

For the:

- **Mid Sussex District Plan (Regulation 18)**
- **Sustainability Appraisal**
- **Habitats Regulations Assessment**
- **Equality Impacts Assessment**

1. Background

The District Council is developing a new District Plan to guide development and the provision of infrastructure over the period to 2039. The new 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.

Community involvement plays a vital role in the preparation of District Plans. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, there are two formal consultation periods for District Plans:

- Regulation 18: Preparation of a Local Plan
- Regulation 19: Publication of a Local Plan (Pre-Submission)

This Community Involvement Plan relates to the Regulation 18 consultation.

2. Role and Purpose of the Community Involvement Plan

Mid Sussex District Council adopted its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in March 2019.

The SCI contains 6 General Principles for Community Engagement:

- 1) Be Timely:** Involve the community as early as possible in decision making
- 2) Be Inclusive:** Accessible to all those who wish to take part
- 3) Be Transparent:** Consultation material should be clear and plain-English
- 4) Be Respectful of Other's Views:** The Council will listen to all views
- 5) Be Efficient:** Consultation to be proportionate and use resources wisely
- 6) Be Clear About the Results:** Decisions and results should be made clear

The SCI recognises that there is no “one size fits all” approach to consultation; recognising that each decision that requires community involvement may be for different audiences or different purposes. The SCI therefore requires that a bespoke Community Involvement Plan (CIP) is prepared for each consultation on Planning Policy documents (such as the District Plan) so that consultation can be tailored.

This Community Involvement Plan follows the template set out in the SCI. It sets out:

- Who is involved in the production and consultation of the new District Plan;
- Why people are being involved in the process;

- When and how people will be able to get involved and influence the new District Plan; and
- How the results of community involvement will be used.

The new District Plan is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Equality Impacts Assessment, all of which are also subject to consultation at Regulation 18 stage and therefore the same consultation arrangements set out in this CIP.

3. Who is to be involved?

Early engagement

In the SCI, the Council commits to ‘front load’ consultation activity, to identify potential issues and options. This work has assisted in the formulation of policies and has informed and updated the evidence base. Early engagement with stakeholders has been sought from the very start of the process of producing the new District Plan, including:

- District Councillors, Town and Parish Councils have been briefed on the need for a new District plan and anticipated content.
- A Developers Liaison Group, which includes representatives from across the development industry, was consulted on the methodology for site selection.
- Neighbouring Local Authorities and County Authorities, on a group and individual basis. Input was sought into the methodology for the site selection;
- External organisations, such as the High Weald AONB Unit.
- Consulting other statutory consultees, such as Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Including everyone

The Equality Impacts Assessment (EqIA) that accompanies the District Plan considers the needs of people classified as having ‘protected characteristics’.¹ This assessment concludes that there are no additional specific measures or actions needed at this time. However, the Council will continue to promote consultation exercises that are inclusive of all, including engagement with representative organisations and monitoring of the consultation.

There is further analysis of consultation practices and the actions that will be taken to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to engage with the consultation included within the EqIA which accompanies the new District Plan.²

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’/ ‘general consultation bodies’ (statutory consultees) as set out in legislation.³ 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 Authority;
- Other organisations, groups or individuals that may have an interest in the new District Plan. These include members of the Mid Sussex Partnership, voluntary services’ associations, residents’ associations, housing associations, business groups and associations,

¹ As defined by the *Equality Act 2010*

² Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/district-plan-review/>

³ *The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)*

environmental, countryside and conservation groups, youth and elderly persons' groups and the development industry;

- Representatives of those groups highlighted as requiring targeted consultation by the EqIA;
- Subscribers to the Planning Policy e-mail alerts service⁴; and
- Internal consultees at the District Council.

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

- The Scrutiny Committee for Planning, Economic Growth and Net Zero (any District Councillor can attend and request to speak);
- Full Council (consists of all District Councillors); and
- Councillors will be directly informed and can respond during the public consultation period.

4. Why are people being involved?

We are asking for people's views on the new District Plan through a formal consultation period. It is important to seek input from the wider public, as the Plan will set the strategy and allocate sites for development in the district and include planning policies that will have an impact upon both the existing and future communities of Mid Sussex.

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

- The new District Plan has been written in line with Government planning policy and guidance, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) and Planning Practice Guidance.
- The new District Plan has been written in accordance with legislation and regulations.⁵
- The new District Plan has been informed by 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 new District Plan has been informed by background evidence. The background evidence will be made available to view on the Council's website.⁶

⁴ To receive news and updates on policy documents being prepared please sign up to our email alerts at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/consultation-monitoring/#topic-planning-policy-email-alerts>

⁵ *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, and other relevant legislation.

⁶ Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/district-plan-review/>

5. When will people be involved?

District Plan Consultation Draft (Regulation 18)	Consultation starts week commencing 7 th November 2022 for six weeks. Consultation documents will be available online from this date with printed copies available at the venues outlined in Section 6.
Proposed Submission draft (Regulation 19)	Following agreement by Council, the Council will 'publish' the Proposed Submission District Plan for a six-week period, anticipated Summer/Autumn 2023. 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 new District Plan is due to be adopted 2024. No consultation is legally required at this stage although it will be widely advertised.

Further details of the timetable are available within the Council's Local Development Scheme: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/consultation-monitoring/>

6. 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 a press release, an email alert and utilise social media;
- Put all the details and documentation on the Council's website 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 advertise and respond to the consultation;
- A translation service is available to those for whom English is a second language;
- Send letters or emails to all the 'specific consultation bodies' (statutory consultees) and to all the other organisations listed in Section 2 above;
- Send letters or emails to all those who have signed up to the Planning Policy alert;
- Hold public exhibitions/drop sessions in areas of significant change, as required.

Availability of Documents

Regulation 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out the requirements for documents to be made available for inspection.

35.—(1) A document is to be taken to be made available by a local planning authority when—

(a) made available for inspection, at their principal office and at such other places within their area as the local planning authority consider appropriate, during normal office hours, and

(b) published on the local planning authority's website,

In terms of criterion (a), the District Plan consultation documents will be available to view at the Mid Sussex District Council offices during normal office hours. As such, consultation materials will be available to view to those making an appointment in advance. This can be arranged by

contacting the Council's switchboard on 01444 458166 or the Planning Policy Team on PlanningPolicy@midsussex.gov.uk

In terms of "other such places" set out in criterion (a), the Council will send hard copies of the District Plan consultation material to each of the libraries and help points and provide instructions for accessing the documentation on the Council website (which could be accessed using library PCs for example). The availability of documents at these locations will be subject to Government guidance and this will be kept under close review during the consultation period and alternative or additional venues/ methods will be sought (and locations advertised) if necessary to ensure that stakeholders are able to view the documents in person during the consultation period.

The new District Plan, supporting documentation and evidence base will be available to view on the Council's website at <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/district-plan-review/>

Submitting Responses

Comments must be submitted in writing (physical or digital) and cannot be accepted as anonymous. All information received is public information, subject to relevant data protection legislation.⁷

Comments can be submitted via the website, email or by post. Electronic submissions are encouraged to lessen paper consumption. A response form will be made available which can be completed and submitted on the MSDC website. Where hard copy responses must be submitted these can be sent to:

Planning Policy, Mid Sussex District Council, Oaklands, Oaklands Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 1SS

E-mail to: policyconsultation@midsussex.gov.uk

⁷Such as the *Data Protection Act (2018)*

7. 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’⁸ and requiring particular consideration as detailed in the Equalities Assessment, will be monitored. This information will be used to inform future consultation work⁹.

A consultation report summarising who was consulted, how this was done, the issues raised by the consultation and how these comments have been used will be published on the Council’s website and will be considered by the Council.

Notification that the summary report has been published will be sent to all statutory consultees, Planning Policy email alert subscribers and respondents who submitted a response and expressed a wish to be notified of the next stages of the District Plan.

If you have any comments or queries on this Community Involvement Plan, please contact the Planning Policy team on PlanningPolicy@midsussex.gov.uk or 01444 477053.

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 team using the details above. 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.

⁸ Defined by Equalities Legislation

⁹ 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.