



Date of Meeting	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Planning, Development & Housing
Report Author	Abigail Mills
Public/Private Document	Public

## Adoption of Revised Statement of Community Involvement

### Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Government released updated planning guidance encouraging Local Planning Authorities to update their Statement of Community (SCI) as soon as possible to allow plan making to progress during the Covid-19 outbreak.
- 1.2 The Council's current SCI, adopted October 2019, sets out how the local community may be involved when preparing key planning policy documents and determining planning applications. It is important, in the interests of clarity for stakeholders and to avoid the potential for legal challenge, that the SCI is up to date and reflects present national planning legislation and the Council's own current procedures.
- 1.3 The draft revised SCI was published for public consultation for a period of six weeks from 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 to 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020 to allow for stakeholders and members of the public to comment and provide input. This report considers the consultation responses and any proposed changes. The SCI document is recommended for adoption.

### Recommendation

- 2.1 To consider and note the representations and officers' responses to representations received following consultation and the proposed changes to the SCI.
- 2.2 To approve the adoption of the revised SCI (August 2020).

### Reason for Recommendation

3. Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to produce a Statement of Community Involvement, which should explain how they will engage local communities and other interested parties in producing their Local Plan and determining planning applications.

## Key Points for Consideration

- 4.1 The Government have released updated planning guidance encouraging Local Planning Authorities to update their Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) as soon as possible to allow plan making to progress during the Covid-19 outbreak.
- 4.2 The current SCI was adopted in October 2019. It is important, in the interests of clarity for stakeholders and to avoid the potential for legal challenge, that the SCI is up to date and reflects present national planning legislation and the Council's own current procedures.
- 4.3 In the current SCI the Council is committed to providing hard copies of consultation documents at our main office at Rochdale Riverside and our 4 principle libraries of Rochdale, Heywood, Middleton and Littleborough. We are now unable to meet this commitment due to the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 outbreak. This means the Council is unable to comply with the current adopted SCI for future planning policy consultations. The updated Government planning guidance allows us to make temporary changes to the SCI to remove this commitment. Please note this is a temporary change which will be reviewed as the Covid-19 outbreak develops.
- 4.4 The Council is also proposing to remove the requirement to consult on future updates to SCIs. This is in line with Government Planning Practice Guidance and will allow us to make future changes to the SCI quickly as Government advice on social distancing changes and adapts during the Covid-19 outbreak. This will ensure that future planning policy consultations can continue to go ahead in line with any updated Government Planning Practice Guidance
- 4.5 The draft revised SCI was consulted on for a period of six weeks (13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 to 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020). The draft SCI was published on the Council's website and consultation portal and stakeholders and members of the public on the Council's planning consultation database were notified by letter or email.
- 4.6 Three consultation responses have been received from statutory consultees. A summary of these consultation responses is attached to this report at Appendix 1. It was not considered appropriate to make further changes to the SCI in light of the consultation responses received.

### **Alternatives Considered**

- It is a legal requirement for the Council to produce a SCI and to carry out consultation on planning policies and planning applications in line with the SCI. The only alternative possible would be to not adopt the revised SCI;
- 4.7 failure to adopt an up to date SCI could leave the Council open to legal

challenge.

### **Costs and Budget Summary**

5. The revised SCI does not commit the Council to any additional expenditure on other consultation than that which is contained within the existing SCI. There are no specific financial implications involved in producing the revised Statement of Community Involvement, which has been prepared in house within existing budgets.

### **Risk and Policy Implications**

- 6.1 The SCI and its production is governed by the requirements of Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), which ensure appropriate levels of consultation. Failure to produce an up to date SCI which reflects current Government guidance and Council practices could leave the Council open to legal challenge on decisions taken on planning applications.
- 6.2 There are no personnel implications arising from the production and adoption of the revised SCI.
- 6.3 The key purpose of the SCI is to promote opportunities for involving the community and stakeholders in decision making processes and increasing the ways in which information is made available.
- 6.4 Equality impacts have been taken into account in the SCI and Equality Impact Assessment Initial Screening has been undertaken. The SCI has a positive impact as it seeks to promote an inclusive approach to consultation on planning policy documents and planning applications.

### **Consultation**

- 7.1 The draft revised SCI was published for public consultation for a period of six weeks to allow for stakeholders and members of the public to comment and provide input before the statement was finalised for approval by Cabinet.
- 7.2 During this time the draft SCI was published on the Council's website. Stakeholders and members of the public on the Council's planning consultation database were notified by letter or email.

**Background Papers**

**Place of Inspection**

8.	Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) – August 2020	Please contact Abigail Mills at <a href="mailto:Abigail.mills@rochdale.gov.uk">Abigail.mills@rochdale.gov.uk</a> 01706 924375
	Equality Impact Assessment Initial Screening	Please contact Abigail Mills at <a href="mailto:Abigail.mills@rochdale.gov.uk">Abigail.mills@rochdale.gov.uk</a> 01706 924375

<b>For Further Information Contact:</b>	Abigail Mills, , <a href="mailto:Abigail.mills@Rochdale.Gov.UK">Abigail.mills@Rochdale.Gov.UK</a>
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## Appendix 1 Schedule of Comments

Organisation	Comments	Council Response
Historic England	Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above document. At this stage we have no comments to make on its content.	Comments noted.
Natural England	<p>Thank you for your consultation on the above which was received by Natural England on 13 July 2020.</p> <p>Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.</p> <p>We are supportive of the principle of meaningful and early engagement of the general community, community organisations and statutory bodies in local planning matters, both in terms of shaping policy and participating in the process of determining planning applications.</p> <p>We regret we are unable to comment, in detail, on individual Statements of Community Involvement but information on the planning service we offer, including advice on how to consult us, can be found at: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals">https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals</a>.</p> <p>We now ask that all planning consultations are sent electronically to the central hub for our planning and development advisory service at the following address: <a href="mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk">consultations@naturalengland.org.uk</a>. This system enables us to deliver the most efficient and effective service to our customers.</p>	Comments noted.
Highways England	<p>Thank you for consulting Highways England regarding the update to the Rochdale Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).</p> <p>Having reviewed the document I can confirm that Highways England has no additional comment to make at this stage, and I am content that nothing mentioned within the updated SCI is likely to cause us any concern.</p>	Comments noted.