

# Statement of Community Involvement

2020



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the authority intends to achieve continuous community involvement in the preparation of its Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents, Neighbourhood Plans and supporting planning documents. The SCI also covers how people will be engaged in decisions and framework for involving the community on planning applications for development that affect their local areas.
- 1.2 We started work refreshing our SCI before the current Covid-19 pandemic. Since the Government's social distancing guidelines were introduced, we have all had to make major adjustments to how we obtain and receive information. This has meant many of the ways we ensure people know about and are able to comment on planning applications and our emerging planning documents now cannot be used due to current guidance to help combat the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19).
- 1.3 While a challenge this has also been an opportunity. Many of us have become much more familiar with using video conferencing and other digital means to access information and to keep in contact with people. Accordingly, in preparing this update to our SCI, we have taken the opportunity to think more about how we can use digital technology to help present, explain and allow people to discuss and get involved in our new Local Plan and supporting planning documents, alongside keeping people informed and able to comment on planning applications. This also supports the Council's move towards digital solutions and is considered consistent with the council's broader Climate Emergency objectives too. A reduction of hard (paper) copy documents will reduce the amount of resource used in the process of preparing development plans and consulting on planning applications. It may also result in reducing our need to travel and allow people to access information 'virtually' at times that suit them, rather than when buildings are open, or the times when events are being held. This we think this is likely to have a beneficial environmental impact and may well lead to longer term changes in how we do things.
- 1.4 However, we are also very much aware with the move to digital and away from paper and more traditional meetings and drop in events etc. could have implications for those in our communities who are not able to access or use this technology and for those who already experience more inequality than others. This potentially negative impact needs to be carefully considered while we adjust to fully adhering to the Government's guidance about making it safe and easier to operate the planning system in response to the spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19). In the longer term, we also need to ensure reliance to digital techniques does not prevent people from fully participating and sharing their views. The proposed changes to our SCI allow the Council to ensure that inequality is not increased as a result.
- 1.5 Our commitment to effective and meaningful consultation and engagement for plan making and determining planning applications is based on the Council's overarching service values:

- **RESOURCEFUL**  
We care about value for money for local people; using available resources sustainably.
- **CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY FOCUSED**  
We care about our communities, putting them at the heart of what we do; at the same time, we support individuals and groups to play an active role in helping themselves.
- **EMBRACING DIVERSITY**  
We care about diversity and respect and champion equality of opportunity for all.
- **AMBITIOUS AND ADAPTABLE**  
We care about innovation and actively seek out new and better ways of doing things by embracing change and digital ways of working.
- **ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE GROWTH**  
We care about the future of South Gloucestershire and are committed to delivering affordable housing, employment opportunities and infrastructure whilst protecting our environment for future generations.
- **WORKING TOGETHER**  
We care about teamwork, achieving shared goals in collaboration with colleagues, residents and partners.

## Vision

- 1.6 Planning is fundamental to shaping the neighbourhoods in which we all live and work, and it is important that everyone has the opportunity to be involved in and influence decisions that are made through the planning process. We have further emphasised this commitment through the vision for the Council's Environment and Community Services Department which focused on:

*“Creating an extraordinary place where people grow and thrive by having access to the best possible social, community, economic and environmental infrastructure”.*

## A refreshed SCI

- 1.7 Through this revised SCI, the Council aims to continue to promote effective public involvement in the planning process. This will help to make sure that all sections of the community, including people who do not normally get involved in the planning process, have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of place-making. The Council aims to involve local residents, businesses, landowners, groups and organisations, along with other stakeholders such as national and sub-regional organisations, in the planning process. The Council will place an emphasis on making information available in suitable formats, and will make use of the Internet, the local press and existing networks of communication, as appropriate.

- 1.8 The Council adopted its first Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in May 2008 and adopted a refreshed version in 2015. Since 2015, a number of changes have been made to the legislative framework within which the SCI operates, and also through planning reforms introduced by the Government including the publication of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and the [National Planning Policy Guidance \(NPPG\)](#). There have also been changes to the Council's decision making processes and in the use of technology which, combined with the Council's experience of using the SCI, have led to a need to refresh the document.

## Involving the Local Community

- 1.9 The Regulations that support the [Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#) set out the groups that must be consulted during the determination of planning applications and the development of our Local Plan (and associated planning guidance documents). These include stakeholders such as neighbouring Local Authorities, Parish/Town Councils, Government Departments and other groups that represent the interests of various parts of the community.
- 1.10 The 'community' includes individuals, groups and organisations that live, work, visit or operate in South Gloucestershire, including local businesses, developers and landowners, residents associations, the police, schools, amenity and interest groups and service providers. Different groups will have different knowledge and experience of the planning system and their ability to get involved will vary. It is appreciated that those groups and individuals who are known to the Council and have experience of the planning system are easier to involve than those who do not. However, it is important that the Council ensures all sectors of its community are able to access and understand the planning system, and how it makes planning decisions.
- 1.11 Local societies and associations or specific amenity/interest groups often represent many thousands of local residents and many varied communities. These will have varying experience of the planning system and different capabilities to get involved, as they are largely voluntary organisations.
- 1.12 South Gloucestershire Council aims to provide high quality services and information. As explained above, given the ongoing Covid-19 situation we also now want to make better use of opportunities provided by digital technology. We have a Customer Care Charter that sets out the standards we aim to meet. This is available on our website at [www.southglos.gov.uk](http://www.southglos.gov.uk). In respect of responding to requests and queries from members of the public we operate in accordance with this Charter unless a more specific target applies for an individual service, for example in the case of a planning application or representation made to a planning document (such as the Local Plan, or a planning guidance document) where there can be separate rules for how we respond (see Sections 3 and 4 of the SCI).

- 1.13 The Council views community involvement as a continual learning exercise so that the processes and techniques that it uses can be improved and enhanced over time. In order to be truly effective, the Council views community involvement as needing to be:
- Open
  - Transparent
  - Involving of people
  - Empowering of people
- 1.14 Public engagement, consultation and decisions on planning policy matters and in handling planning applications are central to partnership working and to sustainable development. The Council has already established ways of working with a wide range of interest groups. When preparing the Local Plan (and associated planning guidance documents) the aim is to build on that existing good practice, to make best use of existing communication channels and to work hard to improve how we provide opportunities for hard to hear groups to be better involved.

## Partnership Working

- 1.15 The Council works with many partners who represents a diverse range of sectors and interests within South Gloucestershire, at a local and a West of England level, as well as regionally, nationally and internationally. Partnerships are a significant feature of delivering high quality public services. Flexibility, innovation and many other benefits allow partnerships to address issues that individual organisations could not tackle alone. The voluntary and community sectors have vital roles to play in engaging communities, helping to give people a voice and in engaging hard to hear communities.
- 1.16 The Council will ensure that its consultation and involvement procedures for the production of documents in the Local Plan (and supporting policy documents) comply with the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the need for Equalities Impact Assessments is considered.

## 2

# HOW WE WILL CONSULT ON PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENTS

## What are our planning policy documents?

- 2.1 The Local Plan is a statutory document setting out policies, allocations & safeguards for the future development and use of land within the authority, which guide decisions on future development.
- 2.2 Supplementary Planning Documents 'amplify' policies that are set out in the Local Plan. This means that they do not actually make policy, instead where necessary they help to explain in more detail specific parts of policy within the Local Plan.
- 2.3 The range of currently adopted Planning Policy Documents can be accessed here: [Planning policy | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](https://www.southglos.gov.uk/planning-policy).
- 2.4 In this chapter we explain the process of plan preparation and how we will involve the local community and statutory consultees throughout the process. We also describe how the results of community consultation will be used and how Sustainability Appraisals will be conducted. Please be aware that for specific stages of plan preparation periods of consultation and other requirements are set out in planning regulations<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.5 When raising awareness and advertising consultation periods on both the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents, we will explain what is happening at each stage and how the community can make a difference and have a say.
- 2.6 We will also try, but cannot guarantee, to avoid consultation periods falling during the main substantial public holidays, i.e. the summer holiday period or Christmas.

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The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012



## Local Plan Consultation Database

- 2.7 The Council aims to give the whole community the opportunity to influence the content of the plans for future development in South Gloucestershire. To this end, the Council maintains an extensive consultation database of interested parties, including voluntary organisations and community groups based in and around South Gloucestershire. Individual, groups and bodies will be informed at each key consultation stage and advised of the procedure for making representations. If you would like to be added to the Council's local plan consultation database so that you are kept informed of progress and key milestones in the preparation of planning policy documents, please contact us by emailing [planningpolicy@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@southglos.gov.uk).

## General publicity on Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents

- 2.8 The Council's website, particularly the Planning Policy pages will be a key source of information during the preparation of all planning documents. All documentation that can be made available electronically will be published online, this includes consultation documents, supporting material and representations received at each stage of plan making.

## Key Steps & Involvement in Producing Local Plans

- 2.9 These stages are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. There are five broad stages of community involvement in the production of Local Plans – these are summarised below along with an explanation of what each stage involves and set of tasks that will be undertaken at each stage.



Stage	What does it involve?
<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Preparation of a Local Plan</b> (Regulation 18)</p> <p>and</p> <p><b>informal engagement</b></p> <p><b>The “informal” consultation stage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Survey and evidence gathering</li> <li>■ Collating up to date information on social, environmental and economic matters</li> <li>■ Consultation documents will be published electronically to the Council's website</li> <li>■ All interested parties are invited to make representations on key issues, potentially relevant to the plan being prepared for example: options and emerging approaches and development areas/sites.</li> <li>■ Likely to include a whole range of consultation and engagement processes and techniques, formal and informal, targeted and not targeted</li> <li>■ An initial Sustainability Appraisal, informed by a Scoping Report will be presented.</li> <li>■ Key technical studies, any consultation documents and supporting material will be made available on the council's website</li> <li>■ Responses made to initial documents and technical evidence will be considered in preparing a draft version of the Plan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Publication of a Local Plan</b> (Regulations 19)</p> <p>and</p> <p><b>Representations relating to a Local Plan</b> (Regulation 20)</p> <p><b>The “formal” consultation stage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A “Draft Plan document” will be published electronically to the Council's website and made available to view in a hard copy format at the Council's One Stop Shops.</li> <li>■ A Sustainability Appraisal Report will accompany the draft plan and be made available</li> <li>■ Copies of the draft plan and associated documents are made available for inspection for (a minimum of) 6 weeks.</li> <li>■ All interested parties are invited to make formal representations on the plan.</li> <li>■ Responses made to this draft will be considered in preparing the Submission version of the Plan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Submission of a Local Plan</b> (Regulation 22)</p> <p><b>Submission stage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A copy of the proposed Local Plan and any associated documents are submitted to the Secretary of State for ‘examination’.</li> </ul> <p>The Council also provides all representations made at the “Formal” Reg 19 Stage to the Secretary of State.</p>

Stage	What does it involve?
<p>4 <b>Examination</b> (Regulation 24)</p> <p><b>Examination stage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ An Independent Inspector is appointed to examine the Submitted Plan. The Inspector leads this part of the process, setting an Agenda for examining the plan, through formal hearing sessions where specific matters which will be discussed, as well as taking into account other matters arising through written submissions</li> <li>■ At this stage, the Inspector may invite representations in relation to how the Plan (or part of it) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate and any other relevant legal and procedural requirements, and whether it is considered to be 'sound'.</li> <li>■ The Council cannot consider new representations at this stage. The inspector may provide opportunities for additional statements to be made, to elaborate on key issues.</li> <li>■ Formal hearing sessions take place, which form part of the examination of the plan.</li> </ul>
<p>4 <b>Inspectors Report</b> (Regulation 25)</p> <p><b>Examination Stage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Inspector will produce a report setting out recommendations to changes that he/she feels necessary for it to be considered sound.</li> <li>■ The Inspector's Report is not binding on the Council, but the recommendations made cannot be ignored and must be given very serious attention. The Council can also suggest their own modifications to the Inspector during the examination, as well as making minor non- material changes themselves.</li> <li>■ Where significant modifications are required to the Plan a formal stage of consultation on the modification will take place.</li> <li>■ Representations are invited on significant changes and any responses to this period of consultation are sent directly to the Planning Inspector to consider.</li> </ul>
<p>5 <b>Adoption</b> (Regulation 26)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Following receipt of the Inspector's Report the Council will make the necessary changes to the document and then adopt and publish the document together with its sustainability appraisal and a full adoption statement.</li> <li>■ A six week period to allow for a legal challenge begins once the adopted document and adoption statement are released.</li> <li>■ Once adopted the Plan achieves the full status of the Development Plan as the basis for determining planning applications (as per Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Section 38(6)).</li> </ul>

- 2.10 Further information about the stages of plan-making and examination are available in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making>.

## Duty to Cooperate

- 2.11 In addition to statutory consultation requirements, Section 110 of the [Localism Act 2011](#) introduced a duty to co-operate in relation to planning of sustainable development. The 'duty to cooperate', as it is generally known, requires local planning authorities to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with one another and with other specified bodies known as 'prescribed bodies' (such as the Environment Agency, English Heritage and the Homes and Communities Agency) to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic matters that cross local authority borders.
- 2.12 The Duty to Cooperate requires ongoing co-operation with prescribed bodies from the very start of the process and is the first test that will be considered in an examination of a Local Plan. If it cannot be demonstrated that the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate have been complied with, the examination will not proceed any further.
- 2.13 Because the Duty to Cooperate is separate from community involvement and will also be dependent on the timescales and processes of other bodies, this SCI does not set out how cross-boundary engagement will be undertaken. Further information about the Duty to Cooperate is available in paragraphs 24 to 27 of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and in the [National Planning Practice Guidance \(NPPG\)](#).

## Key Steps in Producing Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

- 2.14 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) supplement policy in higher level Local Plan Documents. They are not able to make entirely new policy or make land use allocations. Examples of SPDs include briefs for specific sites, particularly where they are identified in an adopted Local Plan, or detailed guidelines on matters such as sustainable design or parking standards are to be applied.
- 2.15 There are fewer preparation and consultation stages involved in preparing an SPD. These are summarised in the table below.

Stage	What does it involve?
<p>1 <b>Pre-Production</b> (Evidence Gathering)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Informal Community Involvement</li> <li>■ Input may be sought from particular bodies that are relevant to the subject matter of the SPD prior to preparing the initial draft in Stage 2.</li> <li>■ Initial involvement is not a statutory stage in preparing an SPD.</li> </ul>
<p>2 <b>Public participation</b> (Regulation 12)</p> <p>and</p> <p><b>Representations on Supplementary Planning Documents</b> (Regulation 13)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Information gathered at the pre-production stage to produce a draft SPD</li> <li>■ Copies of the Draft SPD (and any associated documents e.g. Sustainability Appraisal and/ or Equalities Impact Assessment) are made available for inspection for (a minimum of) 4 weeks and more usually 6 weeks.</li> </ul>
<p>3 <b>Production of final Supplementary Planning Document</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Responses made to consultation on the draft SPD will be considered in preparing the final version.</li> <li>■ A statement will be prepared setting out: who has been consulted; a summary of the main issue raised; and how they have been addressed in preparing the final SPD.</li> </ul>
<p>4 <b>Adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document</b> (Regulation 14)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The final SPD will then be adopted and published accompanied by an adoption statement.</li> <li>■ A copy of the adoption statement will be given to all those who responded as well as those who requested to be kept informed of the outcome.</li> </ul>

## Consultation on Sustainability Appraisals (SA)

- 2.16 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is required for Local Plans and may be required for some types of SPD. This will test the policies and proposals against sustainability objectives and enable them to be modified where appropriate to mitigate potential adverse effects. Put simply, it assesses the environmental, economic and social impacts of a plan or policy. Sustainability appraisals will be published for consultation alongside Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 2.17 The requirement for Sustainability Appraisal came from the requirements of the European ‘Strategic Environmental Assessment’ Directive 2001/42/EC, which seeks to assess plans to see specifically how they will affect the environment. Strategic Environmental Assessment is a distinct requirement from Sustainability Appraisal, although both processes are combined into a single Sustainability Appraisal process for the purposes of producing Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 2.18 In developing the Sustainability Appraisal for each policy document the statutory consultees and other relevant stakeholders will be consulted on the ‘scope’ of the Sustainability Appraisal. This will be done by producing a ‘Scoping Report’ that will be circulated to interested parties and statutory consultees. A Scoping Report sets out the main issues and how the Sustainability Appraisal will be carried out.
- 2.19 There are three statutory consultees that, as a minimum, the Scoping Report must be circulated to for comment. These are:
- Natural England;
  - Environment Agency; and
  - English Heritage

## Methods of Involving and Engaging

- 2.20 The tables below summarise examples of consultation/ involvement methods that could be employed at each document production stage and which groups will be involved at each stage. It is not exhaustive and other methods could also be used. In setting this out, we have also thought about how digital/ virtual techniques could be used to present, explain, and allow people who might not have previously got involved to do so. The intention is a selection from the portfolio of techniques described will be chosen, taking account of any relevant Covid-19 issues that may exist at the time, as appropriate depending on the type of plan and stage of production. Appendix 3 adds to this by setting out in greater detail the use and effectiveness of each of these methods. Appendix 4 then lists how these techniques will be used to target different sections of the community.
- 2.21 Not all sections of the community will want to be involved in the same way. How people wish to be involved may depend on the issues at stake or the stage in the planning process that has been reached. There may be other methods not listed here that could be used and we would like to hear any other ideas for effective communication.

Table ①

## Potential methods used and groups involved at each Local Plan involvement stage

Involvement Stage	Example of likely consultation/involvement methods	Which type of groups can expect to be involved
<b>Preparation of a Local Plan</b> (Regulation 18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Emerging Plan Documents and supporting technical documents, available on website, at one-stop shops and libraries</li> <li>■ Email</li> <li>■ Media/ social media</li> <li>■ Focus groups</li> <li>■ Workshops</li> <li>■ Exhibitions</li> <li>■ Questionnaires</li> <li>■ Leaflets to households and businesses when effective to do so)</li> <li>■ Citizens Panels</li> <li>■ Council newsletters</li> <li>■ Virtual exhibitions and digital interactive place shaping/ design-led techniques</li> <li>■ digital consultations e.g. webinars</li> <li>■ video conferencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Any representative organisations/interest groups who would like to contribute to the identification of issues and options</li> <li>■ Elected members &amp; Parish/Town Councils.</li> <li>■ Prescribed bodies</li> <li>■ General public</li> <li>■ Contacts on the consultation database</li> <li>■ Relevant developers and planning consultants with clients with local land interests</li> </ul>

Involvement Stage	Example of likely consultation/involvement methods	Which type of groups can expect to be involved
<p><b>Publication of a Local Plan</b> (Regulation 19)</p> <p>and</p> <p><b>Representations relating to a Local Plan</b> (Regulation 20)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Draft document available on website, at one-stop shops and libraries</li> <li>■ Council newsletters</li> <li>■ Media/ social media</li> <li>■ Website</li> <li>■ Focus groups/ stakeholder meetings</li> <li>■ Letters/email</li> <li>■ Exhibitions</li> <li>■ Virtual exhibitions and digital interactive place shaping/ design-led techniques</li> <li>■ digital consultations e.g. webinars</li> <li>■ video conferencing</li> </ul>	<p>As above</p> <p>Those who made representations at Regulation 18 stage.</p>
<p><b>Submission of a Local Plan</b> (Regulation 22)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Draft document available on website, at one-stop shops and libraries</li> <li>■ Letters/email</li> <li>■ Council newsletter</li> <li>■ Media/ social media</li> <li>■ Virtual exhibitions</li> <li>■ digital consultations e.g. webinars</li> <li>■ video conferencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Any individuals or groups that have made representations at the Reg 19 stage.</li> </ul>



Involvement Stage	Example of likely consultation/involvement methods	Which type of groups can expect to be involved
<b>Examination of a Local Plan</b> (Regulation 24 - 26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Formal written representations – made to appointed planning inspector.</li> <li>■ Attendance at Examination in Public hearing sessions, video conferencing</li> <li>■ Letters/email</li> <li>■ Media/ social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Individual, Organisations, and consultation bodies that have made representations at Regulation 19, and/ or</li> <li>■ Any persons/groups that have informed Planning Inspectorate that wish to appear at Examination in Public hearing sessions.</li> </ul>

Table ②

**Likely methods used and groups involved at each Supplementary Planning Document (SPDs) involvement stage**

Involvement Stage	Example of likely consultation/involvement methods	Which type of groups can expect to be involved
<b>Pre-Production and informal Community Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Letters</li> <li>■ Website</li> <li>■ Workshops</li> <li>■ Questionnaires</li> <li>■ Virtual exhibitions and digital interactive place shaping/ design-led techniques</li> <li>■ digital consultations e.g. webinars</li> <li>■ video conferencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Specific consultees</li> <li>■ All site specific or district-wide groups and stakeholders as appropriate to the particular SPD</li> </ul>

Involvement Stage	Example of likely consultation/ involvement methods	Which type of groups can expect to be involved
<p><b>Public participation</b> (Regulation 12)</p> <p>and</p> <p><b>Representations on SPDs</b> (Regulation 13)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Letters/email</li> <li>■ Council newsletter</li> <li>■ Media/ social media</li> <li>■ Draft document available on website, at One Stop Shops and libraries</li> <li>■ Virtual exhibitions and digital interactive place shaping/ design-led techniques</li> <li>■ digital consultations e.g. webinars</li> <li>■ video conferencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Specific consultees</li> <li>■ All site specific or district-wide groups and stakeholders as appropriate to the particular SPD</li> <li>■ Statutory stakeholder groups</li> </ul>

## Using the Results of Community Involvement and Feeding Back

- 2.22 Not everyone will support proposals emerging through Local Plan(s) and Supplementary Planning Document preparation process.
- 2.23 Some issues cannot be significantly altered, as they must be in conformity with the policies set out in the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#). For other matters there may be scope to take on board changes and amendments that are suggested by the community. We are committed to giving people the opportunity to make their views known and to have them considered, although it will not always be possible for everyone's views to be accepted. This information will be used to inform decisions alongside other comments we receive, government guidance and/or policies and our evidence base. By involving people from the outset we hope to balance competing needs and reach a consensus. We will be clear from the outset of all community involvement activities, about their scope and possible influence, to avoid raising unrealistic expectations.
- 2.24 Responses made during consultation stages will be considered and the results/ evidence used to inform decisions and/or shape the documents, alongside government legislation, regulations and national policy. Reports will be prepared at the end of statutory consultation periods to identify the key issues made and how views have been considered and documents changed in light of community involvement. These will summarise the main issues and identify how they have been taken into account.
- 2.25 We will also advise by email as our preferred means of keeping in touch respondents, statutory bodies and anyone who has asked to be notified about key milestones in plan preparation.

## Neighbourhood Planning

- 2.26 Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the [Localism Act 2011](#). It allows a qualifying body to draw up their own plans and policies for their area including Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders or Community Right to Build Orders. These plans and policies must be in general conformity with the Council's adopted Local Plan documents as well as meet the basic conditions.
- 2.27 As they are not prepared by the Council, the SCI does not prescribe what methods of community engagement they must follow. The size and complexity of the plan or order and the appropriate level of community engagement will be decided on by the group preparing the Plan, known as the 'qualifying body'. In supporting communities preparing neighbourhood plans we would encourage them to follow wherever possible the general principles and techniques set out in the SCI including where practical and cost effective the use of digital techniques.
- 2.28 The Council does have a statutory obligation to be involved in certain stages of Neighbourhood Development Plan preparation as detailed in the appropriate regulations. The table below outlines where the council has key inputs into the plan making process and where it will assume an advice and assist role outside of these inputs.

### Table ③

**Key Stages of the Neighbourhood Plan Making Process Where Local Planning Authority Input is required.**

Stage of Neighbourhood Plan Making	Key council inputs
<p><b>Step 1. Designating a Neighbourhood Plan Area &amp; Neighbourhood Plan Forum</b> (Regulation 5, 6 &amp; 7 Neighbourhood Plan Area) (Regulations 8, 9 &amp; 10 Neighbourhood Plan Forum)</p>	<p>The local planning authority must publicise and consult on the area application for a minimum of 6 weeks (except where the area covers the entire parish).</p> <p>The local planning authority must publicise and consult on the forum application for a minimum of six weeks (where no town or parish council exists).</p>
<p><b>Step 2. Preparing a Draft Neighbourhood Plan or Order</b></p>	<p>No direct input required from the local authority but instead assumes advice and assist role.</p> <p>The local planning authority will be required to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion. The statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Natural England &amp; The Environment Agency) must be given 4 weeks opportunity to comment.</p>

Stage of Neighbourhood Plan Making	Key council inputs
<p><b>Step 3. Pre-submission Publicity and Consultation</b> (Regulation 14)</p>	<p>No direct input required from the local authority but instead assumes advice and assist role.</p> <p>The Screening Opinion determines if a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.</p>
<p><b>Step 4. Submission of a Neighbourhood Plan or Order Proposal to the Local Planning Authority</b> (Regulation 15 &amp; 16)</p>	<p>The local planning authority must publicise the proposals for a minimum of six weeks.</p>
<p><b>Step 5. Independent Examination</b> (Regulation 17)</p>	<p>The local planning authority sends the Plan/ Order and representation to the independent examiner</p> <p>The local planning authority considers the examiner's report and reaches own view</p> <p>The local planning authority takes the decision on whether to send the plan/Order to referendum</p>
<p><b>Step 6 &amp; 7. Referendum and Bringing the Neighbourhood Plan or Order Into Force</b> (Regulation 18 &amp; 19)</p>	<p>The council publishes the information statement</p> <p>The council publishes notice of referendum</p> <p>The council organises the referendum to take place within the plan area</p> <p>The plan is 'made' at Full Council</p>

- 2.29 The Council has a statutory duty to advise and assist qualifying bodies involved in neighbourhood planning. The Council will play the role of a partner and critical friend in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. Further information on neighbourhood planning can be viewed on the Council's website: <https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning> including a neighbourhood planning protocol which sets out our commitment to providing advice and support.

## 3

# HOW WE WILL INFORM, ENGAGE AND CONSULT ON DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

3.

3.1

Our policy is to ensure every planning application is supported with a level of publicity and consultation that is appropriate to the size and nature of the proposal. We will also need to ensure this is undertaken in ways that ensure the council complies with guidance to help combat the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19). This is likely to involve the greater use of video conferencing and other digital techniques. This section sets out our approach to consultation on planning applications.

## Pre-application Engagement

3.2

The Council offers pre-application advice to those thinking about submitting a planning application but who want to get an idea of the suitability of their scheme before they actually submit the application. The benefit of this service is that it helps people to<sup>2</sup>:

- Verify the list of local information requirements that may be required to support the planning application
- Reduce the likelihood of submitting invalid applications
- Understand how planning policies and other requirements affect your proposals
- Assess the likelihood of your scheme getting planning permission
- Avoid unnecessary expenses

A charge is made for all pre-application advice. A list of the current charges can be found at <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/planning>

Prospective applicants should complete the 'Pre-application advice form' (available on the Council's website), to which a response will be made.

For significant development, major, very major or significant sites, please refer to paragraph 3.14 for preferred pre-application processes.

<sup>2</sup> For significant development, major, very major or significant sites\* , please refer to paragraph 3.14 for preferred pre-application processes. \* Major development = 10-199 dwellings, 1-4 ha 1,000 – 10,000m<sup>2</sup> commercial floorspace, Very Major or Significant sites = over 200 dwellings, over 4ha, over 10,000m<sup>2</sup> commercial floor space.

For further advice please refer to the Council's website at <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/planning> or contact the planning helpdesk on 01454 868004.

## How we publicise and involve people in planning decisions

3.3 Our current practice, where we consult residents by letter widely (and significantly in excess of statutory requirements) was introduced many years ago when other means of accessing information about planning applications were much more limited. Since then there has been a significant widening in the opportunities for people to be informed about and engage with the way planning decisions are made. While in due course it might be appropriate to review the extent of our direct consultation, not least to address the increasing cost of this service, we are not proposing to make changes at this time. Our decision has been influenced by the restrictions currently in place due to Covid-19, which might make it more difficult for some to access information in their usual way, meaning that it is important that we do not make changes which might reduce access to information. This decision will however be kept under active review.

3.4 Anyone is welcome to make comments. The Government has set out statutory requirements that every council needs to follow where they have responsibility for determining planning applications, see: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents>  
As an overview, depending on the type of application, the following processes will apply in South Gloucestershire.

- Details of all planning applications, including the application forms, drawings and any supporting statements are available to view on the Council's website<sup>3</sup>. The website also includes an on-line form to allow easy submission of any comments about an application. Planning applications should be submitted via the planning portal (<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>).  
Details about how to access the Council's website are included in all correspondence we send to people about planning applications;
- On all applications we will send neighbour notification cards to the occupiers of properties immediately adjoining the proposed development site and where there are no adjoining properties we will display a site notice. This is to inform people of the date they have to respond which is usually 21 days. Additional time to comment may be provided on applications where this is prescribed by legislation for applications for development potentially affecting a SSSI. Any queries regarding consultation on specific development proposals should be directed to registration team.

☎ Phone Number: **01454 863140**  
✉ Email: [registrationservice@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:registrationservice@southglos.gov.uk)

- We post a site notice where there is a statutory requirement to do so, which includes, on all sites where there is a requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment, sites where the development if approved, would be contrary to the policy of the Development Plan, and proposals affecting a Public Right of Way.
- Depending on the location, scale and use proposed, the Council may seek to involve communities in adjoining local authority areas<sup>4</sup> to help assess the impacts of development;
- **Weekly lists** showing planning applications received and decided by the Council, as well as planning and enforcement appeals received and decided by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) are published to the Council's website.
- Details of all planning applications can be viewed at the Council's three One Stop Shops at Yate, Kingswood and Patchway.
- Customer enquiries on planning applications can be made by phoning our Corporate Contact Centre on **01454 868004**;
- Some applications (listed building, conservation area and certain types of major applications) legally require newspaper publicity. These will appear fortnightly in the statutory notices section of The Western Daily Press which has full coverage within South Gloucestershire;
- Elected district Councillors are notified of all applications. Members of the public are able to contact their local Councillor to discuss planning applications;
- Parish and Town Councils are consulted on all planning applications in their areas;
- Depending on the type and location of the application we are required by law to consult with a range of statutory and non-statutory bodies, such as the Environment Agency and Highways Agency;
- Professional advice may also be sought from teams and departments within the Council who have expertise in landscape design, ecology, trees (arboriculture), environmental protection (noise, pollution, drainage, licensing), transport, urban design, planning policy and legal matters. Where the Council consider it necessary, external advice is sought, for example, from/on land contamination, aviation, agricultural and equestrian issues, viability issues, structural engineers and barristers/QCs;

Once a planning application has been decided, the full text of the officer's report and the decision notice, including conditions or reasons for refusal, are also published on our website. The report will always summarise any comments received and provide the officer's assessment of the application.

4

For major and very major planning applications with potential impacts in the Bristol City Council administrative area, the Council may expect prospective planning applicants to initially contact the Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network (NPN) at [networkadministrator@bristolnbn.net](mailto:networkadministrator@bristolnbn.net).



## Permitted Development

- 3.5 Permitted development that does not require planning permission is outlined in the Government's General Permitted Development Order (GDPO). Some 'permitted development' requires the consultation of adjacent neighbours or the 'prior approval' of the Local Planning Authority/Council. The GDPO is available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1995/418/contents/made>

## Use of technology

- 3.6 The use of websites, email and the electronic storage and exchange of information is a part of modern day life for many people. Over the last few years the Council has developed its Planning webpages to offer a wide choice of information and advice to people who prefer and expect to receive and handle information via websites and by e-mail. In response to the current Covid-19 circumstances and to support the Council's move towards digital solutions, the aim will be to place more emphasis on electronic consultation. Without having to visit Council offices, users of the planning service can now:

- submit, pay for and track their planning applications on-line;
- use the Council's 'Local Connection' website facility to find out about planning applications in their area – [www.southglos.gov.uk/planning](http://www.southglos.gov.uk/planning)
- view the weekly lists of new applications online;
- view planning appeal weekly lists;
- from our website search for application details and correspondence by street name, post code or reference number, or by searching the weekly or monthly list of applications, making it easy to see which applications might affect you; and
- view all correspondence relating to all applications and choose to comment on-line

- 3.7 However, while websites and e-mail provide people with more choice to contact the Council at times and ways that suit them, we know this does not always suit everyone. The Council is keen to promote the use of its website for handling planning applications. However, we must be careful this will not be to the disadvantage or exclusion of people and organisations that either do not have access to the internet or prefer to use more traditional methods and techniques. In cases where digital methods are not appropriate, potential solutions can be looked into on a case by case basis via the registration team.

- ☎ Phone Number: [01454 863140](tel:01454863140)
- ✉ Email: [registrationservice@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:registrationservice@southglos.gov.uk)

- 3.8 As part of the Council's wider Information and Computer Technology strategy, we are intending to move to consulting all Parish and Town Council's (who receive details of all planning applications in their respective areas) through our web-based consultation system.

## How are planning applications determined and decisions made?

- 3.9 Depending on the type of application and level of comments made, planning applications will be decided by planning officers either under what is known as 'delegated authority' (where the power to determine specified applications has been specifically delegated by the Council to the Planning Department's Director), or by elected Councillors at Committee meetings. The rules that set out which applications are and are not delegated can be found in the Council's Constitution which is available on the Council's website or on request.  
<https://www.southglos.gov.uk//documents/ConstitutionproducedOctober2020-V1.pdf>.
- 3.10 The majority of applications are handled under delegated authority. This involves the Case Officer preparing a short report, which is scrutinised and authorised by the Development Manager or their deputy.
- 3.11 The Council also operates a 'circulated schedule' procedure whereby each week certain reports are circulated to all Members. The rules are set out in the Constitution. Members have five working days to consider the Officer's recommendation, and have the option to refer the application to Committee. Applications may appear on circulated schedule if they:
- are applications made by South Gloucestershire Council
  - Where there are 3 or more comments made contrary to the officer's recommendation
  - Where a parish council makes comments contrary to the officer's recommendation
  - Where an elected ward member makes comments contrary to the officer's recommendation
- 3.12 Unless applications are referred to a Development Management Committee by the Director on the basis of strategic importance, applications are only available for referral by members when they appear on the circulated schedule. The rules by which members can refer applications is contained in the council's Constitution.
- 3.13 Where applications are referred to a committee, the report schedules are available a week before the committee meeting. The minutes of a particular committee are available by viewing the papers for the following meeting at which they are approved.
- 3.14 For all applications, the Case Officer prepares a report summarising the consultation responses and other issues that are all taken into consideration when determining the application. Further information about the planning application process is available on the Council's website  
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/search-planning-applications>

## Pre-application engagement for major development sites

- 3.15 For major sites (over 10 homes and or 1ha, 1000m<sup>2</sup> commercial floorspace) the Council will encourage developers to undertake pre-application consultation tailored to the scale, complexity and nature of the proposals. This could range from a simple letter to neighbours and local Councillors inviting comment, through to a full exhibition or workshop. The subsequent Design and Access Statement (DAS) should reflect how any issues raised have been addressed in the proposals. Further guidance and advice for developers about how effective engagement can be undertaken and ‘what would good look like?’ will be provided on our website at Pre-application planning advice | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council ([southglos.gov.uk](https://www.southglos.gov.uk)).
- 3.16 For major sites, and where required through statute, the Council will expect preparation of a Design and Access Statement (DAS). The Design and Access Statement provides a framework for applicants to explain how a proposed development is a suitable response to the site and it demonstrates that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users. A DAS must explain how the design principles and concepts have been applied to the proposed development. It must also demonstrate how the proposed development’s context has influenced the design. The Statement must explain the applicant’s approach to access and how relevant Development Plan policies have been taken into account, any consultation undertaken in relation to access issues, and how the outcome of this consultation has informed the proposed development. To help ensure information explaining how the consultation was undertaken, community feedback received and how this has been taken into account is easily accessible, the council would recommend this is presented separately to other technical matters covered by the DAS and is written in a way a general member of the public would easily understand. Applicants must also explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the proposed development have been addressed. The level of detail in a Design and Access Statement should be proportionate to the complexity of the application.
- 3.17 Prior to a decision, comments can be made on planning applications. Case files contain all of the comments. These are available to view on our website or electronically at any of our three One Stop Shops. In general, all comments are open to the public for inspection unless they are protected by legal privilege or contain sensitive commercial, financial or personal information.
- 3.18 The Council has statutory targets for determining applications; 13 weeks for major applications, 16 weeks for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) application and 8 weeks for all others. The Council will use the information received in the application stage to inform the determination of the application. This is considered along with the appropriate Local Plan policies, national guidance and other supporting ‘material considerations’ such as relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents and technical advice.
- 3.19 The Council will expect public engagement and consultation in the preparation of the Design and Access Statement. Comments made should be recorded and addressed in refining the design response to the site and the preparation of design principles that will guide development.

- 3.20 The Council supports the principle that the planning system should be planned and will expect sites of typically over 1,000 dwellings (or equivalent) or those which would depart significantly from established planning policy, to be promoted through the Local Plan and SPD processes.
- 3.21 Where a developer/agent intends to submit an application for a non-allocated site, the Council will expect the developer/agent to undertake pre-application community engagement of a scale and type proportionate to the development.
- 3.22 Where appropriate with relevant developers/ parties we might consider the council using its resources to run partners consultations, to help them engage with the public.

**Table 4**

MAJOR, SUPER MAJOR OR SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT SITES			
Stage	Major Sites	Super Major or significant sites**	Who?
<b>Planning Policy</b>	Issues report Public engagement/ consultation (desirable)	Issues report Public engagement workshop Potentially a Supplementary Planning Document	Council Council Council
<b>Outline planning application*</b>	Design and Access Statement Pre-application community consultation	Design and Access Statement Master Plan Pre-application community consultation	Developer Developer Developer (in consultation with Council)
<b>Prior to reserved matters application*</b>		Scalable Masterplan Design Code submitted (and agreed by the Council where appropriate). Consultation with members and key stakeholders where appropriate	Developer Developer  Developer

\* Further guidance and advice about how effective engagement can be undertaken will be provided on our website at <https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/pre-application-planning-advice>

- 3.23 Proposals for waste and minerals related developments vary in scale, potential impact and design issues. Proposals for public engagement for this type of development should be discussed with Officers and agreed at a very early stage based on principles established for other forms of development.

## Involvement on major and super major planning applications with potential cross-boundary impacts

- 3.24 Major and very major planning proposals have the potential to have impacts in adjoining local authority areas. The Council wishes to ensure that neighbouring communities, organisations and local authorities likely to be affected by major or very major planning applications are informed about and have opportunities to shape these proposals, including identifying any actions that may be necessary to reduce the harm/ impact of development. This will be achieved by effective engagement at:

### ① Pre-application stage

Where a pre-application proposal is under consideration and there are likely to be cross-boundary impacts, the Council may informally consult the relevant adjoining local authorities at the earliest practicable opportunity.

For major or very major applications the Council will expect prospective planning applicants at the earliest possible stage in developing their proposals to carry out effective engagement with local communities in adjoining local authority areas.

### ② Receipt of planning application

Where planning applications are received for major or very major sites which may have cross-boundary impacts, the Council may consult the affected adjoining local authorities in the following ways:

- The application case officer may discuss the proposal with planning officers from the adjoining Council(s) and identify how any issues of concern could be resolved and / or mitigated.
- Liaise with the adjoining Council(s) regarding any procedures they have for working with neighbourhood/ community based forum. Attendance at these meetings may be required where relevant and appropriate.
- Information presented to the planning committee making a decision on the planning application will include details of any impact of the proposal on the adjoining area(s) and comments received.
- Joint briefings and site visits by the planning committees of the relevant Councils may be held when necessary.

- 3.25 Where cross-boundary impacts arise and planning obligations are required to mitigate these impacts, an appropriate mechanism to secure these obligations will be discussed with the neighbouring authority.

## What happens after a decision is taken?

- 3.26 Whether a decision is made by officers under delegated powers, or by elected councillors at a Development Management Committee, in addition to the applicant, anybody who responded to the consultation is informed of the decision and the reason for the decision. The Council's website also holds a copy of decision notices.

## How are people involved when planning decisions are appealed against?

- 3.27 There are no third party rights of appeal. Only applicants can appeal against a planning decision. The appeal is made to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).
- 3.28 If you responded to the original planning application you will be advised that an appeal has been received. These and any copies of previous correspondence will be sent electronically to the Planning Inspectorate.
- 3.29 The Government has set out statutory advice that the Council must follow for hearings and Public Inquiries. For hearings and public inquiries, a site notice is published giving the date, time and location of the hearing/ inquiry. Anybody can attend and in some instances, local people may be able to speak at hearings and inquiries by making arrangements with the Inspector. Further details about the planning appeal process are available from the PINS website (<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planninginspectorate>).
- 3.30 Anyone who wishes to be notified of an appeal decision can request to receive this information from PINS. The Council will publish appeal decisions to its website alongside the relevant planning application.

## 4

# CONSULTATION ON MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- 4.1 Major infrastructure projects may comprise significant local projects that go through the normal planning application process, or Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) that are examined by the Planning Inspectorate and determined by the relevant Secretary of State (SoS). NSIPs are large-scale developments of national importance such as new trunk roads, airports, harbours, power generating stations (incl. wind farms or nuclear), and electricity transmission lines. They require a type of permission known as a 'Development Consent Order' (DCO) and the relevant procedures are governed by the [Planning Act 2008](#) (as amended).
- 4.2 The 2008 Planning Act sets the decision-making process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), including a duty on project promoters to ensure that proposals for Major Infrastructure Projects are properly prepared and consulted on before they submit an application for development consent. Requirements for consultation during the pre-application, application and examination process are set out in Government guidance. The Planning Inspectorate also publishes advice notes that cover various aspects of consultation on NSIPs.<sup>5</sup> This process is intended to provide better and clearer opportunities for the public and local communities to get involved from an early stage in decisions that affect them and their area.
- 4.3 Project promoters must prepare and publicise a 'Statement of Community Consultation' (SoCC) setting out who they will consult with, where, how and when. In preparing the SoCC, the project promoter must consult with, and have regard to, the views of relevant local authorities on its' content.
- 4.4 At the pre-application stage, early engagement with communities on the formulation and assessment of project proposals is encouraged. There is a duty to formally consult the local community, relevant councils and other organisations. Project promoters may decide to run additional informal or formal consultations prior to submitting their DCO application to the PINS.

5

NSIP legislation, guidance and advice:  
<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/legislation-and-advice/>



- 4.5 As part of their DCO application, the project promoter must submit a Consultation Report to PINs, describing the consultation they have undertaken, providing a summary of relevant responses to each consultation and setting out the account that has been taken of the responses in developing their proposals from draft to final form. PINs then invite relevant Councils to submit an Adequacy of Consultation Report giving a view as to whether the applicant's consultation accorded with the SoCC and other regulatory requirements.
- 4.6 Once an application is accepted by the Planning Inspectorate, they are responsible for examining it in line with relevant National Policy Statements and other relevant policy or legislation. The Council and local community have the opportunity to register as interested parties for the Examination and submit representations and respond to issues arising.
- 4.7 The Planning Inspectorate is required to process the DCO application within a set time period and then make a recommendation to the relevant Secretary of State (SoS) as to whether consent should be given or not. The SoS (not South Gloucestershire Council) will make the decision on whether to grant or to refuse the DCO. It is possible however that the SoS may consult relevant parties on various matters relevant to their decision, prior to their making it. Again, there is a set time period for the SoS to make their decision.
- 4.8 Applications submitted to the local planning authority for any elements of associated or related development not included within the main Development Consent Order (DCO) application, would be subject to the normal planning application consultation procedures under the Town & Country Planning Act, as covered elsewhere in this SCI.

Further information on the Planning Act 2008 and NSIPs process can be obtained from the Planning Inspectorate website  
<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/the-process>

# 5 RESOURCE AVAILABILITY AND REVIEW

## Resources

- 5.1 This SCI is based on a realistic and robust assessment of resources the council will likely have available to support plan making and determining planning applications processes.
- 5.2 The majority of the consultation measures can be met using resources available in-house. Should it prove necessary and/or beneficial, the Council will investigate the possibility of using external resources, such as consultants where appropriate, to conduct or assist with community consultation, engagement and involvement processes. Where consultation is led by a developer, the Council must be satisfied that engagement has been appropriate and meaningful.

## Fair Interpretation and Openness

- 5.3 We will ensure that representations made during consultation periods are assessed in an entirely objective manner. We comply with UK data protection legislation in our treatment of personal data provided to us. Formal representations made concerning planning policy documents will be accessible to the public. Participants names will be published as part of the consultation response but all personal details such as addresses and phone numbers will be redacted. Participants are made aware of this before they agree to make any comments. "Confidential" and anonymous representations cannot be accepted.
- 5.4 In line with the requirements of the relevant regulations details of stakeholders/ consultees contacted, a summary of the main issues arising, and what changes, if appropriate, the Council will make as a result of the consultation responses, will be set out.
- 5.5 The Council aims to involve people in an effective way during the preparation of the Local Plan (and supporting planning documents) and when considering planning applications. Any complaints about the community involvement activities should be sent in the first instance by email to [ECSfeedback@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:ECSfeedback@southglos.gov.uk)

- 5.6 The complaints procedure is not intended to be used to overturn decisions about the merits of planning decisions either made through the Local Plan examination process or by a planning decision. However if any party is dissatisfied with the manner in which a planning decision has been handled in terms of its administration, then they can complain to the Council in the first instance (as above), or if this does not lead to resolution of the complaint, then to the Local Government Ombudsman
- 5.7 Full details of the Council's procedure for dealing with complaints can be found on our website:  
<https://www.southglos.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/complaints>

## Addressing social exclusion/inequality

- 5.8 We recognise that in the past our consultations have not engaged all parts of our communities equally. This matters to us, because some views can become over-represented, and some voices can go unheard, which could mean that the development of our policies and the decisions we make on planning proposals are not as good as they would be if all views were represented. We are also aware that in moving to embrace new technological options for engagement there is a risk that despite all the benefits this will bring there are some groups in our community who may not be able to, or want to, engage with us in these ways. Our SCI therefore sets out our commitment to addressing the challenge of giving a voice to these members of our community by:-
- Working with our councillors and local community partners who have the community knowledge to ensure the information we are sending out reaches many people as possible
  - Committing to continuing to notify neighbours
  - Working with schools, FE and HE providers and other stakeholders to reach out to young people for their views
  - One stop shops, libraries

# APPENDIX 1

## – Methods of Consultation

### Methods of Involving

Please note that the table below sets out a suite of possible methods which could be used to engage with the community. The specific methods selected will be determined by the type and scale of consultation the Council is undertaking at a given stage. The methods used will also be informed by the ongoing Covid-19 circumstances and the Council's move towards digital solutions. This may increasingly mean these types of activities are held as virtual meetings or accessed via the website.

Involvement method	Use and effectiveness
<b>Focus Groups</b>	Participants invited to semi-structured interviews, meetings or workshops which could also be held virtually. Useful for area based discussion and the presentation of options. Views of representative groups can be obtained. Small group format is useful in allowing a variety of participants to provide detailed input in an informal atmosphere.
<b>Public drop in events/ Public Meetings</b>	Meetings held at a public venue for the community to receive information and express their views on relevant issues. These could also be held as virtual exhibitions and incorporate the use of digital interactive place shaping/ design-led techniques. These types of events allows engagement with a large number of people at once and they can receive direct feedback. However some people may be uncomfortable expressing their views in front of a large number of people.
<b>Workshops</b>	Invitation only event for those people most involved with the document/application. Aim of identifying issues and possible solutions. Can be held in different locations with different sectors of the community. This could also be held as digital consultations e.g. webinars. A variety of activities, styles and techniques of engagement can be used in workshops, depending on the audience attending, the subject matter and the aims of the workshop. They can be run by Council Officers or by external facilitators.

Involvement method	Use and effectiveness
<b>Planning Aid</b>	Government funded service aimed at targeting communities which do not normally get involved in the planning system.
<b>Steering/advisory Groups</b>	Include internal and external stakeholders. Focus on consideration of options and/or providing guidance.
<b>Citizens Panels</b>	Representative groups of residents from across the district asked for their views. This is generally now undertaken via our internet and email systems.

## Methods of Informing

Involvement method	Use and effectiveness
<b>Internet/Website</b>	Can provide detailed information on a regular basis to a wide audience at minimal cost.
<b>Letters/email</b>	Direct provision of information with selected interested parties or the wider consultation database.
<b>Leaflets</b>	Cost effective means of informing a large number of people. Relies on effective, targeted distribution.
<b>Media Coverage</b>	Regular press releases for the local press, radio and TV. Good for raising awareness across a wide audience. Can utilise free newspapers and council publications.
<b>Exhibitions</b>	Visual displays of information put up in public venues. These could also be held as virtual exhibitions and incorporate the use of digital interactive place shaping/ design-led techniques. Good for generating awareness and informal face-to-face dialogue.
<b>Posters</b>	Effective for publicising events and generating awareness. Relies on effective, targeted distribution.
<b>Computer Modelling</b>	Utilising the latest technologies available in the council. Consultation techniques will in future implement methods such as; 3D imaging, illustration software and virtual reality.

## Methods of Consulting

Consultation Method	Use and effectiveness
<b>Internet/Website</b>	Documents for viewing/downloading and on-line forms for submitting comments. Reduces the need for paper usage, thus more environmentally friendly and cost saving.
<b>Letters/email</b>	Direct provision of information with interested parties
<b>One-to-one meetings</b>	Able to obtain detailed comments and possibly resolve potential issues. These could also be held via video conferencing.
<b>Questionnaires</b>	Able to obtain preferences and comments. Unlikely to be used by those without an interest in the planning system. This is generally now undertaken via our internet and email systems.
<b>Written material available for inspection and comment</b>	Documents and comment forms made available at the Council's principal offices and other key locations such as libraries.

**N.B.** This list of methods is not exhaustive. Further methods may also be drawn upon at various stages of involvement, consultation and informing and as technology and digital techniques become further available

## APPENDIX 2

### – target groups and how they will be involved in preparing planning policy documents

Please note that the table below sets out a suite of possible methods which could be used to engage with the community. The specific methods selected will be determined by the type and scale of consultation the Council is undertaking at a given stage. The methods used will also be informed by the ongoing Covid-19 circumstances and the Council's move towards digital solutions. This may increasingly mean these types of activities are held as virtual meetings or accessed via the website.

Target Group	Typical Groups	Potential Issues	Main methods
<b>Local residents and neighbours of site allocations and development sites</b>	Individual residents and families and residents associations	May not be familiar with the planning process. Likely to have strong views and early involvement important to promote understanding on all sides.	Media coverage, public meetings, leaflets and posters in key locations, public exhibitions, questionnaires, internet/website.
<b>General public</b>	Residents, those who live in areas adjoining South Gloucestershire, commuters, visitors to the district, people who work in the district.	General awareness raising of planning issues often required.	Media coverage, public meetings, leaflets and posters in key locations, public exhibitions, questionnaires, internet/website, citizens panel

Target Group	Typical Groups	Potential Issues	Main methods
<b>Councillors</b>	South Gloucestershire Councillors	Need to be fully engaged throughout the plan preparation process particularly through steering groups, working parties and participation in public meetings	Steering/Advisory groups, workshops, letters/email, Councillor briefing sessions/meetings, Council intranet
<b>Town and Parish Councils</b>	All Town and Parish Councils in and neighbouring South Gloucestershire	Likely to participate effectively in direct consultation, public meetings and focus groups. Important contacts for a range of local organisations and residents.	Media coverage, public meetings, letters/email, leaflets, posters, exhibitions, internet/website, workshops in line with requirements of the Parish Charter.
<b>Adjacent Local Councils</b>	Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset, Wiltshire County, Gloucestershire County, Stroud, Forest of Dean, Monmouthshire (Wales)	Familiar with planning and consultation processes; they will respond to consultation letters and are likely to maximise opportunities for electronic communication.	Internet/website, letters/email.
<b>In line with the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate.</b>			
<b>Joint working</b>			
<b>Prescribed bodies</b>	Defined in the The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012		



Target Group	Typical Groups	Potential Issues	Main methods
<p><b>Familiar with planning and consultation processes. They will respond to consultation letters and are likely to maximise opportunities for electronic communication.</b></p>	<p>Internet/website, letters/email</p>		
<p><b>South Gloucestershire Council Officers</b></p>	<p>Officers with relevant expertise from across the Planning Department as well as all other departments where appropriate</p>	<p>Familiar with planning/consultation processes; are likely to maximise opportunities for electronic communication.</p>	<p>Internet/email</p>
<p><b>Workshops</b></p>			
<p><b>Meetings</b></p>			
<p><b>Business community</b></p>	<p>Local businesses/retailers, Chambers of Trade and Commerce, Town Centre Managers</p>	<p>Spatial planning has key impacts on businesses but employers have traditionally not given priority to planning policy issues.</p>	<p>Media coverage, leaflets, internet/website, focus groups.</p>
<p><b>Developers, landowners and agents</b></p>	<p>Home Builders Federation, individual house builders and developers</p>	<p>The input of key landowners will be critical, so they may need to be identified and contacted directly.</p>	<p>Media coverage, leaflets, public meetings, internet/website, focus groups, one-to-one meetings.</p>

Target Group	Typical Groups	Potential Issues	Main methods
<b>Planning Consultants</b>	Various firms with offices in the sub-region as well as other national firms	Familiar with planning and consultation processes. They will respond to consultation letters and are likely to maximise opportunities for electronic communication.	Internet/website, letters/email
<b>Other housing groups</b>	Housing Associations, Avon Travellers Support Group	May be variability of experience with the planning system, so a wide range of methods will be used.	Media coverage, leaflets, letters/ email, one-to-one meetings, focus groups, workshops. Consultation documents available in alternative appropriate formats.
<b>Voluntary and Community Groups, residents and Community associations</b>	Yate Voluntary Link, Filton People	Might not be familiar with planning issues, but will be an important source of local knowledge.	Media coverage, leaflets, letters/ email, focus groups, workshops
<b>Religious, racial, ethnic and language groups</b>	Equal Opportunities Commission, South Gloucestershire Asian Group, Black Development Agency, South Gloucestershire Chinese Association, Bangladeshi Association	May need to target format and language of consultation documentation. May not be familiar with planning issues.	Media coverage, leaflets, letters/ email, focus groups, workshops, one-to-one meetings.

Target Group	Typical Groups	Potential Issues	Main methods
<b>Disability Groups</b>	Disability Rights Commission, other groups representing particular disability groups	Might not be familiar with planning issues, but will be an important source of local knowledge.	Media coverage, leaflets, letters/ email, one-to-one meetings, focus groups, workshops. Consultation material should be available in alternative formats
<b>Elderly</b>	Help the Aged, Age Concern, South Gloucestershire Senior Citizens Forum	Might not be familiar with planning issues, but will be an important source of local knowledge.	Media coverage, leaflets, letters/ email, facilitated focus groups, workshops.
<b>Young people and the learning community</b>	Youth Clubs, school governing bodies, Learning and Skills Council, University of the West of England, South Gloucestershire Youth Forum	Might not be familiar with planning issues, but will be an important source of local knowledge.	Media coverage, leaflets, letters/ email, focus groups, workshops.
<b>Health and Welfare</b>	Health Authorities, Primary Care Trusts, emergency services, South Gloucestershire Local Strategic Partnership	Important source of specialist knowledge.	Letters/email, one-to-one meetings, focus groups, workshops.
<b>Hard to reach groups</b>			

Target Group	Typical Groups	Potential Issues	Main methods
	Children and young people, Gypsies and Travellers, homeless groups and people who traditionally haven't engaged with consultation programmes, such as those on low incomes, ethnic minorities, etc	Groups representing sections of the public that have traditionally been more difficult to reach than the rest of the population. Unlikely to respond to traditional consultation techniques – need for innovative approaches and careful targeting.	Specially tailored and arranged focus groups and workshops, media coverage, posters and exhibitions, one-to-one meetings where appropriate.
<b>Arts and Sports representatives</b>	Sport England, Art SW.	Important source of specialist knowledge. May not be familiar with the planning system.	Media coverage, leaflets, letters, email, focus groups, workshops.
<b>Interest groups</b>	National and local groups covering varied or single issue interests. Also includes local Residents Action Groups (where groups are known to the council and they have provided a suitable contact address/ email for their organisation)	Important source of specialist knowledge.	Media coverage, leaflets, internet/ website, letters/ email, focus groups, workshops.
<b>Transport</b>	Coach, train and bus companies, Highways Agency, sustainable transport groups, footpath and bridleway groups.	Important source of specialist knowledge. Groups will vary in their knowledge of planning processes and are therefore likely to be involved in a variety of consultation methods.	Media coverage, leaflets, internet/ website, letters/ email, focus groups, workshops, questionnaires.

Target Group	Typical Groups	Potential Issues	Main methods
<b>Environment</b>	Conservation groups, e.g. Natural England, RSPB, Avon Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, farming groups, archaeological groups, historical bodies and groups.	Important source of specialist knowledge. Groups will vary in their knowledge of planning processes and are therefore likely to be involved in a variety of consultation methods.	Media coverage, leaflets, internet/website, letters/email, focus groups, workshops, questionnaires.
<b>Utilities, telecoms and infrastructure</b>	Environment Agency, gas and electricity suppliers, water and sewerage companies, renewable energy groups, telecommunication groups/companies.	Important source of specialist knowledge. Groups will vary in their knowledge of planning processes and are therefore likely to be involved in a variety of consultation methods.	Media coverage, leaflets, internet/website, letters/email, focus groups, workshops, questionnaires.
<b>South Gloucestershire Local Strategic Partnership</b>	Representatives from local public services, private business and voluntary groups.	Important body in terms of a wide range of relevant organisations. Membership would provide contacts for focus groups and a means to identify best methods of engaging with hard to reach groups.	Media coverage, leaflets, internet/website, letters/email, focus groups, steering groups.

# APPENDIX **3**

## – Advertising Planning Applications

The following procedures support the guidance set out in Section 4 of this SCI.

### **Neighbourhood notification letters**

When the Council is asked to determine a planning application it will publicise to local residents that a planning application has been received by a neighbourhood notification letter.

### **Site Notices**

Planning applications received will be publicised by a site notice or a notice in a local newspaper, or in some cases both. The newspaper currently used to publicise planning applications is the Western Daily Press.

Site notices will be posted by the case officer or we ask applicants to display it on their site usually on the main entrance to the proposed development in a position where the public can easily read it without entering the application site. Site notices contain basic information which can assist people to know what's proposed in their area and can help them to know where they can find out more information. A notice will normally give a date by which comments should be made, the name and telephone number of the case officer, as well as a web-site for viewing the application online.

Local planning authorities are legally required to publicise certain applications by notice in a local newspaper in which the land is situated in the statutory notices section of one of our newspapers circulating in the district. The newspaper used depends on the parish in which the application is made.

Anybody originally notified about an application, and everyone who has made comments on it, will be notified of amended plans that are received, and which the Council considers require further publicity.

## Time Periods

Only when the publicity period has expired can a planning application be decided. 21 days needs to elapse after the site notice has been posted, any statutory press advertisement was published, or the date on the neighbour notification letter for this to take place. Information contained in either the neighbourhood notification letter, notice or press advertisement explains where and how people can view planning applications.

## Making Comments

Comments on applications should always be made in writing. This can be done via our online form or by post. In circumstances where the publicity period has expired it may not be too late to make comments. This can be established by telephoning the Customer Enquires Team.

Written comments should be addressed to: Department for Environment and Community Services, PO Box 299, Strategic Planning, Civic Centre, High Street, Bristol, BS15 0DR

When sending letters please quote:

- The planning application number
- The address of the property to which it relates
- Your own address

Offensive, racist, discriminatory and other statements that are not relevant will not be published nor taken into account. Offensive statements lower a person's reputation personally or within their trade, profession or business. Racist statements are those that discriminate against individuals on racial grounds including their race, colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. Statements that discriminate on grounds of any protected characteristic (defined under the Equalities Act) will also not be published or taken into account. Anonymous comments will not be published or taken into account. Where individuals have particular sensitivity about making their comments public, they can approach their local Ward councillor and ask that they submit comments on their behalf.

All comments will be taken into account before a decision is reached provided they are received in time. All comments are placed on the application file and published on our website and are available for public inspection.

If the application is to be considered by the Development Control Committee, anyone making written comments will be notified of the date of the meeting and how they can address the Committee if they wish. Once a decision has been reached, people who have made comments will also receive details of the decision.

## Public Speaking

Where an application is to be determined by a Development Control Committee, an opportunity is provided to address the committee. The opportunity to speak is provided for:

- The applicant or supporters of the application.
- Objectors to the application.

Each of these groups is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

## One Stop Shops / Customer Enquiries Contact Centre

Customers can call into any of the Council's 'One Stop Shops' (at Kingswood, Patchway and Yate) where trained staff are available to answer general planning queries. A telephone contact centre is also available where trained staff are also available to answer planning queries. The telephone number of the contact centre is [01454 868004](tel:01454868004).



