

Community Involvement Plan – October 2011

For the:

- **District Plan Consultation Draft**
- **Draft Sustainability Appraisal**
- **Draft Habitat Regulation Assessment**

1. Background

The District Council is developing a new District Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy to guide development and the provision of infrastructure over the period to 2031. The District Plan provides a vision for how Mid Sussex wants to evolve over this time and a delivery strategy for how this will be achieved.

The purpose of this Community Involvement Plan is to set out:

- Who is involved in the process of producing, and consultation on, the Draft District Plan;
- Why people are being involved in the process;
- When and how people will be able to get involved and influence this process; and
- How the results of community involvement will be used.

This Community Involvement Plan has been written in accordance with the adopted Mid Sussex Code of Practice and Statement of Community Involvement (2011) and its appendix, 'How we involve you in making planning decisions'¹. It has been written with the input of Town and Parish Councils, who have provided suggestions for how people can be involved.

2. Who is to be involved?

Early engagement

Community involvement has been sought from the very start of the process of forming the District Plan Consultation Draft. Much of this work has been led by elected Councillors through the District Plan Policy Member Working Group², which has included liaison with and input from the Town and Parish Councils regarding local needs and aspirations and early work on their Neighbourhood Plans.

The Sustainable Communities Strategy, of which the vision and the four priority themes underpinning the District Plan are based on, was also subject to its own programme of extensive public consultation work.

The process has also included using some of the results of the consultation work undertaken for the Core Strategy (of which work was halted in June 2010), itself subject to a number of extensive consultation exercises with a wide range of local groups³, in particular work undertaken to develop the Plan's objectives.

Early engagement has also been undertaken with external organisations to assist in the formation of the strategy and the policies including accessibility groups and Natural England and to inform and update the evidence, for example Natural England on the Draft Habitat Regulations Assessment.

Further early engagement with the wider public is scheduled to commence in October 2011. This public consultation is open to all who are interested.

¹ See www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci.

² Terms of reference agreed at Better Environment Advisory Group on 22nd June 2011. For terms of reference see www.midsussex.gov.uk

³ See Core Strategy Pre-Submission Document (2008) Consultation Topic Paper 16 (Consultation) - available at www.midsussex.gov.uk/8267.htm

Including everyone

Equality Analysis considers the needs of people classified as having 'protected characteristics'⁴. For the District Plan Consultation Draft, this has shown that community involvement should in particular consider and provide for the needs of people with a physical disability or a mental impairment, young and older people, women who are pregnant or have very young babies and gypsies and travellers. Consideration should also be given to people who are disadvantaged by their socio-economic background and people who live in isolated rural areas. Further information is available in the Equality Analysis⁵.

Who will be contacted?

A number of groups will be directly contacted and asked for their comments. These are:

- District Councillors;
- Town and Parish Councils;
- 'Specific consultation bodies'/'consultation bodies' (statutory consultees) as set out in legislation⁶. These include West Sussex County Council, adjoining Local Planning Authorities, service providers and government agencies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England and the South Downs National Park Authority⁷;
- Other organisations, groups or individuals that may have an interest in the District Plan⁶. These include members of the Mid Sussex Partnership, voluntary services associations, residents associations, housing associations, business groups and associations, environmental, countryside and conservation groups, youth and elderly persons groups and the development industry⁷;
- Representatives of those groups highlighted as requiring targeted consultation by Equalities Assessment;
- Subscribers to the Local Development Framework email alert service⁸; and
- Internal consultees at the District Council.

Elected District Councillors have a key role to play in forming the District Plan and will be fully involved in the process through:

- The District Plan Policy Working Group (any District Councillor can attend as an observer);
- The Better Environment Advisory Group (any District Councillor can attend and can request to speak);
- Council (consists of all District Councillors); and
- Councillors will be directly informed and can respond during the public consultation period.

3. Why are people being involved?

We are asking for people's views to help shape the strategy and policies contained within the District Plan. This is important given that the Plan will provide the local policy framework for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans⁹.

The results of consultation will form part of the information used to finalise the strategy and policies. However, in order to make the consultation more meaningful, it is important that people understand the context within which the Plan has been drafted and that certain aspects of the Plan may not be able to be changed as a result of consultation:

⁴ As defined by the Equality Act 2010

⁵ Available at www.midsussex.gov.uk/6536.htm

⁶ Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended)

⁷ Details of these groups are set out in a list of 'key contacts' available at www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci.

⁸ See www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci

⁹ It is expected that these will be prepared by the District's Town and Parish Councils.

- The District Plan has been written in the context of the Localism Bill and the changes to the planning system being introduced by the Coalition Government.
- The District Plan and statutory planning documents need to maintain consistency with national planning policy and guidance¹⁰.
- The District Plan needs to be produced and written in accordance with legislation and regulations¹¹.
- The District Plan has been written using the results of the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal. This shows which options have been considered for its strategy and policies and why the options chosen are preferred over those rejected.
- The District Plan has been informed by background evidence, which may be updated during the course of the production of the Plan. The background evidence (and any updates) will be made available to view on the Council's website, linked to the District Plan web page¹².
- The District Plan has is accompanied by the Draft Sustainability Appraisal and the Draft Habitats Regulation Assessment both of which are part of the public consultation.

4. When will people be involved?

District Plan Consultation Draft	Consultation starts on 24 th October 2011 for 12 weeks with the consultation documents available on the website from that date. Printed copies of documents and other material will be available from Friday 4 th November at the venues outlined in Section 5. The consultation closes at 4:00pm on 13 th January 2012.
Publication	Following agreement by Council in May 2012, the Council will 'publish' the Proposed Submission District Plan for a six week period scheduled May/June 2012. During this time the public can make further representations on the District Plan and these will be considered by the Planning Inspector appointed to carry out the Examination in Public. The Council may make minor changes to the District Plan following publication. A further Community Involvement Plan will be produced at this stage.
Adoption	The District Plan is due to be adopted spring 2013. No consultation is programmed at this stage although it will be widely advertised.

Further details of the timetable are available at www.midsussex.gov.uk/DistrictPlan.

5. How will people be involved?

The consultation will be open to all and we will seek to inform and receive comment from the widest possible range of people. We will:

- Send out press releases, including an article in Mid Sussex Matters (sent to every household in the District);
- Provide a summary leaflet to briefly explain in the clearest of terms, the District Plan and consultation including how people can get involved. Leaflets will be distributed at supermarkets, train stations and shopping centres;
- Provide articles for Town and Parish Council publications/ websites and articles for community led publications;
- Meet with Town and Parish Councils where requested;

¹⁰ Such as Planning Policy Statements/Guidance, Circulars and the emerging National Planning Policy Framework

¹¹ Such as Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments (Regulations)

¹² www.midsussex.gov.uk/DistrictPlan

- Put all the details and documentation on the Council's website¹³ including an on-line response form. All on-line material will be compatible with 'BrowseAloud' for people who find it difficult to read on-line;
- Utilise electronic methods wherever possible in addition to 'traditional methods' to make it as easy as possible to respond to the consultation;
- Provide paper copies of the document to view at the district's libraries (including the mobile library); Help points¹⁴; District Council offices (Main and Planning Receptions); and Town and Parish offices.
- Provide posters and material for display at the District Council campus notice boards and (where possible) at District Council owned community buildings, community centres, Parish Council notice boards and Parish Council run halls, libraries (including the mobile library), Help points, doctor's surgeries, job centres, schools, supermarkets, village shops, train station notice boards and other community buildings.
- Send letters or emails to all the 'specific consultation bodies' (statutory consultees) and to all the other organisations listed in section 2 above.
- Provide unmanned exhibitions where support has been confirmed by the Town and Parish Councils and at libraries and leisure centres.
- A translation service is available to those for whom English is a second language.

Comments must be submitted in writing and cannot be accepted as anonymous. All information received is public information (subject to the Data Protection Act). Comments can be submitted via the website, email or by post. A response form will be made available. The Council's contact details are available on the website and in the District Plan Consultation Draft.

6. What happens to the results?

All comments will be treated equally, although it will be up to the Council to balance any conflicting opinions when considering the final document.

The effectiveness of the consultation and the level of involvement by people, particularly those classified as having 'protected characteristics'¹⁵ and requiring particular consideration as detailed in the Equality Assessment, will be monitored. This information will be used to inform future consultation work¹⁶.

A consultation report summarising the issues raised by consultation and how these comments have been used will be published on the Council's website and will be considered by the Council. An email notification that this report has been published will be sent to all statutory consultees, Local Development Framework email alert subscribers and respondents who submitted a response and expressed a wish to be notified and provided a valid email address.

If you have any comments or queries on this Community Involvement Plan, please contact Nathan Spilsted - nathan.spilsted@midsussex.gov.uk – (01444) 477455.

If you have a comment or concern with your experience of a Council led community involvement exercise, you should in the first instance, contact the officer detailed in the Community Involvement Plan. Alternatively you can contact the Customer Services and Communications Team by phone (01444) 477478 or by writing to Customer Services and Communications, Mid Sussex District Council, Oaklands Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 1SS.

¹³ See www.midsussex.gov.uk/consultation and www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci

¹⁴ Details of libraries and help-points available at www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci

¹⁵ Defined by Equalities Legislation

¹⁶ This information will be used solely for this purpose. Equalities information will be kept strictly confidential. All data is subject to the relevant Data Protection Legislation.