



DARLINGTON LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



TAKE PART IN PLANNING IN DARLINGTON

Statement of Community Involvement



DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 2005



إذا رغبتكم الحصول على هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى غير اللغة الإنجليزية نرجو الاتصال بنا على رقم الهاتف التالي : 01325 388644 • مع ذكر رقم الإشارة.

যদি আপনার ইংরেজী ছাড়া অন্য কোন ভাষায় এই প্রকাশনাটির দরকার থাকে, তাহলে 01325 388644 নম্বরে ফোন করুন এবং সূত্র নম্বর উল্লেখ করুন।

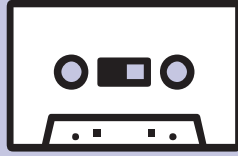
如果你需要其它語言的版本，請與以下電話聯係並報出參考號碼：01325 388644

यदि आप यह प्रकाशन अंग्रेजी के अलावा अन्य भाषा में चाहते हैं तो कृपया संदर्भ नम्बर (रेफरन्स नम्बर) बताकर निम्नलिखित 01325 388644 पर संपर्क करें।

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਨੰਬਰ 01325 388644 ' ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਰੈਫਰੈਂਸ (ਹਵਾਲਾ) ਨੰਬਰ ਦੱਸੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ کتابچہ انگریزی کے علاوہ کسی دوسری زبان میں درکار ہو تو برائے مہربانی ٹیلیفون نمبر 01325 388017 پر فون کر کے حوالہ نمبر بتائیں۔

BRAILLE



LargeType

Details on this document will be made available on request in Braille, tape or large print.

Foreword

We want to involve you in all the decisions that affect your lives. We also welcome the involvement of anyone else with an interest in the town, whether as potential investors, service providers, regulatory agencies or visitors.

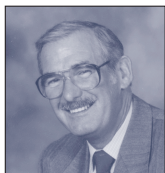
That's why we welcome this Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), prepared by our Planning Services Team and adopted by the Council. It explains how and when you can take part in planning in Darlington, whether it be helping to shape new planning policy documents or having a say on planning applications. If you are planning a 'significant' development, we have set out our new guidelines as to what we expect you to do to involve local people and other organisations in developing your plans, before sending us your planning application.

We are delighted that Darlington Partnership is working closely with the team. Effective partnerships with the local community and agencies which deliver services are at the heart of well-designed and appropriate local development and land use.

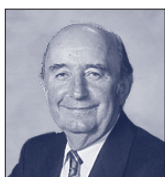
We look forward to your contribution in planning the future of Darlington.



**Councillor J. Williams,
Leader of the Council**



**Councillor D. A. Lyonette, Portfolio Holder,
Development and Regeneration**



**Councillor F. R. Robson, Chair,
Planning Committee**

Darlington Borough Council



STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Contents	Page
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
What is this document and why has it been prepared ?	3
Using this document.	
Getting involved: a cautionary note.	
Guiding principles.	
CHAPTER 2: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS	
How we plan to involve you.	6
Our Service Standards.	10
Which documents will I be invited to get involved in and when ?	11
Your involvement in assessing the effect of the proposed plans.	13
CHAPTER 3: PLANNING APPLICATIONS	
General	15
Why consult the community before a significant planning application is made ?	
What is a 'significant planning application' ?	
What we expect from developers.	
If you do not keep to these guidelines .	17
CHAPTER 4: MAKING IT HAPPEN AND REVIEWING WHAT WE DO	
What resources are there to support this ?	18
What role do elected councillors have ?	
Reviewing what we do.	
LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 1: The main opportunities to get involved in the plan making process.	7
Figure 2: Community involvement in the assessing the environmental effect and sustainability of SPDs and DPDs.	14
LIST OF TABLES	
Table 1: How we will involve you in plan making.	8
Table 2: Preparing new planning documents: Our service standards	10
Table 3: Which documents can I get involved in and when?	11
LIST OF APPENDICES	
Appendix 1: Involving Darlington Partnership in preparing plans.	19
Appendix 2: Public and other involvement in preparing evidence for the Local Development Framework.	20
Appendix 3: Existing publicity and consultation practices for planning applications.	23

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is this statement and why has it been prepared ?

- 1.1 This statement explains what we (the council) will do to involve you in shaping our new local development documents (see note ¹ below). It shows when and how you can get involved in planning matters, and what to expect from the us when you do. It also sets out what we will expect potential developers to do to involve you before they send us significant planning applications.
- 1.2 Under new law we need to produce this statement. If we do not carry out the actions shown in the document when preparing a new planning document, the Government could tell us to withdraw it.
- 1.3 To find out why we are preparing new planning documents, what plans are being prepared and when, please see our 'Why We Plan' and 'The Local Development Scheme 2005-2008' documents. To find out how to have your say on planning applications, see our 'A Charter for Development Control' and 'Have Your Say', a leaflet specifically about speaking at Committee.
- 1.4 All these documents are on our website at www.darlington.gov.uk, or you can see them at the Town Hall and local libraries. Alternatively you can request copies. Phone 01325 388799. However, we may make a small charge for this.

Using this document

- 1.5 *Plan Making:* For details of when and how you can get involved in preparing new local development documents, go to chapter 2.
- 1.6 *Planning applications:* To find out about our guidelines on consulting the community on 'significant' proposals or our existing consultation and publicity practices, go to chapter 3.

Getting involved – a cautionary note

- 1.7 You are most likely to come into contact with the planning system if a development proposal is going to directly affect you. However, because of the range of people and interests that changes to the local environment can affect, it is rarely possible to find development solutions that keep everybody happy. And, we must consider issues such as available resources and legal requirements. Getting involved does not guarantee that we will take account of your views, but we will consider all the relevant planning issues you raise. If we prepare a report for councillors, it will include a summary of your written comments and the officer's response to them.
- 1.8 Sometimes, you may find that we have not taken account of your views in the final decision because the policies on which the decision is based were agreed some time ago. This is why it is also important to have your say when planning policy documents are being prepared.

Guiding principles

- 1.9 We want to improve the way we involve you in making planning policy and in making decisions on planning applications. We also want to encourage more of you to get involved. We hope to do this by making it as easy as possible, and by making sure that you are only involved while plans or proposals can still be changed in response to your comments.

¹ These documents are the formal development plan and supplementary planning documents that will replace our existing adopted Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance.



1.10 We think that taking account of your views and local knowledge as early as possible is the best way to make sure that the development in the borough has the widest possible local support. And by making the process as clear as possible, it will be easy for you to see how we have made decisions and how we have considered your comments.

1.11 To achieve this, we will apply the following principles when we involve you in planning matters.

1 We will communicate clearly

- We will say why we want to involve you, and if we want your comments on a formal or informal basis.
- We will set out documents and reply forms as simply, clearly and concisely as possible, in a form that is easy to understand. If we cannot avoid jargon, we will clearly explain it.
- We will publish a summary document alongside any local development document that is more than 1500 words long. These will also be available (if you ask) in large print, on tape or in certain ethnic-minority languages.

2 We will make it easy for you to be involved

- We will make it clear what you need to do (and when) so you can give us your views no matter what, if any, physical or language barrier you may have. We will provide help if you are not able to write.
- We will hold any public events or surgeries as close as possible to where the people most likely to be affected live. These will be at times when you are most likely to be able to visit, and at venues that are accessible.
- We will try to match how we involve you with the time and financial resources you have available, and your experience or knowledge of the planning system.
- We will try to match our public-involvement programme to the scale and nature of the planning issues we are dealing with.
- If your group has little or no experience of planning, we will work with you, alongside Planning Aid North (see note 2 below), to improve your ability to respond. We will do this for as long as is necessary to allow you to work independently.
- We will make particular efforts to involve groups that traditionally have not voiced their views on planning matters.
- We will make reasonable adjustments to our public-involvement programme and events to make sure that if you have a disability, you do not receive a lower standard of service.
- We will make sure you can reply to all consultations on-line on our website.

3 We will make sure your involvement is effective

- We will involve you at the earliest stage, and at all further stages of a planning application when there is still a genuine opportunity for your views to make a difference.
- We will make it clear what things we can change and what we can't.
- We will give you plenty of time and notice of the opportunities to get involved, wherever possible.
- If you have expertise that we think could help us in developing policies or making decisions on planning applications, we will contact you to discuss this.

4 We will share information and provide feedback

- We will make paper and electronic versions of draft planning and associated documents available to the public and other organisations.
- We will publish all background documents no later than the date that the first development plan document or planning decision that relies on it is made or published. We will publish these on our website and on paper. You will be able to see them at the Town Hall and libraries. They will either be free or available for a small fee.

2. Planning Aid North offers free, independent, professional advice on town and country planning issues to people or groups who cannot afford a planning consultant. For details, call 0191 222 5776 or e-mail ntco@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk.

- We will consider all planning-related comments we receive and provide feedback to you on how we have considered your views and information provided. This will generally only apply to comments made within the publicised time period.
- We will make sure that we report the comments of the public and other stakeholders to councillors no later than the date when they are next due to make decisions on the proposed plans or planning documents.
- We will make your comments and our response to them publicly available, so that others with an interest in the same issue or matter can see them. (This will not include any unsuitable material, for example, sexist, racist or slanderous.)
- We will only use any records we have from the information you provide for planning purposes.
- We will not keep records of the information you have provided any longer than we need for the original purpose.

5 We will keep the process simple

- We will use our existing community involvement arrangements and those of our local partners, such as the Darlington Partnership (see appendix 1 for details). This will improve the range and balance of people having their say on planning matters.
- Wherever possible, we will group together consultations on several planning documents and issues to help avoid a situation where people get fed up with being consulted.

6 We will learn from our mistakes

- We will review how effective each of our efforts to involve you is. We will change or improve the methods we use to deal with any shortcomings we identify. This will not necessarily mean we will change the statement.

We will follow these principles

- 1.12** Chapters 2 and 3 following this outline how we will follow these principles and the standards of service you can expect from us.
- 1.13** Chapter 4 explains the resources that we will use to achieve our aim of involving you.

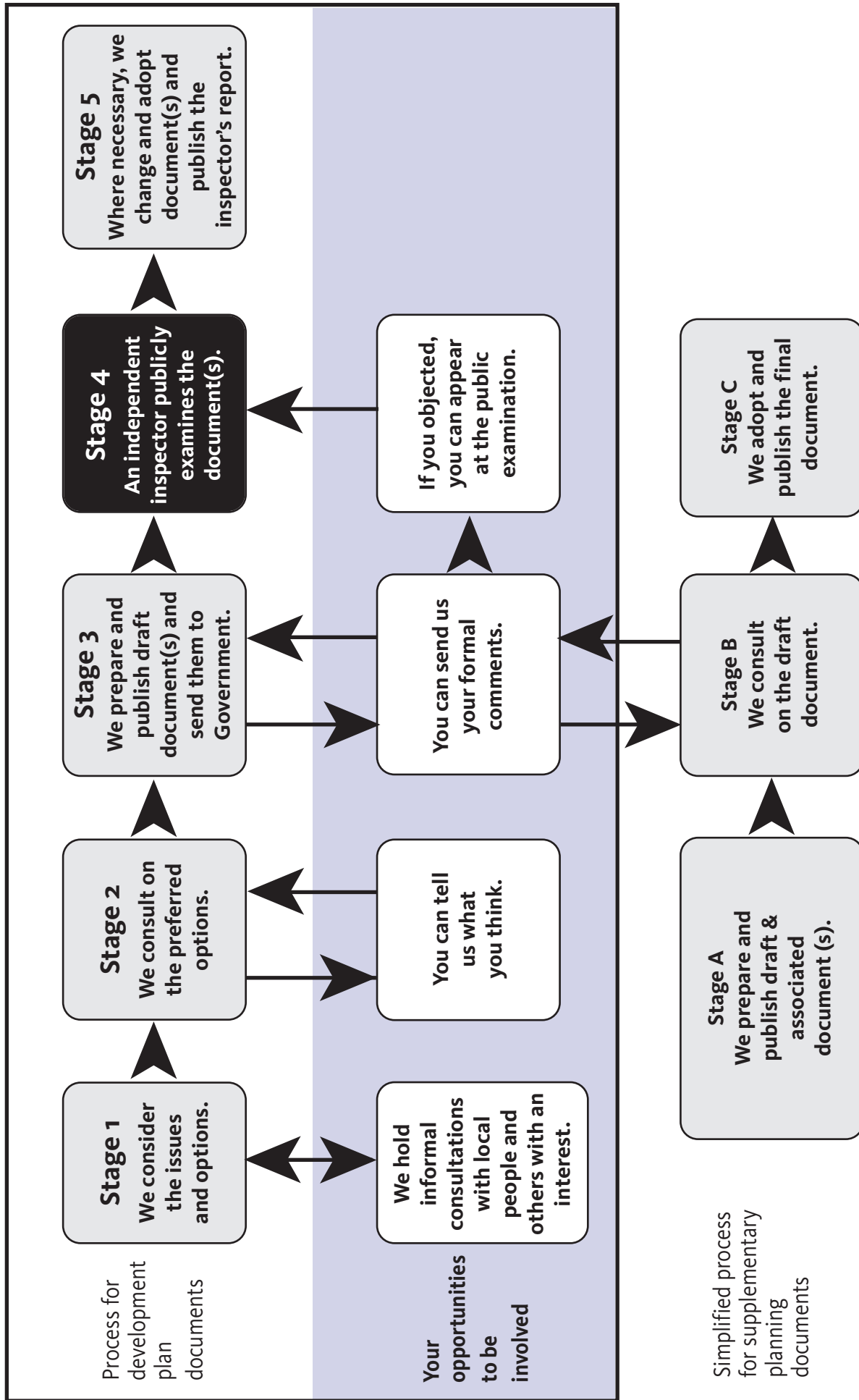


Chapter 2: Local development documents

How we plan to involve you

- 2.1 We want to involve you throughout the plan-making process, and will try to do this in several ways. The methods we use will vary according to:
 - the stage of each plan;
 - what your interest is; and
 - how much experience and knowledge of planning you have.
- 2.2 Darlington Partnership will be at the heart of our consultations with the local community. We will use their groups to involve a wide range of people in our work. The main link will be through their Environment and Economy Sub Group. [Appendix 1](#) shows the links with Darlington Partnership in more detail.
- 2.3 Your main opportunities to help shape the local development documents that we will be preparing are shown in figure 1 overleaf. It shows that there will generally be more and longer opportunities for you to get involved in preparing development plan documents (DPDs) than supplementary planning documents (SPDs).
- 2.4 We will only actively try to get you involved in preparing SPDs if we think you have a clear interest in the area or the issues that the document tackles, or if we have to consult you by law. If we need to prepare a SPD particularly quickly, for example, to help gain funding for developments or to respond to a request from a developer, the opportunities to get involved may be more limited. In these cases, we will give clear reasons why the need for speed is more important than a wide-ranging community involvement.

Figure 1 - The main opportunities to get involved in the plan making process



- 2.5 Table 1 below shows what we will do to involve you in plan-making, and in carrying out the sustainability appraisal and strategic environmental assessment (SA/SEA). This includes specific action to encourage the involvement of those who, in the past, have had little involvement in planning, such as young people, and those who have previously found barriers to their involvement, such as people with disabilities and the black and ethnic-minority population.
- 2.6 How we involve you may depend on the nature of the specific planning issues. Please see our Local Development Scheme and any Annual Monitoring Reports for details on the timetable for each document.
- 2.7 For details of who has been involved in preparing the evidence documents that will inform new policies, please see [Appendix 2](#).

Table 1 - How we will involve you in plan-making

What we will do	Plan-making stage	How we will do it
1 We will let you know when we publish new draft or revised planning documents. We will say where you can see the documents and when and how you can give us your representations.	DPD – stages 2 and 3. SPD – stage B.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will use the local media (including putting a public notice in the Northern Echo and/or Darlington and Stockton Times, Advertiser, Herald & Post). We will use the Town Crier, send letters and/or e-mail to statutory consultees and to people and groups on our planning policy mailing list. We will put notices in libraries and main Council offices, within a week of the start of any consultation period. If a planning document proposes to change how land is used or proposes development on a specific area of land, we will send out leaflets or letters to the neighbouring residents and businesses most likely to be affected. We will also put up notices in prominent places in the area. If possible, we will let owners know of property that is likely to be affected. We will publish a notice on the website at the start of the consultation period, saying where you can see new or revised planning documents. We will contact you directly by e-mail or post if you send in comments directly. We may use a response form to do this.
2 We will promptly publish and make available copies of all new or revised planning documents.	DPD – stages 2, 3 and 5. SPD – stages B and C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will publish all new and revised planning documents on our website in a downloadable form, no later than the day we adopt the document or revise it. We will make paper copies available either free or for a reasonable charge. We will make paper copies of local development documents available for you to see at Crown Street library, Cockerton library, the mobile library and at the Town Hall and our neighbourhood offices, during normal office hours.
3 We will debate and ask for your views on planning issues and options.	DPD – up to stage 3 + between stage 3 and 4 if necessary. SPD – stage B. SA/SEA – stages ii and iii.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will hold open events and exhibitions where you can meet the planners face-to-face. We will hold events, such as focus groups, for certain community representatives, organisations and individuals. If we are invited and it is possible, we will go to other organisations' meetings. We will arrange specific events for groups who need particular encouragement to get involved. We will set up an open planning forum to meet about three times a year, or at important stages when documents are prepared.
4 We will offer advice to, help and develop the knowledge and skills of people and groups with little previous experience of the planning system.	DPD – all stages SPD – all stages SA/SEA – all stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will arrange 'orientation' events for representatives of hard-to-reach groups. We will work with Darlington Partnership's representatives group to develop their role as 'champions'. They encourage people to get involved in planning matters in their local communities and provide a community view on planning matters. We will promote the services of Planning Aid North among disadvantaged communities, black and ethnic-minority people, people with disabilities, young people and the elderly.

What we will do	Plan-making stage	How we will do it
<p>5 We will give you notice of the formal opportunities to make representations on or challenge a planning document, and invite your comments. This also applies to other people's suggested site allocations, if these are made in response to a planning document we have published.</p>	<p>DPD – stages 2 to 5. SPD – stages B and C. SA/SEA – stages iii and iv.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will place an advertisement in the Northern Echo or Darlington & Stockton Times, Darlington Advertiser or Herald & Post public notices sections. This will give details of the proposed planning document together with details of where and when you can inspect it (and the other documents) and how you can make responses. • We will send out formal response forms with all documents to Crown Street, Cockerton and the mobile libraries and to main council offices. • We will publish a notice on the website saying where you can see the documents, together with when, how and to whom you should send any formal representations. • If a planning document proposes changing the way land is used or a development on a specific area of land, we will send out leaflets or letters to the neighbouring residents and businesses most likely to be affected. We will also put up notices in prominent places in the area. If possible, we will let owners and users of property know that is likely to be affected. • We will make forms for formal comments available on the website (you will be able to fill them in and reply on-line). • We will send any people we have to consult by law a copy of the document and any other documents, together with a formal response form and a notice saying where they can see the document. • We will send a notice that a new document has been published, where and when it can be inspected and how to make comments to all others on the planning policy mailing list.
<p>6 We will try to get everyone to agree, and mediate between people who cannot.</p>	<p>DPD – all up to stage 4. SPD – between stages B and C. SA/SEA – all up to stage iv.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will hold meetings with certain individuals and groups to explore particular issues in more depth, and ask them to agree a detailed policy wording. • We will exchange information which has been agreed or which there is a dispute about. • We will explore issues with members of the planning forum.
<p>7 We will use the Environment Scrutiny Committee as a way of getting the public to give their views on specific planning matters directly to elected members.</p>	<p>DPD – between stages 2 and 3 SPD – between stages B and C</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will invite members of the public to committee meetings as well as organisations which members of the committee particularly want to hear from, together with guidelines about speaking at the meetings.
<p>8 We will publish reports (for example, consultation feedback, environmental assessment, Inspector's report and annual monitoring report).</p>	<p>DPD – stage 2, between stages 2 and 3, stages 3 and 5. SPD – between each stage. SA/SEA: –Stages iii, iv and v.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will contact, by e-mail or post, all those who sent in comments directly. We may use a response form. • We will send copies of reports to people we have to by law. • We will publish reports on our website. • We will send out paper copies to main council offices and libraries. • We will make printed copies available for a small charge. • We will advertise the publication using a press release and the Town Crier.
<p>9 We will give notice of our arrangements for events associated with the Public Examination of planning documents.</p>	<p>DPD – between Stages 3 and 4. SEA/SEA – between stages iv. and v.</p>	<p>At least six weeks before any public examination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will publish at least one public notice in at least one local newspaper in the area; • We will issue a press release to the local media, and include the item in the next available Town Crier; • We will post notices in the Town Hall Reception and local libraries; and • We will contact directly those who have lodged objections
<p>10 We will give notice of our intention to adopt if we plan to use a planning document and will publish a community involvement and responses statement. This will set out who has been consulted, how this was done, the main issues that arose, and how the document tackles these.</p>	<p>DPD – Stage 5 SPD – Stage C</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will publish and make copies of the planning document and consultation statement available at the Town Hall, at Crown Street and Cockerton libraries during normal opening hours. We will include information about challenging the document. • We will make all the above available on our website, together with a notice setting out when and where you can inspect copies of the documents. • We will send copies of the planning document and any other documents to the organisations we have to consult by law, together with a notice saying where the documents can be inspected. • We will place an advertisement in the Northern Echo or Darlington & Stockton Times' public notices section, giving details of the proposed planning document, together with details of where and when you can inspect it (and the associated documents). • We will send a 'notice of adoption' to all those who have previously asked to be told.

Our service standards

- 2.8 We are committed to making our dealings with everyone who gets involved in the plan-making process fair, clear, accessible and in good time. Table 2 sets out the standards you can expect in your dealings with us.

Table 2 – Preparing new planning documents: Our service standards

General	In all our dealings with you, we will treat you fairly and considerately.
	We will do the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you write to us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will acknowledge it within three working days of the date that we receive it. We will reply in full within 10 working days of the date that we receive it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you phone us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will try to answer your query immediately over the phone, as long as you call within normal office hours. If your query relates to a specific site, we may ask you to send us a map by post or fax. This is to make sure that the advice we give is actually for the site that interests you.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you e-mail us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As long as you use the e-mail address planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk, we will send you an automatic acknowledgement that we have received your e-mail. A planning officer will follow this up with a full reply by e-mail within 10 working days of the date we received the e-mail. We cannot guarantee this service if you use the e-mail address of a specific planning officer.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you fax us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See our standards for writing to us. These only apply if you use the fax number 01325 388616. It often helps if you contact us first by phone or e-mail to tell us to expect a fax.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you meet us face-to-face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We try to answer your query immediately. If this is not possible, we will explain why not and will let you know when you can expect a follow-up response. We will ask you how you want us to contact you in the future. Planning policy officers are generally available to discuss any aspect of the new local development framework or other development plan documents during normal office hours. However, it is a good idea to make an appointment beforehand.
Specific action	We will do the following:
If you send us a formal representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will acknowledge it within three working days. We will provide feedback either directly or through a summary report of all representations prepared for councillors.
If you ask for planning or environmental information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If necessary, we will explain your rights and the information we have to make available under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.
If you ask for a document	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tell you where you can already see the document; tell you whether there is a charge, and if so what it is; and post it out to you the same day (if it is free of charge) or when we receive your payment (if there is a cost).
If you have sent us comments on any planning document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will publish a community involvement and responses statement alongside the finalised planning document, setting out the issues raised by people who contacted us and our response to each issue raised.
If you make a formal complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Planning Manager will deal with this in the first instance and let you know about the further steps you can take if you do not get a satisfactory answer.

Which documents can I get involved in and when?

2.9 Table 3 shows who we will involve at all key stages in preparing each of the new planning documents. Table 1 shows how we will go about it.

Those to be involved	Statement of Community Involvement	Local Development Scheme	Core Strategy (DPD)	Local development documents (DPDs and SPDs)	Annual Monitoring Report	Environmental and Sustainability Assessment Scoping report	Environmental and Sustainability Report(s)	Notes
Specific organisations we will consult: Association of North East Councils, Countryside Agency, Environment Agency, English Heritage, English Nature, Strategic Rail Authority, Highways Agency, One North East, Yorkshire Forward, other local authorities, the police, fire and rescue services and parish councils.	●		●	●	●	●	●	These are the organisations that the regulations say we must consult if we think that the proposed subject matter of the document affects them.
Government Office for the North East, the media	●	●*	●	●	●	●	●	*Government Office for North East
The general public, MPs, MEP	●		●	●	●		●	
Darlington Partnership, regional health authorities, built environment, architecture and heritage organisations, housing (developers, private and social landlords), environmental organisations and sustainability organisations, regional and strategic organisations (for example, One North East, Tees Valley Regeneration)	●		●	●	●	●	●	
Government agencies and departments	●	●*	●	●	●	●	●	*Planning Inspectorate only
Utility, energy and telecoms providers	●		●	●		●*		*Green energy, for example, companies who provide wind power.
Transport companies and organisations (for example, the Strategic Rail Authority and local transport operators)	●		●	●	●	●	●	

Those to be involved	Statement of Community Involvement	Local Development Scheme	Core Strategy (DPD)	Local development documents (DPDs and SPDs)	Annual Monitoring Report	Environmental and/or Sustainability Assessment Scoping report	Environmental and Sustainability Report(s)	Notes
Local neighbourhood groups	●		●	●			●	
Community diversity (for example, faith groups, disability groups, young people and gypsies)	●		●	●		●	●	
Open space, sport and recreation (for example, Sport England and local sports clubs)	●		●	●	●		●	
Rural and countryside interests, such as farmers groups, country landowners and government agencies.	●		●	●	●	●	●	
Land, and property and housing organisations (developers, housing providers and planning consultants)	●		●	●		●*	●	*Planning consultants only.
Business, industrial and commercial organisations.	●		●	●				
Education, Learning & Skills	●		●	●*				*If education or learning provision is included in the plan.
Retail and town centre.	●		●	●			●	
Health.	●		●	●*				*Where there are clear health links, for example, open land
Land and property owners and occupiers	●*		●*	●**				*major landowners only **those directly affected
Minerals and waste interests	●		●	●*		●	●	* only where relevant.
Tourism interests, such as the hospitality sector and visitors to the borough.	●		●	●*				* tourism locations only, for example, town centre and parks
Other local community and voluntary groups, such as the Council for Voluntary Services.	●		●	●				

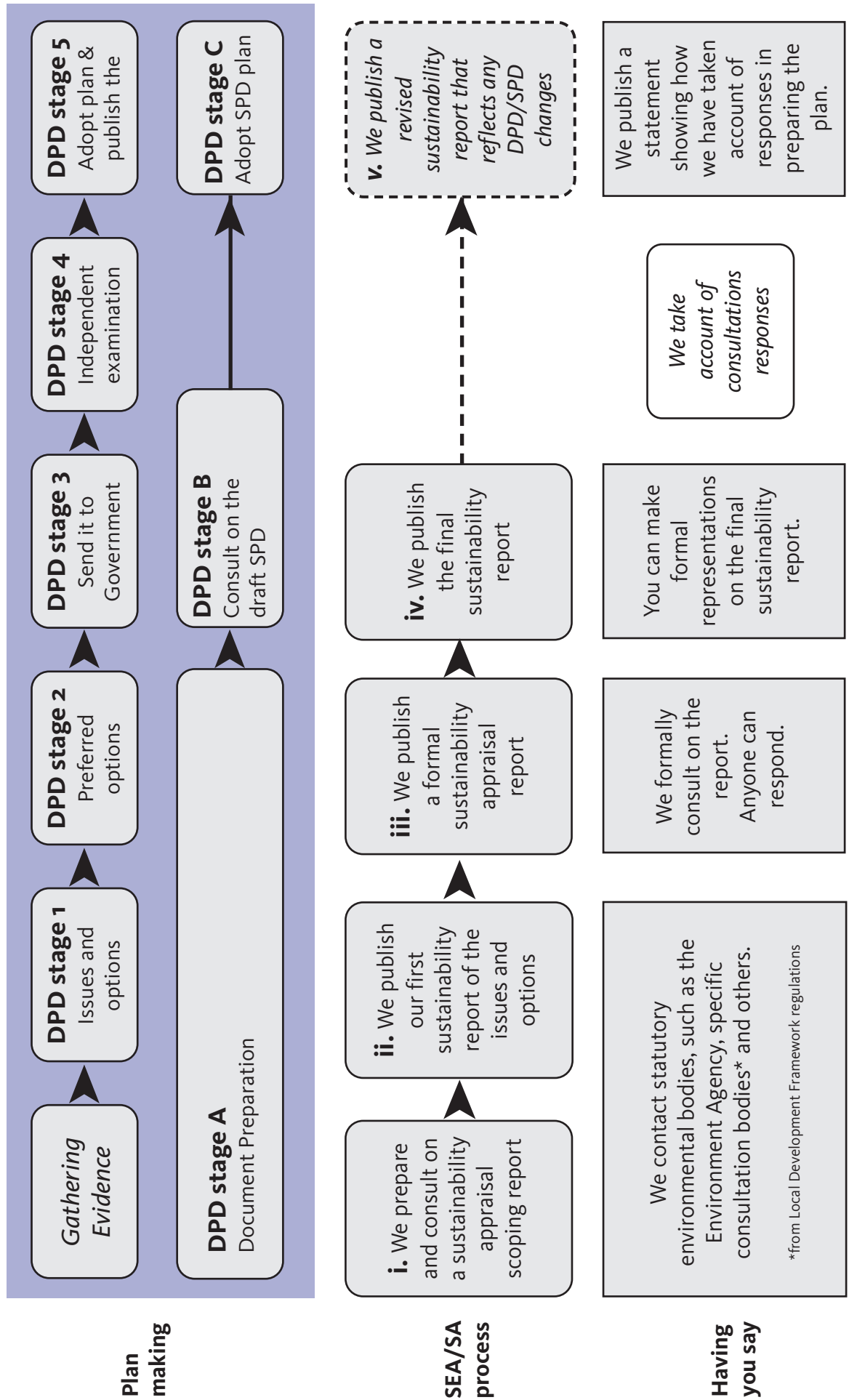
See the website or contact us for an up-to-date list of the organisations currently in each group.

Your involvement in assessing the effect of the proposed plans

- 2.10** At each main stage in preparing any new development plan document or supplementary planning document, we must assess the effect it will have on the environment and how sustainable it will be. We will combine these assessments and may combine the assessments of documents prepared simultaneously, the appraisal work we carry out for each SPD will depend on what already exists for the issue after appraising the related DPD.
- 2.11** We will consult environmental organisations and certain other local organisations on the scope of the environmental and sustainability report. We will continue to involve them as necessary during the assessment process. Everyone will have the chance to comment on the reports, which we will publish at each main stage of preparing the plan (Figure 2 overleaf).



Figure 2 – Community involvement in the environmental effect and sustainability of DPDs and SPDs



Chapter 3: Planning applications

General

- 3.1 This section sets out the guidelines to potential developers on involving the public and others **before** a 'significant' planning application is made to us. We will expect developers to organise, fund and manage this themselves. However, we will provide help, for example, in identifying local community groups, neighbours and suitable venues for events.
- 3.2 This work by developers is on top of what we already do once we receive a planning application. We summarise what consultation and publicity we already do in **Appendix 4**. You can see this on our website or in person at the Town Hall.

Why consult the community before a significant planning application is made ?

- 3.3 We think that the early involvement of the public and other people with an interest in significant planning applications will benefit everyone. People will have more chance to have their say, and for their views to influence the final details of plans. Developers stand to benefit by identifying, at an early stage, local issues and environmental information to put together a scheme that better fits into the local area. As long as developers tackle the relevant planning objections raised at this stage when finalising the scheme, he or she can expect us to deal with your planning application more quickly.

What is a 'significant planning application'?

- 3.4 The following are guidelines as to the kinds of development that we will treat as 'significant':
- Major developments.
We define these as housing developments which include 10 or more homes or a residential development on a site of at least 0.5 hectares, and any other development with a floor area of 1000 square metres or more, or a site area of 1 hectare or more. Major developments will include changes of use above these thresholds.
 - A development which involves an environmental assessment³. These can include major industrial, infrastructure and waste projects, plus schemes such as golf courses, mining and intensive agriculture over certain sizes.
 - A significant development that conflicts with the policies in our development plan or with more up-to-date government planning policy⁴.
 - A development which proposes closing or changing a public right of way.
- 3.5 There may also be proposed developments below these thresholds that we treat as 'significant'. This may be because the type of development or the location is sensitive for some reason, or the effect of a development, when taken with previous developments of the same type in an area, exceeds our significance thresholds. For example, a proposed development may be sensitive if it affects the site or setting of a listed building, the character or appearance of a conservation area, protected trees or ancient woodland, the amenity of neighbours nearby, or could cause local traffic congestion.
- 3.6 The organisation or person applying will have to find out if their planning application will be 'significant'. You can ask a planning officer for a written opinion to see if the application is significant before making an actual application. We will respond to these requests (made in writing) within five working days.


What we expect from developers

- 3.7 If you propose a 'significant' development, we will expect you to consult the public before making a planning application. This consultation should be to the nature and scale of the proposed development. We strongly encourage you to discuss your consultations plan with a planning officer, as part of their pre-application discussions. At this stage, we will give you a list of addresses of people we suggest you consult.

³ Under Schedule 1 and 2 of the EIA regulations.

⁴ As may be set out in ODPM Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements, Ministerial Statements and Speeches.



- 
- 3.8** Pre-application consultations are the responsibility of the potential developer, to whom any comments about the proposals at this stage should be sent.
- 3.9** Any publicity or presentation material and questionnaires should concentrate on facts about the proposed scheme and avoid any bias. We can help assess any material you want to use.
- 3.10** As a guide, we may expect you to carry out a range of activities taken from the list below.

Publicity

- a. You should let local residents, businesses, regular users of land (for example, sports teams) and others (service providers, government agencies) know by letter about the proposed development. The letter should say when and where they can find out more. The letters should include a clear map showing the location of the development and details of who to reply to and by when.
- b. You must place an advert in a local newspaper (usually the Northern Echo) about the proposed development. It should say when and where people can find out more, and to whom and by when people can make comments.
- c. The closing date for comments should be no earlier than 10 days after the close of a consultation event or sending out any letters, whichever is later. You should accept comments made in writing or at a minuted meeting. You should send round any extra information as a press release.

Involving the public at events or exhibitions

- d. You should organise at least one event or exhibition where anyone can find out more. Any staffed event should be no earlier than four days after you have published publicity material or sent out letters.
- e. Any event or exhibition must include display material with your proposals for the site, the scope for public comment, how you will deal with comments and an explanation of what will happen next. You should provide a comments box near any displayed plans.
- f. Any event must take place at a time or times that allows as wide a cross section of the public as possible to attend. This often means including weekends and evenings.
- g. You must hold any event on the application site or building, or at a venue as close as possible to the application site. Venues should be fully accessible but if not, you should make reasonable adjustments to allow access for people with disabilities. These can include libraries, but would generally not include the Town Hall. This is so that we can stay impartial.

Contacting community representatives and others

- h. You should contact all local community groups and any other groups or organisations, for example, service providers and government agencies, who may also have a specific interest in a proposal. Table 3 gives you a starting point for identifying them. However, you should discuss this with a planning officer. The officer will give you all the contact details you need and highlight any hard-to-reach groups where you should make a particular effort to make contact.
 - i. You must let all borough councillors know if their ward includes the application site and any parish council whose parish includes or is next to the site. A code of conduct prevents borough councillors from expressing any views on proposals at this stage. They must stay impartial until any application is formally presented to them at a Planning Committee.
- 3.11** Our guiding principles, set out in chapter 1, are also a useful reference as to the standards we would expect you to meet.

Outline applications

- 3.12** You should provide as much detail as possible about your plans to allow the public to make meaningful comments. This will be easier if your proposals include, say, illustrative layouts.
- 3.13** In the case of proposals which may result in an outline application, you should be aware that you will need to explain the nature of your intended application in any presentation and try to achieve responses that tackle the broad principle of development, rather than details, at this stage.

- 3.14 You may need another publicity event to tackle a detailed submission, following an outline approval. You should check with planning officers before you make these applications.
- 3.15 You may not need to consult the local community on an outline scheme if we or our partners have carried out a recent exercise in preparing a planning or development brief or supplementary planning document.

Variations to significant schemes

- 3.16 You may also need another publicity event to tackle a formal change or modification to a proposal that already has planning permission, if this relates to a significant application. Again, you should check with planning officers before you make these applications.

Sending us a significant planning application

- 3.17 You should send with your planning application a statement setting out the work you have done to involve the community. This should include:
- the extent of the area where you consulted, including a list of properties and businesses you contacted;
 - a list of interest or pressure groups or other organisations you contacted;
 - where any event was held and how long it lasted;
 - a summary of all the comments received and issues raised;
 - clear details of the comments which have resulted in amendments to the scheme and what those changes are, and which comments have not, and why
 - highlighting any criticism by groups or individuals about the process you used to consult.
- You should also keep all consultation responses.

If you do not keep to these guidelines

- 3.18 We cannot refuse to accept a planning application just because you haven't done enough (or any) community consultation before submitting a planning application. However, if this does happen, it could delay us considering your application. This is because we may need to refer relevant planning objections back to you. We may also tell all those we notify about the proposal about your failure at the application stage to keep to these guidelines.
- 3.19 If you fail to carry out any community consultation or do not do enough we will let councillors know this in the officer's report on your proposals. If, at this stage, there are still relevant public objections which you have not dealt with, the Committee will have to consider whether to refuse planning permission or defer making a decision.
- 3.20 If you were genuinely not aware of our consultation requirements, we will let you know about the requirements as soon as we can and give you the chance to suspend the application to allow the community consultation needed to take place. If you refuse to keep to the guidelines, we will let you know the consequences set out above in this section.



Chapter 4: Making it happen and reviewing what we do

What resources are there to support this?

- 4.1 The programme of events to involve you in plan-making will be managed by the Planning Policy Team. The team includes five professional town planners, with technical and administration support.
- 4.2 The action set out in this document will be carried out by the team alongside their other activities. Occasionally, we may ask for specialist experts to work with our staff. In particular, we may ask others to run specific events on our behalf. If this is the case, at least one officer from our planning policy team will be present, and one or more councillors may be there.
- 4.3 We have received money from the Government specifically to help improve our planning service. We will use some of this to improve the amount and quality of feedback we receive from you on new plans and development proposals. This will be on top of the existing communication and customer feedback arrangements we already support, such as the Town Crier, the annual community survey and the Darlington Partnership.
- 4.4 We will make sure the resources available for community involvement take account of:
 - each of the different new planning documents we have to prepare;
 - the costs of any publicity and consultation needed by law; and
 - the views of the local community and others if we do not already know these. We will pay particular attention to supporting activities designed to encourage groups that, in the past, have had little involvement in local planning issues.

What role do elected councillors have?

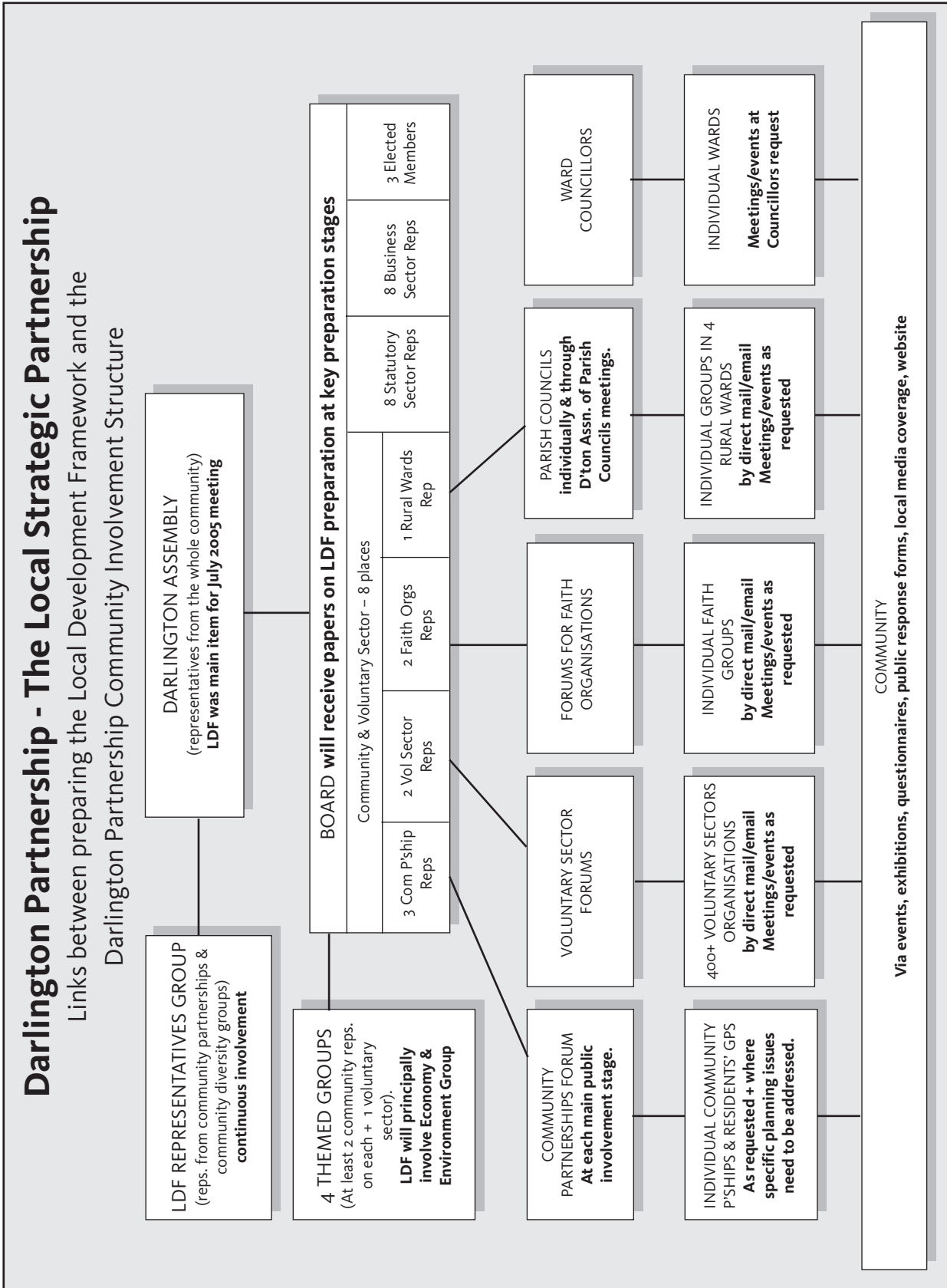
- 4.5 Councillors have two main roles within the council – as decision makers and as community representatives. They may carry out the first role as members of the Cabinet and/or at full Council and/or as members of the Planning Committee. They can act as community representatives as ward councillors and members of scrutiny committees and consultation forums.
- 4.6 When we involve you in plan-making or making decisions on planning applications, your contact will generally be with planning officers. However, if we announce local events, one or more councillors may be present. Councillors find out what you think through officers' written reports, presented at regular public meetings such as Planning Committee, Cabinet or Council Meetings. In making decisions, they take account of these views.
- 4.7 If you want, you can make your views known to your ward councillor directly, by phone, by e-mail, by letter, or by going to a ward surgery. Councillors generally pass on these comments to planning officers. However, unless you make your comments in writing to the planning officer within the timescale given, you have no automatic right to be heard at any Committee, Council meeting, public inquiry or examination.
- 4.8 If you have sent us written comments on a planning policy document, we may invite you to speak directly to the Environment Scrutiny Committee. If you have commented on a planning application, you can speak to the Planning Committee (see 'Have Your Say at Committee' included in [Appendix 3](#)).
- 4.9 Under our current Members' Code of Conduct on Planning, the activities of Councillors who are involved in making decisions on planning applications, for example, serving on the Planning Applications Committee, are strictly limited.

Reviewing what we do

- 4.10 We will assess how effective our efforts are to involve you and we will publish a statement of our findings in the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report. If our findings or new government best-practice guidelines show that we need to change this statement, we will follow the same process we used to under which we have prepared this statement. However, we think early changes to the document are unlikely, as the statement gives us some flexibility in our approach to getting the community involved.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Involving Darlington Partnership in preparing plans



Appendix 2 - Public and other involvement in preparing evidence for the Local Development Framework

Document title	People and groups involved	How they were involved	Consultation periods
Where Quality Comes to Life: A Community Strategy for Darlington	Led by Darlington Partnership. A programme to get the public involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A thorough programme of consultation while the community strategy was developed (focus groups, appraisal activities, exhibitions and surveys) Consultation on draft strategy (mailing and briefings) An ongoing commitment to getting the community involved through the 'Darlington Assembly' 	<p>May to July 2002</p> <p>November to January 2002/2003 Every January and June</p>
Local Plan Review – Key Issues Report	A wide range of community groups and others with an interest in planning in Darlington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mail out at the start of the formal consultation period. Widely publicised invitation to comment. 	July to September 2002.
Corporate Consultation	<p>Annual community survey</p> <p>Citizens' panel</p> <p>'Best Value' surveys</p> <p>'Listening' days</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1000 face-to-face interviews with a random sample of residents. A database of 1000 residents. Volunteers fill in postal questionnaires. Surveyed usually twice a year. The main survey every three years, (2000, 2003, 2006) Occasionally over the year (used by community services) 	Every August. May /June and November/ December.
Darlington Urban Capacity Study	House Builders' Federation, Darlington Civic Trust, Sandersons, BrowneSmithBaker, Teesside Chamber of Commerce (AlphaPlus Architects), DBC Housing, Three Rivers Housing Association, Tees Valley Living.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As partners in shaping the survey work and agreeing the final report. 	2003/2004
Darlington's Housing Strategy 2002.	<p>Residents' panel and residents' associations.</p> <p>Targeted consultation of elderly people, young people and black and ethnic-minority groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seminars and workshops. Face-to-face interviews with young people on estates. 2000 questionnaires to tenants and leaseholders. Estate-based 'Come for a Chat' sessions with tenants, leaseholders and owner-occupiers. 	2001/2002.
Housing Needs Survey 2003	4000 local residents.	Structured postal survey.	Spring 2003.
Adding Quality: A Development Strategy for Darlington Town Centre, February 2001	Town-centre and transport forums, town-centre businesses, affected organisations, developers and landowners. Widespread publicity and consultation.	Forum and conference discussions; letters to ask for comments, press and radio coverage locally and in national professional journals.	2001.

Document title	People and groups involved	How they were involved	Consultation periods
Darlington Retail Study 2004	Town-centre forum, random households in the shopping catchment area, town-centre visitors, retail and town-centre businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A structured phone survey • Street interviews and questionnaires 	2003/2004
Darlington Greenspaces Study	1000 randomly chosen local residents (November 2003). Further consultations are planned.	A structured phone survey.	Autumn 2003.
Darlington Pedestrian Heart	Local residents, town centre users (including retailers, market traders and businesses), those with an interest (including bus and taxi operators, Darlington Association for Disability, Darlington Civic Trust and so on), Town Centre Board, joint transport and town centre forums, Darlington Partnership Economy and Environment Sub Group.	A public consultation exhibition, response leaflets and media publicity, mini-consultations, presentations, letters from the public.	Summer 2004
Houghton Road Masterplan	Residents next to the site, businesses currently on and next to the site, allotment holders currently on the site	Exhibition of draft plans at Eastbourne Sports Complex.	Autumn 2004
Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy	Communities in deprived wards, community partnerships and the Darlington Partnership.	Consultation and action-planning events, responses to doorstep leaflets and other publicity.	2003 and 2004
Darlington Surestart Plan	Parents and early years childcare learning practitioners, providers and organisations and other partnership groups.	Through existing consultee networks, such as Darlington Partnership and the PCT consultee group.	November 2003 to February 2004.
Gateway to Economic Quality: Darlington Economic Regeneration Strategy 2004-2009.	Local organisations and businesses.	Meetings, focus groups and so on	Summer 2004
Darlington: A Town On the Move: Creating Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town.	Local transport operators and Darlington Primary Care Trust when the funding bid document was put together. The local community when putting it into practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In developing a bid that they could support. • For example, direct resident surveys, through the Transport Forum. 	Spring 2004 Autumn 2004 onwards.
Darlington Local Transport Plan 2001-2006	Widespread public consultation; Darlington Transport Forum and Darlington Environmental Forum and Environment Scrutiny Committee.	Using the Town Crier and public exhibitions, questionnaires, a 'Great Transport Debate' in the Dolphin Centre, workshops with private, public and voluntary sector stakeholders.	2000

Document title	People and groups involved	How they were involved	Consultation periods
All Together Now: Social Inclusion Strategy	Target groups and individuals, senior managers from major local agencies and members of target communities.	Letters to 450 target groups and individuals, face-to-face meetings and workshops.	May to August 2004
Growing Older in Darlington (GOLD): Integrated Strategy for Older People in Darlington (September 2002)	Local residents.	Steering group launched in February 2000 open workshops for elderly people in March 2000. 400 people at the first meeting. GOLD is part of an overall strategy.	February 2000
The Darlington Crime and Disorder Strategy 2002-2005	Wide public involvement, working with the police and Darlington Borough Council. This will be overseen by Darlington Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership.	A questionnaire with all sections of the community in the Town Crier.	May to August 2001
Moving Up: Local Cultural Strategy (April 2003)	Consultation alongside the Community Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An intensive programme of consultation during the development (focus groups, appraisal activities, exhibitions and surveys) Ongoing commitment to community involvement through 'Darlington Assembly'. 	November 2001 to July 2002
Rights of Way Improvement Plan	General public, interested groups and agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizens Panel, consultations with interested groups, Town Crier 	Winter 2005
Public Art Policy (draft)	Commissions North, Arts Council England North East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By letter. 	Winter 2004

Appendix 3 - Existing consultation and publicity practices for planning applications

All new applications are publicised. The Council notifies adjoining occupiers by post. For some types of application, we display site notices and place adverts in the press.

All persons notified about a specific planning application will be advised where and when they can see it and how they can make comments upon it. Twenty-one days will be allowed in which to do so. If material amendments are made to an application, it may be necessary to re-notify neighbours or interested parties and in this event a further period for comment will normally be allowed.

Additional publicity is usually given to large or important applications. Extra time is sometimes allowed for comments where necessary.

Planning application records are available for public inspection during office hours (08:45-16:45 Mon-Thu and 08:45-16:15 Fri).

Information about all valid planning applications received will be compiled by way of a weekly list which will be available free of charge at the Development and Environment Department at the Town Hall, and available for postal subscription for an annual fee. An alternative version of the weekly list is viewable online.

The procedure for notification is described in our "Notification Procedure For Planning Applications Documents" document on the website.

How we notify people

Publicity for major development

For residential development, we define major development as 10 or more homes and/or a proposal for a site area of over 0.5 hectares. For other forms of development (offices, industry, retail and so on) the definition refers to the development of over 1,000 square metres of floor space and/or over one hectare or more of a site. Major development also includes mining or working minerals and all waste developments. These definitions are set by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

Procedure: We will let all occupiers who share a common boundary with an application site know, as well as those properties on the opposite side of any road. A site notice will be displayed on or near the site for 21 days. We will also publish a notice in the local newspaper (currently the Darlington and Stockton Times, published on Fridays).

Publicity for minor development

Minor development is defined as the erection of 9 or less residential units or a residential development of less than 0.5 hectares in area. For other forms of development, minor development is defined as less than 1,000 square metres of floor space or less than one hectare in site area.

Procedure: We will let all people who share a boundary know, as well as those properties on the opposite side of any road. We will also consider the need to display a site notice in cases where there may be some doubt as to who may have an interest, perhaps because we don't know who owns or uses land nearby, or because the development is likely to be of interest to more than the immediate neighbours.

Publicity for change of use

Change-of-use applications can sometimes also involve building operations. In this case, the requirements we have identified above will apply. If applications are just to change the use of land and buildings, the following guidelines apply.



Procedure: We will let people who share a boundary know, including those within the application site itself (for example, the upper floor). We will also let those people know who own and use land and buildings directly opposite. We will also consider the need to display a site notice if we are not sure who owns the land or buildings, or if a development may be of interest to more than the immediate neighbours.

Publicity for householder development

Householder developments are defined as those within the curtilage of residential property which need an application for planning permission and are not a change of use. These include extensions, alterations, swimming pools, walls, fences, vehicle access and porches.

Procedure: We will let occupiers know as follows.

- For rear extensions – we will let occupiers on both sides know, plus any properties to the back that might be affected.
- For side extensions – we will let occupiers on both sides know, plus any properties to the front and back that are affected.
- For front extensions – we will let occupiers on both sides know and those directly opposite.
- For porches – we will let occupiers on both sides know and those directly opposite that are affected.
- For garages, sheds and other forms of domestic development – we will let occupiers directly next to the proposal know.

Publicity for other development

Publicity for other proposals (for example, applications to carry out work to protected trees, hedgerows, and so on). We will notify any occupiers of land with a shared boundary with the proposed site.

If there are no clearly identifiable occupiers nearby, we will display a site notice. If needed by law, we will also put an advert in the press.

Minor amendments

Minor changes are often proposed to an approved scheme that will have hardly any effect on occupiers nearby. These could include, for example, the following.

- Changes to materials which do not significantly affect the overall appearance of the development.
- the re-siting of a dwelling where this does not adversely affect the privacy distances for occupiers of nearby properties, or where it will not significantly alter the visual appearance of the development.
- alterations to approved elevations, where they do not adversely affect the privacy or amenity of the occupiers of nearby property.
- the re-alignment or other alterations to access roads within a development where this may disturb or affect people in nearby properties.

Procedure: We can deal with these matters as a ‘non-material amendment’, and give approval by letter. However, we don’t do this often and we will need a formal application for a variation if the amendment would increase the size or change the form or character of the proposed development significantly. When we receive the application, we will let all adjoining occupiers originally notified know again.

Note: The person applying will need to identify the amendments to the revised plans by noting them clearly on the plans and/or giving a clear description of changes in an accompanying letter. These details may be sent round to affected neighbours in appropriate circumstances.

What the notice procedure covers

The above notice procedure applies to:

- full applications;
- outline applications;
- Certificates of Lawful Use (existing use) and submissions of reserved matters;
- applications for permission for advertisements;
- listed building consent;
- conservation area applications;
- variations or modifications to planning permission;
- applications for work to protected trees;
- hedgerow applications; and
- applications for prior-approval for telecommunications apparatus.

It will not apply to agricultural or other 28 day determinations (because of the short timescale involved) nor to Certificates of Lawful Use (Proposed Use or Development) These applications are just decided on an interpretation of the law.

Note: We will address correspondence to the person who occupies the property. However, we will not be responsible for letting owners of land or property who do not occupy the affected land know. For example, if a property is rented, we will let the tenants know but not the landlord.

We will also add site notices (for example, telecommunications, overhead power lines and so on) and send round the weekly list of applications received.

General service standards

The notification letters, site notices and advertisements will ask for all representations within 21 days from the date of the letter, or the date that the site notice is put up, or the date when the advertisement appears in the newspaper. For notice of amendments, we will allow a further period for comment, the length of which will vary depending on the nature of the amendment but shall not be less than seven days from the date of the letter. We will not make a decision on any application before the end of the stated consultation period.

Late representations

We will normally take account of any representations we receive outside the timescale of the publicity timetable but before we make a decision on an application. However, we cannot guarantee to report correspondence we receive on the day of a Planning Committee (including faxes and emails).

Representations we receive after a decision has been made cannot be taken into account.

Commenting on a Planning Application

Comments & Objections

If you wish to comment on a proposed development in a planning application, you may submit your views to the local planning authority. All comments (including objections) received will be taken into account when considering the application.

Please note that the comments we receive **cannot be confidential**. Some may be read out at Planning Applications Committee. Responses associated with a particular current planning application can be made available for members of the public to view on request.



Types of Issues to Raise

Only **material planning considerations** can be taken into account for the purpose of determining a planning application. Examples include:

- the relationship to local, regional and national planning policies
- traffic impact and highway safety
- privacy, visual impact, overshadowing and overlooking
- noise
- effects on trees
- concern about crime

Comments can be in favour of, or in objection to, the proposal or any part of it. Remember that it is often possible for a proposal to be modified to take into account your concerns. Therefore it may be helpful to make any suggestions that would overcome your concerns.

Types of Issues not to Raise

Non-planning issues should not be raised.

Examples include:

- personal morals or views about the applicant
- possible effects on property values
- ownership disputes over land encroachment, rights of way, fence lines etc.
- restrictive covenants
- property maintenance
- loss of private views
- business competition
- conflict with other laws

Such matters cannot be taken into account when considering a planning application. If you raise them they will be disregarded.

Time Limits

We leave a minimum of 21 days before determining an application to allow time for comments to be submitted. We accept comments up until the time a decision is made.

How to Submit your Comments

There are several ways of submitting your comments, i.e.:

- by letter
- via email
- on a Comments Form
- via an online Comments Form

Please note that it is essential to identify the application by including its reference number. Please also include the site address.

If you wish to comment on more than one application, please use a separate letter, email or form for each.

Comments by Letter

Letters should be addressed to:

Development & Environment Department,
Town Hall,
Darlington,
DL1 5QT

If you prefer, your letter may be faxed to us on
01325 388900.

Comments via Email

Comments can be sent via email to either planning.enquiries@darlington.gov.uk or planning.control@darlington.gov.uk.

Comments Form

A form that you can download from our website can be used to record your comments. The completed form should be sent to the above address, or faxed to us on 01325 388900. Copies of this form are also available from the Town Hall reception desk.

Online Comments Form

Our online search & display facility for planning applications also includes a facility for submitting comments via an online form. If you already know the application reference number, the site address and postcode, you may prefer to go directly to the Online Comments Form. Please note that these details will need to be filled in manually in this case, whereas they would be filled in automatically when accessing the form via other routes.

Have your say at committee

Planning Applications Committee

The Committee meets every four weeks to consider planning applications which cannot be decided by our Director of Development and Environment under the approved scheme of delegation.

Most of these applications either do not follow our planning policies, or we have received objections to them, or both. Sometimes the officers' recommendation is to take a decision which does not match with policy or the comments of objectors. As a result, the Committee must take the decision.

The Committee is a formal meeting of the Council and it has to be run efficiently and according to legal requirements.

To make sure that the meeting is properly run, one of the Councillors holds the position known as 'Chair', and he or she is in charge of who may speak at the meeting and in what order. We can only consider applications which have been included on the published agenda for the meeting. Every application will have a report with it prepared by planning officers.

The report

This explains:

- the details of the application and the site;
- comments received from neighbours and other people consulted;
- the relevant policies from the Development Plan; and
- any other planning considerations relevant to the case.

The report must give the Councillors who sit on the Committee a clear recommendation which the planning officers judge to be right for the application, having weighed up any arguments for or against the proposal. The recommendation may be to either approve or refuse the application. In the case of approval, this may be recommended subject to conditions or legal agreements to control the exact form of development.

The decision

The planning officers' report is not the only thing that the Committee will take into account. They will also consider plans and photographs of the site displayed by the officer, the merits of the application itself, and may use their own local knowledge and judgement to reach a decision which they consider to be right for the application. Legally they must take decisions in line with the Development Plan, unless there are clear planning reasons for not doing this.



The Development Plan is in fact two documents - the Borough of Darlington Local Plan and the Structure Plan. These plans tell you what things we will take account of in reaching a decision on most types of planning application. If a proposal does not keep to the policies, we may well refuse permission.

If the Committee decides to refuse permission, we will give specific reasons for this, including referring to the key planning policies which are relevant to the decision.

If you have commented in writing on an application, we will send you a letter to inform you of the decision.

Speaking at the Committee

We know that people who have an interest in the decision, such as the person applying or people who object strongly to what is being proposed, often value the chance to speak directly to the Councillors, and draw attention to the points which they feel the Committee should consider in reaching the decision.

How the public-speaking arrangements work

- You can tell officers in the Planning Services Team in advance of the meeting that you want to speak on an application. However, you do not have to do this.
- When you arrive at the meeting, you must report to the reception desk outside the Committee Room. We can take your details and include you on the Chair's list of people who want to speak on particular applications.
- You should arrive at the meeting 10 to 15 minutes before the start time of 1.30 pm, so that you can register and find a seat in the committee room.
- The Chair will usually make sure that we consider, as early as possible during the meeting, applications where people have said they want to speak. However, this is not always possible. You may have to wait while we consider other applications before the one you are interested in comes up.
- When the time comes for the application to be considered, the Chair will first ask the officer to present the report. Speakers will then follow in this order:
 - 1 Ward Councillor or Parish Council representative
 - 2 Anyone who objects, or their representative (see also the section 'frequently asked questions' below)
 - 3 The person applying, or their representative
- The Chair will ask speakers to take a seat at the table. There is a microphone system to make sure everyone can hear.
- The Chair will then ask the planning officer if there are any comments on the points raised.
- The Committee will then debate the application before moving on to a decision.
- Members of the Committee may ask specific questions of a speaker if they are unsure about something which was said, . However speakers cannot take part in the debate and will not be given a further opportunity to put forward their case.
- Following the debate, the Committee will move to a decision and take a vote.

Frequently asked questions

How long will I be allowed to speak for?

The approved guidelines for the scheme allow you up to three minutes. In exceptional cases the Chair may allow longer if agreed beforehand. However, you should aim to put forward your case clearly and briefly.

Can anyone speak on a planning application?

You can only speak if you have a legitimate interest in the planning application. You must keep your comments to 'material planning considerations', and avoid any personal comments.

How many people can speak for or against an application?

Normally we allow only one person to speak on behalf of those objecting to the application, and one person to support the application. If more than one person wants to speak, they must normally share the time.

Can I show the Committee my own plans or photographs?

Yes, but you will need to leave a copy with us to go on the application file. You can refer to any visual material which has been presented by officers. You may be allowed to use our display facilities, but you must arrange this beforehand and it must be agreed with the Chair.

Can I ask questions about the application?

If you want, you can include questions as part of your comments on the application. However, none of the other people present have to answer you. You will not be able to interrupt the meeting to ask questions after you have had your time to speak.

How do I find out where and when the Committee is going to consider the application I am interested in?

If you are the person applying, their agent, or someone who has commented in writing on the application, we will write to you before the meeting and tell you the time and date. If this is not the case, you will need to contact the Development and Environment Department to find out the time and date. We always hold the meeting in a committee room at the Town Hall and it begins promptly at 1.30 pm.

Can I have a copy of the officers' Committee Report before the meeting?

Yes. The agenda for the meeting is available for the public five clear working days before the meeting. If you contact the Development and Environment Department on 01325 388 670 or Democratic Services on 01325 388 366 to ask for a copy of a report, we can usually send this to you by post, fax or e-mail. Or you can call in at the Town Hall and collect a copy. There may be a small charge for this service.

What are material planning considerations?

It is relevant to raise issues such as:

- the effect on traffic and highway safety;
- the effects on trees;
- concern about crime;
- privacy;
- the visual effect and overshadowing;
- noise; and
- the relationship to local, regional and national planning policies.

We call these matters - and many others - 'material planning considerations'. Some issues which are sometimes raised but which we do not normally treat as planning considerations are:

- personal morals or views about the person applying;
- the possible effect on property values;
- ownership disputes over rights of way, fence lines and so on;
- restrictive covenants;
- property maintenance;
- loss of private views;
- business competition; and
- conflict with other laws.

The Committee cannot take account of matters such as these. If you raise them, the Chair may remind you about this.



Will the application always be decided at the meeting?

No. The Committee will sometimes defer an application to visit the site or to allow further information to be supplied which is important to make the right decision. We are committed to meeting government targets for the time taken to decide on planning applications. We will only defer applications if there is a good reason.

Site visits

The Committee visits sites only when they think that this is necessary for them to properly understand the planning arguments. We have to make sure that everyone has a fair and equal opportunity to put forward their viewpoint. For this reason, site visits are not the time for people applying or objecting to speak to the Committee. The Committee do not make decisions on applications at the site visit. Members of the public are welcome to go to site visits to see what takes place. However, if this involves going on private land, the landowner will decide whether to allow access.

The Planning Register

Local planning authorities are obliged to keep records of all planning applications that they deal with. These records, collectively known as “the Planning Register”, include a log of all applications received, files containing the submitted forms and attachments, plus all decision notices issued.

Copies of current planning application details and recent Decision Notices are made available to members of the public. These can be viewed at the reception desk in the Town Hall foyer.

Application Files

Each application is filed separately. Copies of the application forms, plans, drawings and all correspondence associated with the application are kept together in the file. Applications are numbered and filed sequentially and chronologically. Our records go back as far as 1947.

For each active application, i.e. those currently under consideration, a separate file containing copies of all the main items describing the proposal details is kept at the reception desk. These copies are made available within three working days of the application being validated (see the application & decision process page on our website). Members of the public may view these files on request. Please note that if you wish to view non-current files, it is advisable to contact the department beforehand to ensure that the relevant files are available.

Applications for the period 1974 to 1992 have been transferred to microfiche. Those from 1993 to 1996 have been scanned and the images stored on CD-ROM.

Database

Since 1997, details of each planning application have been recorded in a database which is constantly being kept up to date. We have made these records available online so that you can search for an application and view the main details.

The search & display facility for planning applications can be accessed there too. Look for: [‘SEARCH & DISPLAY APPLICATIONS’](#) [‘View details of applications, back as far as 1997’]

Applications may be searched by specifying criteria such as address, postcode, date, ward, parish or application number.

Please note that the application data that is accessible via the web is not ‘live’, but is updated daily.

A facility is provided to allow your comments on a particular application to be submitted via an online form. You are advised to read ‘Commenting on an Application’ before submitting comments.

Database Extracts

Some lists of applications, e.g. current applications and recent decisions, are produced periodically in PDF (picture file) format and made available online. These can be viewed or downloaded.

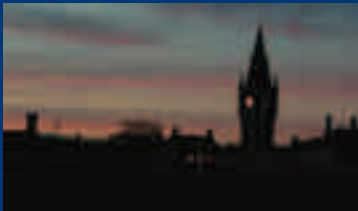
Weekly lists of applications received can be viewed as part of the search & display facility.

Notes



Notes





Tel: (01325) 388644

Fax: (01325) 388616

E-mail: planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk

www.darlington.gov.uk

Planning Services

Development and Environment Department

Darlington Borough Council

Town Hall

Darlington

DL1 5QT