

Pre-Application Community Involvement Protocol for the Stroud District

The aim of this Protocol is to enable open, agreed and well-structured working between communities, applicants/developers, local authorities and elected members in advance of planning applications, helping to deliver better quality development for all.

Any use of this Protocol is without prejudice to the eventual judgement of a Parish/Town Council on the merits of any application or to the determination by Stroud District Council.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states¹ that:

“Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favourably.”

Benefits of pre-application involvement

- **Applicants** can access detailed local knowledge early enough to respond to that in their designs, and evidence shows that this can speed the overall process, reduce conflicts, save money and enhance company reputation.
- **Communities** can engage from the start, avoiding any last minute responses, share local priorities, hopes and knowledge, more locally relevant and distinctive projects and designs can result and any new facilities provided can meet local needs.
- **Local authority officers** can avoid time wasted on ‘rescuing’ projects when faced, far too late in the process, with conflicting views from community and applicant.
- **Local councillors** can be presented with clear evidence from all sides when making a decision.

To be as effective as possible for all parties, pre-application involvement needs to be consistently applied to common standards and procedures agreed by applicant, community and local authority. It also needs to be appropriate to the scale, size and nature of any proposed development, and flexible enough to be informed at a local level (e.g. by a Community Design Statement). In order to provide that consistency and flexibility for all parties, this Protocol has been produced jointly by community and development industry representatives and Stroud District Council.

Roles

The **basic** roles, responsibilities and procedures for all three main parties are as follows:

Applicant	Parish/Town Council	District Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact Stroud District Council and Parish/Town Council as early as possible.• Agree the consultation approach.• Lead and pay for the consultation in line with the Protocol’s principles.• Prepare a final audit report to submit with the application.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check that contact has also been made with Stroud District Council.• Agree the consultation approach.• Provide information and support as appropriate.• Assist with the final audit (or submit an alternative).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that contact has also been made with the Parish/Town.• Agree the consultation approach.• Provide information and support as appropriate.• Use and value the submitted report.

Applying the Protocol

The Protocol has been drafted to apply where a site has been in some way formally **allocated** and perhaps some basic features of it have been settled. Where an applicant intends to bring forward an application on a

¹ See: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

site **not formally allocated** within the latest adopted plan, it will be a matter of judgement by a Parish/Town Council as to whether or not they wish to use this Protocol and engage in any form of pre-application work.

- The Stroud District Council Statement of Community Involvement² (SCI) encourages pre-application community involvement. (This includes principles of good practice, although these are aimed primarily at involvement in plan preparation.)
- The use of the Protocol will be encouraged in the forthcoming Stroud District Local Plan.
- The Protocol applies to all applicants, private and public.
- Statutory organisations (e.g. Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Constabulary, Clinical Commissioning Group, Environment Agency and utility providers) have been made aware of the Protocol and can be expected to respond positively.
- Stroud District Council makes use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) for certain developments. Future PPAs will address pre-application community involvement, following the approach in this Protocol. The Protocol applies even if no PPA is being used.
- Each Parish/Town Council should develop its own Addendum to this District-wide Protocol, for example to include links to a Design Statement, Parish Plan, community profile information and details of key local bodies/groups. To ensure consistency, it is important for Parish/Town Councils to share any Addendum with the District Council.
- Over time it is expected that Stroud District Council will keep a log of good examples of the use of the Protocol and make this available to new applicants on request, and to Parish/Town Councils using the Protocol for the first time.
- Guidance to District Council elected members will be updated in line with the Localism Act to ensure that member involvement in pre-application discussions can be delivered appropriately, constructively and legally.

This Protocol can only be invoked where a Parish or Town Council has formally resolved to adopt it and use it.

Overall Principles

Good practice in pre-application community involvement is based on five key principles:

- **Applicant Leadership but Shared Responsibility:** Although it is the applicant's role to lead, drive, manage and mainly fund involvement, success also depends on other parties, especially local communities, establishing a professional relationship during the work.
- **Openness and Transparency:** Building trust between all and ensuring an agreed outcome depend heavily on having an open process, while respecting issues such as commercial confidentiality.
- **Agreed Community:** There needs to be agreement about who exactly is 'the community' for any project.
- **Agreed Scope:** There also needs to be agreement about the scope of the involvement, i.e. what is and is not open to change.
- **Agreed and Delivered Process:** Success in all respects comes from up-front agreement of the process to be followed, the clear delivery of this process and a thorough report on it.

This Protocol is supported by guidance notes that elaborate these principles into practical detail, cover more about unallocated sites, clarify different roles and so forth.

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The working group and wider reference group of Stroud District Parish/Town and District Councils, GAPTC, Stroud District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Constabulary, Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, The Localism Network.



² See: www.stroud.gov.uk/info/localplan/SCI_Adopted_Nov_07.pdf