

Statement of Community Involvement – SCI Leaflet 1 of 3

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how and when you can influence new planning documents and the ways in which you can comment on planning applications, as well as other forms of consent such as listed building consent or telecommunications applications.

This leaflet (1 of 3) describes our overall approach to community engagement and involvement in the planning process and there are two further information leaflets on the following topics:

[Leaflet 2 - Influencing the Local Plan](#)

[Leaflet 3 - Getting Involved in Planning Applications](#)

Our Community Involvement Strategy

Our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been informed by the key principles contained in the council's Community Involvement Strategy, and all our planning consultations conform to the **Community Involvement Charter** which is set out in that document¹.

This strategy explains that 'South Tyneside is a place where everyone can get involved in decisions that affect them and people have the opportunity to significantly influence the delivery of local services'.

[1. 'A Stronger Voice through Opportunity and Choice Our Community Involvement Strategy for South Tyneside'](#).



Our approach to Community Involvement

When we involve you in preparing the new Local Plan or consult you on planning applications or other forms of consent we will:

- **Keep the process simple** by writing in plain English and explain any planning terms that we need to use.
- **Communicate clearly** by explaining the reasons why we want to involve you and receive your comments.
- **Make it easy for you to get involved** by explaining when and where you can provide your views. We will make our public planning events as accessible as possible for all groups, taking into account the time and possible costs of attending. We will also make use of existing community involvement networks and group together consultations on several planning topics as far as possible.
- **Be inclusive** wherever possible by providing information in an accessible format and giving clear advice on how the planning system works where this is requested, and encourage involvement from groups that have traditionally not been involved in the planning process.
- **Share information with you** on the council's website, in our libraries and at South Shields Town Hall and Civic Offices where this is appropriate and effective.
- **Make consultation draft Local Plan documents available** free of charge for residents, community groups and businesses within the borough.
- **Make sure your involvement is effective** by listening to your views early in the planning process. We will explain what we can and cannot take into account and make sure you have enough time and notice of all opportunities to get involved. We will consider all comments received and provide feedback on how these have been considered.
- **Strive to meet our targets** for the preparation of the Local Plan, and also Government targets for the determination of planning applications within statutory timeframes (8 weeks for minor applications and 13 weeks for major applications), wherever possible.



Who will we involve?

We want everyone to have the chance to have their say on the council's emerging new Local Plan documents, and on planning applications, wherever it is relevant.

We have developed a database of individuals, groups and stakeholders who we regularly contact on planning matters (that are of interest to them) and we will continue to involve individuals, groups and organisations in the preparation of our new planning documents so that everyone has the chance to shape the future of the borough. This database is reviewed and updated on a continuous basis.

Government regulations require us to ensure that certain groups are consulted at key stages in the preparation of the new Local Plan, for example the Coal Authority, Environment Agency, English Heritage, Natural England, Highways Agency and Homes and Communities Agency. The full list of consultees is provided at Appendix A of [Leaflet 2](#).

We are committed to doing everything reasonably possible to make our community involvement inclusive. This means that we aim to give everyone in South Tyneside an opportunity to be involved in the decisions that we take. The council's [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) explains our approach to inclusion and our Community Involvement Strategy sets out the different ways in which we involve all relevant groups.

We can make documents available in alternative formats on request. This can include large print, Braille and alternative languages. The council also has interpreters available to assist any groups in having their say in the planning process. For assistance with this, please contact our Communications Unit on 0191 424 7385.

How will we involve you?

We will keep you informed through a variety of methods including: letters and e-mails, our website www.southtyneside.info, our 'Local Plan' newsletter, the council's 'South Tyneside' magazine and through notices in the local newspaper.

The ways in which you can have your say on the planning process will vary depending on the issue, and different techniques may be used at different stages in the production of a planning document or assessment of a planning application. For example, you may be invited to submit written representations by letter or e-mail or online, or provide comments via feedback forms and questionnaire returns. We will produce press notices, organise public consultation events and provide exhibition information to keep you informed and arrange smaller group workshops wherever this is appropriate and helpful to the planning process.

If you know someone who would like this information in a different format contact the communications team on (0191) 424 7385

The role of Planning Officers

The council's Planning Officers work in two teams within the Planning Group, which is based at South Shields Town Hall:

- The **Forward Planning Team** produces the planning documents that make up the [Local Plan](#) (our new statutory development plan) and can be contacted for advice on planning policy. They organise and lead the consultations on draft planning documents and consider relevant consultation responses for incorporating any amendments into the council's final adopted documents, where appropriate to do so (see [Leaflet 2](#)).
- The **Development Management Team** assesses planning applications in accordance with the adopted development plan, the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and any other material considerations including consultation responses and other representations. They can be contacted for advice on pre-application enquiries and planning applications (see [Leaflet 3](#)).

The Planning Officers from both teams work closely together in the preparation of new planning policies, in the assessment of planning applications and in providing specialist professional planning advice on key council development projects with land-use implications.

The role of Councillors

Locally elected Councillors have a key role in the planning process in the following ways:

- The council's executive, the Cabinet, is made up of senior Councillors, who make decisions on council planning policy, whilst the full Council is responsible for approving and adopting all statutory planning policy;
- The council's Planning Committee is made up of a number of Councillors who make decisions on individual planning applications;
- Councillors represent their respective wards and listen to residents' concerns on planning issues (at ward surgeries or public meetings and consultations); and
- Councillors can voice their support or make objections to planning applications in writing and speak at Committee on behalf of their constituents.

The role of locally elected Councillors in representing the views and concerns of residents in the planning process is very important. However, your views can only be formally taken into account when you make them in writing to the Planning Group within the specified time for a particular consultation. There are existing protocols for the way that Councillors and Council Officers conduct their activities, which ensure that any potential conflicts of interest are resolved in a transparent way.