

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

Joint Statement of Community Involvement 2019 – Addendum

### **Amended Practice in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic**

This document provides an addendum to the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Statement of Community Involvement (Feb 2019).

It is to be read alongside the original document, available to view at:

<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/Joint-SCI-Planning-Matters-February-2019-FINAL.pdf>

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/Joint-SCI-Planning-Matters-February-2019-FINAL.pdf>

### **Introduction**

The Councils are working hard to protect our residents, staff and services and respond to the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) situation. This addendum to the Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Councils will undertake measures to enable the Joint Local Plan to progress to an Examination in Public, in accordance with the National Planning Practice Guidance. Amendments to the planning application process were published on the Councils' websites following the outbreak of Covid-19 and continue to be kept up to date.

### **Involving the Community in Planning Policy**

The Government is encouraging all local planning authorities to continue, as much as possible, to work proactively with their community and other stakeholders to progress plans, even if some adjustments to timetables are necessary.

The Planning Advisory Service advise that, 'This is an opportunity to think differently about how you consult and how you use the online and virtual tools you have access to promote your consultation and allow people to get involved.' Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council's Planning Service has been developing and improving its methods of online consultation and community engagement and will continue to do so.

Some specific changes are needed to our current methods to reflect government restrictions in place as a result of Covid-19. Making plan documents available to view at Council offices is not possible when the Council offices are closed to visitors. Please refer to the Councils' websites for the latest updates. Documents will be made available on the Councils' websites. Reflecting this, when the Councils invite representations (through a notice on the Councils' websites, and advertising through other methods such as social media, news releases, Council publications or press adverts, or through contacting those on the Local Plan consultation database) the Councils will include an e-mail address and phone number for the Planning Policy team, so that anyone having problems viewing the documents can discuss this and seek assistance to view them.

Engagement with Town and Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Plan groups will be undertaken through online platforms. Any engagement with statutory consultees would also be via online platforms. The Councils will, where possible, send documentation electronically to support organisations for identified hard to reach groups.

## Hard Copy Documents

New legislation that temporarily amends regulations 35 and 36 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, removes the requirement to make certain documents available for inspection at premises and to provide hard copies on request. The documents must be made available for inspection online.

This also applies to the requirements within the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations). Modifications undertaken by the Government in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, remove requirements for physical copies of SEA-related documents to be available for inspection at an address and for hard copies to be made available. Instead, copies of the relevant documents must be made available for inspection online.

The Councils will however continue to provide hard copies of documents on request at a cost as set out in section 2.1 of the Statement of Community Involvement.

The sentences in paragraph 3.3 as follows, will be temporarily suspended:

*“Make hard copies of all appropriate Local Plan information at the Councils’ customer service centres. If suitable to the area / the consultation, other locations may also host hard copies including libraries, community centres, shops, and schools. However, cost considerations and volumes of paper need to be considered.”*

All documentation will be available to view online only for the Regulation 19 Joint Local Plan Pre-Submission stage and thereafter subject to guidance from the Government regarding Covid-19.