

These additional consultation methods are a positive response to the communities wish for greater neighbour notification and will ensure publicity of planning applications beyond just neighbouring properties. In particular the MyAlerts system responds to the increasing use of technology by our communities and will enable an improved access to the planning service.

Subject to approval by the Executive, the Draft Statement of Community Involvement will be published for a 6 week consultation period.

CORPORATE PRIORITY OUTCOMES

ENVIRONMENT

In consultation with the community, develop plans for how land is used in Mole Valley. Whilst safeguarding the Green Belt, we will set out proposals for jobs and homes, retail, leisure and commercial development.

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is the starting point for all planning consultations. The document sets out how MVDC will engage with the community in the preparation of the Local Plan and the determination of planning applications. The SCI encourages public involvement at the earliest stages to ensure that communities can be fully involved in the process and shape the outcomes.

The SCI will be an important consideration in the preparation of the new Mole Valley Local Plan.

The Executive has the authority to determine the Recommendations

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 18) requires Local Authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement to explain to members of the public (residents, businesses and their employees, and other local organisations) how they can get involved in the preparation of the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and in the determination of Planning Applications.
- 1.2 The current SCI was adopted in 2010. Since then there has been a number of significant changes to the planning system, these have included: the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies (e.g. South East Plan); the introduction of the Duty to Cooperate and Neighbourhood Planning through the Localism Act 2011; and the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012 and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in 2014. The current SCI therefore makes reference to elements of the planning system which no longer exist and therefore, as a minimum, a factual update is required.
- 1.3 In addition, although the planning system has always involved consultation and engagement with local communities, new government legislation puts a renewed focus on community involvement. The emphasis is on a bottom up approach to planning. Both the NPPF and the Localism Act (2011) set out the importance of early and meaningful engagement in the planning process.

Background

- 1.4 An updated version of the SCI was published for consultation in 2014. This update changed the references to national planning policy and also significantly reduced the length of the document by removing much of the detail relating to consultation methods. These changes were aimed at making the document more user friendly and accessible to the general public, whilst not reducing the amount of consultation proposed for both plan making and planning applications. An 8 week consultation was held on the draft SCI (alongside the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan) from 10th January – 7th March 2014. A total of two comments was received.
- 1.5 Following the consultation period some minor changes were made and the document was recommended for Adoption. In June 2014 the Scrutiny Committee considered the document and a number of concerns were raised about the level of consultation currently being undertaken for planning applications.
- 1.6 As a result of the concerns raised, many of which were also shared by Executive Members, the SCI was withdrawn from the Executive Agenda of 1st July 2014 by the Executive Member for Planning, so that the points could be considered and the necessary changes made to the document.
- 1.7 Officers considered the concerns about the SCI and determined that a more wide ranging review of the whole document was required. As with the 2010 SCI, the proposed replacement document is split into two sections – Planning Policy and Planning Applications. Both sections have been updated and Members concerns about the existing consultation arrangements for planning applications and the ongoing need for community engagement throughout the Local Plan process have been taken into account.
- 1.8 A copy of the draft proposed 2015 SCI is annexed to this report.

2. Planning Policy

- 2.1 The Planning Policy section of the SCI has been updated and restructured to reflect the Government's focus on the preparation of a single Local Plan document rather than multiple documents comprising a Local Development Framework. The new structure also seeks to clearly set out and highlight when communities and organisations can get involved in the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 2.2 The chapter has been split into the following sections:
 - **When we will consult** – this sets out the key stages in the preparation of Local Plan documents and at which point communities will be able to get involved. A diagram setting out the different stages in preparing a Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Document has been included for reference.
 - **Who we will consult** – this sets out the organisations and individuals who will be consulted. It also provides information about how individuals can be added to the Local Plan consultation database.
 - **How we will consult** – this sets out the types of engagement methods we will consider using for consultations. More detail about types of engagement methods is included as an Appendix to the SCI.
 - **What happens to your comments?** – this sets out how comments will be considered and the consultation reports which will be published summarising both the comments and MVDCs response.

2.3 Additionally the consultation arrangements for Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) have also been included. This relates only to those consultations which MVDC is responsible for, as the ongoing community engagement required throughout the preparation of the NDP is led by the Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum.

3. Planning Applications

3.1 The Development Management section of the draft proposed SCI sets out how it is proposed planning applications will be publicised and how residents can get involved. In revising this part of the SCI account has been taken of requests by residents to be better informed when planning applications are submitted.

3.2 Under Part 3 paragraph 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, there is a statutory requirement to publicise planning applications.

3.3 Depending on the nature and type of the application, this can take the form of:

- A site notice.
- An advertisement within a local newspaper.
- By serving notice on adjoining owners or occupiers using a letter/form.

In addition, information regarding newly submitted applications must be made available on the Council's website. This is locally known as the Weekly List.

3.4 In all cases, a period of 21 days must be allowed for interested parties to view proposals and submit formal representations.

3.5 The current adopted system of publicity for applications is a mixture of the statutory requirements. This comprises three elements:

1. A Weekly List of newly submitted applications is published on the Council's website and is made available to Councillors, Parish Councils, the main Residents Associations, other amenity groups and the local press. Paper copies are made available on request.
2. Statutory press notices are placed in the Dorking and Leatherhead editions of the Surrey Advertiser for certain types of application including major developments, Listed Buildings and development within Conservation Areas, as well as proposals which are departures from the adopted Development Plan. Site notices are also displayed at the site.
3. Individual neighbour notification letters are sent in the post to owner/occupiers of properties that physically abut the application site (see page 10 of the annexed SCI). As all applications are different other nearby properties are also notified by letter where, in the view of the Case Officer, the proposed development would have an impact beyond the immediate area having regard to the scale and nature of the proposal, its height, mass and traffic generation and the character and topography of the surrounding area. Each year there are approximately 1,500 planning applications

generating 20,000 individual letters of neighbour notification. The cost of sending out this number of letters is approximately £12,000¹.

- 3.6 Approximately 3000 responses are received each year. This is a response rate of 15%.
- 3.7 Most local planning authorities in Surrey follow a similar system of publicity for planning applications.
- 3.8 Whilst there is a statutory obligation to carry out publicity for submitted applications there are different ways this can be achieved. In considering the revised draft SCI in June 2014 Members raised concerns about the limited publicity of planning applications in the surrounding area and suggested a need to increase the scope of consultation.
- 3.9 In the light of these concerns a menu of different ways of informing local residents about planning applications has been looked at to see how the current arrangements could be improved.
- 3.10 The current system (as set out in para 3.5) has been in operation for some time and whilst it has generally worked well there have been instances where the interpretation of the provisions of the SCI has meant that some residents, who feel they would be affected by a development proposal, were not notified by letter.
- 3.11 The use of site notices can be an effective mechanism for publicising planning applications and would pick up those people who would not receive a neighbour notification letter under the current arrangements. To ensure as many people as possible have the opportunity to see a site notice one or more could be placed at the application site or in nearby roads which would alert surrounding residents to the application. The site notices would set out key information about the development proposed and information about how to view the planning application document. However, there is always a chance that not everyone who felt they might be affected by the development proposal sees the notice.
- 3.12 It is estimated that posting two site notices per site would cost in the region of £1,200² per annum.
- 3.13 To overcome concerns that not enough people are notified of planning applications consideration has also been given to the practicalities of notifying residents within a linear distance of 100m, 200m and 500m from an application site, when measured along the road that the site is in and adjoining side roads. The number of households that would theoretically need to be notified has been taken from analysis based on applying the proposed method to ten applications that have been dealt with historically. These ten sites have been selected from a range of rural, urban, commercial and residential locations. The estimated costs³ of using this methodology are as follows:

¹ The estimated cost of sending a notification letter is 60p – comprising 36p postage, 4p printing and 20p handling.

² Assuming 8p printing costs for 1,500 planning applications

³ In addition there would be a requirement for an additional resource in the Planning Support Team costing approximately £30,000 per year to deal with the increased workload associated with generating and posting a greater number of letters.

Road distance from application site	Number of letters	Total cost⁴	Increase⁵
100m	51,400	£51,400	£39,400
200m	91,100	£91,100	£79,100
500m	220,100	£205,600	£193,600

3.14 Instead of using linear road distance, to determine who should be notified of a planning application, concentric zones could be used. For example every property within a radius of 50m or 100m of an application site could be notified. Addresses within a concentric zone could be automatically generated. However, this arrangement might pick up addresses which are clearly not affected by a development proposal and could lead to reputational issues about the use of resources.

3.15 The costs of this zonal method has been calculated using ten planning applications that have been submitted in the past, in a range of locations across the district³:

Radius from application site	Number of letters	Total cost⁶	Increase⁷
50m	228,800	£122,200	£110,200
100m	433,600	£229,400	£217,400

3.16 As our communities become increasingly comfortable with accessing council services through the internet, work is ongoing to continually improve the Council's website and online communications. In this regard a new email notification system for residents has been developed; this is called 'My Alerts'.

3.17 'My Alerts' is an extension of the 'Mole Valley and Me' website facility (currently being rebranded as 'My Mole Valley'). It allows users to subscribe to email alerts based on the proximity to their homes. In the case of planning applications, a customer could choose to be notified by email of all planning applications within a set area from their property (eg 50m, 100m, 500m).

3.18 This improvement to how we communicate with our residents provides a further opportunity to use electronic communication in the interests of wider publicity, convenience, efficiency and cost effectiveness. It allows residents to select an area

⁴ This is not an automated address generating system so a 60p handling cost has been used because of the additional work involved in identifying those properties along road frontages. The postage cost per letter is calculated using a sliding scale which decreases as the volume of letters increase.

⁵ Above the current cost of £12,000.

⁶ It is assumed that the handling costs for this number of letters will remain at 20p per letter. The economies of scale are negligible because the process involves manually handling letters. The postage cost per letter is calculated using a sliding scale which decreases as the volume of letters increase.

⁷ Above the current cost of £12,000

where they wish to be notified of all new planning applications. Importantly, it places control with local people allowing them to decide what information they receive.

- 3.19 'MyAlerts' is scheduled to launch in October/November 2015 and to coincide with this a range of publicity is planned to raise awareness of the new service.
- 3.20 It is clearly important to ensure that any system for letting people know that a planning application has been submitted is efficient and cost effective. The zonal and linear road distance notification systems would ensure that many more people receive notification of a planning application than under the current system. However, such arrangements would significantly increase costs and could result in some people receiving multiple notification letters during a given period which some may consider is not an efficient use of resources.
- 3.21 There are many positive aspects to the current system but these could be enhanced by blending in the benefits of more site notices and the MyAlerts facility, without a significant increase in costs. The proposed extension of the current system will ensure the wider publicity of planning applications beyond the existing neighbour notification arrangements and give local residents control over what they are notified about.
- 3.22 It is therefore proposed that the following consultation methods for planning applications be used:
- Continuing with the existing postal neighbour notification arrangements.
 - Adopting the electronic method of email notifications through the 'MyAlerts' system for planning applications.
 - Putting up site notices for all planning applications, with the exception of Certificates of Lawfulness and Tree applications.

This would be in addition to the statutory requirements of publishing a Weekly List and statutory press notices for specific application types.

4. Format of the proposed SCI

- 4.1 The draft SCI has been structured so that it follows a logical progression through the various stages of Local Plan preparation and the determination of Planning Applications.
- 4.2 It is proposed to produce a summary leaflet for members of the public to clearly show when/how they can get involved in both the plan making process and planning applications. This could be a simple leaflet style that could be made available at the Council Offices, HelpShop etc. The more detailed full version of the SCI would remain available for reference.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 The draft SCI will be subject to a minimum 6 week consultation.
- 5.2 All Statutory Consultees will be notified as well as all those organisations and individuals registered on the Local Plan database. The document will be available to view on the MVDC website and a hard copy will be available at the Council Offices and HelpShop. A press release will also be issued to alert residents to the consultation and invite their views.

- 6. Financial Implications** – The recommended option does not introduce any new financial consequences. However, there are options for consulting on planning applications which would have significant financial implications and savings if they were taken forward – see paragraphs 3.8 - 3.15.
- 7. Legal Implications** – There is a legal requirement to adopt a Statement of Community Involvement and the proposed SCI has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Once adopted the Council will be required to adhere to the requirements set out in the SCI in determining planning applications and preparing the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 8. OPTIONS**
- 8.1 Approve the draft Statement of Community Involvement for consultation (recommended)
- 8.2 Amend the Statement of Community Involvement by altering the consultation arrangements for plan preparation or planning applications. Any changes will need to consider the significant financial implications outlined for some of the options in paragraphs 3.8 – 3.12.
- 8.3 Not approve the Statement of Community Involvement.

9. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Monitoring Officer commentary - The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that all relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

S151 Officer commentary – awaiting comments.

Risk Implications – The existing SCI is out of date and does not meet the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and guidance. An updated SCI is now required to avoid the risks inherent with not engaging stakeholders in the planning process in accordance with current regulations.

Equalities Implications – The SCI includes measures to reduce barriers to people having a say in the planning decision making process, with an aim of advancing equality of opportunity for all. It also identifies ‘hard to reach’ groups and sets out how MVDC will work with them.

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been prepared in conjunction with this document.

Employment Issues – None for the recommended option. However, there may be a need for additional resources in Planning Support for some of the options outlined in paragraph 3.13 – 3.15 is taken forward in relation to the consultation arrangements for planning applications.

Consultation – A 6 week period of public consultation will follow approval of the draft Statement of Community Involvement.

Communications – a press release has been prepared.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

SCI - Equalities Impact Assessment

Draft Statement of Community Involvement

August 2015



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Chapter 1 Introduction

- 1.1** Planning involves making decisions about the future of our towns, villages and countryside. It involves balancing the need for development including homes, jobs, shops, community facilities and infrastructure; whilst taking into consideration the environment, conservation of public spaces, preservation of heritage and improvement of amenities.
- 1.2** For many people, planning is something they only get involved with when a development proposal directly affects them. However, there are opportunities to get involved in planning from the early stages of preparing local planning policies through to the determination of planning applications. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how.
- 1.3** The preparation of an SCI is a legal requirement of Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It sets out the different approaches Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) will take to find out what communities and individuals think about its planning policies as they are developed and what their views are on planning applications. We will take account of the needs and preferences of the communities, groups and organisations likely to be affected.

Listening to what you tell us

MVDC aims to give the whole community the opportunity to take part in the preparation of planning policies and decisions on planning applications. We will:

1. Make sure that consultation publications are clear and concise, avoiding the use of unnecessary technical jargon
2. Ask interested and affected individuals, groups and organisations for their views as early as possible.
3. Listen to, respect and take account of the comments that are received and explain what happens to them
4. Inform those who respond to a consultation with details about later stages in the process.

Working with your Councillors

- 1.4** MVDC's Councillors play an important role in making decisions on planning matters in Mole Valley. They are also a key contact for local communities providing more information about planning applications. Councillors also have an important role in the development of local planning policies to ensure that they reflect local values and priorities.

Chapter 2 Planning Policy

Preparing the Local Plan

Local Plan

MVDC is responsible for the preparation of a Local Plan. A Local Plan sets out a vision for the future development of the district (usually 15-20 years), addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure - as well as a basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design.

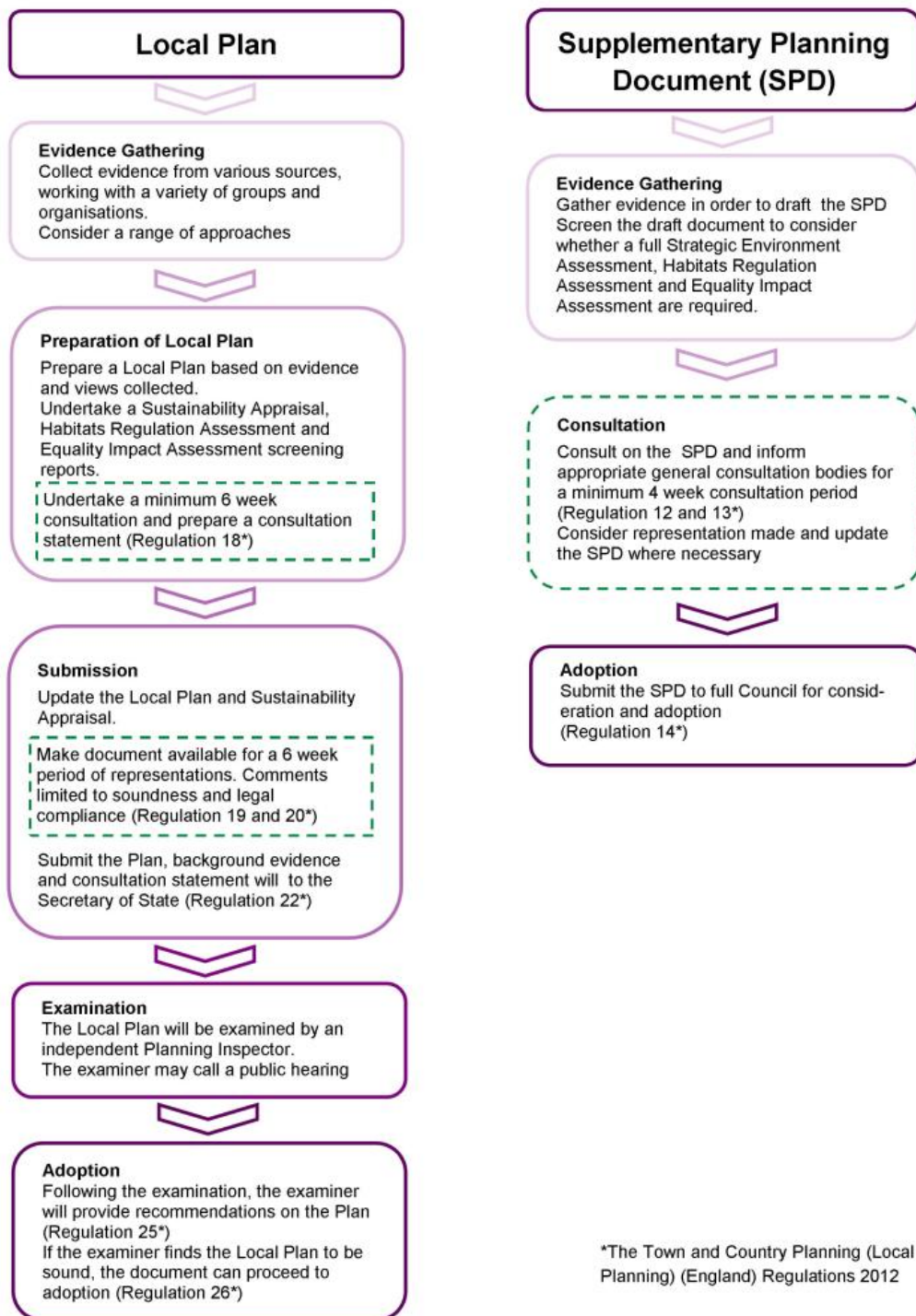
The Local Plan will make clear what development will take place, where and when this will occur and how it will be delivered. It will take into account the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and is underpinned by extensive evidence. The Plan is subject to public consultation and independent examination by a Planning Inspector. It is the starting point when MVDC considers planning applications.

Other Local Plan documents

- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)** - add 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. We will prepare SPDs where it is helpful to provide additional guidance and more in depth advice concerning a particular development issue. They will be supported by appropriate evidence and accord with national planning policy and the Local Plan.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** - is a statutory charge on new buildings and extensions used to fund infrastructure provision required as a result of new development.

A **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** and **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** will need to be undertaken for the Local Plan and some other Local Plan documents. These are procedures required by law to assess the economic, social and environmental impact of the Plan.

Stages in preparing a Local Plan and a Supplementary Planning Document



Planning Policy

When we will consult

2.1 We believe it is important to involve people in the Local Plan right from the start.

- We will begin by explaining that the job of a Local Plan is to set out policies and proposals for homes, jobs, infrastructure and other development taking account of national planning policy and constraints on development.
- We will explain the planning issues facing the district and invite people to tell us where and what type of development should be planned during a minimum 6 week consultation period
- We will carefully consider the comments we receive and prepare a draft Local Plan which will set out MVDC's thoughts based upon the communities views. We will invite views on this version of the Plan for a period of 6 weeks.
- We will reflect on what communities tell us and revise the Plan.
- We will then publish a draft Local Plan which will explain MVDC's proposed planning policies and invite representations on them for a period of not less than 6 weeks
- The Local Plan, background evidence and representations are then submitted to the Secretary of State who appoints an independent Planning Inspector to examine them all. A public examination will then be held where those who made representation will be able to voice their concerns.

2.2 The same general methods of consultation apply to the adoption process of an SPD as for a Local Plan. However the criteria for 'when we will consult' are slightly different. They are as follows:

- We will consult on a draft version of the SPD for a minimum of 4 weeks.
- After considering the responses to the draft, we will consider the need for further consultation before proceeding to adoption of the SPD.

2.3 See diagram 'Stages in Preparing a Local Plan and a Supplementary Planning Document'

Who we will Consult

2.4 MVDC understands the importance of involving as many members of the community as possible in the preparation of Local Plan documents for the District.

2.5 In addition to the Duty to Cooperate (which requires relevant local authorities and bodies to work together), there are a number of specific organisations which the Council is required to consult with when preparing the Local Plan. These are mostly national and local bodies, including the Environment Agency & Natural England, neighbouring Councils, and utility services including gas, telephone, water & sewerage suppliers.

2.6 MVDC has a further extensive list of organisations, bodies, businesses, consultancies, landowners and individuals that we will consult. It includes the following:

- Parish Councils
- Residents' associations
- Housing associations / registered providers of social housing
- Groups for people with disabilities
- Voluntary groups
- Religious groups
- Youth groups
- Neighbourhood Forums
- Countryside and conservation groups
- Local businesses
- Local business groups

- Town centre retail groups and organisations
- Town Centre Forums
- People who have registered their interest on the Local Plan database
- County and District Councillors
- Members of Parliament
- Developers, housebuilders and representative organisations

2.7 The above list is not exhaustive and is amended or added to as required.

2.8 MVDC is keen to involve under-represented groups of people, often referred to as 'hard to reach' groups, in relevant planning matters. The following groups are identified by the Council as falling under this category:

- Residents of relatively deprived areas in the District
- Young people
- Some older people, particularly those who are frail or socially isolated
- People with disabilities
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
- Residents in rural areas
- Working people who are unavailable during core working hours
- People who travel or commute into the area

2.9 MVDC will go out to meet these groups and listen to their views, using venues convenient to individuals and groups, and methods and formats best suited to their needs.

Any individual, group or organisation that has an interest in new development in the District can register to be consulted by adding themselves to the Local Plan database by e-mailing planning.policy@molevalley.gov.uk or telephoning 01306 879281. This will apply to the development of planning policy **only** and not the determination of planning applications.

How we will consult

2.10 Planning legislation and national guidance set out requirements as to how and when consultation will be undertaken and also who must be consulted. Outside of this legal requirement, the Council will use the most appropriate ways of getting as many people as possible involved in the preparation of the Local Plan by balancing cost and time constraints with the likely relevance of the Plan to specific communities and/or organisations (Appendix 1 sets out in more detail how the community will be invited to become involved in the preparation of the Local Plan).

- We will contact appropriate organisations and individuals directly by post or electronic means.
- We will leave consultation documents on display at locations open to the public such as council offices and libraries.
- We may publicise consultations by methods such as leaflets, newsletters (Mole Valley Magazine), press releases, public notices, social media, existing forums, community events, public exhibitions, roadshows, workshops, and joining with other consultations where feasible and appropriate.
- In addition to our web pages, we will provide a hard copy of a document as soon as reasonably practicable after it has been requested.

Planning Policy

- Consultees are encouraged to respond to all consultations online via our consultation portal at www.molevalley.gov.uk/localplans as this is the quickest and most effective method of responding.
- The Local Plan and related information will be made available in a variety of formats for example, Braille, large print, and languages other than English on request.

MVDC's website is the primary source of information. All planning policy documents, including the Local Plan, will be published on our website. This will include all of our supporting documentation.

What happens to your comments?

- 2.11** All comments received in response to each of the consultation stages in the preparation of a Local Plan or a SPD will be fully considered by MVDC. Changes to the document will be made where appropriate during the course of their preparation in light of the comments we receive at each stage of the Local Plan/SPDs preparation. We may contact the person or organisation who made comments in order to discuss their views and suggestions.
- 2.12** All written comments received within the consultation periods will be made available to view. Comments cannot be treated in confidence. In order to comply with the Data Protection Act, personal information will not be made publicly available.
- 2.13** MVDC will not acknowledge submitted comments, unless requested.
- 2.14** We will provide a response to the comments received and explain how consultation comments have been taken into account. This will be in the form of a report summarising comments and a response to the issues raised. It will be made available on the Local Plan web pages.
- 2.15** Having considered comments at the consultation stages of the Local Plans preparation MVDC will agree a final version of the plan for submission to the Secretary of State. At this stage there will be an opportunity for formal representations about the content of the Plan. These representations, together with the Local Plan and background evidence, are then submitted to the Secretary of State who appoints an independent Planning Inspector to examine them. A public examination will later be held where those who made representations will be able to voice their concerns.
- 2.16** For SPDs, a summary of the main points raised in comments will be considered by the Council before a decision is taken as to whether or not to adopt the document.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 2.17** Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) were introduced by the Localism Act 2011. They allow local community bodies to set out a vision for an area or site and planning policies for the use and development of land. They are about local rather than strategic issues.
- 2.18** As they are not prepared by the Council, the SCI does not prescribe what methods of community engagement they must follow. The appropriate level of community engagement and the size and complexity of the plan will be decided on by the Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum preparing the NDP. Nevertheless, NDPs should follow wherever possible the general principles and techniques set out in the SCI and publish a Consultation Statement explaining how the local community was involved in the preparation of the NDP.
- 2.19** MVDC is required to consult on the following stages in the preparation of NDPs:

- Neighbourhood Area Application - MVDC will publicise the application on the website and bring the area application to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the application area.
- Neighbourhood Forum Application - MVDC will publicise the application from the forum on the website for a minimum 6 week period.
- Draft NDP - MVDC will publicise the Plan on the website and invite comments, in addition we will notify the bodies referred to in the neighbourhood forum or parish councils' consultation statement.

Making Decisions on Planning Applications

Chapter 3 Making Decisions on Planning Applications

- 3.1** MVDC is responsible for processing and determining planning and other applications within the District. It is at the planning application stage where specific, detailed decisions are made about the use of land or a building. Applications are considered against national and local planning policies as well as expert advice, provided internally and externally to guide decisions as to whether individual planning applications are approved or refused.
- 3.2** MVDC understands that local residents want to have their say about applications for planning permission that may have an affect on their property or area, and be assured that their views will be considered in the decision-making process. **All stages of the planning application process from registration onwards can be followed on the Council's planning website.**
- 3.3** There are two stages for community involvement in planning applications. These are as follows:

1. **Pre-application consultation:** This is a form of consultation undertaken by the applicant before submitting a formal planning application. This should be carried out for any major or significant application so that issues of concern can be ironed out by the applicant prior to the submission of the planning application. The Government has made this a legal requirement for significantly large scale major developments.
2. **Application consultation:** Once a planning application has been formally submitted, the Council is responsible for carrying out appropriate consultation.

Pre-application consultation

- 3.4** To ensure early public involvement on major development proposals or locally sensitive schemes, developers are encouraged to undertake public consultation before making a planning application.
- 3.5** It is a legal requirement for potential applicants to consult the local community and any specified persons before submitting a planning applications for significant development proposals (those over 200 homes, 4 hectares and/or flood area over 10,000 square metres or 2 hectares).
- 3.6** In addition anyone submitting a planning application in Mole Valley for 10+ dwellings or 0.5+ ha of residential development, 1000m² of building space or 1.0 ha of development land, will be required to:
- Agree the consultation approach with the Council, including considering what is required to involve community groups that will be particularly affected by change;
 - Inform local people about the details of the scheme and be clear what elements can be influenced by making comments;
 - Submit a statement with the planning application outlining the community involvement that has been carried out, the comments received and any changes made as a result.
- 3.7** MVDC is also keen to encourage developers/applicants to discuss major development proposals with Planning Officers prior to submission as this can confirm the suitability of a development and the level of detail required for MVDC to make an appropriate decision. This is a chargeable service and prices can be found on our web pages.

MVDC consultation

- 3.8** On receipt, a planning application, will be considered against a validation checklist to ensure the correct documents have been submitted. This checklist is available on our website. When validation is successful, a planning application will be registered and allocated to a Planning Officer.
- 3.9** MVDC aims to determine most planning applications within 8 weeks and major planning applications within 13 weeks. This time period includes formal public consultation. However, it is appropriate in some circumstances to agree an extended deadline with the applicant where it is acceptable to both parties.
- 3.10** The requirements for advertising and consulting on planning applications are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). This specifies that written comments are required to be submitted within 21 days from the date of notification. Comments can be by letter, email or via our website. The Council will consult with the following (where relevant):
- Statutory bodies including the Environment Agency and Natural England to establish any specialist concerns arising from the application;
 - Utility bodies (electricity, sewage or gas companies);
 - Other experts including the Historic Environment Officer and Highways Officer;
 - Residential and business neighbours using the methods set out below.

Making Decisions on Planning Applications

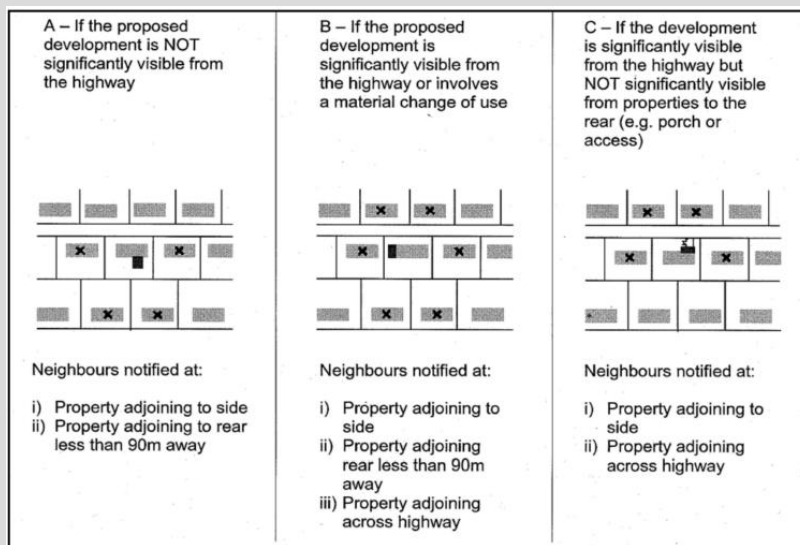
Consultation for Planning Applications

Neighbour notification letters

When a planning application is submitted individual notification letters are sent to neighbours at adjoining and nearby properties. The number and pattern of neighbours who will be individually notified of an application is based on the likely effects of the proposed development and includes the following considerations:

- the scale and nature of the proposed development in relation to the surrounding area;
- The relationship of the proposed development to nearby properties in terms of its height and mass and the topography of the area;
- The traffic that would be generated by the proposed development.

The varied nature of planning applications means that it is difficult to be prescriptive about who will be notified. In the case of the simplest and most common types of householder applications the diagram below sets out who would be notified. Individual letters are sent to the owners and/or occupiers of the properties marked with an 'X'.



Where the application is for a larger scale or significant development, letters of notification will be sent to many more people living in the road and the wider surrounding area that may be affected by the proposal.

Site Notices

Site notices will be displayed on or close to the site for all planning applications. The site notice will set out key information and direct people to the website / Council Offices for further information.

Electronic notification - 'MyAlerts'

All Mole Valley residents who are registered on MyAlerts will receive an email notification about planning applications which are within the buffer area set by the user.

Making Decisions on Planning Applications

- 3.11** In addition we will publish the weekly list of planning applications on the MVDC website and make it available to local Councillors, Parish Councils, the main Residents' Associations, other amenity groups and the local press. Hard copies of this list can be made available if requested.
- 3.12** Planning applications concerning Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, those that conflict with the Local Plan, major applications and those that affect a Right of Way will be advertised in the Surrey Advertiser.
- 3.13** Applications for work on trees (protected with a Tree Preservation Order or in a Conservation Area) will be added to the weekly list of planning applications and will be determined without consultation. Public input will be sought on applications to fell significant protected trees, but only where the request is not urgent, e.g. the tree is not considered to pose a risk or the tree is not dead or dying.
- 3.14** Applications for Prior Notifications of Proposed Agricultural or Forestry development will be added to the weekly list of planning applications and will be determined without consultation. The council has 28 days to inform the applicant of its decision to allow or refuse approval.
- 3.15** No neighbour notification is carried out for Certificates of Lawfulness for a proposed use or development. Such applications seek to ascertain whether a proposal is lawful. This is a matter of fact taking into account the relevant regulations. The outcome of such applications cannot be influenced by other factors such as local planning policies or any impact on neighbouring amenity.

How to comment on a Planning Application

Anyone can comment on a planning application. Comments must be made in writing and submitted through one of the following options:

1. Email comments should be sent to: planning@molevalley.gov.uk.
2. Letters should be sent to: Corporate Head of Service (Planning), Mole Valley District Council, Pippbrook, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1SJ.
3. Online comments are submitted as an attachment to each individual application searched and found on the online planning database system.
4. Anonymous submissions will not be considered.

How to sign up to the 'MyAlerts' service ... **to be added when arrangements finalised.**

Considering your views

- 3.16** Letters of representation are taken into account in the consideration of planning applications.
- 3.17** Once the consultation period has ended, a report is prepared recommending the application is permitted or refused. This report will take into account the relevant legislation, planning policies material considerations and the comments that are received.
- 3.18** The final decision is then made by the Development Control Committee or under powers delegated to the Corporate Head of the Planning Service. These are reviewed from time to time and the current scheme of delegation can be seen on the MVDC website.
- 3.19** Whilst the majority of applications are determined under delegated powers (usually minor developments such as house extensions and alterations), a Councillor can request that an application be considered by the Development Control Committee. This request must be made in writing within 28 days of the publication of the weekly planning application list, stating the reasons for referral to Committee.

Making Decisions on Planning Applications

- 3.20** Major and other significant applications are usually determined by the Development Control Committee which meets on the first Wednesday of each month, and is open to the public. Where either of these type of applications is contrary to policy the application can be determined under delegated powers.
- 3.21** A copy of the agenda is available for inspection at the Council Offices and on the website at least 5 working days before the meeting.
- 3.22** Where planning applications attract 20 or more individual objection letters or a petition of 50 signatures from different households against a proposal, the Council allows a representative of this group to speak at the Committee meeting. An equal opportunity to speak is also permitted to the applicant/developer. This process applies where the Officers' recommendation is either for approval or refusal. Letters of representation that are received after the publication of the Committee's agenda and up to 9am on the day of the Committee, will be summarised on the addendum sheet and presented to Committee.
- 3.23** Where the opportunity to speak arises, the Council will consider how best to engage with interested parties. Details of the arrangements for speaking at a Committee meeting are set out on the Council's website.
- 3.24** Once the Council has made a decision about an application, it will inform the applicant and publish the decision on the website.
- 3.25** If the applicant is aggrieved with the decision or conditions attached to it, they can lodge an appeal to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The appeal will be determined by an independent Planning Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate. Members of the public who commented on the application will be notified in writing by the Council that an appeal has been lodged.
- 3.26** Once planning permission has been granted there is no statutory third party right of appeal to challenge the approval. The only mechanism for interested parties to challenge the granting of planning permission is through a judicial review upon a point of law.
- 3.27** There will be a need for some permitted schemes to be followed up with the submission of details required by conditions attached to the planning permission. The Council will not consult on these details, however progress can be followed on the Council's website.

Chapter 4 Further Information and Advice

Independent Planning Advice

- 4.1** Independent advice on planning is available from Planning Aid England, operated by the Royal Town Planning Institute. This service provides free, independent and professional planning advice to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay for professional fees.
- 4.2** Planning Aid England can assist people with their own planning applications and can help them to comment on planning applications and planning policy consultation documents.
- 4.3** More information can be found at: www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk or alternatively, they can be contacted by phone, 0330 123 9244 or email, advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk.

Planning Portal

- 4.4** The Planning Portal is the Government's website that offers clear guidance on the planning system.
- 4.5** More information can be found at www.planningportal.gov.uk.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 4.6** Advice on Neighbourhood Planning and the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan is available from Locality.
- 4.7** More information can be found at www.locality.org.uk/projects/building-community/

Further Information and Advice

Appendix 1 Summary of Community Involvement in the Local Plan

Summary of Community Involvement in the Local Plan

When	What we must do	What we may do
<p>Stage of preparation</p>	<p>Statutory requirements for consultation⁽¹⁾</p>	<p>Options for additional community involvement</p>
<p>Local Plan</p> <p>Evidence gathering and preparation of consultation documents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify each of the specific and general consultation bodies, residents, businesses and organisations who the Local Planning Authority (LPA) considers may have an interest in the subject of a Local Plan Invite each of the people notified to make representations to the LPA during the period from the date of the notice about what a Local Plan ought to contain We must consider those representations in the preparation of the Local Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Hard to reach' community consultation work. Attend appropriate meetings of community groups. Hold workshops to focus on particular areas or issues where appropriate. One to one meetings with service providers to discuss service and infrastructure capacity issues where appropriate. Wider meetings with service providers to focus on particular issues where appropriate. Publish discussion / consultation papers (including on website), inviting comments on them and make copies available. Use exhibitions and roadshows to publicise discussion / consultation papers where appropriate. Display information on noticeboards and public places where appropriate. Publicise discussion / consultation papers in Council magazine where publication dates allow. Publicise Local Plan updates via the website. Issue press and media release. Send letters and/or emails to Local Plan database of groups and individuals to invite comments. Make feedback information available on website. Brand the Local Plan to create identity and recognition Local Plan community reference groups Use social media to publicise consultations

Statutory requirements for consultation from the Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2012

Summary of Community Involvement in the Local Plan

When	What we must do	What we may do
<p>Stage of preparation</p> <p>Proposed Submission document</p>	<p>Statutory requirements for consultation⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed submission documents will be made available for inspection (includes website) and sent to the general and specific consultation bodies. • Give notice by local advertisement. • Any person may make a representation to the LPA during 6 weeks from the date of the notice. • We must consider those representations. 	<p>Options for additional community involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Hard to reach' community consultation work. • Attend appropriate meetings of community groups. • Hold workshops to focus on particular areas or issues where appropriate. • One to one meetings with service providers to discuss service and infrastructure capacity issues where appropriate. • Wider meetings with service providers to focus on particular issues where appropriate. • Publish proposed submission document (including on website), inviting comments on them and make copies available. • Use exhibitions and roadshows to publicise proposed submission document where appropriate. • Display information on noticeboards and public places where appropriate. • Publicise proposed submission document in Council magazine where publication dates allow. • Publicise Local Plan updates via the website. • Issue press and media release. • Send letters and/or emails to Local Plan database groups and individuals to invite comments. • Make feedback information available on website.
<p>Submission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitted documents and associated matters (including Sustainability Appraisal Report and Statements of Consultations and Public Participation) made available for inspection (includes website) and sent to relevant bodies. 	

Summary of Community Involvement in the Local Plan

When	What we must do	What we may do
Stage of preparation	Statutory requirements for consultation⁽¹⁾	Options for additional community involvement
Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give notice by local advertisement • Notify anyone who requested to be notified on submission. <p>At least 6 weeks before the examination starts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give notice by local advertisement. • Publish details on the website. • Notify people who made representations of the time and place of the examination and of the name of the person appointed to hold the examination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish hearing agendas on the website. • Publish the Council's and representatives responses to the agenda on the website.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the inspectors recommendations available for inspection (includes website). • Notify those people who have requested to be notified of the publication. 	
Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make adopted documents, adoption statement and sustainability report available for inspection (includes website). • Give notice by local advertisement • Notify anyone who requested to be notified of adoption. 	
Withdrawal / direction not to adopt / modification (where requested by the Secretary of State)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a statement of the fact on the website. • Give notice of the fact by local advertisement. • Notify any body to which a copy of the proposed submission documents were requested. 	

Summary of Community Involvement in the Local Plan

When	What we must do	What we may do
Stage of preparation	Statutory requirements for consultation⁰	Options for additional community involvement
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)		
Public Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPD documents made available for inspection for a period of 4-6 weeks (includes web) and sent to statutory bodies along with the consultation statement and any supporting documents. • Give notice by local advertisement. • Any person may make a representation to the LPA about the SPD within the 4-6 week period from the date of the notice. • We must consider those representations in the creation of the SPD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider holding meetings and workshops with those with close interest in the SPD subject, for example, if an area specific SPD, Parish Councils and Residents' Associations. • Consider need for 'hard to reach' community work. • Where appropriate publicise consultation document in Council Magazine where timing of publication allows. • Send letters and / or emails to appropriate groups and individuals on Local Plan Database to invite comments. • Keep those who have made representations informed of progress. • Use social media to publicise consultations
Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted document, adoption statement and statement of representations made available for inspection (includes website). • Send adoption statement to any person who has asked to be notified of the adoption of the SPD. 	

Summary of Community Involvement in the Local Plan

When	What we must do	What we may do
Stage of preparation	Statutory requirements for consultation ⁽¹⁾	Options for additional community involvement
Withdrawal / direction not to adopt / modification (where requested by the Secretary of State)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a statement of the fact on the website. • Give notice of the fact by local advertisement. • Notify any body to which a copy of the proposed submission documents were requested. 	

Table 1.1

