

Statement of Community Involvement

Draft for consultation Autumn 2023

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service

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Version

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Statement of our intention to engage with our communities

Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils are committed to involving as many people and organisations as possible in the planning process. This includes groups and communities that are typically under-represented.

Planning affects the lives of everyone who lives, works, and visits Greater Cambridge. Therefore, it is essential that as many people as possible have a say in the decisions the councils make on new housing, workplaces, open spaces, and the measures we take to tackle climate and biodiversity issues.

We want to encourage you to read and respond to the consultation on the draft Statement of Community Involvement, the document which sets out how the Councils will engage on a wide range of planning matters over the next five years. Widening community participation in planning will always achieve the best outcomes and therefore this Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the councils will achieve this.

Through extensive public engagement during the Covid 19 pandemic, including interactive webinars on our emerging new Local Plan, through to the award winning work we are doing with youth engagement in local schools, we are always pushing ourselves and developers to do more engagement and to reach out to the widest possible audience. Whilst the SCI sets out the minimum levels of engagement the councils will undertake, it also sets out what we can, and frequently do, to go beyond this and how we try to engage in innovative ways alongside documents and websites that are written with as little jargon as possible.

This document also sets out how the Councils will support local communities and parish councils to develop their own neighbourhood plans which can set out local aspirations for new developments within their area.

We will strive to provide opportunities and make it as simple as possible for all individuals to become involved in the planning process, regardless of their circumstances. By involving communities from the earliest stage, they can help to make a difference and, crucially, feel a sense of understanding and ownership of local planning decisions.

Finally, we would encourage you, as residents and stakeholders (including parish councils, neighbourhood forums, groups and associations representing residents and businesses in the area), to use this Statement of Community Involvement and the protocols set out within it, to hold the Local Planning Authorities to account and ensure that all local people have opportunities to have their say. We recognise that consultation and engagement activities are ever evolving, and typically engagement is moving further towards digital means. We understand that whilst digital engagement

is convenient for some members of our community, this is not the case for everyone, and therefore we have been mindful about this as this SCI has been updated.

Whilst this is an SCI for the next five years, it will be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure it is up to date and reflects local and national priorities, practices, and policies.

Engaging with our communities in the planning process is very important. It enables us to hear their views and take those into consideration in making decisions that affect how land is used and developed in Greater Cambridge.

This Statement of Community Involvement goes much further than our current SCI. It ensures that the diversity of our residents and their views and aspirations are reflected in our emerging joint Local Plan as well as how development proposals are prepared, assessed and determined.

I commend this statement and look forward to working with our residents, businesses, developers and other stakeholders in using it effectively to create great places across Greater Cambridge.

Cllr. Dr. Tumi Hawkins, South Cambridgeshire District Councillor and Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Development Management

It is vitally important that everyone knows how to influence development in our area and make their voice heard. I am very pleased that we now have such a clear statement of how the Councils will ensure that residents, businesses, local organisations and visitors are properly consulted as we decide what to build, what to change, and how to create the best possible spaces within which we can live, work, learn, and play.

Elected members endeavour to continue to work closely with Planning Officers to make sure that we work in a transparent, trustworthy, and effective way, and the practices outlined in this important document demonstrate our ongoing commitment to serving the people of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

I am very pleased to have this updated document setting out the Councils commitment and procedures for involving our communities - residents, businesses, local organisation and visitors - in the complicated process to build new buildings and create the best possible places.

It's through a concerted effort by everyone involved in planning that we can work towards improved transparency and arrive a place of mutual trust.

Councillor Katie Thornburrow, Cambridge City Councillor and Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

1.0 Introduction

What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the Local Planning Authorities, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, will consult with local people, groups, businesses, partners, and other organisations in the planning process. This is important to improve understanding about how we prepare planning documents such as the Local Plan and guidance documents, consider planning applications, neighbourhood plans or neighbourhood development orders.
- 1.2 Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have a shared planning service, the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP). Planning officers within GCSP will be responsible for delivering all planning consultations, but Councillors within Cambridge City Council will ultimately have responsibility for consultations which effect the city of Cambridge, and Councillors within South Cambridgeshire District Council will oversee consultations that effect South Cambridgeshire. For consultations which affect both areas, both Councils will retain oversight.
- 1.3 Local Planning Authorities are currently required under [Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#) to prepare and review a SCI. This establishes the approach and standards of engagement we will make with our communities about planning matters or proposals. We aspire through the aims of the SCI to:
 - Ensure that engagement is managed **efficiently** by consulting at the earliest possible stages of the planning process, providing clear information about the proposals and by conducting early engagement with Councillors, stakeholders, community groups, applicants and individuals in a meaningful way.
 - Set clear and concise objectives of consultations in order to be **transparent** by keeping people informed, being clear on what we are asking for responses on, publishing outcomes, and setting realistic timelines for consultations and being open and clear about our decision making.
 - Be **proportionate** and **cost effective** in resource and promote best practice by exploring new and evolving methods of consultation and

communications including digital to engage more easily with local communities.

- Ensure consultation is **inclusive**, fair, equitable and supports our local communities in feeling heard through consultation methods that are consistent to all, including those people without access or find it difficult using digital communication.
- Be **accountable** in the decision-making process, by explaining how the responses to consultations will be considered, how people will be informed of outcomes or decisions, and ensure that the planning stages are robust, justified and consistent.

1.4 During the COVID-19 pandemic, both Councils had to reassess how they carried out public engagement whilst meeting social distancing requirements. In May 2019 and December 2020 GCSP published an addendum to its SCI which outlined the measures that the Councils were taking in response to the pandemic, including restricting face-to-face activities and holding events online. Whilst we are now able to meet face-to-face once again, the Councils learnt some key lessons on how to make good use of webinars and digital communication tools when carrying out public engagement exercises. This has the positive effect of making best-use of our resources whilst also making it more convenient for our communities to participate in engagement activities.

1.5 This document sets out the approach of the Councils to consulting and engaging with our communities through the different stages of the planning process. The sections of the document which follow explain the purpose of the SCI, how you can be involved in the process of preparing our planning policy documents, and how we will engage through different types planning applications. The document also provides guidance for how the local community can prepare neighbourhood plans or neighbourhood development orders, and how we will assist with this process.

1.6 The Appendices contain the glossary for words abbreviated throughout the document, the consultation bodies, the requirements for consulting on planning applications, and the Council's contact information.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Statement of Community Involvement

1.7 In 2018, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council agreed to work in partnership to deliver shared services. This led to the

formation of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP), to deliver the range of services consistent with their responsibilities as the Local Planning Authority for the two areas.

- 1.8 It is important to recognise that although the Councils have prepared this joint SCI, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council remain separate legal entities in relation to their designation as Local Planning Authorities.

Why is the Statement of Community Involvement being reviewed?

- 1.9 The [Town and Country Planning \(Local Plan\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 \(as amended\)](#) require Local Planning Authorities to review their SCI every five years. The current SCI was adopted in 2019, so is coming up to five years old and needs to be updated. This provides the opportunity to review the SCI to ensure it still provides the most efficient and effective approach to consultation and engagement and learns lessons from the wide range of engagement we have undertaken in recent years.
- 1.10 In 2020, the Government's consultation on the [White Paper Planning for the Future](#) proposed substantial reforms to streamline the planning system. This included proposed changes to the preparation of local plans and modernisation of planning, through improved engagement with people, by promoting the use of digital technology. At the time of writing this document, the Government are proposing reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. It is likely there will be further changes to the planning process and how we consult in the coming years, as well as where we capture information currently found in SCI's.
- 1.11 GCSP have already been working to explore digital opportunities to make information easily accessible and to make it easier to provide feedback. We have created [interactive maps](#) and [webinar videos](#) for our Local Plans. We are also seeking to continuously improve, for example we are part of the government's PropTech programme exploring improvements to digital engagement tools and transform community involvement in the planning process.

In carrying out the review of the SCI, particular consideration and changes has been given to:

- Opportunities provided by digital technology including the lessons learned during the Covid 19 pandemic;

- Learning from the Greater Cambridge Local Plan consultations, where we tried new methods of consultation for example interactive online digital engagement;
- providing more information to guide pre-application engagement by developers, including a range of engagement methods which they can consider at the initial stages of them preparing a development proposal;
- Highlighting the importance of reaching under represented groups, including Black and ethnic minorities communities, people with disabilities and young people;
- A new section on planning obligations/developer contributions and how the Councils may seek views on the use of contributions on priority projects for infrastructure, for example public art or children's play spaces;
- Updates to our neighbourhood planning support offer reflecting experience gained, including refocusing our funding offer on Strategic Environmental Assessment screening rather than a health check;
- Setting out how local communities can respond to significant infrastructure projects which are considered and determined by other bodies outside of the councils.

What is the purpose of planning?

- 1.12 The purpose of planning is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF 2021 sets out the three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental that should be achieved and delivered through plan making and decision taking.
- 1.13 The Local Planning Authorities are responsible for making decisions to guide where sustainable development takes place and its functions, guided by national planning policy and the development plan. The key functions that GCSP has in the overall planning process are:
- **Planning policy or plan making** is the formulation of a statutory development plan which sets out the vision for the future of the area and provides a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social, and environmental priorities. The main policy documents for the area are the adopted Local Plans. Other documents include supplementary planning documents (SPDs) which may also be produced to provide more detail on the policies in the Local Plan. Neighbourhood plans, produced by local communities, also form part of the development plan. You can find more information on what documents form part of our current development plan on our [website](#).

- **Development Management** is about ensuring that the right type, mix and design of development is provided in sustainable locations through the granting or refusal of planning permission. Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire determine most applications in the area, but some, such as for minerals and waste, are dealt with by Cambridgeshire County Council. Some very large infrastructure proposals are determined at the national level, through Development Consent Orders.

1.14 This SCI sets out in later sections, further detail of the Local Planning Authorities functions in relation to preparing planning policy, determining planning applications, consideration of the design and conservation of the built and natural environment, planning obligations, the approach to compliance, and how local communities can be assisted in preparing neighbourhood plans or neighbourhood development orders. Each of the sections outline the approach to consultation and engagement and the time periods that will be applied to ensure an appropriate balance between effective participation and efficient plan and decision making.

2.0 How can I get involved in the planning process?

- 2.1 Since planning has a direct impact on the daily lives of residents and businesses, it is important that development proposals are transparent and that you have the opportunity to have a say in the planning decisions that are made on your behalf. The Local Planning Authorities want to ensure that you have the opportunity to engage in planning decisions at the earliest possible stages of the planning process.
- 2.2 Early involvement in the planning process gives you the best chance of influencing planning proposals including in plan making, planning application stages and neighbourhood plans. The SCI's intention is to inform you of the formal stages in the planning process, including when and how you can engage and participate. In addition to the formal stages of planning, you are also able to speak to your local ward or parish Councillors about a planning matter or proposal you might wish to comment on or influence.
- 2.3 We recognise that local knowledge is valuable in making better planning decisions. An understanding of our communities concerns and aspirations is key to successful engagement. We also want to understand the aspirations of developers, as they are mainly responsible for delivering the new spaces that we plan for. Developers also have a significant role to play in engagement, and we will encourage them to engage effectively with local communities. Early engagement with our local communities often achieves the best planning outcomes.
- 2.4 The SCI has been written to guide you through the plan making, development management and neighbourhood planning process and set out how you can get involved in each of these areas. There are also a number of other ways you can engage in the planning process at a local level.
- 2.5 We have set up a series of forums for Planning Officers, Councillors and members of the public meet to discuss planning matters. We also sometimes invite developers to present information about their sites. There are the new settlements at [Northstowe](#), [Waterbeach](#), and [Bourn Airfield and Cambourne](#). Community Forums are also held focusing on development areas on the edge of Cambridge for [Cambridge East](#), [North West and West Cambridge](#), and [North East Cambridge](#). We also hold a [Residents Association Forum](#). [Waterbeach](#) and [Bourn Airfield and Cambourne](#). Community Forums are also held focusing on development areas on the edge of Cambridge for [Cambridge East](#), [North West and West Cambridge](#), and [North East Cambridge](#). We also hold a [Residents Association Forum](#). [Bourn Airfield and Cambourne](#). Community Forums are also held focusing on development areas on the edge of Cambridge

for [Cambridge East](#), [North West and West Cambridge](#), and [North East Cambridge](#). We also hold a [Residents Association Forum](#). [Waterbeach](#) and [Bourn Airfield and Cambourne](#). Community Forums are also held focusing on development areas on the edge of Cambridge for [Cambridge East](#), [North West and West Cambridge](#), and [North East Cambridge](#). We also hold a [Residents Association Forum](#) for residents of the city of Cambridge.

- 2.6 We hold [Agent Forums](#) to update planning agents on changes to legislation and procedures within GCSP. We also regularly hold Parish Council Forums where we can discuss planning issues with Parish Councils.

3.0 Our methods for community engagement in planning policy

What is planning policy?

- 3.1 Planning policy involves preparing plans or requirements to provide a vision that will guide decisions about new development in an area. In England, planning policy is delivered through the creation of a development plan which provides a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social, and environmental priorities. Planning applications have to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 The development plan for an area is typically made up of a number of documents, including a local plan, neighbourhood plans, waste and mineral plans and area action plans. There is also a policies map. There are other planning policy documents which help to guide decisions about new development, but which are not part of the development plan, such as supplementary planning documents (SPDs).

Why should communities help to create planning policies?

- 3.3 The Councils believe it is vital that you can contribute to planning policies in order to help to create the vision which will shape your area. We are therefore committed to providing opportunities for comment, feedback and engagement when preparing different planning policy documents. Including different perspectives from our communities means that the quality and effectiveness of the planning documents will improve. Below, the different types of planning policy documents are explained and there is also guidance about how communities can influence each document.

Local Plans

- 3.4 A Local Plan is a plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. The Local Plan contains policies relating to the amount of development that should take place, the number of jobs and homes that need to be created, where development should take place, and how it should be designed. The Local Plan also identifies

the infrastructure that needs to accompany development, setting policy requirements of developers, for example the provision of affordable housing Policies can apply to the whole area, or they can be specific to individual sites.

- 3.5 In 2018, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council adopted their Local Plans. Both [Cambridge City Council](#) and [South Cambridgeshire District Council](#) also have a number of documents which contribute to their wider development plan. You can find more information on what documents form part of our current development plan on GCPS's [website](#).
- 3.6 The Councils are currently preparing a joint Local Plan to cover the areas of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. When adopted this will replace the adopted Local Plans of the individual Councils.
- 3.7 The [First Proposals consultation](#) on our emerging Local Plan sets out the vision to make Greater Cambridge a place where a big decrease in our climate impacts comes with a big increase in the quality of everyday life for all our communities. The Plan aims to create thriving neighbourhoods with the variety of jobs and homes we need, increase nature, wildlife and green spaces, and safeguard our unique heritage and landscapes.
- 3.8 We are also preparing a North East Cambridge Area Action Plan, which would also have the status of a local plan but cover the specific area around Cambridge North Railway Station and Cambridge Science Park.
- 3.9 A timetable for preparing and reviewing our Local Plan documents is set out in the [Local Development Scheme](#) (LDS). This is regularly updated and explains the stage that the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan and North East Cambridge Area Action Plan has reached and how people can comment on the Plan's policies.

Supplementary planning documents

- 3.10 Local plans can be supported by supplementary planning documents (SPDs). These documents provide guidance to support the implementation of planning policies and can include documents such as design codes for specific sites. The key difference for SPDs compared to local plans is that they do not undergo public examination by a Planning Inspector and are not automatically subject to a sustainability appraisal. SPDs are capable of being a material consideration which means they should be taken into account in decisions but are not part of the development plan.

- 3.11 It should be noted that where documents are being produced by an individual Council rather than jointly, the measures in this SCI will be applied by the individual Council. An example might be if a design code is produced to supplement one of the current adopted individual Council Local Plans.

Neighbourhood plans

- 3.12 Neighbourhood plans are a tool that local communities use to shape development in the places they live and work. Once adopted or 'made', neighbourhood plans become part of the development plan which means they become a material consideration when planning applications are decided. With neighbourhood plans, the community carries out the work, such as researching maps, conducting surveys, and drafting policies. This is often conducted by a parish council, or if it is an unparished area, a neighbourhood forum needs to be established which then acts as the qualifying body to prepare the neighbourhood plan.
- 3.13 Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council both have a duty to support communities who are preparing neighbourhood plans. This support could include advising on potential plan policies, supplying maps, or helping to set up a forum. We have also prepared a [Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit](#).
- 3.14 By August 2023, there were eight 'made' neighbourhood plans in Greater Cambridge with 15 further areas formally designated indicating their intention to prepare a neighbourhood plan. You can find details of neighbourhood plans being prepared by parish councils and neighbourhood forums and their current status on our [website](#).
- 3.15 Both Councils can also assist communities with the preparation and delivery of neighbourhood development orders (NDOs) which grant planning permission for buildings specific sites or for alterations across areas.
- 3.16 Once a neighbourhood plan is prepared and has undergone an independent examination and a successful referendum it falls to the Local Planning Authority to 'adopt' as a made plan. The Council that covers the area(s) of the neighbourhood plan can consider whether it should be adopted, for example a plan within South Cambridgeshire would be the responsibility of SCDC, and a plan in Cambridge City would be for CCC.

How will the Local Planning Authorities consult on Local Plan documents?

- 3.17 Each Local Planning Authority must fulfil a number of public consultations, in line with national government regulations shown in Table 1. However, we want to reflect the aims of this SCI and aspire to go beyond the Government's expectations for public engagement. For example, as part of the First Consultations for the emerging Local Plan, Planning Officers engaged with members of the public at pop-up events, met with groups who are traditionally under represented in planning consultations, and held webinars online to increase outreach. GCSP also tried to make our online consultations accessible by avoiding the use of planning jargon. GCSP will continue to consider innovative ways of carrying out public engagement for the next stages of the Local Plan.
- 3.18 Local Planning Authorities provide you with the opportunity to have your say on planning policy and aim to provide an efficient, transparent, proportionate, inclusive, accessible, accountable, and coherent approach to consultation.
- 3.19 In preparing a local plan document, Local Planning Authorities will engage with relevant stakeholders and gather evidence. For each consultation, Planning Officers will review each submitted comment, evaluate it against evidence, and consider whether the policy needs to be altered. Planning Officers will then prepare a consultation statement setting out how engagement has been undertaken, explaining how GCSP has considered the issues and how the feedback has been incorporated.
- 3.20 As part of the Examination process there could be further consultations, for example the main modifications to the Plan. Any additional consultations will be for six weeks unless it falls over a public holiday period where it may be extended.
- 3.21 The statutory process for preparing these documents is set out in the [Town and Country Planning Local Planning England Regulations \(2012\)](#) (as amended). There are two key stages of consultation during local plan preparation, Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Local Plan preparation

Local Plan stage	Consultation duration
Public participation (Regulation 18)	One or more public consultations, on issues and options or draft policies. Consultations will be undertaken for a minimum of a six week period. All representations must be received within the consultation period.

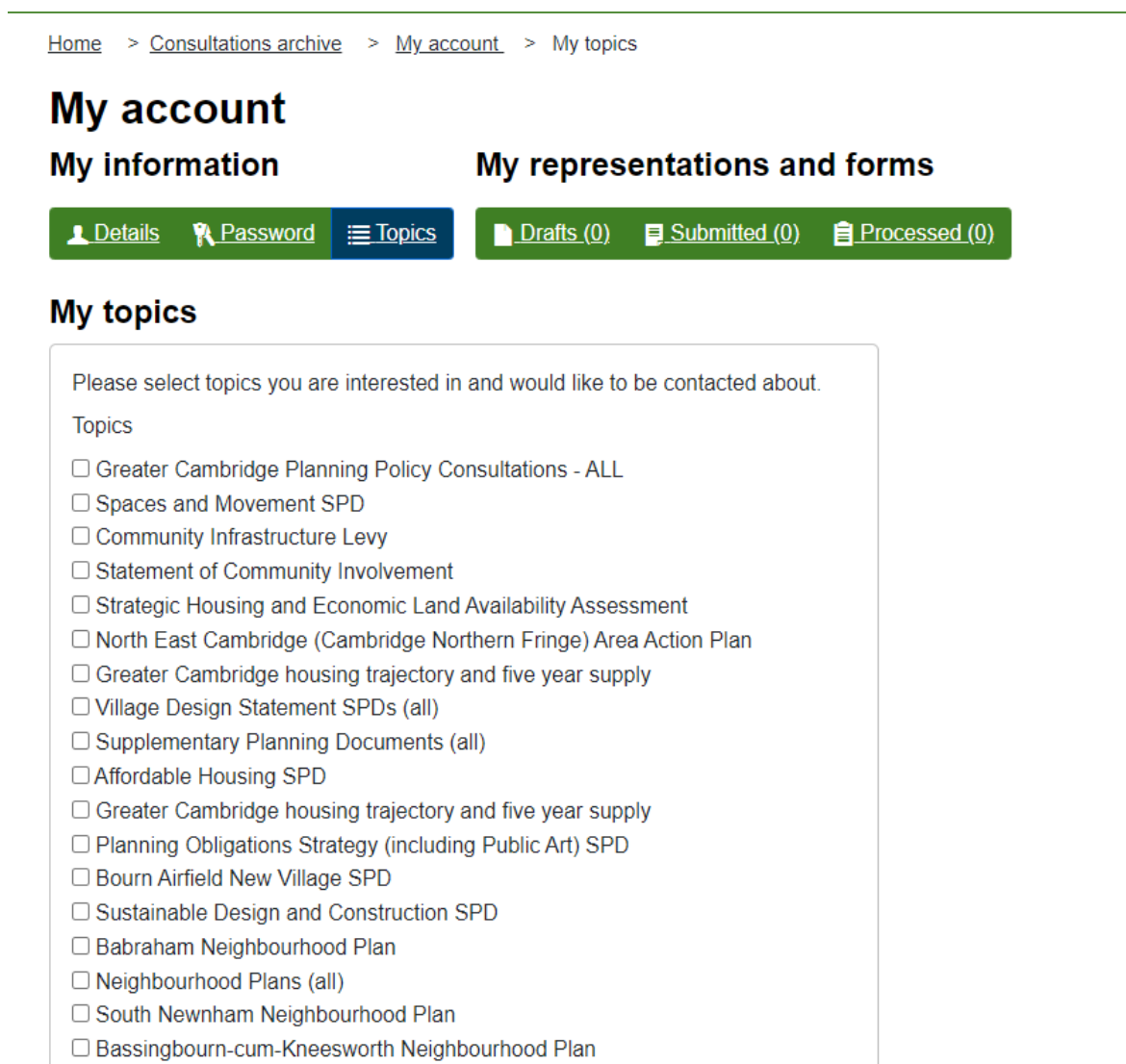
Pre-submission publication (Regulation 19)	Consultation will be undertaken for a minimum of a six week period. All representations must be received within the consultation period.
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- 3.22 There are four main methods for consulting at Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 stages that the Councils will apply. These are:
- Inviting representations through a notice on the Councils websites, and advertising through other methods such as social media, news releases, Council publications or press adverts
 - Consultations with specific consultation bodies and appropriate general consultation bodies and other relevant stakeholders (see Appendix 2)
 - Consultation documents will be available to view on the Councils websites, and at our Council offices (see Appendix 3 for details)
 - Public consultation events if appropriate to the nature of the consultation (this may include in person and/or online events).
- 3.23 Following the consultation stages, the Council submits the Local Plan to the Secretary of State together with the representations received at the Regulation 19 stage. The submitted document and the representations received, will be considered by a Planning Inspector at an independent examination. The Council will notify the specific and general consultation bodies who were invited to make representations at earlier stages, and all those who have requested to be notified, of this stage.
- 3.24 Individuals and organisations that have made representations may be invited by the Inspector to submit a written statement during the examination. Individuals and organisations that made an objection to the document and have requested to speak at the examination will be contacted by the Inspector to be informed of the procedure for being heard.
- 3.25 Following the receipt of the Inspector’s Report the Councils will notify all those who have requested to be notified, as soon as it is reasonably practicable. The report will also be made available on the Councils website and at Council offices defined in Appendix 3.
- 3.26 If the Inspector has concluded that the Plan is sound the Council will adopt the plan and will publish an adoption statement on their website and make it available to view at Council offices as defined in Appendix 3. The Council will then again contact all those who have requested to be notified as soon as it is reasonably practical.

Who does Local Planning Authorities involve in Plan-making?

- 3.27 Regulations specify a number of organisations that Local Planning Authorities must consult when preparing planning policy documents. These bodies are set out in Appendix 2. They include specific consultation bodies and various types of general consultation bodies. Specific consultation bodies include utility companies, government agencies, Local Planning Authorities and parish councils. General consultation bodies are voluntary bodies active in the area and those bodies which represent different interests and include neighbourhood forums.
- 3.28 The Council is required to co-operate with neighbouring Local Planning Authorities and other prescribed bodies on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries under the statutory 'duty to co-operate'. The Councils are committed to cooperating with the [Local Nature Partnership](#) (LNP) (Natural Cambridgeshire) and have regard to their activities which are relevant to local plan making. The LNP acts as an independent voice for the natural environment in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and part of its role is to coordinate partners to deliver projects and activity that will meet the Partnership's vision and aims. The bodies identified under the statutory duty to co-operate are defined in Appendix 2.
- 3.29 Individuals and organisations can opt-in to receive notifications in relation to future public consultations. To opt-in, users must register onto the GCSP consultation database. Once logged into the [consultation database](#), the 'My Information' tab allows the user to choose the 'Topics' to receive future mailings about. These can be updated by the registered user as preferred. If you make comments on a planning policy document, we will also offer you the opportunity to opt-in to these updates, which will keep you informed about future stages of the plan making process. Figure 1 below shows the layout of the webpage with a preview of the list of topics to receive mailings about.

Figure 1: Layout of the consultation database screen



3.30 If you do not have an email address or do not have access to the internet but would like to opt-in to receiving future mailings in relation to public consultations or notifications on one or more of our planning policy documents, please contact us by telephone or write to us using the details in Appendix 3.

How can representations be submitted?

3.31 During the consultation periods our preferred method is to receive comments through our website. This is the easiest way to submit comments, and it helps us process your comments efficiently. Representations can also be sent to us by email, or post using the address in Appendix 3. If you are having difficulty commenting, or need information in a different format, please email us at localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org, call us on 01954 713694.

- 3.32 Representations received, including names of who they were submitted by, will be published on the Councils websites. You can view the latest versions of our privacy notice on our website.
- 3.33 The online consultation system allows any individual, business, organisation, or group to register their details and submit comments during consultation periods.
- 3.34 The privacy notice for planning policy consultations and notifications sets out how your personal data will be used and by whom, if you opt-in to any of our 'topics' or submit representations. The consultation database will be maintained by the Local Planning Authorities and will follow the latest legal requirements on data protection, currently the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018.
- 3.35 The councils will not accept or publish comments that contravene its compliance with the Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

How will GCSP include a wider range of perspectives?

- 3.36 GCSP will meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which aims to promote equality, eliminate discrimination and encourage good relations between different groups associated with age, disability, gender and gender reassignment, race, religion and other protected characteristics. It is recognised that some parts of the community in the area are under represented such as Gypsy and Traveller communities, the young and elderly, and it is important to include them in planning consultations. The Councils will work closely with relevant organisations that have experience in finding the best way to engage with these groups.
- 3.37 It is GCSP's aim to explore how innovative forms of public engagement can be further developed and refined in future consultations. In 2022 South Cambridgeshire District Council established the 'Young People Task & Finish Group' to explore how to improve youth engagement in South Cambridgeshire. A [report](#) set out the opportunities to create or develop effective youth engagement along with recommendations relating to the SCI that GCSP will use to improve planning consultation with young people.
- 3.38 The Councils want to ensure local communities are well informed about planning matters within the Greater Cambridge area. To achieve this, the Councils will continue to promote the use of electronic methods of consultation

including our website and social media to make involvement easier, quicker and more cost effective. The Councils are keen to explore new methods of communication and engagement with local communities, recognising that e-communications can be a highly effective way of publicising information about the planning service to the widest possible number of people and organisations.

- 3.39 GCSP aims to include a wide range of perspectives within the Plan-making process and will continue to explore different measures to improve levels of participation. Examples of where GCSP has tried to widen participation include:
- Creating accessible documents that meet the requirements set out in our [GCSP accessibility statement](#)
 - Used social media and videos to publicise consultations
 - Created bespoke consultation websites to support engagement
 - Held events at a wide range of venues and locations, for example providing drop in events, attending established events like coffee mornings, or providing information at railways stations
 - Held interactive webinars to discuss consultation issues and responded to questions, and used interactive tools to allow attendees to participate
 - Engaged directly with groups who are under-represented in planning consultations, such as sixth-form students, and Gypsy and Travellers communities.

Preparation of supplementary planning documents

- 3.40 SPDs can be prepared to add greater detail and guidance to planning policies or allocations. A SPD cannot create new or amend planning policy. SPDs could relate to an area or they may be topic-based, such as affordable housing or design guidance.
- 3.41 Prior to the formal stage of consultation, Local Planning Authorities will engage with relevant stakeholders and gather evidence. They will prepare a consultation statement setting out how this has been done, and how issues that have been raised have been considered in finalising the SPD.
- 3.42 The Local Planning Authorities will consider all comments that are made at formal consultation stage and make any appropriate changes to the SPD before it is adopted. Upon adoption the SPD will be published together with an adoption statement, made available to view on the Councils website, and at the Council's main offices (see Appendix 3). Local Planning Authorities will also send a copy of the adoption statement to all those who requested to be notified.
- 3.43 The statutory process for preparing these documents is set out in the Town and Country Planning Local Planning England Regulations (2012) (as amended).

There is one public consultation stage during SPD preparation, Regulation 12 and Regulation 13 that should be consulted on for a minimum of four weeks.

3.44 There are four methods for consulting at Regulation 12 and Regulation 13 stages that will be followed. These are:

- Inviting representations through a notice on the Councils websites, and advertising through other methods such as social media, news releases, Council publications or press adverts
- Consultations with specific consultation bodies and appropriate general consultation bodies and other relevant stakeholders (see Appendix 2)
- Consultation documents will be available to view on the Councils websites, and at our Council offices (see Appendix 3)
- Public consultation events if appropriate to the nature of the consultation (this may include in person and / or online events).

Preparation of neighbourhood plans

3.45 The statutory process for preparing these documents is set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and subsequent amendments. Table 2 below sets out the key stages of consultation during neighbourhood plan preparations that are undertaken by the Local Planning Authorities. More information regarding the neighbourhood planning process can be found on our website and Section 5 of this document sets out how Local Planning Authorities will assist parish councils and neighbourhood forums during the NP process.

Table 2: Neighbourhood Plan Preparation

Neighbourhood plan stage	Consultation duration
Regulation 5, 6 and 7 Neighbourhood Area Designation: The qualifying body applies to the Local Planning Authority for a neighbourhood area to be designated.	No consultation is required where the whole of a parish is proposed. A minimum period of 6 weeks consultation for all other proposed neighbourhood plan areas
Regulation 9, 10 and 11: Designation of a neighbourhood forum	Not less than 6 weeks from the date on which the application is first publicised
Regulation 15 and 16 Submission: Where a draft NP is submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the plan meets the requirements in the legislation, the Local Planning Authority must publicise the NP.	Minimum of 6 weeks

Neighbourhood plan stage	Consultation duration
Regulation 18 Independent Examination: Post receipt of the Examiners Report the local planning authority may decide to make a decision which differs from that recommended by the examiner. If this is the case the local planning authority must carry out a targeted consultation inviting representations.	Within 6 weeks of the local planning authority first inviting representations

3.46 The main methods for consulting on neighbourhood plans at the Regulation 5, 6 and 7, 9, 10 and 11 stages that must be followed are:

- Inviting representations through a notice on the Councils websites, and advertising through other methods such as social media, news releases, Council publications or press adverts
- Consultations with specific consultation bodies and appropriate general consultation bodies and other relevant stakeholders (see Appendix 2)
- The relevant qualifying body will be asked to assist the Local Planning Authority in publicising the consultation by placing information about it in any local newsletters or on their website
- If requested by the relevant qualifying body the Local Planning Authority will also notify local contacts in the proposed neighbourhood area. The contact details of these local groups to be provided by the qualifying body
- Posters prepared by the Council to be shown at key locations in the neighbourhood plan area during the particular stages: creation of a forum, designation of area, and consultation on submission
- Consultation documents will be available to view on the Council's websites, and at the relevant Council offices (see Appendix 3), additionally at the qualifying body's office or publicly accessible venue within the neighbourhood area during normal office hours.

3.47 The main methods for consulting on neighbourhood plans at the Regulation 15 and 16 stages that must be followed are:

- Inviting representations through a notice on the Councils websites, and advertising through other methods such as social media, news releases, Council publications or press adverts
- Notify any consultation body referred to in the consultation statement submitted alongside the draft neighbourhood plan. These bodies are referred to in [Paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 in the Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#). The qualifying body will have considered which of these to notify depending on whose interests the qualifying body considers may be affected by proposals in the draft neighbourhood plan

- Emails to anyone that has 'opted-in' to be notified of consultations on the specific document being prepared
- Consultation documents will be available to view on the Councils websites, and at the relevant Council offices (see Appendix 3), additionally at the qualifying body's office or publicly accessible venue within the neighbourhood area during normal office hours.

3.48 The main methods for consulting on neighbourhood plans at the Regulation 18 stage that must be followed are:

- Emails sent by the Local Planning Authority inviting representations from
 - the qualifying body
 - anyone whose representation was submitted to the examiner and any consultation body that was previously consulted.

4.0 Methods for community engagement at the planning application stage

- 4.1 A planning application is a means by which someone applies for permission from the Local Planning Authority to develop land. Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are responsible for most planning decisions that are made in their respective areas, with some exceptions such as minerals and waste which is dealt with by the Council. We receive a wide range of planning applications for formal determination. The Local Planning Authorities assess and determine planning applications against national planning policies and local policies, including the local plan. Applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 GCSP makes all applications and decisions available to view online through our [planning applications page](#) (see Figure 2). On the same website, a [weekly list](#) of validated and determined planning applications is made available for parish councils, neighbourhood forums and any other interested parties to be kept informed of planning decisions in their areas. There are four key stages to the planning application process set out in Table 3.

Figure 2: Layout of the Search Function on the Planning Applications Page

The screenshot shows the 'Greater Cambridge Shared Planning' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Search', 'My Profile', 'Login', 'Register', and 'Apply Online'. Below this, a text box explains that the online planning register allows users to search, view, track, and comment on planning applications. It also provides links to 'User Guide' and 'Terms and conditions'. The main section is titled 'Planning – Simple Search' and includes instructions on how to search for planning applications, appeals, and tree works applications. There are tabs for 'Simple', 'Advanced', 'Weekly/Monthly Lists', 'Property', and 'Map'. Under the 'Simple' tab, there are sub-tabs for 'Applications', 'Appeals', and 'Enforcements'. The search form includes dropdown menus for 'Local Authority' (set to 'All') and 'Status' (set to 'All'). Below these is a text input field with a placeholder 'Enter a keyword, reference number, postcode or single line of an address.' and a 'Search' button. The 'on idox solution' logo is visible in the bottom right corner.

Table 3: Planning Application Process

Stage of process	Explanation
Pre-application	An applicant or developer prepares the development proposal. Early engagement with the Local Planning Authority, relevant stakeholders and the community is strongly encouraged, especially for larger and more complex proposals.
Planning application	An application is submitted to the Local Planning Authority who will consult on the planning application
Decision making	A decision is made by either a planning committee of elected Councillors or delegated to a Planning Officer
Appeals	The applicant has a right to appeal where they disagree with the decision of the Local Planning Authority to refuse permission

4.3 The statutory requirements for consulting on planning applications are set out in Appendix 4.

Pre-application advice and consultation

4.4 Both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council encourage applicants or developers to carry out early engagement with the Local Planning Authority and the local community before submitting a planning application. These discussions enable Planning Officers to provide advice to the applicant and in no way predetermine the outcome of the application. Early discussion of a proposal in the form of a pre-application with the council verifies the information required to be submitted with the application and reduces the likelihood of submitting invalid applications. It provides an opportunity for Planning Officers to provide an initial view on a proposal, identifying issues and opportunities an early stage. This enables more efficient use of resources, as problems can be addressed earlier on in the process.

4.5 There are also significant benefits to involving communities and stakeholders at the pre-application stage, including:

- Helping the applicant to understand how planning policies and other requirements may affect their proposal
- Addressing issues early on is likely to result in higher quality proposals that reflect the aspirations of communities. This could lead to less objections, meaning the applications are likely to move through the application process more quickly.

4.6 Whilst some pre-application discussions can be confidential for commercial reasons, developers are strongly encouraged to undertake community

engagement at this stage of the planning process, particularly where development is likely to have significant impacts on local communities or where the site is particularly sensitive.

- 4.7 An example of good engagement between developer and community at the pre-application stage occurred during a recent application for a mix of residential properties and commercial spaces in Devonshire Gardens, Cambridge. Socius and Railpen were the developers for the scheme and held substantial consultation with the local community, with over 3,000 local residents responding to the proposals. The final site will incorporate new public space and a community pavilion which will be shaped by a local design competition following planning permission. Similarly, the Hartree developers at North East Cambridge held a People City Planet Festival where over 400 people attended the two day event at Shirley Community Primary School to find out more about the proposals for the site, listen to talks and participate in interactive workshops, and provide feedback on the proposals.
- 4.8 The [Localism Act 2011](#) introduced a duty for developers to consult local communities before submitting planning applications for certain developments. For development proposals that fall outside of the requirements of the Localism Act, the Local Planning Authority encourage pre-application consultation with local communities and key stakeholders. This allows those likely to be affected by the development to raise potential issues and to make suggestions.
- 4.9 Further information about the pre-application process or how to request a Duty Planning Officer service where members of the public can obtain advice and guidance on householder applications, can be found on GCSP's [website](#).

Planning performance agreements

- 4.10 GCSP offers the opportunity for applicants or developers to enter into a planning performance agreement (PPA), which sits alongside the pre-application advice service. A PPA is a project management tool that allows all parties to agree timescales, actions and resources for handling planning applications. PPAs are usually agreed at the pre-application stage and relate to the whole development process, from pre-application planning advice and community engagement to application progress meetings right through to the post decision stage, including the discharge of conditions and site monitoring. PPAs can be used for any type of application but are most effective for major and complex planning applications. You can find more information on PPAs on our [website](#).

Pre-application advice for Listed Buildings

- 4.11 GCSP offers separate pre-application advice to the owners of Listed Buildings and their agents. This advice enables the applicant to discuss their proposals with a Conservation Officer and to receive either verbal or written advice as to the suitability of what they hope to do. For bigger schemes, owners of higher graded listed buildings, Grade II* and Grade I, are also recommended to contact Historic England who also offer a pre-application service.

Design panels

- 4.12 Design review panels are a well-established and effective way of offering multi-disciplinary, independent advice from a panel of experts who help to inform the planning process and give greater confidence in the decision making of innovative and quality design of the built environment. Panels involve a group of experts such as architects, heritage professionals, and urban designers, who meet to analyse prospective applications to improve the quality of Greater Cambridge's built environment. It is possible for applicants to book an appointment with design panels and a fee needs to be paid to obtain the expert's advice.
- 4.13 There are currently three design panels which are used at the pre-application stage to improve the quality and accessibility of proposals. The panels consist of members from different disciplines and offer critical design advice to applications. The [Cambridgeshire Quality Panel](#) is led by Cambridgeshire County Council for schemes that are going to the Joint Development Control Committee. The panel helps to raise the quality of development by identifying where designs can be improved to achieve the best possible outcomes, in accordance with the adopted Local Plans. The Disability Panel is led by GCSP and considers applications that go to the South Cambridgeshire District Council's Planning Committee and Cambridge City Council's Planning Committee. There is also the [Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel](#) which is led by GCSP and offers independent advice and considers applications that go to the same two committees. The panel reviews major or significant planning applications and pre-applications for sites within the Greater Cambridge area, that fall outside of the remit of the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel. The Greater Cambridge Design Review Plan may also review any policies, guidance and documents that relate to these sites. The panel reviews major or significant planning and pre-applications for sites within the Greater Cambridge area, that fall outside of the remit of the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel. The Greater Cambridge Design Review Pan may also review any policies, guidance and documents that relate to these sites.

Youth engagement service

- 4.14 There are many under represented groups across Greater Cambridge that we aspire to engage with, including young people. Engagement with young people can ensure that the final design of developments considers the specific interests of children and young people who are often under represented in public consultations, particularly in relation to delivering play areas and public spaces that are child friendly and fit for purpose.
- 4.15 GCSP provides an award-winning [youth engagement service](#). It aims to address the long standing issue of young people being under represented in decision making about the built environment. The service aims to enhance planning outcomes by giving young people opportunities to be involved in our work whilst increasing diversity and inclusion.
- 4.16 The service does this by holding workshops in schools that involve Planning Officers and developers who together deliver activities to help young people learn more about their local built environment. Often, the workshops are shaped around a specific planning proposal, which is then used as a gateway to discuss broader issues, such as the history of development in their areas. The students often participate in activities such as designing play areas, public open spaces, and street furniture. In some instances, benches and art installations designed by the participants have been incorporated into the design of a planning proposal and been implemented in the development.

Other forms of pre-application engagement

- 4.17 The most effective way to achieve good planning outcomes is for early community engagement in the planning application process. The Local Planning Authorities therefore expect developers to engage with local people in a meaningful way that, so that proposals are refined as they progress through the planning process. There are a number of ways to do this, including innovative methods:
- **Urban Rooms:** This is a [space](#) where members of the public are able to come together to discuss and engage with planning issues and are encouraged to express their views about proposed developments. They are sometimes transportable spaces, facilitating meaningful discussions with groups representing the local community. Urban Rooms and other such spaces should be well publicised and easily accessible to the community in order to enable effective community participation. The responses and dialogue at these events could be used to explore

refinements to proposals to achieve wider community support. Developers are encouraged to use feedback loops to explain how they have incorporated community feedback.

- **Co-design:** This process involves developers identifying residents of the scheme and working with them to design their new homes. [Marmalade Lane](#) in Orchard Park, Cambridge was produced by residents, Cambridge City Council, and the developer TOWN, and is an example of community collaboration at the pre-application stage.
- **Online tools:** Developers could use innovative online [engagement tools](#) that enable local people to easily identify areas which are of social value, and spaces that need improvement. The information gathered could be used to inform the content of development proposals.

The Planning Application Process

- 4.18 The [Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) Order 2015](#) (as amended) requires that at any time before a decision is made on a planning application, stakeholders and the local community should have the opportunity to comment on any aspect of the proposal. The level and extent of consultation will vary depending on the size, scale, location, and nature of the proposed development. Planning applications, supporting information and key dates are available for public inspection on the [GCSP website](#).
- 4.19 Comments, known as representations, that are received during the consultation period will be considered in decisions made by and on behalf of the Councils. Representations must be submitted in writing, electronically via email or through the [consultation system](#). Late representations may be considered up to the point of determination of the application, however it is highly recommended that they are received during the consultation period indicated. They can only be taken into account if they relate to material planning considerations. You can find more information on this on the [government's website](#) on the planning system. Representations will be added to the application file and made publicly available online alongside the planning application documents. These will be published in accordance with the Council's Privacy Notice.
- 4.20 When a planning application is registered by the Local Planning Authority, there is a statutory period during which anyone can comment on the proposal, as set out in Table 4. It is the Local Planning Authorities responsibility to publicise planning applications. The approach to notification of planning applications will be to:

- Publish details of planning applications online on [Public Access](#), including which applications have been registered, digital copies of Plans and supporting information. Our websites include a search function to help find specific planning applications.
- Undertake appropriate notification as shown in Table 4. In some instances, the Local Planning Authority can go beyond the minimum statutory requirements where the development would potentially have a wider impact and may make use of additional methods of communication, for example through articles in the Councils' magazines. Such wider consultation is carried out at the discretion of the Planning Officer.
- Parish councils in South Cambridgeshire as well as neighbourhood forums in the city of Cambridge are consulted on all appropriate planning applications as statutory consultees.
- Consult with both statutory and non-statutory consultees. All consultees have 21 days (30 days for applications accompanied by an Environmental Statement) from the issue of the consultation notice to make representations (extended as appropriate where the period extends over public or bank holidays). It is highly recommended that representations are submitted prior to the published consultation deadline. The list of statutory and non-statutory consultees related to planning application consultations is set out in Appendix 5.

4.21 Where neighbour notification letters/emails are sent out, Neighbour notification letters/emails are sent to directly adjoining properties of the application site. The Planning Officer may sometimes determine that neighbour notification letters and emails should be sent beyond this where a development could potentially have an impact on a wider area.

4.22 In addition, Cambridge City Council operates a [Development Control Forum](#) where petitioners to an application can present their views to Councillors, Planning Officers and the applicant before a planning application is determined. The aim of the Forum is to allow early discussion of the planning issues raised by petitioners and to seek to resolve concerns. The Forum does not determine the outcome of the planning application.

4.23 It is at the discretion of the Local Planning Authority whether further publicity and public consultation is necessary when an application has been amended. In deciding if it is necessary, the Local Planning Authority will consider the criteria set out in [Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\)](#) published by the Government. In most cases a period of 14 days is considered an appropriate period to allow for further comment.

- 4.24 Table 4 sets out how the Councils will publicise planning applications made under planning legislation. Each type of planning application will be the subject of a different method of publicity which will broadly reflect the scale and impact of the proposal on its surroundings.
- 4.25 Where an application falls within a Conservation Area a site notice may be required and the Local Planning Authority will advise. Certain classes of permitted development will require a Prior Notification application. In these cases, an application must be made to the Local Planning Authority who has to make its determination within the statutory period set out in the GDPO from the date of receiving the application. The time period can vary depending on the type and complexity of the proposal and in some cases in agreement with the applicant and Local Planning Authority. Prior notification applications will be publicised online and may in some instances include a site notice and neighbour consultation letter, depending on the type and nature of the development proposal. Further details about prior notification can be found at :-[Prior approval - Consent types - Planning Portal](#)
- 4.26 There is no statutory requirement to consult on the following types of applications:
- Certificates of Lawfulness of proposed use or development
 - Certificates of Lawfulness of existing use or development
 - Approval of details/Discharge of Conditions
 - Non material amendments.

Table 4: Minimum publicity for planning applications

Type of application required for	Minimum methods of publicity
Major Development	Site notice or neighbour notification letter/email, press notice in local newspaper, website, parish council notification letter/email, neighbourhood forum letter/email notification.
Minor Development	Site notice or neighbour notification letter/email, website, parish council notification letter/email, neighbourhood forum letter/email notification.
Householder Applications	Site notice or neighbour notification letter/email, website, parish council notification letter/email, neighbourhood forum letter/email notification.
Applications subject to EIA which are accompanied by an Environmental Statement	Site notice or neighbour notification letter/email, press notice in local newspaper for a minimum of 30 days, website, parish council notification letter/email, neighbourhood forum letter/email notification.
Applications which do not accord with the development plan for the area	Site notice, press notice in local newspaper for a minimum of 30 days, website, parish council notification letter/email, neighbourhood forum letter/email notification.
Applications affecting a Public Right of Way	Site notice, press notice in local newspaper for a minimum of 30 days, website, parish council notification letter/email, neighbourhood forum letter/email notification.
Listed Building applications and applications affecting the setting of a Listed Building	Site notice or neighbour notification letter/email, press notice in local newspaper, website, parish council notification letter/email, neighbourhood forum letter/email notification.
Brownfield Land Register (Part 2)	Site notice, website, parish council notification letter/email, neighbourhood forum letter/email notification.
Works to protected trees	Site notice responsible for by applicant, site notice or neighbour notification letter/email is discretionary (to be determined on a case by case basis by the Local Planning Authority) but the landowner must be notified, website, parish council notification letter/email is discretionary (to be determined on a case by case basis by the Local Planning Authority) and neighbourhood forum letter/email notification is also discretionary (to be determined on a case by case basis by the Local Planning Authority).
Applications relating to an advertisement	Site notice and/or neighbour notification letter/email, website, parish council notification letter/email, neighbourhood forum letter/email notification.
Hazardous Substances Consent	Site notice and/or neighbour notification letter/email, press notice in local newspaper, website, parish council notification letter/email, neighbourhood forum letter/email notification.

Decision Making process

- 4.27 Decisions on planning applications are made by Planning Committee and Planning Officers under delegated powers. Delegated powers enable Planning Officers to determine applications without needing a decision from the Planning Committee. This is set out in the [Schemes of Delegation](#). Applications that are likely to be considered by the Planning Committee include applications for Major developments and applications relating to the demolition of a listed building or a Building of Local Interest.
- 4.28 The Councils are involved in three planning committees. There are two separate Planning Committees for the respective Local Planning Authorities. There is also the Joint Development Control Committee which addresses specific areas on the edge of the city, which comprises members appointed by the city and district council. This Committee considers planning applications for major and ancillary developments on the fringes of Cambridge.
- 4.29 Agendas and reports for Planning Committee are publicly available at least five working days before the meeting and are also published online. The committee meetings are minuted and published online. Members of the public may speak at a Planning Committee provided they have previously made written representations on the proposed development. Both Councils have further guidance and information regarding speaking at Committee Meetings and can be viewed on the City [website](#) and South Cambridgeshire [website](#), and on the joint committee [website](#).
- 4.30 Once an application has been determined, a copy of the planning decision notice will be sent to the applicant. As part of [The Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#), Local Planning Authorities are required to send notification of the decision to all third parties who have made representations, in accordance with the Local Planning Authorities statutory requirements. The Local Planning Authority will also make the decision available to view online through [Public Access](#) along with the reports that have been considered in the reaching of the decision. On the same website, a [weekly list](#) of validated and determined planning applications is made available for parish councils, neighbourhood forums and any other interested parties to be kept informed of planning decisions in their areas.

Planning Appeals

- 4.31 An applicant may appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against a refusal or contest any of the conditions imposed to the granting of permissions or the non-

determination of an application. Only the applicant has the right to appeal. The Local Planning Authority will support the appeals process by adding appeal documentation to the online planning file online on [Public Access](#). The Councils will inform all parties that were originally consulted on the application or made representations on the proposal of the appeal. A planning appeal will then be considered by the Planning Inspectorate, who will make the final decision on the proposal. The Local Planning Authority has no statutory requirement to notify neighbours or interested parties of the appeal decision. This will be made available on the Planning Inspectorate [website](#).

- 4.32 There are three procedures that an appeal can follow, written representations which usually relate to householder applications, advertisement consent and minor commercial (shop front) applications as well as a public hearing or a public inquiry. The Planning Inspectorate publish a [Planning appeals: procedural guide](#) where you can find more information about how appeals work and opportunities to participate.

Compliance

- 4.33 Planning compliance (formerly referred to as enforcement) describes the processes involved in ensuring that people comply with planning law and requirements of a planning permission. The majority of cases arise through referrals from the public, Councillors and Planning Officers. Many investigations are confidential, so the process involves little public consultation. Where a breach of planning control is reported, an Officer will investigate and assess the complaint, gather evidence, and establish what, if any, the most appropriate course of action should be.
- 4.34 Many investigations result in the submission of a planning application in an attempt to regularise a breach. When this is the case, the community can become more involved in the same way as with any other planning application. If the breach cannot be regularised, the Local Planning Authority will consider formal enforcement action. The Local Planning Authority will ensure that the complainant is informed of the outcome of the Council's investigation. Further information about the compliance process can be found on the [Councils websites](#), including the [GCSP's Compliance Policy](#).

National Infrastructure Planning

- 4.35 Introduced by the Planning Act 2008 to streamline the decision making for major infrastructure projects, National Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), are large scale infrastructure projects, which fall into one of the following categories:

- Energy Generation
- Transport Projects
- Water and Waste
- Pipelines

4.36 These projects can include new roads, railway lines, power stations, reservoirs and waste water treatment plants. NSIPs require a development consent order (DCO) and this process for granting planning permission is determined by the Planning Inspectorate. It is different from the usual planning application process. There are 6 stages to the process:

- Pre-application
- Acceptance
- Pre-examination
- Examination
- Recommendation and Decision
- Post Decision

4.37 Before submitting a major infrastructure project an applicant, for example, a developer or Government Department has a duty to carry out consultation on their proposals. The applicant must prepare a Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC) which sets out how the applicant proposes to consult the local community. It is a key opportunity for the Local Authority, using local knowledge, to inform how the consultation should be conducted. It is also at this stage the applicant will formally consult the statutory consultees, local authorities, affected parties and the local community of the proposal.

4.38 If you wish to participate in the examination of an application for development consent, you first need to register with the Planning Inspectorate by making a Relevant Representation about an application. More information can be found on the [Planning Inspectorate](#) website.

5.0 How can the community be involved in the allocation of planning obligation funds?

- 5.1 In certain circumstances a planning application will need to be supported by the provision of on site and/or off site infrastructure or financial contributions to make it acceptable in planning terms. An applicant will be required to enter into a planning obligation also known as S106 Agreement. Guidance on S106 Agreements is available on the Councils [Youtube](#). This is a legal agreement between the applicant or the landowner of the application site and the Councils. They normally deal with how a development will be carried out or the provision of new or improved infrastructure, community services or facilities.
- 5.2 Major or strategic developments generally have more complex obligations attached, but obligations may also be applied to small scale developments to achieve, for example, provision of affordable housing or sustainable travel measures.
- 5.3 Through consultations at pre-application stage and as part of the consideration of planning applications, the local community, key partners and stakeholders may give their views on the content of any likely planning obligations. This may be considered in line with previously identified projects and the priorities of both Councils. These will also be taken into consideration when the Council determines the planning application and any required obligations, in accordance with [Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\) Regulations](#) and in compliance with the three 'CIL' tests.
- 5.4 In some instances, the Councils will seek the views of local communities where developer contributions need to be spent on specific off-site infrastructure projects (for example public art or the refurbishment of a children's play space). These types of projects are usually overseen by other Council service areas where information on the scope of the project, funds available and geographically where the funds can be spent is set out on the relevant council website.

Biodiversity

- 5.5 The GCSP Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document was adopted in February 2022. It provides clear guidance on how developments should consider biodiversity at the start of the planning process to make sure Biodiversity Net Gain is integrated, increased and enhances development proposals. This is in line with the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environment Act 2021, which requires new development to provide

biodiversity net gain. The Councils will seek to require developers to deliver 20% BNG and under the scheme developers who are unable to meet BNG on site in the South Cambridgeshire area will be able to secure biodiversity off site from the Lower Farm BNG scheme in Fulbourn. Habitats will be secured for at least 30 years via obligations and/or conservation covenant and can be delivered on-site, off-site or via statutory biodiversity credits.

6.0 How the local community can prepare a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order

- 6.1 The [Localism Act 2011](#) introduced the opportunity for local communities to prepare neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders (NDOs). These may be prepared by parish councils or designated neighbourhood forums and form part of the statutory plan for the area which can be used in deciding local planning applications.
- 6.2 Neighbourhood plans set out policies for the development and use of land in a local area or neighbourhood. A neighbourhood plan helps set out a community's vision and can allocate sites for development of housing, employment and community uses. The neighbourhood plan cannot propose less growth than the Local Plan, prevent development from ever taking place in an area and is required to be in general conformity with strategic policies in the Local Plan. Once adopted a neighbourhood plan forms part of the development plan for the area and has the same status as a Local Plan.
- 6.3 Neighbourhood development orders (NDOs) grant planning permission for specific developments within a designated neighbourhood area and remove the requirement to submit a planning application for this type of development.
- 6.4 Whilst the neighbourhood plan making process itself is community led, Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty to help local communities as set out in the [Neighbourhood Planning \(General Regulations\) 2015 regulations](#). Local Planning Authorities offer assistance through the [Support Offer](#) and [Toolkit](#) that provide guidance on how Local Planning Authorities will support and assist parish councils and neighbourhood forums that are preparing a neighbourhood plan. Neighbourhood plans are required to undergo independent examination and are subject to a referendum of the local community before they can be 'made'.
- 6.5 The SCI broadly sets out how the Local Planning Authorities carry out this duty to advise and assist parish councils and neighbourhood forums at each of the key stages. The amount of support provided will be subject to both the Local Planning Authorities resource availability and the needs of the parish council or neighbourhood forum. Further detailed guidance has been prepared by the Local Planning Authorities and is available on the [neighbourhood planning page](#) of the GCSP website.

Broad overview of how the Local Planning Authorities will provide advice and support for neighbourhood planning

Step One: Getting started

- 6.6 Planning Officers will provide advice online through the GCSP website and will respond to email or telephone enquiries about neighbourhood planning. Officers will meet with parish councils in South Cambridgeshire or neighbourhood forums in Cambridge City who may be interested in preparing a neighbourhood plan to:
- identify the area within which their plan would apply
 - the requirements of preparing a plan
 - any other alternative methods for groups to meet their local objectives
 - whether the parish council or neighbourhood forum has the necessary information to decide which approach works best.

Step Two: Designating a neighbourhood area or forum

- 6.7 For parish councils in South Cambridgeshire, an application form for a new neighbourhood area is to be completed and submitted by the parish council. For groups seeking to create a neighbourhood forum within Cambridge City, an application form for creating a neighbourhood forum is to be completed and submitted as well as the application for a new neighbourhood area.
- 6.8 Where consultation is required for a neighbourhood area this will be for a minimum of six weeks undertaken by the Local Planning Authority. The publicity for public consultation will correspond with the timescales and methods set out in Table 2. The Local Planning Authority can assist by preparing a map to show the proposed neighbourhood area.

Step Three: Preparing the plan and evidence base

- 6.9 Once the neighbourhood area is designated, the Local Planning Authority will meet with the parish council or neighbourhood forum to advise on:
- The adopted local plan, emerging policy and guidance documents;
 - What support the Local Planning Authority can give during plan-making process
 - Regulatory and legal requirements, including the requirement to meet the [Basic Conditions](#)
 - Sources of grants and technical support packages
 - Effective methods of public engagement

- Mapping support
- Sources of information including providing links to a library of resources
- The use of a planning consultant who specialises in neighbourhood planning.

6.10 During the preparation of the NP, the Local Planning Authority will:

- Provide information about where to find data for the evidence base
- Share information on contacts for key consultees
- Highlight the key allocations and designations on the local plan policies map that will impact the neighbourhood plan area
- Provide constructive comments on emerging draft policies in the NP against the [Basic Conditions](#)
- Provide guidance in the [neighbourhood planning toolkit](#) which includes how to prepare a NP and the evidence base and specialist advice on planning issues that may need to be included in the NP, such as local housing needs.

Step Four: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

6.11 There is a statutory requirement for neighbourhood plans to carry out an [Strategic Environmental Assessment](#) and [Habitat Regulations Assessment](#) to ensure:

- The emerging NP provides a high level of protection of the environment (SEA)
- The emerging NP protects and improves Europe's most important habitats and species (HRA).

6.12 A neighbourhood development order may also require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to ensure that the full knowledge of any significant effects on the environment are known. Other European directives or future regulations may apply in particular circumstances of a draft neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order and the Local Planning Authority will be able to advise at this stage.

6.13 For neighbourhood plans in both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire, the Local Planning Authority will organise and pay for the SEA and HRA screening of the neighbourhood plan up to a maximum cost of £2,000 including VAT. If the cost is higher than this or a repeat screening is required, the excess will need to be funded by the parish council or neighbourhood forum. The Local Planning Authority will also advise on third party technical support packages for any Neighbourhood Plan that requires a full SEA or HRA, particularly those

offered by [Locality](#) as part of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities funding.

Step Five: Pre-submission consultation and preparing the plan for submission

6.14 The Local Planning Authority will advise the parish council or neighbourhood forum of how to apply for technical support packages that include a health check of the draft neighbourhood plan. This health check is carried out before they submit the neighbourhood plan and supporting documents to the Local Planning Authority.

6.15 The [health check](#) review considers whether the draft neighbourhood plan meets the [Basic Conditions](#) and the independent examiner will provide guidance on any amendments required to ensure the conditions are met prior to submission of the neighbourhood plan.

Step Six: Submission of the NP for Public Examination

6.16 The final stages of preparing the neighbourhood plan are undertaken with the Local Planning Authority as the lead rather than the parish council or neighbourhood forum. The Local Planning Authority will keep the parish council or neighbourhood forum informed of progress and liaise with them to resolve any issues as the plan goes through the examination and referendum stages of the process. This will include liaising with the parish council or neighbourhood forum regarding:

- The appointment of an examiner
- Arrangements for any public hearing that might be necessary
- Changes proposed in the Examiner's Report to ensure the neighbourhood plan meets the [Basic Condition](#) tests
- Any changes required to the neighbourhood plan.

Step Seven: Public referendum and adoption

6.17 Subject to a successful outcome of the Public Examination, the Local Planning Authority will then inform the parish council or neighbourhood forum of the Council's decision to proceed to referendum and subsequent timescales. The organising of the public referendum and publicity regarding its outcome will be undertaken by the elections team at the Council, rather than by the Local Planning Authority.

6.18 Subject to a successful referendum, the neighbourhood plan will then be made by the Council as part of the statutory Development Plan for the area.

7.0 Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 The SCI is based on current national planning policy and legislation. As per the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) (as amended), the Local Planning Authorities are committed to reviewing the SCI at least every five years from the time of adoption to ensure that it is up to date and reflects current legislation and best practice.
- 7.2 Should significant changes be made to national legislation which no longer apply to elements of the SCI, the Local Planning Authorities will endeavour to update the SCI as soon as possible.
- 7.3 Each year the GCSP produces a joint Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) which is a statutory requirement for all Local Planning Authorities. The AMR monitors and reviews the performance of planning policies set out in the adopted Local Plans and Area Action Plans and provides a general overview of the social, economic, and environmental trends taking place across Greater Cambridge. The AMR also assesses the Councils progress in producing the Local Plan and Area Action Plans against the timetable set out in the [Local Development Scheme](#) (LDS). You can find more information on the AMR on our [website](#).
- 7.4 GCSP continues to review the outcomes of our consultations and reflect on the lessons learnt during the process. As part of the First Proposals for the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, we published a [report](#) alongside the full record of comments and feedback from the [First Conversations](#) and [Call for Sites](#) consultation. The report sets out the methodology followed in collecting and presenting the datasets and a quantitative analysis of the data. It also provides an overview of the outreach of the First Conversations consultation and the ways we engaged with our communities and statutory consultees.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Abbreviation	Term	Definition
AMR	Authority Monitoring Report	The AMR describes progress against the Local Development Scheme and monitors the impact of planning policies included in the Development Plan documents. Authority Monitoring Reports were formerly known as Annual Monitoring Reports.
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	Process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed scheme or development, taking into account positive and negative impacts related social, economic, cultural and human health.
GSCP	Greater Cambridge Shared Planning	The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, formed in 2018, is a partnership between Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils, which provides planning service to both councils.
LNP	Local Nature Partnerships	Are coalitions of organisations, businesses and people from a range of sectors, who aim to improve local natural environments.
LPA	Local Planning Authority	They are responsible for planning functions of an area. Usually through the planning service of a Borough, District or Unitary Council
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework	Sets out the Government's planning policies in England and provides a framework in which local plans can be produced
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement	Sets out how and when stakeholders, partners, the community and others will be consulted and the requirements to be met in producing for example any new local development plan documents or supplementary planning documents.
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document	Provides additional details to help implementation of policies set out in development plan documents.
S106	Section 106 Planning Agreement	This is a legal agreement between the applicant or land owner of the application site and the Councils. The agreement deals with how a development will be carried out or the provision of funds for new or improved infrastructure, community services or facilities to support growth and development.

Appendix 2: Consultation Bodies for Plan-making

The [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) (as amended) specify a number of organisations that local planning authorities should consider consulting when preparing planning policy documents. These are known as Specific Consultation Bodies and General Consultation Bodies.

The Regulations allow the councils to select 'such of' the Specific and General Consultation Bodies that may have an interest and/or the Local Planning Authority consider appropriate to the consultation document being prepared.

The organisations the Councils will consult will be drawn from the list in this Appendix and will depend upon the nature of the consultation being undertaken, bearing in mind:

1. The area covered by the document - certain organisations may only operate in parts of Cambridge and/or South Cambridgeshire
2. The subject matter of the document - an SPD may address a specific topic which may only be of interest to some organisations.

The consultation bodies outlined in this Appendix are common to both Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. Where there are differences between the councils, these have been identified below.

Specific Consultation Bodies

The Specific Consultation Bodies are defined in the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 \(as amended\)](#), Part 1 as the following:

- The Coal Authority(b) (The Coal Authority has advised South Cambridgeshire District Council it does not wish to be consulted)
- The Environment Agency
- The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (now known as Historic England)
- The Marine Management Organisation(e)
- Natural England
- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (company number 2904587) (Network Rail Office of Rail Regulation)
- The Highways Agency (now known as Highways England)

- Relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the local planning authority's area:
 - a) A local planning authority

Table 5: Local Planning Authorities who will be consulted

Local Planning Authority	Council who will be consulting
Bedford Borough Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Braintree District Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cambridge City Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
East Cambridgeshire District Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Fenland District Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Huntingdonshire District Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
North Hertfordshire District Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Peterborough City Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Cambridge City Council
Uttlesford District Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
West Suffolk Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council

- b) A county council referred to in section 16(1) of the Act

Table 6: County Councils who will be consulted

County Council	Council who will be consulting
Cambridgeshire County Council	Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council
Essex County Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Hertfordshire County Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Suffolk County Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council

- c) A parish council

South Cambridgeshire District Council will consult with parish councils within South Cambridgeshire; and parish councils which adjoin South Cambridgeshire.

Cambridge City Council will consult parish councils within South Cambridgeshire which adjoin the City.

- d) A local policing body (Cambridgeshire Constabulary)
- any person—
 - (i) to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under section 106(3)(a) of the Communications Act 2003, and
 - (ii) who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the local planning authority's area,

- If it exercises functions in any part of the local planning authority's area—
 - (i) a Primary Care Trust established under section 18 of the National Health Service Act 2006(g) or continued in existence by virtue of that section; (formerly known as Clinical Commissioning Groups, now known as Integrated Care Boards (ICBS))
 - (ii) a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 6(1)(b) or (c) of the Electricity Act 1989(h)
 - (iii) a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986(a)
 - (iv) a sewerage undertaker
 - (v) a water undertaker
- The Homes and Communities Agency (now known as Homes England); and
- where the Local Planning Authority are a London borough council, the Mayor of London (not applicable to Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire).

General Consultation Bodies

The General Consultation Bodies are defined in the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 \(as amended\)](#), Part 1 as the following:

- a) voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the local planning authority's area
- b) bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the local planning authority's area
- c) bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the local planning authority's area
- d) bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the local planning authority's area
- e) bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area

The Local Planning Authorities must also ensure they meet the requirements of the [Equality Act 2010](#). To ensure the views of harder to reach groups are represented, the Local Planning Authorities will work closely with relevant organisations that have experience in a particular matter to find the best way of consulting and liaising with these groups.

The Local Planning Authorities will also consult with other consultation bodies which they consider to be appropriate to planning and who do not fall into the above categories. These may include:

- Residents' Associations

- Developers and agents
- Landowners
- Special interest groups.

Duty to Co-operate Bodies

The Duty to Cooperate Bodies are defined in [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012, Part 2, Regulation 4](#) as follows:

- The Environment Agency
- The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (known as Historic England)
- Natural England
- the Mayor of London (not applicable to Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire)
- The Civil Aviation Authority
- The Homes and Communities Agency (now known as Homes England)
- Each Integrated Care Board established under section 14D of the National Health Service Act 2006 (formerly known as Clinical Commissioning Groups)
- The National Health Service Commissioning Board
- The Office of Rail Regulation (known as the Office of Rail and Road)
- Transport for London (not applicable to Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire)
- Each Integrated Transport Authority
- Each highway authority within the meaning of section 1 of the Highways Act 1980 (including the Secretary of State, where the Secretary of State is the highways authority)
- The Marine Management Organisation.

In addition, [Planning Practice Guidance](#), Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 9-006-20160519 states:

“Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships are not subject to the requirements of the duty. But local planning authorities and the public bodies that are subject to the duty must cooperate with Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships and have regard to their activities when they are preparing their local plans, so long as those activities are relevant to local plan-making.”

The [Local Nature Partnership](#) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is Natural Cambridgeshire. The role of Natural Cambridgeshire is to act as an independent, objective voice for the Natural Environment in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, acting as a conduit to local and central government and other stakeholders. The main focus for the Natural Cambridgeshire Board will be to provide strategic leadership, coordinating partners to deliver projects and activity that will meet the Partnership’s vision and aims. More information regarding Natural Cambridgeshire is available on their [website](#).

Appendix 3: Council offices where planning consultation documents will be made available for public inspection

It should be noted that where documents are being produced by an individual Council rather than jointly, documents will only be made available for public inspection at the relevant Council office.

Table 7: Addresses for Councils

Council	Address
Cambridge City Council	Customer Service Centre Mandela House 4 Regent Street Cambridge CB2 1BY
South Cambridgeshire District Council	South Cambridgeshire Hall Cambourne Business Park Cambourne Cambridge CB23 6EA

The opening times for both offices can be found on the Councils websites and by calling the telephone numbers below. Both Councils operate an appointments system.

Table 8: Contact details for Councils

Council	Contact telephone number	Webpage
Cambridge City Council	01223 457000	Council offices - Cambridge City Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council	01954 713000	Council Offices - South Cambridgeshire District Council

Appendix 4: Statutory requirements for consulting on planning applications

The Local Planning Authorities are required to undertake a formal period of public consultation, prior to deciding a planning application. This is prescribed in:

- The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order [2015](#)
- The Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order [2017](#)
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations [1990](#)
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations [2004](#)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order \(as amended\)](#)

Appendix 5: Consultation Bodies for a Planning Application

Statutory Consultees that Cambridge City Council or South Cambridgeshire District Council may consult (those consulted will vary depending on the type of application)

- Ancient Monument Society
- Anglian Water Services Ltd
- British Gas
- British Telecommunications plc
- Cambridge Water Company
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
- Canal and River Trust
- Coal Authority
- Control of Major-Accident Hazards Competent Authority
- Crown Estates Commissioners
- Council for British Archaeology
- Department of Energy Security and Net Zero
- Designated Neighbourhood Forums
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- Environment Agency (EA)
- Forestry Commission
- Health and Safety Executive
- Highways England
- Historic England
- Marine Management Organisation
- Mobile Operators Associations
- National Grid Transco
- Natural England
- Network Rail
- Parish Councils
- Rail Infrastructure Managers
- Rail Network Operators
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
- Sport England
- Theatres Trust
- The Gardens Trust
- The Georgian Group
- Twentieth Century Society

- Victorian Society

Examples of Non-Statutory Consultees that the Councils may consult (those consulted will vary depending on the type of application)

- Cambridge Business Improvement District
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board
- Internal council service areas (such as Housing and Environmental Health) (as relevant)
- Adjoining Parish Councils and Local Authorities (as relevant)
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Emergency Services and Multi-Agency Emergency Planning
- Ministry of Defence
- Office of Nuclear Regulation
- Residents' Associations
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire

If you wish to join our consultation database, please send your contact details to the email addresses shown below or if you would like to write to us, send your details to our offices shown below:

Table 9: Email Address for GCSP

Email address
planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org

Table 10 Postal Addresses for Councils

Council	Postal address
Cambridge City Council	Application Support, Cambridge City Council, PO Box 700, Cambridge, CB1 0JH
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Planning Department, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, CB23 6EA