



Draft

Cannock Chase District Council

Local Plan Communication and

Engagement Strategy

2026



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The Local Plan Communication and Engagement Strategy (CES) is provided by the Planning Policy Section of Planning Services at Cannock Chase Council. To request a physical copy of the document or for information:

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Cannock Chase Council is beginning the preparation of a new Local Plan for the District. The involvement of communities and stakeholders is key to preparing a development strategy for the District which allows it to grow sustainably, meets the needs of our communities, and protects and enhances the things we value most. The Council will therefore work closely with communities and stakeholders in preparing the new Local Plan, carrying out a range of engagement and consultation throughout its preparation.
- 1.2. This Communication and Engagement Strategy (CES) identifies how the Council will consult and engage communities and stakeholders on the new Local Plan and any related Supplementary Plans (SPs). Consultation on Neighbourhood Plans, planning applications, and decision-making is covered separately in the Statement of Community Involvement.
- 1.3. The Local Plan goes through various legal stages of preparation, and it is important to clearly set out how and when people can become involved. A summary of these stages is set out in Section 5.
- 1.4. For plan-making this document sets out:
 - What will be consulted upon;
 - Who we will consult;
 - When the Council will consult; and
 - How the Council will consult (methods used to consult).
- 1.5. The CES also provides information about:
 - The role of elected councillors, parish and town councils, and voluntary and community groups in planning matters;
 - Who you can contact for assistance in local planning matters; and
 - What will be expected of you when you make comments and how those comments will be presented.

2. Legal Requirements

- 2.1. There is a clear emphasis throughout national policy on encouraging early and consistent community involvement. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the online Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) encourages front-loading engagement and cooperation with the community so that local plans reflect a collective vision and agreed set of priorities. They also highlight the importance of early community engagement before planning and other applications are submitted.
- 2.2. Specifically for plan making, the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 sets out the steps to produce local plans and supplementary planning documents. It sets out who is to be included at each consultation, and which documents are available at each stage of the process.

3. The Planning System

- 3.1. The Planning System plays a key role in shaping the use of land and development to provide attractive, vibrant and well-designed places to live and work. Whilst it seeks to conserve and protect the environment, it also aims to provide new development that meets the needs for new housing, employment, and other facilities. This inevitably involves making some challenging decisions. The role of the Local Planning Authority is to make evidenced and balanced decisions after considering consultation responses and other material planning matters.

Plan Making

- 3.2. Plan Making is referred to as planning policy or spatial planning. Plan Making requires Local Planning Authorities to produce a Local Plan for the area which sets out how the area will develop over a period of time. The Local Plan policies will be used to guide future development and provide the framework for decisions on planning applications.
- 3.3. The process of creating a Local Plan requires Local Planning Authorities to identify and engage, at an early stage, with all those that may be interested in the development or content of the Local Plan, and with groups who may be affected by proposals. With the help of the local community and the collation of an evidence base, the Local Planning Authority will identify options for addressing local development needs, to inform a preferred approach for future development. This requires carrying out community consultation with local communities, business and other interested parties.

4. The Local Plan

- 4.1. The process of producing a Local Plan involves various stages, each of which entail consultation with stakeholders and communities. The stages for the preparation of the Local Plan are set out in the Council's Local Plan Timetable and summarised in the diagram below. The preparation of each of these documents will provide important opportunities for communities to get involved in shaping the places in which they live.



5. Access to background local plan documents and evidence base

- 5.1. The documents prepared as part of the Local Plan process are done so on the basis of a sound and up-to-date evidence base. All relevant evidence base studies, assessments or strategies will be made available on the Council website. Paper copies of these documents can be made available upon request subject to the relevant fees and charges.
- 5.2. The adopted Local Plan; the Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018 – 2040 remains the development plan for the district until the new Local Plan is adopted by the Council and the Plan and its associated evidence base will remain available on the Council's website.
- 5.3. The work on the new Local Plan (2026 – 2046) including evidence-based studies and initial consultation exercises alongside any future work on all these aspects will need to conform to the requirements set out in this document, when finalised following this consultation.

6. Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 6.1. Local Plan documents are subject to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process. The SEA assesses the preparation of the Local Plan's policies and proposals as these are developed against social, environmental and economic objectives to ensure the best approach is delivered. A key element of the SEA process is the baseline information established through survey data. A series of SEA reports produced through the preparation of the Local Plan are consulted upon alongside the policies and proposals.

7. Supplementary Plans

- 7.1. Supplementary Plans are complementary documents that provide further details and guidance to policies contained in the Local Plan and are used as material considerations in reaching planning decisions.
- 7.2. Supplementary Plans take many forms ranging from a master plan or development brief, to design codes and design guides, and general additional guidance produced by the Council.

8. Engage in the Local Plan

- 8.1. There are a variety of ways in which communities and stakeholders can become involved in the preparation of the Local Plan. The minimum requirements for consultation and engagement are set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
- 8.2. This section explains how and when you can be involved in influencing and informing the production of the Local Plan for the Cannock Chase District. Legislation sets out which documents need to be in place, the processes to produce those documents and the minimum requirements for involvement in their production.

How we involve you in the Local Plan

- 8.3. Advertising and notification of opportunities to be involved is essential. The Council will make use of electronic communication tools and build upon existing communication channels wherever possible. The Council will engage, involve and consult on planning matters in line with the latest regulations and guidance as appropriate and relevant.
- 8.4. An assessment under the equalities regulations may be appropriate and a requirement for some planning policy documents. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) may be undertaken as a tool for ensuring that equality, social inclusion and community cohesion issues are considered when drawing up policies.
- 8.5. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026¹ specifies the persons that should be notified of consultations comprise of:
- General consultation bodies as the local authority consider appropriate;
 - Specific consultation bodies as the local planning authority consider may have an interest in the proposed local plan
 - Such residents or other persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area as the authority consider appropriate; and
 - Any person who requests to be notified of the making available of the consultation

Your Involvement in the Local Plan

- 8.6. To ensure your involvement is effective you will be required to:
- Make your representation/comments on the appropriate form within the specified time period;
 - Provide comments in a clear and succinct format, ensuring that representations relate to the issues and documents being consulted upon;
 - Be aware that your comments with your name attached (for local plan and planning policy consultations) will be made publicly available with personal and sensitive information redacted in line with the Council's privacy notices;

¹ [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#)

- Be understanding and respectful of alternative views. We have zero tolerance of abusive language etc. All comments are moderated and any that are considered to fall short of these requirements will be rejected; and
- If you are replying on behalf of a group or organisation, consider and explain how members of the group have been involved in formulating the representation.

Role of elected councillors

- 8.7. The role of locally elected councillors in representing the views and concerns of residents in the planning process is very important. However, the views of elected councillors can only be formally considered when made on the appropriate form and within the specified time for a particular consultation.

Parish and Town Councils

- 8.8. Parish and town councils play an important role in community involvement in the planning system and the production of neighbourhood plans. Parish and town councillors can comment on the preparation of policy documents that may affect their area as well as the District. Parish and town councils have a valuable role when identifying priorities in their areas and provide a key means of sharing information about the planning process to their local community. This is particularly important for when parish and town councils produce a neighbourhood plan.

Role of voluntary and community groups

- 8.9. We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decision that affect them and their community. Voluntary and community groups are encouraged to be involved in planning matters and can represent their members. Please see the following sections for how to register to be involved in planning policy documents.

Less well-represented groups

- 8.10. We are aware that some people and groups are less well-represented or thought to be 'hard to reach'. We also understand that particular groups may have specific areas of interest or a limited capacity for involvement. Every opportunity will be taken to add to our awareness of such groups; to increase engagement and to identify issues and policies that are likely to be of particular concern and we welcome proactive suggestions to increase such engagement. Documents and information will be made available in alternative formats upon request.

Please Note: Updates can only be sent to those that sign up to and remain on the Local Plan Consultation Database.

9. The Local Plan Process

- 9.1. The preparation of the Local Plan represents the most resource intensive strand of Local Plan preparation, particularly in relation to community involvement. To prepare the policies and proposals for the Development Plan, the District will consult with community and statutory authorities to establish the main issues for the document to address as part of developing policy options and key matters.

Scoping

- 9.2. This stage of the Local Plan is intended to be wide ranging and informal. It will invite discussion on the objectives of the relevant plan making document and the options available for achieving those objectives. The Council will not put forward any specific proposals at this stage.
- 9.3. The Council will also at this stage be collecting information on a range of socio-economic elements of the Local Plan, including a Call for Sites exercise alongside key housing and employment statistics.
- 9.4. The local community and stakeholders are encouraged to provide their details via email to be added to the consultation database so that they can be kept informed throughout the following stages. Any data will be held in line with the Council's Privacy Notice² and a request to be removed can be made at any time via email.
- 9.5. Representations at this stage should be on the questions raised. You will be able to comment on the appropriate form via email or letter.
- 9.6. If you are requesting the allocation of a specific site for development, then it is highly desirable that you engage with the Council at this early stage so that community involvement is maximised and appraisal work can be undertaken on the proposed site through the plan preparation process. Development proposals can be robustly assessed if the site and its proposed use are clearly defined. The Council will contact existing developers, land promoters and landowners on the consultation database regarding the Call for Sites, you can submit your land via email or letter using the available form on the Call for Sites webpage³.

Vision and Strategic Options

- 9.7. The Council will use the responses and information gathered during the Scoping stage to develop:
- Draft vision and strategic options
 - Proposed spatial strategy
 - Proposed approach in relation to policies including in relation to the amount, type and location of, and timetable for development in the district
 - Summary of evidence gathered and evidence still to gather

² [Data Protection - Privacy Notices | Cannock Chase District Council](#)

³ [Planning Policy Monitoring | Cannock Chase District Council](#)

- 9.8. This stage will set out the Council's preferred approach to delivering the objectives identified as part of the scoping stage through the proposed local plan content and evidence.
- 9.9. The community and stakeholders, including statutory organisations, will be encouraged to participate in the on-going policy development process. Following on from the scoping consultation and early engagement on key matters, the Council will consult on the proposed local plan content and evidence in the form of a Vision and Strategic Options Consultation for a minimum of 6 weeks.
- 9.10. This stage provides an opportunity for representations which suggest alternative options for delivery of the Local Plan objectives. You will be able to comment on this stage on the appropriate form via email or letter.
- 9.11. If you are requesting the allocation of a site for development you will be expected to clearly define the site, the uses proposed for the site, describe any community involvement already undertaken, and why you think that the proposed site is a more sustainable option than those put forward by the Council.

Publication and Submission

- 9.12. The Council will use the responses and information gathered through the Vision and Strategic Options consultation to:
- Draft the proposed Local Plan
 - Draft the proposed Policies Map
- 9.13. Following preparation of the Proposed Local Plan the District Council will publish a final version and invite comments on the document from the community, statutory organisations and other interested parties as part of an 8 week consultation stage.
- 9.14. This is effectively the final stage to submit formal representations to the District Council on the Proposed Local Plan. The District Council will then submit the Proposed Local Plan, Policies Map and the entire evidence base, including the representations made, to the Secretary of State for an Examination in Public.

Examination in Public

- 9.15. An independent Inspector is appointed to undertake an Examination in Public (EiP), to test the legal compliance and soundness of the proposed Local Plan whilst considering all representations made at the Publication stage.
- 9.16. Prior to the EiP, the Council must publish an advert notifying the public, including any interested parties, about details of the Examination.

- 9.17. Anybody who submitted representations and the publication stage (final consultation) will have the opportunity to present their case to the Inspector.
- 9.18. The Planning Inspector will decide on how to best proceed with the EiP, identifying issues which should be debated. Generally, the EiP includes a series of formal hearings which are chaired by the Planning Inspector.
- 9.19. A Programme Officer will be appointed from outside of the Planning Department and will be responsible for managing all the arrangements of the Examination process. Alongside acting as the liaison between the appointed Inspector and the Council, they are responsible for managing all the arrangements of the Examination process, including collating all documents, where appropriate, organising site visits and dealing with all correspondence. The Programme Officer will be the main point of contact for members of the public through the EiP.
- 9.20. During the EiP stage the Council may propose Main Modifications to the document, if these are needed to make it “sound”. If this is required a further consultation on the proposed changes will be carried out.

Adoption of the Local Plan

- 9.21. Following the conclusion of the EiP the Inspector will produce a report setting out any changes the Council must make to the document before it can be adopted. The Inspector’s report and its recommendations are binding on the Council (i.e. the Council must accept these changes should it take forward the Local Plan to adoption).
- 9.22. The modifications suggested by the Inspector must be undertaken if the Council seek to adopt the Local Plan. A formal decision must then be made by Council Members to adopt the Local Plan for planning purposes.
- 9.23. Following, a member decision to adopt, the Council must notify all consultees registered on the Planning Policy Consultation Database of their intention to adopt the document for planning purposes. A notice of adoption will be placed on the Council’s website, at the Council’s primary offices (Civic Centre) and at the 6 District Libraries and will include information on the statutory rights of appeal. An announcement would also be made on the appropriate social media channels used by the Council.

Supplementary Plans

- 9.24. Supplementary Plans (SPs) relate to specific sites or specific planning issues and have the same weight as a local plan for the purpose of decision-making. This would also include Infrastructure Levy regimes to apply at the local level for securing developer contributions in the future.
- 9.25. There is a similar process to Local Plans for SPs comprising of:
 - Notice of Intention to Commence

- The preparation and consultation of a draft SP and map of proposed policies
- Submission of documents for Examination in Public
- The Adoption of the SP by the Council

9.26. The key principles for community involvement which are applied to the preparation of Local Plans equally applies to the preparation of Supplementary Plans.

9.27. The approach to community involvement will remain to engage as many people who are interest in the issue/area as possible. It should be recognised however, that there is limited value in engaging groups whose interest may lie both outside the geographical scope and the subject scope of the document consultation. Any community involvement on SPs should be relevant, proportionate and efficient.

9.28. The examination of the SP will be undertaken by an independent Inspector and will be undertaken in line with the procedure set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) Section 15DB.

10. Planning Policy Consultations

Who will we consult

- 10.1. In the preparation of the Local Plan and any SPs a wide range of individuals, groups, representatives and organisations will be consulted as appropriate.
- 10.2. Cannock Chase Council wants to ensure that all stakeholders have every opportunity to be involved with the preparation of planning policy documents and no groups/organisations and individuals, including hard to reach groups, are excluded.
- 10.3. The Council maintains a database, which largely consists of those who have expressed an interest in being involved in the preparation of planning policy documents. These are identified as key stakeholders and are shown in the table below.

Residents	Businesses	Individuals
Neighbouring Local Authorities	Statutory Organisations	Parish Councils
Land Promoters	Developers	Local Interest Groups
Voluntary & Community Groups	Councillors & MPs	Landowners

- 10.4. Any resident, business or interested party can be included in this database by emailing the Council's Planning Policy Team. The data will be stored in line with UK General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018 and as set out in the Council's Privacy Notice.

Statement of Common Ground/Duty to Cooperate

- 10.5. The Council previously had been required to engage with neighbouring authorities and other statutory organisations to satisfy the 'Duty to Cooperate' legal requirement under Section 110 of the Localism Act, including where appropriate through Statements of Common Ground. This was to ensure that neighbouring authorities and relevant organisations work together to meet development requirements and address any strategic cross boundary issues.
- 10.6. The Duty to Cooperate was removed under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to streamline the plan-making process. Nevertheless, authorities still need to collaborate across their boundaries, including on unmet development needs from neighbouring areas in line with national policy which stipulates 'maintaining effective cooperation'.
- 10.7. Cannock Chase Council has worked closely with all relevant Duty to Cooperate organisations through the production of the adopted Local Plan 2018 – 2040 including neighbouring authorities and statutory consultees. The Council remain committed to effective cross-boundary collaboration and developer/land promoter communication in the preparation of future planning policy documents.

How will we consult

10.8. Cannock Chase Council will use a range of methods to involve local people and strengthen community involvement. The table below describes the various methods that may be used for consulting on planning policy documents, where appropriate.

Letters & Emails	Letters and emails set out to notify relevant stakeholders (held on the Consultation Database) about a consultation on planning policy documents
Display Documents	Documents are made available in the reception of the Council's primary offices (Civic Centre) to raise awareness of consultation on planning policy documents and how people can get involved.
Social Media	Existing Council Social Media channels are used to raise awareness about consultation on planning policy documents
Libraries	Hard copies of planning policy documents, with response forms, are distributed to local libraries within the District for people to view and make comments.
Council Website	Details of planning policy documents are published on the website for the public to view, including details of consultation and how to respond. https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/planningpolicy
Public Events	Public events will be held in appropriate locations within the District to provide information on planning policy documents and an opportunity for members of the public to have queries answered.

What will we do with your comments

10.9. All representations will receive an automated response if received by e-mail. The Council will also accept comments by letter and will process them in the same manner as other representations.

10.10. All representations will be electronically recorded and then published on the Council's website in line with regulations, or through the Neighbourhood Planning Bodies website as relevant, for the public to view. They will be considered and used to help inform the production of planning policy documents.