

EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL

TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF PARTS OF THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT FOR PLANNING POLICY PURPOSES - ADOPTION OF THE SUFFOLK COASTAL LOCAL PLAN

SUBJECT MATTER:

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) set out certain requirements in relation to availability of documents on adoption of a Local Plan. Amendments to this legislation were introduced in July 2020 to temporarily remove the requirements for making hard copies of documents available.

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory planning document which the Council is required to prepare by legislation. The SCI reflects the regulatory requirements and also sets out the Council's complementary measures.

The matters subject of this note are:

1. To suspend part of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) insofar as it relates to the **provision of hard copies of documents at Council offices and Local Libraries** from the date of adoption of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, subject to review in relation to the practicality and possibility for documents to be made available in the Council's offices and in libraries for public inspection, in a safe way.

The Statement of Community Involvement for East Suffolk Council comprises:

- How to get involved in local planning – Statement of Community Involvement (adopted by Suffolk Coastal District Council, September 2014)
(<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy-and-local-plans/suffolk-coastal-local-plan/existinglocal-plan/statement-of-community-involvement/>)
- How to get involved in local planning – Statement of Community Involvement (adopted by Waveney District Council, September 2014)
(<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Waveney-Local-Plan/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/1Statement-of-Community-Involvement-September-2014.pdf>)

REASON FOR ACTION BEING TAKEN:

Arrangements set out in the SCI for the preparation of the Local Plan require that hard copies of documents are made available for inspection at Council offices and at local libraries. With current social distancing restrictions as the result of Covid-19, it is not possible to fulfil this requirement.

Alternative measures and a temporary suspension of the relevant requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement are therefore needed in order to progress with the adoption of the Local Plan and to enable fair and equal access to the Local Plan and supporting documents.

ADJUSTMENT:

The Council's alternative approach (adjustment) to ensure access to the Local Plan and supporting documents in a fair and equal way is set out below. Should any Government guidance or amendments to legislation be published the Council will react accordingly.

The Local Plan and supporting documents will continue to be made available via the Council's website.

For those that are not able to view the Local Plan or supporting documents online hard copies will be made available and posted out where possible (free of charge) on request.

This will be communicated in material publicising the adoption of the Local Plan.

The Council will be clear in its correspondence as to how officers can be contacted via phone when not in the office.

Arrangements will be kept under review.

BACKGROUND:

The Council has prepared the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan in accordance with relevant Regulations. On adoption, the Council is required to make documents available for inspection.

In view of the current Covid-19 social distancing measures, it is not possible to fulfil the relevant requirements of the SCI in relation to the provision of hard copy documents on adoption of the Local Plan. Failure to comply with the requirements of the SCI could result in legal challenges being brought which would impact on the weight applied to planning policy documents in planning decisions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There may be increased printing and postage costs resulting from demand for hard copies of documents.

Failure to comply with the requirements of the SCI could result in legal challenge. If this were to occur there would be significant associated costs.

ACTION AUTHORISED:

To suspend part of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) insofar as it relates to the provision of **hard copies of documents at Council offices and Local Libraries** from the date of adoption of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, subject to review in relation to the practicality and possibility for documents to be made available in the Council's offices and in libraries for public inspection, in a safe way.