

Statement of Community Involvement

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement sets out the overall approach we take to involving the community with land use planning.
- 1.2 As residents, businesses and organisations within the local community, we want you to feel empowered to get involved with planning should you wish to. We aim to work positively and proactively with local communities to make sure:
- you are fully informed
 - you feel involved in the decision-making process
 - you have timely and meaningful opportunities to have a say.
- 1.3 The district councils have a significant role in shaping our built environment. As the Local Planning Authorities, we are responsible for making planning decisions in the districts. We have made a commitment in our **South** and **Vale** Corporate Plans to ensure this is done successfully and in a way that is in the local communities' best interests.
- 1.4 This draft Statement of Community Involvement is a joint one covering both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils, and will replace the existing Statements of Community Involvement for each district. We have decided to produce a joint Statement of Community Involvement because the councils are now working together to prepare a joint local plan.
- 1.5 This draft Statement of Community Involvement is being made available for comment for a six-week period from **8th September to 20th October 2021**. By consulting on this document, we are providing an opportunity for local communities, businesses and other relevant stakeholders to comment on the process and methods that we intend to use across the planning service.
- 1.6 Once the consultation has ended we will review all the comments received and make any necessary changes. The Statement of Community Involvement will be adopted by both councils, expected to happen in December 2021, and we will then carry out consultation on planning policy document and planning applications in line with the processes set out in the document.

WHAT IS A STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT?

- 1.7 A Statement of Community Involvement explains **when, how, and why** you will be invited to participate in planning related issues, such as plan making, neighbourhood plans and planning applications.
- 1.8 [National Planning Practice Guidance](#) issued by central Government sets out that Statements of Community Involvement must be reviewed every five years. Each time, we review our consultation methods to ensure that we engage effectively with local communities at all key stages of the planning process. Technology is opening new ways to get involved in planning, which we have added in this review. We have also updated our practices to take account of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to keep our communities safe.

OUR VISION AND VALUES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 1.9 We want you to have the opportunity to make a real and lasting difference to the areas where they live and work. We value involvement from the community in local plan preparation and in planning applications.
- 1.10 Our vision is for consultation to be fair, equal, meaningful and worthwhile.
- 1.11 We will do this by:
- **involving you in all formal stages of plan making** and wherever possible ensure early involvement in the preparation of our planning policy documents, so that you are involved from the start
 - **make information available**, raise awareness of planning matters and ensure people are kept up to date at all relevant stages
 - analyse responses carefully and, where appropriate, **provide clear feedback** to participants after an engagement exercise within a published timescale. Where possible, this will include changes we have made as a result of comments
- 1.12 We will do this while complying with all legislation that is currently in force or that comes into force in the future. All data that we store and publish will be compliant with the councils' data protection policy.
- 1.13 We are committed to equality and ensuring that everyone has access to our services. We comply with the **Equalities Act 2010** and the **Human Rights Act 1998** and have developed a **Corporate Equality Policy** which sets out our commitment to equality in everything we do. As active members of **The Consultation Institute** we are committed to the Consultation Charter, which encourages high standards of engagement and consultation.
- 1.14 In line with best practice, we aim to:
- use Plain English in our documents and consultation
 - reduce the use of planning jargon
 - increase meaningful engagement
 - improve how we use online technology and social media platforms
 - live-stream and record meetings where possible
 - reach out to all sectors and age groups, including those who are 'seldom

heard'

- be transparent and clear about the planning process, what is being proposed and the scope for you to influence the outcome
- improve the style and accessibility of our documents.

OUR METHODS OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 1.15 We will use the most appropriate methods to consult and engage local residents, businesses, organisations and statutory consultees to ensure that engagement is proportionate and meaningful. We will combine written methods like emails, online technology (including our website and social media), and face-to-face methods.
- 1.16 We will make consultation documents available to view in hard copy in selected deposit locations, such as local libraries, across the districts. We will use posters and put them up in libraries, community noticeboards and other venues as appropriate. We may also use focus groups, workshops, meetings (face to face and virtual) and the telephone to engage with communities.

REGISTER FOR UPDATES

- 1.17 We use tools like press releases and social media to let people know when we are consulting on planning policies. To make sure you don't miss out on consultation news, you can register on the council's 'have your say' consultation database to hear from us directly. Here are some examples of the types of information you might receive:
- If you sign up to the **general consultation** database you will receive notifications on a wide range of council matters and policies for example, car parking, homelessness and rough sleeping, taxi licensing, council tax and the Corporate Plans.
 - If you sign up to the **planning policy consultation database** you will hear about planning consultations and find out how to get involved in the development of planning policies and documents, for example the joint local plan.
- 1.18 The councils' consultation databases are kept in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations. Please [sign up](#) if you would like to be registered to either of our consultation databases.

- 1.19 If you change your mind and do not wish to receive updates from us, you can always **opt out**. Please note, we may still need to contact you for certain consultations if we have a legal obligation to do so.

2. PLANNING POLICY

- 2.1 Planning policies are prepared and implemented by the district councils to guide where, when and how development can take place. Planning policies are found in a variety of policy documents which all make up both district's Development Plans. The **Development Plan** is then used to determine planning applications.
- 2.2 Development Plans set out a vision and a planning framework for future development of an area. Development Plan Documents include local plans and neighbourhood plans. They often cover topics such as:
- safeguarding the environment (eg. climate mitigation, renewable energy, sustainable construction)
 - community facilities
 - infrastructure
 - high quality design
 - the economy (including how much office/research/business space is needed and where)
 - housing (how many homes are planned for and where).
- 2.3 The statutory stages in the preparation of these documents are set out in the **Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012**.
- 2.4 The councils have produced a timeline for preparing all of our planning policy documents - the **Joint Local Development Scheme**. It is regularly updated so people are aware of upcoming opportunities to participate in the preparation of planning policy documents.

POLICY DOCUMENTS WE PREPARE AND HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

LOCAL PLAN

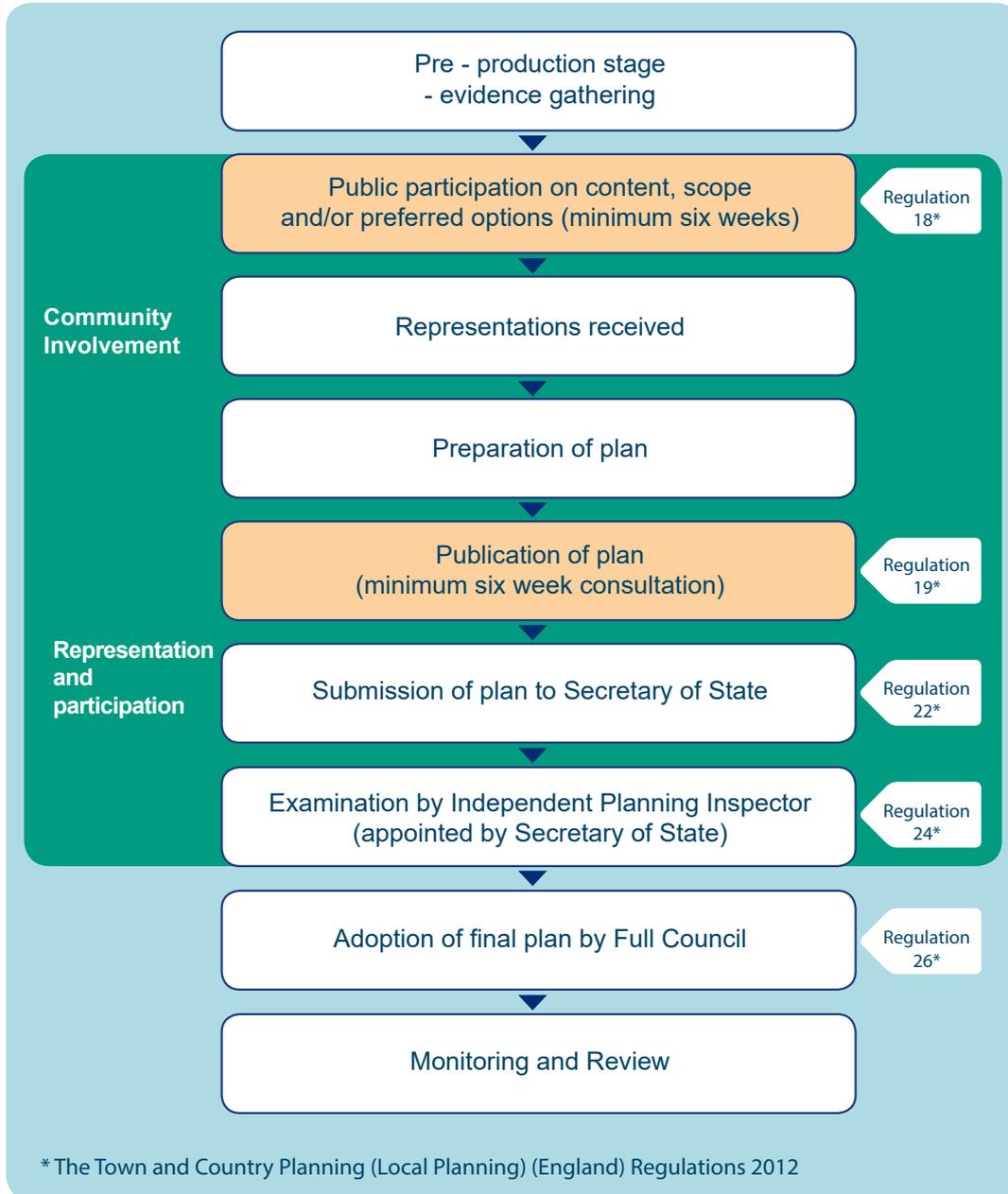
- 2.5 Local plans are tools used in guiding decisions about individual development proposals, from large scale new housing sites to a single new home or extension. local plans generally plan ahead for at least the next 15-20 years.
- 2.6 All local authorities are required to have an up-to-date local plan (no more than five years old).
- 2.7 We are working to produce a joint local plan that will cover both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts. The joint local plan, when finished and adopted, will replace the existing South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 and the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Parts 1 and 2. It will become part of the Development Plan for both districts.

The key stages of preparing a local plan and when you can get involved are:

- **Plan Preparation (Regulation 18)**
This stage includes public consultation for a minimum of six weeks on a draft plan. There can be more than one consultation during this stage as the plan develops.
- **Plan Publication (Regulation 19)**
This stage consists of a public consultation for a minimum of six weeks on the proposed policies that will be in the plan.
- **Plan Examination (Regulation 24)**
The plan is examined by an independent planning Inspector. During the examination process the Inspector will review the comments submitted during the Regulation 19 consultation. People who have made comments can ask to participate in the local plan hearings.
- **Plan Adoption (Regulation 26)**
The plan is formally adopted by the council(s). The plan becomes part of the development plan and is used to determine planning applications.

These key stages are shown in Diagram 1

Diagram 1: Key stages of preparing a local plan

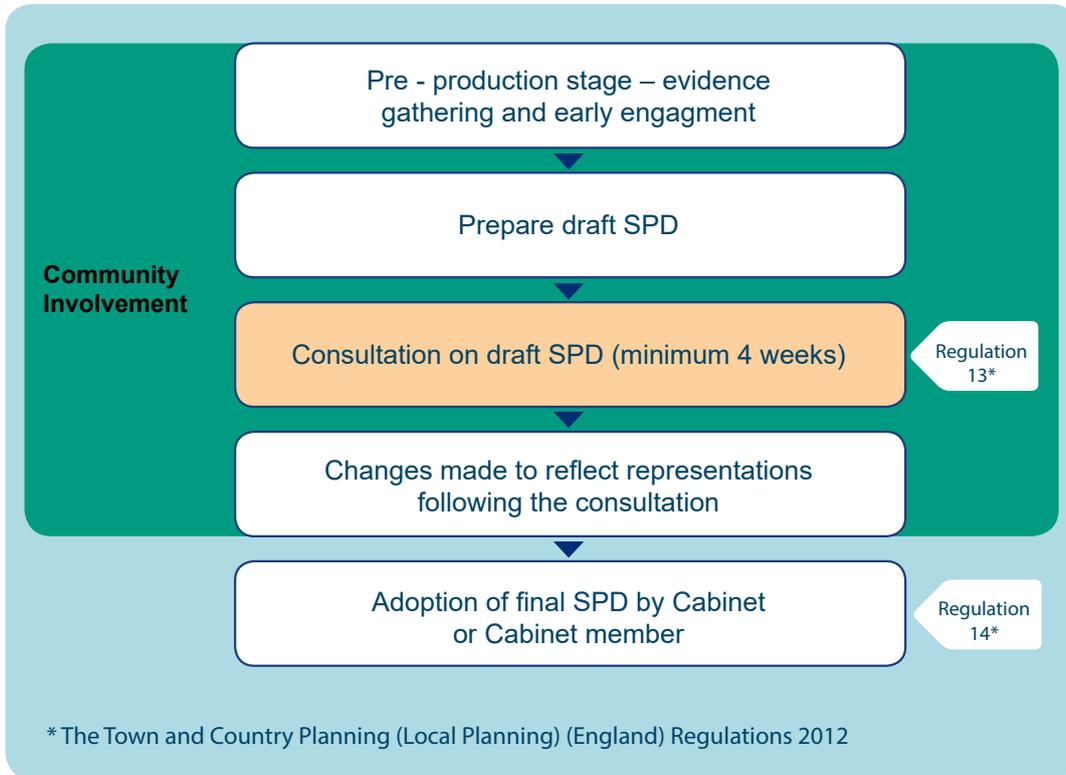


SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

- 2.8 Supplementary planning documents, also known as SPDs, add further detail to policies in a local plan. They can provide further guidance about development on specific allocated sites, or on particular issues, such as design or affordable housing. They help explain how the policy should be implemented but cannot be used to set out new policy. SPDs can generally be produced in a shorter period of time than a local plan because, although they go through a formal consultation stage, there is no examination by a planning inspector.
- 2.9 More information on SPDs for [South](#) and [Vale](#) can be found on our websites.
- 2.10 As with local plans the statutory requirements for preparing supplementary planning documents are set out in the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) and summarised below.
- **Supplementary planning document preparation**
In this stage the councils work on preparing a draft supplementary planning document
 - **Public consultation on draft supplementary planning document (Regulation 13)**
This stage consists of a public consultation for a minimum of four weeks on the draft document
 - **Review of consultation responses**
In this stage the council will consider all the comments received during the consultation and make any changes to the supplementary planning document. The council will produce a statement summarising the main issues raised during consultation and how they have been addressed.
 - **Adoption of supplementary planning document (Regulation 14)**
The supplementary planning document is formally adopted by the council(s) and becomes a material consideration in planning decisions

This process is summarised in the following diagram 2:

Diagram 2: Key stages of preparing a supplementary planning document



COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

- 2.11 The Community Infrastructure Levy is a charge that developers pay to councils to contribute towards the cost of infrastructure. Developers pay the levy based on the amount of floor space created in their developments. The money collected through the levy can be spent on a wide range of projects such as transport schemes, community facilities, parks and leisure facilities.

- 2.12 [Vale of White Horse](#) and [South Oxfordshire](#) district councils are both classed as ‘charging authorities’ and so we charge CIL on certain types of development that are carried out in this area. A CIL charging schedule sets out how much the charges are, and the types of development that are charged.

- 2.13 The statutory process for preparing or updating a CIL charging schedule is set out in the [Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010](#) (as amended) and can be summarised as:
 - **Preliminary draft charging schedule is prepared by the council**
 During this stage the council gather evidence and draft a charging schedule

 - **Consultation on the preliminary draft charging schedule (Regulation 15)**
 This stage consists of a public consultation for a minimum of four weeks on the preliminary draft charging schedule.

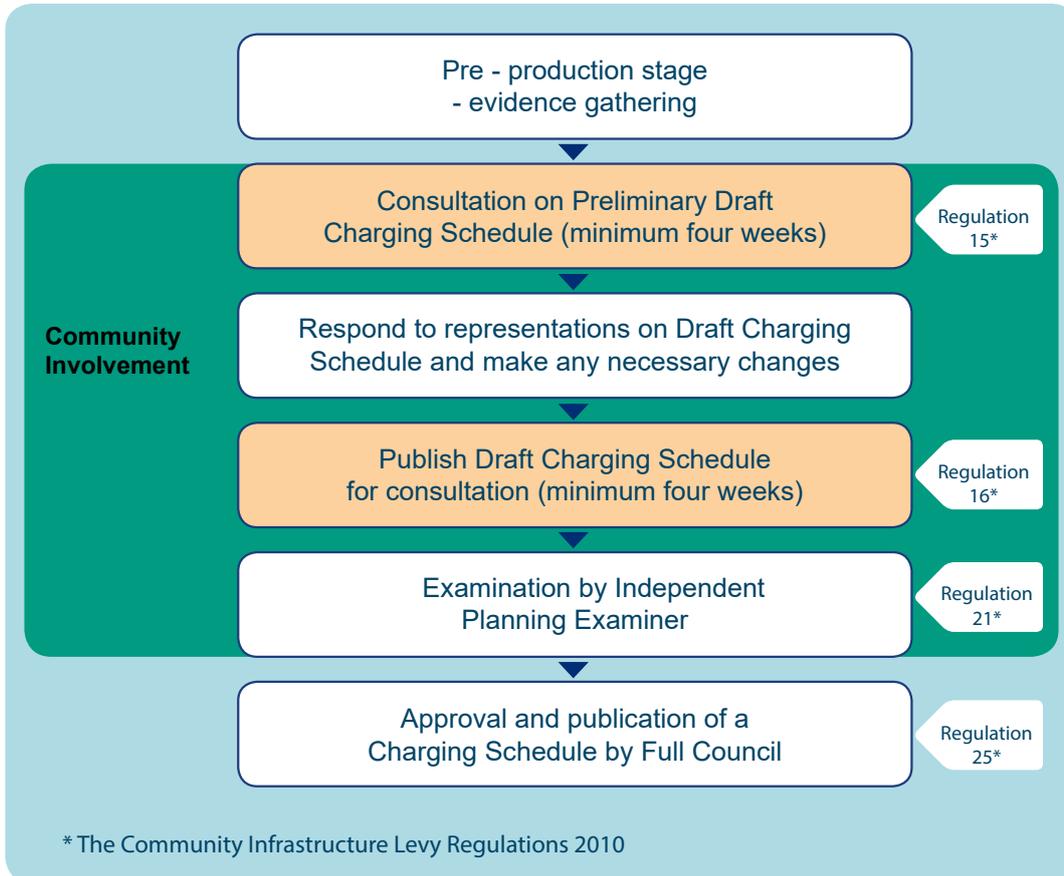
 - **Publication of draft charging schedule (Regulation 16)**
 Once the council has reviewed the Regulation 15 consultation responses and made any changes needed, the draft charging schedule is then published for a further public consultation of a minimum of four weeks.

 - **Examination of the charging schedule (Regulation 21)**
 The charging schedule is examined by an independent examiner. During the examination process the examiner will review the comments submitted during the Regulation 16 consultation.

 - **Approval of charging schedule (Regulation 25)**
 In this stage the final charging schedule is approved and published by the council. The new charges can then come into force.

These key stages are shown in diagram 3.

Diagram 3: Key stages of preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- 2.14 Neighbourhood planning is a way for local people and communities to take a lead on planning for the future of their area. Neighbourhood planning can be led by a town or parish council or by a designated neighbourhood forum.
- 2.15 Neighbourhood plans set out the vision, objectives and planning policies that shape development in a local area. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils both support neighbourhood planning and we have dedicated officers to help communities prepare their own plans. A neighbourhood plan has the same legal status as a local plan (and other documents that form part of the development plan) once it has been approved at a referendum. At this point it comes into force as part of the development plan.

The key stages in preparing a neighbourhood plan and where communities can get involved are:

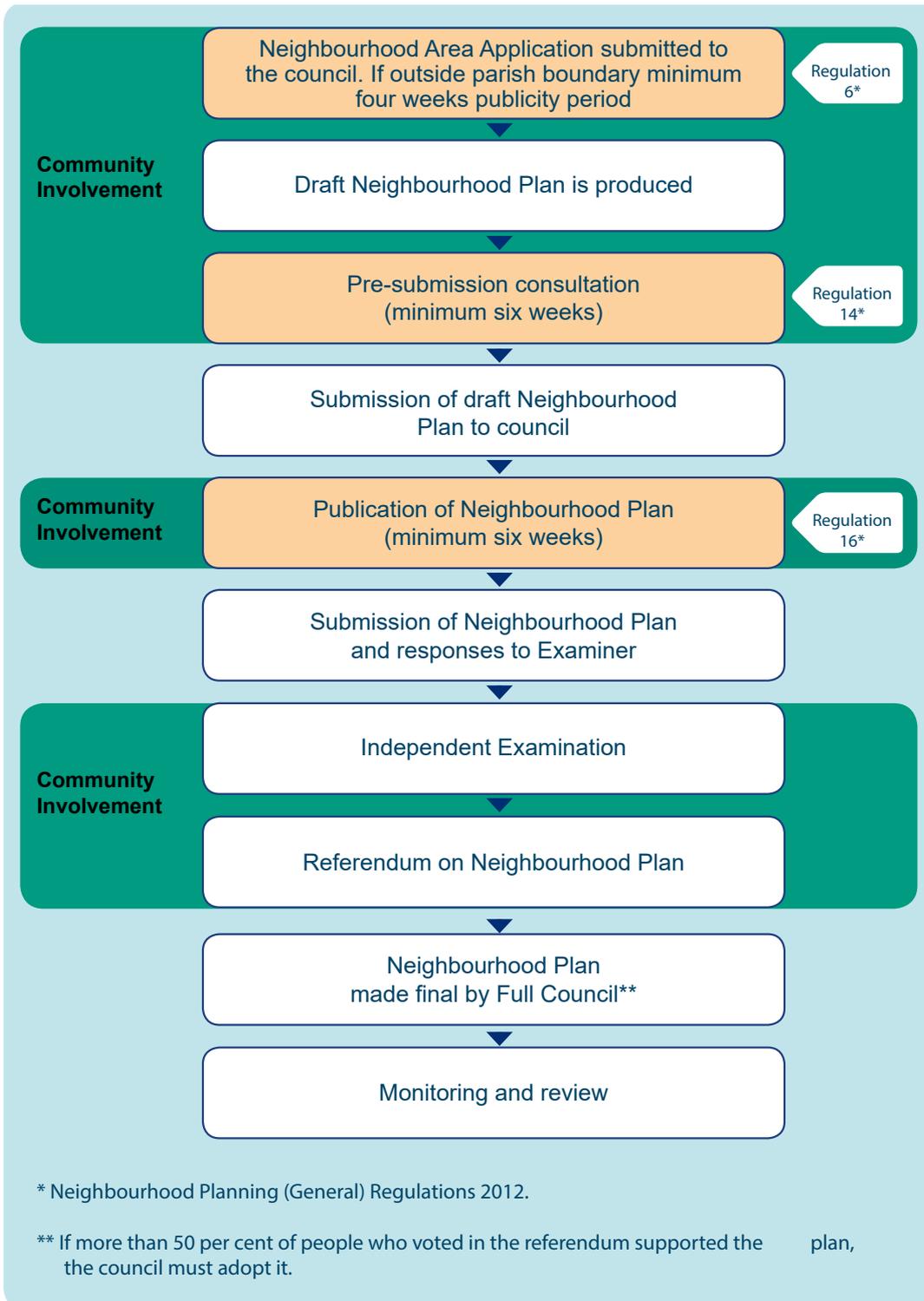
- **Council approves a Neighbourhood Area application (Regulation 6)**
A Neighbourhood Area application is submitted to the council by a neighbourhood planning group. This stage includes public consultation for a minimum of four weeks if the proposed Neighbourhood Area falls outside the parish boundary. Once the Neighbourhood Area is approved by the council work can start on preparing a neighbourhood plan.
- **Pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14)**
This stage consists of a public consultation for a minimum of six weeks on the draft neighbourhood plan. The plan is then submitted to the council.
- **Publication of neighbourhood plan (Regulation 16)**
This stage consists of a public consultation for a minimum of six weeks on the neighbourhood plan. The plan is then sent to an independent examiner.
- **Examination of the neighbourhood plan**
The plan is examined by an independent examiner. During the examination process the examiner will review the comments submitted during the Regulation 16 consultation.
- **Referendum on the neighbourhood plan**
A local referendum is held where voters are asked whether or not the neighbourhood plan should come into force. For the plan to be 'made'

i.e adopted by the council, at least half of voters must vote 'yes'

- **Plan is made final by Full Council**

These key stages are shown in diagram 4.

Diagram 4: Key stages of preparing a neighbourhood plan



NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT ORDERS

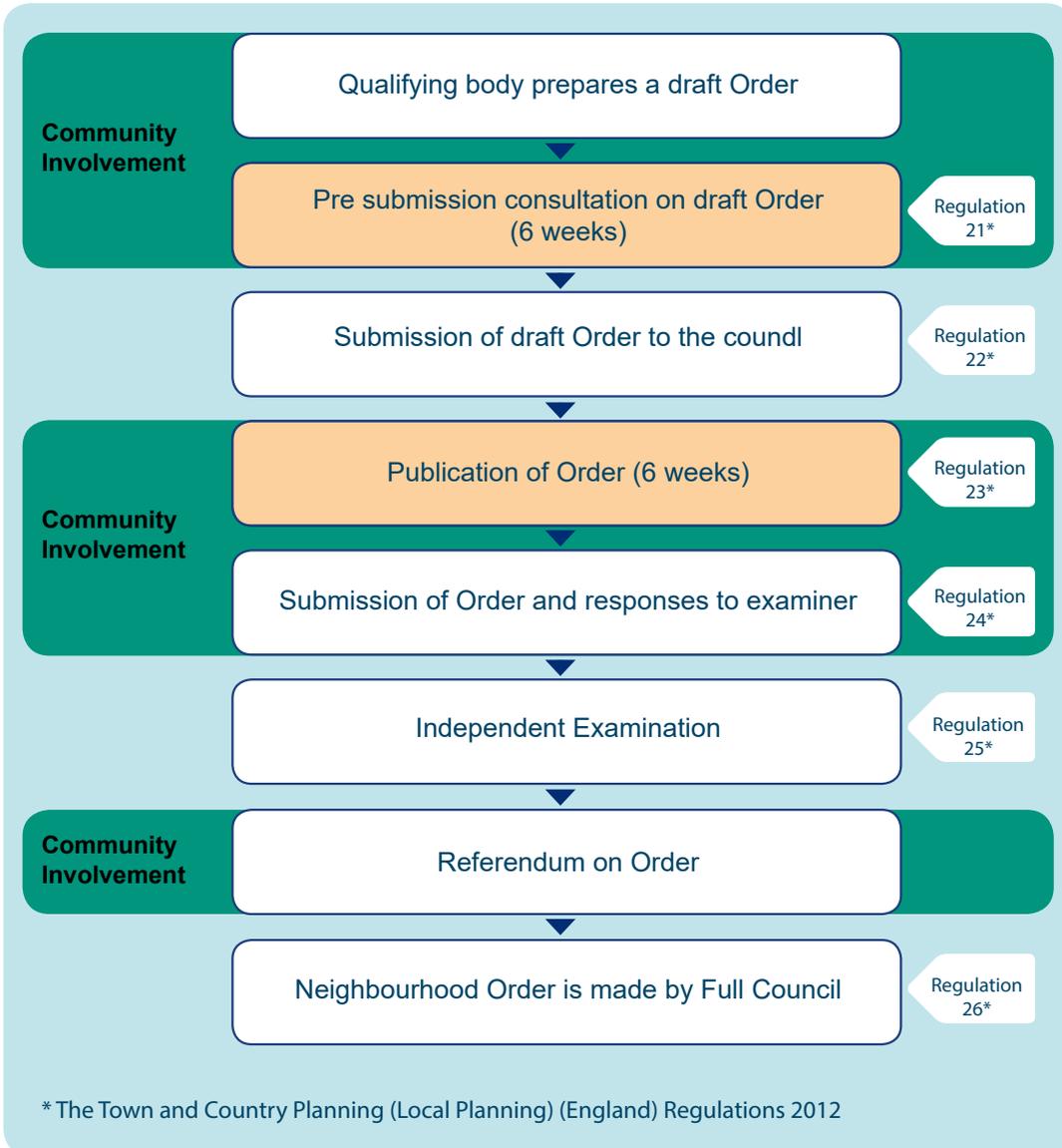
2.16 A Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) is another tool that communities can use, this time to permit different types of development without the need for planning permission. When preparing a Neighbourhood Development Order, it must still be in line with national and local policy and other legal requirements. The town or parish council or neighbourhood forum is the only body that can prepare an NDO. Some community organisations can develop a Community Right to Build Order in an area. A Community Right to Build Order is a form of Neighbourhood Development Order that can be created by a local community organisation, and so not restricted to a town or parish council or neighbourhood forum and can be used to grant planning permission for small scale development for community benefit on a specific site or sites in a neighbourhood area.

The process of developing a NDO and where communities can get involved are set out below:

- **A draft Order is prepared**
A draft Order is prepared by the parish council or neighbourhood forum
- **Pre-submission consultation on draft Order (Regulation 21)**
This stage consists of a public consultation for a minimum of six weeks on the draft Order.
- **Submission of Order to the council (Regulation 22)**
Publication of Order (Regulation 23)
- **This stage consists of a public consultation for a minimum of six weeks on the Order**
The Order is then sent to an independent examiner.
- **Examination of the Order (Regulation 25)**
The Order is examined by an independent examiner. During the examination process the examiner will review the comments submitted during the Regulation 23 consultation.
- **Referendum on the Order**
A local referendum is held where voters are asked whether or not the Order should come into force. For the order to be 'made' by the council, at least half of voters must vote 'yes'
- **Order is made final by Full Council (Regulation 26)**

This process is shown in diagram 5

Diagram 5: Key stages of preparing a neighbourhood development order



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING SUPPORT WE OFFER

- 2.17 We encourage and support local communities wishing to prepare a neighbourhood plan or a neighbourhood development order and we have allocated resources to help with this.
- 2.18 Our dedicated Neighbourhood Planning Team provides support to groups as they go through the process of developing their neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order. We also have a step-by-step [neighbourhood plan toolkit](#) online.
- 2.19 Our support includes:
- advice and guidance throughout plan development including an introductory meeting to discuss the group’s aims and outline the overall process
 - a lead officer to attend meetings, where appropriate, and offer expert advice
 - advice on how to obtain funding
 - advice on external sources of support and guidance that is available to groups
 - advice on engaging with the local community - including how and why groups need to record this
 - informing groups which external organisations and statutory bodies will need to be consulted
 - advice on what evidence is required to help groups write their plan
 - running statutory consultations on area designation proposals (where appropriate) as well as submitted plans
 - reviewing draft neighbourhood plans to ensure they meet the basic conditions
 - organising the Independent Examination and Referendum for the plan.
- 2.20 We run the council’s statutory neighbourhood plan and neighbourhood development order consultations and publicity periods and advise groups on the statutory duty they need to follow when carrying out their own consultations.
- 2.21 We also provide advice to neighbourhood planning groups on best practice community engagement to help them gather views from all those within their neighbourhood area. This may be done through meetings, workshops and written

guidance and we can provide support with surveys, public engagement events and communications. For example, we advise groups on:

- the different consultation and engagement methods that could be used
- the consultation materials required
- those who should be consulted and at what stage
- organising consultation and engagement events, and
- the publication and distribution of consultation documents

2.22 If you would like to find out more information regarding neighbourhood planning or neighbourhood development orders, including contact details, please go to the neighbourhood planning webpages for [South](#) and [Vale](#).

OTHER DOCUMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Oxfordshire Plan 2050

2.23 The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is a joint strategic plan being prepared on behalf of all of the district and the city councils in Oxfordshire: Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire. It is a strategic planning document that will provide a joined-up approach to planning across the county over the period to 2050. Once adopted, it will become part of the Development Plan for each Oxfordshire council.

2.24 The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 has its own Statement of Community Involvement, and the Oxfordshire Plan team run their own consultations on the Oxfordshire Plan, which you can take part in.

2.25 Further information including the timeline for delivering the Oxfordshire Plan, and how you can sign up and get involved can be found on the [Oxfordshire Plan website](#).

Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Plan

2.26 Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for preparing and consulting on this plan to provide up to date minerals and waste planning policies and proposals for the period up to 2031. For more information on this plan, please visit the [Oxfordshire County Council website](#).

Diagram 6: Relationship of development plan documents and wider national policies and frameworks



CONSULTATION ON PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENTS

WHO WE CONSULT

- 2.27 There are legal requirements on who we must consult when preparing planning policy documents such as the joint local plan. These are set out in Part 1 of the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#).
- 2.28 There are special requirements for consulting some specific organisations identified as 'specific and general consultation bodies':

Specific and general consultation bodies

- 2.29 Government regulations are clear about how important it is that certain bodies are consulted at key stages when preparing local planning policy documents (these bodies are sometimes referred to as statutory consultees). They include bodies such as the Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England and Highways England, and any other organisation that we have a duty to cooperate with, including neighbouring councils¹. We will always consult on our planning policy documents with the relevant consultation bodies in accordance with the regulations, as set out above.

Local communities and other interested parties

- 2.30 The local community includes, but is not limited to:
- residents
 - town and parish councils
 - local interest groups
 - access groups
 - local businesses
 - local community groups and organisations
 - faith groups, schools, colleges and higher education providers
 - 'seldom-heard' groups.

HOW WE WILL CONSULT

- 2.31 At all stages of plan-making, we will publicise any consultation material and accompanying documents on our website and via social media and provide links to these documents. Consultees registered on our planning policy consultation database will be notified of all planning policy consultations and relevant updates. From time to time we may also contact consultees registered on our general council consultation database, where a planning policy document might be of interest. We will contact you by email, where one is provided and this is your preferred method of contact.
- 2.32 If your preferred method of contact is by post we will send you a letter notifying you of the consultation. We are using online and social media more than ever and trying to reduce printing as part of our commitment to tackle the Climate Emergency. We will ask if you are interested in reducing your impact on the environment by going paper free, and if you wish to change your contact preference from post to email, please email haveyoursay@southandvale.gov.uk or call 01235 422425.
- 2.33 We will also make information available in other ways on request (for example, large print, audio, Braille, Easy Read and alternative languages).
- 2.34 The methods of consultation we use will vary depending on the nature of the planning policy document, the stage of the document being consulted on and the geographical scope or nature of the planning issue covered in the document.
- 2.35 Depending on the scope of the consultation, the engagement methods we will use can include one or more of the examples set out in the table below, which is not an exclusive list.

Method	Actions
 Emails	<p>We will send email communications to everyone who is registered on our planning consultation database to receive planning policy updates. Relevant stakeholders, including statutory organisations will also be informed. We may consult consultees that are registered on our general consultation database if we think they may have an interest in the consultation.</p>
 Documents	<p>We will make our planning documents available online on our website and make you aware when they are published using the appropriate council communication channels, including social media. We will provide paper copies of consultation documents in selected deposit locations, such as local libraries, across the district.</p> <p>Planning documents will be published on our websites and we will provide hard copies of our documents at our offices upon request.</p>
 Website	<p>We will make the following available on our website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning policy documents • consultations • supporting information • links to online questionnaires and feedback forms
 Local Press	<p>We will promote major consultations in the local press by issuing press releases and paid notices where appropriate.</p>
 Social Media	<p>We will make use of the councils' various social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to communicate planning policy news, including live consultations.</p>
 Letters	<p>We will post letters to those who have requested to be kept informed by post, and encourage consultees to use online methods where possible and when it can make engagement easier.</p>

HOW YOU CAN RESPOND TO CONSULTATIONS

- 2.36 For most planning policy consultations, we offer an online survey. We also accept comments by email or by letter. Using the online survey is our preferred way for you to respond to consultations as it makes processing the responses simpler. If you find it difficult to use the online survey, please ask, we are happy to help you.

HOW WE WILL RESPOND TO YOU ON PLANNING POLICY

- 2.37 Once a consultation period has ended and we have read and logged all the responses, we will prepare a report and publish a summary of the responses. The report is called a consultation statement and is prepared after every statutory consultation. Each consultation statement sets out how we have considered the comments made during the consultation before moving to the next stage of plan-making. We make our consultation statements available on our website and on request at our council offices, when open to the public.
- 2.38 The comments we receive on our planning policy documents will be made publicly available on our websites at the earliest opportunity, once the consultation has finished.

MONITORING OF PLANNING POLICIES

- 2.39 We regularly publish an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for each council. We use this to report how many new homes and other developments have been permitted and to check whether adopted policies are being effectively implemented. It also allows communities and interested parties to track the progress we are making towards delivering the vision and objectives set out in the local plan.

LOOKING AHEAD

- 2.40 We have tried to prepare for future changes on the horizon that might require us to vary our consultation methods. If necessary, we will update our Statement of Community Involvement to ensure it is up to date.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- 2.41 The restrictions that were put in place in March 2020 changed the way we, and all councils, had to consult and engage. There has been more focus on digital consultation instead of face-to-face events. There have been some positive outcomes from these changes. We have found that more people have taken part in our consultations and engagement surveys. It is more flexible as people can access information at any time using mobile phones or devices rather than attending an event in person. Some people feel more comfortable attending an event online than in person. It has also reduced the need for people to travel, and the impact this has on carbon emissions. We have also reduced the number of documents we have printed, saving paper and reducing waste.
- 2.42 We will continue to explore new and effective ways to carry out consultations and to learn from what is and is not successful when engaging with our communities. Even as restrictions are lifted and face-to-face events are allowed, we will continue to develop ways that people can engage digitally.

Temporary measures

- 2.43 In April 2020 the Government introduced [temporary measures](#) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to change the way we operate, including how we consult. The measures were designed to make it easier to operate the planning system during periods of restrictions, and included removing the requirement to provide paper copies of documents for inspection. The temporary measures expire on 31 December 2021. As a result, we varied our consultation methods and introduced

new ways of interacting with our communities:

- holding public meetings online and making livestreams and recordings available to watch via our [YouTube channel](#);
- exploring other ways that we can carry out public events, workshops and exhibitions, for example holding virtual online exhibitions
- planning documents are published on our website
- we use digital technology whenever possible

CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM

- 2.44 In August 2020 Government consulted on a package of proposals to reform the planning system in England, called '[Planning for the Future](#)'. The aim of the reforms is to streamline and modernise the planning process. If these proposals are implemented there could be some significant changes to how and when local residents, businesses, organisations and statutory consultees engage in the planning process. One of the key proposals in the reforms is to make more use of interactive digital technology in the plan-making process.
- 2.45 The Government is reviewing the feedback on the consultation and will decide what changes will be taken forward, along with any necessary supporting legislation.

3. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 Development management is the name given to the work we undertake in the planning service to pro-actively manage development in the local area. It includes the process of deciding planning applications, planning enforcement (dealing with alleged breaches of planning legislation) and planning appeals.
- 3.2 The development management team is responsible for assessing planning applications in accordance with the adopted Development Plan, the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#), the [Planning Practice Guidance \(NPPG\)](#) and other material considerations, including consultation responses about a proposal. The development management team also defends decisions at appeal and investigates and enforces against breaches of planning control.

TYPES OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- 3.3 We receive several types of planning applications. The most common types that we receive include 'major', 'minor' and 'other' applications whose definitions are prescribed by Government, as set out below:



Major Applications

Applications for developments of 10 or more homes, or 1,000 sqm or more gross non-residential floorspace (including changes of use of existing buildings).



Minor Applications

Applications for developments of up to 9 homes or up to 999 sqm gross non-residential floorspace (including changes of use of existing buildings and changes of use of open land).



Other Applications

Includes all other types of planning applications including applications for the extension or alteration to a house, ancillary buildings in the garden of a house, advertisements or listed building consent.

THE PLANNING APPLICATION PROCESS

3.4 The table below outlines the process from when we receive a planning application through to making the decision:

<p>1 Registration and Allocation</p>	<p>The application has been validated, registered and allocated to a case officer.</p>
<p>2 Consultation</p>	<p>A letter is sent to neighbouring properties who share a boundary with the application site letting them know that an application has been received, who the case officer will be, and how to comment if they wish to.</p> <p>The case officer may also use their discretion to write to any additional neighbours they feel may be directly affected by the proposal, for example directly opposite the access.</p> <p>We also inform the town or parish council/parish meeting and any relevant specialist consultees.</p> <p>Where required, a statutory notice is displayed at the site.</p> <p>We publicise the submitted application on our website and comments made (in accordance with our retention schedules).</p>
<p>3 Site Visit</p>	<p>We usually visit the application site without an appointment. It is at our discretion as to whether we need to view the proposal from neighbouring land or properties.</p>
<p>4 Officer Assessment</p>	<p>This is when the planning merits of the application are assessed by the council, once the consultation deadline has expired.</p>
<p>5 Potential Negotiation and Re-consultation</p>	<p>The case officer may contact the applicant if our assessment in Step 4 above concludes that we are unable to support the application as originally submitted or we need some further information and clarification.</p> <p>If an application is formally amended to address any planning issues raised, we may consult again if we think the changes may affect different neighbours or if new issues might be raised.</p>
<p>6 Recommendation and Decision</p>	<p>Our constitution enables most application decisions to be made by the Head of Planning, under what we term 'officer delegated powers'.</p> <p>However, large and/or complicated applications are often referred to the Planning Committee for a decision, which is made up of our elected councillors.</p>

CONSULTATION ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- 3.5 Once we have registered a planning application, we will carry out consultation on the application. We will use the following methods to publicise planning applications that are submitted to us.

Method	Methods used
 <p>Email Alerts</p>	<p>If you're interested in planning applications in your area (postcode), you can sign up for email alerts. Once registered, you will receive an automatic email notification informing you of any new planning application or planning decision made in your area (within 100m radius of a postcode area) with a link to the relevant documents on our website.</p> <p>We encourage residents and businesses to subscribe to our email alerts, which (by post code) will automatically notify you of applications made in your street.</p> <p>If you live in South Oxfordshire you can sign up for email alerts here</p> <p>If you live in the Vale of White Horse you can sign up for email alerts here</p>
 <p>Neighbour Notification Letter</p>	<p>We will send a notification by either letter or email to properties adjacent to the boundary of the application site, as shown in figure 7. We may also notify others we consider to be directly affected by the proposal.</p> <p>Where proposed new development is likely to affect more properties than those that are immediately adjacent to the boundary of the site (e.g. 'major' applications), wider consultation may be carried out.</p>
 <p>Site Notice</p>	<p>Depending on the type of application, we will display a notice at the application site in a place that is visible to members of the public. For all major applications we will display at least one site notice for a minimum of 21 days.</p>
 <p>Press Notice</p>	<p>We will publicise all major planning applications in the notices section of a local newspaper. We will publicise a press notice for applications that are in conservation areas or that affect the character or appearance of a listed building.</p>
 <p>Weekly List</p>	<p>Every week we compile a list of planning applications that have been registered that week. The list is published on our website and emailed to councillors.</p>

Diagram 7: Minimum neighbourhood notification for all applications



A list of who is consulted is set out below:

Method	Actions
Statutory Bodies:	<p>Statutory bodies will be consulted on planning applications for certain types of development in accordance with relevant regulations. A list of statutory consultees is provided in the planning practice guidance.</p> <p>Consultation with these bodies will vary depending on the type of development proposed and/or the location.</p>
Neighbours:	<p>Neighbours adjacent to the boundary will be notified of planning applications. This is subject to the type of application submitted.</p> <p>If neighbouring properties cannot be identified, a site notice on or near the application property will be displayed.</p>
Town and Parish Councils/ Meetings:	<p>Town and parish councils will be notified of an application within and/or immediately adjacent to the town or parish boundary.</p> <p>They are not informed of permitted development proposals.</p>
Councillors:	<p>Ward councillors will be notified by email when an application relates to their area. Other councillors may be notified if they have requested this.</p>
Members of the Public:	<p>A public consultation will be undertaken for most applications. The scale of consultation and involvement with the community will depend upon the nature of each individual application.</p>

VIEWING AND COMMENTING ON A PLANNING APPLICATION

- 3.6 Planning applications submitted to either South Oxfordshire or Vale of White Horse councils are published on a list of all planning applications received. This is known as the planning application register.
- 3.7 You can find the register for planning applications in South Oxfordshire [here](#).
- 3.8 And the register for planning applications in Vale of White Horse [here](#).
- 3.9 You can also look on our [interactive planning map](#) to search for planning current applications and to look up a property's planning history.

The following table explains the process for commenting on an application:

We can only accept comments in writing.

We ask that all comments be made via our websites in the first instance. We also accept emails and letters.

Commenting on planning applications

When commenting on an application, it is important to provide:

- Planning application reference number
- Address of the site
- Name of the case officer

Your comments will appear publicly on the planning applications's webpage. All personal information such as telephone numbers, emails and signatures will be redacted, however addresses and names will be shown.

Please note that we don't acknowledge or respond to comments directly, due to the high numbers we receive.



Via our websites

View and comment on planning applications in **South Oxfordshire**

View and comment on planning applications in **Vale of White Horse**



By email

Registration@
southandvale.gov.uk



By post

Planning,
135 Eastern Avenue,
Millon Park,
OX14 4S8

We provide guidance on how to comment on planning applications on our websites. Comments made on a planning application are not transferred to a subsequent consultation or to a new planning application (although if an amendment is made to a current application, comments originally submitted are taken into account and do not need to be made again). If a new planning application is submitted on the same application site as a previous application, you will need to resubmit your comments for consideration.

When commenting on planning applications, it is important to comment on **material planning considerations**.

These are more likely to help shape the outcome of the application.

In accordance with our Customer Service Standards, we will not tolerate comments that contain abusive, offensive or derogatory language, or those related to a personal circumstance not directly related to the application. Any comments submitted to us in this manner will not be published.

TIME TO COMMENT ON APPLICATIONS

- 3.10 Once a planning application is registered and allocated to a planning officer, the application will be publicised online and appropriate parties will be notified. Parties have a minimum of 21 days to comment. This period is set out in article 15 of the [Town and County Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) Order](#). All comments must be made in writing, preferably through our websites, or by email, or if this is not possible then by letter, within:
- 21 days from the date of our notification letter, or
 - 21 days from the date of a press notice or site notice appearing
- 3.11 Due to the volume of correspondence we receive, it is not possible to respond to or discuss individual comments that we receive on planning applications, however a summary of these and the officers' responses are provided in the officer report.

DECISIONS ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- 3.12 Decisions on planning applications will be determined in accordance with the decision-making processes set out in the councils' constitution.
- 3.13 The constitution sets out how we, the councils, operate, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that we are efficient, transparent and accountable.
- 3.14 Further information on our constitution can be found on the [South](#) and [Vale](#) websites.

Planning Committees

- 3.15 All planning applications are allocated to a case officer who will assess the application and make a recommendation on whether the application should be approved or refused. Most applications are determined under delegated powers, which means the applications does not need to go to a planning committee for a decision. However, some larger and/or complicated planning applications will need to be determined by a planning committee.
- 3.16 South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse councils each have their own planning committee that meet regularly to discuss and make decisions on planning applications. The planning committee, which comprises elected councillors, has a duty to decide planning and other development-related applications. However,

currently around ninety percent of applications are determined under the scheme of delegation to the Head of Planning.

- 3.17 If an application that you have commented on is due to go to a planning committee for a decision, we will write to you and invite you to speak or submit a statement for the meeting. Each speaker, or group of speakers, can speak for up to three minutes (at Vale of White Horse planning committees) or five minutes (at South Oxfordshire planning committees) on each application site. If there is more than one speaker, the three or five minute slot is shared between the speakers, therefore it may be worthwhile nominating just one or two speakers. Planning committee arrangements can change, so please refer to our [South](#) and [Vale](#) websites for the latest position.
- 3.18 Agenda papers are published on our website five working days before the committee meeting. If you wish to speak or submit a statement at the meeting, please register with Planning Services by noon the last working day before the meeting by emailing planningbusinessenquiries@southandvale.gov.uk or telephone 01235 422600.

PLANNING APPEALS

- 3.19 If a planning application is refused, the applicant can either re-apply for planning permission with an alternative scheme, or they can appeal against the decision. Applicants also have the right to appeal against non-determination, if the council has not determined the application within the statutory time limits. It is also possible to appeal against any planning condition imposed on a planning permission. Appeals are made to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).
- 3.20 Only the person who applied for planning permission, or was served with an enforcement notice, has a legal right to appeal (known as the appellant). There is no right of appeal for interested people or organisations (known as third parties), or the councils.
- 3.21 There is [planning practice guidance](#) available online that provides useful information about the appeals process.
- 3.22 If an appeal is made, we will notify the interested parties of the appeal and provide information on how and when to respond to the Planning Inspectorate.
- 3.23 Appeals can be viewed on our websites on our Planning Appeals Registers for [South](#) and [Vale](#).

- 3.24 This online register is 'live' and includes current and recent appeals and sets out details of what stage the appeal is at, as well as the decision, if it has been made.
- 3.25 Alternatively, you can view current appeals on the Planning Inspectorate's [Appeals Casework Portal](#).

SECTION 106 (PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)

- 3.26 A Section 106 is a legal agreement between the council and developer(s) and/or landowner(s) and is used alongside the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to raise money to fund infrastructure needed to support development.
- 3.27 We draw up a Section 106 agreement before we grant planning permission, so the developer is legally bound to deliver the infrastructure we have agreed. Money is collected from the developer once the planning permission is implemented and when certain points in the agreement have been met.
- 3.28 We do not consult on Section 106 agreements. However, we work with town and parish councils and local district councillors, to find out which community facilities may be impacted by new development or that require investment as a result of the development. Once we have a Section 106 agreement in place and the development has commenced, we will notify town and parish councils or parish meetings of the sums available for identified community facilities and provide an update to them on a six-monthly basis.
- 3.29 We are committed to working with town and parish councils to continue to identify local priorities and to deliver local projects. A list of all Section 106 contributions that are secured by the council are available on our [South](#) and [Vale](#) websites.

PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

- 3.30 The pre-application stage, which is discretionary, encourages applicants to carry out early engagement with the local community and the council, before submitting a planning application.
- 3.31 We encourage the early discussion of planning proposals as it can:
- verify the list of local validation requirements
 - help applicants to understand how planning policies and other requirements may affect the proposals.

- 3.32 Any pre-application advice letters sent between the applicant and the council will be made available online if a formal planning application is submitted.
- 3.33 Further information on the pre-application process, including how to apply for pre-application advice and the charges for it, are on our [South](#) and [Vale](#) websites.
- 3.34 We would also encourage applicants to seek advice from other key stakeholders, such as Thames Water, (if relevant) at the pre-application stage too.

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

- 3.35 When a person carries out development without planning permission, the council considers what action to take. Although we investigate allegations, the decision on whether to take formal action is discretionary.
- 3.36 If we find a breach of planning control has occurred, we can consider enforcement action. However, before such action is taken, we will give the person an opportunity to put things right. This could involve us asking for a new retrospective planning application.
- 3.37 If no application is made and the breach is deemed to be harmful in planning terms, then formal action will be considered. We have several tools we can use, including enforcement notices and high court injunctions, however, as most breaches of planning control are not criminal matters, formal action is always the last resort.
- 3.38 Further details on our approach to addressing planning enforcement matters, including our enforcement statement, can be found on our [South](#) and [Vale](#) webpages, along with contact details.

GLOSSARY

<p>Adopt/Adoption/ Adopted</p>	<p>The final stage for a local plan or planning policy document when it is confirmed and brought into force by a Local Planning Authority (LPA).</p>
<p>Breach of Planning Control</p>	<p>A breach of planning control is defined in Section 17A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the carrying out of development without the required planning permission; or • failing to comply with any condition or limitation subject to which planning permission has been granted.
<p>Charging Schedule</p>	<p>A document produced by councils as the charging authority, setting out rates for the amount of Community Infrastructure Levy chargeable for development in the area.</p>
<p>Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)</p>	<p>A levy (tax) that councils can choose to charge on new developments in their area. The money can be used to support development by funding infrastructure.</p>
<p>Community Right to Build Order</p>	<p>A type of neighbourhood development order allowing communities to decide for themselves what is built. This might include, for example, new community facilities and affordable housing.</p>
<p>Constitution</p>	<p>Vale of White Horse District Council's and South Oxfordshire District Council's Constitution set out how the council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>A process of asking for views on a draft policy or planning proposal before a decision is made.</p>

Corporate Plan	The Corporate Plan highlights the council's priorities and strategic themes for the next few years.
Development Plan	Document setting out the policies and proposals for the development and use of land and buildings in an area. These include adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans, the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan and the forthcoming Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
Development	Development is defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as "the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land." Most forms of development require planning permission (see also "permitted development").
General Data Protection Regulations	The General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 is a regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy in the European Union and the European Economic Area. It also addresses the transfer of personal data outside the EU and EEA areas.
Local Development Scheme	This sets out the timetable and work programme for the preparation of the local plan and other development plan documents
Local Plan	The plan for the local area that sets out the long-term spatial vision and development framework for the district, as well as and strategic policies and proposals to deliver that vision. Part of the development plan.
Major Developments	Applications for developments of 10 or more homes, or 1,000 sqm or more gross non-residential floorspace (including changes of use of existing buildings).

<p>Minor Developments</p>	<p>Applications for developments of up to 9 homes or up to 999sqm gross non-residential floorspace (including changes of use of existing buildings and changes of use of open land).</p>
<p>National Planning Policy Framework</p>	<p>This sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied at a local level. The NPPF is a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications or appeals.</p>
<p>National Planning Practice Guidance</p>	<p>The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is a planning practice online resource covering a range of planning issues.</p>
<p>Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO)</p>	<p>Can be used to permit different types of development (in full or outline) without the need for planning permission.</p>
<p>Neighbourhood Development Plans</p>	<p>A plan prepared by a town or parish or a neighbourhood forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).</p>
<p>Oxfordshire Plan 2050</p>	<p>A strategic planning document being prepared on behalf of the Oxfordshire City and District Councils to provide a joined-up approach to planning across the county.</p>
<p>Planning Appeals</p>	<p>If a decision to refuse planning permission on a planning application has been made by a local council, the applicant can appeal against the decision made. The Planning Inspectorate will organise for an independent Inspector to review the decision made and will make a decision.</p>
<p>Planning Enforcement</p>	<p>The Planning Enforcement Team can investigate when a person carries out development without the benefit of having planning permission. The team investigate what action, if any, is appropriate to take.</p>
<p>Planning Inspectorate</p>	<p>The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) is an executive agency sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. PINS deal with planning appeals, national</p>

	<p>infrastructure planning applications, examinations of local plans and other planning-related and specialist casework.</p>
Planning Permission	<p>Formal permission from a Local Planning Authority for the erection or alteration of buildings or similar development.</p>
Referendum	<p>A general vote by the electorate on a single political question which has been referred to them for a direct decision. A neighbourhood plan referendum is used to ask voters whether they want the Neighbourhood Plan to be used to decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>Stakeholders can affect or be affected by a council's actions, objectives and policies. The council will consult with key stakeholders at different stages of planning.</p>
Statement of Community Involvement	<p>The SCI sets out standards to be achieved by the council in relation to involving the community in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and in determining planning applications for development.</p>
Supplementary Planning Documents	<p>A planning policy document that adds further detail to the policies in the local plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary Planning Documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the Development Plan.</p>

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request.

These include large print, Braille, audio, email, Easy Read and alternative languages.

Please contact customer services to discuss your requirements on 01235 422600.

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