



Castle Point
Statement of Community Involvement
(SCI) 2020

Introduction

1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the community and other stakeholders will be engaged and consulted on local planning policy documents and planning applications. An addendum to this SCI has been prepared to set out the consultation processes that will apply to South Essex planning documents.
2. This SCI is an update to earlier documents and has been prepared during the coronavirus pandemic. Whilst the lifespan of this SCI will extend beyond this pandemic, at this time, and potentially for some while to come it is important that we engage and consult with the communities in Castle Point in a way which ensures their safety and wellbeing. There is therefore additional emphasis within this SCI on digital access and the use of social media, which we will strongly encourage residents to use.
3. However, the Council recognises that a small proportion of our residents do not have access to the internet, and we will therefore continue to work to engage and consult with these residents via more traditional means wherever possible whilst ensuring their safety.

General Principles of Planning Consultations

4. The Council will apply some general principles to our planning consultations and engagement activities. Where consultations and engagement activities are being undertaken by others, we will expect them to apply these too.
 - Involvement will be open to all regardless of gender, faith, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or age.
 - The views of interested and affected parties will be sought as early as possible.
 - We will choose engagement and consultation methods which ensure safe but effective engagement, balanced against the availability of resources, costs and time constraints. There are some things we are required to do by law which reduce our discretion in this regard.
 - Consultation documents will be as clear and concise as possible, without understating the complexities of any issue.
 - We will inform those who take part in engagement activities or respond to a consultation of the next stages in the process, where details have been provided.
 - We will continue to work with neighbouring boroughs and public bodies who provide infrastructure and services or look after the environment in the area to ensure that strategic matters are addressed.

Planning Policy Consultation Database

5. Over time, the Council has built up an extensive database of organisations and individuals who wish to be involved in consultations on planning policy matters such as the Local Plan.
6. Any individual or organisations wishing to be included may request be added to the database at any time.
7. This database will be periodically reviewed to ensure it remains up to date and complies with the General Data Protection Regulations. In between these reviews, if you wish to be removed from this database you can submit a request at any time.

Development Plan Documents (DPDs)

8. Development Plan Documents (DPDs) are locally produced documents containing policies to manage and guide development. The Local Plan is a DPD. DPDs must be supported by evidence, generally accord with national planning policies, and must be subject to an ongoing process of appraisal to ensure that the policies are sustainable i.e. they have benefits in terms of their economic, social and environmental outcomes.
9. Consultation is required as part of the preparation of a DPD in order to ensure that all the relevant and important issues in the local area are identified and planned for appropriately. The requirements for such consultation are set out in legislation and will be applied as a minimum within Castle Point when DPDs are prepared.
10. The following approach applies to consultation and engagement on Development Plan Documents.

Who will be consulted?

- Statutory organisations including nearby councils, infrastructure providers and government bodies as legally required, or otherwise appropriate.
- Based on the subject of the document will we also consult the following groups as appropriate:
 - Groups representing a place, communities or other special interests;
 - Local businesses, voluntary and other organisations;
 - The general public;
 - Planning and development industry stakeholders;
 - Others who have expressed an interest in the issue or matter.

When will consultation occur?

- An initial consultation will take place early in the preparation of any DPD. This consultation will last for a minimum of 6 weeks.
- We will consider the need to prepare documents for additional consultation stages as appropriate, based on the topic and based on the need for further feedback through consultation. Any additional consultations will last for a minimum of 6 weeks.
- We will consider the need for targeted engagement with organisations, key stakeholders and other groups as appropriate throughout the preparation of the plan outside any formal consultations to assist in developing the plan.
- Once the Council feels that there has been an appropriate level of community involvement, the DPD will be finalised for publication and submission to the Government for independent examination.

How will we consult?

- We will prepare a consultation plan before each consultation occurs. The following sets out the minimum we will do.
- We will directly contact those organisations we have a statutory duty to contact.
- We will directly contact those organisations and individuals in our planning policy database, as appropriate. Where an email address has been provided this will be by email.

- We will publicise consultations on our website. We will also use an appropriate combination of other methods to let people know that the consultation is underway. This may include a press release, announcements on social media and the use of community notice boards. Other options may also be explored as appropriate, including opportunities to work with partner organisations.
- Consultation materials will be made available to view and download from the Council's website. Stakeholders are strongly encouraged to access materials in this way, particularly whilst social distancing measures to manage the spread of the coronavirus are in place.
- Consultation materials will normally also be available to view at the Council Offices and libraries during normal offices hours. Whilst restrictions are in place because of COVID-19, this may not be possible. An appointment may be required to view consultation documents in this way where it is possible.
- Anyone wishing to respond to a consultation is encouraged to do so online via our consultation portal, as this is the quickest and most effective method of responding. The Council will however accept others forms of response such as an email or letter. When making a response by email or letter, it should be marked clearly so that it can be assigned to the consultation. All responses, including those sent by email or post must be received by the consultation deadline to be taken into account.

How will consultation responses be dealt with?

- All responses will be recorded in a database and we will publish them or a summary as soon as it is feasible to do so. When publishing comments, we will normally publish the person's name. We may occasionally redact elements of a comment where it provides too much information about a person's identity and would breach data protection rules. We may also redact those parts of a comment which contain discriminatory or hateful content in order to ensure we do not breach rules in the Equality Act.
- We will explain how consultation responses have been taken into account in the preparation of the plan, and in any decisions taken, as required by legislation. There are some points within the process of preparing a plan where this is not required, and any comments received are dealt with through the examination process instead. We will make it clear in consultation materials where this is the case.

Consultation once a DPD has been prepared

11. Once the Council has finalised the DPD for publication and submission to the Government for independent examination, a final consultation will take place. This consultation will last for at least 6 weeks and will follow the requirements set out in legislation. At this stage, any comments made will be passed as scanned copies of the original to the Inspector appointed by the Government to examining the Local Plan. There are therefore specific questions that consultees are asked to answer, and the Council will provide a form and guidance note to aid consultees in doing this.
12. Once a DPD is submitted to the Government, an independent Inspector carries out an Examination of the document, considering the comments received, before making recommendation on the document that can be put before the Council for adoption. The Inspector may recommend that modifications are made to the DPD before it can be adopted. In this instance the Inspector will ask for consultation to take place on those

modifications. Consultation will be carried out in accordance with the requirements set out in legislation. All comments made on modifications are collected by the Council but will be passed to the Inspector as scanned copies of the original for consideration only by the Inspector.

Supplementary Planning Documents

13. The Council may prepare Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) to provide guidance and more detailed advice on matters set out in a Development Plan Document such as the Local Plan. These documents will be prepared using an appropriate evidence base, and should conform with national policy, and the policy or policies within the Development Plan Document they are intended to support.
14. SPDs are not independently examined by a Planning Inspector and are adopted for use at a local level by the Council. However, in accordance with legislation the Council must carry out at least one stage of consultation in the preparation of an SPD and must ensure that other legal requirements related to environmental assessments are met.
15. As with DPDs the Council will prepare a consultation plan for SPDs to detail how we will consult. However, the same general methods of consultation, as described for DPDs above will be used for SPDs. There are variations in 'when consultation occurs' for an SPD, as set out below:

When will consultation occur for an SPD?

- We will consider the need for targeted engagement with the community, organisations and key stakeholders in developing the SPD.
- We will consult on a draft version of the SPD for a minimum of 4 weeks.
- After considering the responses to the draft, we will consider the need for further engagement or consultation. The Council will decide if the engagement or consultation needs to be targeted or more extensive based on the issues arising.
- Once we consider that there has been an appropriate level of community involvement and made any appropriate amendments, we will adopt the SPD.

Master Plans, Development Briefs and Design Codes

16. These documents provide detail at a site or area level about what types of development will occur and some details about what it should look like. Master plans and development briefs will also detail how the development will provide or relate to infrastructure, and how the development will be connected into the wider area.
17. Master Plans, Development Briefs and Design Codes are used to ensure that allocations and other development arising from Development Plan Documents such as the Local Plan deliver on the policy requirements and objectives for the area.
18. Due to their level of detail, and because they normally include more graphics than other planning policy documents, consultation on master plans, development briefs and design codes are generally something that communities can engage in with greater ease.

19. Master Plans, Development Briefs and Design Codes are not independently examined by a Planning Inspector and are adopted for use at a local level by the Council. However, as these plans affect the use of land legal requirements related to environmental assessment must be met. Additionally, if the Council wants to afford a master plan, development brief or design code weight in the decisions it takes, it should also meet the legislative requirements for consultation set out for SPDs. Having met those requirements, the Council could choose to adopt a master plan, development brief or design code as an SPD.
20. Given the high potential for communities to engage with master planning and the preparation of development briefs and design codes, the Council will prepare a consultation plan for each master plan, development brief or design code to detail how consultation and engagement will occur. As a basis however, the same general methods of consultation, as described for DPDs will apply for master plans, development briefs and design codes. There will however be variation in when engagement and consultation occurs for these documents, as set out below:

When will consultation occur for a Master Plan, Development Brief or Design Code?

- We will consider the need for targeted engagement with the community, organisations and key stakeholders in developing each document.
- We will consult on a draft version of the document for a minimum of 4 weeks.
- After considering the responses to the draft, we will consider the need for further engagement or consultation. The Council will decide if the engagement or consultation needs to be targeted or more extensive based on the issues arising.
- Once we consider that there has been an appropriate level of community involvement and made any appropriate amendments, we will approve the document for use. We may choose to adopt it as an SPD.

Neighbourhood Plans and Development Orders

21. Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders are taken forward by qualifying bodies and communities themselves. They are not prepared by the Council; therefore, this SCI does not prescribe what methods of community engagement they must follow. It will be for the qualifying bodies and communities to decide an appropriate level of community engagement in relation to the size and complexity of the Plan. Nevertheless, the Council will expect this to meet the requirements set out in appropriate legislation and to follow wherever possible the general principles and techniques set out in this SCI.
22. The Council will assist/ advise, as appropriate, on the Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order process in line with relevant Regulations.

Community Infrastructure Levy

23. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge which allows the Council to raise funds for infrastructure to support new development. CIL rates are set out in a Charging Schedule. The Council will ensure that consultation on the CIL achieves at least the minimum requirements set out in legislation. On this basis:
 - Consultation on the Charging Schedule will be for a minimum of 4 weeks.

- We will consult statutory bodies identified in legislation, other stakeholders, interested bodies and where appropriate, the wider community.
- We will publish comments received or a summary as soon as it is feasible.
- An independent inspector will examine the charging schedule, having considered the representations made prior to making recommendations for the Council to consider in adopting the charging schedule.

Planning Applications

24. We are keen to encourage developers to discuss their proposals with planning officers before submitting an application. This can confirm whether the principle of development is acceptable and clarify the format, type and level of detail required to enable us to determine an application. Preapplication advice is currently provided on request and its procedure and associated cost is available on our planning website. The Council will usually decide a planning application in its submitted form.
25. On receipt of a planning application the Council will, as a minimum, carry out consultation in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation and take account of any relevant consultation responses. This may involve displaying a site notice or sending notifications to affected neighbours by letter or email or placing an advertisement in the local press.
26. To ensure early public involvement on major development proposals or locally sensitive schemes the applicant will be encouraged to carry out public consultations before making a planning application. Before making a major planning application (10+ dwellings or 0.5+ ha of residential development or 1000+ square metres of building space or 1.0+ ha of development land), prospective applicants should:
- Talk to the Council planning officers about their application through making use of the Council's pre-application advice service;
 - Talk directly with relevant statutory consultees to minimise technical objections to their application. Some of the statutory consultees operate their own pre-application advice service;
 - Consult the local community on overall and specific aspects of the proposal. It is advised that the Council and local ward Members are notified of when such consultation is occurring;
 - Consider the consultation responses received and take them into account before making their planning application.
27. Before making other types of planning application, prospective applicants should also consult both the Council planning officers and people likely to be affected and consider their views before finalising the proposal. The latter may be as simple as talking over plans with a neighbour or making use of the Council's pre-application advice service.
28. Where applicable planning applications should be accompanied by a consultation statement explaining what consultation has been carried out by the applicant, including technical and public involvement and how it has influenced the planning application proposals. The

Council will consider any submitted consultation statement by applicants in addition to any comments received on the planning application.

29. In addition to the press notice, site notice and/or neighbour notifications the Council will publicise a weekly list of planning applications on our website and in other public places as appropriate.
30. Planning applications are public documents and can be viewed on the Council's website via Public Access our internet service that allows you to view and comment on planning applications. To view documents online please visit <https://publicaccess.castlepoint.gov.uk>.
31. Planning applications can also be viewed in person at the Council Offices. You are recommended to contact the Council before visiting to view planning applications documents whilst COVID-19 restrictions are in place as an appointment may be required to be able to access the building.
32. The Council will by arrangement allow applicants and objectors to make a short statement on planning applications which are considered by the Development Management Committee in certain circumstances. A guide to commenting on planning applications and Development Management Committee is available on the Council's website.
33. The Council will publish the decisions on all planning applications on its website which will, where required, include the reasons for the decision. Please refer to the relevant planning pages on the Council's website: <https://publicaccess.castlepoint.gov.uk>

Lawful Development and Prior Approval Applications

34. Not all development proposals require a planning application. The General Permitted Development Order enables some development to occur without the need for a planning application. However, the Council receives the following in relation to this type of development:
 - Applications seeking a certificate to confirm a proposal is lawful – this confirms that what is proposed does not need planning consent; and
 - Prior approval applications – this application type seeks confirmation that additional rights within the General Permitted Development Order can be applied to a development, i.e larger residential extensions, additional floors on buildings, and changes of use.
35. Applications for a certificate to confirm a proposal is lawful is not the subject of consultation, as the issuing of a certificate simply confirms that a development does not need consent in law.
36. Some prior approval applications are the subject of consultation, with the specific requirements set out in the General Permitted Development Order. The Council will follow those requirements for these applications. For larger extensions to residential properties this would include writing to adjoining neighbours as an example.

37. In some instances, the Council will also receive applications for a certificate of lawfulness for an existing use or development. As this existing use or development may or may not have required planning consent, the Council will consult with adjoining neighbours prior to making a decision.

Independent Planning Advice

38. Independent advice on planning is available from the Planning Aid website (<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/>). Planning Aid provides free, independent and professional town planning advice and support to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay planning consultant fees. It complements the work of local planning authorities but is wholly independent of them. Planning Aid can assist people with their own planning applications or can help them to comment on planning applications or planning policy consultation documents.
39. If you have a query regarding the information set out in this Statement of Community Involvement or a specific question relating to a specific consultation or other planning policy matters, please contact us – our contact details are available via the Councils website.

Addendum – Statement of Community Involvement for the South Essex Plan

Introduction

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Addendum sets out a consistent approach to consultation and involvement with regard to the preparation of the South Essex Plan. This SCI acts as an addendum to each of the existing SCI’s for the six South Essex authorities working in partnership on this Plan. These are Basildon Borough, Brentwood Borough, Castle Point Borough, Rochford District, Southend Borough and Thurrock Borough Council.

Important Note

This SCI Addendum sets out the approach to consultation as it relates to the South Essex Plan only. The consultation approach for all other planning documents and planning applications remains as set out in the existing Statement of Community Involvement adopted by each individual authority. Please refer to the individual authority’s website for details.



Map of South Essex

Background

The South Essex Plan will be a formal statutory Development Plan Document, providing the strategic planning framework for the six Local Planning Authority areas identified above. Essex County Council will assist with preparing the South Essex Plan. The adopted Plan will include an overall spatial strategy as well as contain strategic allocations and policies setting out the amount of housing, employment and supporting infrastructure needing to be provided over the period to 2038, in aid of the delivery of the South Essex 2050 Ambition.

Public consultation is required at a number of specific stages during the preparation of the South Essex Plan, including its final “Publication” stage, after which it will be submitted to Government. An independent Planning Inspector will then carry out an Examination into the document, considering

the views of interested people. The final decision on the soundness of the South Essex Plan will be made by that Inspector and, if found sound, the plan can be adopted by the six Councils. You can find Government guidance on preparing local plans here: www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plan

Consultation General Principles

We will apply some general principles to our South Essex Plan consultation:

- Involvement will be open to all regardless of gender, faith, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and age.
- We will undertake consultation as the Plan is prepared.
- We will choose consultation processes by balancing available resources, cost and time constraints, but always in accordance with the requirements as set out in Government legislation and regulations.
- Consultation publications will be clear and concise and avoid unnecessary jargon, without understating the complexities of any issue.
- Consultations will be run for a minimum of 6 weeks in conformity with Government legislation.
- We will inform those who respond to any stage of consultation of further consultation opportunities and make a summary of our responses to each consultation available on our website.

Who We Will Consult

- We will contact appropriate organisations and individuals directly.
- We will publicise consultations by a combination of methods, as appropriate, such as: local authority websites, press releases, displays, social media, community groups and community events.
- We will make consultation documents available at council offices and public libraries where appropriate.
- Consultation documents will be made available for download via each Council's website.
- We will consider organising consultation events such as public exhibitions and stakeholder workshops.
- We will publish comments received or a summary as soon as feasible. We will explain how these comments have been taken into account when decisions are made.

When We will Consult

- Each authorities Local Development Scheme, available online, provides a 'live' timetable for preparing the South Essex Plan, setting out key consultation stages and milestones;
- We will consider the need for targeted engagement with organisations and key stakeholders in developing the Plan, in addition to legal requirements;
- The first consultation on the South Essex Plan will present the key issues that need to be addressed and will ask for comments on approaches to address these issues;
- We will consider the need to prepare documents for additional consultation stages setting out further options, information, greater detail or preferred options;
- Once we think there has been an appropriate level of community involvement, both in terms of the opportunity to shape plan approaches and to be compliant with Government regulations, we will formally publish the "Publication Version" of the Plan in accordance with the relevant regulations. A final opportunity for public engagement will be given before submission to Government for independent examination

- Each iteration of the South Essex Plan will be presented alongside an evidence base and a statement setting out the role that the previous consultation had on its production.

Data Protection Statement

Those parties who have been consulted on this SCI Addendum have been consulted directly by their Local Authority in conjunction with the consultation procedure as set out in their existing SCI.

The details of anyone who makes a representation on the wording of this SCI Addendum or who otherwise expresses an interest in being consulted throughout the development of the South Essex Plan will be held on a database maintained and shared between the six South Essex Authorities (Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock), and Essex County Council. This database will be used for the sole purposes of matters relating to the production of the South Essex Plan.

This database, in whole or in part, may need to be shared with any consultants who the authorities need to work with in order to manage future consultations. Data protection regulations will be enforced with any consultant that this may apply to.

The names of any member of the public making a representation to any South Essex Plan related consultation will be published alongside their representation as representations are required to be made a matter of public record. All other personal details will be redacted.