groups, objectors and applicants, or their supporters can address the Committee for up to three minutes each.

5.45 Guidance and information on speaking at Committees, as well as help in advising potential speakers, or groups of speakers, how to make the best use of the time allocated, can be obtained from our Public Speaking Coordinator. We also have a leaflet called 'Have Your Say on Planning in Winchester District: A guide for those speaking at Planning (Development Control) Committee', which provides more information. Please contact our Customer Service Centre for more details on 01962 840222, for a copy of the leaflet, or to speak to the Public Speaking Coordinator.

General information, regarding public participation at all Council Meetings, is included in Appendix 5 attached to this Statement.

- 5.46 As indicated in paragraph 4.6, above, it should be remembered that in regard to matters of procedure, such as delegated authority for dealing with certain planning applications and processes which provide for public speaking opportunities, the Draft SCI outlines the arrangements which have been adopted by the Council are, therefore, currently in operation. In order to be able to make necessary changes to such arrangements, from time to time, the Council is not including such matters as a formal part of its SCI. However, any more far-reaching changes to the Council's scheme of delegation for development control or the process for speaking at committees may need to incorporate appropriate consultation, having regard to the principles set out in Section 3 of this Draft.

How we involve communities after applications are decided

- 5.47 The Council's written acknowledgement of the objector/supporter's letter gives details of how to access planning decisions, either by telephone or via the Council's web site. People who have either objected to, or supported, a planning application are no longer given written notification of the decision made. The Council (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning General Development Order, 1995) is required to give reasons for all decisions made on planning applications and other applications for consent. This helps towards providing improved accountability and transparency.

How we involve communities if an appeal is received on an application

- 5.48 Only applicants for planning permission have the right of appeal, either against the refusal of permission, or any conditions imposed, or against the failure of the Council to determine the application within specified time periods. An appeal must be made within six months of the Council's decision. There are no 'third party' rights of appeal. If an appeal is lodged, the Council will notify all those who made representations on the original application and advise them how to make their views known to the independent Planning Inspector, who will be appointed to deal with the appeal. The Council will also forward copies of all letters previously submitted, to the Planning Inspectorate.

Performance Targets

- 5.49 As part of its reforms to improve the speed of the planning system, the Government has introduced new performance targets for handling planning applications which are tied to Continuing Performance Assessment and Planning Delivery Grant. Amended Performance Indicators were set for 2005/06. These targets are:

- 60% of major applications within 13 weeks
- 65% of minor applications within 8 weeks
- 80% of all other applications within 8 weeks

Resourcing planning engagement

- 5.50 The City Council carries out a great deal of community engagement and consultation, and we must match the need to carry out high quality engagement with the resources we have available. We are therefore committed to better coordination of consultation

throughout the District – not just that carried out by the City Council, but by all organisations which we work in partnership with. By working together with our partners (principally via our Local Strategic Partnership) we can ensure the better use of resources throughout the area. We will also work to strengthen and support these links with partners, stakeholders and community representatives. As far as possible, these needs will be met by the City Council's own staff although, occasionally we will call on extra facilitation or consultancy help where needed.

- 5.51 A further key consideration for the Council is how and when to exceed the minimum legal requirements, in order to deliver the best balance between the use of limited resources and desirable outcomes. The latter must be seen in terms of improving the quality of engagement and community involvement which can then lead to improved planning services, both in terms of plan-making and the determination of applications. The Council's focus will be on achieving the most efficient, timely and cost-effective community involvement to help shape planning decisions, whilst recognising the resource pressures placed on all local planning authorities.

6. HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE PROGRESS

The Annual Monitoring Report

- 6.1 The Council is required to produce an Annual Monitoring Report, in order to assess the extent to which planning policies are being successfully implemented. This report, which will largely contain factual information, will form part of the 'evidence base' that will inform the preparation and review of the Council's planning documents. The Annual Monitoring Report will be published, and will be a useful document for the local community to refer to, when considering if or how the Council's planning policies should be changed.
- 6.2 The Council is proposing to allocate 'Local Reserve' housing sites, in order to meet housing needs, and the Annual Monitoring Report's information will be used to help determine whether there is a need to release any of these sites. In future years, consultation will be carried out on the conclusions of the Annual Monitoring Report in relation to the Local Reserve sites, prior to the Council deciding whether there is a need for any releases.
- 6.3 The Annual Monitoring Report will also consider the success of the Statement of Community Involvement. This will highlight the need for any amendments to the Council's consultation processes. If significant changes are required, the Council may need to carry out a formal review of the SCI. Additionally, regard will be had to any emerging best practice guidance or changes in legislation as an important part of updating and periodic revision.

Monitoring, Feedback and Resource Availability

- 6.4 Certain elements within the Statement of Community Involvement will need close monitoring, especially in those areas involving newly-formed groups, or where efforts to involve particular target groups more closely have not had the time, or opportunity, to fully develop new links.
- 6.5 The Council will, therefore, undertake to assess the content and methods contained in the Statement with a particular concern for young people under 30, businesses, and other 'hard-to-reach' groups. The City Council has formally signed up to the 'One Compact for Hampshire' initiative, which guides the way we relate to voluntary and community sector organisations. This includes a guaranteed minimum of 3 months for consultations to enable them to participate effectively. The 'One Compact for Hampshire' will provide a degree of monitoring, as it establishes a benchmark for the Council's relationship with the voluntary and community sector. If organisations are unhappy with the way in which the Council has treated them, in particular with regard to consultation, it provides a mechanism for this dissatisfaction to be tabled.
- 6.6 The measures set out in this SCI are based on the resources currently available, or planned to be available, to the Council and its partners. They also take account of the implications for applicants, although the aim is that additional time and effort undertaken at the early stages of preparing planning applications will be repaid by faster and more trouble-free determination of the applications. The proposals in this SCI are, therefore, achievable, as well as being intended to improve the quality and effectiveness of public involvement.

7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

7.1 Through the production of this draft SCI the Council is proposing various commitments to maintain and improve its involvement of the public and stakeholders in its decisions, and is suggesting various requirements of others. The key points are summarised as:

- Commitment to a set of core values (Section 2);
- Establishment of principles for consultation (Section 2);
- Identifying a 'menu' of measures which are appropriate for various types and stages of involvement and consultation (Section 3);
- Requiring applicants/developers to play an increasingly important part in community engagement (Section 5 and Diagram 7)
- Providing a range of opportunities for local communities to be involved in helping to shape major developments (Section 5 and Diagram 8)
- Further developing, and refining, consultation and involvement techniques

We particularly welcome your views on these key aspects of the SCI, as well as any detailed points you wish to make.

7.2 The City Council has published this Draft Statement for public consultation, for a period of six weeks, starting on 16th March 2006. After this we will consider all the comments that have been received on the draft Statement and will use these to inform any changes. The revised SCI will form the 'submission' version of the Statement. This will also be subject to a six-week period of formal consultation, starting when it is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination against a number of pre-set 'tests of soundness'.

7.3 Any representations made at this second consultation stage, together with any new issues raised, will be taken into account by an independent Planning Inspector, appointed to examine the 'soundness' of the SCI. Overall, the Inspector will have responsibility to examine the Submission version of the Statement and to determine whether, or not, it represents a sound approach to community involvement on the part of the Council.

7.4 After this formal examination, the Inspector will recommend any further changes he/she considers necessary, or that arise from the representations received. Such changes will be recommended in a binding report from the Inspector and will then be incorporated in a final version of the Statement, to be published and adopted by the City Council (See Diagram 2 for an illustration of the processes).

7.5 The Council also provides a confidential telephone service for those whose first language is not English. For information on how to use this language line to make comments on the draft SCI document please contact Greg White on 01962 848418. A large print version of the document is also available.

7.6 If you have any queries regarding this document or would like to discuss its contents, please contact the City Council's Customer Services. Telephone 01962 848217. E-mail: customerservices@winchester.gov.uk