

# High Peak Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement

## Guidelines on Pre-application consultations for planning proposals





**High Peak Borough Council**

*working for our community*

## Pre-application consultations

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 High Peak Borough Council adopted our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in May 2006. The SCI sets out High Peak's commitment to community involvement in planning. It explains how people can let the Council know what they think about new planning policy, how they can comment on planning applications and how the Council will keep them in touch with planning issues. The document can be downloaded from our website, [www.highpeak.gov.uk](http://www.highpeak.gov.uk), under planning / local development framework, and viewed at Council offices and libraries. Details of these venues are also available on the website.
- 1.2 The SCI states that the Council encourages pre-application discussions with all applicants, developers and land owners to consider issues relevant to the determination of an application; these discussions may include community consultation. This advice note provides guidance on the Borough Council's expectations concerning pre-application consultations; it ensures that discussions are in line with the adopted SCI, while respecting privacy and confidentiality issues.

### **2. Role of pre-application consultations**

- 2.1 In December 2004, the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now the Department for Communities and Local Government) published the document, *Statements of Community Involvement and Planning Applications*. The document states that the objective of pre-application discussions should be to confirm whether the principle of development is acceptable and to clarify the format, type and level of detail required to enable the authority to determine an application. It is at this early stage, in discussing planning applications, that developers should be encouraged to engage with the community.
- 2.2 High Peak Borough Council encourages all applicants, developers and land owners to discuss their proposals with the local community before submitting planning applications. Pre-application consultation could be undertaken with any or all of the following: neighbours, local residents, elected members, schools and colleges, local parish or town councils and other interested groups. Early consultation should also be undertaken with our own in-house specialists, as well as potential consultees, such as the Environment Agency and Natural England.

- 2.3 Any pre-application consultations undertaken by a developer are in addition to the actions taken by the Council, when we receive a planning application.
- 2.4 The benefits of pre-application consultation include:
- Better quality applications, which contain all relevant information and can be quickly processed;
  - Resolution of problems, avoiding possible objections by neighbours and the public at a later stage;
  - A transparent approach to the consideration of development and planning applications;
  - Better design of buildings, meeting the needs and aspirations of local communities and contributing to the sustainable development of the area;
  - Time and resource savings for developers, by avoiding the need to revise proposals.
- 2.5 Applicants who do decide to undertake pre-application community consultation before submitting an application should contact the Council to discuss the methods to be used. Any resulting planning application should include details of this process, the results of the consultation exercises and any changes made to the proposals as a result.
- 2.6 The final decision on planning applications remains with the planning committee. While the committee welcomes pre-application consultation, carrying out such an exercise will not, by itself, ensure an application will be approved.

### **3. Developments appropriate for pre-application consultations**

- 3.1 The Borough Council has adopted a tiered approach for determining which applications should be subject to wider community involvement and the most appropriate range of approaches to be taken. Generally, the more significant the proposal, the more extensive the consultation that would be expected (see table on page 4).
- 3.2 It is the applicant's responsibility to find out if their planning application will require pre-application consultation. A planning officer can provide a written opinion on this before an application is made. The following are guidelines to the kinds of development that the Council considers would require a level of pre-application consultation:
- **Major developments:** housing developments of 10 or more homes, or on a site of at least 0.5 hectares, and any other development with a floor area of 500 square metres or more, or a site area of one hectare or more. Also changes of use above these thresholds. (Tier 1 application);

- Developments requiring an environmental assessment, under Schedule 1 & 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, which can include major industrial, infrastructure and waste projects, plus schemes such as mobile phone masts, golf courses, mining and intensive agriculture over certain sizes, structures with a height of more than 15 metres. (Tier 1 application);
- A significant development that conflicts with the policies in our local development framework, or local plan, or with up-to-date government planning policy. (Tier 2 application); and
- A development which proposes closing or changing a public right of way. (Tier 3 application)

3.3 Some proposed developments below these thresholds may also require consultation, because of the type of development, its sensitive location, or its potential impacts when taken with previous developments in the same area. Examples include developments affecting the site, or setting of a listed building, protected species or ancient woodland, or the amenity of neighbours.

#### 4. **Appropriate approaches to consultation**

4.1 Any pre-application consultation should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal. The table below sets out the range of approaches to community consultation that may be appropriate for each tier of application as described above, and for all other applications.

**Table showing methods of community involvement approaches appropriate for each tier of application**

Approach to community involvement	Type of application			
	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Other
Public exhibition	✓	✓		
Workshop	✓			
Area Forum meeting	✓	✓		
Contacting community representatives	✓	✓	✓	✓
Town and Parish Council meeting	✓	✓	✓	
Regeneration and Town Partnership meeting	✓		✓	
Neighbour notification	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local media	✓	✓	✓	✓
Website	✓	✓	✓	

- 4.2 When considering appropriate forms of pre-application consultation, it is recommended that a consultation plan is submitted to the Council, giving details of who is to be consulted and the nature of the consultation proposed.
- 4.3 The Council may be able to help facilitate some forms of consultation, such as with the use of Area Forum meetings. Applicants are invited to contact the Planning Policy and Design team ([ldf@highpeak.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@highpeak.gov.uk)) for further information and advice on the range of approaches given in the table above and set out in more detail below.

#### **Involving the public at events or exhibitions**

- 4.4 At least one event or exhibition should be organised, where anyone can find out more about the proposals. Any staffed event should be held at least one week after publishing publicity material or sending out letters.
- 4.5 Any event or exhibition should include display material with proposals for the site, the scope for public comment, how comments will be dealt with and an explanation of what will happen next. A comments box should be provided near any displayed plans.
- 4.6 Any event should take place at a time, or times, that allow as wide a cross section of the public to attend, as possible. This often means including weekends and evenings. It is preferable to hold any event on the application site or building itself, or at a venue as close as possible to it. Venues should be fully accessible for disabled people.

#### **Contacting community representatives and others**

- 4.7 Details of a proposed development could be sent to local community groups, residents groups, amenity groups, the Crime Prevention Design Officer (Derbyshire Constabulary) and other organisations (such as service providers and statutory bodies), who may have a specific interest in a proposal. The SCI provides a starting point for identifying such organisations and further details can be supplied by the Planning Policy and Design Team ([ldf@highpeak.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@highpeak.gov.uk)).
- 4.8 Town and parish councils should be contacted, as well as town centre or regeneration partnerships. Four area forums have been set up, covering Glossopdale, Central, Buxton and the Hope Valley. Major development proposals can be considered as agenda items at these meetings.

#### **Neighbour notification**

- 4.9 Neighbours, local residents, businesses, regular users of land (for example, sports teams) and others should be notified by letter about the proposed development. The letter should state when and where they could find out more, as well as including a clear map showing the location of the development, together with details of who to reply to, and by when.

## **Local media**

- 4.10 An advertisement could be placed in appropriate local newspapers about the proposed development. It should set out when and where people can find out more, as well as how to make comments.

## **Website**

- 4.11 The Council's website is at [www.highpeak.gov.uk](http://www.highpeak.gov.uk). The Council works with the Planning Portal to provide a range of up-to-date planning information, including planning guidance, making a planning application and viewing current and historic applications. Details of pre-application consultations can be carried on the site.

## **Statement of Community Involvement**

- 4.12 The Council's guiding principles on community involvement are set out in the Statement of Community Involvement. The document provides a useful reference regarding the standards to be met.

## **5. Types of planning applications**

### **Outline applications**

- 5.1 When an outline application is the target, it is important to explain the nature of the intended application in any presentation, and to achieve responses that address the broad principles of a development, rather than its details. However provision of illustrative layouts, where possible, can be helpful. Another publicity event may be needed to consider a detailed submission, following an outline approval.
- 5.2 It may not be necessary to consult the local community on an outline scheme, if the Council or partners have carried out a recent exercise in preparing a planning or development brief, or supplementary planning document. Planning officers will be able to provide advice before any application is made.

### **Variations to significant schemes**

- 5.3 If changes or modifications are made to a significant development that already has planning permission, it may be necessary to hold another publicity event. Again, planning officers will advise.

## **6. Submitting a planning application**

- 6.1 A submitted planning application should include a statement, setting out the steps taken to involve the community. This should include:
- the extent of the geographical area covered by consultations, including a list of properties and businesses contacted;
  - a list of voluntary or community groups, or other organisations contacted;
  - details of any events held, including their timings;
  - copies of any newspaper advertisements or other media publicity;
  - a summary of comments received;

- details of amendments to the scheme, made in light of the consultation feedback; and
- A copy of all consultation responses.

6.2 It is important to note that High Peak Borough Council cannot refuse to accept an otherwise appropriate planning application, if no pre-application consultation has been undertaken; or if the consultation undertaken is considered to have been ineffectual. However, failure by the applicant to consult early in the process could lead to objections being made, which could be material to the determination of the application. The resolution of these objections may delay the determination of the planning application, or result in it being refused.

### **Further information**

For further information, please contact:

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