Introduction

Eastbourne Borough Council is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (also known as a SCI) in order to inform the local community and other interested parties how they can be involved in the planning process.

Eastbourne Borough Council is responsible for planning within the Eastbourne Borough boundary, except for the area within the South Downs National Park, which is the responsibility of the South Downs National Park in terms of planning.

Many people are interested in their town’s future. They want their children to have a decent home and job and they value Eastbourne’s environment. They have clear ideas as to the kind of place they would like Eastbourne to be but probably have not realised the important role of planning in helping to achieve these ideas.

It is important that local communities and interested parties are given the opportunity to get involved in helping to shape the priorities for the future of the in which they live. The SCI set out the standards and approaches that the Council will take to involve stakeholders and the community in the consulting on planning matters.

This document summaries the SCI and should take approximately 10 minutes to read. The full version of the SCI can be viewed via www.eastbourne.gov.uk/sci.
The draft SCI has been published for consultation between 24th March and 19th May 2017, and is open for comments relating to how local communities and interested parties should be engaged in the planning process in Eastbourne in the future. Comments can be submitted on the Consultation Portal via www.eastbourne.gov.uk/sci.

**What is Planning?**

The Planning System manages the use and development of land and buildings with the aim of achieving ‘sustainable development’.

The Planning System has two main parts to it:

- **Plan making** – setting out a plan and policies for how an area will develop over time as a guide to future development.

- **Development Management** – when proposals for development is assessed and granted or refused planning permission.

The planning system is a ‘plan-led system’, which means that applications for planning permission should be determined according to what the plan and policies for the area says about it.

Eastbourne Borough Council’s Planning Officers prepare the local policy and assess applications and provide advice to elected Councillors, who are responsible for approving planning policy documents and plans and making decisions on whether planning permission should be granted.

**Plan Making**

Plan-making is setting the strategy for the future of the area over a long period, typically 15/20 years, in the form of plans and policies. These plans are called Local Plans.

Local Plans set out the priorities for future development including the requirements for housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure. They also identify opportunities for development, and what may or may not be permitted and where.

The preparation of a Local Plan tends to be a fairly long process. Before the Local Plan can be finalised, it needs to be examined by a Planning Inspector, who will assess whether or not the plan is ‘sound’. The Council sets out its
timetable for the preparation of Local Plans in a document called the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

The stages in the preparation of a Local Plan and the proposed approach to consultation are identified below:

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<th>Stage</th>
<th>What is involved?</th>
<th>Approach to consultation</th>
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<td>Evidence Gathering and early engagement</td>
<td>This stage involves establishing a clear understanding of what the Local Plan needs to address through the collection of evidence and through speaking to interested parties.</td>
<td>Consultation at this stage is likely to be informal, with the Council approaching organisations and consultation bodies for their input. There may be elements of public consultation with communities within this stage.</td>
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<td>Issues and Options consultation</td>
<td>The local community and other interested parties are invited to identify issues that need to be addressed and to comment on which options they would prefer to see taken forward in order to address the issues identified.</td>
<td>This is the stage that the majority of people will be able to have their say of how they would like the town to develop. Public consultation at this stage will take place for a minimum of 8 weeks.</td>
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<td>Publication and submission</td>
<td>The final version of the Local Plan is published and the local community and other interested parties are invited to comment on its ‘soundness’. Following this, the plan is submitted to the Secretary of State to arrange examination by a Planning Inspector.</td>
<td>At this stage, the Council is only able to accept representations on the ‘soundness’ of the policies and proposals in the Plan. The Plan will be published for a minimum of 6 weeks to allow representations to be submitted.</td>
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<td>Examination</td>
<td>The Planning Inspector considers the representations made on the Local Plan, usually through public hearing sessions, and may propose changes to address issues of ‘soundness’. Any proposed modifications will be subject to consultation before they are confirmed.</td>
<td>Consultees who submitted representations at the previous stage will be given the opportunity to raise their objections at Public Examination. If required, consultation on modifications will take place for a minimum of 6 weeks for representations on their ‘soundness’.</td>
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### Stage | What is involved? | Approach to consultation
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**Adoption** | Once the Planning Inspector has found the Local Plan to be sound, the Council can adopt it and use it to determine planning applications. | Once the plan has been adopted, there is a **6 week** period for anyone who is aggrieved at the decision to adopt to apply to the High Court to challenge the decision.

As part of plan making, the Council can also produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD), which provides additional information of how Local Plan policies should be interpreted. The process for preparing SPDs is similar to that for a Local Plan, except that SPD are not subject to examination.

The approach to consultation in plan-making will be dependent to the nature and scale of the plan being consulted upon. The SCI sets out the basic consultation standards that will be used in all plan-making consultation, and additional consultation methods that may be used depending on the nature of the consultation.

**Basic Consultation Standards**

- **Consultation Portal** – Consultation will be ‘digital by default’. All consultations on planning policy issues will be hosted on the Council’s online Consultation Portal. Each consultation on the Consultation Portal will include the opportunity to read and comment on the document in question. Responses can be submitted directly using the website, or by downloading forms that can be completed and either uploaded to the website, returned by email or returned by post.

- **Direct Notification to organisations and individuals** - All organisations and individuals on the consultation database will receive direct notification of the publication of a planning policy document for consultation.

- **Deposit** - Documents published for consultation will be made available in paper copy for consultees to view at Eastbourne Borough Council’s Customer Contact Centre, 1 Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4TW.

- **Local media** - A public notice will be placed in a local newspaper to advertise formal periods of consultation. These will include details of the consultation, including where to view the consultation and the deadline for submission of representations.
• **Local Councillors** - Local Councillors will help to promote consultation within their wards and encourage all residents to get involved.

• **Quarterly Email Newsletter** - an email newsletter will be sent out on a quarterly basis to everyone on the consultation database and to anyone who has subscribed to email notifications on Planning Policy topics via ‘Keep me posted’ on the Council’s website. This will provide updates on preparation of Local Development Documents and when consultation is expected to be undertaken.

Additional Consultation Methods

• **Social Media** - Social media may be used to promote consultation through updates on the Council’s Facebook and Twitter pages.

• **Public exhibitions** – Public exhibitions will be hosted at the Town Hall, and can visit community groups by requested

• **Consulting with Younger People** – Existing forums that have been set up to allow younger people to contribute to and understand societal issues will be involved in consultation.

• **Presentations and Forums** - Presentations and forums may be arranged to enable discussion with appropriate groups, organisations or stakeholders.

• **Leaflets and Posters** - Leaflets and posters may be produced and distributed to promote consultation events or to summarise information on consultations

• **Surveys and questionnaires** – On-line surveys and questionnaires may be used to gather information and canvass views on key issues, options and proposals

• **Summary Documentation** - Non-technical summaries of consultation documents will be produced in order to provide a more accessible way to access and understand the consultation.

• **On-line videos/Presentations** - Videos and presentations may be published on-line as an easy visual way of presenting the consultation material
• **Community Groups/Organisations** - Neighbourhood Panels and Community/Residents Associations could be used to get members of communities involved and may be asked to help promote consultation within their local area.

• **Eastbourne Review** - Where possible, the Council will use the Eastbourne Review to inform residents about and summarise the consultation.

Representations made will be recorded through the on-line Consultation Portal and published. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000, representations cannot be treated in confidence, and by submitting a representation the consultee accepts responsibility for their comments.

Confidential or anonymous comments, including those submitted using avatars or web-names, cannot be accepted. In addition, any comments that are offensive, obscene, racist or illegal in any way will be rejected.

Following consultation, all representations received will be documented. Feedback on the consultation, including responses to the representations received and how they will be addressed in the next stage of plan making, will be published on the website and promoted via the quarterly email newsletter.

**Development Management**

Development Management is the process of managing the development of land and buildings through the granting of planning permission. Eastbourne Borough Council is responsible for deciding whether planning permission should be granted for a proposed development when a planning application is submitted.

Whether planning permission is granted will depend on whether the application is in line with the policies and proposals within the Local Plan, or if there are other strong planning reasons or ‘material considerations’ that would influence a decision.

Decisions on whether planning permission should be granted will be taken via one of two mechanisms:

• Determination by elected Councillors on the Planning Committee
• Determination by the Senior Specialist Advisor in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee through delegated powers
Where an application is refused, either by Planning Committee or through delegated powers, the applicant has the right to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, or to negotiate an amended scheme to overcome the areas of concern.

Eastbourne Borough Council makes decisions on around 800 applications per year, with approximately 90% being determined using delegated authority.

Eastbourne Borough Council is committed to informing and engaging with the community on planning applications. It is important that a balance is struck between providing the community with a genuine opportunity to comment and determining applications within the statutory determination period.

Before a planning application is submitted, the applicant is encouraged to engage with the local community, statutory consultees and service providers, which should be appropriate to the scale of the proposal. The responses to the consultation should be documented and submitted alongside the application.

In the determination of a planning application, the Council is required to undertake a formal period of consultation, to which anyone can respond. Consultation on planning applications will be publicised in the following ways:

- **Neighbour Notification Letters** - The Council will notify any neighbours immediately adjoining a development proposal by letter or email. Notifications may be sent to a wider area at the discretion of the case officer.

- **Site Notice** - Site notices are displayed on or near to the application site.

- **Public Notice** - A Public Notice is placed in a local newspaper for certain types of planning applications.

- **Publication on Council’s website** - Weekly lists of applications received and decisions made are available on the Council’s website. All planning applications that have been or are being processed, including appeals, are also available to view on the Council’s website.

The deadline for submitting comments on a planning application will be set out in the publicity accompanying the planning application. This will be not less than 21 days, or 14 days where a notice is published in a newspaper. The Council is under no obligation to consider comments submitted after the deadline.
Where an application is due to be determined by planning committee, members of the public can request to address the committee. Anyone wishing to address the committee on a planning application will need to register their interest, outlining the points they wish to raise, by the end of the consultation period. Details of meeting dates and times are publicised on the Council’s website, and also outside the Town Hall and at the Central Library.

**Community-led Planning**

Community-led Planning allows local communities are able to get more involved in planning for their areas by preparing Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders. However it should be noted that community-led planning is not a process that can be used to prevent development or promote a lower level of development than is set out in a Local Plan.

As Eastbourne Borough is not a ‘parished’ area, (i.e. it does not have Town or Parish Councils), Neighbourhood Plans or Orders can only be prepared by a Neighbourhood Forum. A Neighbourhood Forum requires a minimum of 21 people who live or work in the neighbourhood area, and once set up, can apply to Eastbourne Borough Council to designate a neighbourhood area to plan for.

**Further Information**

Further information and advice on planning matters is available from Eastbourne Borough Council. Please contact the Customer Contact Centre at:

Eastbourne Borough Council Offices, 1 Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4TW
(01323) 410000

customerfirst@eastbourne.gov.uk

www.eastbourne.gov.uk