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1. Introduction

One of the City Council’s corporate aims is to improve dialogue and consultation. This is set out in the Corporate Plan 2014-2018, with over-arching principles and actions set out in the Community Engagement Policy Statement 2014-2017. The City Council has also produced the Corporate Equality Scheme 2012-2015. This Scheme identifies that having fair access to engage in the planning process is a priority for the City Council.

These strategies apply to all the City Council’s services and are not specific to the planning process. There is then an additional legal requirement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) for the City Council to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which sets out how it intends to achieve community involvement in the preparation of plans and in decision-making on planning applications.

The City Council adopted its first SCI in 2006. Since then there have been a number of changes to the planning system. Collectively these changes have produced new requirements and processes for producing local plans and for dealing with planning applications. It is now appropriate to update and revise the SCI to reflect legal and administrative changes.

In addition, the City Council is keen to promote greater and earlier public engagement in planning decisions. In 2013 the City Council commissioned an independent review of planning processes, including consultation processes, through the Roger Dudman Way Review (2013). The recommendations and lessons learnt about community engagement from this review have also helped to shape this revised SCI.

The proposals set out in this draft document for consultation go above the minimum statutory requirements for consultation and promote best practice in the context of the need to make efficient use of Council resources.

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2 The minimum requirements for consultation on Local Development Documents (LDDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The minimum requirements for consultation on Planning Applications are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2010 (DMPO).
What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

Oxford City Council is the planning authority for Oxford. The SCI sets out the City Council’s approach to involving the community and stakeholders in the production of planning policy documents and planning control decisions in the city. The ‘community’ includes all the individuals, groups and organisations that live, work, or operate within Oxford. By ‘stakeholders’ we mean individuals, landowners and organisations with a direct influence on the subject under discussion.

This Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the City Council will involve the local community when preparing planning policy documents and deciding on planning applications.

It:

- Lets you know how you can get involved in planning decisions;
- Sets out how we will engage the wider community in planning decisions; and
- Sets out the level of community engagement that we expect from developers in the planning process.

In summary, it is about how we inform, involve and consult local communities in our planning functions.

Using the Statement of Community Involvement

This revised SCI is less prescriptive and less detailed than the City Council’s previous version. This is because one of the main reasons for the update is that government policy and legislation related to the SCI has changed several times in recent years, which has resulted in references in the SCI becoming out-dated. This SCI therefore seeks to avoid content that will inevitably date the document in forthcoming years. In doing so, it is intended that the SCI be an effective guide to planning consultation, and be flexible enough to apply even if there are shifts in the regulatory framework or operational procedures.

The SCI sets out consultation requirements and guiding principles, whilst allowing more details to be provided through supplementary means such as the Planning Application Validation Checklist and supplementary guidance and help sheets that will be published on the City Council’s website. These documents can be updated more easily and frequently.
Consultation on the draft SCI and how you can comment

All of the consultation documents are available online at www.oxford.gov.uk/SCI. They can also be viewed at the City Council’s main offices (St Aldate’s Chambers) or at public libraries across the city during opening hours.

We want to hear your comments about our proposed changes to the SCI. You can send us your comments between 6th January 2015 and 5pm on 17th February 2015.

We would prefer your comments by email to: planningpolicy@oxford.gov.uk

Or you can also write to us at:
City Development
Planning Policy Team
Oxford City Council
St Aldate’s Chambers
109-113 St Aldate’s
Oxford OX1 1DS

T: 01865 252847
2. Why should the community be involved in the planning process?

Achieving effective community involvement in the planning process is likely to have several benefits including:

- A better understanding of how planning policies are developed;
- More focus on the priorities identified by the local community and stakeholders;
- Influencing the provision of local services to meet local needs;
- Increased support for planning services and community commitment to the future of an area; and
- Ability to draw upon a local knowledge base.

We want to inform and involve the community in the decision-making process. Consultation will start as early as possible to give everyone the opportunity to participate and influence the development of policies and options for an area. We will also encourage consultation on major applications at an early stage. This will give communities and stakeholders the chance to put forward their own ideas rather than simply comment once proposals are fixed. We hope that we will then be better placed to understand the issues and needs that are important to the community.

On-going community involvement will include feedback and information on progress and outcomes. Involving communities at an early stage and continuing that involvement will help to resolve issues and achieve consensus, where possible, which will in turn avoid the need for lengthy independent examinations. We recognise that this will always be a balancing act and people will have different views. We won’t be able to please everyone. However, we will aim to take on board as many views as possible, not just the views of those who ‘shout the loudest’. “It is not intended to enable minority interests to overrule the best interests of the wider community and the city as a whole” (Community Engagement Policy Statement 2014-2017), a principle which is particularly relevant to planning discussions.

The scale and type of community involvement in the planning system also has to reflect the resources that the City Council has available, especially in the context of reduced budgets for local councils across the country. To ensure the most efficient use of resources, the approaches used have sought to make use of existing established networks where possible.
3. Our principles for community involvement in planning decisions

The City Council’s approach to community engagement contributes directly to its ambition to build a world class city for all. Many of Oxford’s residents are highly articulate and very skilled at getting their points of view heard and their voices are always welcome. However, the City Council also wants to open up more opportunities for engagement with people whose voices might not be so easily heard.

Within this context, the following principles of community engagement have been agreed within the City Council’s Community Engagement Policy Statement 2014-2017:

i. Flexibility
ii. Proportionality
iii. Transparency and clarity
iv. Timeliness
v. Feedback
vi. Inclusiveness and accessibility

In addition, a key reason for updating the SCI is to be able to review the consultation procedures relating to pre-application processes in light of the recommendations and lessons learnt in the Roger Dudman Way Review (2013), and subsequent Action Plan.

The independent Roger Dudman Way Review identifies four key principles for effective engagement in planning:

1. Timely and sustained – events and activities should start before any planning decisions are made and engagement should last throughout the planning process and beyond;
2. Inclusive for all local people – those living and working in an area have a right to be involved, all parties are welcome, and process must take account of peoples’ varied needs;
3. Two way, open and responsive – communication should be discursive not prescriptive, so that information can be debated and ideas exchanged; and
4. A matter of public record – the processes must be documented and published.  
   (Roger Dudman Way Review 2013, paragraph 91)

Taking these principles on board, this SCI seeks to achieve the following in the planning process:

The opportunity to contribute ideas – people will have the opportunity to put their ideas forward and the City Council will consider and respond to these suggestions as appropriate;

The opportunity to take an active part in developing proposals and options – the City Council will provide opportunities for people to actively engage in the planning process from an early stage. The City Council will also encourage others who are promoting development proposals to do the same;

The opportunity to make comments on formal proposals – for more advanced development proposals and planning documents, the City Council will actively seek views to meet, and in some instances exceed, the Regulatory requirements for community involvement;

The opportunity to receive feedback and be informed about progress and outcomes – the City Council will consider all comments received through consultations and will make appropriate changes accordingly. The City Council will provide updates on the progress of planning policy documents to all those who submit comments as part of a planning policy
consultation. This may be by direct contact or by publishing material on the City Council’s website (e.g. consultation reports and updates). The City Council will also explain how comments on planning applications have been taken into consideration in officer’s reports. These reports are also published on the City Council’s website; and

To achieve value for money – ensuring consultation is worthwhile and value for money by balancing cost and time constraints and City Council resources.

We will deliver these principles through:

- Being open and transparent in our decision-making;
- Using plain English as far as possible;
- Making policy documents easy to read through images, maps, illustrations, etc;
- Ensuring that consultation is proportionate to the nature of the document or the planning application;
- Using consultation techniques appropriate and proportionate to the type of issue and the communities affected;
- Front-loading policy involvement/engagement at the early stages of producing new policies and generating options;
- Encouraging early consultation when working up planning applications; and
- Promoting electronic methods of communication for efficiency but not excluding people who find it difficult to access material online.
4. Consultation on planning policy documents

Which documents will we be consulting on?

The main planning policy documents that the City Council produces are:

**Statement of Community Involvement** – this document is itself the subject of public consultation. When finally approved, all Local Development Documents will need to meet the consultation requirements in this document.

**Local Development Scheme** – this sets out the City Council’s programme over a three year period, including a description and timetable for each document. The Local Development Scheme is published and updated annually on the City Council’s website.

**Local Development Plan Documents** – these include:
- **Core Strategy** – this outlines the vision for the area and how it will be achieved;
- **Site Allocations** – this will allocate land for specific uses; and
- **Area Action Plans** – these relate to a specific area where significant development is expected in the future.

**Supplementary Planning Documents** – these documents supplement and elaborate on policies and proposals in local development plan documents. Although they will not be subject to independent examination, they will undergo rigorous public consultation, and must comply with national planning policies. Examples of these types of documents are affordable housing and natural resource impact analysis.

**Sustainability Appraisals** – these will be produced by the City Council alongside local development plan documents and, where appropriate, supplementary planning documents. Sustainability appraisals examine the impact of policies and proposals on economic, social and environmental factors (including natural resources). Sustainability appraisals will be available for consultation alongside the local development plan documents or supplementary planning documents that they relate to at formal stages of consultation.

**Annual Monitoring Report** – the performance of policies in the local development plan documents will be reviewed in an Annual Monitoring Report. There will not be consultation on this report but we may contact specific groups to obtain some of the data required. The Annual Monitoring Report will also review the implementation of the Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement.

Figure 1 on page 10 explains how the different planning policy documents link together to form the Local Plan for Oxford and their relationship with the wider planning process.
Figure 1: Components of the Oxford City Local Plan and its relationship to the wider planning process

- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
  Sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied in preparing local and neighbourhood plans and in determining planning applications.

- **Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)**
  Provides further guidance and details on the policies set out in the NPPF.

- **Evidence Base**
  Background studies on specific issues including water and landscape.

- **Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)**
  An assessment of a plan’s impact on European protected species and habitats.

- **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**
  An assessment of the social, environmental and economic impacts of a plan.

- **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**
  Sets out how the community will be involved in the planning process.

- **Core Strategy (2011-2026)**
  Sets out the overarching planning strategy, vision and policies for Oxford.

- **Sites and Housing Plan (2013-2026)**
  Allocates sites for development and sets out detailed policies for residential development.

- **Local Plan (2001-2016) Saved Policies**

- **Area Action Plans**
  Guide development and policy implementation in specific parts of the city.

- **Neighbourhood Plans**
  Neighbourhood Forums and Parish Councils can use new powers under the Localism Act to produce a neighbourhood plan that allocates land for development and sets general policies in their areas.

- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)**
  Provide further guidance and information on the implementation of Core Strategy and Saved Local Plan policies.

- **Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)**
  The AMR monitors the performance of Oxford’s planning policies.

- **Planning Applications**
  Planning applications are determined in accordance with the policies in the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**
  A standard charge on new development to help the funding of infrastructure.
5. Consultation process for planning policy documents

Consultation on the Local Development Plan Documents

The key stages in preparing the Local Plan (which may consist of several local development plan documents) are:

**Early public involvement** — Before drafting begins, informal consultations will be held and a process of informal dialogue will commence. This may involve publishing a consultation document, or it may be as wide-ranging as simply asking questions about what the document and policies should include.

During this period, we will gather feedback using a variety of techniques as appropriate to the policy topic, and the type and level of community involvement will be proportionate to the issues and impacts.

This early public involvement is a key stage as it enables people to put forward their ideas and to participate in the initial stages of developing proposals and options. Once we are sure that we have understood and considered all views expressed we will start to refine this to formulate options and proposals, including input, as appropriate, by City Council committees and Full Council.

A specific consultation programme for each statutory planning policy document will be agreed with the committee authorising the document in question. This will set out the detail of which consultation methods are most appropriate for that document and topic, so that members and the public are clear what consultation can be expected for that document.

**Consultation on the emerging options or draft policies (as applicable)** — As part of the process of refining the options and policies, the City Council may publish preferred options, including a related Sustainability Appraisal, for public comment or for informal circulation with stakeholders. Comments forms will be available for people to use during formal consultation periods, which will normally last for six weeks.

**Pre-submission** — When the City Council has refined the policies to what it thinks is the final version, it will publish the document for a final stage of consultation before submitting it to the Government. Comment forms will be available for people to use, and normally at this stage the key evidence documents that sit behind the plan/policies will also be made available including a Sustainability Appraisal. Following this consultation, the City Council will normally only make minor changes to the document. The City Council will collate the comments received and pass them to the Government Inspector along with all of the other submission documents.

**Independent examination** — This will be held by an independent Inspector (appointed by the Government) who will consider all the representations received at the pre-submission stage of consultation. The examination process is determined by the Inspector so it is not for the City Council to propose processes in the SCI, or to replicate what is already set out in government guidance or regulations elsewhere. The examination period commences once the document has been submitted and ends when the Inspector issues their report or conclusions. Within this period there are usually hearing sessions, where people who have
commented at the pre-submission stage may be invited by the Inspector to speak in a round-table discussion.

**Adoption** – The final stage is for the City Council to adopt the document. The Inspector’s report will be reported to Full Council and will be published on the City Council website.

**Consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)**

The preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents is a slightly different, less formal, process, as set out below:

**Early public involvement** – As with local development plan documents, consultation may vary depending on the topic of the SPD, for example it may be focused on those with specific expertise in the subject area, like developers or highway engineers, or on people living and working in a specific geographical area. The main purpose of this stage of involvement is information gathering and the consideration of issues and options. A Sustainability Appraisal will be produced where appropriate but is not always required, depending on the topic.

**Consultation on the emerging draft** – As with local development plan documents, we will usually publish a draft document for formal consultation and consider all representations received. Following this we will refine and finalise the document before progressing to adoption. There is no examination process for SPDs.

**Adoption** – The document, together with an analysis of comments received (as applicable), will be reported through City Council committees if appropriate. It will be adopted by Full Council and published on the City Council website.

**The Neighbourhood Development Plan process**

The preparation of neighbourhood planning documents is led by local communities in accordance with the Regulations, and the principles of localism. As such, the majority of the community engagement in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans will be led by the neighbourhood planning group. There are then certain stages where the City Council is required to carry out formal consultation in accordance with the Regulations as follows:

**a) Application to designate a Neighbourhood Area**

The City Council will publish the name of the neighbourhood area, a map, and the name of the relevant body who applied for the designation on the City Council website. People will be able to comment on the extent of the neighbourhood area designation.

In addition, the neighbourhood planning group will be encouraged to let the local community know through local notices, their own websites, and other means as appropriate.

Following this consultation, the City Council will publish its decision to either designate or refuse the application (with reasons, if refusing) on the City Council website.

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7 Neighbourhood planning groups are community groups that are designated to take forward neighbourhood planning in areas without parishes. It is the role of the local planning authority to agree who should be the neighbourhood planning group for the neighbourhood area.
b) **Application to designate a Neighbourhood Planning Group**

The City Council will publish a copy of the application and details about how to comment, on the City Council website. If the City Council agrees to designate the group, it will publish the name of the group, a copy of the constitution, and contact details on the City Council website. If the City Council decides to refuse the designation then it will publish reasons for the refusal on the City Council website. The City Council will also encourage the neighbourhood planning group to publicise the application in the local area.

c) **Options testing and preparing the Neighbourhood Plan** (carried out by the neighbourhood planning group)

During the preparation of their plan, the neighbourhood planning group will need to carry out consultation and involve the local community. They will be encouraged to take into account emerging best practice in this relatively new, and still evolving, area of planning policy. Additional guidance and sources of information for neighbourhood planning groups will be made available on the City Council website.

d) **Pre-submission consultation** (carried out by the neighbourhood planning group)

At this final stage of consultation, before the plan is submitted to the City Council, the neighbourhood planning group will be encouraged to take into account emerging best practice. Additional guidance and sources of information for neighbourhood planning groups will be made available on the City Council website.

e) **Publicity/submission consultation**

Once the neighbourhood planning group has submitted their Neighbourhood Plan, the City Council will publish the plan and supporting documents in accordance with the regulatory requirements\(^8\) on the City Council website. Copies of these documents will also be available at the main council offices (St Aldate’s Chambers). The City Council will contact all those who we are advised have commented previously on the Neighbourhood Plan to invite final comments.

f) **Decision on a Neighbourhood Plan**

The City Council will send a copy of the Neighbourhood Plan, the supporting documents and comments received at the submission stage to an appointed examiner for independent examination. Hearing sessions may or may not be required at the discretion of the Examiner.

The City Council will then publish the Examiner’s report and decision statement on the City Council website, and make it available to view at the City Council’s main offices (St Aldate’s Chambers), before proceeding to arrange (subject to a favourable Examiner’s report) the referendum.

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\(^8\) At the time of writing this is a minimum of six weeks
6. How will people be involved in the preparation of planning policy documents?

The methods of community involvement we will use will depend on the subject and the stage in the plan-making process. There are different levels of involvement that may be appropriate in different circumstances:

- **Information-sharing** - providing information through leaflets, advertising, on-going awareness, and publicity campaigns;
- **Consultation** - consulting the community and stakeholders through questionnaires, exhibitions, and formal consultation processes; and
- **Participation** - such as in workshops, charrettes, or ‘Planning for Real’ type exercises.

Sometimes it will be more appropriate to gather a wider-range of less detailed comments, such as through polls or newspaper articles. The coverage is broad but they do not generally provide much opportunity for an in-depth debate. At other times we will need to talk to people in more detail, such as through focus groups or meetings.

We will include a variety of methods and will look to best practice examples in this evolving field. For example use of social media in consultations is fast-evolving. Further guidance about the methods we are using is provided in the supporting information on the City Council website.

**Keeping you updated throughout the planning policy preparation process**

During the policy preparation process, from the earliest stages through to adoption, we will keep the community and stakeholders informed of progress in the following ways:

- The latest version of any formal published consultation documents will be available on the City Council website;
- The City Council will acknowledge representations received by electronic means (email or online forms) at each consultation stage;
- Reports to City Council committees (including City Executive Board and Full Council) are available on the City Council website and these meetings are held in public;
- At examination stage (for local development plan documents) we will tell those who asked to be notified when the document has been submitted to the Secretary of State. We will also publish a consultation summary report on the City Council website and the representations from the pre-submission stage will be made available for public inspection;
- The final adopted versions of the documents will be published on the City Council website; and
- Throughout the preparation of the plan, an email address and contact phone number will be available for the public to find out the current position on the progress of documents.

An up-to-date list of deposit points (where consultation documents will be made available) and their opening times is provided on the City Council website.
7. Consultation process for planning applications

In general, planning applications will be determined in accordance with the adopted policies, unless material considerations outweigh these policies. A material consideration is a matter that should be taken into account in deciding a planning application or in an appeal against a planning decision. Material considerations can include (but are not limited to) matters such as loss of privacy, overshadowing, parking, traffic generation, layout, design, noise etc.

We recognise the need to ensure that the community is informed and involved in the consideration of planning applications. The degree of involvement will vary with the nature of the individual application.

Consultations before planning applications are submitted

All applicants and their agents are strongly encouraged to discuss development proposals with the City Council before applying and to also consult and work with the community to a degree proportionate to the nature of the proposal at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

There are significant benefits to early consultation on applications, including:

- Early availability of good quality information, enabling issues and problems to be addressed up front;
- Better quality applications which are straightforward and can be more quickly processed;
- A means of resolving problems, thereby avoiding possible public objections later;
- overcoming a perceived ‘closed door’ approach to determining applications, ensuring a more transparent approach;
- Better design of buildings that are more in keeping with their surroundings and meet the needs and wishes of local communities; and
- Savings on applicants’ time and resources by avoiding the need to revise proposals at an advanced stage. This in turn saves resources for authorities.

For minor applications, e.g. house extensions, all applicants are encouraged to let their neighbours know before the application is submitted. You could speak with them or put a note through the door.

If the scheme falls within the definition of a ‘major’ application, officers will strongly encourage applicants to contact neighbours and those in the vicinity, and to consider arranging a meeting with relevant local residents and amenity groups or other appropriate publicity/means of notification as appropriate. In some instances this may be made a formal requirement of the application via a Planning Performance Agreement. A short statement setting out how consultation has been carried out and any changes made to the proposals as a result, is encouraged to be submitted with the application.

Whilst there is no legal obligation for consultation to take place at the pre-application stage, failure to consult properly is likely to lead to objections being made by interested parties (such as neighbouring residents) later on in the process which could be material to the determination of a planning application.

We would also encourage applicants to let the local ward councillors know about the proposals. The City Council’s Code of Practice for councillors on planning applications

\[9\] See website for examples of good practice.
advises that councillors attending public meetings take great care to maintain their impartial role, listen to all the points of view expressed by the speakers and public and not state a conclusive decision on any pre-application proposals or submitted planning applications. Nonetheless we would encourage applicants on major schemes to make local councillors aware so that they can help to bring it to the attention of their constituents at the earliest stages.

In addition, it is noted that Section 122 of the Localism Act 2011 requires applicants to carry out pre-application consultations where a proposed development meets criteria set out by the Government in a development order. It is noted that there may be additional development orders published in future in relation to this requirement, which will influence the requirements for applicants. Irrespective of the regulations, the City Council is keen to encourage this pre-application stage of engagement.

Consultations when applications are submitted and are under consideration

The Government sets out minimum standards for consulting on planning applications that the City Council must comply with (see Appendices Table 3). These standards apply to all applications.

If the City Council goes beyond the minimum standards then there needs to be a balance between cost, speed of decision making, and providing a reasonable opportunity for public comment. People are therefore encouraged to 'self service' where possible, using updates on the City Council website and through alert services such as the PlanningFinder website.

The City Council will make information available about planning applications using the following methods:

Advertisements and site notices – site notices in the vicinity of the application site (scale proportionate to the application) will be used to notify the occupiers of the properties most likely to be affected by the development proposal (including those bordering an application site). Comments are normally required within 21 days of the notice being displayed. Developers are also required to display site notices for certain types of development. In addition, the City Council is required to publish information about some types of planning application in a local newspaper.\(^\text{10}\)

Public Access – the details of all submitted planning applications are available on the City Council website to view online through the Public Access system.

PlanningFinder\(^\text{11}\) – online tool similar to Public Access which enables the public to view all planning applications. People can also register to receive email updates about individual applications or notifications of new planning applications received within specific postcode areas.

Weekly list – a list is published weekly of all valid planning applications received, as well as other notifications such as those affecting conservation areas. The list is available on the planning section of the City Council website.

Statutory consultees – we are legally required to consult certain organisations as set out in government guidance. The actual organisations consulted will vary depending on the nature of the proposal and location.

\(^{10}\) Currently advertised in the Oxford Times newspaper

\(^{11}\) http://www.planningfinder.co.uk/about
Availability of plans – plans and documents submitted as part of a planning application are available to view as printed or electronic copies at the main City Council offices (St Aldate’s Chambers) during office hours. Paper copies of documents for major planning applications are available in reception at all times. Paper copies of documents for other types of planning application are available to view by making an appointment with the relevant case officer in advance. All planning applications are also available to view on the City Council website. The website contains further details of the applications including how and when they are likely to be determined.

How planning applications are determined

Applications are assessed against planning policies by planning officers. An officer will write a report outlining the main issues and considering them against the relevant planning policies before reaching a recommendation to approve or refuse permission for the proposal. Before recommending a decision, the planning officer will make a full site inspection and take account of any comments received from neighbours, interested bodies, and statutory consultees. The results of any consultation will be reported and taken into account in decisions made by, and on behalf of, the City Council.

Legislation requires that applications are refused only when there are good planning reasons for refusal. In some cases it is appropriate to impose planning conditions in order to render a proposal acceptable. In other cases, officers may ask for small changes to be made to the proposal, and for amended plans to be submitted, in order to resolve issues. Any amended plans will be available on the City Council website and subject to consultation. If there are more significant issues to resolve, the application may be determined in its original form and the applicant invited to re-apply with revised proposals as a new application.

The majority of planning applications are decided by planning officers under delegated powers. (These are mainly householder applications and small-scale or minor development proposals.) Planning applications are decided in this way to help ensure that the majority are dealt with promptly.

Other applications are decided by a Planning Committee if:

- The application falls outside officer delegated powers (for example major applications);
- City councillors request that the application is dealt with at committee; or
- The application is submitted on behalf of the City Council or by an officer or city councillor.

Reports for applications to be determined at committee are available for public inspection at city council offices (St Aldate’s Chambers) and on the City Council website usually one week before the Committee meeting.

Planning Committee meetings are open to members of the public to hear the discussion. The following groups will usually have the opportunity to speak at the committee before a decision is reached:

- Parish Councils;
- Objectors/representatives of objectors; and
- Applicants/their agents and supporters.
A maximum of five minutes is available to speak either against or in support of each application, and this must be shared between all those wishing to speak at the meeting.

Committee members will then vote on whether to accept the officer’s recommendation in the report, and the outcome will be announced verbally at the meeting. Some applications may be deferred to a later meeting if further information or negotiation is needed.

All decision notices are published on the City Council website (via PublicAccess). A copy of the decision notice is also sent to the applicant (or their agent).

**Appeals against planning application decisions**

If an applicant has a planning application refused, or disagrees with the conditions attached to the granting of permission, or if the City Council fails to decide the application within the agreed timescales, the applicant has a right to appeal. In most cases appeals will be determined by an independent Inspector, although in some cases the Secretary of State may choose to determine the appeal themself. This right of appeal does not extend to a third party (i.e., there is no right of appeal to anyone who is not the applicant).

The procedures for notifying people of appeals and for submitting comments during the appeal process is set out by the Planning Inspectorate\(^{12}\), so it is beyond the remit of this SCI. However for completeness an overview is provided here.

When an appeal is made, the City Council will send letters to all those who commented on the original planning application and to adjoining properties, notifying them that an appeal has been made and, depending upon the type of appeal, informing them of how they can submit further comments should they want to do so. There is no need to repeat comments submitted at the application stage as these comments will be forwarded to the independent Inspector by the City Council. Local councillors are also notified.

The majority of appeals are dealt with by written representations and where this is the case, the appeal is decided on the basis of the statements submitted by the appellant, the City Council and any third parties. Where a public inquiry is to be held to consider an appeal, a site notice is also erected and in some cases information is published in the press. Appeal hearings and inquiries are open to the public and members of the public may also be given an opportunity to speak, at the discretion of the Inspector.

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\(^{12}\) See Planning Portal website for Planning Inspectorate guide to Planning Appeals
8. How will consultations be resourced?

Staff resources to deliver City Council-led planning consultations and the statutory requirements will be mainly from City Development, but may involve other city council officers and external resources if needed. Consultations relating to planning applications will also require resources from the applicant, and consultations at certain stages of the Neighbourhood Plan process will be led by the relevant neighbourhood planning group that are preparing those plans.

We will try to combine consultation activities where appropriate and timetabling allows, to get the best value from resources and to avoid ‘consultation fatigue’.
Appendices

Table 1 Summary of statutory requirements and additional consultation methods for Local Plan documents

Table 2 Summary of statutory requirements and additional consultation methods for Supplementary Planning Documents

Table 3 Summary of Planning Application Consultation
## Table 1: Summary of statutory requirements and additional consultation methods for Local Development Plan Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of consultation</th>
<th>What we must do to consult and notify you (Statutory requirements)</th>
<th>Additional methods of informing and consulting you (We will select the most appropriate methods from this list taking into consideration the subject of the policy document)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development Plan Documents (including the Local Plan, Area Action Plans and site allocations)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inform at appropriate stages using a combination of the following methods:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Early public Involvement And Consultation on emerging options *(at time of writing this is Regulation 18)* | Notify bodies listed in the Regulations about the subject of the local plan document and invite comments about what it should contain. (This includes local residents.) Consult on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report with appropriate statutory consultation bodies listed in Regulations and other general consultation bodies we consider appropriate. | - Press release  
- Contact groups and/or individuals on the City Council’s consultation register by letter/email (contact may be targeted if appropriate for subject e.g. specific geographical area)  
- City Council website  
- Social Media (such as Twitter and Facebook)  
- Poster and/or leaflet campaigns  
- Development Management User Group  
- City Council newsletter ‘Your Oxford’  
- Contact local interest groups (such as Forums and Resident Associations) to ask them to share information with their members |
| Formal public consultation on pre-submission document *(at time of writing this is Regulation 19)* | Pre-submission document, Sustainability Appraisal and associated matters required by the Regulations I to be made available for inspection at the City Council’s main offices (St Aldate’s Chambers) and published on the City Council website. Notify the statutory bodies listed in Regulations. (This includes local residents.) | Consult at an appropriate stage using one or a combination of the following methods: |
| | | - Questionnaires and/or comment forms (online and/or paper copies)  
- Public exhibitions/displays/stalls/road shows  
- Interactive displays  
- Public meetings  
- Workshops/‘Planning for Real’ exercises  
- Involve pre-existing panels and other regular City Council meetings with groups  
- One-to-one meetings/focus groups  
- Consider special measures to identify and engage with ‘hard to reach’ groups  
- City Council committees  
- Telephone |
Each time that we publish a document for formal consultation we will:

- Make the document available on the City Council website and in appropriate public locations/deposit points in the city (see supporting paper for specific locations we may use and their opening hours).
- Also consult on the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal.
- Prior to the consultation starting, the documents will be discussed at an appropriate City Council committee meeting (usually the City Executive Board) to agree a specific consultation programme for each document with members. This will set out the detail of which consultation methods are most appropriate for that document so that both members and the public are clear about what consultation can be expected for that document.
- Consider all comments and publish feedback on the consultation on the City Council website.
- Consider extending the consultation period where it includes the summer or Christmas holidays.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Submission to Government and Independent Examination</th>
<th>Make copies of the submission documents available for inspection. Notify the statutory bodies listed in the Regulations, as well as other people who have requested to be notified of the submission of the Local Plan.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide details of the hearing sessions and examination progress via an examination website or dedicated page on the City Council website.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Adoption | Final document, adoption statement, Inspector’s report and final Sustainability Appraisal to be made available for inspection at the City Council’s main offices (St Aldate’s Chambers) and published on the City Council website. Notify anyone who requested to be notified of adoption and send them a copy of the adoption statement. | No further consultation needed. |
Table 2 Summary of statutory requirements and additional consultation methods for Supplementary Planning Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplementary Planning Documents</th>
<th>Statutory Requirements for consultation and notification (what we must do)</th>
<th>Additional methods of consultation (what we will do) – we will select the most appropriate methods from this list according to the specific subject matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage consultation takes place</td>
<td></td>
<td>Informally involve local communities and stakeholders (including consultation on sustainability appraisals).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early public involvement And</td>
<td>No statutory requirement to undertake consultation.</td>
<td>To inform at appropriate stages using a combination of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation on draft document</td>
<td></td>
<td>• issue press release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• contact groups on consultation register (target consultation if appropriate for subject)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• consider using City Council newspaper, website, posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To consult at appropriate stages using a combination of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• public exhibitions/displays/stalls/road shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• interactive displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• public meetings/area committees</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• one-to-one meetings/focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• involve pre-existing panels and other regular City Council meetings with groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If document is published for formal consultation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss at City Council committees. A specific consultation programme for each document will be agreed with members, to set out the detail of which consultation methods are most appropriate for that document and topic, so that members and the public are clear what consultation can be expected for that document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Make the report available on the City Council website and in appropriate public locations/deposit points Publish the sustainability appraisal (if applicable for the subject topic).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>Prepare and publish a summary of consultation, and make it available for inspection along with the SPD, and the adoption statement, at the main Council offices and on the City Council website. Notify anyone who requested to be notified of adoption and send them a copy of the adoption statement.</td>
<td>No further consultation needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3 - Summary of Planning Application Consultation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-application</th>
<th>Application (what we must do)</th>
<th>Application (what we will do above the statutory minimum)</th>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Appeal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • We will encourage developers to contact us early on.  
• For smaller applications (e.g. household extensions), encourage applicants to talk with their neighbours.  
• For major applications – strongly encourage applicants to make direct contact with adjoining occupiers and any relevant interest groups, provide information and seek feedback, for example via questionnaires, exhibitions, meetings. We will particularly encourage applicants to, where appropriate, use illustrative measures to assist the local community in understanding the proposal (see website for additional information about | • Advertise in a local newspaper (Oxford Times) and display site notices for applications involving listed buildings, conservation areas, environmental impact assessments*, applications affecting a public right of way* and applications which depart from the development plan* (* plus publish on website).  
• For major applications – advertise in a local newspaper (and on our website) and display a site notice offering 21 days to make comments.  
• For minor and other applications – display a site notice with 21 days to make comments.  
• Depending on the nature of the | • Advertise applications to certify the lawfulness of existing development, and some applications involving telecom work in a local newspaper.  
• Wider consultation of local residents and interest groups if appropriate depending on the nature of the proposal.  
• Details of applications published on the City Council website.  
• Via Public Access and PlanningFinder, applications can be searched for individually.  
• Large proposals may also feature under ‘hot topics’ on the City Council website.  
• Every planning application will have a | • For all applications decided by committee (smaller and larger), applicants and the public will be allowed to speak (up to total five minutes for all objectors).  
• Decision notices will be viewable on our website. | • Appeal procedures are determined by the Planning Inspectorate. Consultation on appeals varies according to the procedure being followed.  
• For most types of appeal, the City Council will send letters to adjoining properties and to anyone who commented on the original application, notifying them of the appeal.  
• If the appeal is following the written representations, hearing or inquiry procedures and not a fast track procedure, this letter will also set out how comments can be submitted. |

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13 There may be additional fee for this service. Further details are provided on the City Council website.
examples). This may also be applicable during period of the application being considered, depending on the technique used.

- We will encourage applicants of major applications to engage with the Oxford Design Review Panel, both at pre-application stage and at the point when a more detailed proposal is set out.

- application, consult with appropriate statutory consultees.

- nominated planning officer as a main point of contact for interested parties.

- A planning officer will visit site prior to recommending a decision.

- There is no opportunity to submit comments on appeals following a fast track procedure (such as the householder appeal procedure).

- Copies of all comments received at the application stage will be forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate.

- Members of the public may also be given the opportunity to speak at a hearing or inquiry.

Statutory consultation bodies will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation.