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## Suffolk Coastal Local Development Framework Statement of Community Involvement

July 2006





# **SUFFOLK COASTAL DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**

**Adopted July 2006**

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## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS**

DPD - Development Plan Document

EERA - East of England Regional Assembly

GO-EAST – Government Office for the East of England

LDD - Local Development Document

LDF - Local Development Framework

LDS - Local Development Scheme

LTP - Local Transport Plan

ODPM - Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

RPG - Regional Planning Guidance

RSS - Regional Spatial Strategy

SCI – Statement of Community Involvement

SD - Statutory Document

SOS - Secretary of State (currently the Deputy Prime Minister)

SPD - Supplementary Planning Document

SPG - Supplementary Planning Guidance

# INVOLVING SUFFOLK COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN THEIR FUTURE

## 1. THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 1.01 The Statement of Community Involvement is a key document that forms part of the new planning system for the District. The Statement is different in purpose from the other documents though, since it is concerned primarily with community involvement in the planning process. The general aim will be to ensure that all sections of the community can contribute to the planning process from an early stage. It will make clear how communities will be a part of the production of new or revised plans, who will participate and when. This will also cover community involvement for planning applications.
- 1.02 By achieving greater levels of community engagement in the planning process, local communities, stakeholders and other organisations can contribute more to the shaping of their local environment and addressing key local challenges, for example; affordable housing and access to services. By working in this way, it is considered that there will be an enhanced level of local ownership and understanding in planning and thus a more flexible, inclusive and streamlined process.
- 1.03 Throughout this document the Council has attempted to use plain English, free of technical or legal language. There are occasions, however, where this has not been possible, notably where official titles of documents have been used or words and sentences extracted.

## 2. THE PROCESS OF PREPARING THE STATEMENT

- 2.01 There are three main opportunities for consultation/involvement in producing a Statement of Community Involvement for the District, as follows:

### Stage 1

*March 2005 - Initial letter and questionnaire* sent to Parish/Town Councils, and other statutory consultees requesting views on their preferences for involvement in the planning process under the new planning system. This stage received a 33% overall response rate.

### Stage 2

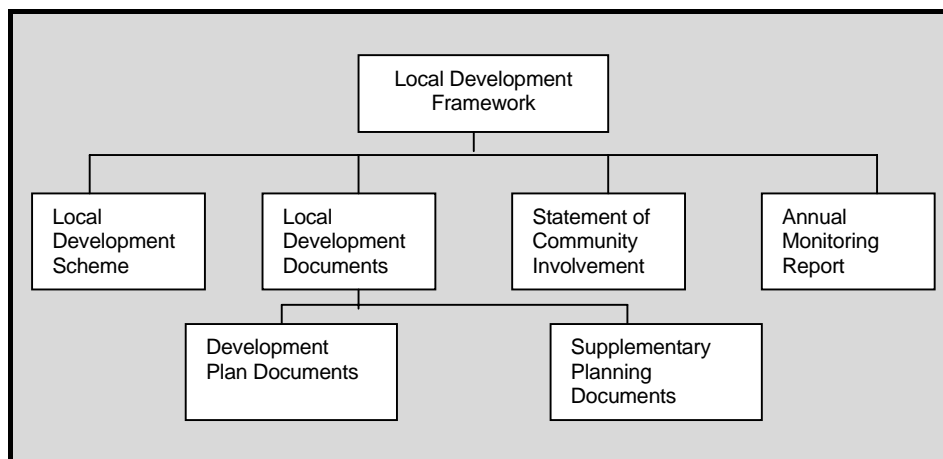
*July 2005 - Preparation of a Draft Statement.* A first draft version was published on the Council's website and made available in other forms. This took into account the results of the initial consultation exercise. There was a formal public consultation period of eight weeks. Comments were invited from a wide range of consultees on the approach, content and layout of the draft.

### Stage 3

*February 2006 - Formal submission* (and examination) of the Statement. The document was revised to take into account comments received during Stage 2. It was again made available for inspection as in Stage 2 and a further opportunity for all to comment was formally given over a six week period. The representations at this stage were considered by a Planning Inspector and his recommendations were binding on the Council.

### 3. THE NEW SYSTEM – THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- 3.01 Substantial changes to the planning system and development plans have recently come into effect via the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). These changes include the replacement of Local Plans with Local Development Frameworks (LDFs).
- 3.02 The Local Development Framework will be a folder that will hold a number of Documents. Each Authority is required to prepare such documents.
- 3.03 It is intended that the new system of LDFs will simplify the local planning process and become more accommodating to any required changes. In addition to greater community involvement, there is also a greater emphasis to be given towards the environment and sustainable development. As a result, all Local Development Documents (LDDs) will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal. Some will undergo an independent examination by a planning inspector before adoption. The methodology behind the Sustainability Appraisal will also be the subject of community involvement.
- 3.04 Until the new documents are finalised and adopted, the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (incorporating the First Alteration) – adopted 2001 will remain valid in determining planning applications. It will be supplemented by a Second Alteration during 2006.



### 4. THE EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN – THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

- 4.01 The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) has prepared new regional guidance – Regional Spatial Strategy – for the East of England. It will update RPGs 6 (East Anglia) and 9 (South East) where it covers the East of England and guide planning and transport policy up to 2021.
- 4.02 Following consultation and an examination before an independent panel (which occurred between November 2005 – March 2006) this revised Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) will be considered by the ODPM and, if approved, become the spatial strategy for the region. It will be part of the statutory development plan. The Suffolk Coastal Local Development Framework will be prepared to conform with this RSS.

### 5 THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS

- 5.01 These are the documents which will most affect the future of the District and communities within it. They fall into two groups – Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

5.02 The **Development Plan Documents** comprise:

- **Core Strategy and Policies**

The strategic document setting out the vision, objectives and spatial strategy of the District as well as containing a suite of policies to be used in the determination of planning applications.

- **Site Specific Allocations and Policies**

A document containing policies that apply to specific sites, locations or areas as opposed to being District wide.

- **Area Action Plans**

Documents containing the planning framework for the future development and regeneration of specific areas, towns or villages.

- **Proposals Map**

A map giving the geographical expression to adopted policies. To be revised as each new Development Plan Document is adopted.

5.03 These must be compatible with a plan for the East of England known as the **Regional Spatial Strategy**. They will be examined by an independent inspector.

5.04 **Supplementary Planning Documents** elaborate upon the policies and proposals in Development Plan Documents. They are not subject to independent examination.

5.05 The remaining Local Development Documents include the production of the **Local Development Scheme**, this **Statement of Community Involvement**, and an **Annual Monitoring Report**.

### **The Local Development Scheme**

5.06 The starting point in preparing all the documents is a programme known as the Local Development Scheme. This is a detailed list of all the Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, and when they will be produced.

5.07 The Scheme has been published and is available in all of the libraries in the District and the Council's offices in Woodbridge. It can also be accessed via the Council's website:

<http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk>

### **The Council's Communication Strategy**

The Council ensures consistency of message to both external and internal audiences. It will effectively deliver the right messages to the right audiences through the most appropriate methods at the right time.

Communication is already at the heart of the Council's core vision of preserving and enhancing quality of life in the District. The

Council's strategy is to:

- Explain clearly how the Council will approach its communications in support of its Vision and Strategic objectives
- Identify communication objectives requiring co-ordination across existing service boundaries, between Council departments, and with external partners
- Provide communication principles and advice to guide service delivery in the future
- Ensure consistency of messages to all audiences

## **6. A PROFILE OF THE DISTRICT**

- 6.01 Suffolk Coastal covers nearly 90,000 hectares (900 km<sup>2</sup>). The district has a population of just over 115,000 living in mixed environments including open countryside, sparse settlements, villages, traditional market towns, the key commercial centres of Woodbridge and Felixstowe, as well as the urbanised fringes of the regional town of Ipswich. The two principle towns, Felixstowe and Woodbridge, are located in the south area of the district.
- 6.02 The 2001 Census shows 98.1% of the Suffolk Coastal district population are in the 'white British group' with this figure increasing to 98.8% for all people of 'white' ethnic group. The largest ethnic minority group in the district is Chinese which accounts for 0.5% of the total population.
- 6.03 The population is ageing and 47% of people in the district are over the age of 45 years old. 21% of all people are over the age of 65. Young people under the age of 16 years old accounts for 19% of the district total.

## **7. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – STRATEGY AND APPROACH**

### **Objectives**

- 7.01 The Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 prescribe the minimum acceptable means of community involvement. However, Suffolk Coastal already goes beyond the minimum acceptable approach as prescribed by these regulations in consulting on planning matters. In the interests of maintaining its commitment to wide and effective community involvement, the Council will continue to exceed these minimum standards.
- 7.02 As stated previously, the general aim will be to involve anyone with a planning interest as far as possible in the process. However, some sections of the community have always proved difficult to involve in the process for a number of reasons (being commonly described as 'Hard to Reach' groups). This problem suggests a need to explore new approaches towards gaining their involvement in planning matters.
- 7.03 The objectives of community involvement in the Local Development Framework process are to:
- be transparent and consistent
  - be accurate and honest
  - be timely
  - be as simple and as free of jargon as possible
  - actively encourage feedback (and respond to it)
  - use a range of cost effective delivery methods

- recognise the needs of different groups
- be measured to see how involvement is working

7.04 The Council is committed to diversity and social inclusion to ensure that everyone has access to services and is treated fairly. There are key pieces of Government legislation to which the Council will comply. These include:

- Race Relations Act 2000, particularly the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote equal opportunities.

The main issue within this district will relate to the fact that English may not be the first language

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the need to promote an equal quality of service. Issues here will revolve around physical access to consultations venues and visual impairment.

The means by which the Council will seek to meet the requirements of the above legislation are set out in the schedule following paragraph 7.07. In respect of the availability of documents in appropriate formats the Council will have regard to what is practical and cost effective. The profile of the district (see section 6) shows that ethnic minorities account for an extremely small proportion of the district and the first language of over 98% of the district is English. Therefore, all documents will be published in English and requests for other languages will be considered upon request. With regard to visual impairment, large print editions will be prepared upon request.

**Who?**

7.05 Whilst this SCI will set out the Council’s overall proposed approach towards community involvement, it is important not to be overly rigid and prescriptive. Thus, if a particular interest, organisation or individual expresses a wish to be involved in preparing any particular document the Council will take a flexible approach and aim to accommodate such requests as far as possible. Non-statutory consultees will only be consulted where the topic of the document affects them so as to avoid irrelevant and unnecessary consultation. The Council currently holds an LDF database consisting of those persons, bodies or organisations who wish to be consulted and kept informed throughout the LDF process. If anyone wishes to be added to this database, they are able to use any of the contact methods listed at the end of this document. These database entries include those which represent the categories of consultee identified at Appendix 2.

7.06 There are likely to be a large numbers of individuals (particularly landowners) affected by the LDF process. The District Council will seek their views where such individuals are known. Otherwise it is expected that these will become aware of the LDF process through their town and parish councils.

7.07 The types of individuals and groups, who comprise the broader community and need to be consulted (in general) including the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The general public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliamentary representatives</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various Community interest groups eg. housing, employment, transport, conservation and wildlife groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Planning Body</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land interest groups including, where practical, owners, developers, agents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local government, including county, district and parish/town councils</li> </ul>

and consultants	
• Residents' associations/local neighbourhood groups	• Local Councillors
• Other mainly local societies and associations	• Other SCDC Service groups and those promoting local initiatives
• Amenity societies/area focussed groups	• Community Led Partnerships
• The workforce	• Other providers of services and facilities
• Local clubs	• The Council's partners
• The employment/business sectors and bodies representing these	• The media
• Central Government and related national agencies	• Infrastructure and utilities providers
	• The voluntary and charitable sectors

It would not be appropriate to list every organisation within these categories, since these may well change over time, with some disbanding, re-organising or through new bodies being formed.

### **Town and Parish Councils**

Suffolk Coastal District covers a very large area, with no less than 115 town and parish councils. The District Council considers these local councils as key partners, with the important benefit of very good local knowledge. Accordingly, working with the town and parish councils represents a fundamental element of the proposed approach. Initial consultation carried out with these organisations (April-May 2005) attracted a good level of response (33%), which is encouraging for the wider production process of the Local Development Framework.

### **Hard to Reach Groups**

- 7.08 Particular attention needs to be paid to involving the 'hard to reach' groups. Accordingly, the Council proposes that a number of methods of encouraging involvement by these groups be considered.

### **Hard to Reach Groups**

These tend to include minorities, those with special needs and other groups who are excluded from planning processes, such as the young. Levels of access to information and knowledge of institutional decision making processes can vary greatly, possibly as a result of language barriers or disabilities. As a result, some sections of the community can be disadvantaged in getting involved. Accordingly, the Council will have regard to the requirements of relevant legislation, including the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It will also explore, consult upon and test new and innovative methods of communication and involvement.

Some Hard to Reach groups already have organisations that represent them, such as councils for particular groups of ethnic minorities. There is also a range of bodies within the voluntary sector and these are co-ordinated by the Council for Voluntary Services as an umbrella body. In particular, the Council has sought to encourage the involvement of the young in its activities and in local matters through the Suffolk Coastal Local Strategic Partnership. Another area where the Council may strive to obtain the views of a wider population can be through 'community led' plans eg. parish plans and market town partnerships. Community led plans have the potential to engage more 'hard to reach' people due to the high level of return rates which they obtain from questionnaires.



Group	Potential Issues Preventing Involvement	Possible solutions to be used and considered
Residents new to the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of knowledge of which Council covers the area or who provides planning services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning Portal provides local council look-up service</li> <li>Links from Suffolk County Council and Onesuffolk websites</li> <li>Information through Town and Parish Councils</li> <li>Council's 'Coastline' newsletter goes to all households in District</li> </ul>

## 8. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – HOW?

8.01 The Council appreciates the important ongoing issue of resource constraints and, with this in mind, it is essential that we all make the best possible use of our valuable time. It is also essential that the chosen methods of involvement are cost-effective and agreement will, therefore, need to be reached on preferred approaches. The type of document to be prepared, its stage of preparation and the knowledge of the planning system held by particular groups, will all influence which method of involvement works best in each case. In addition, all parties will need to be realistic about the time and resources that they can commit to the ongoing LDF process. In view of all these considerations, it may be the case that the most appropriate methods will be new or amended processes and arrangements.

8.02 The Council already consults on a variety of documents and issues with other partners, for example on town centre action plans with Suffolk County Council and the relevant town council, or on strategic issues at the Suffolk Coastal Local Strategic Partnership Forums. The benefits of this result in a more efficient use of Council resources and also reduce the potential for 'consultation fatigue' to the community. Where relevant working timetables permit, the Council will seek to align consultation on the LDF with partners. In particular, the LDF and the Suffolk Coastal Local Strategic Partnership will continually review the potential for combined consultation as the areas of work are most similar.

8.03 There are considered to be three main 'methods' of engaging the community:

- **Publicity** whereby the community is kept informed.
- **Dialogue** whereby the community and others have the opportunity to present their views directly to the Council and hear its response.
- **Group Participation** whereby a number of communities and organisations can meet to discuss the Local Development Framework.

The Council intends to use all of these methods where appropriate and practical in order to engage the community in the planning and Local Development Framework process.

## RESOURCES

8.04 The Council is fully committed towards community involvement in planning and already exceeds statutory consultation requirements. The Council has considered the financial requirements for community consultation as set out in this document and has made provision for enough financial and other resources to cover the programme of the Local

Development Framework. However, forced changes to the Council's budget could affect the resourcing of the programme and these may need to be taken into account in future reviews of the SCI.

<b>METHODS OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>		
<b>PUBLICITY</b>	<b>DIALOGUE</b>	<b>GROUP PARTICIPATION</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council's website</li> <li>• Emails to participants</li> <li>• Letters to participants</li> <li>• Statutory notices (in particular newspapers)</li> <li>• The regular Suffolk Coastal newsletter 'Coastline'</li> <li>• Information at the Council's main offices</li> <li>• Information in local libraries</li> <li>• Through District Councillors</li> <li>• Through Town and Parish Councils</li> <li>• Public notices</li> <li>• Other newspaper articles</li> <li>• Leaflets/newsletters</li> <li>• Exhibitions</li> <li>• Public attendance at District Council meetings</li> <li>• Community roadshows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual meetings</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> <li>• Talks by Suffolk Coastal officers at Town and Parish Council meetings</li> <li>• Public speaking on planning applications</li> <li>• Consultation letters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Discussion meetings</li> <li>• Town and Parish Council meetings</li> </ul>

### **Consultation So Far**

The Council has commenced the creation of a Local Development Framework and already has demonstrated its intention to involve the community through:

- The publication of a newsletter – ‘A Vision of the District’ delivered to every household in the District with the Council’s magazine ‘Coastline’.
- Two series of workshops – one involving stakeholders and based on subjects, and one involving town and parish councils arranged by area.
- Press releases resulting in newspaper articles.
- A postal consultation exercise on the potential contents of this Statement (see section 9 below)
- A consultation exercise on a draft version of this document

Continuing consultation will also occur relating to the appraisal of the LDF in terms of sustainability and environmental impact.

These methods need to be reviewed afresh and broadened, extended and updated with consideration to the results of the Council’s early stage consultation.-

## **9. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKSHOPS**

9.01 A series of workshops were held across the district in 2004 and 2005 relating to the LDF process and community engagement. Three key topics to the district were chosen for exploration during the 2005 sessions, namely Affordable Housing, Settlement Policy and Community Involvement (in August 2005 an Event Record from the first series of LDF workshops was produced – it is available on the Council’s website – (<http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk>).

9.02 The feedback gained from the workshops has been built into the production of this document and more generally will be considered in the Local Development Framework process. For example, a significant concern was raised as to the periods of consultation that the Council allows for town/parish councils on policy documents. It was generally requested that the Council extend consultation periods to 8 weeks. In the interests of ‘front loading’, the Council will attempt as far as possible to allow a period of 8 weeks for initial LDF document consultations. However, to accord with the Council’s Local Development Scheme timetable, documents at the submission stage will have the statutory 6 week consultation period.

## **10. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – INTEGRATION**

10.01 It is important for the Council to have a co-ordinated approach to community involvement. A number of other strategies are relevant to the LDF most notably the Community Strategy, Parish/Community Plans and the Council’s own strategic objectives.

- 10.02 In particular, the Local Strategic Partnership is working to improve the quality of life and services across the District. It has adopted the Community Strategy, based on a Vision of the District as one where people want to live and to invest, and care for others and the environment. In furthering this vision the Partnership has focussed its efforts on four issues – Community Well-being, Housing, Environment and the Economy.
- 10.03 The Council will work alongside the Local Strategic Partnership. It is the role of the Local Development Framework to give spatial expression to the Community Strategy where it involves the use of land. Therefore, the Local Development Framework will link very closely with the Community Strategy in terms of addressing development and change within the district. Where practicable, consultation under the LDF and Community Strategy will be combined such as the LSP forum.
- 10.04 For further information about the Community Strategy visit [www.suffolkcoastal.org.uk](http://www.suffolkcoastal.org.uk)
- 10.05 Another example of a co-ordinated approach is the involvement in the Suffolk Compact. The Compact is a framework to outline working partner relationships with statutory governmental organisations and the voluntary and community sector. It establishes shared visions and key principles and undertakings on both sides. It can also lead to more transparent and coherent closer working with the aim of making a real difference to the Suffolk community.
- 10.06 For further information on the Suffolk Compact see <http://www.thecompact.org.uk>

<b>LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP</b>
<p>The Suffolk Coastal Local Strategic Partnership core membership includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public sector organisations which serve the Suffolk Coastal District;</li> <li>• Community organisations and local people;</li> <li>• Voluntary organisations;</li> <li>• Local businesses.</li> </ul> <p>The membership and size of the Suffolk Coastal Local Strategic Partnership will be continually reviewed to ensure that it reflects its aims and the issues with which it is dealing.</p>

## **11. PARISH/COMMUNITY PLANS**

- 11.01 Roughly a third of communities in the District have prepared or are in the process of preparing their own plans. These have various titles of 'Town Plan', 'Parish Plan', 'Community Plan' etc.
- 11.02 The Council will strive to implement these Plans where practical and possible. The uptake of parish/community plans will continue to be encouraged and they will also be given considerable weight in preparing the Local Development Framework. The Plans normally produce a high level of return from surveys and can therefore be highly valuable in obtaining the wider views of the local communities.

## 12. THE COUNCIL'S OVERALL APPROACH – WHAT, WHEN, WHO AND HOW?

12.01 The table over the page provides a guide to the proposed overall approach to community involvement in producing Development Plan Documents (DPDs) in broad terms. It does not mean that all organisations quoted at each stage will be involved in all such documents, whilst others not listed may be involved:

### Development Plan Documents

<b>STAGE OF DPD PREPARATION (When)</b>	<b>WHO WILL BE INVOLVED (Who)</b>	<b>LIKELY METHOD OF INVOLVEMENT (How – see para. 8.03))</b>
Pre-production – Evidence gathering; e.g. housing needs survey, urban capacity study, etc.  See the Local Development Scheme for timetable of work.	Specialist agencies; development interests; land interests; Local groups/bodies who may hold information Neighbouring local authorities	<b>Dialogue &amp; Group Participation:</b> Letters/telephone calls Email Project meetings
Continuing community involvement on Issues and Options together with sustainability appraisal  Regulation 25	Suffolk Coastal LSP Town/Parish Councils Other relevant groups/organisations	<b>Publicity, Dialogue &amp; Group Participation:</b> Website Email Letter Workshops Discussion meetings
Preparation of, and 8 week consultation period on, Issues and Preferred Options together with sustainability appraisal.  Regulation 26  See the Local Development Scheme for timetable of work.	Suffolk Coastal LSP Town/Parish Councils Other relevant groups/organisations Known landowners	<b>Publicity, Dialogue &amp; Group Participation:</b> Website Email Letter Workshops Discussion meetings
6 week formal public consultation period on draft document, at submission stage together with sustainability appraisal.  See the Local Development Scheme for timetable of work.	LSP Town/Parish Councils Statutory consultee bodies Other relevant groups/organisations Known landowners General public All on LDF Contacts database	<b>Publicity, Dialogue &amp; Group Participation:</b> Website Email Letter Individual meetings Libraries
6 week formal public consultation period if alternative allocated sites are proposed together with sustainability appraisal	Local Public Known Landowners Local Parish/Town Councils Statutory consultee bodies	<b>Publicity, Dialogue &amp; Group Participation:</b> Website Email Letter

details at the submission stage. Regulation 32/33	Relevant/local groups/organisations.	Individual meetings Libraries Site Notices
Adoption  See the Local Development Scheme for timetable of work.  Regulation 36	All previously involved in the process	<b>Publicity:</b> Press release Newspaper (regulatory) Notices Website notification

### Supplementary Planning Documents

<b>STAGE OF SPD PREPARATION (When)</b>	<b>WHO WILL BE INVOLVED (Who)</b>	<b>LIKELY METHOD OF INVOLVEMENT (How – see para. 8.03)</b>
Pre-production – Evidence gathering; e.g. scoping of site/development constraints  See the Local Development Scheme for timetable of work	Specialist agencies/utilities providers; development interests; land interests; Local groups/bodies who may hold information (dependent on type of document, whether site specific or district-wide)	<b>Dialogue &amp; Group Participation:</b> Letters/telephone calls Email Project meetings
Preparation of and 6 week consultation on draft document together with sustainability appraisal.  Regulation 17  See the Local Development Scheme for timetable of work	Suffolk Coastal LSP Town/Parish Councils Other relevant groups/organisations General Public	<b>Publicity, Dialogue &amp; Group Participation:</b> Website Email Letter Discussion meetings Libraries
Adoption Regulation 19  See the Local Development Scheme for timetable of work	All previously involved in the process	<b>Publicity:</b> Press release Newspaper Notices Website notification

12.02 The representations from LDF consultation exercises will be preferably acknowledged by email where appropriate. However, where email communication is not available to respondents, acknowledgement will be sent via postal addresses. The Council will produce a representations and response summary after each LDF consultation period. Each summary will be published via the Council's website and will be available upon request. At the submission stage of each LDF document, the Council will produce a 'Statement of Compliance' which will set out how consultation has met the community involvement regulations.

All documents produced as part of the Local Development Framework including consultation drafts, will be available from their time of production at the Council's

Offices in Woodbridge as well as through the Council's website. Requests for documents to be made available in another language, large print, Braille or on audio tape can be submitted to the Council and it will do its utmost to help.

12.03 When more formal LDF event consultations have taken place eg. workshops, the Council will produce an 'Event Record' to document the issues raised and discussed at these sessions.

12.04 All consultation representations and relevant Event Record comments, as well as other relevant material eg. Town/Parish plans will inform and be taken into consideration when producing documents related to the Local Development Framework.

### 13. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

13.01 The Council already has a number of successful procedures in place, in order to involve the community in the decision-making process for all planning applications. These procedures already go beyond the statutory requirements set out by the Government and include:

- The display of a notice on every site that is the subject of a planning application.
- Consultation letters to the occupiers of neighbouring properties.
- Consultation letters to others who are considered to be materially affected by the proposal.
- A weekly list of the planning applications received, published on the Council's website and sent to all libraries and local groups/societies who requested it
- Consultation with the relevant parish and town councils (and neighbouring ones if materially affected), including sending a copy of the application.
- Consultation with local societies.
- Consultation with specific organisations e.g. County Highways, Environment Agency.

13.02 The planning application itself is available to be viewed at the Council's office in Woodbridge during normal working hours, as well as being sent to the local parish and town clerk.

13.03 The Council intends to use the methods set out in Table 1, where practical, for various types of planning applications. In particular, where a planning application is likely to be sensitive or highly controversial the Council will, where possible and practicable, hold a public meeting or stage an exhibition. These have been previously carried out with the co-operation and approval of the planning applicant for example, an application for a windfarm and the proposed redevelopment/re-use of a former RAF base. The Council also issues press releases for some applications when it wishes the wider public to be aware.

**Table 1: Community Involvement in Planning Applications**

<b>Applications where there are issues of scale and controversy, or are contrary to/out of line with local development framework policy</b>	<b>Applications broadly in accordance with the local development framework but raising controversial issues or detail</b>	<b>Applications of a scale, or on a site, for which authorities require wider community involvement. Also, applications that fall within sites that are 'sensitive' to development pressures.</b>
Public meetings	Town/Parish Councils	Development briefs

Public exhibitions	Media	Towns/Parish councils
Development briefs	Website	Media
Towns/Parish councils		Website
Media		
Website		

13.04 In all cases the Council encourages potential planning applicants to discuss their proposals with planning officers before submission. To aid this, a suitably qualified member of staff is always available at the Council's Planning Helpdesk. Applicants are also encouraged to discuss their proposals with neighbours and the wider community at pre-application stage.

13.05 Comments received in writing or by email should be submitted as soon as possible although they will be considered right up to the decision being made. All those received will be put on display with the relevant application, they cannot be treated as confidential and, unfortunately, because of sheer volume of numbers cannot be acknowledged. The vast majority of planning applications (82%) are determined by senior officers under delegated authority after full consideration of all comments. Those which are referred to the Development Control Committee or Sub-Committee will be debated in public. Applicants and objectors have the opportunity to speak. Committee minutes, committee reports, new planning applications and application decisions are all published on the Council's website at <http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/meetings/default.htm>

The results of any such consultation will be reported and taken into account in decisions made by, and on behalf of, the Council.

### **Information and Communications Technology**

The Council recognises that information and communications technology is advancing rapidly, that its use is becoming more widespread all the time hence it has many benefits. Accordingly, the Council is committed to modernising its methods of communications and involvement. This may also help to encourage new groups among the public to become involved in the planning process, such as the young. However, use of technology does not suit all those to be involved in planning matters and clear preferences have been expressed by some not to prioritise this approach. This was borne out among many Parish/Town Councils in the initial pre-production consultation stage carried out for this statement; 67% of respondents preferred not to receive future correspondence electronically. Flexibility in approach and a range of tailored methods will therefore be appropriate.

## **14. MONITORING**

14.01 The previous sections have set out the Council's proposed approach to community involvement in the LDF process and the determination of planning applications both in general terms and in specific terms, where appropriate. It would be inappropriate to be overly specific about the exact nature of community involvement in every case. Accordingly, community involvement at each of the various stages of LDF document

production and the determination of planning applications may be tailored to the nature and timing of that document in question, according to what approach is fit for purpose. However, community involvement in LDF documents will have to comply with this SCI. Therefore, when a document is prepared it will include a Statement of Compliance setting out how the Council is involving the community in its preparation.

14.02 The effectiveness of the Council's approach to, and methods of, community involvement will also be monitored by way of:

- Analysing the use of the Council's website
- Asking for feedback from users of the website
- Regular surveys of consultees and respondents to consultation exercises
- Feedback forms to complete after specific events
- Monitoring of press articles
- Random research of employees' views, representing residents and workers in the district
- Random surveys of councillors' views
- Regular surveys of town and parish councils

It is important for the SCI to remain up to date with modern thinking and local circumstances. Some methods over time may become inappropriate for the community or specific hard to reach groups. Therefore, the Statement of Community Involvement will be subject to a minimum period of review of 3 years. The success and effectiveness of the SCI will be reviewed through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

## **15. FURTHER HELP**

The RTPI East of England Planning Aid Service offers assistance and advice on the planning system to individuals and groups who are unable to pay for independent professional planning advice. Planning Aid encourages people to get involved in the planning system to help shape their own environments. The Council supports the work of Planning Aid and will work with the Service to provide an independent element within some of the consultation procedures proposed in this document.

## **APPENDIX 1 – THE TEST OF SOUNDNESS**

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been subject to an examination by an Inspector. At the examination, the Inspector used the following criteria, as set out in Government guidelines, in order to test the soundness of the SCI : -

1. The Council has complied with the legal requirements of production;
2. The Council's strategy for community involvement is cohesive and links with other community involvement initiatives;
3. Sets out generally, the local community groups and other bodies to be consulted;
4. Develops how the local community and other bodies can be involved in a timely and accessible manner;
5. Determines that the consultation methods to be used are suitable for the intended audience and stages in the production of LDDs;
6. Demonstrates that the Council has sufficient resources to manage community involvement efficiently;
7. It can be shown how the results of community involvement will be input into the production of DPDs and SPDs;
8. The Council is equipped for reviewing the statement of community involvement; and
9. The SCI clearly describes the Council's policy for consultation on planning applications.

Source: *ODPM – Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks. Guide to Procedures and Code of Practice (2004) p. 20.*

## APPENDIX 2 – CONSULTATION ORGANISATIONS

This appendix will be updated on a regular basis as the titles of organisations change, new ones are created or some no longer exist. The validity of objections to this appendix will, therefore, be assessed with this in mind.

### Consultee list A

The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations (2004), requires that the following organisations must be consulted: -

- Regional planning body (East of England Regional Assembly) (EERA)
- Regional Development Agency (East of England Development Agency) (EEDA)
- Adjoining LPAs (Suffolk County Council, Essex County Council, Babergh District Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Mid-Suffolk District Council, Waveney District Council)
- The Environment Agency (EA)
- The Countryside Agency (CA)
- English Nature (EN)
- English Heritage (EH)
- Strategic Rail Authority
- Highways Agency
- Strategic Health Authority
- Relevant telecommunications companies
- Relevant electricity and gas companies
- Relevant sewerage and water undertakers

### Consultee list B

Based upon Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) recommendations, the following will be consulted: -

- The Secretary of State (through Government Office for the East of England (GO EAST))
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- Department for Education and Skills (GO EAST)
  
- Department for Transport (GO EAST)
- Department for Trade and Industry (GO EAST)
- Department of Health (through relevant Regional Public Health Group)
- Town and Parish Councils
- HM Prison Service
- Ministry of Defence (MoD)
- Office of Government Commerce (Property Advisers to the Civil Estate)
- Age Concern
- British Geological Society
- British waterways, canal owners and navigation authorities
- Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- Chambers of commerce, local CBI and local branches of the Institute of Directors
- Church commissioners
- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)
- Commission for Racial Equality
- Crown Estate Office
- County Land & Business Association
- Diocesan Board of Finance
- Disability Rights Commission
- Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee
- Environmental groups at national, regional and local level, including CPRE, Friends of the Earth (FoE), RSPB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust.
- Equal Opportunities Commission
- Fire and Rescue services
- Forestry Commission
- Freight Transport Association
- Gypsy Council
- Health and Safety Executive
- Help the Aged
- Corporation
- Learning and Skills councils
- Local Agenda 21 (LA21) groups
- Local public transport operators

- National Playing Fields Association
- Network Rail
- Police architectural liaison officers / crime prevention design advisors
- Port operators
- Post Office Property Holdings
- Rail companies and the Rail Freight Group
- Regional development agencies
- Regional housing boards
- Regional sport boards
- Road Haulage Association
- Sport England
- Sports facility providers
- The Home Builders Federation
- The National Grid Company
- The National Farmers Union
- Traveller Law Reform Coalition
- Women's National Commission

This list is not exhaustive and will be continually updated via the Local Development Framework review process.

### **Consultee list C**

The Council will attempt to involve the following more-local groups where they wish to participate: -

- Local Community Action Groups
- Local Amenity Groups
- Local Resident associations
- Suffolk Coastal Local Strategic Partnership
- Local Area Partnerships
- Local Development Agencies
- Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC)
- Suffolk Coastal Business Forum
- Suffolk Coastal Primary Care Trust
- Local Race Equality Groups
- Land interest groups, owners, developers, agents and consultants
- Local Chambers of Commerce



