The essence of the StayFull range lay in providing products that “were not diet but would aid in weight control as part of a healthy diet” [RA4], achieved by “keeping the customer feeling full for a longer period of time after eating a meal”. The idea originated from the company’s trend studio team, who recognised the increasing move towards consumers adopting a “healthy lifestyle, but diet products are not appropriate for all these types of consumers, as some are not looking specifically to cut calories or their weight” [RA1]. The head of product direction, technologist for health, and category manager also shared the belief that this strong underlying pattern existed. These individuals formed the key team members at this early stage, alongside the innovation chef. The output of the first stage was a specification for the range, with the central concept that products would be:

- ‘Healthy eating’- forming part of a healthy lifestyle
- ‘Not Diet’- importantly, not diet or focused on calorie reduction
- ‘Keeps you feeling Fuller’- help consumers to feel full
- ‘Less eating = weight control and no snacking’- helping consumers control their weight or aiding in weight reduction

Whilst the exact product range was not established at this stage, the range was to focus on meals, and some accompaniments, as the aim was to avoid snacking.

The second stage was the development of a proposal, which involved establishing what products would form part of the range. This required three activities to be conducted concurrently:

- Product development - kitchen work and taste tests. Driven by the retailer, but undertaken by both the retailer’s and supplier’s chefs. This work was exploratory in nature.
- Research of a scientific nature - to establish possible ingredients that would create this ‘full’ feeling.
- Market research - to understand customer’s perceptions of the potential range, and explore the restaurant sector.

This allowed the team to continually scope possible product ideas. Following this, a preliminary decision was made on the products most likely to be included in the range. The project then progressed to carrying out more extensive kitchen work to evaluate possible ingredients and recipes, working with suppliers. This was led by the innovation chef. Based on the initial analysis, the sandwich recipes had to include ingredients which were wholegrain, high in protein, and not highly processed.
Proposed recipes and concepts for each of the main types of products were
developed and prepared for consumer taste testing. Alongside this, research
continued, investigating consumers’ perceptions of the concepts, and identifying any
similar developments occurring in the restaurant environment. The health technology
team continued to research any new food sciences and technologies which might be
applied to the products.

The project reached the stage of the proposal and stage gate one, at which point
approval was given to proceed. The output was the establishment of the proposed
products and product ranges, including the number of sandwiches. At this stage, the
team, particularly the head of product direction and category manager, converted the
proposals into product specification for suppliers to be briefed. Within this brief, a
basic proposal for the packaging format was set by the project manager, as the form
required a type of packaging to be listed for each product. The basic looks, materials,
and design (graphics) were detailed. This section also focused on environmental
considerations (particularly focusing on the desire to use cardboard), the desire to
have a window to view the product, costs, and ease of opening.

The team decided to set a “basic specification, largely based on fit(ting) with existing
product lines” [RA4] within the brief. The same format of packaging was listed as
used on the company’s existing sandwiches, a board based pack. More detailed
decisions (including the choice of material), were largely left to the suppliers in
subsequent stages. Later testing would be required to confirm the pack was suitable
for the new types of products, and that no issues occurred in its application. No
development challenges were anticipated, as the sandwiches were not particularly
unique or different in any respects which would influence the packaging. Later, the
chosen product supplier would contact DarbysOwn when particular decisions were
being made.

The use of an existing pack for the range ensured a fit with the existing types of
sandwiches which the company already produced: hence there was little need to
consider the packaging. This simplified decision making, as “… it was not necessary
to consider the impact on suppliers, distribution, or the products retailing” [RA2].
Indeed, relatively little consideration was given to this decision. The retailer had been
relatively pioneering in its use of cardboard sandwich packs, which it had developed
alongside a university. Their patented packs benefited from being easy to open, sustainable, and shelf stable. Thus, whilst the hand-finished nature of sandwiches meant that packaging change would have little impact on the supplier’s production line, this existing format was an obvious choice and the category manager saw no need to explore the other basic packaging options available, or consult the packaging team to identify potential opportunities. This also excluded any need to consider the packaging with respect to the product’s distribution or retailing.

The second part of the third stage involved DarbysOwn approaching its approved sandwich suppliers with the briefs. Suppliers were then given an approximate timeframe in order to develop product proposals, plans, and costing, which would then be presented back to DarbysOwn. The suppliers also developed a critical path: setting out a timeframe with which to meet the proposed launch date. At this stage, the management of the project was handed over to the relevant trading areas. Subsequently, decision makers were primarily category managers, product developers (operating under the category manager), buyers, merchandisers, and food technologists. Buyers played a key role in keeping costs low and ensuring a desirable margin, and merchandisers focused on understanding how the product line would fit within the store. Hence merchandisers had some influence on the size of the range. These key groups would work closely with the suppliers.

At this stage, the retailer’s design studio was recruited: to create the appearance of the packaging’s exterior, graphics, artwork, and photography. This team was also responsible for deciding on the degree of printing on the pack, its colour, and the positioning of windows.

Having received the brief, the suppliers generated a timeline for the project and initiated their development process. The following activities were undertaken:

1. Chefs created recipes from the brief, and considered manufacturing constraints.
2. Recipes were then evaluated and modified, establishing feasibility and identifying possible issues.
3. Consumer taste tests were conducted at the retailer’s facilities.

Once the recipes were established and agreed, discussions were held, primarily focusing on the business case. In order to establish feasibility and uncover potential
issues, the proposed recipes were also discussed with buyers, product developers, scientists, and chefs.

At this stage, the brief was passed on to the supplier’s packaging team. The buyers within this team approached packaging suppliers, in order to establish costs. Their brief focused on look, materials, design (including the colour scheme, the need for imaging, and standard style criteria for sandwiches). The team then:

1. Sourced packaging, based on the existing formats used with minor layout modifications.
2. Samples were presented to the chefs.
3. Prices were forwarded to commercial teams.
4. A critical path was sent to the packaging supplier.
5. Finally, the samples and plans (having been agreed internally) were discussed with DarbysOwn to ensure they were satisfied.

As a result of the established format being utilised, the main focus of discussions was on the additional units to be produced. Throughout the process, there were daily communications between the supplier and DarbysOwn. The culmination of this was approval by DarbysOwn. At this stage, it was notable that DarbysOwn was presented with a range of packaging types, for each product line being developed. That most of the products across the new range were able to utilise existing packs simplified this process; whereas if more innovative packs had been incorporated, evaluating the options and making decisions for such a large product range would have created a higher workload.

In the fifth stage, the supplier moved forward to analyse the concepts and recipes in more depth. A team meeting was held between each of the main groups consulted with during the preceding stage, in order to establish feasibility, look at any practical issues and build the business case (including investments, unit costs, and production requirements). The buyers from the supplier’s packaging team then inputted into the business plans the proposed packaging and costs. The information was compiled and put into a tender to contract for manufacture, which was passed to DarbysOwn. The supplier believed that cost was key, as “predominantly supplier choice is driven by price” [RA5].
The supplier's commercial managers presented their case to the retailer, who subsequently evaluated the tenders from each supplier and contacted chosen suppliers to arrange contracts. The project then progressed to the seventh stage.

The plans were implemented during the product development and scale up phase. Investments were made in machinery and ingredients. Testing of the recipes also continued, to identify any final changes required. The packaging team received the final brief and cost guidelines. At this stage, the buyers within the team largely handled decision-making. The team set the final brief and contacted the supplier to source the packaging. Following this, factory tests were undertaken to ensure “we get the recipe right” [RA5], and samples were taken to DarbysOwn for approval.

The product samples were approved at a joint meeting, and once this occurred larger scale factory tests were undertaken. As sandwiches were not produced in large batches (like soups, which are cooked in a single vat), factory tests were not a key part of the process: mass production had little impact on the product’s characteristics. Once factory tests were completed, the packaging team worked with the suppliers to agree the final pack, and requested samples and costs. The results were then reviewed internally, and this information was subsequently passed on to the retailer for approval.

Stage eight began with production line samples being produced and sent by courier to DarbysOwn in an existing pack, for approval. The existing packaging was used to enable this travel test to take place at this early stage, when the final pack was not ready. Concurrently, a number of members of the packaging team began to become more heavily involved, working with suppliers on each pack, developing prototypes or PDFs to be presented to the retailer. At this stage, it was also confirmed that no new tooling would be required for this launch.

The supplier and retailer then met at a pre-production meeting for final approval of the product’s costing, quality, and price. The order size and number of stores initially stocking each sandwich were also confirmed. At this stage, samples of the tailored packaging format for the sandwiches were reviewed and approved by the supplier and retailer teams. This meeting also confirmed:

- The critical path for the remainder of the project
- The packaging and board to be used
• The volumes of each design
• The packaging cutter guides

The final activity in the product approval process largely focused on travel testing the packaging. Once the samples were received from the packaging supplier for all lines, small batches of the sandwiches were produced. This was delivered to DarbysOwn by a courier: both teams reviewed the results, and the packaging was “signed off” [RA3]. It is noteworthy that packaging sign off had occurred much later than the product: something regarded as quite common, as packaging “tends to get pushed back later into the development process” [RA3].

Stage nine involved the packaging design and artwork, combined with setting up the production line for the actual packaging. This entailed the following core activities:

• Setting up the board specifications and cutter guides
• The supplier's factory process was approved by DarbysOwn.

Concurrently, the retailer also initiated a design project within its internal team for the artwork and photography. This was the only stage at which consumers were involved with respect to the packaging, with the design team working alongside marketing staff to test and refine various potential designs for the exterior of the packaging. The process resulted in the artwork being generated and presented for review by the product development team, and minor rework being requested. The revised artwork was then provided for a photo shoot, with the food supplier providing the product. This was then put together and approved by the retailer. The food supplier subsequently sent the details to the packaging supplier for printing. The final activity involved the packs, with printing, being produced and then received by the food supplier.

Stage ten oversaw the production of the final sandwich and its packaging, for marketing in a UK test market area. The results were then reviewed: having produced positive sales results, agreement to scale up production and marketing for national launch was given.
8.2.5 Project B: The development of a Plastic Wine Glass

Alongside most other brands offering alcoholic beverages, DarbysOwn sold small wine bottles for picnics or other occasions which required wine to be carried and consumed away from home. Over the period of 2008-9, the category manager became interested in investigating a new type of packaging, with a particular focus on “picnics and 'on the go' consumption” [RA6]. The packaging team were asked to initiate a project to investigate whether the current small bottles were the most appropriate form of packaging, and what other opportunities might exist. Wine itself offered little opportunities, other than basic selection of different varieties to improve sales. The aim was that packaging should become the key aspect of the offering.

The team began to investigate different types of packaging, including different bottles and materials, closures, and bag-in-box formats. One of the more exciting to be identified was that of packaging wine in a glass “ready for consumption without a need to effectively ‘decant’ the product” [RA2]. This was discussed with the category manager (a buyer), who considered the idea warranted further investigation. He stated: “This project warranted investment as portion sized wine is relatively price elastic…. we should be able to increase our price premiums through this change” [RA6]. The NPD process is summarised in Figure 8.2.3.