

<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Head of Economic Prosperity</b>
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<b>Portfolio Leader:</b>	<b>Economic Development and Planning</b>
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Report Track:</b>	<b>Cabinet: 10/12/20</b>

**Cabinet**  
**10 December 2020**  
**Statement of Community Involvement – Addendum December 2020**

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek approval to temporary amendments to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that sets out how the Council consults in planning matters.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That Cabinet authorises on a temporary basis, revisions to the Council's adopted SCI which are required in light of changes to national guidance arising from the coronavirus pandemic. The proposed temporary revisions will be made by way of an Addendum to the current SCI, a copy of the Addendum is attached In Appendix A.
- 2.2 That Cabinet authorise the Head of Economic Prosperity in liaison with the Portfolio Holder Economic Development and Planning to make any necessary minor changes to the SCI Addendum prior to publication.
- 2.3 That authority be given to the Head of Economic Prosperity in liaison with the Portfolio Holder Economic Development and Planning to determine, as a result of Government Guidance, when the temporary changes shall cease to be required and thereafter to remove the Addendum with the effect of re-instating the Council's adopted SCI <sup>1</sup>.

**3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 and National Planning Practice Guidance

<sup>1</sup> The SCI being adopted by Cabinet on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018

requires Local Authorities to review their SCI's in light of the Coronavirus pandemic. SCI's are required to reflect social distancing in any consultation activities to allow plan-making to continue as well as decision making activities.

- 3.2 The SCI has been reviewed and the Addendum sets out the consultation methods which will be temporarily suspended<sup>2</sup> in view of social distancing restrictions. The revised temporary methods are deemed to conform to current guidance and are highlighted and will be prioritised as a means of carrying out consultation until it is safe to reinstate the full range of methods when restrictions are lifted.
- 3.3 The SCI Addendum will be published on the Council's website alongside the current adopted SCI.

#### **4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:

- **Promoting Prosperity** – Promoting prosperity by helping to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity and ensuring sufficient land is allocated for a range of housing and employments uses, linking these to opportunities for developing skills and encouraging a balanced portfolio of employment opportunities. Supporting town centres to adapt to changing demands to ensure they are vibrant and diverse centres.
- **Community Wellbeing** – Ensuring that people can lead healthy and active lifestyles within attractive, safe and healthy environments through consideration of issues such as open space, sport and recreation, walking, cycling, improved air quality, sustainable transport, improved air quality and other opportunities for healthy lifestyle choices.

#### **5 Report Detail**

- 5.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004(as amended) requires the Council to produce a 'Statement of Community Involvement' (SCI) which sets out how the Council intends to achieve continuous community involvement in the preparation of plans and decision making for planning applications.
- 5.2 The current Statement of Community Involvement was approved for adoption at the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018 Cabinet meeting. The current SCI will need to be reviewed within 5 years from the date of adoption.
- 5.3 The coronavirus pandemic has necessitated legislative changes to bring SCI's in line with restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic. Local Planning Authorities have been advised to continue with plan making activities and maintain decision making processes and adapt current practices to observe social distancing requirements.
- 5.4 In terms of plan making, the requirement to place a hard copy of plan documents in a publicly accessible place including the main office of the Local Authority

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<sup>2</sup> As set out within the SCI adopted by Cabinet on the 13 December 2018.

cannot be satisfied as access to offices and public buildings is not possible or is restricted. Instead, access will be through the Council's website.

- 5.5 Public consultation events where face to face meetings are held must observe social distancing guidance where the guidance in place at the time allows it. This may necessitate the use of facial coverings and officials to maintain the number of people given access to an event and ensure social distancing is observed. There may also be opportunities to use technology more productively including virtual exhibitions at certain venues or hosted on the Council's website. Opportunities for virtual meetings by appointment will also be explored. The regulations also suggest that consultation with local groups or local champions who can represent a larger group of people should be encouraged.
- 5.6 The Addendum is a temporary measure only to allow the Local Plan Review to continue. The LDS 2019 is now out of date and the Local Plan timetable has been affected by the pandemic. A new LDS is proposed for early 2021 and the next stage of the Local Plan being the Preferred Option will be prepared for consultation as soon as possible. It is likely that there will be certain restrictions in place and the SCI Addendum will take these into account to ensure that consultation can be carried out in accordance with it.
- 5.7 It should also be pointed out that The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 are due to expire 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. The government has announced in a press release 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 its intention 'to roll forward the temporary changes made over the summer to ensure the planning system continues to operate effectively during the Covid19 emergency recovery. These include temporary freedoms on how planning applications are publicised, and on public inspection of planning documents'.
- 5.8 Local Planning Authorities are not required to consult when reviewing and updating the SCI and given that the proposed changes to the SCI contained within the Addendum are temporary and relatively minor, it is considered that consultation on the SCI Addendum is not required.
- 5.9 Cabinet is requested to approve delegated authority for the Head of Economic Prosperity in Liaison with the Portfolio Holder Economic Development and Planning to determine when the temporary measure should be lifted in consequence of the current pandemic restrictions being lifted. At such time, it is proposed that the Addendum will be removed from the adopted SCI and from the website at this time and that the adopted SCI and the consultations methods contained within the 2018 adopted document will be reinstated.
- 5.10 Similarly, delegation to approve minor amendments to the document is requested and these will be confined to non-substantive changes such as typographic errors or grammar correction. In addition, if required, references will be added to the addendum should new guidance be published that extends the temporary changes beyond 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 incorporating the relevant date.
- 5.11 Officers will continue to use alternative methods of engagement through social media, local publications, newspapers, notices and leaflets. Online presentations and videos explaining contents of consultation documents are also being

explored. It is recognised that many residents do not have access to a computer or the internet and will require targeted support.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

There are no direct financial implications for the Council as a result of this report any additional costs will need to be contained within approved budgets.

### **6.2 Legal**

The Council is required to review the SCI to conform to current guidance with a view to continue plan making activities. Without the changes within the Addendum the Council would not be able to carry out certain consultation activities if coronavirus restrictions remain in place and would therefore be at risk of legal challenge.

### **6.3 Human Resources**

There will be less reliance on open consultation events that would potentially reach larger numbers of people. The number of such events will reduce but the number of participants may not and may require a higher number of individual consultations or remote/virtual meetings requiring a greater amount of officer time to service them.

### **6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)**

None.

### **6.5 Human Rights Act**

None.

### **6.6 Data Protection**

None.

### **6.7 Risk Management**

None.

### **6.8 Equality & Diversity**

Up-to-date and relevant consultation activities would allow for positive community engagement and continued involvement in plan making.

### **6.9 Best Value**

None.

**7 Appendices to the Report**

Appendix A: Statement of Community Involvement Addendum 2020.

**Background Papers**

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020

Cannock Chase Statement of Community Involvement 2018

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# Statement of Community Involvement Addendum December 2020





## **Cannock Chase Statement of Community Involvement Addendum 2020**

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is produced by the Planning Policy Section of Planning Services at Cannock Chase Council. To order further copies or for information:

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## 1. Statement of Community Involvement Addendum December 2020

This document provides an addendum to the adopted Cannock Chase Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2018. It sits alongside the SCI 2018 and should be read in conjunction with it. The SCI 2018 can be found at the following link:

[https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cannock\\_chase\\_statement\\_of\\_community\\_involvement\\_2018.pdf](https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cannock_chase_statement_of_community_involvement_2018.pdf)

The changes proposed are temporary in nature and this guidance applies initially up to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. This will be kept under review and measures will be extended or adjusted as necessary to the point where the Statement of Community Involvement 2018 can be reinstated at the appropriate time.

## 2. Introduction

The aim of an SCI is to make the planning system accessible to a wide range of people, leading to communities being well informed about how and when they are able to take part in the planning process. This is intended to result in greater participation and a more efficient and inclusive decision-making process. Clearly, the scale of community involvement in the planning system has to reflect the resources the Council has available and the guidance in force at the time. To ensure the most efficient use of resources the approaches used have sought to make use of existing established networks wherever possible and to conform to regulations.

Following the outbreak of Covid19, the government published guidance in May 2020 [[The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#)] encouraging Local Authorities to ensure planning processes continued moving forward. Local Authorities were also advised to review their Statement of Community Involvement and incorporate temporary changes that would control the spread of the virus and protect the health of communities and Local Authority officers but allow the process of plan making to continue and maintain the Council's decision making processes

The new regulations will have an impact on the way planning services are delivered as well as the way the Council's engages with the community. This SCI Addendum will set out the temporary changes that are necessary to reflect current Government guidance and advice.

A notification will be issued in relation to the publication of this addendum on the Council website, to those registered in the Council's planning policy database and also in the local press. For details of how we process your personal data please view our privacy notice at:

<https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/council/about-council/data-protection/data-protection-privacy-notice>

## 3. Local Plan

Local Authorities are encouraged to continue to engage with their communities and stakeholders to progress plans. In doing so, certain adjustments will be required to observe restrictions put in place related to Covid19. These adjustments in relation to the Local Plan are set out below:

The Council will:

- Place relevant documents on the Council website together with any supporting information needed to enable people to understand what they are being asked to comment on;

- Contact specific, general and other consultees who may have an interest in the document and invite to make representations, advising where and when the relevant material can be accessed, how copies can be obtained, the closing date for representations and where access and where to send any representations;
- Issue adverts and/or press releases to local newspapers circulating in the area, as appropriate, advising where the relevant material can be accessed, how copies can be obtained, the closing date for representations and where to access representation forms and where to send any representations, and use the Council's website, Chase Matters magazine and social media channels to raise awareness of consultation stages.
- Make available Plain English summary documents and/or leaflets as appropriate;
- Provide appropriate advice and information to the public as requested observing social distancing guidelines at the time;
- Produce a report summarising consultation methods, representations made and Council responses (whether requiring a change to the plan or not) and make available on the Council's website before proceeding with a subsequent version of the plan and/or further consultation.

The Council will temporarily suspend the practice of making available all relevant material for inspection at the Council Civic Centre in Cannock or at libraries and other public venues.

The Council's website will be the primary source for consultation documents and an email address and phone number for the Planning Policy Team will be provided for visitors to the website to obtain further information or assistance.

The Council will endeavour to provide alternative methods of engagement including (where appropriate technology is available), virtual presentations and telephone appointments and video conferencing with individuals. In addition, where social distancing is observed, meetings with organisations can be arranged where each individual participant is in a secure, safe and Covid19 compliant location.

## 4. Development Control

### Forms of Notification of Planning Applications

#### 1. Newspaper advertisement

The following categories of application are publicised by way of newspaper advertisement:-

- I. Applications including an Environmental Statement.
- II. Departures from the Development Plan.
- III. Applications affecting public rights of way.
- IV. Major applications
- V. Applications for Listed Building consent.

VI. Applications for development affecting the setting of a Listed Building or a Conservation Area.

2. Site notices

The Council will continue to erect site notices however the guidance published May 2020 provide flexibility on the publicity of planning applications and where restrictions impact on the display of site notices the council will notify anyone that is likely to have an interest in a planning or listed building consent application through a notice on the council website.

3. Notification by letter

Occupiers of properties, whether residential or business or community services (e.g. schools, churches, community halls) are notified by letter of all application categories with the exception of Non-Material Minor Amendments and Lawful Development Certificates. Notification by letter involves those neighbouring properties directly adjoining the application site boundary.

Content of notification letters and newspaper advertisements

All the published material contains a description of the application, where it can be accessed, the timescale for responses and the offer of an appointment with the case officer to discuss the matter via telephone or video conference. Information is also given about the Council's Consultations Charter relating to planning applications, a copy of which is enclosed with the notification letters.

Responding to Publicity about Applications

All comments which people wish to be taken into account in the decision making process need to be made in writing either by letter, email or by completing a comments form that can be accessed from the Council's website. Representations should be received within 21 days once notice of a planning application has been published.

Timescale for responses

21 days is allowed for responses to initial notification of applications and a minimum of 10 days for re-notification on amendments.

Consultation on Planning Applications and other applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning Acts

This part of the process includes both the statutory requirements for consultation prior to decision being made on applications, most of which are included in the Town and Country

Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, and non-statutory consultation with organisations with expertise to contribute to the process.

## Planning Control Committee

Temporary arrangements have been put in place to hold Planning Committee meetings remotely while Covid19 restrictions are in place. The Council's website provides details of meetings including agenda and reports, instructions as well as passwords to access the meeting via internet or by telephone. These details will be available a week before the meeting is scheduled. Speakers are still able to address Committee via these methods.

## 5. Neighbourhood Plans

Revised guidance in respect of Neighbourhood Planning can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

In view of the document inspection requirements, the guidance states that no referendums can be carried out until May 2021. This will be kept under review. The Council will continue to support Qualifying Bodies preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

## 6. Summary

This Statement of Community Involvement Addendum December 2020 sets out the interim arrangements to maintain community involvement in the planning process. It provides information on how activities will be adjusted to ensure community involvement and consultation is carried out in a safe manner that accords with Covid19 guidance.

The Council may need to amend timetables for document preparation and the Local Development Scheme will be kept under review and updates will be published on the Council's website as necessary.

These arrangements will be kept under constant review to respond to further government guidance to control the impact of Covid19 or revert back to the Statement of Community Involvement 2018 when appropriate.

Contact details for the Planning Policy Team are shown on page 1 of the addendum should further advice or guidance be required.