

Community Involvement Plan – March 2015

For the:

- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031 – Pre-Submission Draft and Policies Map
- Sustainability Appraisal
- Habitats Regulations Assessment

1. Background

The District Council is developing a new District Plan 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.

This Community Involvement Plan has been prepared taking into account the extensive consultation that has previously taken place.

Extensive consultation was undertaken to inform the withdrawn 2013 District Plan. This was carried out in accordance with the Community Involvement Plans prepared at that time. Whilst there have been no fundamental changes made to the strategy and policies of the District Plan submitted to the Government in May 2013, the opportunity has been taken to reflect new Government planning policy, particularly the publication of the National Planning Practice Guidance in March 2014. Comments made during the previous consultations for the District Plan have also been taken into account.

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 Member Policy 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.

Public consultation was undertaken on the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 – Consultation Draft for a period of eight weeks from 21st November 2014 until 16th January 2015.

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

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

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

Including everyone

The Equality Impact Assessment considers the needs of people classified as having ‘protected characteristics’³. For the District Plan Pre-Submission 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 Impact Assessment⁴.

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 legislation⁵. 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 Authority⁶;
- 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 the Equality Impact Assessment;
- Subscribers to the Local Development Framework email alert service⁷; 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 Member Policy Working Group (any District Councillor can attend as an observer);
- The Scrutiny Committee for Planning and Economic Development (any District Councillor can attend and 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 Plans⁸.

³ As defined by the Equality Act 2010

⁴ Available at www.midsussex.gov.uk/6536.htm

⁵ Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

⁶ Details of these groups are set out in a list of ‘key contacts’ available at www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci.

⁷ See www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci

⁸ These are being prepared by the District’s Town and Parish Councils.

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:

- The District Plan has been written in the context of the Localism Act, the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance published by the Government. The District Plan and statutory planning documents need to maintain consistency with national planning policy and guidance⁹.
- The District Plan needs to be produced and written in accordance with legislation and regulations¹⁰.
- 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 page¹¹.
- The District Plan is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment, both of which are part of the public consultation.

4. When will people be involved?

Publication	Following agreement by Council in March 2015, the Council will ‘publish’ the Pre-Submission District Plan for a six-week period scheduled for May/June 2015 (dates to be confirmed). 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 Public Examination. The Council may make minor changes to the District Plan following publication.
Adoption	The District Plan is due to be adopted in spring 2016. No consultation is programmed at this stage although it will be widely advertised.

Further details of the timetable are available at <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/8264.htm>.

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);
- Put all the details and documentation on the Council’s website¹² 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 points¹³; District Council offices (Main and Planning Receptions); and Town and Parish offices;

⁹ Such as National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Policy Statements/Guidance, Circulars

¹⁰Such as Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments (Regulations)

¹¹ www.midsussex.gov.uk/DistrictPlan

¹² See www.midsussex.gov.uk/consultation and www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci

- Send letters or emails to all the 'specific consultation bodies' (statutory consultees) and to all the other organisations listed in section 2 above;
- Send an email or letter to all those who made representations during previous consultations on the District Plan;
- 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 Pre-Submission Draft.

6. What happens to the results?

Representations will be considered by the Planning Inspector appointed to carry out the examination.

The Council is required¹⁴ to summarise the main issues raised and publish a consultation statement that sets out:

- Who was invited to make representations to the District Plan Consultation Draft¹⁵ how this was done, a summary of the main issues raised and how they were taken into account
- Who was invited to make representations to the Pre-Submission District Plan¹⁶, how this was done, how many representations were received and a summary of the main issues raised.

Notification that the summary 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 of the submission of the District Plan to the Secretary of State.

If you have any comments or queries on this Community Involvement Plan, please contact Alice Henstock - alice.henstock@midsussex.gov.uk (01444) 477394.

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

¹⁴ Regulation 22 - The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012

¹⁵ Regulation 18 - The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012

¹⁶ Regulation 20 - The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012