

Adopted Statement of Community Involvement



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1 Introducing the Statement of Community Involvement

1.1 Background

Community involvement is an important part of preparing the Local Development Framework. The Council is required to prepare and maintain a statement known as its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The aim of the SCI is to help ensure community ownership of the Local Development Framework, and to strengthen community involvement in planning over time. It also aims to improve overall representation and involvement across all sections of the community. This SCI has been prepared to reflect the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 12 – Local Development Frameworks, and Government regulations concerning participation during the Local Development Framework process.

1.2 The New Planning System

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 replaces the current system of Structure and Local Plans with Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Frameworks (LDF). The Local Development Framework is comprised of a set of Local Development Documents, which include Development Plan Documents (DPD), that are part of the statutory development plan, and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) which expand on policies set out in a development plan document or provide additional detail. These documents contain the policies relating to the development and use of land within Ashford Borough. It is also a requirement that one Local Development Document deals specifically with public consultation and participation in the plan making process. This local development document is the SCI.

1.3 The Statement of Community Involvement

Strengthening Community Involvement is a key part of the Government's planning reforms. This is also reflected in the Government's "Sustainable Communities Plan" (February 2003) which sets out a vision for sustainable communities and considers effective community involvement particularly important in Ashford, which is designated as an area of growth in the Sustainable Communities Plan.

The SCI sets out how the Council intends to achieve continuous community involvement in the preparation of Local Development Documents in their area. Its aim is to ensure that all sections of the public, including local groups and organisations, are actively involved throughout the process of preparing any Local Development Document contained within the LDF, including both Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

1.4 The Ashford Context

As a growth area identified in the Sustainable Communities Plan and revisions to Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9), the production of the Ashford LDF is especially important. There will be considerable development and many changes proposed. Therefore it is crucial that local people, stakeholders and other interested groups are appropriately consulted at every stage of the LDF production process.

The LDF is more than just a land use plan. It will determine transport patterns and influence the way places work – e.g. by dealing with the facilities provided and design of new developments around Ashford. It will impact on the nature of place and the nature of community created. As well as involving those people who will be affected by any future development, it is also important to involve relevant stakeholders and organisations that will be involved in delivering the LDF.

1.5 The Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000

The Ashford Borough Local Plan was adopted in June 2000. The Plan covers the period to 2006. The impact of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is to automatically “save” all the Local Plan policies until July 2007. Additionally, the policies included in the Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006, the sections of the Kent Minerals Local Plan and the Kent Waste Local Plan are also “saved” by this process. During the period to July 2007, Local Development Plan Documents will be produced to replace the saved Local Plan policies and proposals. As each new Development Plan Document is adopted, the policies, proposals and supporting text in the Local Plan it replaces will be withdrawn.

2 Explaining the Local Development Framework

2.1 The Local Development Scheme

The Council is required to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Local Development Scheme is a three-year project plan for the preparation of the LDF showing the timetable for producing each Local Development Plan Document, including the SCI. It is submitted to the Secretary of State and will be used to assess the Council's performance in LDF preparation. It will be reviewed annually and provide an opportunity to amend and change the scheme where appropriate. The timetable for the preparation of the Ashford LDF taken from the Local Development Scheme is inserted as Appendix 1. As the timelines and content of the Local Development Framework may be subject to change please visit our website at www.ashford.gov.uk/ldf for an up-to-date version of the framework.

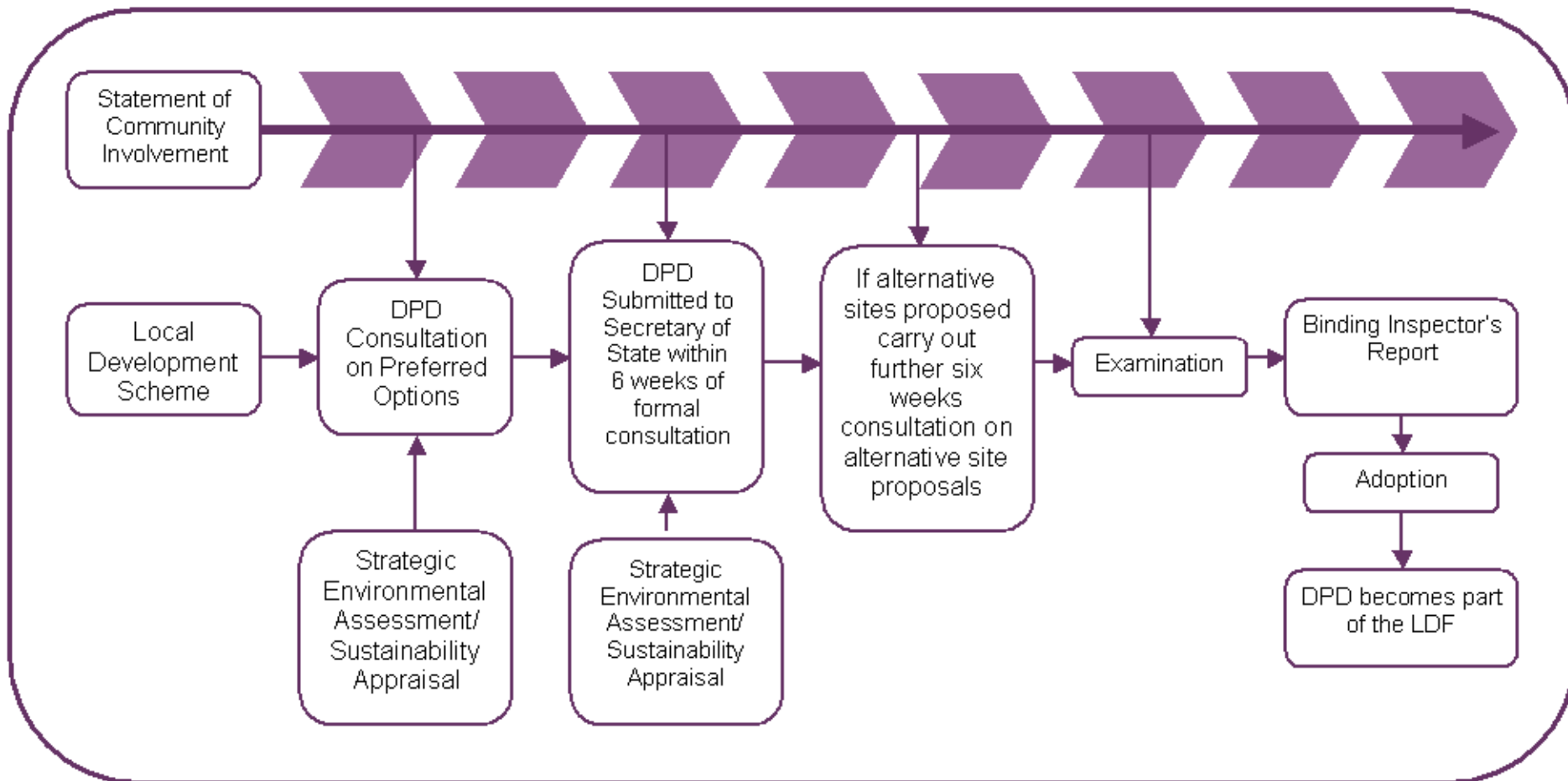
2.2 Preparing the Local Development Framework Documents

Development Plan Documents should be a set of documents, which together set out the plans for Ashford in a way that will be useful to all those involved in making them happen, and understood by everyone involved and affected by them. The types of Development Plan Documents that Local Authorities must prepare include:

- Core Strategy (statutory)
- Site Specific Allocations and Policies (statutory)
- Area Action Plans for key areas of change or conservation (optional); and
- Proposals Map (statutory)

Each Development Plan Document must be prepared in a series of stages, which is illustrated in Figure 1 that follows. Community involvement is essential during the process of producing each document. This SCI goes on to explain how this will happen.

Figure 1: The Process of preparing and adopting Development Plan Documents (DPD)



2.3 Continuous Community Involvement

The aim of continuous community involvement in the new planning system is to produce consensus as far as possible, on the form and content of any Local Development Document, which the Local Planning Authority are preparing. Achieving consensus is not always possible and planning is often seen as conflict laden. With Ashford's growth agenda and the potential for communities to resist change, there is a need for creativity and good will, to develop solutions and reach consensus as far as possible. This Statement sets out the Council's commitment to a range of participation proposals that will involve all stakeholders and take place throughout the process. If this is successful in building a broad consensus it will help to minimise the need for a lengthy examination process. However, it must be recognised that the Local Planning Authority will have to make difficult decisions where it may not always be possible to achieve complete consensus and it may then be necessary to take any unresolved issues to an examination.

2.4 The Sustainability / Environmental Assessment

Directive 2001/42/EC requires a formal Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of certain plans and programmes, which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. An important part of the LDF preparation process is to check the policies and proposals to ensure they help in moving the Borough towards a more sustainable future, in line with the Borough's Community Strategy and aims for Ashford's Future.

As part of the Ashford's Future work, a Strategic Environmental Assessment is currently being carried out as part of the Masterplanning work, which will feed into the LDF process. However, this work will need to be built upon in order to produce a comprehensive Sustainability Appraisal of all the LDF Plans policies and proposals. As changes are made to existing policies and new policies introduced, consideration will be given to their impacts on sustainability and environmental issues. Each policy and proposal will be examined against a set of broad sustainability criteria and more local environmental, social and economic issues. A separate sustainability and environmental assessment report will be published, to accompany each Development Plan Document. This will provide the basis for future monitoring, together with specific indicators and targets.

3 Community Involvement – The Wider Context

Continuous community involvement is not a new concept for Ashford Borough Council. Comprehensive and successful participation and consultation involving many hundreds of stakeholders and local people has been carried out for many other strategies and initiatives led by the Council in the past. Indeed much of this participation, indirectly feeds into the LDF in terms of views and opinions relating to setting a vision for the Borough and ultimately development proposals and policies.

Those strategies most directly related include;

3.1 Ashford Borough Council Corporate Plan

Ashford Borough Council's mission is "to protect and improve the quality of life of every resident of the Borough, now and in the future". Four key objectives of this plan set out the aims and values, which underpin all the work of the Borough Council and its delivery of services to the people of Ashford. These broadly aim for: A Better Future, A Better Environment, Better Lives and Better Services.

3.2 Ashford's Community Strategy

The Ashford (Local) Strategic Partnership has reflected on the implications of Ashford's planned growth and the work on the community strategy has provided a vision for Ashford in 2014 that needs to be carried forward into the LDF. Ashford's Community Strategy sets out the following vision for Ashford; "Set in the heart of the Garden of England, Ashford Borough provides a safe, healthy and thriving environment that offers an excellent quality of life to all who live, work and visit the area". Ashford's Community Strategy can be viewed from the Council's website at www.ashford.gov.uk

Eight key themes reflect the vision and aims of the Ashford Community Strategy:

- Health and Social Care
- Lifelong Learning
- Transport
- Housing and the Environment
- Social Inclusion
- Prosperity
- Community Safety
- Leisure and Culture

The Local Strategic Partnership has been involved in key stages of planning for the LDF and will continue to play an important role at each stage in the process. It is essential that there is a strong relationship between the Community Strategy and the LDF in order to link the objectives and identify opportunities, consider the potential to combine community consultation processes and share information gathering and monitoring processes. There is also a countywide Community Strategy that has been endorsed by all Kent District Councils that sets out a 'Vision for Kent'. The Ashford (Local) Strategic Partnership will play an important role in providing a link between the countywide Community Strategy, the Ashford's Community Strategy and the LDF.

3.3 Ashford's Future

Probably the most closely linked strategy to the LDF is the Ashford's Future project, which aims to adopt a collaborative approach to the future development of Ashford involving client partners, consultants and community stakeholders. Both Central Government and Ashford Borough Council recognise the strategic importance of the Borough and consider that it is essential that the general public and those with an interest have ample opportunity to express their views on the proposals. There has already been extensive participation with the local and wider community in workshops, exhibitions, leaflets, and opinion surveys and through the media. In addition to this, we have actively sought the views, interests and advice of strategic landowners, service providers etc. throughout the process through a range of uses including one to one meetings, workshops and focus groups.

Further participation is planned and will be carefully related wherever possible to the key formal stages of the LDF. This will provide the opportunity to create a more widely shared vision of how Ashford can develop for the benefit of the community in the future.

4 Community Involvement in the Local Development Framework

4.1 How the Council proposes to involve the public


This is the key part of the statement where we outline an inclusive programme for consulting with the public and all key stakeholders at various stages of the production of the Local Development Plan Documents. Consultation on Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents must conform to the SCI and include a Statement to illustrate how they have done this.

We firstly want to identify the key target groups to be involved in the LDF process. It is also important to recognise that within any area ‘communities’ are made up of many different interest groups, and effective involvement cannot happen without a good understanding of make up, needs and interests of these different groups and their capacity to engage in community involvement. For each there will be effective ways to involve them, which, if carefully designed, will maximise opportunities to influence the LDF. For example, a summary leaflet might be all many people want to read about the LDF, but local amenity groups may want full documents and supporting information and to debate these at workshop events. The Council has an LDF database, which is used to manage the contact details for individuals and is also arranged into, and provides an effective tool in targeting specific target groups. The LDF database is referred to in Table 3 of the SCI.

It is crucial that the debate about the Local Development Framework is accessible to all. The Council will offer large print documents, a document reading service, Braille versions and a translation service for all key material it produces on request and will work with local groups on other steps needed to make sure that all members of the community can access material. Alternative versions can be made available by calling the Planning and Development Unit on 01233 330229. Events and exhibitions will be planned at venues that are fully accessible for everyone regardless of their mobility.

To be effective, consultation needs to be accessible and appropriate to the needs of the particular target group. A significant proportion of the Boroughs residents live in rural areas, some have limited access to public transport and other services. The Council will endeavour to fully engage rural communities in consultation as well as those communities that live in the Ashford growth area. Tailoring consultation arrangements to community needs is important and therefore innovative approaches should be explored and developed, especially in relation to “hard to reach” groups, such as the elderly, the young, disabled, ethnic minorities. These groups have tended to be underrepresented in the planning process in the past, and therefore more innovative approaches are needed in order to engage them. For example, we have previously carried out successful consultation with youth groups through the use of “Schools Roadshows”.

The Ashford Community Network is a key strategic body for voluntary and community organisations within the borough. It aims to represent the sector’s voice on key issues and to provide an efficient and effective single point of contact and consultation with the voluntary and community sector. The Ashford Community Network works in partnership with the Ashford (Local) Strategic Partnership.



Additionally, the Council is committed to the Ashford Borough Compact, which sets out clear principles and codes of practice on working positively with its voluntary and community sector partners. Ashford Borough Council recognises that both the Ashford Community Network and the Compact are key to enabling effective involvement of marginalised groups in policy development and community planning. The Ashford Borough Compact can be viewed from the 'Go Ashford' website at: www.goashford.com

One of the main aims of the SCI is to ensure that all sections, including the public, local voluntary and community groups and organisations, service providers, landowners and developers, Parish Councils are actively involved throughout the process of preparing any local development documents including Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. Planning Policy Statement 12 lists a set of 'statutory' consultees that must be involved in consultation - this is reproduced in Appendix 2.

The following table sets out the broad consultee groups that we will aim to involve and the techniques that may be used to target them.

Table 1: List of Consultee groups and techniques used to target these groups

Consultee Group	Example	Consultation techniques proposed for targeting group
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ashford Borough Councillors ● Kent County Councillors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LDF Task Group and formal Council meetings ● Workshops and meetings
Parish Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual Parish Council chairman and clerks ● Representatives from Parish Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parish Forums ● Workshops and meetings ● Wish list exercise at Parish level
Business Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local Companies –Rural and Urban ● Ashford Chamber of Commerce, Ashford Town Centre Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshops, meetings and focus groups ● Participation in exhibitions
Land Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developers, landowners, house builders and consultants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meetings and workshops ● Ashford Landowners Group
Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ashford’s Future Delivery Board Members, Government Agencies, Local Strategic Partnership, Statutory Consultees, South Kent College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshops and meetings ● Consult with partner agencies throughout the drafting of policy documents
General Interest Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Borough and the wider area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participation in workshops and exhibitions ● Focus groups on specific issues
General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Borough and the wider area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep up to date on issues via the Council website and the media and press ● Exhibitions and public events
Hard to Reach Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Young people, older people, ethnic minority groups, disabled people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specific tailored events within schools, colleges, community centres etc ● Workshops, exhibitions and focus groups

4.2 The detailed participation proposals

The participation processes and activities proposed can be separated into two parts: the types of consultation we intend to carry out throughout the process and the broad interest groups that we intend to involve at each stage.

Individual Development Plan Documents will vary greatly in content, scope and location, it is important to consider the most appropriate consultation method to use at the different stages in the preparation of each DPD, and also to ensure that the methods employed are suitable for the intended audience. It is therefore proposed that throughout the production of each DPD a table is produced outlining what we have carried out at each stage in order to demonstrate our commitment to effective and participative consultation. A statement of how the methods used for each DPD conform to the general thrust and approach set out in the SCI will also be included, and will form part of the monitoring and review process.

The following table, Table 2 sets out the general consultation techniques that we may use throughout the production of the Local Development Documents and what these techniques involve. Following on from this, Table 3 sets out the key stages in the production of a DPD and the types of consultation that may be carried out at each stage, some form part of the minimum statutory requirements for consultation. The Council exceeds the minimum statutory requirements set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, shown in Appendix 4.

Table 2: Consultation methods for standard Development Plan Documents

Consultation Techniques	
Leaflets / flyers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-technical leaflet / flyer produced to summarise key issues and proposals with details on how to get involved, in order to generate interest and engagement. ● Can be distributed widely in order to gain greater public engagement and raise awareness.
Summary Brochure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Summary brochure outlining all the key issues and proposals. ● Informal comments form included for recipients to fill in and return.
Consultation document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft documents made available for inspection at the Council Offices, Libraries and other appropriate venues and on the Council website. ● Formal opportunities for making representations on the draft documents in accordance with Government requirements at formal plan making stages.
Non-staffed exhibitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Summary exhibitions outlining main issues and proposals using a range of materials that capture interest and reaction. ● Acting as a “point of sales display” at key / prominent locations i.e. Ashford civic centre and main libraries.
Staffed exhibitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exhibition outlining main issues and proposals with chance for face-to-face discussion with planning officers. ● Summary exhibition outlining main issues and proposals using a range of materials that capture interest and reaction. ● Acting as an effective way of soliciting responses to published documents ● Exhibitions will take place at times and be located at venues accessible to the widest possible audience.
Website	<p style="text-align: right;">www.ashford.gov.uk/ldf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To provide basic information on the LDF process, timetable, outputs and all documents produced in a downloadable format conforming with e-government initiatives and accessible to all. ● To act as a consultation tool at the formal consultation stages, through viewing documents and submitting representations electronically.
LDF Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Informative quarterly newsletter produced to highlight progress in the production of LDF documents, and provide information on proposed public consultation events, and where to obtain feedback from past consultations. ● The newsletter will be available to download from the Councils website and interested parties will be informed of its availability via email, where possible.

Workshops/Meetings

- Organised meetings / discussions to discuss specific issues in a structured forum and to obtain initial concepts and develop ideas.
- Generating structured discussions to establish consensus and to flag up areas of contention.
- Provide developers / landowners with the opportunity to promote their sites and set out their aspirations.
- Increasing interface and working relations between consultants, agents, the council and key stakeholders, in order for key people to feed successfully into LDF process.

Formal Adverts

- These are statutory notices placed in local newspapers to advertise key public consultation stages in the production of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents showing the places and times at which the proposals documents can be inspected.

Informal Adverts

- These are informal and may include posters, flyers etc. advertising the LDF and raising key headlines.
- May also include articles / adverts in the local newspaper highlighting the process, consultation events etc.

News Coverage

- Local media coverage to advertise the LDF at key stages.

Table 3: Stages and types of Consultation

Pre-options Consultation	
Summary Leaflet	Where needed, leaflet produced highlighting issues for debate – wide circulation.
Full Document	Informal scoping report sent to all ‘specific’ consultation bodies that are affected by the issues and policies of the Development Plan Document. Also sent to ‘general’ consultation bodies as the Council considers appropriate.
Website	LDF web pages will be kept up to date and show detail relating to active policy documents being prepared, the broad timings for consultation events proposed including how people can get involved in the process.
Workshop	Statutory consultees will be consulted on the evolving issues, as necessary. The Council will hold informal meetings with the appropriate specific consultation bodies and non-statutory consultation bodies, to discuss issues at the earliest opportunity.
Informal Adverts	Used to alert people to early work on area-based elements of LDDs and seek, for example, site submissions from interested parties.
Quarterly LDF Update Newsletter	Raising awareness of general issues and work underway.
News Coverage (Media)	Encourage local media to run early stories raising awareness by issuing press releases and having regular briefings.

Pre-submission public participation (preferred options stage)	
Summary Leaflet	Leaflet produced providing full summary of issues and how to get involved in consultation – circulated widely.
Full Document	Full consultation document available for inspection at principal Council offices and libraries during normal office hours. A copy will be sent to all ‘specific’ consultation bodies; and ‘general’ and non-statutory consultees that have confirmed that they would like to receive a hard copy.
Promotional Displays	Small mobile exhibition with brochures left at various key points, including ‘point of sale displays’ in locations with good footfall.
Exhibitions (Staffed)	Mobile exhibition at key locations around the Borough using Council mobile display unit. Brochures and informative literature dispensed at same time.

Website	<p>Full consultation document and representation form downloadable from website. Background documents including promotional material downloadable from website where possible, or information on how to access them. Clear instructions on timings and how to participate in the consultation displayed.</p> <p>Consultation highlighted on the planning 'News and events' page.</p>
Letter / Email	Informative pre-submission letter (email if available) distributed to all interested stakeholders listed on the Councils LDF database.
Workshop	Major workshop with all key stakeholders – additional themed events as required.
Formal Adverts	Public notice in the local newspaper of the proposal matters and the places and times that the pre-submission documents can be inspected.
Informal Adverts	Information provided to local groups – Parish Councils, churches, schools etc. to encourage publication to a wide range of local audiences.
Quarterly LDF Update Newsletter	Information relating to preferred options report to complement leaflet and raise awareness of issues and how to participate in consultation – subject to timing.
News Coverage (Media)	Encourage local media to run major features through consultation period by issuing press releases and having regular briefings.

Submission Public Consultation	
Summary Leaflet	Revised leaflet outlining changes to document following pre-submission consultation - circulated widely.
Full Document	Full consultation document and sustainability appraisal report available for inspection at principal Council offices and libraries during normal office hours. A copy will be sent to all 'specific' consultation bodies; and 'general' and non-statutory consultees if they have confirmed that they would like to receive a hard copy. A statement outlining changes following preferred options consultation will also be included.

Website	<p>Full consultation document and representation form downloadable from website. Background documents including the sustainability appraisal will be downloadable from website. Clear instructions on timings and how to participate in the consultation will be displayed.</p> <p>Submission document highlighted on planning 'News and events' page.</p>
Letter / Email	<p>Informative submission letter (email if available) sent to all interested stakeholders listed on the Councils LDF database.</p> <p>Give notice by letter / email (if available) to all those requesting to be notified of the submission of the DPD to the Secretary of State that it has been submitted.</p>
Workshop	Major launch event to introduce document and explain formal consultation process
Formal Advert	Public notice in the local newspaper of the proposal matters and the places and times that the submission documents can be inspected.
Informal Adverts	Information provided to local groups – Parish Councils, churches, schools etc. to encourage publication to a wide range of local audiences.
Quarterly LDF Update Newsletter	Informative update relating to submitted document – subject to timing.
News Coverage (Media)	Encourage local media to run major features through consultation period by issuing press releases and having regular briefings.

Any Alternative Sites Consultation	
Summary Leaflet	Alternative sites summary leaflet produced for local community representatives and local people – wide circulation.
Full Document	Alternative sites document available for inspection at principal Council offices and libraries during normal office hours. A copy will be sent to all 'specific' consultation bodies; and 'general' and non-statutory consultees that have confirmed that they would like to receive a hard copy.
Promotional Display	Material can be made available illustrating specific site submissions to aid / encourage debate locally

Website	Alternative sites document and representation form downloadable from website. Clear instructions on timings and how to participate in the consultation displayed. Consultation highlighted on planning 'News and events' page.
Workshop	With key service providers to explain submissions received and encourage feedback
Informal Adverts	Material made available for local community organisations and Parish Councils to publicise locally.
Quarterly LDF Update Newsletter	Potential role publicising site put forward – subject to publication timing.
News Coverage (Media)	Encourage local media to run stories on additional sites put forward by issuing press released and having regular briefings.

Examination	
Leaflet	Simple leaflet informing people about the examination – its purpose, timing and location
Full Document	Copies of Council evidence provided to those appearing, otherwise on demand – and at cost for commercial organisations.
Promotional Display	Likely to be material exhibited during the examination – its purpose, timing and location
Website	Information on examination arrangements. Representations made on submitted document displayed.
Formal Advert	As required by Regulations
Quarterly LDF Update Newsletter	Information about examination – its purpose, timing and location – subject to publication timing.

4.3 Consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents

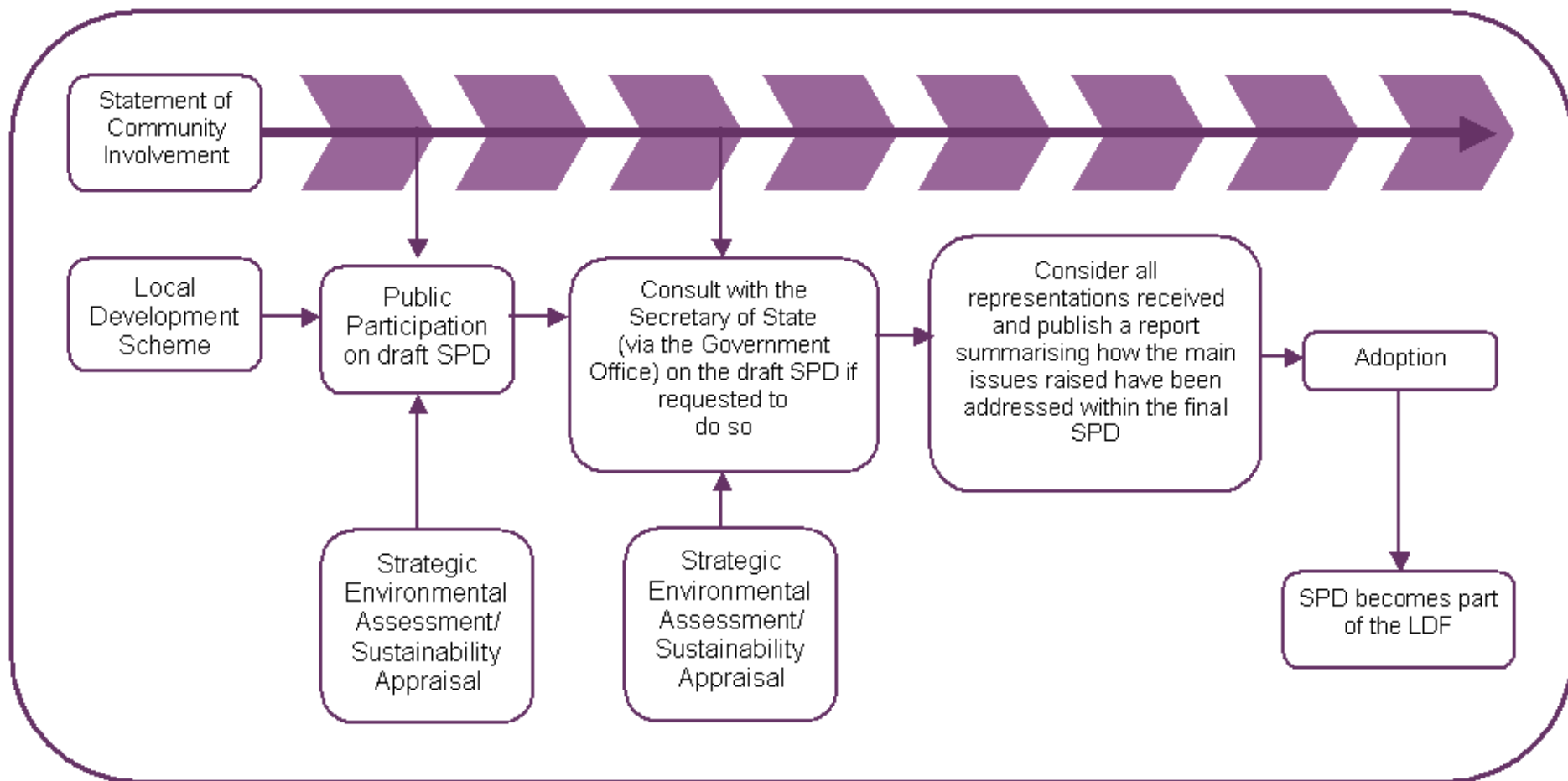
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) will form part of the policy framework for the Borough, and their purpose is to expand on policy issues or provide further detail to policies in development plan documents. All proposed Supplementary Planning Documents are timetabled into the Local Development Scheme, for example, a Town Centre Design Guidance SPD is proposed, to detail design coding for the Ashford Town Centre and will complement the specific proposals within the proposed Town Centre Area Action Plan.


The process for the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document is similar to the process of preparing a Development Plan Document but is simplified. It is not necessary to include a preferred options stage, however they will still be subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement. Consultation techniques will vary and be targeted to particular groups and individuals depending on the nature, issues or location of the Supplementary Planning Document proposed. An individual programme for consultation should be produced for each Supplementary Planning Document. The programme should inform the local community and stakeholder to the proposed consultation processes for that specific SPD at an early stage in its preparation.

Table 4: Consultation requirements for a Supplementary Planning Document

Supplementary Planning Document Consultation Process
The minimum statutory requirements for consulting on SPDs are outlined in this table and in Appendix 4.
Informal consultation targeted at interested parties and individuals and with representative organisations, to identify relevant issues and options prior to the start of the formal consultation process.
Before the adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document, a four to six week public consultation period must be arranged on the draft SPD with the following minimum standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Make copies of the SPD documents, and a statement of SPD matters available for inspection during normal office hours at principal offices (Civic Centre, Ashford) and at such other places that the authority considers appropriate.● Publish the draft SPD documents on the Councils website.● Send a copy of the draft SPD document, the sustainability appraisal report, a consultation statement, and relevant supporting documents to each of the 'specific' consultation bodies to the extent that the Council thinks that the SPD affects the body.● Also send a copy of the draft SPD to 'general' consultation bodies, as the Council considers appropriate.● Advertise the draft SPD in the local newspaper and state where the documents are available for inspection and the places and times at which they can be inspected.● The Council must also consult the Regional Planning Body to ensure conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Figure 2: The Process of preparing and adopting Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)





Village Design Statements are managed and organised by the local community and are a tool that local communities can use to influence the design of new development locally by identifying, describing and analysing local character and drawing guidance directly from this character. Under the Local Plan Village Design Statements may have been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), where as, under the new Local Development Framework Village Design Statements may be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). The council is keen to continue to adopt Village Design Statements as supplementary guidance and will assist local communities by providing advice on consultation when drafting and adopting their Village Design Statements.

4.4 Consultation on Sustainability Appraisals

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the individual Development Plan Documents must also undergo rigorous community consultation. The Government has designated four ‘authorities with environmental responsibility’, which must be consulted on the scope and level of detail to be included within the SA reports. The four agencies – the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency, will have a minimum of 5 weeks to respond to consultation.

Once this initial consultation is complete we will consult with ‘specific consultation bodies’, and it may also be appropriate to consult with other bodies that also have social, environmental or economic responsibilities and maybe concerned by the effects of implementing the plan. The draft Sustainability Report and Submission Sustainability Report will be subject to extensive public consultation in tandem with the DPD Options Report and the DPD submission Document.

4.5 Reporting back

An important part of community involvement is to report back to those who have taken the trouble to be involved in consultation, and to let them know how their comments and suggestions have been taken on board.

The results from formal consultation and key decisions relating to the LDF process will be dealt with in a number of ways. Initial consultation feedback will be reported to the LDF Task Group, who will make formal recommendations to be considered by the Council’s Executive, final enforcement rests with the Full Council. The Members’ recommendations will be taken forward into Development Plan Documents, which may result in changes or amendments. The Council’s formal response to representations and those that may result in any additional changes or modifications to Development Plan Documents will be published on the website. Stakeholders will be notified of the consultation feedback through the LDF Update Newsletter. We will ensure that all respondents to consultation are notified to the consultation feedback via email (if available) or letter.

As well as being made available on our website, www.ashford.gov.uk/ldf copies of these reports and all LDF documents will be available at the following locations:

Ashford Borough Council The Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL.
9am – 5.00pm (Monday – Thursday); 9am – 4.30pm (Friday)

Ashford Borough Council Tenterden Sub-Office, 67 The Fairings, Tenterden, TN30 6QX.
9am – 5.00pm (Monday – Thursday); 9am – 4.30pm (Friday); (closed 1 – 2pm).

Ashford Library, Church Road, Ashford, TN23 1QX.
9.30am – 6.00pm (Monday – Thursday); 9.30am – 7.00pm (Friday); 9.30am – 5.00pm (Saturday)

Charing Library, Market Place, Charing, Ashford, TN27 0LR.
Closed (Monday and Wednesday); 9.30am – 12.30pm and 2.00pm – 5.00pm (Tuesday and Thursday); 2.00pm – 5.00pm (Friday); 9.30am – 12.30pm (Saturday).

Tenterden Library, 55 High Street, Tenterden, TN30 6BD.
9.00am – 5.30pm (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday); Closed (Wednesday); 9.00am – 4.00pm Saturday.

Wye Library, 6 Upper Bridge Street, Wye, Ashford, TN25 5AF.
Closed (Monday and Wednesday); 9.30am – 12.30pm (Tuesday); 2.00pm – 6.00pm (Thursday); 9.30am – 12.30pm and 2.00pm – 6.00pm (Friday); 9.30am – 12.30pm (Saturday).

5 Active participation on planning applications

This section sets out how the Council makes information on planning applications available to the public and how comments can be made. The Council has a number of procedures currently in place to involve the public in considering planning applications. These are in accordance with Circular 22/80 - Development Control and Practice, Circular 28/83 – Information on Planning Applications and Circular 15/92 – Publicity for Planning Applications. These documents are available at the Council offices in Ashford and also at the sub-office in Tenterden as well as on our website www.ashford.gov.uk/ldf

Definition of Major, Minor and Other applications

Major

- Applications for 10 residential units or more
- Residential sites of 0.5 ha or more
- The creation of 1000m² or more of non-residential floorspace
- All sites of more than 1 ha in size

Minor

Development that does not meet the criteria for major development and is not a change of use or householder development


Other

Changes of Use, householder, advertisement and other related applications such as Certificates of Lawfulness

When consulting neighbouring residents and businesses, it is the Council's normal practise to send letters to individual premises. Letters are sent to immediate neighbours and, for larger proposals letter are distributed more widely, depending upon the scale of the proposal. Consultation letters invite responses to be made within 24 days of the date of the letter. The results of any such consultation will be reported and taken into account in decisions made by, and on behalf of, the Council. Bodies such as English Nature will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation.

Ashford Borough Council undertakes statutory publicity for submitted planning applications by posting Planning Notices on or adjoining planning application sites. Where a proposal may have impact on more than one street it may be appropriate to display more than one site notice. Some applications are also advertised in the local newspaper, if the application affects a listed building, a conservation area, affects a public right of way, or departs from the Council's Local Plan, or if the application may have a substantial impact on an area.

Notification letters will also be sent to organisations (e.g. Highways Agency, Environment Agency) etc. and the organisations invited to comment on proposals in accordance with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (as amended).



Borough Councillors will be notified of applications in their Ward. A copy of each application will be sent to the relevant Parish Council and responses invited within 24 days of the date of the notification letter.

The Council will place copies of all its applications and accompanying plans available for inspection, in the Council offices at the Civic Centre, Ashford and, if the application site lies within parishes of Tenterden, Woodchurch, High Halden, Biddenden, Rolvenden, Newenden, Wittersham and Stone at the Council office in Tenterden. All copies of applications and plans are available for inspection on the Internet, usually within 4 working days of being registered. A weekly list of applications is published on the Council's website.

The Council receives and handles comments on planning applications by conventional post, fax and email. The Council's website provides access for members of the public to view the full details of planning applications, including their accompanying plans. The website is updated with any subsequent correspondence received from the applicant or third party allowing the public to track the progress of an application.


If there are any significant amendments to the planning application during consideration, a copy of the revised plans will be sent to the relevant Parish Council. In addition to this, a consultation notification will be sent to the relevant ward member, nearby residents and to people who have already written in with comments.

The Council's Planning Committee takes place approximately every 3 weeks and is attended by elected Members who determine the decision of major, complex or controversial planning applications. The Committee agenda's are available on the Council's website, and includes reports on the individual planning applications being considered. Written comments on planning applications may be considered by the Committee if received before the committee meets. The Parish Council and one speaker in support and one in objection to the application are allowed to speak at the meeting for up to 3 minutes prior to the application being debated. Committee reports and resulting decisions can be viewed via the Council's website.

At the time a decision is issued on any application, the Council will send letters to all those who have submitted written comments on the application, advising whether the application has been approved or refused. Parish Councils are sent copies of the decision notices for the applications that fall within their area.

Pre-application consultation

Ashford Borough Council and Ashford's Future Partnership, the local delivery vehicle for Ashford's growth area, face a major challenge to fulfil the Sustainable Communities agenda. The Borough Council and Ashford's Future are developing a standards 'Charter' for major proposals, which has the commitment of all local agencies involved in determining planning applications. The Charter's role will be to encourage major development and to provide a framework to facilitate them. Ashford's Future core delivery team will be available to negotiate where competing interests threaten to frustrate progress.



The Council also works hard to inform and involve the wider community in helping to create better quality developments and “place making”. The Council encourages potential major developers to undertake pre-application consultation on significant applications. This process can serve to inform interested parties about the nature and scale of the proposal and local people have an opportunity to comment before proposals reach an advanced stage.

There are many pre-application consultation techniques currently being used by the Council, not all these methods will be suitable for each pre-application consultation, it is essential to match the consultation methods with the individual planning proposal. The Council uses a combination of the following.

- Public meetings and exhibitions
- Workshops
- Surgeries
- Enquiry by Design
- Development briefs

The Council produces a major sites development update leaflet every six months to inform key stakeholders and consultees about significant planning applications and progress being made with them. The development update will be distributed to the Borough’s principal libraries and will be circulated to interested consultees as well as being published on the Council’s website.

6 Resources and Management of the process

The majority of work involved in undertaking community involvement and participation proposals will be the responsibility of the Planning and Development Unit. Public consultation can be resource intensive both in terms of Officers time and production costs. Events that require considerable staff involvement, such as staffed exhibitions and workshops will need to be prioritised to the most effective stages in the preparation of Development Plan Documents. Assistance and support from other staff within the Council or partner organisations and agencies may be required as well as from Ashford's Future Team and the Ashford (Local) Strategic Partnership. Initially a non-prescriptive approach will be taken to wider community involvement, to allow flexibility so that we can enhance and build on learning experiences from past consultation events.

Wherever possible, the Planning and Development Unit will aim to undertake consultation in tandem with other initiative and strategies in order to make better use of resources and to avoid 'consultation overload'. When considering spatial elements contained within the Community Strategy we will consult with the Ashford (Local) Strategic Partnership. We will also build participation by drawing on the skills and resources of the existing Urban and Parish Forums, local interest and amenity and stakeholder groups, and the Ashford Community Network wherever it is considered appropriate.

A review of the key target groups and consultation techniques set out in the SCI to inform and involve the community will be monitored for their effectiveness and form part of the Annual Monitoring Report which will be available on the Council's website and also at the locations described in Section 4.5 in December each year. Local indicators will be used to measure social inclusion and to enable an analysis of the scale of community participation. Listed below are the community involvement indicators that will initially be used in the monitoring and review of the SCI. These indicators may be developed or changed to meet new circumstances in the future.

- Number of staffed exhibitions taken place
- Number of attendees to the staffed exhibitions
- Number of individuals invited to events
- Analysis of events tailored to 'hard to reach' groups
- Number of representations made (by consultee groups)
- Percentage of respondents who feel that the Council has taken notice of their views

In line with Planning Policy Statement 12, it will only be necessary to review the SCI if there are any significant changes to the type of groups that the Council wishes to engage or where there are changes in the techniques used to consult. A review of the SCI may also be necessary if there are any revisions to the Regulations that govern publicity and involvement in planning policy or planning applications.

Appendix 2: List of Participants

The Town and County (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, lists three different classifications of consultation bodies; specific, general, and other consultees. 'Specific' consultation bodies must be consulted on in accordance with the regulations. 'General' and 'Other' consultation bodies should be consulted upon where appropriate.

Please note, this list is not exhaustive and also relates to successor bodies where re-organisations occur.

Specific Consultation Bodies

Regulations	Consultee for Ashford
The regional planning body if the local planning authority's area is in a region other than London	Government Office for the South East South East England Regional Assembly
A relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the area of the local planning authority	Maidstone Borough Council Shepway District Council Swale Borough Council Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Rother District Council Canterbury City Council Kent County Council East Sussex County Council All Parish Councils in the Ashford Borough, including all adjoining Parish Councils of adjoining Local Authorities.
The Countryside Agency	The Countryside Agency
The Environment Agency	The Environment Agency
Highways Agency	Highways Agency
The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England	English Heritage South East Region
English Nature	English Nature
Strategic Rail Authority	Network Rail
A Regional Development Agency whose area is in or adjoins the area of the local planning authority	South East England Development Agency
Any person to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under Section 106 (3) (a) of the Communications Act 2003, and	Mobile Operators Association (MOA) Three O2

Any person who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the area of the Local Planning Authority	Orange T-mobile (UK) Limited Vodafone Channel Tunnel Rail link
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Regulations	Consultee for Ashford
Any of the bodies from the following list who are exercising functions in any part of the area of the Local Planning Authority; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strategic Health Authority ● Person to whom a licence has been granted under Section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986 ● Sewage undertaker ● Water undertaker 	Ashford Primary Care Trust Kent & Medway Strategic Health Authority British Gas Transco – South East Mid-Kent Water Ltd Southern Water The National Grid

General Consultation Bodies

(as defined within the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004).

- (a) Voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the authority's area;
- (b) Bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic, or national groups in the authority's area;
- (c) Bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the authority's area;
- (d) Bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the authority's area; and
- (e) Bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the authority's area.

The following list contains a selection of 'general' and 'other' consultation bodies and is for information only. The list is divided into broad consultee groups and should provide an indication of the types of participants, by way of an example, who may be consulted on in the preparation of policy documents.

Councillors Ward Member for Beaver Ashford
 Ward Member for Tenterden North
 County Councillor for Ashford Rural East

Parish Councils Rolvenden Parish Council
 Stanhope Parish Council



Business Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashford Town Centre Partnership Royal Mail Eurotunnel The National Trust Confederation of British Industry McArthur Glen Designer Outlet County Square Shopping Centre Eurostar Stagecoach East Kent Limited Business Link Kent
Land Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashford Landowners Group House Builders Developers Landowners
Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Partnerships Learning and Skills Council Tourism South East Ashford (Local) Strategic Partnership Ashford Community Network Halcrow Consulting Limited William Harvey Hospital Kent Institute of Art and Design Kent County Constabulary Urban Initiatives
General Interest Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kent Energy Centre Ashford Museum Ashford Rural Trust Victoria Road Residents Association Wye Flood Group Kent RIGS Group Salvation Army Housing Association Ashford Fire Brigade
General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents of the Borough
Hard to Reach Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashford Access Kent Association of the Disabled Shopmobility

Appendix 3 – Minimum Consultation Requirements

The minimum consultation requirements as specified within the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 are set out below.

Development Plan Documents (DPD) and Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

Pre-submission consultation (Regulation 25)

The local planning authority must consult:

- Each of the ‘specific’ consultation bodies (defined within Appendix 2) to the extent that the local planning authority thinks that the proposed subject matter of the DPD affects the body.
- The ‘general’ consultation bodies (defined within Appendix 2) considered appropriate by the local planning authority.
- Pre-submission consultation requirements for the SCI are satisfied if the authority consults the regional planning body; each relevant authority within or adjoining the area of the local planning authority; and the Highways Agency.

Pre-submission public participation (Regulation 26)

The local planning authority must consult for six weeks with the following as minimum standards:

- Make copies of the pre-submission proposals document(1) and a statement of the proposals matters(2) available for inspection during normal office hours at their principal office (Civic Centre), and at other appropriate places (e.g. main libraries).
- Publish on the Councils website the pre-submissions proposals documents, the proposals matters, and a statement detailing that the pre-submissions proposals document is available for inspections, and the places and times at which they can be inspected.
- Send to the DPD bodies(3) the authority’s proposals for the DPD, supporting documents as are relevant to the body to which the documents are being sent, a notice of the proposals matters, and a statement detailing that the pre-submissions proposals document is available for inspections, and the places and times at which they can be inspected.
- Give notice by local advertisement of the proposal matters and the places and times at which they can be inspected.

(1) Pre-submission proposals documents – means the authorities proposals for the DPD and such supporting documents as in the opinion of the authority are relevant to those proposals.

(2) Proposals matters – means the proposed title of the DPD, the proposed subject matter and area of the DPD, the period within which representations on the proposals may be made, the address to which and, where appropriate, the person to whom representations must be sent, a statement that any representations may be accompanied by a request to be notified at a specified address that DPD has been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination and of the adoption of the DPD.

(3) DPD bodies – means the bodies consulted by the Borough Council under the pre-submission consultation (Regulation 25).

Submission public consultation (Regulation 28)

As soon as reasonably practicable after the authority submit a DPD to the Secretary of State they must arrange for a six week consultation period with the following as minimum standards:

- Make copies of the DPD documents(4) and a statement of the DPD matters(5) available for inspection during normal office hours at the places at which the pre-submission proposals documents were made available (under Regulation 26).
 - Publish on the Councils website the DPD documents, the DPD matters, and a statement of the fact that the DPD documents are available for inspection and of the places and times at which they can be inspected.
 - Send to each of the DPD bodies copies of the DPD, the sustainability appraisal report, the pre-submission consultation statement(6), such of the supporting documents sent to the Secretary of State, a notice of the DPD matters, and a statement of the fact that the DPD documents are available for inspection and of the places and times at which they can be inspected.
 - Give notice by local advertisement of the DPD matters, the fact that the DPD documents are available for inspection and of the places and times at which they can be inspected.
 - Give notice to those persons who requested to be notified of the submission of the DPD to the Secretary of State that it has been submitted.
- (4) DPD documents – mean the DPD, the sustainability appraisal report, the pre-submission consultation statement, such supporting documents as in the opinion of the authority are relevant to the preparation of the DPD.
- (5) DPD matters – means the title of the DPD, the subject matter of, and the area covered by the DPD, the period within which representations on the DPD may be made, the address to which and, where appropriate, the person to whom representations must be sent, a statement that any representations may be accompanied by a request to be notified at a specified address of the publication of the recommendations arising from the appointed Inspector’s consideration of the DPD or the adoption of the DPD or both.
- (6) Pre-submission consultation statement – means a statement setting out which of the bodies they have consulted (under regulation 25), how these bodies and any other persons whom the authority have consulted, were consulted, a summary of the main issues raised in those consultations, and how those main issues have been addressed in the DPD.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Public participation (Regulation 17)

The local planning authority must before adopting a SPD allow a four to six week public participation period with the following minimum standards:

- Make copies of the SPD document(7) and a statement of the SPD matters(8) available for inspection during normal office hours at their principal office (Civic Centre), and at other appropriate places (e.g. main libraries).
 - Publish on the Councils website the SPD documents, the SPD matters, and a statement of the fact that the SPD documents are available for inspection and of the places and times at which they can be inspected.
 - Prepare a statement setting out the names of any persons the authority consulted in connection with the preparation of the SPD, how those persons were consulted, a summary of the main issues raised in these consultations, how those issues have been addressed in the SPD.
 - Send to relevant specific consultation bodies and relevant general consultation bodies the SPD, the sustainability appraisal report, a consultation statement(9) the relevant supporting documents, a notice of the SPD matters and supporting statement (providing the consultation details and procedures).
 - Give notice by local advertisement of the SPD matters, the fact that the SPD documents are available for inspection and the places and times at which they can be inspected.
 - Consult with the Regional Planning Body to ensure conformity with Regional Spatial Strategy.
- (7) SPD documents – means the SPD, the sustainability appraisal report, the consultation statement, and relevant supporting documents.
- (8) SPD matters – means the title of the SPD, the subject matter of, and the area covered by, the SPD, the period within which representations about the SPD must be made, the address, and where appropriate the person to whom representations must be sent;
- (9) SPD consultation statement – means a statement setting out the names of any persons whom the authority consulted in connection with the preparation of the SPD, how those persons were consulted, a summary of the main issues raised in those consultations, how those issues have been addressed in the SPD.

Appendix 4 – Glossary

- AAP** Area Action Plans
These Plans will be area specific policies and proposals and will focus on implementation, providing an important mechanism for ensuring development of an appropriate scale, mix and quality.
- AMR** Annual Monitoring Report
Part of the local development framework, the annual monitoring report will assess the implementation of the local development scheme and to the extent which policies in local development documents are being successfully implemented.
- DPD** Development Plan Document
Development Plan Document is the name given to any of the policies that makes up the local development framework, and should include: the Core Strategy: Site-specific allocations of land and Area Action Plans (where needed).
- LDD** Local Development Documents
The individual documents that set out planning policies for specific topics or geographical areas.
- LDF** Local Development Frameworks
The name of the portfolio which contains all the policies and documents that collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the Borough.
- LDS** Local Development Scheme
The document which sets out what the local planning authority is proposing to do and when, a timetable for the production of the Local Development Framework.
- PPS** Planning Policy Statement
These are being phase in to replace the Planning Policy Guidance notes and are Government statements on national planning policy.
- RSS** Regional Spatial Strategies
Regional Spatial Strategies replace the old Regional Planning Guidance and sets out the regions policies in relation to the development and use of land and forms part of the development plan.
- SA** Sustainability Appraisal
Assessment of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the policies and proposals contained within the Local Development Framework.
- SEA** Strategic Environmental Assessment
Generic term used to describe environmental assessment as applied to policies, plans and programmes.
- SPD** Supplementary Planning Documents
These are being phased in to replace the Supplementary Planning Guidance, and are non-statutory documents that expand upon policies or proposals in the Development Plan Documents.

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