



Statement of Community Involvement

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION AUTUMN 2023



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Statement of our intention to engage with our communities

Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils are committed to involving as many people and organisations as possible in the planning process. This includes groups and communities that are typically under-represented.

Planning affects the lives of everyone who lives, works, and visits Greater Cambridge. Therefore, it is essential that as many people as possible have a say in the decisions the Councils make on new housing, workplaces, open spaces, and the measures we take to tackle climate and biodiversity issues.

We want to encourage you to read and respond to the consultation on the draft Statement of Community Involvement. This document sets out how the Councils will engage on a wide range of planning matters over the next five years. Increasing participation in planning will always be good for communities and this Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Councils will achieve this.

Through extensive public engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, including interactive webinars on our emerging new Local Plan, through to the award-winning work we are doing with youth engagement in local schools, we are always pushing ourselves and developers to do more engagement and to reach out to the widest possible audience. Whilst the SCI sets out the minimum levels of engagement the Councils will undertake, it also sets out what we can, and frequently do, to go beyond this and how we try to engage in innovative ways alongside documents and websites that are written with as little jargon as possible.

This document also sets out how the Councils will support local communities and parish Councils to develop their own neighbourhood plans which can set out local aspirations for new developments within their area.

We will strive to provide opportunities and make it as simple as possible for all individuals to become involved in the planning process, regardless of their circumstances. By involving communities from the earliest stage, they can help to make a difference and, crucially, feel a sense of understanding and ownership of local planning decisions.

Finally, we would encourage you, as residents and stakeholders (including parish Councils, neighbourhood forums, groups and associations representing residents and businesses in the area), to use this Statement of Community Involvement and the protocols set out within it, to hold the Local Planning Authorities to account and ensure that all local people have opportunities to have their say. We recognise that consultation and engagement activities are ever evolving, and typically engagement is moving further towards digital means. We understand that whilst digital engagement is convenient for some members of our community, this is not the case for everyone, and therefore we have been mindful about this as this SCI has been updated.

Whilst this is an SCI for the next five years, it will be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure it is up to date and reflects local and national priorities, practices, and policies.





Statement of Community Involvement

GREATER CAMBRIDGE SHARED PLANNING

GET INVOLVED! MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Planning shapes the places where we live, work and play. Everyone should have the opportunity to get involved. This is where the Statement of Community Involvement plays a vital role.

We need your views

SCAN TO GET INVOLVED

Cambridge City Council, PO Box 700, Cambridge CB1 0JH
 South Cambs District Council, South Cambridgeshire Hall,
 Cambourne Business Park, Cambridge CB23 6EA



Cllr. Dr. Tumi Hawkins

South Cambridgeshire District Councillor and Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Development Management

Engaging with our communities in the planning process is very important. It enables us to hear their views and take those into consideration in making decisions that affect how land is used and developed in Greater Cambridge.

This Statement of Community Involvement goes much further than our current SCI. It ensures that the diversity of our residents and their views and aspirations are reflected in our emerging joint Local Plan as well as how development proposals are prepared, assessed and determined.

I commend this statement and look forward to working with our residents, businesses, developers and other stakeholders in using it effectively to create great places across Greater Cambridge.



Councillor Katie Thornburrow

Cambridge City Councillor and Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

It is vitally important that everyone knows how to influence development in our area and make their voice heard. I am very pleased that we now have such a clear statement of how the Councils will ensure that residents, businesses, local organisations and visitors are properly consulted as we decide what to build, what to change, and how to create the best possible spaces within which we can live, work, learn, and play.

Elected members endeavour to continue to work closely with Planning Officers to make sure that we work in a transparent, trustworthy, and effective way, and the practices outlined in this important document demonstrate our ongoing commitment to serving the people of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

I am very pleased to have this updated document setting out the Councils commitment and procedures for involving our communities - residents, businesses, local organisation and visitors - in the complicated process to build new buildings and create the best possible places.

It's through a concerted effort by everyone involved in planning that we can work towards improved transparency and arrive a place of mutual trust.



1.0 Introduction

What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the Local Planning Authorities, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, will consult with local people, groups, businesses, partners, and other organisations in the planning process. This is important to improve understanding about how we prepare planning documents such as the Local Plan and guidance documents, consider planning applications, neighbourhood plans or neighbourhood development orders.
- 1.2 Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have a shared planning service, the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP). Planning officers within GCSP will be responsible for delivering all planning consultations, but Councillors within Cambridge City Council will ultimately have responsibility for consultations which effect the city of Cambridge, and Councillors within South Cambridgeshire District Council will oversee consultations that effect South Cambridgeshire. For consultations which affect both areas, both Councils will retain oversight.
- 1.3 Local Planning Authorities are currently required under [Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#) to prepare and review a SCI. This establishes the approach and standards of engagement we will make with our communities about planning matters or proposals. We aspire through the aims of the SCI to:
- Ensure that engagement is managed efficiently by consulting at the earliest possible stages of the planning process, providing clear information about the proposals and by conducting early engagement with Councillors, stakeholders, community groups, applicants and individuals in a meaningful way.
 - Set clear and concise objectives of consultations in order to be transparent by keeping people informed, being clear on what we are asking for responses on, publishing outcomes, and setting realistic timelines for consultations and being open and clear about our decision making.
 - Be proportionate and cost effective in resource and promote best practice by exploring new and evolving methods of consultation and communications including digital to engage more easily with local communities.
 - Ensure consultation is inclusive, fair, equitable and supports our local communities in feeling heard through consultation methods that are consistent to all, including those people without access or find it difficult using digital communication.
 - Be accountable in the decision-making process, by explaining how the responses to consultations will be considered, how people will be informed of outcomes or decisions, and ensure that the planning stages are robust, justified and consistent.
- 1.4 During the COVID-19 pandemic, both Councils had to reassess how they carried out public engagement whilst meeting social distancing requirements. In May 2019 and December 2020 GCSP published an addendum to its SCI which outlined the measures that the Councils were taking in response to the pandemic, including restricting face-to-face activities and

holding events online. Whilst we are now able to meet face-to-face once again, the Councils learnt some key lessons on how to make good use of webinars and digital communication tools when carrying out public engagement exercises. This has the positive effect of making best-use of our resources whilst also making it more convenient for our communities to participate in engagement activities.

1.5 This document sets out the approach of the Councils to consulting and engaging with our communities through the different stages of the planning process. The sections of the document which follow explain the purpose of the SCI, how you can be involved in the process of preparing our planning policy documents, and how we will engage through different types planning applications. The document also provides guidance for how the local community can prepare neighbourhood plans or neighbourhood development orders, and how we will assist with this process.

1.6 The Appendices contain the glossary for words abbreviated throughout the document, the consultation bodies, the requirements for consulting on planning applications, and the Council's contact information.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Statement of Community Involvement

1.7 In 2018, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council agreed to work in partnership to deliver shared services. This led to the formation of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP), to deliver the range of services consistent with their responsibilities as the Local Planning Authority for the two areas.

1.8 It is important to recognise that although the Councils have prepared this joint SCI, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council remain separate legal entities in relation to their designation as Local Planning Authorities.

Why is the Statement of Community Involvement being reviewed?

1.9 The [Town and Country Planning \(Local Plan\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 \(as amended\)](#) require Local Planning Authorities to review their SCI every five years. The current SCI was adopted in 2019, so is coming up to five years old and needs to be updated. This provides the opportunity to review the SCI to ensure it still provides the most efficient and effective approach to consultation and engagement and learns lessons from the wide range of engagement we have undertaken in recent years.

1.10 In 2020, the Government's consultation on the [White Paper Planning for the Future](#) proposed substantial reforms to streamline the planning system. This included proposed changes to the preparation of local plans and modernisation of planning, through improved engagement with people, by promoting the use of digital technology. At the time of writing this document, the Government are proposing reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. It is likely there will be further changes to the planning process and how we consult in the coming years, as well as where we capture information currently found in SCI's.

1.11 GCSP have already been working to explore digital opportunities to make information easily accessible and to make it easier to provide feedback. We have created [interactive maps](#) and [webinar videos](#) for our Local Plans.

We are also seeking to continuously improve, for example we are part of the government's PropTech programme exploring improvements to digital engagement tools and transform community involvement in the planning process.

In carrying out the review of the SCI, particular consideration and changes has been given to:

- Opportunities provided by digital technology including the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Learning from the Greater Cambridge Local Plan consultations, where we tried new methods of consultation for example interactive online digital engagement;
- providing more information to guide pre-application engagement by developers, including a range of engagement methods which they can consider at the initial stages of them preparing a development proposal;
- Highlighting the importance of reaching under represented groups, including Black and ethnic minorities communities, people with disabilities and young people;
- A new section on planning obligations/ developer contributions and how the Councils may seek views on the use of contributions on priority projects for infrastructure, for example public art or children's play spaces;
- Updates to our neighbourhood planning support offer reflecting experience gained, including refocusing our funding offer on Strategic Environmental Assessment screening rather than a health check;
- Setting out how local communities can respond to significant infrastructure projects which are considered and determined by other bodies outside of the Councils.

The key functions that GCSP has in the overall planning process are:

- Planning policy or plan making is the formulation of a statutory development plan which sets out the vision for the future of the area and provides a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social, and environmental priorities. The main policy documents for the area are the adopted Local Plans. Other documents include supplementary planning documents (SPDs) which may also be produced to provide more detail on the policies in the Local Plan. Neighbourhood plans, produced by local communities, also form part of the development plan. You can find more information on what documents form part of our current development plan on our [website](#).
- Development Management is about ensuring that the right type, mix and design of development is provided in sustainable locations through the granting or refusal of planning permission. Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire determine most applications in the area, but some, such as for minerals and waste, are dealt with by Cambridgeshire County Council. Some very large infrastructure proposals are determined at the national level, through Development Consent Orders.

What is the purpose of planning?

- 1.12 The purpose of planning is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF 2021 sets out the three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental that should be achieved and delivered through plan making and decision taking.
- 1.13 The Local Planning Authorities are responsible for making decisions to guide where sustainable development takes place and its functions, guided by national planning policy and the development plan.

- 1.14 This SCI sets out in later sections, further detail of the Local Planning Authorities functions in relation to preparing planning policy, determining planning applications, consideration of the design and conservation of the built and natural environment, planning obligations, the approach to compliance, and how local communities can be assisted in preparing neighbourhood plans or neighbourhood development orders. Each of the sections outline the approach to consultation and engagement and the time periods that will be applied to ensure an appropriate balance between effective participation and efficient plan and decision making.