

# Greater Cambridge Statement of Community Involvement 2019 – Addendum May 2020

## Amended Practice in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic

This document provides an addendum to the Greater Cambridge Statement of Community Involvement 2019.

It should be read alongside the original document, available to view at:

[www.cambridge.gov.uk/sci](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sci)

[www.scambs.gov.uk/sci](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/sci)

### Introduction

The Councils are committed to keeping essential services running during the Coronavirus outbreak. Planning has an important role to play in supporting our economy and our communities. It is important that we find a way to keep the planning process moving forward. There are a number of ways in which the Councils are 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.

Note: For more general updates about the impact of the Coronavirus outbreak on Council services please visit:

[www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus)

[www.scambs.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/coronavirus)

# Involving the Community at the Planning Application Stage

## Site notices

Following a short period during the early part of Covid19 lockdown where site notices were not being erected, a new process has now been put in place which means that site notices can be displayed in the normal way. Those notices that had not been displayed previously have now been erected. A full 21 day consultation period will be completed in all cases, with the consultation period expiry being 21 days from whichever is the last notification - the neighbour letters, advert or site notice.

## Site Visits

Up until 15 May 2020 Officers have not been carrying out site visits, unless for emergencies or other exceptional circumstances in accordance with Government advice about minimising travel and keeping within the social distancing requirements. This has meant that if you submit a pre-application request or planning application, we ask you to submit good quality photos and other contextual information to help us to assess any impacts of the development. Any emergency site visits that we do carry out will be governed by social distancing requirements and you will be asked a series of triage questions in advance of the visit being arranged.

Measures are now being finalised to allow officers to start making site visits again where possible, subject to required social distancing measures and self-isolation requirements. A site visit protocol will be produced and publicised on the Council websites and site visits will then be conducted in accordance with that protocol.

Whilst it is not possible for members of the Planning Committee to carry out site visits at present, officers will ensure that members have all the information that they require, including photographs and other contextual information, in order make decisions.

## **Hard Copy Documents**

We are currently unable to make available hard copies of planning application documents in either the Council or Parish Council offices as these officers are closed to the public. In certain circumstances, the Council has a statutory duty to make hard copy documents available for inspection at the Council offices and at other locations. In the current circumstances, these documents will be available on the Council websites. The public will be advised by commentary accompanying press notices and site notices of this temporary arrangement, as well as how they can contact the Council via a named officer/officers should residents encounter any issues in accessing these documents. The Council will continue its current practices in respect of notifying neighbouring occupiers of planning applications directly in writing.

## **Decision Making Process**

At present, the decision making process for planning applications remains as it was prior to the Covid-19 outbreak. Following the publication of recent Government legislation, the respective Councils are considering how planning committee meetings can now take place in order to ensure effective decision making. Updates will be provided on this in due course.

## **Planning Enforcement**

As with planning application site visits, we are not currently carrying out site visits, unless for emergencies or other exceptional circumstances in accordance with Government advice about minimising travel and keeping within the social distancing requirements. Such exceptional circumstances could include the demolition of a Listed Building or where alleged unauthorised planning works are causing or are likely to cause other significant and immediate harm.

## 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.' The Greater Cambridge Planning Service has been developing and improving its methods of online consultation and community engagement and we will continue to do so.

Some specific changes are needed to our current methods to reflect to government restrictions in place related to Covid-19. Making plan documents available to view at Council Offices is not possible when the Council offices are closed to visitors. Please refer to the Council's websites for the latest updates. Consultation documents will be made available on the Councils' website. 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.

## How the community can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan or Order

Due to the particular document inspection requirements set out in legislation which applies to proposals for Neighbourhood Plans, the Councils will not currently be taking forward Neighbourhood Plan pre-submission public consultations (Regulation 14), or submission public consultations (Regulation 16). We will keep the situation under review as government advice in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is updated.

The Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government have published a new section to the [on-line planning guidance](#) relating to neighbourhood planning specifically about the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and neighbourhood plans. The guidance also indicates that no referendums can be carried out now until May 2021.

## Appendix 1

### Approaches in Adopted SCI where a revised Approach in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic is now applied.

Page	Paragraph	Text in the Adopted SCI	Revised Approach in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic.
9	Table 1	<p>Consultation Methods:</p> <p>Consultation documents will be available to view on the councils' websites, and at council offices;</p> <p>Public consultation events if appropriate to the nature of the consultation.</p>	<p>Documents will not be available to view at Council Offices until further notice.</p> <p>Any public consultation events will take account of government guidance.</p>
12	Table 2	<p>Consultation Methods:</p> <p>Consultation documents will be available to view on the councils' websites, and at council offices;</p> <p>Public consultation events if appropriate to the nature of the consultation.</p>	<p>Documents will not be available to view at Council Offices until further notice.</p> <p>Any public consultation events will take account of government guidance.</p>
10	3.16	If the Inspector has	Documents will not be

		concluded that the Plan is 'sound' the council will adopt the plan and will publish an adoption statement on their website and make it available to view at council offices	available to view at Council Offices until further notice.
13	3.32	'Upon adoption the SPD will be published together with an adoption statement, made available to view on the councils' websites, and at the councils' main offices during normal working hours.'	Documents will not be available to view at Council Offices until further notice.
13	Table 3 - Regulation 5, 6 and 7 Neighbourhood Area Designation	<p>The relevant qualifying body will be asked to assist the LPA in publicising the consultation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placing information about it in any local newsletters or on their website, and</li> <li>• Placing around their local area at key locations the consultation poster prepared by the council.</li> </ul> <p>Consultation documents available to view on the councils' websites and at council offices during normal working hours; and additionally, at the relevant qualifying body's office or</p>	<p>Any public consultation events or putting up of posters will take account of government guidance.</p> <p>Documents will not be available to view at Council Offices until further notice.</p> <p>Deposit of documents within the</p>

		other appropriate publicly accessible venue within the neighbourhood area.	neighbourhood area will also need to take account of government guidance.
13	Table 3 Regulation 9, 10 and 11 Designation of a neighbourhood forum	The relevant qualifying body will be asked to assist the council in publicising the consultation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placing information about it in any local newsletters or on their website, and</li> <li>• Placing around their local area at key locations the consultation poster prepared by the council.</li> </ul> <p>Consultation documents available to view on the councils' websites and at council offices during normal working hours; and additionally, at the relevant qualifying body's office or other appropriate publicly accessible venue within the neighbourhood area.</p>	Any public consultation events or putting up of posters will take account of government guidance.  Documents will not be available to view at Council Offices until further notice.  Deposit of documents within the neighbourhood area will also need to take account of government guidance.
13	Regulation 15 and 16 Submission	Consultation documents available to view on the councils' websites and at council offices during normal working hours; and	Documents will not be available to view at Council Offices until further notice. Deposit of documents

		additionally, at the relevant qualifying body's office or other appropriate publicly accessible venue within the neighbourhood area.	will need to take account of government guidance.
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