

B L A C K P O O L C O U N C I L



L O C A L D E V E L O P M E N T F R A M E W O R K

Statement of Community Involvement

Adopted

June 2007



Contents

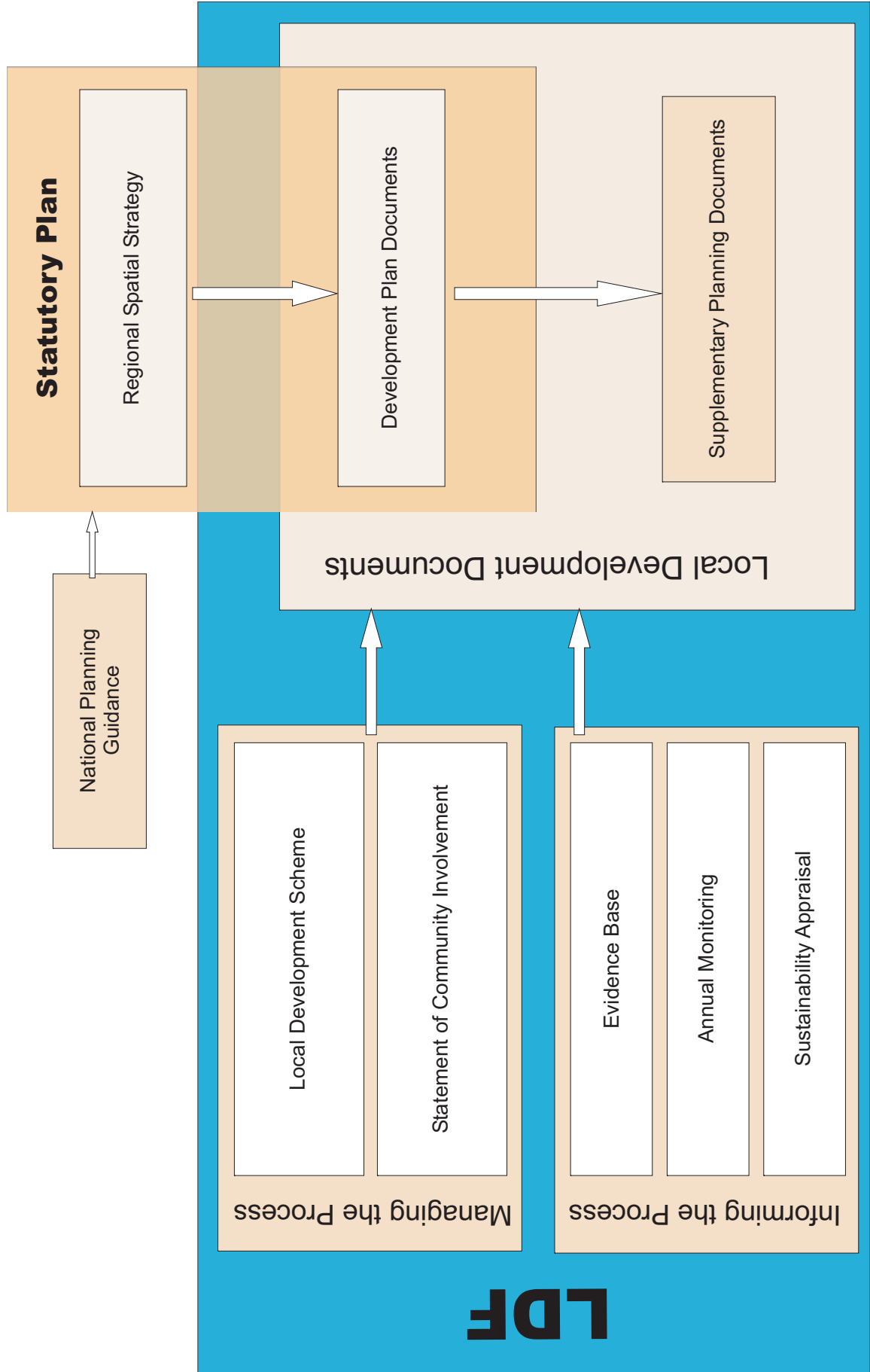
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1. The New Planning System

- 1.1 In 2004 the planning system changed¹. The Local Plan will be replaced by a **Local Development Framework**, which will guide the way in which Blackpool develops into the future. It sets out policies and proposals ranging from house extensions and parking, to major regeneration projects such as casino development and neighbourhood renewal programmes. It is an important document that has the potential to change the way in which Blackpool grows. It is a document that will affect every resident, business and organisation in the Borough.
- 1.2 The **Local Development Framework (LDF)** can be thought of as a ‘**folder**’ containing a number of different documents (called **Local Development Documents** or LDDs). This format will enable Blackpool Council to revise certain documents quickly as circumstances change. It therefore provides an up to date development plan that can adapt quickly and respond faster. Figure 1 shows the relationships between the documents in the LDF.
- 1.3 At the heart of an LDF lies the Core Strategy, a **Development Plan Document (DPD)** which sets out the spatial vision and strategic objectives for the area. The Blackpool strategy will be accompanied by a site-specific allocations and policies document, a proposals map and a generic development control policies document. The Local Planning Authority can also choose to produce Area Action Plans which deal with key areas of change or conservation. Along with the **Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)**, which provides a strategic framework for local policy, these **Development Plan Documents (DPDs)** form the **Statutory Development Plan**.
- 1.4 An LDF must also contain a **Local Development Scheme**, which identifies which Local Development Documents will be produced, in what order and when. An **Annual Monitoring Report** and a **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** must also be included. Non-statutory **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)** may also be produced to expand policy and provide further details.

¹ Planning and Compulsary Purchase Act 2004.

Figure 1: LDF Relationships diagram



2. What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

2.1 This is Blackpool Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). It is our commitment to you, to improve the way in which we listen to what you have to say. We aim to involve you in making decisions on the future of Blackpool to create a vibrant and prosperous town. This SCI will make participation central to the planning process at Blackpool Council. It will meet requirements under the new planning system for involving communities in the production of planning policy documents and the processing of planning applications. Once adopted, its provisions will be binding on the Council.

2.2 The Government is placing increasing emphasis on community involvement in the delivery of all community services, including planning, because:

"Planning shapes the places where people work and live. Local communities should be given the opportunity to participate fully in the process of drawing up specific plans or policies and to be consulted on proposals for development. Community involvement is vitally important to planning"².

2.3 This SCI is an important document that will explain who we intend to consult with, how and when. It addresses issues of accessing information and receiving feedback on consultations. If you are an individual or a member of a group or organisation with an interest in getting involved in planning decisions, then this document will explain how you can do that.

2.4 This SCI is intended to deal with consultation on the Blackpool Local Development Framework and the Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Framework. The latter is being prepared jointly with Lancashire County Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. Lancashire County Council will lead the work and will be responsible for all consultation on the Minerals and Waste Development Framework and will ensure that the provisions set out in this document are met.

2.5 Before explaining how to get involved in planning, the SCI looks at the wider corporate approach and the benefits of communities getting involved in local Blackpool decisions. It also identifies barriers to effective participation and how Blackpool Council can overcome them.

² Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

3. The Council's Approach to Community Involvement

- 3.1 Blackpool Councils Community Plan 2004-2020 was published in 2004. The Community Plan is prepared by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which combines the expertise of local public, private and voluntary sectors. The LSP has the specific aim of working together to make Blackpool a better place by delivering the Community Plan through a series of joined up actions. The Community Plan engages with local communities and it expresses their needs and focuses delivery on the really important issues. Any land use implications arising from the Community Plan need to be included in the Local Development Framework, the Council's key document for delivering Blackpool's growth. The Local Development Framework is prepared by the Council's planning service.
- 3.2 The six priorities of the Community Plan are supported by the Councils three main Corporate priorities outlined in the Corporate Performance Plan. Of these the LDF has a key role in delivering "New Blackpool" through; 'Resort Regeneration'; 'Living Environment'; 'Town Centre Regeneration'; 'Heritage'; and 'Infrastructure'. The LDF will also indirectly influence the delivery of the 'Stronger Communities' and 'Quality Services' goals.
- 3.3 The Local Strategic Partnership has created strong links with many organisations across Blackpool, each with a role to play in meeting Blackpool's community needs. Coordination between the LSP and the Community Empowerment Network, which is called the Sustainable Urban Regeneration Federation (SURF), relies on open and transparent communication. Building on the LSP/SURF shared values and principles and incorporating further consultation guidance produced by Blackpool Council in the form of a toolkit and handbook, the following **core principles** are considered central to the development of this SCI:

Table 1: Core Principles of Consultation

CORE PRINCIPLES	GENUINE	- Ensure involvement has a clear purpose - Involve people where they can have an influence
	ACCESSIBLE	- Provide access to easy to understand information - Improve accessibility of involvement opportunities
	RELEVANT	- Explain the purpose of each document - Explain how it relates to you
	OPEN	- Allow everyone to know what's going on - Provide sufficient feedback to demonstrate benefit
	EFFICIENT	- Involve people at the right time in the process - Integrate activities where possible
	PROACTIVE	- Provide opportunity for people to contribute ideas - Facilitate more active involvement where possible
	COST EFFECTIVE	- Ensure cost effectiveness in community engagement

4. Community Involvement.....Why bother?

4.1 Blackpool Council believes that wide ranging community involvement in the planning process is beneficial for all parties involved, including local residents, organisations, businesses and the Borough Council itself.

4.2 How will the general public benefit?

- Local services will be better able to meet local needs
- Greater community cohesion and inclusion
- More public ownership, a greater sense of democracy and active citizenship

4.3 What can individuals and organisations expect to achieve by getting involved?

- An ability to influence the decision making process and 'make a difference'
- An increased understanding of how policies are developed and proposals delivered
- Enhanced sense of contributing to the future of the community
- Better quality outcomes through joint working

4.4 Benefits to the Council include:

- Wider contributions to problem solving
- Increased support for local planning policies and Council activity
- Local expertise, opinions and insight are brought to the planning process
- A contribution to sustainable development by enabling all members of society to be heard and to contribute to the future of their communities.

4.5 The over-arching benefit in developing policies and proposals together with the community is the resolution of conflict. The new planning system not only increases the importance of participation, it also ensures that communities are engaged at the outset. This means that communities help shape policies and proposals rather than the traditional style of communities just responding to the ideas of the Council.

5. Our Community

- 5.1 Who, when and how involvement is undertaken is central to this Statement of Community Involvement strategy. This SCI is not about listing each organisation that will be contacted, or exactly which method of engagement that will be used. Instead it adopts a flexible rather than prescriptive approach. Who we consult very much depends upon the issue we are seeking views on. How we engage with you also depends on the issue, for example, a neighbourhood plan for the Claremont area will require meetings, exhibitions and consultations with residents of that neighbourhood. Holding an exhibition in the South Shore area of Blackpool and consulting with residents in that area will not be effective at understanding the needs and aspirations of the residents in Claremont. Alternatively consultation on proposals for the town centre should be widely advertised and widely consulted because it is an issue that affects not only town centre businesses and residents, but also everyone living in the Borough of Blackpool. Our 'community' includes individuals, groups and organisations that live, work or operate within the Borough. The Blackpool Community Plan describes our local community and the needs and issues that make us distinct from other areas.
- 5.2 The local community is composed of many different groups, all of which will have different needs and expectations. Some of these groups will be familiar with the planning service and have the time and expertise to get involved, whereas others do not. This SCI will ensure that the different groups are recognised when planning effective consultation to ensure that barriers to participation are overcome. The different groups that make up the local community are summarised below:
- 5.3 a) **Local People**
- Local residents are easy to identify by area, however particular sections of local communities can find it harder to get involved. Local Councillors can represent the interests of residents in their ward.
- b) **Local Groups**
- Groups such as Area Forums and residents associations, who are easy to identify and have the capability to be involved, can represent the interests of local communities. Amenity or interest groups can represent specific interests or perspectives.

b) Statutory Stakeholders

There are certain groups that we have to involve. These include our regional planning board (NWRA), development agency and Government Office (GONW), English Heritage, Environmental Agency and the Countryside Agency. All of these are easy to identify. However, as some are regional or national organisations, they can be in great demand and therefore do not always have the capacity to be involved every time in every District's activities.

c) Other Agencies

We recognise that, in addition to our statutory stakeholders, other organisations can provide valuable views regarding the LDF and its documents. These organisations are easy to identify and generally have the capacity to be involved. Some, however, may need support in understanding the LDF process and how it relates to their operations so they are able to contribute effectively.

d) Developers and Landowners

Developers are already aware of the planning system and, by way of working, seek to be involved in the process. Most can be easily identified via previous involvement and have the capability to be involved. Landowners will be keen to understand and consider the implications of any policies/decisions in order to protect the rights they have to develop or protect their land. We wish to support both groups in being more actively involved.

e) Business Sector

Local businesses range in size from the self-employed and small businesses to multi-national organisations. As such, so does their capacity to be involved. Whilst larger organisations may have the capacity to get involved more actively, smaller organisations may need support in understanding the system, how it relates to them and how they can get involved. The interests of the business sector can also be represented by organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce.

f) Service Providers

Service providers include local health trusts, schools and colleges, transport providers, emergency services, community development organisations, Council departments and others. All of these can be easily identified and all have the capacity to be involved in LDF development. However, we will seek to involve them only when it is relevant for them – to make most efficient use of their time concentrating on those documents where they can make a key contribution.

6. Which Planning Policy Documents will be subject to public consultation?

- 6.1 We will involve the local community in the preparation and development of each of the different documents that we produce.
- 6.2 **Local Development Documents** is a general term used to describe the collection of **Development Plan Documents (DPDs)** and **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)** that make up the LDF. **DPDs** are examined by an independent inspector. **DPDs** therefore have statutory planning weight and are the principal consideration against which planning applications will be determined. **DPDs** take on a variety of different forms including a Core Strategy, Area Action Plans, Development Control & Allocations **DPDs**. **SPDs** do not have statutory weight because they are not tested by an independent inspector. **SPDs** essentially amplify policy and can be prepared in a variety of different forms including planning guidance, planning briefs and development briefs.
- 6.3 In addition to this SCI the Council has already produced the **Local Development Scheme**, which establishes the timetable for the production of the Local Development Framework and covers the period from April 2005 to April 2008.
- 6.4 The Council will produce an **Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)** at the end of each year to review actual progress. All **Local Development Documents** will be subjected to **Sustainability Appraisal**, incorporating **Strategic Environmental Assessment**, throughout the process of preparing the document.
- 6.5 **Which Planning Applications will be subject to Public Consultation?**
All types of planning applications are subject to varying degrees of consultation depending on their significance;
- **Significant applications**
 - **Listed Building/Conservation Area applications**
 - **Minor applications**

7. Community Involvement – Who?

- 7.1 New planning guidance already sets out the minimum requirements for involvement with local communities. The guidance allows local authorities to be flexible over exactly who will be consulted depending on the type of document produced. Potentially there is great value in supplementing the minimum standards further and incorporating additional local community groups. The more people that are involved in the process, the greater understanding the Council will have in meeting needs and aspirations.
- 7.2 The Planning Regulations 2004³ state that the following specific consultation bodies must be consulted if the local planning authority thinks that the proposed subject matter of the Development Plan Document (DPD) in question affects the body. Blackpool Council will consult all the following statutory consultees on all DPDs. Relevant organisations from this list will be consulted on SPDs.

Table 2: Specific or Statutory Consultees

Government Office North West	North West Regional Assembly	North West Regional Development Agency
Lancashire County Council	Fylde Borough Council	Wyre Borough Council
Environment Agency	Natural England	Network Rail
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England	Strategic Health Authority	Highways Agency
Gas Companies	Electricity Companies	Telecommunications companies
Water undertakers	Sewage undertakers	

³ The Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004

7.3 The Planning Regulations 2004⁴ also state that certain ‘general consultation bodies’ must also be consulted where the local planning authority considers it appropriate. The regulations define this group as voluntary bodies whose activities benefit any part of the district and other bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic, national, religious, business and disabled persons groups. Below is a list of all the types of national and local groups Blackpool Council considers to fall into these categories. This list will be reviewed as consultation events take place and through the production of the ‘Statement of Compliance’ which must accompany each Local Development Document. Any type of group or organisation not listed who wishes to be consulted on any part of the planning process should contact the Planning Department.

7.4 The Council will consult all the following types of non-statutory consultees on all DPDs. Relevant non-statutory consultees will also be consulted on SPDs.

Table 3: General or non-Statutory Consultees (detailed list in Appendix A).

Local Members of Parliament	Youth Groups, Schools, Colleges	Ethnic Minority Groups
Internal Consultees at Blackpool Council	Disability Groups	Housing/Design Interest Groups
Blackpool Council Members (Councillors)	Religious Groups	Local Residents Associations
Other Local Authorities	Local Businesses/Business Groups	Planning Agents
National & Regional Conservation/ Preservation Groups	Older Persons Groups	Other National/Regional Organisations
Local Conservation, Preservation & Amenity Groups	Holiday Accommodation Providers	Other Local Organisations e.g. Area Forums
Public Transport Operators	Local Strategic Partnership Members (County LSP to be consulted on Minerals and Waste Issues)	Neighbouring Parish Councils

⁴ The Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004

8. Community Involvement - When?

8.1 **Development Plan Documents (DPD)** – there are five key stages for each DPD:

- Pre-production
- Production
- Submission
- Examination
- Adoption

Within this structure there are three broad opportunities for the community to become involved in the preparation of development plan documents. These are in the:

Preparation of Issues and Options	(Production stage)
Preparation of Preferred Options	(Production stage)
Submission of the DPD	(Submission)

A possible extra opportunity for involvement may arise if the Council receives representations which seek to either add or amend a site allocation from a submitted DPD. If this happens, the Council will carry out a further 6 week consultation on these site allocation representations. At the pre-production stage, the Council is required to prepare a robust and comprehensive evidence base to underpin its Local Development Framework.

8.2 **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)** - SPDs are non-statutory documents within the Local Development Framework and go through a more streamlined production process in that representations are not subject to inspection and the production of a binding report by the Planning Inspectorate. There are two broad opportunities for the community to become involved in the preparation of supplementary planning documents:

- Informally during the **Preparation of the draft SPD**
- Formally during the **Statutory Consultation on the draft SPD**

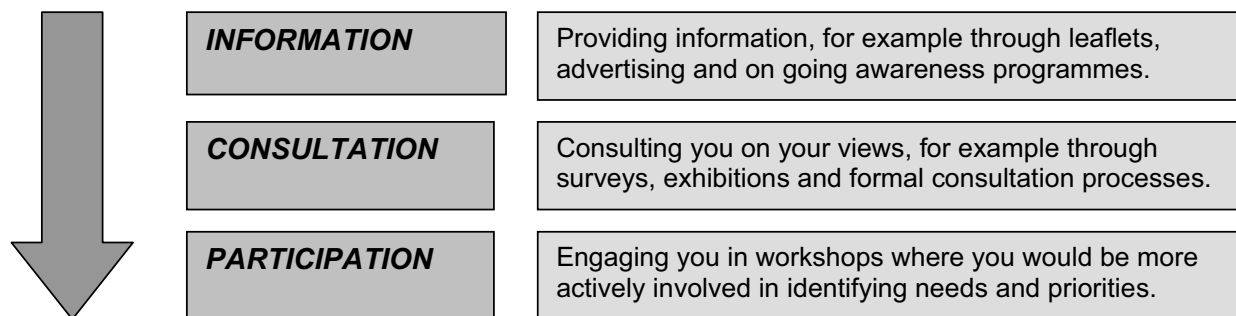
Following the statutory consultation period, the SPD will be amended as appropriate to reflect the representations received and will then be adopted by the Council.

- 8.3 **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** – the sustainability appraisal is a programme of work that seeks to assess the social, economic and environmental effects of DPDs and SPDs to promote sustainable development. SAs are not subject to independent examination themselves but are required to be submitted with a DPD to the Inspector. The report is to be prepared in line with the DPD or SPD as the Council conducts sustainability appraisals of the issues and options that emerge. The SA will follow a very similar consultation programme to the DPD or SPD it accompanies.

9. Community Involvement - How?

9.1 Involvement means the interaction between our planning service and the community. We recognise that there are different levels of involvement.

Figure 2: Methods of Involvement



9.2 Some communities will respond better to some techniques than others and certain issues are better explored through specific techniques such as focus groups rather than a general mail shot. In order to develop a successful consultation programme the council will put in place a range of consultation tools to meet the different circumstances that will arise. For example, a citizen's panel is ideal for canvassing the broad views of a number of people but a focus group is better placed to explore specific issues in-depth.

9.3 Table 4 overleaf examines the relationship between the techniques available and their suitability for specific Local Development Documents. It also sets out the stages in the process where the consultation would be particularly appropriate. The resource implication of each is also included.

Table 4: Appropriate Consultation Techniques and Stages for the production of LDDs for the Blackpool LDF

	Engagement Technique	Consultees		This is useful for...	Appropriate for which documents? (see section 6 & fig.1)	Appropriate consultation stage?	Resources
		Specific	General				
14	Availability of documents & comment forms on Council website	✓	✓	Allowing access to the latest information about progress and the opportunity to contribute.	All documents	All consultation stages	Low cost when established but specialist skills needed.
	Documents or letters alerting the availability of documents mailed out to consultees and sent by email upon request.	✓	✓	Allowing and publicising access to the latest versions of documents. Meeting minimum requirements in allowing everyone the opportunity to comment on draft documents	All documents	All consultation stages	Medium. Printing and postage is expensive when done at large scales.
	Press releases in the local newspapers. Consider alternative media formats and the Council newsletter.		✓	Raising levels of awareness. Reaching a wide audience.	All documents	Preferred Options / Draft Submission	Low. Where local interest exists, press release can get wide publicity.
INFORMATION	Posters – to be put up in public areas e.g. schools and shops		✓	Going out into the community to provide information and access views - potentially reaching those who wouldn't otherwise become involved.	Key documents of wide general interest and those of specific local interest.	All consultation stages	Medium. Material can be expensive and staff time is needed to design and distribute.
	Public notices in the press	✓	✓	Publicising specific opportunities to get involved.	All documents	All key stages / as required to meet statutory requirements	Low. Easy to do but expensive if done regularly.
	Manned and un-manned public information displays/ roadshows		✓	Outlining specific plans and proposals to a target audience. Accessible to a broad audience.	Area Action Plans Development Briefs	Preferred options / Draft and Submission stages	High. Cost and time taken to produce boards and staff time at exhibitions.
CONSULTATION	Documents available at Council offices and local libraries		✓	Meeting minimum requirements in allowing everyone the opportunity to view and comment on draft documents	All documents	All consultation stages	Low. Postage cost only.

Public meetings (held at various times).	✓	Reaching area-based groups, community groups and/or the general public.	Area Action Plans Development Briefs Core Strategy Relevant SPDs	Issues and Options Preferred options / Draft Possible Extra Stage	Medium. Time needed for preparation, ongoing support from staff.
General invitation for comments, by letter or email. Mailshot to residents. (Questionnaire/standard response form to be usual format).	✓	Reaching a potentially wide cross-section of people in a targeted area.	Area Action Plans Development Briefs	All consultation stages	Medium/High Cost of production and mailing can be high depending on the number of consultees targeted.
Citizen Panel	✓	Reaching out to a cross-section of the community	Specific issues of general interest to inform relevant documents.	Issues and Options Preferred Options / Draft	Low. Production and mail out easy.
Focus groups (for specific issues) and roundtables	✓	Bringing together representatives to provide direct input on specific issues.	Core Strategy Area Action Plans Relevant SPDs	Issues and Options Possible Extra Stage	Medium/High. Time is needed for preparation, specialist skills may be required. The cost of venue hire.
Planning for Real and interactive workshops/ interactive techniques e.g. concept statements	✓	Bringing together representatives from different sectors of the community to be more actively involved in scoping documents and identifying priorities	Area Action Plans Development Briefs	Issues and Options	High. Time needed for preparation, specialist skills may be required. The cost of venue hire.
15	PARTICIPATION				

9.4 We believe that everyone has the right to be informed and, where possible, be involved in planning. However the process of developing this document has highlighted that not everyone wants to, or can, be involved all of the time. It is important that we consider the different reasons for this and do our best to address them. Table 5 lists the **barriers to participation** and how we might overcome them.

Table 5: Barriers to Effective Participation

Barriers to Participation	Suggested Actions
Accessibility of documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All LDF documents can be made available, on request, in a variety of formats such as large print, Braille, audio-cassette, computer disc or in languages other than English.
The cost of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure availability in a variety of public places. Ensure availability on the Councils internet site.
Lack of time to comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easily understood documents that are not repetitive and overly long. Easy-to-use website. Email able comment forms.
Time (of meetings/activities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider evening and weekend.
Incomprehensible 'Planner' speak and jargon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of Plain English and simplification of text.
Complex procedures and inability to understand matters which will affect them (e.g. young children)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplified user guide of the new planning system and the development control applications procedure.
Perception that only objections are sought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that supporters are encouraged to express their opinions.
Accessibility of meeting for those with mobility or sensory difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose locations that meet accessibility standards where possible. Choose locations that provide a hearing loop where possible.
Physically unable to attend meetings and non-PC literate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed coverage in the local free newspaper. Continued use of paper comments forms. Contact Disabilities Information Service about reaching those people who are disabled and cannot access buildings, public transport or are unable to read or hear announcements.
Accessibility of meetings to those without a car	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of venues accessible by public transport where possible.
Apathy and disinterest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always try to relate issues, particularly strategic, to the local level. Target groups for consultation who do not normally take an interest.
Mistrust and public cynicism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure that consultation responses are fair and accurate and that full explanations are given for the decisions made. Present information in a way that does not suggest that decisions have already been made.
Disaffected groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of outreach workers to access information.

9.5 We will at all times endeavour to apply a range of consultation techniques appropriate to the level of planning whilst ensuring that 'barriers to participation' are actively reduced using a range of methods set out in Tables 5.

9.6 **Hard to reach groups** – the following groups have been identified as being hard to reach:

- Children and young people
- Old people
- People with disabilities
- People who live in the district but who work elsewhere
- People who work in the district but who live elsewhere
- Black and ethnic minorities
- Faith Communities

9.7 Both the Blackpool Local Strategic Partnership and the Sustainable Urban Regeneration Federation (the name adopted by Blackpool's Community Empowerment Network) are committed to securing genuine participation from under-represented groups. We intend to consult these groups on all DPDs and on SPDs where appropriate. The Council has also sought to include groups which represent hard-to-reach sectors of the community in the list of general/non-statutory consultees.

9.8 Efforts are being made to involve hard-to-reach groups. These include the formation of;

- The **Blackpool Young People's Council**, which meets at the Isis Centre in Layton every Tuesday at 6pm. The aim of the Council is to represent the views of young people in Blackpool and is open to 11-19 year olds.
(visit <http://www.blackpoolypc.org.uk/> for more information)
- The **Senior Voice Forum** was established in March 2005 and provides older people in Blackpool a voice on issues, both local and national, which affect them. It is an opportunity for older people to make a difference, not only to their own quality of life but for the community at large. The Forum meets on a quarterly basis and is facilitated and supported by a co-ordinator.
- The **Blackpool Faith Forum** which provides a single initial point of contact with the Council and which promotes and pursues opportunities for faith based organisations to contribute to public service development and the delivery of the Community Plan. The forum has strong links with the Blackpool Local Strategic Partnership.
- The **Blackpool Equalities Forum** was established in 2000 and meets quarterly. The forum promotes dialogue and understanding across the separate equality 'strands'. Dealing with all age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and broader equality and human rights issues, the group can be contacted through the Faith, Equality and Diversity Unit at Blackpool Council.

10. The Adoption of Documents

10.1 Once **Development Plan Documents** have gone through the consultation, pre-production and production stages, they are submitted to the Secretary of State for independent **examination**. At this time, the respondents from the statutory consultation period are invited to make representations on the submitted document. However, objectors can only object to the **soundness** of the document rather than its content.

10.2 **Soundness:** A DPD must not only satisfy the statutory requirements for plan preparation as set out in the 2004 Planning Regulations⁵, it must also be sound. It must therefore meet the following tests:

- **Procedural** – it must have been prepared in accordance with the LDS and SCI and its plans and policies must have been subjected to sustainability appraisal.
- **Conformity** - it must be a spatial plan which is consistent with national planning policy and in general conformity with the regional spatial strategy. It must also have regard to the community strategy and any other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area or to adjoining areas.
- **Coherence, Consistency & Efficiency** - the strategies/policies/allocations in the plan must be coherent and consistent with other DPDs and also with neighbouring authority's DPDs where cross-boundary issues are relevant. The strategies/policies/allocations must represent the most appropriate in all circumstances, having considered all relevant alternatives, and must be founded on a robust and credible evidence base. There must be clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring and the plan must be reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.

(The particular tests of soundness for the SCI are set out in Appendix B).

⁵ The Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004

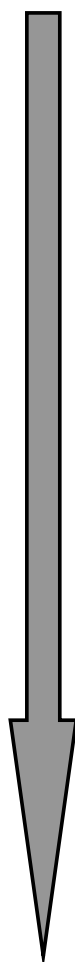
- 10.3 **The examination:** the purpose of the independent examination is to determine if the document is sound. Therefore a DPD or SCI must be submitted for examination, even if no representations have been received. Generally the SCI examination will be conducted through written representations although objectors have the right to be heard if they so wish.
- 10.4 **Binding Report:** following the independent examination, the Inspector will issue a report of recommendations. This report is binding and the local authority must adopt the changes required by the Inspector. Once the local authority has received this report, they have two weeks to check any facts and clarify meaning. The Inspector then sends the authority his final report in both electronic and paper form.
- 10.5 **Adoption:** following receipt of the Inspectors report, the Local Authority must adopt the document as soon as is practicable. The Local Authority must also:
- Prepare an adoption statement to accompany the DPD which states the date of adoption and explains how people aggrieved by the DPD can object to the High Court.
 - Advertise that the document has been adopted and where it can be viewed.
 - Make the DPD and adoption statement available at principal council offices and on the local planning authority's website.
 - Send a copy of the adoption statement to those who have asked to be notified of the adoption of the DPD.

11. The Planning Application Process and Community Involvement

- 11.1 This SCI outlines the way in which the planning service will consult and get communities involved with planning applications. The Development Control team within the planning service makes decisions on planning applications. When an application is submitted they are firstly validated and assigned to a case officer. Consultation is undertaken with various statutory and non-statutory consultees and, depending on what the application is, these will vary. Consultation with the public and a site visit by the case officer will lead to a decision. National targets expect planning applications to be determined within 8 weeks, or for major applications, within 13 weeks.
- 11.2 All planning applications received by the Council are subject to minimum statutory requirements for public consultation (Table 6). The Council supplements these minimum requirements (Table 6) for the following reasons:
- To identify disputes at an early stage and encourage refinements to be made to the proposals
 - To provide a speedy and efficient service without compromising on quality
 - To enable people to access the planning department on-line
 - To keep objectors informed of progress and the subsequent decision.
- 11.3 Table 8 sets out how we involve local communities in the applications process. The Council has always gone above and beyond the minimum requirements for public consultation in the planning application process. Recent improvements have built upon this foundation to allow greater accessibility to information and greater transparency of the process.
- 11.4 The normal period allowed for making comments on planning applications is 21 days, however, bodies such as Natural England will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation. The results of any such consultation will be reported and taken into account in decisions made by, and on behalf of, the Council.

Table 6 What we have to do... What we've always done... What we do now...

	Statutory Minimum Requirements	What we've always done, over and above minimum requirements	What we do now...
Pre-application consultation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly meeting of the planning agents group (architects and developers etc- who regularly submit applications) • Guidance set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage pre-application consultation on significant, minor and listed building/conservation area applications, see Table 8.
Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major, controversial applications in the public interest (e.g. conservation/ listed building): Site notice and neighbour notification, publication on the weekly list (website) and press notice. • Other applications: Site notice or neighbour notification. • Depending on the nature of the application, consult with appropriate statutory consultees. • Re-notify neighbours if revisions will result in a significant change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants will be informed of the case officer and how to contact them on submission of an application. • Applications can be submitted and progress tracked on line. For those without access to the internet, paper applications and case officers available to advise. • All comments received will be acknowledged • View consultees on the website. • Submission of comment forms on line. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View entire application on Council website including the site plans and drawings. • View on the Council website which nearby properties (or addresses) have been notified.
Decision-making		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Control Committee agendas and minutes available on website • Objectors/applicants or agents can speak for 3 minutes at Development Control Committee, subject to prior approval • Notify objectors of decision in writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View decision notices on the Council website. • Circulation of a list of planning decisions in a similar manner to the current weekly list • View committee reports on the Council website • View list of applications on forthcoming committee.



12. The Developers Role... Pre-Application Discussions and Community Consultation

- 12.1 A focus of the new planning system is 'front-loading' consultation at the start of the application process to reduce conflict at later stages. The objective of pre-application discussions is to confirm whether the principle of development is acceptable and to clarify the format, type and level of detail required to enable Blackpool Council to determine the application. The broad requirements for community consultation may also be discussed.
- 12.2 The approach to pre-application discussions will be at all times for Blackpool Council to remain impartial. Often discussions held between the applicant and the Council are 'in confidence' because there can be commercial confidentiality or because applications are not at a stage where they will be submitted. The following '**ground rules**' establish how pre-application discussions will be dealt with.
- 1) Pre-application discussions are to be resourced, managed, organised, designed and delivered by the developer/agent/applicant. This will enable the Council to remain impartial when making a decision on the application.
 - 2) Discussions at an early stage in the process about proposals where there is commercial confidentiality can still be undertaken on a confidential basis. However, when proposals are firm enough to submit an application the council will encourage open pre-application discussions and public consultation in line with this SCI.

At present the Council does not intend to impose charges for pre-application services. Any future plans or policy to introduce charges would be publicised and details made available for public inspection.

- 12.3 As part of the 'front-loading' approach, the Council will encourage applicants and developers to also discuss proposals and engage with communities. Developers will then be encouraged to submit a consultation statement with their application. At this early pre-application stage community consultation is beneficial, because:
- better quality applications will result which are straightforward and can be quickly processed;
 - there is early availability of good quality information, enabling issues and problems to be addressed up-front.

- problems can be resolved avoiding possible public objections at later stages;
- it saves developer time and resources by avoiding the need to revise proposals at an advanced stage, which in turn leads to resource savings for authorities;
- it overcomes the perceived 'closed door' approach to determining planning applications, ensuring an inclusive and transparent approach; and
- there can be better design of buildings more in keeping with their surroundings as well as meeting the needs and aspirations of local communities.

At this stage, consultation with statutory bodies, such as the Highways Agency, is also recommended where appropriate.

12.4 There are three types of application for the purposes of this SCI: Significant, Minor and listed building/conservation area related applications. Table 7 sets out the types of applications and some recommended pre-application consultation methods. It is up to the developer/applicant/agent to determine the most suitable methods for use, depending on the size, type and location of the proposal.

Table 7: Types of Applications and Recommended Pre-Application Consultation Methods

Application Type	Definition	What we encourage	Appropriate consultation methods
Significant	<p>Significant is defined as the following sorts of applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 or more dwellings or a site area over 0.5 hectares. • 1000 sq.m or more gross floorspace commercial • 1000 sq.m or more gross floorspace leisure • Minerals and Waste Applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage developers to canvass local opinion. • Encourage greater Ward Councillor awareness and involvement. • Encourage the submission of a consultation statement setting out pre-application discussions. • For applications with a regional or sub-regional impact e.g. casino/airport/rail development, a Borough Council 'development team' will be assembled to facilitate pre-application discussions with the developer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public meetings • public exhibitions • surgeries • workshops • planning for real • Media • Website • Planning Aid • leaflets outlining proposals • outline information available at the development site • area forum presentations

Application Type	Definition	What we encourage	Appropriate consultation methods
Minor	Minor is defined as anything that is not considered significant, most often involving domestic extensions, changes of use of properties or small infill developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage applicants to discuss proposals with their neighbours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal • Letter
Conservation/ listed building	Any application that is listed or falls within a conservation area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with Blackpool Civic Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal • Letter

13. Feedback

- 13.1 The information we obtain through community involvement will be collated and used to inform our decisions and/or shape any documents we produce. In providing feedback to you we aim to make the link between your responses and our decision or action clear. To do this we will produce a report that will outline the responses received and how each response was used to make the decision or shape the report.
- 13.2 Each Development Plan Document in the Local Development Framework will require a 'Statement of Compliance'. This will outline how the SCI has been followed and how doing so has benefited document production.
- 13.3 We will make all general feedback and summary reports available on our website, www.blackpool.gov.uk, and in paper format at the following locations:

Customer First, Municipal Buildings, Corporation St., Blackpool
 Education, Leisure & Cultural Services Department, Progress House, Clifton Rd, Blackpool
 Blackpool Central Library, Queen Street, Blackpool
 Anchorsholme Library, Luton Road, Blackpool
 Bispham Library, Devonshire Road, Blackpool
 Boundary Library, Bathurst Avenue, Blackpool
 Layton Library, Talbot Road, Blackpool
 Mereside Library, Langdale Place, Blackpool
 Palatine Library, St. Anne's Road, Blackpool
 Revoe Library, Central Drive, Blackpool

In addition we aim to feedback directly to those involved in either specific involvement activities such as workshops, or consultation processes associated with the LDF documents or planning applications.

Figure 3: Our Feedback Commitment

Our Feedback Commitment

- an acknowledgement of your comments;
- how your information will be used;
- when you can expect to hear from us again;
- a summary of feedback to be reported in the Annual Monitoring Report;
- a clear reference made to the responses when preparing draft documents;
- the production of a consultation statement following consultation on planning policy documents
- for major applications storyboards adjacent to the site giving information about the proposal such as what will be provided e.g. open space and play park, 50 houses and a shop, when it will be completed and who to contact for further information.
- use of Council's newsletter

14. Review

14.1 We will review the content and proposals of this SCI through the following methods:

- a) Comments from the Community - the Council would welcome comments from the community at any time on issues related to this SCI including concerns regarding methods used and who the Council should be consulting. The Council will aim to respond to comments received within 14 days.
- b) Through the 'statement of compliance' on individual LDDs - in this statement prepared by the Council, there will be an opportunity for any issues and problems arising from applying the Statement of Community Involvement to be identified here.
- c) Reviewing best practice - The Council will continue to review whether the policies contained within this document are working and reflect best practice.
- d) The success and effectiveness of the SCI will be reviewed through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)

14.2 Generally, when changes to the SCI are required, they will be to enhance the methods already used. The Council is committed, as a minimum, to consulting on these changes with all statutory and non-statutory groups listed in the SCI along with other groups and individuals who have become involved in preparing LDDs. The exact nature of the consultation will depend on the changes proposed.

14.3 If the review process identifies significant deficiencies or requires a change in direction for this SCI, this will lead to a formal review of the SCI and resubmission to the Secretary of State.

15. Resources

15.1 Blackpool Council is committed to cost-effective community involvement deploying existing staff resources more effectively. The Borough Council will explore the following ways of achieving this:

- Using staff from other sections to supplement the Development Plans team appropriate to the consultation issue. For example Neighbourhood Area Action Plans will require assistance from the neighbourhood team. Consultations on Supplementary Planning Documents relating to specific development issues will require assistance from Development Control planning officers.
- Learning from and, where possible, utilising the skills of other organisations such as the Community Empowerment Network and the Local Strategic Partnership.
- Making the most of resources set up specifically designed to assist local authorities such as the Planning Portal and Planning Aid.
- Choosing the most appropriate and efficient method. The methods we will use at any particular time will be dependent on the resources we have available and the effectiveness of that methods in achieving the commitments set out in the SCI.
- Combining and integrating involvement activities to optimise their value and so as not to over consult the community; links are particularly seen with the community plan.
- Even with significant effort, we cannot persuade everyone to get involved. We have to recognise that there are limits to our resources and we have to be realistic in our aspirations for community involvement.

Appendix 1 - List of Potential Consultees

The Development Plans Team maintains a consultation database which has been compiled as a consequence of previous consultation on planning policy documents and also with information from other networks and partnerships. Anyone can join this consultee database by contacting the Development Plans Team on 01253 476239 or email development.plans@blackpool.gov.uk. The resources to update it have and will be met from existing development plan funding sources.

Some consultees appear on several consultation lists. To avoid repetition the Council will only list a consultee once.

Please note, this list is not exhaustive and also relates to successor bodies where re-organisations occur.

STATUTORY/SPECIFIC CONSULTTEES (33)

Government Office North West
 North West Regional Assembly
 Department for Education and Skills (through Government Office)
 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
 Department for Transport (through Government Office)
 Department of Health (through relevant Regional Public Health Group)
 Department of Trade and Industry (through Government Office)
 Ministry of Defence
 Department of Work and Pensions
 Department for Culture, Media and Sport
 Lancashire County Council
 Fylde Borough Council
 Wyre Borough Council
 Preston City Council
 The Environment Agency
 Highways Agency
 English Heritage
 Natural England
 Network Rail
 North West Regional Development Agency
 Telecom development:
 Patrick Forfar Associates
 Adam Holmes
 Mono Consultants
 Vodaphone Ltd
 Daly International
 O₂ (UK)Ltd
 Pentland
 BT Plc
 PP2004
 T Mobile
 Spectra Telecom UK Ltd
 BT Cellnet
 British Telecom
 Orange PCS Ltd
 Strategic Health Authority
 United Utilities
 St. Anne's Parish Council

Westby with Plumpton Parish Council
Staining Parish Council

NON-STATUTORY/GENERAL CONSULTEES

Elected Representatives

Blackpool Borough Councillors (44)
Blackpool North MP
Blackpool South MP
European MPs (10)

Area Forum Working Group Members (33)

Other Public and Local Organisations (148)

Action for Better Access in Blackpool & The Fylde
Age Concern
Anchor Housing Association
ARRIVA trains Northern
BAGS
Barham Residents Association
Bispham Hotel & Traders Association
Bispham & District Community Association
Blackpool & District Pensioners Pressure Group
Blackpool & Fylde College
Blackpool & Fylde Conservation Volunteers
Blackpool & Fylde Friends of the Earth
Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association
Blackpool Airport
Blackpool Challenge Partnership
Blackpool Chamber of Trade
Blackpool Civic Trust
Blackpool Combined Associations
Blackpool Council for Sport & Recreation
Blackpool District Education Office
Blackpool Football Club
Blackpool Forum
Blackpool Fylde & Wyre Health Services NHS Trust
Blackpool Hotel & Guest House Association Ltd
Blackpool Licensed Taxi operators Association
Blackpool Major Retailers Consortium
Blackpool Marton Rotary
Blackpool Pleasure Beach
Blackpool Primary Care group
Blackpool Private Hotels Association
Blackpool RUFC
Blackpool Self Catering Holiday Association
Blackpool Society for Mentally Handicapped
Blackpool Town Centre Forum
Blackpool Towns Women's Guild
Blackpool Transport Services
Blackpool Workspace & Employment Development Service
Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde Health Authority
BLIND
Central & West Lancs. Chamber of Trade & Industry
Central Action Area Group

Chinese Community Association
Civic Trust Regeneration unit
Civic Aviation Authority
Civilian Disabled Society
Claremont Community Association
Claremont West Renewal Area Residents Association
Coliseum Traders Association
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
Commission for Racial Equality
Community Council of Lancashire
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Council for voluntary Services
Countryside Agency
Crown Estate Commissioner
Deaf Society
Dickson Road/Promenade Area Focus Group
Diocese of Blackburn
Duxburys Chartered Surveyors
English Partnerships
First North Western
Five Piers (Manchester Methodists) Housing Association
Foxhall East Residents Association
Foxhall Focus Group
Friends of the Earth
Fylde Coast Cycling Action Group
Grange Park Community Association
Grange Park Residents Association
Grange Park Youth and Community Association
Grasmere Residents Association
Gynn and North Shore Focus Group
Gynn Avenue Hotel Association
Gypsy and Traveller Community Group
Health and Safety executive
Help the Aged
Homeless in Blackpool Borough Council House Builders Federation
Housing 21
Housing Corporation
Ingthorpe North Tenants & Residents Association
In the Pink Leisure Group
Lancashire Enterprises Plc
Lancashire RIGS Group
Lancashire Waste Services Ltd
Lancashire Economic Partnership
Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board
Law tec
Leisure parcs
Manchester Unity Housing Association
Marton & Mereside Youth & Community Centre
Muir Group
National Playing Fields Association
National Probation Service
New South Promenade Hospitality Group
Noble Organisation Ltd
North British Housing Association
North Central Business & Residents Association
North Layton Residents Association

North West Council for Sport & Recreation
North West Lancashire Health
North West Regional Chamber
NPFA Fields Office
Old peoples Welfare Committee – Blackpool
Pensioners Association
Planning Aid
Pleasure Beach Area Focus Group
Progress Housing Group
Queens Park Residents Association
Railtrack Property
Ravenseft (for Land Securities)
Ramblers Association
Regional Planning Advisor
Revoe Residents Association
Ride – Ability (Coastal Community Transport)
RNIB
Robert Pinkus & Co.
RONSA
Royal British Legion – Housing Association
Royal Mail Property Group
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Salvation Army Housing Association
South Shore Action Group
South Shore Focus Group
South Shore housing Association
Sport England
St Christopher’s Community Association
St Heliers Youth and Community Association
Sustrans
Sycamore Development (1990) Ltd
Talbot & Brunswick Community Association
Tidy Britain Group
Transco
Warbreck Residents Association
Whiteholme Youth and Community Centre
Windmill Housing Association
Women’s Institute
Women’s National Commission
Wyre Housing Association

Local Strategic Partnership Members (39)

Faith Forum Members (89)

Community Empowerment Network (55)

Senior Management Group (internal consultation) (31)

Planning Department (internal consultation) (10)

Appendix 2 - Test of Soundness for an SCI

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks, sets out the nine tests of soundness that apply to Statements of Community Involvement. These are:

- i) Has the local planning authority complied with the minimum requirements for consultation as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations, 2004?
- ii) Does the SCI provide links with other community involvement initiatives?
- iii) Does the SCI identify in general terms which local community groups and other bodies will be consulted?
- iv) Does the SCI identify how the community and other bodies can be involved in a timely and accessible manner?
- v) Are the methods of consultation to be employed suitable for the intended audience and for the different stages in the preparation of local development documents?
- vi) Are resources available to manage community involvement effectively?
- vii) Does the SCI show how the results of community involvement will be fed into the preparation of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents?
- viii) Are there mechanisms for reviewing the statement of community involvement?
- ix) Does the SCI clearly describe the planning authority's policy for consultation on planning applications?

Appendix 3 - Glossary

Adoption	Formal adoption of a document by the Council for forward planning and in the determination of planning applications.
Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)	Report produced annually which sets out progress against the Council's Local Development Scheme and analyses the impact and effectiveness of planning policy.
Binding Report	Report produced by an independent planning inspector following the public examination of a Development Plan Document or Statement of Community Involvement. This report considers representations made against a document and recommends changes to be made to the final draft. The Council must make these changes before the document can be adopted for use.
Community Empowerment Network (CEN)	Network of community groups and forums, co-ordinating with the Council and Voluntary Organisations, which enables local people to have an effective part in local decision making. In Blackpool the CEN is called the Sustainable Urban Regeneration Federation (SURF).
Core Strategy	Sets out the long-term spatial vision for the local planning authority area, the spatial objectives, and outlines the strategic policies required to deliver that vision.
Development Plan Document (DPD)	Statutory planning document which goes through independent public examination and makes up part of the Local Development Framework.
Examination	Independent public examination to test the Soundness of a Development Plan Document or Statement of Community Involvement and to ensure that the necessary legal requirements for its preparation have been undertaken.
Generic Development Control Policies	These are a series of criteria-based policies which seek to ensure that development within the area will meet the spatial vision and spatial objectives set out in the Core Strategy.
Hard-to-reach-group	Group of local residents or individuals, who may represent a particular sector of society, who are identified by the Council as experiencing particular barriers to participation. Additional effort may be required to ensure these individuals can contribute effectively to the planning process.
Issues and Options	Stage during the preparation of a Development Plan Document where a range of issues and potential options are identified through extensive community engagement.
Joint Authorities	Refers to the Joint Working of Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and Blackpool Council.

Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Framework	A folder of documents produced by the Joint Authorities to guide mineral and waste related development in Lancashire.
Local Development Document (LDD)	Document making up the Local Development Framework.
Local Development Framework (LDF)	A folder of documents which will guide the way in which Blackpool develops into the future. The LDF forms part of the Statutory Development Plan for the town and will, in time, replace the current Local Plan.
Local Development Scheme (LDS)	Document which makes up part of the Local Development Framework and which sets out a timetable of which policy documents will be completed and when.
Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)	Non-statutory, non-executive body bringing together representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors. Local Strategic Partnerships are responsible for preparing Community Strategies.
Planning Aid	Voluntary service provided by planners of free and independent professional advice on planning to individuals or groups unable to afford to pay for the full costs of such advice. Planning Aid includes the provision of training so that its clients can be empowered through better understanding of how the planning system works and the development of skills that enable them to present their own case more effectively.
Preferred Options	Stage during the preparation of a Development Plan Document where a small number of preferred development options are devised in conjunction with community engagement.
Public consultation	A process through which the public is informed about proposals fashioned by a planning authority or developer and invited to submit comments on them.
Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)	Regional planning policy for the North West, prepared by the Regional Planning Body, which sets the context for the Local Development Framework and forms part of the statutory development plan.
Site Specific Policies and Allocations	This refers to allocation of sites for specific developments. Policies will identify any specific requirements for individual proposals.
Specific/Statutory Consultees	Individuals/organisations/bodies which the Council must consult on planning matters to accord with government regulations.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	Document that sets out the Council's approach for involving the public and other stakeholders in the production of planning policy and the determination of planning applications.
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	A formal process which analyses and evaluates the environmental effects of a plan or programme (carried out in conjunction with Sustainability Appraisal).
Statutory Development Plan	The planning policy framework that directs the development of an area.
Submission	Submission of the final draft of a document to the Secretary of State for independent public examination by the planning inspectorate.
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)	Supporting planning guidance related to a policy contained within a Development Plan Document. These documents form part of the Local Development Framework.
Sustainability Appraisal (SA)	A formal process which analyses and evaluates the environmental, social and economic impacts of a plan or programme.

For more information...

Copies of the latest Local Development Scheme and other documents can be obtained from your local council office. For up-to-date information on progress and opportunities to get involved please see the local press and our website:

www.blackpool.gov.uk

Information can also be obtained from:

**The Development Plans Team,
Blackpool Council,
PO Box 17,
Corporation Street,
Blackpool.
FY1 1LZ**

Email: development.plans@blackpool.gov.uk

Tel: 01253 476244

To ensure services provided by Blackpool Council are accessible, this document is available upon request in alternative formats such as Braille, large print, audiocassette and other languages.

The Planning Aid service provided by the Royal Town Planning Institute also offers advice on planning matters and can be accessed through <http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk/>