

WEST SOMERSET LOCAL PLAN COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INFORMATION SHEET

Updated FEBRUARY 2012





West Somerset Council Local Plan Community Involvement information sheet

The Local Plan:

The main planning policy document for each District Council is once more to be known as “the Local Plan” through the provisions of the Localism Act 2011. The Local Development Framework Core Strategy is being renamed the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032. The statutory Local Plan is a key part of the Town and Country planning system in England. Once they have been examined by the Secretary of State and adopted by the Local Planning Authority their policies become a powerful statutory tool to help in the making of decisions on development proposals.

The Local Plan can consist of more than one document which may either be statutory, having been subject to formal examination, or be non-statutory, giving more detailed guidance on the implementation of the statutory policies. The community and interested stakeholders are involved in the preparation of any such documents which are produced.

What Planning Policy documents has West Somerset Council already prepared?

- **Statement of Community Involvement (adopted in November 2007):** This sets out how we will involve the community in the preparation of planning policy documents and on planning applications.
- **The Local Development Scheme (subject to revision):** This is the project plan setting out the Council’s programme for the preparation of planning policy documents.
- **Annual Monitoring Report:** The latest was published in December 2009. Provides information on how the implementation of planning policy has been progressing over the previous year (April 2008 to March 2009) and also helps to inform the review of planning policy.

Development Plan Documents (DPDs):

Development Plan Documents are the most important documents making up the Council’s Statutory Development Plan. The Council’s Local Plan, currently in preparation, is a DPD.

All Development Plan Documents are subjected to independent testing and must also be in general conformity with the National Planning Policies in force, see:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicystatements>



Neighbourhood Development Plans:

The Localism Act 2011 includes provisions for the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans by local communities. Unlike Local Plans, their preparation is not compulsory, however where they are adopted following a successful local referendum result they would also become part of the statutory Development Plan for that area. Regulations and guidance for the preparation of NDPs remain in draft at present, however it is clear that the Government intends that the community itself would take a leading role in their preparation.

Be part of planning for the future of *your* West Somerset District...

Why should I bother with all this?

You can benefit from:

- Increased awareness of local planning issues
- Being involved with the rest of the community in planning policy formulation
- Opportunities to raise local or wider issues
- Improved Council services through efficient and effective use of resources
- Helping us to get it right!

Who can get involved?

Everyone.

The Council is committed to the involvement of the following groups (not an exclusive list):

- The general public, including
 - o People with disabilities
 - o Ethnic minorities
 - o Business and rural communities
 - o Lone parents
 - o Gypsies and travellers
 - o Youth groups
- Conservation groups
- Businesses
- Parish Councils
- Environmental groups
- Voluntary organisations
- local Interest groups
- Statutory bodies and groups
- Housing groups (eg: registered social landlords)



- Central, regional and local government
- sport and recreation groups
- Tourism groups
- Religious Groups
- The police
- The Fire Service
- Transport groups (eg: the West Somerset Railway)

So how can I be involved?

HELPING TO PREPARE THE WEST SOMERSET LOCAL PLAN:

- **Stage 1 – Evidence gathering and identifying key issues**
An initial call for the public's views and community needs, what are the issues that really matter, and which need something doing about them? (completed in summer / autumn 2009)
- **Stage 2 – Developing and consulting on strategy options**
The issues raised during the evidence gathering and issues stage were used to develop policy options to address the issues identified, which must be also be supported by the evidence (completed in spring 2010).
- **Stage 3 – Preferred Strategy**
The Council is currently working to prepare a preferred strategy on the basis of the evidence, community and stakeholder input. This will be subject to an eight week consultation period for public and stakeholder involvement (February – April 2012)
- **Stage 4 – Publication (and then submission) of the Local Plan**
When the Local Plan is formally published (publication anticipated in early Autumn 2012) there will be a statutory six week period for public comment on the soundness of the document. These comments will be submitted to the Secretary of State with the Submission Core Strategy for consideration during the formal Examination of the document.

For more information about the Local Plan process, or to add your name and contact details to our mailing list, please e-mail LDF@westsomerset.gov.uk or write to: West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton, Taunton, Somerset. TA4 4QA.

To get involved at any time you can be added to our mailing list so that you will be kept informed of what is happening.

If you would like more information about any of the items in this information sheet, you can visit our website at: www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk or contact the Planning Policy team on 01643 703704,