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1. Background

1.1 This document is an amendment to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) September 2013. It is the 5th iteration of the SCI.

1.2 The first SCI was adopted by the Council in July 2006, following a public consultation and review by an independent Planning Inspector. In September 2009, a supplement was approved due to the Council introducing pre-application charging. A further minor amendment was approved by the Local Development Framework (LDF) Panel in April 2010. Further amendments were made in 2013 reflected changes in legislation, governance and technological change.

1.3 A need to review the SCI has arisen due to recent changes in legislation. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 amended section 10A to include a duty on Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to review their SCIs every five years. Additionally, the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 has introduced a requirement on LPAs to include within their SCIs their policies for giving advice or assistance on making and modifying neighbourhood development plans and on making neighbourhood development orders.

1.4 An SCI must be subject to public consultation however since 2011, there is no longer a need to submit SCIs for independent examination.

Consultation on draft revision of 5th iteration of the SCI

1.5 This SCI will be published for a six week public consultation using methods from both the previous SCI and any additional methods set out in this document. An equalities impact assessment accompanies the SCI to ensure that the needs of people in respect of age, disability, gender, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or sexual orientation are taken into account.
2. Introduction

2.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a change to the planning system in England in September 2004 including a requirement for Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to produce a Statement which informs communities and stakeholders how they will be consulted.

What is an SCI?
2.2 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how and when the LPA will involve local communities in the planning system together with a description of the types of involvement that we intend to use. This includes community engagement in both aspects of the planning system; The Local Plan and other planning policy documents which sets out the planning policies to guide new development in the District and consultation on planning applications.

2.3 The Localism Act 2011 places engaging with local communities to shape the places where they want to live, work and play at the heart of the planning system.

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (recently updated in July 2018) provides the framework for local communities and the local authorities to prepare local and neighbourhood plans that reflect their visions and aspirations through the Local Plan process. The NPPF recognises that early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential.

2.5 Paragraph 12-017 of the NPPG (last revised 2014) states:

“LPAs [are required] to produce a Statement of Community Involvement, which should explain how they will engage local communities and other interested parties in producing their Local Plan and determining planning applications. The Statement of Community Involvement should be published on the local planning authority’s website.”

2.6 The key stages for preparing the Local Plan and Development Plan Documents (DPD) are set out in Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. In summary these are set out below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Regulation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Regulation 18</td>
<td>Public participation in preparation of DPDs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Regulation 19 + 20</td>
<td>Publication of a DPD and making representations (under regulation 20 consultation is 6 weeks).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Regulation 22</td>
<td>Submission of documents to Secretary of State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Regulation 23 to 25</td>
<td>Examination process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5</td>
<td>Regulation 26</td>
<td>Adoption of DPD.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The Plan Making Process

3.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) required the preparation of new planning documents to replace the previous ‘Local Plan’ system. This new suite of documents was called the Local Development Framework (LDF) however, following a change of government in 2010, a new set of Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations came into force in 2012 and these revert to the former terminology of a ‘Local Plan’.

Currently adopted Local Plan

3.2 Braintree District Council has adopted a Core Strategy under the Local Development Framework System. Previous guidance for the District, which is set out in the Local Plan Review 2005, is relevant where it is still an adopted development plan for decision making.

3.3 For the purposes of minerals and waste planning, Essex County Council are the responsible authority producing a Minerals Local Plan and Waste Local Plan. The Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan was adopted in July 2017 and the Essex Minerals Local Plan was adopted in July 2014. When preparing the Braintree Local Plan, regard will need to be given to the strategies and policies contained within the Minerals and Waste Local Plans.

3.4 Braintree District Council has submitted for examination a new Local Plan with a shared strategic Section 1 which is jointly prepared with the neighbouring authorities of Tendring and Colchester. Section 2 Local Plan has also been submitted which sets out the policies which relate to Braintree District only.

3.5 The new Local Plan will set out how the Council plans for, and make decisions about, the future of towns, villages and countryside in the District. It will set out a strategy for the future development of the District, which is based on a clear and locally distinct vision. This vision should be developed with the involvement of the local community and there should be commitment by all relevant agencies to its delivery.

3.6 There are a number of different types of planning documents that can be prepared as set out below.

Local Development Scheme

3.7 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a project planning document for the Local Plan. It sets out the documents that the Council intends to produce, their scope and the timetable for their preparation. It is regularly updated to reflect the Council’s priorities for plan making.

Local Plans (including CIL, DPDs, policies maps and Sustainability Appraisals)

3.8 Development Plan Documents (DPDs) are planning documents that cover policies, proposals and allocations. They are statutory documents prepared in accordance with set procedures. This includes community involvement throughout the process in accordance with this SCI. The DPDs will be subject to a public examination to assess their soundness, which will be carried out by an independent Planning Inspector.

3.9 A policies map (also known as proposals map) often accompanies a DPD to spatially identify land use designations and allocations. The adopted proposals map reflects the most up-to-date
3.10 The Council will undertake Sustainability Appraisals (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) of DPDs throughout their preparation. This will test the policies and proposals against sustainability objectives and enable them to be modified where appropriate to mitigate potential adverse effects. The Sustainability Appraisal will be published for public consultation alongside the DPDs where appropriate.

**Supplementary Planning Documents (including Area Action Plans)**

3.11 A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides further information in respect to DPD policies. They must adhere to regulations 18 through 20 but are not subject to regulation 22 submission and can be adopted by the Council, without being subject to independent examination.

3.12 To guide the application of policies in the Local Plan, the Council has adopted a number of SPDs. The SPDs cover a range of issues, specific subjects, or individual sites. They are intended to explain, or provide further detail about policies or site allocations in the Development Plan Document. SPDs must have public consultations carried out in accordance with this SCI.

3.13 An Area Action Plan (AAP) is a SPD which is focused on a specific location or area by setting out additional policies and/or land use designations. This typically involves new policies for the implementation and delivery of development of an appropriate scale, mix and quality. AAPs can be applied to development in areas which are opportunities for change or conservation. There are currently no plans for the production of new AAPs. Masterplans, rather than AAPs, will be produced for allocated strategic growth locations to guide planning applications for these areas where appropriate.

**Neighbourhood Plans**

3.14 The Localism Act 2011 introduced reforms to the planning system that enables communities through a parish/town council or by establishment of a Neighbourhood Forum to create Neighbourhood Plans for their area with support from the Council. This has introduced a new tier of Development Plan Documents to the planning system.

3.15 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 provide further details of the process of Neighbourhood Planning, including requirements for consultation and publication of neighbourhood areas, forums and plans. The 2017 regulations amendment brought in new duties for the LPA including a requirement for LPAs to set out how they will give advice or assistance to Neighbourhood plans or Development Orders.

3.16 Assistance and advice is available from the Council’s Neighbourhood Planning Team and is fully set out in the Statement of Relationship with Braintree District Council in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan which is available online. The table below outlines the assistance that will be provided:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Process</th>
<th>Support Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial meeting(s)</td>
<td>Make a presentation about neighbourhood planning; Facilitate a community workshop to get people involved; Provide examples of publicity materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define the Neighbourhood Area</td>
<td>Explain the application process; Advise on the boundaries and the suitability of the local group as a ‘qualifying body’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a steering group</td>
<td>Chair initial meetings of volunteers; Advise on group structure; Provide example terms of reference; Provide training for group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare a project plan</td>
<td>Advise on time plan and budget; Assist with funding applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement</td>
<td>Advise on a communications strategy; Provide example surveys; Advise on engagement event organisation; Facilitate community engagement events; Advise on how to keep records of participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft a vision and planning objectives</td>
<td>Facilitate a visioning event; Provide example visions and planning objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an evidence base</td>
<td>Sign post to sources of information; Provide maps; Advise on assessment of sites; Provide comments on the emerging evidence base; Advise on additional studies that may be needed; Advise on Sustainability Appraisal; Advise on any requirement for Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare a draft plan</td>
<td>Advise on presentation and assessment of options; Advise on creating deliverable proposals; Advise on how to draft planning policy; Advise on the structure of the document; Provide comments on the emerging draft; Provide a Strategic Environmental Assessment scoping report on the draft plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult on the plan (pre submission consultation)</td>
<td>Advise on the statutory consultation process; Advise on the preparation of the Consultation Statement and Basic Conditions Statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit the Plan for Validation and Consultation</td>
<td>Advise on suitability of the plan in meeting the ‘basic conditions’: Conformity of the Plan; Suitability of the Consultation Statement; Suitability of any Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations Assessment undertaken; Conformity with other legislative requirements;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appoint examiner</strong></td>
<td>Work together on the appointment of the independent examiner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.17 Like Local Plans, neighbourhood plans are subject to public consultations. Neighbourhood plan consultations must adhere to the stages within the Neighbourhood Planning (general) regulations 2012 (As Amended). The LPA will undertake the consultation Neighbourhood Designation under limited circumstances where this is required in accordance with the legislation. For regulation 14 the consultation bodies prescribed in Schedule 1 of the regulations must be consulted otherwise, it is for the Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum to decide who to consult given the scope and nature of the proposals, in accordance with paragraph 48 of the PPG. The LPA will advise and assist on this consultation as required. For regulation 16, it is the LPA’s responsibility to undertake public consultation in accordance with the legislation and the commitments set out within this SCI.

3.18 Before the examination, the LPA has to check that the submitted plan/order is legally compliant, i.e. the procedural steps have been followed. The examiner’s report is not legally binding, but the authority must have clear reasons for departing from any of the examiner’s recommendations.

4.1 The Council will publish details, in the Local Development Scheme and on the website, of the timetable for the preparation of DPDs and will regularly update this information. DPDs that have been adopted will also be published on the website, together with supporting evidence documents. An interactive version of the Local Plan will also be accessible on the website.

4.2 The actions to be undertaken by the Council during the key stages in the preparation of the Development Plan Documents are detailed below:

**Preparation and Public Participation, and Duty to Co-operate**

4.3 This is the survey and evidence gathering stage, undertaken to understand the main issues to be addressed in the document, involving collating up to date information on social, environmental and economic matters.

4.4 Early consultation will be conducted on the broad subject of each DPD as considered appropriate by the Council.

4.5 The Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places a duty on local planning authorities and other bodies to cooperate with each other to address strategic issues relevant to their areas. The duty requires ongoing constructive and active engagement on the preparation of development plan documents and other activities relating to the sustainable development and use of land, in particular in connection with strategic infrastructure.

4.6 In order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, the NPPF requires LPAs to maintain Statements of Common Ground (SOCG) on cross-boundary matters. These will state the matter(s) being addressed and progress made through co-operation to address them. The information required for the production of SOCGs is detailed further in the NPPG.

**Regulation 18 Consultation on the Draft Document**

4.7 This consultation stage is a statutory requirement and a minimum six week consultation period for a development plan document is required. This is an opportunity for the community, statutory consultees and other stakeholders to submit representations on the document and raise concerns. It is also an opportunity to set out alternative options to those being proposed.

4.8 The Council will publish the document electronically and in paper form.

4.9 A Sustainability Appraisal must be integrated at this stage to inform the DPD from a sustainability perspective, ensuring that the social, environmental and economic needs of (and effect on) the area are taken into account. A Habitats Regulation Assessment may also be required to establish whether the DPD has likely significant effects on internationally protected nature conservation sites.

4.10 Alternative options put forward by others will also be published and made available for inspection.
Regulation 19 + 20 Publication of a Local Plan

4.11 After considering the responses to the previously published draft document, the Council will publish what they consider in their view should be the final version of the document called the Submission Document. This will contain finalised policies and proposals.

4.12 The Council will publish the document electronically and in paper form. It will be submitted to the Secretary of State and published for formal consultation for a minimum of six weeks. The submission will be accompanied by a document that sets out how representations have been dealt with in accordance with this SCI.

4.13 The way in which representations are made at this stage will become more formal. Representations can only relate to whether policies and plans have been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, the relevant legal and procedural requirements, and whether it is considered to be ‘sound’ (see paragraph 4.15 below). As such representations at this stage should only make reference to these matters.

4.14 At the same time the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment will be published together with other supporting documents as appropriate.

Public Examination

4.15 Copies of all representations received during the period for consultation on the Submission DPD together with a summary of previous issues and how they were dealt with, will be forwarded to Secretary of State who will appoint an Inspector to carry out the examination into the soundness of the document. The tests of soundness (NPPF Paragraph 35) are set out below:

a) Positively Prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seek to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with sustainable development;

b) Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;

c) Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and

d) Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this framework.

4.16 The Council will appoint a Programme Officer who will be the point of contact for the Inspector. The name of, and details for how to get in contact with, the inspector will be published on the Council’s website. A notice detailing the time and place of the examination and pre-hearing meeting (if necessary) will be published on the Council’s website.

4.17 Examinations are not required for SPDs, Neighbourhood Plans or this Statement of Community Involvement.
Adoption

4.18 Following receipt of the Inspector’s report the Council will make the necessary changes to the document and then adopt the document together with its Sustainability Appraisal. These documents will be advertised and made available at the Council offices, it will also be available on the Council’s website.

SPDs and Neighbourhood Plans

4.19 Supplementary Planning Documents (including AAPs) must accord with a separate part of the Town and Country Planning (General) regulations 2012 to DPDs (regulations 12 to 15). Neighbourhood Plans are prepared in accordance with regulations 14 to 20 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The differences for the purposes of community involvement are set out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Local Plans, Development Plan Documents</th>
<th>Supplementary Planning Documents</th>
<th>Neighbourhood Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and Duty-to-Cooperate</td>
<td>Information gathering to update social, environmental and economic matters. Early consultation on the broad subject of the DPD. The LPA must undertake the DTC and maintain an SOCG on strategic cross boundary matters.</td>
<td>Information gathering to update social, environmental and economic matters. The duty-to-cooperate does not apply to non-strategic plans.</td>
<td>Evidence gathering and public participation is at the discretion of the Neighbourhood Plan group. The duty-to-cooperate does not apply to non-strategic plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Consultation</td>
<td>6 week public consultation Sustainability Appraisal required.</td>
<td>4-6 week public consultation. Sustainability Appraisal not required. This stage is optional.</td>
<td>6 week public consultation. Sustainability Appraisal not required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication Draft Consultation</td>
<td>6 week public consultation.</td>
<td>4-6 week public consultation.</td>
<td>6 week public consultation. SEA and HRA screening is required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination</td>
<td>Secretary of State will appoint an Inspector who will carry out an examination into the soundness of the Plan. No examination is required.</td>
<td>An examiner, who is appointed by the LPA in with agreement with the Neighbourhood Planning Group, will determine if the Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Referendum</strong></td>
<td>No referendum required.</td>
<td>No referendum required.</td>
<td>Following receipt of examiner’s report, the LPA must make a decision on whether the Plan can proceed to referendum in accordance to regulation 18 as soon as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adoption</strong></td>
<td>Following receipt of Inspector’s report and the recommended changes to make the plan sound, the Council may choose to adopt it in line with regulation 25 and 26.</td>
<td>Following the preparation of a consultation statement and adoption statement, an SPD can be adopted by the LPA in line with regulation 14.</td>
<td>If the Neighbourhood plan referendum receives a simple majority in favour, the LPA will ‘make’ (adopt) the Plan promptly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Community Involvement in the Local Plan

5.1 NPPF paragraph 16 states that plans should ‘be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees; [and] be accessible through the use of digital tools to assist public involvement and policy presentation;’

5.2 The Council intends to maintain a process of ongoing community involvement and aims to encourage early involvement in the preparation of each document so that everybody feels that they have had a chance to influence local policy decisions that are made. The Council intends to let people know about what it is doing, what stage it has reached in the preparation of documents, where documents can be inspected, how people can be involved and the results of consultations. This information will be continually updated.

5.3 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) set out the minimum requirements for public participation in the preparation of a DPD. It is proposed to go beyond these requirements, to fully engage the wider community.

Methods of Community Involvement

5.4 A number of different methods will be used depending on the nature of the subject involved, audience and Council resources to ensure effective and wide ranging community involvement.

5.5 The following table details some of the methods and activities the Council will consider using. It is not exhaustive, nor does it represent a list of activities that will be used in every instance. All engagement activities will be published on the Council’s website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation Method/Activity</th>
<th>How it will be used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Council’s Website           | • Council’s website – www.braintree.gov.uk  
• Interactive Publication of DPDs through the Council’s Consultation Portal - braintree-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal  
• Host information on the timescales and progress of the Local Plan.  
• Viewing and downloading of Local Plan documents.  
• Information on the Examination in Public (where applicable) including location and time of hearings, matter statements, correspondence from the Inspector. |
| Social Media                | • BDC corporate social media presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram |
| Press Release               | • Issuing new releases and arranging briefings for the local media at key stages in the plan-making process. |
| **Posters, leaflets and displays in public locations** | • Can be used to summerise detailed information and capture a wider audience.  
• Leaflets and flyers could be distributed in public places.  
• Posters, leaflets and forms could be circulated to Parish/Town Councils for local community boards and deposit at village halls. |
|**Council Meetings** | • Where appropriate feedback from Councillors will be sought by taking the documents to relevant committee meetings. |
|**Public Exhibitions and Roadshows** | • Either unstaffed exhibitions in public places e.g. libraries, council offices; or  
• Staffed events at town and village public halls and other venues.  
• Venues need to be accessible.  
• Participatory methods could be used to record comments however majority of comments are expected to be submitted on a proforma or online.  
• The Council have a duty to safeguard vulnerable adults and ensure they have regard to the welfare of children at this event. |
|**Public Meetings** | • An opportunity for face to face discussion.  
• It will remain the responsibility of the individual, group or organisation to submit written comments after the meeting.  
• The Council have a duty to safeguard vulnerable adults and ensure they have regard to the welfare of children at this event. |
|**Questionnaires** | • Can be sent by post or email to large numbers of people. Useful in gauging opinion on specific issues. |
|**Site notices** | • Used to promote the consultation process and reach individuals or groups who are not on the Council’s planning policy mailing list.  
• This method can be used to notify residents about proposed development land allocations. |
|**Workshops** | • Interactive sessions to focus discussion around difficult issues and key themes. This method could capture an audience who may respond to this kind of contact. |
|**Inspection points** | • Documents will be put on deposit at the Council offices and will be available for inspection during normal office hours. |
- Deposits may also be made in public libraries.
- Documents will be available online at all times.
6. Who is involved?

6.1 There are various types of bodies, groups and organisations that the council, where appropriate, will involve and consult during the preparation and development of the Local Plan. These lists are not exhaustive and also relate to successor bodies where re-organisations occur.

6.2 Regulation 18 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) state that the local planning authority must notify and invite to make representations on the Local Plan, the following bodies:

(a) specific consultation bodies (statutory consultees)

- Historic England
- Environment Agency
- Highways England
- Homes England
- Natural England
- Network Rail
- Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group
- Essex Police
- Essex County Council

Relevant authorities adjacent to the district:
- Babergh DC, Colchester BC, Maldon DC, Chelmsford CC, Uttlesford DC, South Cambridgeshire DC, St. Edmondbury BC, Cambridgeshire CC, Suffolk CC.
- Town and Parish Councils
- Telecommunications companies
- Electricity and gas companies
- Sewerage and water companies

(b) general consultation bodies

The Council will seek to engage and consult, where appropriate, with the general public, the wider community, neighbourhood forums and hard to reach groups. These may include:

Community and voluntary bodies:
- Residents and tenants groups
- Registered social landlords
- Wildlife groups
- Environmental organisations
- Historical/Archeological organisations
- Sports organisations
- Arts organisations
- Citizens advice bureau
- Town and village societies and associations
- Local amenity societies
Special interest groups:
- Disability groups
- Older peoples groups
- Youth groups
- Mental health groups
- Local trusts
- Ethnic minority organisations
- Faith groups and churches
- Local trusts
- Gay, lesbian and transgender groups
- Gypsies and travelers
- Showman’s Guild

Other Bodies:
- Schools, colleges and other education and training providers
- Developers and planning consultants/agents
- Health organisations
- Environmental groups
- Rail and bus groups
- Community transport providers
- House builders
- Housing Associations
- Sport and cultural organisations
- Essex Fire and Rescue
- East of England Ambulance Service
- Local branches of professional institutions

(c) residents or other persons carrying on business

These may include:

Business Groups:
- Chambers of trade and commerce
- Town centre strategy groups
- Business groups
- Landowner and farming organisations
- Haven Gateway
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)

Others:
- Anyone that has previously made a representation on the Local Plan (and have not opted out)
- Anyone who has asked to be placed on the Council’s planning policy mailing list.
Voluntary Sector Involvement

6.3 The Council will consult with the voluntary and community sector on all major planning consultations and any proposals that may have a significant effect on their services. The Council will endeavor to make documents available to view prior to the statutory consultation period but this may not always be possible.

Consultation with hard to reach groups

6.4 The Council will make efforts to include the views of people with sensory, physical and learning disabilities for whom written or typed representation may not be appropriate.

6.5 It is recognised that some parts of the community often have less chance to be involved than others and are therefore under-represented in the planning process. Examples of these hard to reach groups include young people, older people, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities. Therefore positive action will be taken to ensure that they have every opportunity to be involved and encourage their participation by following the basic principles in consulting with hard to reach groups:

- Ensuring, as far as possible, that documents are produced in a clear, concise and understandable manner;
- Hold meetings and exhibitions in locations which will include accessibility for people with disabilities, access to public transport and locations within the more rural parts of the District.

6.6 Where people are invited to attend a consultation events in a specific place we will:

- Make sure the venue is accessible,
- Offer a range of contact methods,
- Offer assistance in completing written consultations documents; and
- Be sensitive to the cultural needs of the people we are talking to.

The Duty to Co-operate

6.7 The Localism Act 2011 and NPPF places a duty on LPAs and other prescribed bodies to cooperate with each other to address strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. Whilst the Council has always consulted with neighbouring District and County Councils, this has added a formal duty to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in the preparation of the Local Plan and on strategic matters such as infrastructure. The Council’s compliance with the duty to cooperate will be demonstrated by through Statements of Common Ground which will be hosted on the Council’s website.

Feedback and respond to Consultation Results

6.8 All representations on DPDs will be made available to view online. Comments can be made through the Council’s consultation portal, by post or email. Comments which are received using the latter two methods will be transcribed onto the consultation portal to enable the public to view all of the comments that have been made.

6.9 After the consultation has concluded, all representations will be published on the Council’s website. Representations will be carefully reviewed by officers and a summary report will be
reported to the relevant committee. This report will summerise the representations received, provide officer comment on the matters raised, make recommendations with reasons, and be used to inform future stages of plan preparation. The report and minutes of these committee meetings will be made available online, and at the council offices.

6.10 The Council holds details of responses in order to undertake its public task and a mailing list will also be created featuring only individuals, groups or businesses who have opted in. Acknowledgement by e-mail or letter will be sent to all representations and to provide further information. All those on our mailing list will be notified by letter or e-mail when documents are submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration, when the Inspector’s main modifications is published (if required) and when a document is adopted.

6.11 All DPDs submitted to the Secretary of State will be accompanied by a Consultation Statement which sets out compliance with the SCI in the preparation of the document, the main issues raised and how these have been addressed. A duty to cooperate statement will also be prepared to demonstrate how the LPA has complied with the duty in the preparation of the DPD.
7. Planning Applications

7.1 For many people their main contact with the planning system is through planning applications, either as an applicant, or as someone who might be affected by the proposed development. This section of the SCI therefore sets out the Council’s proposed approach for involving statutory bodies and the community in pre-applications consultations and planning applications.

Pre-Application Stage

7.2 Consultation and local community involvement can identify many potential issues early, particularly for applications of significant or sensitive development. The planning application process is not a substitute for proper pre-application community involvement - there may be issues that arise during the consideration of the application that could have been addressed and will warrant refusal. The aim of consultation is to encourage discussion and enable adjustments to the proposals to be made, in line with the aspirations of the local community where practicable and to avoid unnecessary objections at a later stage.

7.3 As a result of the Localism Act 2011, pre-application consultation is now a requirement for all large scale major applications. The Council will also encourage pre-application discussions for all development. Although the Council will advise on the consultation process, to enable the Council to maintain an impartial position, at this stage it will not be directly involved in the consultation itself. Developers will be expected to submit a Consultation Statement with their planning application that outlines the methods used, the views expressed and how these have been addressed in the application.

7.4 The objective of pre-application discussions is to establish whether the principle of the development is acceptable and to clarify the format, type and level of detail required to enable the Council to determine the application. In most cases, there is a charge for pre-application advice. Pre-application discussions with officers will offer the opportunity to:

- Appropriately agree matters associated with the disclosure of information provided by the prospective applicants;
- Advise on engagement methods, venues and techniques;
- Discuss the outcome of any pre-application consultation, if this was held.

7.5 The Council will offer constructive feedback on the proposal whenever possible, although any views expressed by officers at pre-application stage cannot be binding on a subsequent decision. Developers should note that discussions will take place in the context of the requirements contained within the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environment Information Regulations 2004.

7.6 Types of application and suggested methods of involvement are set out as follows, subject to the site’s circumstances. For example, a small development may have a much bigger impact in a rural area than in an urban area and may therefore require more consultation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Type</th>
<th>Suggested consultation methods</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major applications (i.e. housing sites of 1 hectare, or 30 dwellings or more, retail and leisure uses of 1000sq.m or more, business uses, higher and further education uses of</td>
<td>• Public Meetings/Exhibitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Workshops/consultation panel/ Surgeries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Publicity Measures</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Applications broadly in accordance with the Development Plan but raising controversial issues of detail. Reserved matter applications raising issues not addressed at the outline stage. | - Exhibitions  
- Website  
- Surgeries  
- Social and published media  
- Town and Parish Council engagement  
- Individual letter |
| Other applications for sites where wider community involvement may be beneficial including those on sites that are sensitive to development pressures for example within a conservation area or affecting a listed building or its setting. | - Town/Parish Council engagement  
- Website  
- Social and published media  
- Individual letters  
- Surveys/questionnaires |
| Minor and householder applications                                       | - Neighbour Consultation                                 |

### Application Stage

7.7 The statutory requirements for publicity for applications for planning permission are laid down in Article 15 of the *Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order (2015)*. This requires the LPA to publicise planning applications either by site notice or by notification to adjoining landowner or occupier and sometimes by press advertisement. Other regulations set out the requirements for applications for listed building and conservation area consent and for applications for planning permission affecting the setting of a listed building, or demolition within a conservation area. In deciding what constitutes a significant or controversial application, the LPA will use its discretion.

7.8 For all applications, a proportionate level of publicity will be in line with statutory requirements as a minimum, and could include:
- Making the application viewable on Council’s Website  
- Posting a Site Notice  
- Sending consultation letter to neighbours  
- Displaying an advert in a local newspaper  
- Appropriate Town or Parish Councils consulted by Email  
- Ward Members notified by E-mail

7.9 The level of publicity will vary depending what the application is, for example minor, major, significant or controversial applications, or an appeal. Some statutory bodies such as Natural
England will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation.

**Decision Stage**

7.10 Generally, where applications are in accordance with planning policy and no objections have been made, the decision will be made under delegated powers. Some applications such as those which receive significant objections will be referred to the chair’s briefing for consideration to bring to Committee at the discretion of the LPA.

7.11 There will be an officer report which describes the site and application, sets out the policy considerations, summarises the representations received, comments on them and makes a recommendation for approval or refusal. If the application goes to Committee, all respondents will be notified before the meeting is held. The Committee agenda and officer’s report will be made available before the meeting at the Council offices and online. Time is set aside at the start of Committee meetings for public statements and questions. A Parish Council representative may be invited to speak but cannot vote on the application.

7.12 A weekly list of decisions is posted on the Council’s website and a full copy of the decision notice is retained on the statutory planning register which is available for inspection at the Council’s main office at Causeway House.

7.13 In order to comply with the NPPF, all the planning decisions issued by Braintree District Council will include a proactive and positivity statement, tailored to reflect the circumstances of the particular case.

**Appeals**

7.14 If an application is refused by the Council, or not determined within the statutory timeframe, the applicant can apply for appeal in accordance with section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Council will provide a copy of the comments made on the application to the Planning Inspectorate and notify these participants on how they can participate in the appeal process, including venue and time of any informal hearing or public inquiry. Further representations can be made to PINS in accordance with the Planning Inspectorate’s procedural practice guidance.

**Implementation Stage**

7.15 For major developments, the Council is keen for there to be continuing community involvement during the implementation of the development. This ensures a continuing dialogue with the Council and the developers and enables matters of detail to be considered further and problems during implementation to be discussed.
8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 Changes to national legislation, regulations and policies on the preparation of SCIs, DPDs, SPDs and Neighbourhood Plans will be monitored and any significant changes may require a review of this document. The SCI will also need to be compliant with any legal requirements for the processing of data or changes to anti-discrimination laws, and respond to changes in corporate policy.

8.2 The database of people and organisations to be consulted will be kept up-to-date and managed to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2016.

8.3 The community involvement process will be kept under review, as measured through comments, customer satisfaction surveys, complaints and consultation feedback, to ensure that they are effective. This SCI will be reviewed no later than five years after adoption as required by the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2017.
## 9. Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term Used</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Authorities Monitoring Report (AMR)</td>
<td>Sets out the principal characteristics of the District, assesses progress in preparing Local Development Documents and monitors progress in housing, employment and other development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development Plan Document (DPD)</td>
<td>Spatial Planning Document that are subject to independent examination. This includes the Local Plan and Policies Map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty to Co-operate (DTC)</td>
<td>Requirement to co-operate with relevant authorities and other bodies on an the preparation of policies that address strategic planning matters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Development Scheme (LDS)</td>
<td>This sets out the programme for the preparation of DPDs and SPDs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Planning Applications</td>
<td>A housing site of 1 hectare, or 30 dwellings or more, retail and leisure uses of 1000sq.m or more, business uses, higher and further education uses of 2500sq.m or more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</td>
<td>Sets out Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)</td>
<td>Supports the NPPF; the guidance is published online and regularly updated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)</td>
<td>These documents are supplementary to the Development Plan and are used to provide additional detail as deemed necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)</td>
<td>Assessments required by European and national law into how the plan will impact on the District’s environment in the long term and contribute towards sustainable development.</td>
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