

West Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement 2018 – Addendum June 2020

Amended practice in response to COVID-19 pandemic

This document provides an addendum to the West Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement 2018.

It should be read alongside the original document, available to view at https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/Planning_Policies/upload/18-12-20-SCI-adopted-version.pdf

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out West Suffolk Council's strategy for effective community participation in planning matters. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak we have not been able to follow all the requirements set out in the SCI document which has promoted this review.

There are a number of ways in which the council is having to adapt the approach to planning decisions and plan making. This addendum to the Statement of Community Involvement sets out these measures, and how it will continue to enable full involvement of people in planning matters.

The council remains committed to running an effective planning service, and for the Statement of Community Involvement to comply with COVID-19 guidance, we have made the following changes to the SCI. For example, we have needed to implement measures necessary to follow governmental guidance such as social distancing requirements.

This table sets out where we have temporarily varied our key commitments – the way we provide our service has changed.

These changes are necessary to allow plan-making to progress and that we continue to promote effective community engagement by means which are reasonably practicable.

SCI section	What the SCI said	Response to COVID-19	Response to COVID-19 lifting
1.1 Consultation on development plan documents	"Hold workshops, exhibitions or community roadshow events in defined locations where there is an impact on that settlement - to help decide issues to be included in the plan"	We cannot hold face to face meetings of any kind at this time. However, all relevant documents will be available on our website: https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/wslocalplan	We will hold online Q and A sessions with officers at advertised times on the council's website, using online platforms. Appointment based drop-in sessions across West Suffolk, which limits the number of people who can attend at any time. Room set up with exhibition boards and staff behind a table, maintaining a two-metre social distancing space and virtual exhibitions will be considered.
Explanatory note	1.1 Relates to consulting on the local plan.		
	"Hard copies will be available at council offices."	Our offices are closed for all non-emergency visits. We cannot provide paper copies at the present time. All documents can be viewed online: https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/wslocalplan	
Explanatory note	This relates to hard copies of the consultation and adoption documents		
	"attend and speak at the public hearings"	Our offices are closed to the public and no hearings are scheduled.	Should meetings be scheduled, they are capable of being carried out virtually and/or by written submission. These will be publicised at the appropriate time and details will be provided in due course.
	"inspector's recommendations being available from the council offices."	Our offices are closed for all non-emergency visits. We cannot provide paper copies at the present time. All documents can be viewed online: https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/wslocalplan	
1.3 Supporting the neighbourhood planning process	Meet local communities who contact us expressing an	We are continuing to provide support for neighbourhood plan groups. For information on individual plans, see online:	We are continuing to provide support for neighbourhood plan groups. For information on individual plans, see online:

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	interest in neighbourhood planning, in order to provide initial advice and information and discuss options.	<p>https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning</p> <p>The Government has also updated its guidance regarding neighbourhood plans, at Paragraph 107 Reference ID: 41-107-20200407 on this page: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#history</p> <p>Face to face contact is not possible during lockdown. Consultation periods should be extended during this period to 10 weeks. The neighbourhood plan group should provide online information, such as a dedicated website. Virtual exhibitions could be offered during this time.</p>	<p>https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning</p> <p>The Government has also updated its guidance regarding neighbourhood plans, at Paragraph 107 Reference ID: 41-107-20200407 on this page: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#history</p> <p>Face to face contact is not possible. Consultation periods should be extended during this period to 10 weeks. The neighbourhood plan group should provide online information, such as a dedicated website. Virtual exhibitions could be offered during this time.</p>
1.4 Consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents	"hard copies being available at council offices."	Our offices are closed for all non-emergency visits. We cannot provide paper copies at the present time. All documents can be viewed online: https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/wslocalplan	
1.4 Concept statements, masterplans and development briefs	Developers are encouraged to engage with local communities using a range of methods such as letters, emails, focus groups and exhibitions.	Face to face contact is not possible during lockdown. Consultation periods should be extended during this period to 10 weeks. The developer should demonstrate active engagement with the relevant parish council, and online provision of information, such as a dedicated website. Virtual exhibitions should be offered during this time.	Face to face contact is not possible. Consultation periods should be extended during this period to 10 weeks. The developer should demonstrate active engagement with the relevant parish council, and online provision of information, such as a dedicated website. Virtual exhibitions should be offered during this time.

SCI section	What the SCI said	Response to COVID-19	Response to COVID-19 lifting
2.2 Publicising our planning applications	Planning applications are available electronically for public inspection at the council offices.	Our offices are closed for all non-emergency visits. All documents can be viewed online: https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/wslocalplan	
2.2 Consultation on planning applications	Site notices will be posted for "all applications not in above categories"	In line with our current risk-based approach to visiting sites, (based on COVID-19 good practice,) we need to minimise the number of visits made by planning officers.	We will only provide site notices where required by national legislation – that is for all other applications shown in the table at paragraph 2.2.

Involving the community in planning policy

The Government is encouraging all local planning authorities to continue, as much as possible, to work proactively with their community and other stakeholders to progress plans, even if some adjustments to timetables are necessary.

The Planning Advisory Service advise that, 'This is an opportunity to think differently about how you consult and how you use the online and virtual tools you have access to promote your consultation and allow people to get involved.' West Suffolk will continue to develop and improve its methods of online consultation and community engagement.

Reflecting this, when we invite representations (through a notice on the councils' website, and advertising through other methods such as social media, news releases, council publications or press adverts) we will include an email address and phone number for the planning policy team, so that anyone having problems viewing the documents can discuss the consultation and seek assistance to view them.

Other measures such as consultation events or putting up posters will also need to reflect current government guidance and any future updates.