

# Statement of Community Involvement

Adopted February 2007

Thanet District Council

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# Statement of Community Involvement

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Planning policy in Thanet is undergoing a major change
- 1.2 The Local Plan, which sets out policies to 2011, will be the last one published by Thanet Council. In September 2004 a new 'Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act' came into being, which will completely change the planning system in England.
- 1.3 Instead of a Local Plan, the Council has to prepare a 'Local Development Framework', made up of a number of documents which will set out the planning policies for Thanet through to 2021. The Local Development Framework will be different to the Local Plan in that the individual documents can be subject to scrutiny and review as situations change without needing to review the whole plan.
- 1.4 This flexibility of approach will enable the Council to prioritise important elements and allow less urgent matters to be developed through subsequent reviews of the framework.
- 1.5 Another change in the planning system is that the LDF places more value on meaningful community involvement. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is one of the documents in the LDF, setting out how and when our community will be involved in the development of the LDF. It will also outline how we will consult the local community on planning applications.
- 1.6 The Council has, in the past, followed its statutory duties to consult with members of the public and statutory bodies in the planning process, but the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) sets out new standards and encourages a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to community involvement.
- 1.7 Research has shown that more comprehensive involvement of the community in the planning process has several benefits. These include improved decision making, and greater ownership of the policy framework that shapes the future of the area. It can also result in speedier decisions as issues can be resolved at an early stage.
- 1.8 This document sets out the Council's strategy for community involvement in the planning process. It outlines how the Council plans to establish common ground with the community, promoting consensus on the form and content of the Local Development Documents that will be produced to form the Local Development Framework and how the community will be involved when the Council receives major planning applications.
- 1.9 This document is set out in two parts. The main body of the document forms the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and the second part, the appendices at the back, sets out supplementary information relating to the specific detail of the Council's community involvement strategy. The appendices do not form part of the statutory Statement of Community Involvement as they are subject to change and quickly outdated.

## The Thanet Context

- 1.10 Thanet is a coastal district situated at the eastern end of Kent in close proximity to the continent. The district consists of a rural area to the west and south-west with a large urban area, including the historic seaside towns of Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate, around the northern, eastern and southern coastline. The recently established town centre

of Westwood is situated in a central position in the district. Thanet has a population of just over 127,000 people (2001 Census).

- 1.11 The district benefits from Port Ramsgate which includes the only Royal Harbour/Marina complex, and provides both car passenger and freight services to Europe. The district also has a developing airport, Kent International Airport, which is identified in the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and Regional Planning Guidance as an airport of regional significance.
- 1.12 Despite its location in the South East of England and its attractive environment, the district has suffered from long term economic and social problems. Unemployment has for many years been well above the Kent average and significant social deprivation exists in many parts of the district.

## 2 The New Planning System

### The Legal Context

- 2.1 The new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a complete new system of planning in England and Wales, implemented by following the procedures set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.
- 2.2 Structure Plans, previously prepared by Kent County Council, are being replaced by Regional Strategies which will be prepared by the South East of England Regional Assembly.
- 2.3 Development plans prepared by Thanet District Council have also changed - Local Plans will be replaced by a series of documents, known collectively as the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 2.4 The new planning system focuses on Community Involvement and places much more emphasis on this than did the previous planning system.

### Regional and Strategic Planning Context

- 2.5 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East was adopted in 2001. This Guidance designates Thanet as part of the East Kent Priority Area for Economic Regeneration (PAER). A review of this Guidance, 'The South East Plan', is currently being drafted and has identified much of the East Kent Coastal area as a 'regeneration area'. The South East Plan will replace the existing Regional Planning Guidance once it has been adopted.
- 2.6 The Kent & Medway Structure Plan is a long term statutory land-use policy document for the county which guides development, protects important features of the environment and influences the location and type of private and public investment. It was adopted in July 2006 and runs until 2021.

### District Planning Context

- 2.7 The documents produced by Thanet Council that will make up the Local Development Framework are described briefly below:

### **Local Development Framework (LDF)**

- 2.8 The LDF is like a ‘folder’ containing all the documents that form Thanet Council’s part of the statutory development plan.

### **Local Development Scheme (LDS)**

- 2.9 This sets out the programme for preparing the documents which will form the Local Development Framework.

### **Local Development Document (LDD)**

- 2.10 A Local Development Document is the term given to the documents that form the Local Development Framework.

### **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**

- 2.11 How and when public participation will be carried out and how this will apply to different documents.

### **Development Plan Document (DPD)**

- 2.12 These are documents that the local planning authority must prepare and which have to be subject to community involvement, consultation and independent examination. These include general policies applicable to the whole district, allocations of land, site/area specific policies and the proposals map.

### **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

- 2.13 SPD’s are intended to elaborate upon a policy or proposal in the DPD’s but do not have their full statutory status. (Currently the Councils Supplementary Planning Guidance which will be reviewed/updated as necessary in due course).

### **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**

- 2.14 Assessment of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the policies and proposals contained within the Local Development Framework.

### **Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA)**

- 2.15 Assessment of the environmental impacts of the policies and proposals contained within the Local Development Framework.

### **Local Development Framework Structure.**

- 2.16 The LDF will comprise the LDD’s (identified in the Profiles set out in the Local Development Scheme) and the adopted Thanet Local Plan.

- 2.17 The Thanet Local Plan was adopted in June 2006 and will be ‘saved’ for a period of at least three years after its adoption. As each LDD is adopted the corresponding policies in the Thanet Local Plan will be withdrawn. It is expected that a number of policies will be saved beyond the initial three year period as appropriate.

- 2.18 It is anticipated that the LDF will be presented in a loose leaf folder. This will enable policies to be amended and updated without the need to reprint the whole document.

- 2.19 In addition to the RSS regard will also need to be had to the Minerals and Waste LDF's produced by Kent County Council, as all these documents, together with the saved Local Plan, will make up the Development Plan for the area.

## **3 Links with other Community Involvement Initiatives**

### **The Council's Corporate Plan and Community Strategy.**

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan sets out a number of specific objectives, which relate to different aspects of the Council's activities. The Council's key priorities from 2003-2007 are:
- Creation of fairly paid jobs;
  - Improving the look, cleanliness, vitality and safety of the Thanet street scene particularly in town centres and coastal areas;
  - Increasing the extent to which improving economic prosperity benefits the whole of Thanet by focusing regeneration efforts on key wards;
  - Continuing to improve the quality of all services;
  - Consulting and involving Thanet people in discussions that affect them;
  - Meeting Thanet's Housing needs; and
  - Rebranding Thanet.
- 3.2 The first Community Strategy for Thanet was published in June 2004. The Strategy's vision is to see a prosperous, secure and welcoming community that is a safe and attractive place to live and work. The key themes are
- The Economy
  - Lifelong Learning
  - A Safer Community
  - The Environment & Housing
  - An Inclusive Community; and
  - Health and Life Style.
- 3.3 The LDF will be prepared to ensure consistency and close integration with both the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy and will also have regard to other County and District level strategies.

### **The Council's Consultation Standards**

- 3.4 In line with the Council's corporate aim to improve customer care and 'involve Thanet people in the decisions that affect them' as set out in the Councils Public Consultation Strategy, these principles of effective public consultation will be promoted. The Council will:
- Value your contribution to the consultation and will not ask the same questions over again in a short space of time, without good cause

- Aim to provide sufficient background information to enable the public/stakeholders to understand and respond to consultation material
- Aim to produce consultation results that are measurable and can be evaluated objectively
- Present a clear reason for carrying out consultation and endeavour to offer meaningful choices. Consultation will not be used simply to rubber stamp decisions that have already been taken
- Be clear about how the consultation is being organised and how responses should be made
- Explain the purpose of the consultation and how it is anticipated the results will be used
- Work to allow sufficient time for the consultation
- Aim to make the consultation inclusive by taking account of any particular needs or difficulties you have to enable you to respond to the consultation
- Make appropriate use of a wide range of consultation methods
- Offer feedback on the results of the consultation and on how these results have been used to inform decision-making, once the consultation is complete
- Respond to your comments on being consulted by considering how future consultations might be improved

In response you are asked to:

- Show that the full range of member's views of any group you are representing is fully explored and that areas where agreement and disagreements exist are highlighted
- Ensure your contribution is accurate and authoritative, especially where your particular skills or expertise are being sought
- Ensure your responses are as clear and concise as possible and relevant to the issues being considered
- Be respectful of other peoples' views and courteous towards representatives of the Council when engaging in public events

## **Planning Aid**

3.5 Communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay planning consultant fees can obtain free, independent and professional advice on town planning via Planning Aid who complement the work of local authorities but are wholly independent.

3.6 Planning Aid is a vital part of the planning system. It enables local communities, particularly those with limited resources, to participate effectively in planning matters, and is working to further widen engagement in the planning process and to give an equal voice to all those involved in planning.

3.7 Planning Aid can help people to:

- Understand and use the planning system
- Participate in preparing plans
- Prepare their own plans for the future of their community

- Comment on planning applications
  - Apply for planning permission or appeal against refusal of permission
  - Represent themselves at public inquiries
- 3.8 Planning Aid is delivered regionally. The Caseworker is the first point of contact and the contact details for our region are set out below:

Ian Bremner  
Kent Architecture Centre, 1st Floor, Admirals Offices, The Historic Dockyard, Chatham,  
Kent,

ME4 4TS

Tel: 0870 850 9806

E-mail: [secw@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:secw@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

Available: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday am & Friday am. If calling outside of these times, please leave a message.

Or visit the website at <http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk>

## 4 Purpose of the Statement of Community Involvement

- 4.1 The new planning system places greater emphasis on ‘front-loading’, with local communities on the content of the plans that will shape the future of the district. Traditionally, community involvement in the planning process would involve inviting comments on proposed policies and proposals in a written document (with relevant maps) at specific stages during the process. The new planning system encourages greater community involvement throughout the process. In order to fully engage the community and take on board their views and opinions as early as possible, the Council will use the methods of community involvement outlined in Table 2 to create a stronger local dialogue with the community. This general approach will be used throughout the process of Development Plan Document preparation.

### Process Management

- 4.2 In order to maximise commitment at the earliest possible stage and widen ownership of the new Local Development process, a steering group has been established which includes Councillors and representatives from the Local Strategic Partnership, to advise on the LDF process. Regular steering group meetings are held to inform of progress and guide decisions on major issues.
- 4.3 There are many techniques that can be used to involve the community but a level of commitment from participants is required for wider, more comprehensive community involvement.
- 4.5. This SCI has already been subject to public consultation – a questionnaire was sent out in 2005 regarding different consultation techniques, the SCI was discussed at a planning conference in July 2005, and has also been subject to a six week period of formal public consultation from 17<sup>th</sup> February – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006. Corporately, the Council will aim to

ensure that wherever possible consultation on the LDF takes place in tandem with other consultation exercises in order to avoid ‘consultation fatigue’ and to make best use of available resources.

- 4.6 Whenever there is a consultation stage for any Development Plan Document or Supplementary Planning Document or supporting documentation such as the Sustainability Appraisal, the Council will automatically publicise this through the use of press releases and the Website. Subject to the requirements of the Regulations, the Council will seek to maximise its use of email and the Internet to advise stakeholders of the availability of consultation documents and encourage consultees to make use of the Council’s Website rather than send hard copies of documents. However, hard copies will be available on request, and available for inspection at Council offices and libraries.
- 4.7 In terms of receiving representations, the Council is able and willing to receive written comments by email, fax, or letter. At the formal stages of the process those making representations will be encouraged to use the official forms for making comments, though all comments, however received, will where appropriate still be registered. An interactive section of the Website will also be established so that comments will be able to be made using the Internet. Representations made by telephone cannot normally be registered as formal representations. Any comments made verbally should be confirmed in writing.
- 4.8 Community involvement is principal to:
- The Core Strategy – the spatial strategy and core policies
  - Development Plan Documents – eg Housing
  - The Proposals Maps
  - Area Action Plans
  - Supplementary Planning Documents
  - Major Planning Applications
- 4.9 The key stages in the production of a Development Plan Document are listed below and shown in Table 1 to show the overall process:
- 1 Pre-production stage
  - 2 Production Stage
  - 3 Submission to the Secretary of State for Examination
  - 4 Examination in Public
- 4.10 Continuous community involvement will take place during the pre-production and production stages. In addition to this, there will be a formal six week (required in the Legislation) period during which the community can submit its views on the final draft the Council submits to the Secretary of State. These comments will be considered by an independent inspector at the examination and his report will be binding. The nature of involvement at each stage can be summarised as follows:

**Pre-production Stage: Evidence gathering and early community involvement - ‘front-loading’:**

- 4.11 The statutory consultees will be consulted on the evolving issues, as necessary, in accordance with Regulation 25. The Council will also continue to hold informal meetings

with specific consultation bodies and with non-statutory consultees to discuss issues at the pre-production stage.

### **Production Stage:**

- 4.12 This stage involves consultation on the **Preferred Options**. The intention will be to publish and publicise a Preferred Options Report prior to the formal participation process. This will enable an informal stage of consultation prior to the statutory stage. This will be followed by the formal six week period for pre-submission public participation under Regulation 26. The Council will statutorily advertise and issue Press Releases at this stage. In line with the Regulations, copies of the consultation document will be sent free of charge to all statutory and non-statutory consultees who have confirmed that they would wish to receive a hard copy. Other groups, companies and individuals will be able to purchase copies or download the document from the Website. Adverts will be placed in the local press.

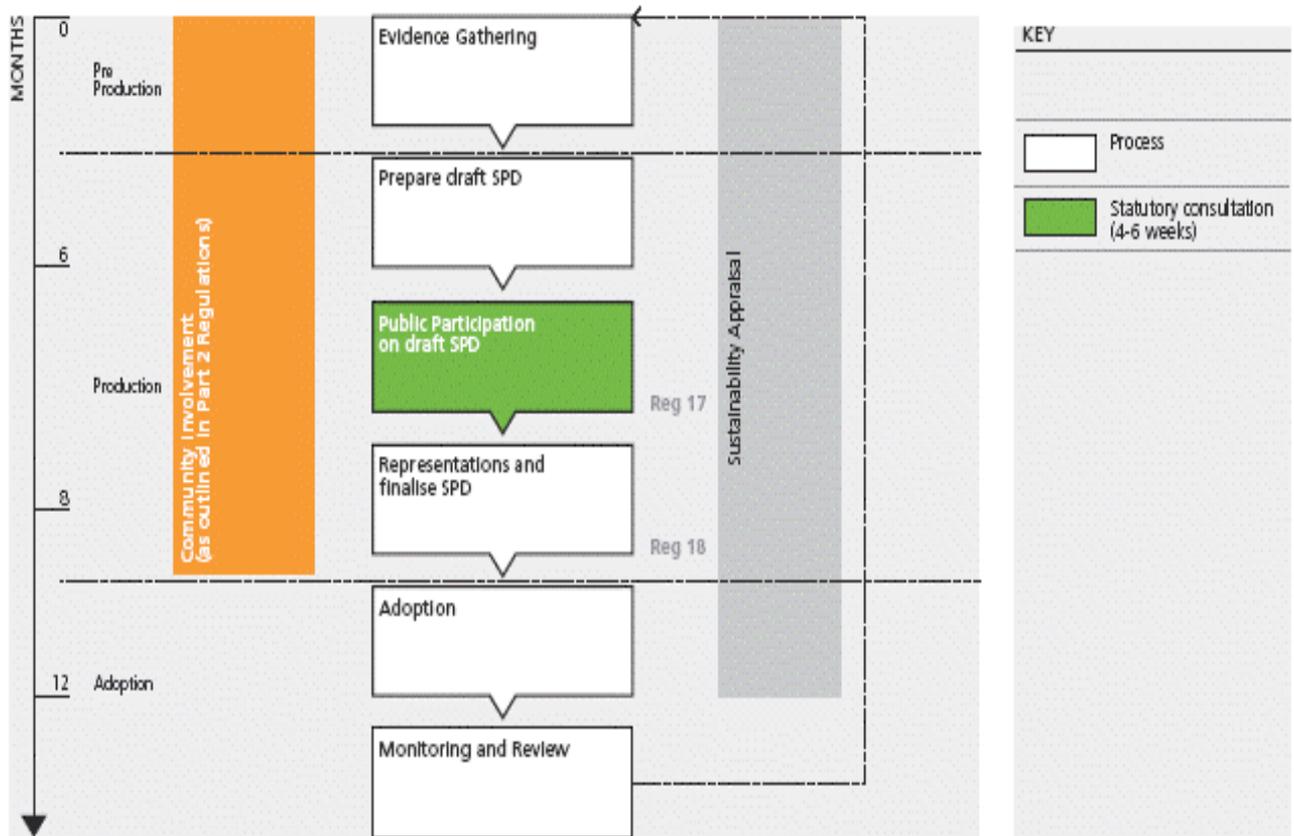
### **Submission to Secretary of State for Examination:**

- 4.13 Under Regulation 28, the community has a six week period from the date the Council submits the DPD to the Secretary of State for submitting any comments to be considered by the independent inspector at the examination stage. The Council will statutorily advertise the DPD and issue Press Releases at this stage. In accordance with the Regulations all Statutory Consultees and other consultees will be notified that the DPD has been submitted to the Secretary of State. Consultees will be sent a complimentary copy of the Document if they have indicated that they need a hard copy, otherwise their attention will be drawn to the Council's Website. Other groups, companies and individuals will be able to purchase copies or download the document from the Website. Adverts will be placed in the local press.
- 4.14 Some Development Plan Documents will allocate sites for development. People that respond may suggest alternative sites or changes to the boundaries of these allocations. The Council will consult on these suggestions in accordance with Regulation 32 and deal with the representations in accordance with Regulation 33. This includes sending notification and the address of the sites to specific consultation bodies.

### **Examination:**

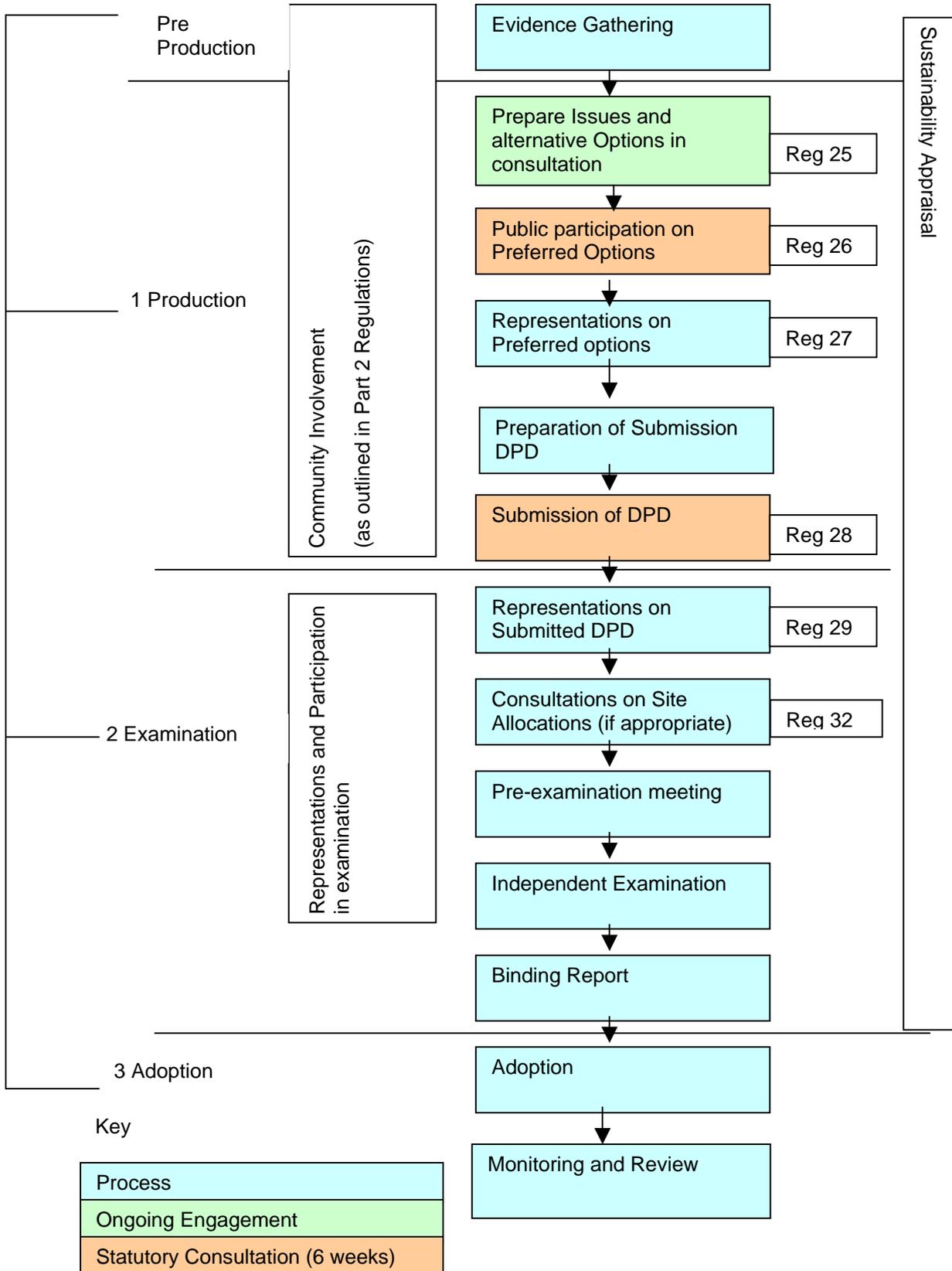
- 4.15 There will be a Pre-Examination Meeting at which the Inspector will agree with all those who have made representations how their views will be considered. The presumption will be that the majority of representations will be considered by Written Submissions but there is a right to be heard. Again, the presumption will be that the majority of issues will be considered at informal or roundtable sessions.
- 4.16 The process for preparing Supplementary Planning Documents is similar to the process for preparing Development Plan Documents, except there is only one formal stage of consultation, and there is no public examination. At the formal consultation stage, a draft document will be published and advertised in accordance with Regulation 17. It will be made available for inspection at offices and on the website, and sent to relevant specific consultation bodies for comment.

Figure 4.2 – The Supplementary Planning Document Process



(source PPS12, Communities and Local Government)

**TABLE 1 – THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT PROCESS**



## Who we will be consulting

- 4.17 The Council will continue to carry out formal, statutory consultation procedures by way of formal letters of notification, notices in the press, and the availability of documents at deposit points. The Regulations for the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) specify that certain specific consultation bodies must be consulted. The minimum requirement for pre-submission consultation is outlined in Regulation 25. It requires the local planning authority to consult with:
- “(a) each of the “specific consultation bodies” to the extent that the local planning authority thinks that the proposed subject matter of the Development Plan Document affects the body; and  
(b) such of the general consultation bodies as the local planning authority consider appropriate”
- 4.18 A more specific list of stakeholders and consultees is contained in Appendix 1. As the appendices to this document do not form part of the formal statement of Community Involvement, they can be updated as and when required. The Council also keeps a database of groups, organisations and individuals wishing to be kept informed of planning issues, and any group or individual showing an interest in the LDF can be added to the database at any stage of the process.
- 4.19 Bodies consulted on a particular document will vary depending on the nature of the document being produced. For example, for an Area Action Plan, consultation would be focused to those local to the specific area, whereas a document such as the Core Strategy would involve a district-wide consultation. The Statement of Compliance which accompanies each document will identify general consultees consulted for that particular document.

## How we will be consulting

For **all** planning documents we produce, we will:

- Make the documents available in libraries and area offices
- Make the documents available on the Council's website
- Engage in public consultation
- Engage in public participation
- Formal consultation periods will be for six weeks (as directed by legislation) but may be advertised earlier

- 4.20 The consultation and participation carried out for different documents will be dependent on the nature of the documents being prepared. The results of the questionnaire identified

public meetings, questionnaires and letters to households as the favoured methods of community involvement. However, over half of the respondents were aged 65+, therefore other methods will also be used to try and engage with younger people.

- 4.21 Table 2 overleaf shows the methods of consultation that could be used for each type of document. The Council will use one or more of the methods identified as being appropriate, depending on the type, nature, context and stage in the process of the document concerned.
- 4.22 Consultation will be carried out by staff from the Strategic Planning section and/or Development Control section, in conjunction with the Councils Communications team who have relevant expertise and resources in delivering public consultation and involvement. The budgetary requirements for the consultations programmed for the current Local Development Scheme have been identified and will continue to be planned for in future years. Where landowners, developers or external organisations choose to carry out pre-application consultation exercises they will be responsible for the cost.
- 4.23 It is important that sufficient time and resources are committed to ensure that effective and meaningful consultation is carried out with the community including feedback. By ensuring that consultation is targeted and realistic the council will ensure that best use is made of the resources available.

Wherever possible the approach will be to :-

- Consult on related LDD's at the same time where appropriate.
- Make use of consultation exercises being undertaken elsewhere in the council or by the LSP and other partners.]
- Ensure an identified budget is set aside for consultation.
- Use all available internal support for consultation exercises and ensure staff are suitably trained.
- Match the consultation methods with the available resources.
- Use consultants only where added value can be demonstrated or where independence and greater impartiality is necessary.

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Table 2 – Methods of Community Involvement

|                                                     | <b>Provision of information</b>                                                                                                  | <b>Consultation</b>                                                                                                                        | <b>Participation</b>                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Core Strategy</b>                                | Advert/leaflet in local newspaper<br>Council website – online consultation<br>Non-Technical Summary<br>Article in Thanet Matters | Documents available for inspection at deposit points<br>Internet – online consultation<br>Exhibitions<br>Questionnaires<br>Public meetings | Workshops<br>Working groups<br>Discussions with stakeholders |
| <b>Development Plan Document (DPD)</b>              | Advert/leaflet in local newspaper<br>Article in Thanet Matters<br>Council website – online consultation<br>Non-Technical Summary | Documents available for inspection at deposit points<br>Internet – online consultation<br>Exhibitions<br>Questionnaires<br>Public meetings | Workshops<br>Working groups<br>Discussions with stakeholders |
| <b>Area Action Plans</b>                            | Advert/leaflet in local newspaper<br>Council website – online consultation<br>Letters to households<br>Non-Technical Summary     | Internet – online consultation<br>Exhibitions<br>Questionnaires<br>Public meetings                                                         | Workshops<br>Working groups<br>Discussions with stakeholders |
| <b>Site Specific Allocations/Development Briefs</b> | Advert/leaflet in local newspaper<br>Council website – online consultation<br>Letters to households                              | Internet – online consultation<br>Exhibitions<br>Questionnaires<br>Public meetings                                                         | Workshops<br>Working groups<br>Discussions with stakeholders |
| <b>Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)</b>        | Advert/leaflet in local newspaper<br>Council website – online consultation                                                       | Internet – online consultation                                                                                                             | Discussions with stakeholders                                |
| <b>Sustainability Appraisal (SA)</b>                | Advert/leaflet in local newspaper<br>Article in Thanet Matters<br>Council website – online consultation<br>Non-Technical Summary | Documents available for inspection at deposit points<br>Internet – online consultation<br>Exhibitions<br>Questionnaires                    | Workshops<br>Working groups<br>Discussions with stakeholders |

Table 3 – Appropriateness of methods of consultation

| Method                                               | Useful for:                                                                                                                                                      | At What Stage:                                                               | For Whom:                                                                                                               | For us to consider:                                                                                                                                  | Resources:                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Advert/leaflet in Local Paper                        | Raising levels of awareness and publicising specific opportunities to get involved. Reaching wide audience.                                                      | All stages in the process                                                    | Local Communities, Developers & landowners, Business Sector, Service Providers                                          | We need to allow enough time for publication and set an appropriate timeframe for collecting responses                                               | Costs of advertising/printing                                                                                                                                                 |
| Article in Thanet Matters                            | Raising levels of awareness and publicising specific opportunities to get involved. Reaching district-wide audience.                                             | All stages in the process where appropriate (given it is produced quarterly) | All residents                                                                                                           | We need to be aware of deadlines for articles to ensure appropriate information is included                                                          | Staff time/printing costs                                                                                                                                                     |
| Council Website – online consultation                | Allowing access to latest information and provide opportunities to contribute electronically                                                                     | All stages                                                                   | All sectors                                                                                                             | The suitability of documents to make them electronically available. Items should be placed online in time for people to respond effectively          | Will need to work together with TDC Communications unit, but once information is available on-line it is low cost. Will need GIS expertise for any maps to be made available. |
| Documents available for inspection at Deposit Points | Meeting minimum requirements in allowing everyone the opportunity to comment on draft documents – deposit points include all Council offices and local libraries | All stages                                                                   | All sectors                                                                                                             | It must be clear how and when people should respond. Information should be accessible to all in terms of mobility, understanding and time available. | Staff time may be needed to answer questions and collate any responses. Printing costs may be an issue.                                                                       |
| Exhibitions                                          | Outlining specific plans and proposals to target audience. Accessible to broad audience.                                                                         | Production and/or submission stages                                          | Citizens Panel<br>Local communities, developers, landowners. Business sector, service providers, additional authorities | Information should be accessible to all in terms of mobility, understanding and times available.                                                     | Preparation costs and time needed can be significant. Additional staff time needed if exhibition is manned.                                                                   |
| Questionnaires                                       | Determining attitudes                                                                                                                                            | Pre-production,                                                              | All sectors                                                                                                             | Surveys can reap a                                                                                                                                   | Analysis can be time                                                                                                                                                          |

## Thanet District Council – Statement of Community Involvement

| Method          | Useful for:                                                                                                                                             | At What Stage:                                | For Whom:                                                                                       | For us to consider:                                                                                                                       | Resources:                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                 | and identifying needs for improvement. Gaining views from people who may not otherwise express an opinion.                                              | production and submission stages              |                                                                                                 | greater number of responses but require significant administration                                                                        | consuming and specialist skills/software may be required                                                                                                   |
| Public Meetings | Gaining first hand views regarding a specific area                                                                                                      | Pre-production, production, submission stages | Citizens Panel<br>Local communities, developers, landowners, business sector, service providers | The audience and any restrictions, time available for consultation                                                                        | Costs of venue hire can be significant, staff time needed to prepare any material                                                                          |
| Workshops       | Bringing together representatives from different sectors of the community to be more actively involved in scoping documents and identifying priorities. | Pre-production, production, submission        | All sectors                                                                                     | Events require significant preparation and organisation. However they can be very useful for discussing important and/or difficult issues | Time is needed for preparation – specialist skills may be required. High staffing levels likely for facilitating. Costs of venue hire can be considerable. |
| Working Groups  | Bringing together representatives to provide ongoing support to LDF development and production.                                                         | All stages                                    | Representatives from LSP and Councillors<br>Citizens Panel                                      | Success is dependant on commitment from those involved. Regular or ongoing meetings can also have resource implications                   | Ongoing support from staff has time implications                                                                                                           |

## Hard to reach groups

- 4.24 There is no clear definition of Hard to Reach groups, although some definitions include ‘those inaccessible to most traditional and conventional methods for any reason’, ‘those who have traditionally been under-represented’ or ‘people who are hard to engage with on a positive level’.
- 4.25 The Council aims to increase participation from all sectors of our community and pay particular regard to the needs of different race and disability groups. The Council uses a number of specialist companies who can translate documents into different languages should a need be identified or requested. Documents in braille, other languages or on audiotape can also be available on request by calling 01843 577165.
- 4.26 The following table identifies hard to reach groups and ways we might engage with these groups:

| <b>Hard to reach group</b>                  | <b>Possible Solutions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Young people                                | Send Packs/leaflets to schools<br>Presentations to schools/'student committees'<br>Youth Council                                                                                                                                     |
| Ethnic Groups/Refugees                      | Contact via Migrant Helpline                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Gypsies and Travellers                      | Via organisations/support groups                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Those with low levels of literacy/education | Use of plain English<br>Contacts via Surestart<br>Wider distribution of leaflets/publicity material in relevant places                                                                                                               |
| Residents who work outside the district     | Wider distribution of leaflets/publicity material<br>Consider evening/weekend consultation exercises                                                                                                                                 |
| Single Parents                              | Wider distribution of leaflets/publicity material<br>Surestart projects/connections                                                                                                                                                  |
| Disabled/Elderly                            | Wider distribution of leaflets/publicity material – for example via meals on wheels/Help the aged<br>Availability of documents in large print/Braille or audiotape on request<br>Consider access arrangements when organising events |

- 4.27 In addition, residents in the large rural parts of the District may not have easy access to the Council Offices or information. The Council will consider ways as to how information can best be passed throughout the rural area. This could involve using established parish networks and encouraging the use of electronic communication. Meetings with members from Parish Councils have already taken place. Further meetings will be held as part of the continual community involvement. Parish Councils and Town Centre Forums will also be asked to disseminate information when a major consultation is taking place.

## Feeding back the results of community involvement

- 4.28 The Council recognises that it is important to report back to the community and other stakeholders on how their comments and suggestions are taken on board. The Council will publish the feedback to all consultation on its website and in document format (eg committee reports, newsletters) that will be available in all Council offices and libraries. Feedback will also be reported back to the Local Development Steering Group. The community and other stakeholders will be contacted by letter or e-mail to inform them in detail of the response to their suggestions and views.
- 4.29 Each document in the LDF will require a ‘statement of compliance’ which will outline how the SCI has been followed, how the main issues raised have been addressed and any benefits this brought to the process.

## 5 Consultation on Planning Applications

- 5.1 The Council deals with a variety of applications for planning permission and allied applications. It carries out consultation, publicity and notification in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements as specified in legislation in force at the time. The Council also carries out consultation in excess of the statutory requirements
- 5.2 The Council currently uses a combination of the following:
- Site notices
  - Letters to local residents/businesses
  - Press advertisements – adverts for applications which are a departure from the development plan, require an Environmental Impact Assessment or involve a listed building or conservation area are advertised separately
  - Weekly list of applications (to both public and consultees) – by both hard copy and e-mail
  - Weekly list of applications and details of planning applications on the Councils website
  - Specific consultation or notification with statutory and non-statutory consultees, including local community groups and amenity/conservation societies
  - Notification to Parish and Town Councils – enhanced by the provision of a full copy of every relevant application
- 5.3 To consult neighbouring residents and businesses, the Council currently sends letters to individual premises. Letters are sent to the most immediate neighbours and, for larger proposals, a wider area, depending on the scale of the proposed development. Consultation letters invite responses to be made within 23 days of the date of the letter (this being the usual statutory period of 21 days plus two days to allow for any postal delays). Bodies such as Natural England will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation. Where the owner or occupier of neighbouring land cannot readily be identified, the Council will put up a site notice nearby. The results of any such consultation will be reported and taken into account in decisions made by, and on behalf of, the Council.
- 5.4 Where a press notice is required or thought to be appropriate, the Council will place this in one of the local newspapers circulating within the district.

- 5.5 If an application is significantly amended during its consideration, the Council will send a further round of consultation letters to nearby residents and to any additional people who have already written in with comments. A copy of the revised plans will also be sent to the relevant Parish or Town Council and made available on the website.
- 5.6 The Council has copies of applications and accompanying plans available at the Council offices in Cecil Street, Margate, and Parish and Town Councils are encouraged to make copies available to residents.
- 5.7 The Council receives and handles comments sent by conventional post, fax, e-mail and electronically via UK Planning.
- 5.8 The Council's planning committee (attended by 15 Members) allows public speaking in respect of those applications that the Council, as local planning authority, is itself determining. Under current arrangements, the Parish or Town Council, the applicant and one person who has submitted a written comment on the application may address the committee for three minutes.
- 5.9 At the time a decision is issued on any application, the Council sends letters and a copy of the decision notice to all those who have submitted written comments on the application, advising whether the application has been approved or refused.

## Pre-submission consultation and wider community involvement

- 5.10 The Council will encourage potential applicants to publicise and consult on emerging larger scale projects before they submit a planning application. In addition to the techniques set out above it may well be appropriate to engage in one, or a series of public exhibitions.
- 5.11 Wider community involvement will be sought for certain types of planning applications which are described in 'tiers' as follows:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>TIER LEVEL 1</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Development Plan Departures that are referred to the Secretary of State</b>                                                                                                                                            |
| If a planning application contradicts a policy in the Local Plan, but is recommended for approval, this is known as a 'departure' from the development plan. Departures are automatically sent to the Secretary of State. |

| <b>TIER LEVEL 2</b>                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 Developments (as defined by the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations)</b>                           | These are schemes likely to have significant effects on the environment (eg waste disposal schemes etc)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Proposals that are subject to the Town and Country Planning (Residential Density) (London and South East England) Direction 2002</b> | This refers to the building of houses that are not in line with the housing thresholds as set out in PPG3. This Direction requires the Council to notify the ODPM and GOSE of development that comprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the provision of houses or flats on sites of 1 hectare or more; where</li> <li>b) the residential density will be less than 30 dwellings per hectare; and any application for planning permission which is not an application to which the Residential Development on Greenfield Land Direction applies.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Town and Country Planning (Shopping Development) (England and Wales) Direction</b>                                                   | This applies to development that comprises or includes the provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) gross shopping floor areas of not less than 20,000 square metres; or</li> <li>b) gross shopping floorspace of not less than 2,500 square metres which will exceed a cumulative total of 20,000 square meters</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Applications which require a full Transport Assessment</b>                                                                           | Applications where a transport assessment is required to reflect the scale of development and the extent of the transport implications of the proposal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

| <b>TIER LEVEL 3</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Applications of a local significance that the Council considers to require wider community involvement</b>                                                                                                                                                                 | Developments considered to have district-wide implications screened for identification on a case by case basis.                                                                                      |
| <b>Applications that fall within sites that are ‘sensitive’ to development pressures</b>                                                                                                                                                                                      | These may include development adjoining a listed building, substantial demolition in a conservation area, loss of allotment land, loss of employment land for housing, development on windfall sites |
| <b>Allocated sites that may not have been subject to extensive consultation in the development plan process, such as allocations which were not objected to and consequently may not have been considered in depth in the independent scrutiny and any public examination</b> | Such applications may come as a surprise to local residents, so more extensive publication at the application stage may be beneficial.                                                               |
| <b>Other – to encompass lower thresholds for non-conforming uses and other types of specific development.</b>                                                                                                                                                                 | Developments considered to have a significant environmental impact upon their local area identified on a case by case basis.                                                                         |

5.12 Given the range and types of available consultation approaches available to the Council, the table below provides an indication of the methods for community engagement that may be appropriate for each ‘tier’ of application.

|                    | <b>Tier 1</b> | <b>Tier 2</b> | <b>Tier 3</b> |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Approach</b>    |               |               |               |
| Public Meetings    | ✓             |               |               |
| Public Exhibitions | ✓             | ✓             |               |
| Development Briefs | ✓             |               |               |
| Workshops          | ✓             |               |               |
| Focus Groups       | ✓             | ✓             |               |
| Forums             | ✓             | ✓             | ✓             |
| Parish Councils    | ✓             | ✓             | ✓             |
| Media              | ✓             |               | ✓             |
| Website            | ✓             | ✓             | ✓             |

## 6 Review of the SCI

6.1 The consultation procedures used by the Council detailed in this SCI will be kept under review and monitored to determine where procedures have proven unsuccessful or where revisions may be necessary to meet new circumstances. Some of this information will become apparent via the Statement of Compliance (see para 4.29). In addition, we

will assess each method of consultation we have used to see if it:

- Gave you the information you needed
- Gave us the type of feedback we needed
- Actively encouraged more people to be involved
- Involved different and appropriate types of people and organisations
- Allowed participants the opportunity to have their views heard and recorded
- Resulted in participants feeling their involvement was worthwhile.

6.2 The results of the assessment of any consultation we have carried out will be reported in the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which is prepared at the end of each calendar year and submitted to the Secretary of State. If the assessment of consultation methods used show that changes are required to the SCI, these will be reported in the AMR.

## APPENDIX 1 – General Consultation Bodies

Where appropriate, the following agencies and organisations will be consulted in the preparation of local development documents. Please note, this list is not exhaustive and also relates to successor bodies where re-organisations occur.

### Specific Consultation Bodies

The ‘specific consultation bodies’ comprise statutory consultees including:

- The Regional Planning Body
- Kent County Council
- Neighbouring Authorities (ie Canterbury City Council & Dover District Council)
- Parish Councils (including adjoining Parishes in Canterbury and Dover)
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Highways Agency
- English Heritage
- Network Rail
- Regional Development Agency
- Owners/controllers of telecommunications apparatus
- Strategic Health Authority
- Organisations that provide electricity, gas and water and deal with sewerage

### Government Departments

Department for Education and Skills (through Government Offices)  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Department for Transport (through Government Offices)  
Department of Health (through relevant Regional Public Health Group)  
Department of Trade and Industry (through Government Offices)  
Ministry of Defence  
Department of Work and Pensions  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport

### General Consultation Bodies

The “general consultation bodies” include community groups and other stakeholders such as:

- Voluntary groups
- Bodies representing the interests of different racial. Ethnic or national groups in the area
- Bodies representing the interests of different religious groups in the area
- Bodies representing the interests of the business community in the area
- Bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the authority’s area

### Other Agencies

Age Concern/Help the Aged

## **Thanet District Council – Statement of Community Involvement**

Bodies representing interests of different groups within the community eg racial, ethnic, religious, disability)

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England  
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment  
Environmental, Heritage and Wildlife Organisations  
Equal Opportunities Commission  
Health and Safety Executive  
Housing Corporations  
Kent Association of Parish Councils  
Kent Rural Community Council  
Learning & Skills Councils  
National Playing Fields Associations  
Network Rail  
Port Operators  
Sport England  
Sure Start  
Voluntary Organisations/Council for Voluntary Services

### **Service Providers**

Education Establishments  
Health Services  
Health Trusts  
Kent Ambulance NHS Trust  
Kent County Constabulary  
Kent Fire & Rescue Service  
Sports Organisations  
Transport Providers (air, road, rail, water)

### **Business Sector**

Business, Trade and Industry Associations/Federations  
Chambers of Commerce  
Economic Development Organisations  
Employment Organisations  
Larger and multi national businesses  
Retail outlets  
Small and medium sized businesses  
Tourism Organisations  
Town & Shopping Centre Management

### **Local Communities**

Community Development Organisations  
Community Groups  
Individual Residents  
Local Agenda 21  
Local Strategic Partnership  
NFU  
Residents Associations/Forums  
Citizens Panel  
Wardens Service

### **Developers and Landowners**

Crown Estates  
Defence Estates  
Developers  
Development and Building Companies  
National Trust  
Post Office Property Holdings  
Regeneration Organisations  
The House Builders Federation  
The Housing Corporation/Associations

### **Individuals, groups and organisations**

The Council keeps a comprehensive database of those who have shown an interest in being involved with planning issues. These groups and individuals will be contacted at each stage of the process in the production of any part of the LDF. However, this database is subject to considerable change due to new contacts, contacts that are no longer interested (eg have moved away etc), pressure groups which become defunct etc and is maintained and updated on a regular basis. Groups and individuals can be added to this database at any time by contacting the Strategic Planning team on 01843 577591 or e-mailing [local.plans@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:local.plans@thanet.gov.uk).

**The Statement of Community Involvement was prepared by the Strategic Planning section of Thanet District Council's Development Services department.**

**Tel: 01843 577591**

**[Local.plans@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:local.plans@thanet.gov.uk)**