

Statutory Consultees

1. Introduction

- 1.1. When producing your neighbourhood plan there is a responsibility to undertake formal public consultations to ensure that every resident or organisation that may be affected by it has an opportunity to contribute to its content. Doing this well will help to ensure your plan passes the independent examination and becomes adopted.
- 1.2. You will need to make sure that everyone who lives, works, or carries out their business in your Neighbourhood Area gets the chance to comment on the plan. However in addition to this, there are many organisations that you will have to consult to make sure your plan is robust and, most importantly, does not contain any development or policies that may conflict with their interests or responsibilities.

2. The pre-consultation stage

- 2.1. During the initial stages of developing your plan you will be spending time identifying your vision and objectives. Numerous different options for achieving these objectives may emerge and the options that your community prefers will need to be developed into policies.
- 2.2. Having decided on the policies that your plan requires it will be good practice to have some kind of discussion with the organisations that you have identified to make sure that the detail of your policies are accurate and conform to as many of these organisation's requirements as possible.
- 2.3. It is also the case that many of these organisations will be really interested to learn about your area's own aspirations as they develop so that they can then keep them in mind when they develop their own plans and documents.
- 2.4. While this part of the process is going on it is a good idea to keep a list as they emerge of the likely organisations that you think may have some expertise or advice to offer you on the subjects being discussed.
- 2.5. For example, a policy on the provision or location of affordable housing may need to involve the following organisations:
 - The Environment Agency – for drainage and flooding issues if there's any
 - Natural England – especially if the allocation is to be on a greenfield site and may have landscape impacts
 - Thames Water – for water supply and sewerage capacity
 - West Berkshire Council's Highway and Transport Team – for advice on access issues and public transport
 - West Berkshire Council's Housing Team – for details about the characteristics and allocations of affordable housing, etc.
 - Local Housing Associations – for discussion about existing and future affordable and market housing provision
 - Homes England - to give them a chance to comment on the suitability of your aspirations from a regional or national context

3. Consulting on your first draft of neighbourhood plan

- 3.1. With all the information that you have ascertained from the preliminary dialogue you will be able to produce a draft version of your plan. Neighbourhood planning regulations (Regulation 14) then require the draft neighbourhood plan to be the subject of a pre-submission consultation (see Neighbourhood Planning Advice Note 14 for further details) before it is submitted to West Berkshire Council for independent examination.
- 3.2. You should consult any relevant statutory consultees who may be affected by the proposals in your neighbourhood plan. You may have already been in touch with some or even most of these statutory consultees in the process of developing the content of the plan in the first place. This stage of the consultation process therefore presents an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have taken on board their comments alongside all the other comments you received at the time and reassure them you have tried to respond to any concerns they expressed. If you have been able to do this then you may well not get too many adverse comments as a result of the consultation at this stage.

4. Submission of your neighbourhood plan to West Berkshire Council

- 4.1. Having collected all the comments from every individual, organisation, and statutory consultee that you have consulted throughout the process, you will have to consider them and see how they can be incorporated into the final version of your neighbourhood plan.
- 4.2. These consultation responses will also need to be reflected within your Consultation Statement (see Neighbourhood Planning Advice Note 16 for further detail) which will need to be submitted to West Berkshire Council alongside your plan. With all the amendments and additions to your plan's text it will be ready for final submission to West Berkshire Council for independent examination.

5. Who are the Statutory Consultees?

- 5.1. West Berkshire Council has produced a Statement of Community Involvement (<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=38265&p=0>) which includes a list of bodies and organisations West Berkshire Council consults during the preparation of their Development Plan Documents. You may find this as a useful starting point. The Planning Policy Team at West Berkshire Council will also be able to recommend which statutory consultees are appropriate for your plan.
- 5.2. Below is a non-exhaustive list of statutory consultees which provides an example of which bodies may have to be consulted on. There is a statutory requirement on 'consulting body' in the paragraph 1 of schedule 1 for the purposes of Regulations 14 and 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.
 - West Berkshire Council (local planning authority) and adjoining local planning authorities
 - The Coal Authority
 - Homes England
 - The Regulator of Social Housing
 - Natural England
 - The Environment Agency
 - Historic England

- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited
- Highways England
- Marine Management Organisation
- National Health Service Commissioning Board (known as NHS England)
- National Grid
- Broadband suppliers
- Electric and gas suppliers
- Thames Water (sewage and water undertaker)
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Local Nature Partnerships
- Community groups or national organisations that represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups, different religious groups, local businesses and disabled persons in the neighbourhood area

5.3. Please note you may not always receive a response from those bodies you have consulted.

6. Adjoining local planning authorities, parish/town councils, and neighbourhood planning groups/forums

6.1. You also have a statutory responsibility to consult with any adjoining Parish Council or Local Planning Authority, if any part of their area is in or adjoins the boundary area of your neighbourhood plan. If you are in any doubt about who to consult please contact Planning Policy Team at West Berkshire Council.

6.2. The adjoining local authorities of West Berkshire Council include:

- Basingstoke and Deane District Council
- Bracknell Forest Borough Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Reading Borough Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- Test Valley District Council
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- Wiltshire Council
- Wokingham Borough Council

6.3. You will also need to consult with any parish/town councils and neighbourhood planning groups / forums that adjoins your Neighbourhood Area. West Berkshire Council's Planning Policy team can provide names of adjoining parish/town councils upon request.