

Statement of Community Involvement

Charnwood Borough Council

January 2021



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Executive Summary

This document sets out how Charnwood Borough Council will consult the community, business and organisations on planning matters. Planning shapes the environments where people live, work and spend their time and the Council recognises that effective and meaningful consultation is a valuable component of the planning process. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council will:

- Consult on **planning policy** documents (including the Local Plan)
- Engage with and support **neighbourhood planning**
- Consult on **development management** planning applications

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1. Introduction

What is and why adopt a Statement of Community Involvement?

The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how Charnwood Borough Council will consult on the preparation of planning policy documents, the processing of planning applications and how the Council will engage with neighbourhood planning. The Council is required by legislation to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement¹.

Planning shapes the places where people live, work and spend their time and, in turn, community involvement should help shape planning decisions. The Council values community engagement as a fundamental component of planning and, through this document, our vision is to empower communities to engage in modern, dynamic, efficient and effective ways.

This document replaces the previous Statement of Community Involvement (adopted January 2014) and will be reviewed regularly in accordance with the requirement to review this document every five years².

How to read the Statement of Community Involvement

This document is split into three themes – planning policy documents, neighbourhood planning, and development management. **The Council's specific consultation commitments are shown as Green text for ease of reference.**

¹ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), Section 18

² The Town and Country Planning Regulations 2017, Regulation 4

2. Planning Policy Documents

2.1 Planning policy documents set a framework for managing development in the area. The adopted Local Plan and adopted Neighbourhood Plans together form the 'Development Plan' for the area. Supplementary Planning Documents can add further detail to the Development Plan. Public consultation forms a key element of the preparation of planning policy documents and the Council attaches great importance to facilitating meaningful and wide-reaching public participation. The Statement of Community Involvement is required to set out the Council's consultation policy in respect the preparation of planning policy documents³.

Local Plan

2.2 Local Plans set out a vision and planning policies to guide the determination of future planning applications within the area, and allocate land for housing, employment, retail and protective uses. Information about the role and scope of Local Plans is on the Government website⁴. The process for preparing a Local Plan and minimum consultation requirements are set out in legislation⁵. The Council aims to make local plan consultations meaningful and engaging. Our commitments in relation to preparing the Local Plan are to:

- ✓ **Undertake the following six-week consultations:-**
 - **Preparation Stage (Regulation 18) – to survey the scope and content of the plan at an early stage.**
 - **Preferred Options Stage (non-statutory) – to further inform plan content.**
 - **Publication Stage (Regulation 19/20) – to seek final views on the plan, to be considered by the independent Planning Inspector.**
- ✓ **Consult using all the methods listed in Table 1. Consultation procedures will be clearly explained and engaging.**
- ✓ **Fulfil procedural duties for Local Plan preparation, examination and adoption.**
- ✓ **Upon request, provide physical copies of consultation documents for a charge of the printing cost + £5 (per document) administration fee.**
- ✓ **Maintain a consultation database of consultees including 'specific' organisations prescribed by legislation; 'general' consultation bodies considered appropriate by the Council (including hard to read groups); and any other person/organisation that requests to join the database⁶**
- ✓ **Maintain a separate e-mail alert service that provides regular updates to people/organisations that join the mail list⁷.**
- ✓ **If revising the local plan pursuant to legislation⁸, the Council will undertake two six-week consultations (as per Regulation 18 and 19/20 above).**
- ✓ **For each consultation undertaken, publish a report on the website that collates and responds to consultation representations and identifies actions taken.**
- ✓ **Engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with neighbouring local authorities on issues of a strategic and cross-boundary nature (including consideration of joint working opportunities).**

³ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), Section 18 (2)

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making>

⁵ Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

⁶ Sign up to the consultation database by e-mailing: localplans@charnwood.gov.uk

⁷ <https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/lpsignup>

⁸ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), Section 26

Table 1: Consultation methods for preparing planning policy documents

Method	Details
Online copy availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents and latest information via www.charnwood.gov.uk/planningpolicy
Hard copy availability*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation documents made available at the Council's principal office
Site Notices*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the Preferred Options and Publication stages consultations, at least 1 general site notice will be placed near each proposed housing and employment allocation.
E-mail and letter notification to those on the consultation database/ e-mail alert.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Plan: to be sent to all consultees on the database Other documents: to be sent to consultees dependent on the relevance of the consultation to them (i.e. impacts their area/ specialist topic).
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicity material to be posted on the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts Video/presentation material will be produced at the Council's discretion.
Local Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Press releases will be prepared and sent to local media organisations The Council will respond constructively to media requests for more information
Focused Meetings*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where requested, the Council will facilitate meetings with interest groups; organisations and community advocates. Where necessary the Council will work with stakeholders to coordinate such meetings where there is a high level of demand.
Parish and Town Councils and Neighbourhood Planning Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be notified of all Local Plan consultations, and consultations on other document that impact their area, and encouraged to publicise in newsletters.
Notify Local Politicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where their areas are impacted, Councillors (district and county) and Members of Parliament to be notified of the consultation by e-mail
Exhibitions/ Workshops*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be facilitated at the Council's discretion and can focus on specific topics or localities.
Charnwood News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where timescales permit, publicity material on consultations will be published in the 'Charnwood News' magazine which is distributed to most homes in the Borough.* Consultations will be publicised on the Council corporate 'Charnwood News' e-mailing list
Consultation Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses will be welcomed online or by post to widen engagement
Developer/Stakeholder/Community Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of planning developer/stakeholder/community forums that the Council facilitates will be notified of the consultation by e-mail.
Equal Access Requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will respond positively to equal access requests in line with the public sector equalities duty (for example advancing opportunity of access to consultation documents where inequalities derive from characteristics such as race, disability and age).

*COVID-19 measures may temporarily restrict the Council's ability to undertake physical consultation methods. Should this be the case the Council will facilitate online alternatives.

Supplementary Planning Documents/ Informal Guidance

2.3 Supplementary Planning Documents add detail to, but do not have the same status as, policies in the Local Plan. The process for preparing and consulting on a Supplementary Planning Document is set out in legislation⁹. Informal Guidance is sometimes published to add more clarity to aid the interpretation of policy. Our commitments in relation to preparing Supplementary Planning Documents/ Informal Guidance are to:

- ✓ **Undertake a four-week consultation on the proposed document.**
- ✓ **Consult using all the methods listed in Table 1. Consultation procedures will be clearly explained and seek engagement of those most affected.**
- ✓ **Upon request, provide physical copies of consultation documents for a charge of the printing cost + £5 (per document) administration fee.**
- ✓ **Publish a report on the website that collates and responds to consultation representations and identifies actions taken.**

Local Development Scheme

2.4 Charnwood Borough Council's Local Development Schemes sets out an up-to-date programme and timescales for preparing the Local Plan¹⁰. Our commitments in relation to the Local Development Scheme are to:

- ✓ **Ensure that the scheme is kept up-to-date and publicly available on the website.**
- ✓ **Annually report on progress made on the scheme in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report.**

⁹ Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, Part 5.

¹⁰ <https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/localdevelopmentscheme>

3. Neighbourhood Planning Support

3.1 Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their local area and takes two forms, which are prepared by the local community, usually parish councils (designated 'qualifying bodies') and endorsed by referendum:

- **Neighbourhood plans** can contain development allocations and planning policies to guide the development of the local area to which the plan relates.
- **Neighbourhood development orders** grant planning permission for specific types of development within a local area.

3.2 Information about neighbourhood planning is on the Government website¹¹. The procedure and timescales for engaging with neighbourhood planning is prescribed by legislation¹². The Council has a duty to give advice and assistance to qualifying bodies (those engaging with neighbourhood planning)¹³. The Statement of Community Involvement is required set out the Council's policy for engaging with neighbourhood planning¹⁴. Considering these matters, The Council will engage positively with local communities partaking in neighbourhood planning.

Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders

3.3 Our commitments in relation to neighbourhood planning are to:

- ✓ **Fulfil our duties within statutory timescales unless otherwise agreed with qualifying bodies (subject to consideration of COVID-19 measures)**
- ✓ **Maintain dialogue with qualifying bodies at all procedural stages.**
- ✓ **Where requested, support qualifying bodies with digital mapping, Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitats Regulations Assessment screening, Environmental Impact Assessment, the establishment of Neighbourhood Forums, and sharing relevant parts of the Council's Local Plan evidence base.**
- ✓ **Where requested, provide informal advice on draft neighbourhood plan policies and draft neighbourhood development orders.**
- ✓ **Respond to the Regulation 14 and 21 consultations (those organised by the qualifying body).**
- ✓ **Communicate with qualifying bodies when organising regulation 6 and 16 consultations (those organised by the Council) in order to coordinate publicity materials. Where the Council is responsible for consultations it will:**
 - **publicise consultation documents the website;**
 - **deposit physical consultation documents at one location within the neighbourhood area;**
 - **consult relevant parties within the Council's planning consultation database. (The same approach will be taken for the publicity of modification or revocation of a plan or order).**
- ✓ **Maintain a webpage, including links to documents, on the Borough Council's website about the neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order.**

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

¹² The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended by 2015, 2016 and 2017 regulations)

¹³ The Town and County Planning Act 1990 (as amended), Schedule 4b, Paragraph 3

¹⁴ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), Section 18 (2B)

3.4 It is not the Council's role to lead on the establishment or drafting of neighbourhood plans or orders. The Council seeks a proactive relationship in assisting qualifying bodies but will not take responsibility for preparing documents or offer additional administrative/ printing facilities.

4. Development Management – Processing Planning Applications

4.1 The Council processes a range of planning applications from householder and minor applications to major housing/ employment sites, and other specific consent routes detailed below. The Council attaches great importance to providing an effective and efficient development management service, including good stakeholder and community consultation, and sets out below how this will be achieved at the various stages.

Pre-Application Engagement

4.2 Pre-application advice helps applicants understand and resolve key issues prior to submitting a formal planning application. Although not a statutory function, the Council encourages and values early pre-application engagement (particularly alongside community engagement exercises) and has set out procedural information and **ten pre-application commitments in the document ‘Pre-Application Advice Service: Guidance Note’¹⁵**. The Council recognises its data protection responsibilities.

Consultation on Planning Application – by type

4.3 The minimum requirements for community consultation on planning applications are set out in legislation¹⁶. Other specific consent routes are governed by different legislation, the requirements of which are as a minimum reflected below. Our commitments in relation to consulting on planning applications are to:

- ✓ **Undertake the consultation actions set out in Table 2. The following will apply to the different consultation methods:-**
 - **Website – documents and information considered to be relevant will be placed on the Council’s Planning Explorer¹⁷ public access website.**
 - **Site Notices – at least 1 will be placed on or near the proposal site. Reasonable steps will be taken to replace removed, obscured or defaced site notices where the Council is made aware.**
 - **Neighbour Letters – sent to the occupier of adjoining properties.**
 - **Newspaper Notice – in the Loughborough Echo or Leicester Mercury.**
- ✓ **Consult statutory consultees¹⁸.**
- ✓ **Invite consultation responses in writing only, using the following routes:-**
 - **Online – using the Council’s Planning Explorer (see footnote 17).**
 - **E-mail – development.control@charnwood.gov.uk**
 - **Post – Planning Services, Charnwood Borough Council, Southfield Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 2TN.**

Other Procedural Matters

4.4 Our general commitments in relation to the Development management process are to:

- ✓ **Aim to process planning applications within statutory timescales, unless an extension of time is agreed with the applicant.**
- ✓ **Support public involvement at Planning Committee in accordance with the Council’s ‘Public speaking at Planning Committee’¹⁹ policy.**

¹⁵https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/pre_application_advice_guidance_note/Charnwood%20Borough%20Council%20Pre-Application%20Advice%20Service%20May%202017%20-%20mod%20Jan%202018.pdf

¹⁶ The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), Article 15

¹⁷ <https://portal.charnwood.gov.uk/Northgate/PlanningExplorerAA/GeneralSearch.aspx>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-and-pre-decision-matters#Statutory-consultees-on-applications>

¹⁹https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/speaking_at_committee/Public%20Speaking%20leaflet%20A5%20Oct%202011.pdf

- ✓ **Make decisions on planning applications available on the website.**
- ✓ **Fulfil statutory duties where an appeal against refusal of planning permission is made and notify in writing those who commented on the application.**

Table 2: Consultation actions on planning applications by type

Application Type	Consultation Duration	Documents on Website	Newspaper Notice	Site Notice or Neighbour Letter
Major Development (10 or more dwellings, 1000 sqm or floorspace, or 0.5ha site)	21 days	✓	✓	✓
Applications that do not accord with the provisions of the Development Plan	21 days	✓	✓	✓
Environmental Impact Assessment applications accompanied by an environmental statement	30 days	✓	✓	✓
Affects a Public Right of Way	21 days	✓	✓	✓
Development affecting or within the setting of a Listed Building, or within a Conservation Area	21 days	✓	✓	✓
All other planning applications (minor, including householder)	21 days	✓		✓
Where an amendment that materially effects the proposal has been received on a planning application.	7-21 days (additional)	✓		✓
Works to trees protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or trees within a Conservation Area.	21 days	✓		✓
Prior notification (where consultation is required only)	As required	✓		✓
Variation/ removal of condition.	21 days	✓		✓
Discharge of conditions	None			
Lawful development certificates	None			
Advertisement consent	None			
Non-material amendments	None			
Hedgerow removal	None			
Environmental Assessment screening or scoping opinion	Consult statutory consultees			

5. Further Advice and Contact

5.1 For more information about community consultation on the preparation of planning documents or neighbourhood planning, contact localplans@charnwood.gov.uk.

5.2 For more information about community consultation on planning applications, contact development.control@charnwood.gov.uk.