

## Statement of Community Involvement (2017) (Amended June 2019)

### Temporary update in response to Covid-19 guidance (July 2020)

South Norfolk Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in May 2017 and sets out how and when the Council will involve communities and other stakeholders in the development of Local Plan documents. It also sets out the Council's expectation of developers in respect of community engagement at the pre-application stage, and how the Council consults people during the planning application process.

The Government has issued Planning Guidance stating that local planning authorities should make any temporary amendments that are necessary to their SCIs to ensure that there are no conflicts between particular commitments within the document and the Government's current Covid-19 guidance on social distancing. This is to ensure the safety of our communities, key partners, businesses and Council staff. As and when Government guidance changes, the Council will review this update and issue amendments, as necessary.

The table below highlights those sections of the SCI which are therefore subject to a temporary amendment and explains, in each instance, the nature of that amendment.

Section of SCI	Issue	Amendment required
Paragraphs 60-63 (Consultation methods) pp. 17-18  Paragraph 65 and following tables (How will we consult people at different stages in the plan making process?) pp. 20-28  Appendix 3 (Consultation methods) pp. 39-40	Paragraph 61 presents a list of different involvement and publicity methods for consideration at different stages (re-iterated in the subsequent tables and in Appendix 3), some of which involve face-to-face engagement with communities and stakeholders. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exhibitions</li> <li>- Meetings</li> <li>- Focus groups</li> <li>- Workshops</li> </ul>	Due to the Government's current guidelines on social distancing, these methods <b>will not currently be options</b> as regards plan making consultations.  Alternative options are discussed later in this update.
	Paragraph 60 states that the Council will always have hard copies of consultation information available for inspection at	Due to the current closure of the Council offices, they <b>will not currently be used</b> for making hard copy documents available for inspection.

	<p>the Council's office.</p> <p>In addition, paragraph 61 mentions making consultation material available at libraries in the district, where appropriate. Again this is reiterated in the subsequent tables and within Appendix 3.</p> <p>Many libraries are currently closed and the Council offices are only open for essential visits.</p>	<p>Where libraries are open, and it is safe to make documents available for inspection, they will remain an option for publicising consultations. For those libraries that remain closed, they will clearly not be used for making hard copy documents available for inspection. Details of consultations will make it clear which, if any, libraries have been used for making documents available.</p> <p>Details of which libraries in Norfolk are currently open and closed are available from: <a href="http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries">www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries</a></p> <p>Alternative options are discussed later in this update.</p>
<p>Paragraph 72 (The pre-application stage; Community Involvement in Planning Proposals and Applications) p.30</p>	<p>The paragraph states that applicants are encouraged to engage directly with the local community before submitting their applications to the Council so that local people can have their say about the proposed development before a planning application is submitted.</p>	<p>Due to the Government's current guidelines on social distancing, <b>it is not currently expected that developers use face-to-face engagement methods at the pre-application stage</b>, although there are a range of other techniques that could be employed, <b>such as virtual engagement methods discussed later in this document.</b></p> <p><b>Developers are expected to monitor the Government's latest guidance on social distancing and staying safe during the pandemic and to take a view on those pre-application engagement methods that may be safe to use, going forward.</b></p> <p>The Council is happy to advise applicants on suitable pre-application consultation methods on a case-by-case basis.</p>

<p>Paragraph 74 (The planning application stage – site notices)</p>	<p>This paragraph states that ‘Site notice(s) will be displayed at a prominent location, only where there is a statutory requirement to do so.’</p>	<p>In light of the ongoing controls in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, <b>where there is a statutory requirement to display a site notice this will be undertaken.</b> We will practice social distancing, minimise the number of officers who will undertake this and will use appropriate protective equipment to minimise risk.</p> <p>The statutory requirement includes applications that affect the character or appearance of a conservation area or the setting of a listed building; that are a ‘major application’ i.e. 10 or more dwellings or 1000sqm or more for non-residential; where the application is contrary to the Development Plan; that are accompanied by an Environmental Statement; that affect a public right of way; or are submitted by the Council. The Council will also advertise by site notice when the proposal is directly adjacent to land where the landowner’s address is unknown i.e. agricultural land. In order to minimise the number of journeys to erect the required site notices it is likely that there will be a delay in the Council being able to determine the application.</p> <p>For further details, please visit: <a href="https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building/application-process">https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building/application-process</a></p>
<p>Paragraph 75 (The planning application stage – viewing application details)</p>	<p>This paragraph states that notices and letters will make it clear when and where the application(s) can be viewed.</p>	<p>Due to the current closure of the Council offices, planning application documents and representations <b>will not be able to be viewed at this location, for the time being.</b></p> <p>However, all documents and representations will continue to be made available via the Council’s website.</p>

		<p>For further details, please visit:  <a href="https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building/application-process">https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building/application-process</a></p>
<p>Paragraph 78 (The planning application stage – speaking at Planning Committee)</p>	<p>This paragraph sets out the procedure should a member of the public wish to speak at Planning Committee.</p>	<p>The Council will continue to run Planning Committee, as scheduled, but this will now be on a virtual platform (Zoom) and as such the Committee will not be held at the Council Offices during this time.</p> <p><b>Public speaking will continue to take place on agenda items however this will now be in a virtual format.</b></p> <p>For further details, please visit:  <a href="https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building/application-process">https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building/application-process</a></p>
<p>Appendix 4: Neighbourhood Planning Support, pp. 39-40</p>	<p>This section sets out the range of support that officers are able to provide to Neighbourhood Plan groups in the district. The areas of support listed include various forms of face-to-face engagement, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting with parish/town councillors;</li> <li>- Officer attendance at meetings;</li> <li>- Neighbourhood Plan Network meetings;</li> <li>- Providing training through a variety of means;</li> </ul>	<p>Due to the Government’s current guidelines on social distancing, these areas of support <b>will not currently be options</b>, in the form of face-to-face interaction.</p> <p>As an alternative measure, Council officers will be happy to attend <b>(or host, if necessary)</b> any virtual meetings that Neighbourhood Plan groups may be holding, in order to provide advice and guidance.</p> <p>Officers will also issue a quarterly news bulletin, via email, to Neighbourhood Plan groups whilst social distancing restrictions are in place, as an alternative to holding Network meetings.</p>

## **Alternative options in relation to community involvement in plan making**

The following sets out temporary, alternative measures that will be considered as options whilst Government guidelines on social distancing and interaction remain in place. These options will be reviewed as and when the national guidelines change.

For all consultations in relation to plan making, the Council will consider whether it would be appropriate and feasible (given the Government guidelines and restrictions that may be in place at that time) to undertake safe and inclusive community and stakeholder involvement. If it is determined that consultations can be carried out, then the following temporary measures will be considered as options, whilst restrictions are in place:

- a) ***Extension to normal consultation time period*** - Where the Council undertakes any specific plan making consultation exercise, it may determine that the current Covid-19 guidance and the restrictions this places on the ability of certain stakeholder bodies to issue a timely response (e.g. community groups / parish councils, that may not be fully operational or have the ability to issue a corporate response within this time), requires that the normal consultation time period (as set out in Figure 7 of the SCI) be extended. Any such consultation extension will be explained and publicised accordingly.
- b) ***Use of virtual engagement methods*** - During early stages of plan making (stages 1 and 2 of DPD production – Figure 4 of the SCI; stage 1 of SPD production – Figure 5), the Council will consider whether it is appropriate and feasible to use virtual methods to engage with community and stakeholder bodies. Methods to be considered include online exhibitions, virtual presentations and virtual meetings.
- c) ***Availability of hard copy documents*** - Consultation documents and related information will still be available to view and download from the Council website. In circumstances where hard copies are not available from the Council offices and libraries, we will include in our consultation publicity details of how those without internet capability can access hard copies of the consultation documents. The SCI currently includes a range of publicity measures, including non-digital measures such as articles in local media and posters in local notice boards, which will still be considered as options and which can include details of how to get in touch.

For any queries on these temporary updates, please email [ldf@broadland.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@broadland.gov.uk). For further information about how the Council is responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, please visit [www.broadland.gov.uk](http://www.broadland.gov.uk).