

Statement of Community Involvement

July 2019

Republished following removal of amendments for the coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic (December 2022)

Preface

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended); the Localism Act 2011; the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended); the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended); and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021.

Government's plan for Living with COVID-19 was published in February 2022. Planning guidance that was in place to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus was subsequently withdrawn at the end of May 2022. Amendments made to this SCI to ensure consistency with Government guidance have now been removed and the SCI republished. In addition, the document has been reformatted to make it more accessible.

This document was subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) in June 2019, which showed that the SCI has the potential to have a positive impact on all protected characteristic groups. The EqIA can be found on the Council's website alongside the SCI and other supporting documents:

https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/technical-documents

The information contained in this document can be made available in alternative formats. Please contact us for more information.

Keeping in touch

Anyone can request to be added to the Council's Local Plan mailing list. You will then be notified by email (unless another format is requested) when a document is available for consultation or is adopted. To be included on the mailing list, please contact the Strategic Planning and Growth Division as follows:

Email: SP>eam@bexley.gov.uk
Post: Strategic Planning and Growth

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Bexleyheath, DA6 7AT

Phone: 020 3045 5865

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Information regarding the Council's privacy notice can be found on the Council's website at: www.bexley.gov.uk/services/privacy-notice.

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1. Introduction

What is the statement of community involvement?

- 1.1. It is a statutory requirement, set out in Section 18(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) that the Council prepares and maintains a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI formally sets out how the Council will ensure that local communities, businesses and other stakeholders can have greater involvement in local planning decisions and are better able to shape the places where they live.
- 1.2. This SCI replaces Bexley's previous SCI, which was adopted in 2006 and partially updated in 2009, and has been updated to take account of changes in planning guidance and legislation; to better reflect the use of technology as a method of engagement; and to shape the consultation of the Council's key growth documents including the emerging Local Plan.

Links to other Council strategies

- 1.3. The Council has other strategies that guide and promote community engagement. These include Bexley's Draft Connected Communities Strategy 2019-2023, and it's associated 'workstreams.'

 They set out Bexley's commitment to create and maintain effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, openness and constructive challenge.
- 1.4. This SCI takes account of these and other relevant corporate policies to ensure that, wherever possible, a consistent approach to consultation and engagement is taken across the Council.

Community involvement principles

- 1.5. Having regard to the Equality Act (2010) and national guidance on consultation principles, the Council will seek to effectively involve the community in all aspects of the local planning process, by ensuring that:
 - consultations are inclusive, appropriate and fit for purpose;
 - information is clear and accessible to all;
 - people feel confident that they can engage effectively in the process;
 - there is opportunity for early engagement;
 - the scope of consultations is clear from the start; and
 - feedback is provided to show how responses have been considered as part of the process.

2. Plan making

- 2.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) sets out the current system of producing local plans, amended by the Localism Act (2011) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2018). Formerly known as the Local Development Framework or 'LDF', the suite of documents outlined in our previous SCI are now known as the Local Plan. The local development documents in Bexley are the Local Plan and supporting supplementary planning documents (SPDs).
- 2.2 The planning framework for London Borough of Bexley is set out in Table 1.

Framework hierarchy	Relevant documents
National policy and guidance	 National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
Development Plan for Bexley	 Bexley Local Plan Mayor's London Plan Neighbourhood Plans (non-statutory but are included in the Development Plan) (currently none in preparation or adopted)
Development Plan guidance documents	 Article 4 Directions (A4Ds) Conservation area character appraisals and management plans (CAMPs) Planning briefs, development briefs, planning frameworks, development frameworks, masterplans Strategy and action plans Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) Supplementary planning guidance (SPGs)
Other relevant documents	 Borough Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule Brownfield Land Register Five Year Housing Land Supply Annual Report Housing Delivery Action Plan (if required) Local Development Scheme (LDS) Local Plan and CIL Monitoring Reports (published annually) Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy (MCIL) Charging Schedule Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

Table 1: Planning framework for London Borough of Bexley

2.3 From time to time, other strategic planning documents may be produced by the Council and the principles set out in this SCI will be applied to those where appropriate.

When we will consult

- 2.4 When a formal consultation is carried out, this will be for a minimum of six weeks for development plan documents (DPDs), including the local plan, and four weeks for supplementary planning documents (SPDs). Should a consultation fall within a holiday period, the Council will consider extending the consultation period to accommodate those who may be away at these times.
- 2.5 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) states that there must be a minimum of two consultation periods for local development documents

- (including local plans). The first consultation relates to the subject matter that the local development document should contain, and the second consultation should take place either: prior to the submission of the local development document to the Secretary of State to carry out a public examination of the documents; or prior to the adoption of a supplementary planning document.
- 2.6 In addition to the statutory consultees, the Council will ensure that local communities, businesses and key stakeholders can be involved throughout the preparation of the Local Plan.

Who we will consult

- 2.7 Bexley will make every effort to consult as wide a range of people as is possible and appropriate. Planning legislation requires local planning authorities preparing local plans to consult and notify 'specific consultation bodies,' 'general consultation bodies,' and residents or other such persons carrying out business in the area that the Council considers it appropriate to invite representations from. The 'specific' and 'general' consultation bodies are listed in Appendix B.
- 2.8 Any interested parties not listed under the 'specific' or 'general' consultation bodies can request to be added to the Council's Local Plan mailing list. They will then be notified by email (unless another format is requested) when a document is available for consultation or is adopted. To be included on the mailing list, please contact the Strategic Planning and Growth Division using the details provided in the Preface at the beginning of this SCI.

Duty to cooperate

- 2.9 As set out in the Localism Act 2011 and section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), the Council, when plan-making, has a legal duty to cooperate with neighbouring and other relevant local planning authorities, the Mayor of London as the Greater London Authority, and other prescribed authorities and agencies. This means working 'constructively, actively and on an on-going basis' on strategic issues having a significant impact on at least two planning areas.
- 2.10 The prescribed agencies/bodies with which the Council has a legal duty to cooperate are set out in Appendix B.

How we will consult

- 2.11 Legislation sets out the minimum requirements for public participation when preparing a Local Plan and SPDs. This includes making information available on our website. We will use a range of communication methods to inform individuals and organisations that a consultation is taking place, what the issues are and how they can be involved in the process and use the most appropriate and proportionate consultation methods to ensure maximum opportunities for community involvement.
- 2.12 The Council will use different levels of community involvement as follows:
 - information providing information through a variety of methods to inform;
 - consultation requesting the community provide their views about particular planning proposals at the appropriate stages;
 - participation enabling communities and stakeholders to get involved (i.e. workshops to identify specific issues).
- 2.13 The methods that we employ to notify and involve stakeholders in the consultation process include those listed below. A bespoke combination of consultation methods will be utilised depending on the specific issue being considered:

- contact appropriate organisations and individuals directly;
- publicise consultations along with relevant documents by methods such as website updates, social media, press releases, displays, etc.
- place formal notices in the local media;
- place consultation documents at the Council's Civic Offices and other appropriate key venues such as libraries;
- consult with community groups and local organisations who have registered an interest to participate in the local planning process through registration on the council's local plan consultation data base; and/or,
- consider organising events such as stakeholder meetings or workshops, including placeshaping workshops, where appropriate.
- 2.14 The nature of consultation will be determined by the nature of the issue and those likely to be affected. For example, if the particular issue concerns a specific site, a consultation may be areabased or may target a certain sector. For each consultation, the Council will ensure consideration is given to the most effective way of communicating the particular issue, and that the methods engaged are proportionate.
- 2.15 In line with the principles of community involvement, the Council will do its best to ensure that documents are written clearly and concisely and avoid technical language whilst remaining fit for their purpose. Documents can also be made available in different languages and formats on request.
- 2.16 We will choose accessible consultation venues and hold events at convenient times of the day and week. We will also be clear about the aims and scope of engagement so that people understand when and how they can participate and the rules for doing so. This will help to manage expectations.

Consultation results

- 2.17 After the close of a consultation, all comments received will be considered by the Strategic Planning and Growth Division and the document in question will be revised as appropriate. A consultation statement will be prepared which will be made available online and will detail:
 - compliance with the duty to co-operate;
 - who was consulted and how;
 - a summary of the main issues raised from the comments;
 - the Council's response to these; and,
 - how the comments have been taken into account in the revised document.
- 2.18 In the case of the Local Plan, individual responses will be published on the Council's web site in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 2.19 Neighbourhood planning was introduced under the Localism Act 2011 to give new powers to communities, as neighbourhood forums, to shape the future development of their neighbourhood area.
- 2.20 If a local community considers that there is scope in their area to accommodate additional development over and above that which is planned in the Council's Local Plan, or that the planned development should be provided in a different way, then it may consider establishing and seeking designation as a neighbourhood forum from the Council.

- 2.21 Neighbourhood forums are responsible for preparing neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders, including carrying out continued engagement throughout the process with the local community.
- 2.22 Neighbourhood plans form part of the development plan for Bexley, sitting alongside the local plan. Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in the Bexley Local Plan or the Mayor's London Plan; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.
- 2.23 The Council has a statutory duty, set out in Neighbourhood Planning (General, and Referendums)
 Regulations, as amended, to advise and support the preparation of these plans and has some
 statutory responsibilities in their preparation. In particular, the Council is responsible for carrying
 out the formal stages of consultation, arranging the examination and referendum.
- 2.24 Producing a neighbourhood plan can be time intensive, costly and complex so it is important that you discuss any proposals with the Council as early as possible. In addition, the Government offers advice on neighbourhood planning on its Planning Portal website:

 https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/42/neighbourhood_planning.
- 2.25 If you are considering producing a neighbourhood plan, please contact the Planning Policy Team on SP>eam@bexley.gov.uk.
- 2.26 No application for a neighbourhood development order or neighbourhood development plan has been received by the Council to date.
- 2.27 Figure 1 shows the process for preparing a neighbourhood plan or development order, and how the Council is required to get involved.

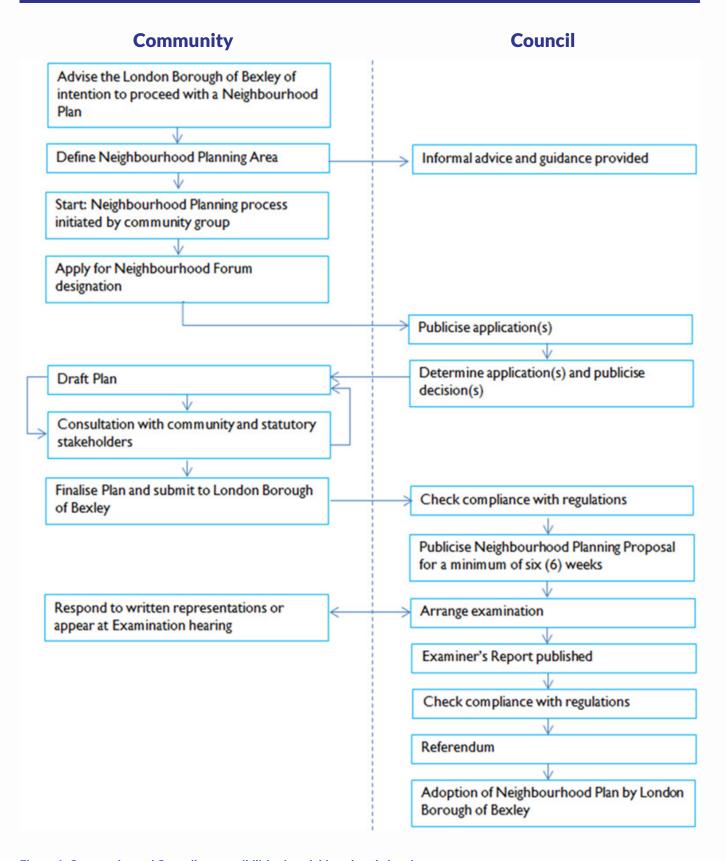


Figure 1: Community and Council responsibilities in neighbourhood planning

3. Planning applications

- 3.1 Most kinds of development require planning permission; however, there are a number of circumstances where certain types of development are automatically permitted. These are described in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Some such permitted development rights are subject to a 'prior approval' process which may involve neighbour consultation.
- 3.2 Decisions taken on planning applications must be made in accordance with the Mayor's London Plan, the adopted Local Plan and, where applicable, any adopted relevant neighbourhood plans unless there are material considerations to indicate otherwise, such as national guidance.
- 3.3 The Council wishes to ensure that any person, group or service providers affected by or interested in a planning application has the opportunity to comment on the proposals. The Council is also committed to ensuring that any views expressed in writing on material planning matters are taken into account when the application is determined.
- 3.4 The key areas on which the Council will concentrate are:
 - informing people or groups about applications that may affect them or which they may have an interest in; and
 - encouraging the early involvement of those likely to be affected by, or those who have an interest in, the proposals.

Pre-applications

- 3.5 Developers and applicants are encouraged to discuss their proposals with planning officers, statutory consultees, neighbours to the development and the wider public where relevant. Where major development is proposed discussions with officers will cover possible methods of and timescales for pre-application publicity that applicants may wish to undertake on their proposals. This may include public exhibitions or meetings which will inform residents and interested groups.
- 3.6 Genuine and sustained early engagement with the local community is encouraged, prior to the working up of proposals for the pre-application stage, in order to help shape and inform what is appropriate for the site. This could happen over several stages, allowing the community to see how their involvement has informed the development proposal or a detailed explanation where it has not. The Council will work with developers and the community on major applications to mediate such an arrangement where appropriate.
- 3.7 In order to enable the Council to respond as effectively as possible to enquiries, an extensive preapplication advice service is available, for which a charge is made. Details of this are available on the Council website: https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/planning/application-advice-service. Any views expressed by the Council at this preapplication stage will not be binding on subsequent planning application decisions.
- 3.8 Engagement with the planning committee can form a part of the pre-application process where appropriate. More information on this can be found on the above link.

Planning and heritage applications

3.9 A list of applications that have been recently validated is regularly published on the Council's website: https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/planning/view-and-comment-planning-applications.

- 3.10 The list provides details on the site address, proposal description, applicant/agent, and the Ward. Members of the public are encouraged to comment on all planning applications if they consider themselves affected by the proposal, whether they are for small scale housing extensions or major projects.
- 3.11 We ensure that we carry out all publicity and consultation as required by planning legislation and the Council's Constitution, which is published on the Council's website here:

 https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/councillors-elections-and-democracy/democracy/constitution, as well as having appropriate regard to relevant Government guidance https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-and-pre-decision-matters#statutory-publicity-requirements. The Council normally allows 21 days but there may be occasions when a smaller period is set, for example in cases of special urgency or for a re-consultation.
- 3.12 Depending on the type and scale of application, consultation may include:
 - placing a site notice at or near to the application site;
 - advising in writing occupiers of properties immediately adjacent to the application site and directly affected by the proposal;
 - advertising proposals on the Council's website (access to the website is available at all local libraries if required);
 - advertising proposals in local newspapers; and,
 - consultation as required with statutory consultees and other bodies, such as the Environment Agency, Historic England, the Secretary of State and the Mayor of London, and local amenity groups when appropriate.
- 3.13 Anyone wishing to make a representation on any planning application may do so and these can be taken into account provided that the matters they raise are material planning issues.

 Representations must be made in writing, preferably using the Council's online form:

 http://pa.bexley.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=simple&searchType=Application. All comments received will be taken into account when making a decision, provided they contain your name and address. Anonymous comments without an address will not be accepted.
- 3.14 If the application goes to the Planning Committee for a decision, you may have an opportunity to address the committee if you have expressed a view on the proposal, as per London Borough of Bexley's Constitution, Part 5 section (5): http://democracy.bexley.gov.uk/documents/s89415/CodesandProtocols.pdf. You will be advised of the procedure prior to the Committee date if this is the case.
- 3.15 If the application is a resubmission of an application on which you have previously commented, please note that previous comments will not be taken into consideration in the determination of this application and you will need to provide your comments again. Unfortunately, we cannot acknowledge written comments or enter into correspondence, but you can check that they have been received by following the progress of the application on the website.
- 3.16 If we receive a petition or a standard letter from multiple contacts, we will record the comments either against the contact details of the head petitioner/original author of a standard template letter, where known, or against the first name and address that is listed on the petition or that we receive the standard letter from.
- 3.17 Petitions or multiple standard letters will not necessarily carry any greater weight than representations received from individuals in the consideration of a planning application or appeal.

- The weight given will depend on the planning matters raised, not the volume of signatures. It is often better for individuals to write a letter explaining their own views, as these are generally a better reflection of personal concerns.
- 3.18 If you still wish to submit a petition it will be considered provided that: each page of the petition is headed with the aim of the petition; the names and addresses of those signing are provided and are legible; and the comments are material in planning terms and clearly stated.

Certificates of lawfulness

3.19 Decisions on these applications are a matter of law, not of planning policy so there is no requirement to consult on them.

Advertisement consent

3.20 We consult as required by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. Even where express consent is not required, advertisements must comply with any other relevant statutory provisions e.g. listed building consent.

Trees

3.21 For applications under Tree Preservation Order procedures and for notifications of works to trees in designated conservation areas, advertising the applications is not required.

Appeals

- 3.22 When an application for planning permission has been refused and the applicant appeals against the Council's decision, we will inform those who were initially consulted and any others who have made representations during the life of the application. Details of all appeals received are also included on the website.
- 3.23 Comments made at the time of the application will be forwarded to the relevant Inspector but any further comments which objectors or supporters wish to make should then be sent direct to the Planning Inspectorate. Persons wishing to attend and participate in any subsequent Inquiry or Hearing must inform the Planning Inspectorate of their wish.
- 3.24 The Inspector's decision is available after the inquiry/hearing from the Planning Inspectorate and copies are forwarded by the Inspectorate to those parties who have requested it.

Applications called in by the Mayor of London or Secretary of State

3.25 Where applications are called in by the Mayor of London or Secretary of State, we will usually continue to be responsible for consultation and providing the responses to those taking the decisions. Once an application is called in by the Mayor of London a 'representation hearing' is held.

Planning performance agreements

- 3.26 The Council may enter into planning performance agreements (PPA) when dealing with planning applications. This is an agreement between the Council and applicants to provide a project management framework for applications.
- 3.27 The PPA will set out the commitments of both parties for the gathering of information, consideration of options and the formulation of design proposals, for the effective processing of the planning application. It will also clarify the means of engagement and consultation with the local community, in line with this SCI.

4. Monitoring and review

4.1. The SCI will be reviewed and updated, as necessary, in order to reflect changes in national legislation or guidance; to make improvements; and to acknowledge the use of additional, new or different approaches to consultation.

Appendix A - Other planning documents

Authority local plan monitoring reports

Local planning authorities must publish information annually that shows progress with local plan preparation as set out in their published local development scheme; reports any activity relating to the duty to cooperate; any information collected which relates to indicators in the plan; and any policies that are not being implemented.

Local plan monitoring reports highlight which policy aims are being achieved and which policies need to be strengthened or refocused where they are not as successful. It can help inform if there is a need to undertake a partial or full update of the local plan, when carrying out a review at least every five years from the adoption date. Bexley's local plan monitoring reports are available on the Technical documents webpage on the Council's website.

Impact assessments

All policies within development plan documents will be subject to a number of impact assessments. A sustainability appraisal (SA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) will be carried out as necessary, as will an equalities impact assessment (EqIA).

Although not a statutory requirement, a health impact assessment (HIA) will also be completed to ensure that health considerations are sufficiently considered. All of these are often considered together as an Integrated Impacts Assessment.

The impact assessments for each document will be started at an early stage and amended as the document is progressed. This should ensure that the likely impacts of policies and proposals are taken into account from the beginning. The process will enable changes to be made in the light of the predicted impacts before the document is finalised.

Bexley will consult the local community on its impact assessments and involve appropriate key stakeholders such as the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England in their preparation.

Local development scheme

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is the Council's 'project plan' setting out what local development documents will be prepared and includes a timetable for their preparation.

The LDS can be found on the Technical documents webpage on the Council's website

Neighbourhood development orders and community right to build orders

If a community wishes to simplify the process for allowing development, it can also produce a neighbourhood development order or a community right to build order. These can be instead of or alongside a neighbourhood plan and would result in effectively granting planning permission for certain types of development in specified areas.

These orders, however, do not remove the need for other permissions such as listed building or conservation area consent.

Appendix B - Consultation bodies

Specific consultation bodies

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) the following specific consultation bodies must be consulted where the Council considers that they may have an interest in the subject of the proposed planning document:

- Adjoining and other relevant Local Planning Authorities
- Clinical Commissioning Groups
- National Highways
- Historic England
- Marine Management Organisation
- Natural England
- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited
- Relevant electricity and gas companies
- Relevant telecommunications companies
- Thames Water
- The Coal Authority
- The Environment Agency
- The Mayor of London, including Transport for London (TfL)General consultation bodies

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) the following general consultation bodies must be consulted where the Council considers it appropriate:

- voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the borough;
- bodies that represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the borough;
- bodies that represent the interests of different religious groups in the borough;
- bodies that represent the interests of disabled persons in the borough; and,
- bodies that represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the borough.

Duty to cooperate

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) the prescribed agencies/bodies with whom the Council has a legal duty to cooperate are as follows:

- Clinical Commissioning Groups/NHS England
- Historic England
- Local Enterprise Partnership (London Enterprise Partnership)
- Local Nature Partnership (All London Green Grid Local Nature Partnership)
- Natural England
- The Civil Aviation Authority
- The Environment Agency
- The Marine Management Organisation
- The Mayor of London
- The Office of Rail Regulation
- Transport for London (TfL) and other relevant Highways Authorities

Appendix C - Further information and advice on planning

The planning portal

The planning portal is the Government's online 'one-stop-shop' for planning and building services. It provides information on the planning system; allows you to submit a planning application; find out about development in your area; appeal against a decision and research government policy.

Website: www.planningportal.gov.uk

Email: support@planningportal.gsi.gov.uk

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

DLUHC provides general information on the planning system including the latest national planning policy, decisions on planning appeals, research and statistics and reform of the planning systems.

Website: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-levelling-up-housing-and-

communities

Email: contactus@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Address: Fry Building

2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF

Telephone 0303 444 0000

Planning Aid England (PAE)

Planning Aid England provides free, independent and professional planning advice to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees. It is provided by the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Website: www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-advice Email: info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk Address: The Royal Town Planning Institute

> 41 Botolph Lane London EC3R 8DL

Telephone: 0207 929 8338

The Planning Inspectorate

The Planning Inspectorate processes planning appeals and holds examinations into statutory planning policy documents and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Website: www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planninginspectorate

Email: enquiries@pins.gsi.gov.uk
Address: The Planning Inspectorate

Room 3/13, Temple Quay House 2 The Square, Temple Quay

Bristol BS1 6PN

Telephone: 0303 444 5000