

**Forest Heath District Council
&
St Edmundsbury Borough Council**

**Statement of Community Involvement
(SCI)**

Consultation Draft
September 2013

Forest Heath • St Edmundsbury

West Suffolk
working together

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Statement of our intention to engage with our communities

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Statement of our intention to engage with our communities

This statement is part of a wider commitment made by Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils to create and maintain effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, openness and constructive challenge. Consulting and engaging with local people is essential in helping both Councils to develop quality services. This is one of the reasons why Elected Members and Officers have developed this '*Statement of Community Involvement*' for their planning service.

This document sets out how we will consult and engage with you in relation to the majority of our planning functions, with the overarching aim of going beyond the normal, recognised channels of engagement and thinking innovatively about what works best for the people of the District and Borough now and in the future. Getting community engagement right is a challenging task, but the end result, of getting more people actively involved in decision-making and feeling informed about issues that affect them, is just as rewarding.

We would urge you, as residents and stakeholders, to use this Statement and the protocols set out within it, to hold the Authorities to account and ensure that all local people have sufficient opportunities to have their say. We recognise that consultation and engagement activities are constantly evolving and this Statement will be revisited at regular intervals to ensure it is fully up-to-date and reflects local and national priorities, practices and policies.

Introduction

This draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out:

- our vision and strategy for involving the wider community in the preparation of new planning documents; and
- how our communities can become more involved and have a greater say in the handling of the planning applications that we receive.

The SCI is effectively a statement of our intent to seek positive and meaningful engagement with our local communities in the delivery and improvement of all of our planning services.

Whilst it is not a legal requirement, it is considered best practice to consult upon a draft version of the Statement so that our communities and stakeholders have an opportunity to have their own say on its content, before we produce a final draft and seek its adoption across both Councils.

The background to the preparation of the SCI is that Forest Heath produced a '*Preferred Option*' version of a SCI and consulted upon it in June 2005. However, a final version was not produced and the Council does not currently have a formally adopted SCI. For St Edmundsbury, a SCI was prepared, consulted upon and then formally adopted in February 2008.

Looking forward, the intention now is to produce a Statement that will be applicable across both local planning authority areas. It should therefore reflect the newly aligned processes and procedures in place for plan-making and planning application assessment that are being put into place as the planning services of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury become increasingly 'shared'.

In reading this statement it is important to understand that although the Councils are sharing their planning services, St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath remain separate legal entities in so far as the designated *Local Planning Authority*, (LPA), is concerned. This draft Statement has been written within this context.

PART 1 – PLAN MAKING

1.1 How we produce our Local Plan documents

What is a Local Plan?

The plan produced by a local planning authority which sets out planning policies for the future development of its area. A number of Local Plan documents can make up an authority's Local Plan including a Core Strategy which establishes the level of growth to be provided in an area and strategic high level policies, site allocation documents which allocate specific sites for development and development management policy documents which are used to help determine day to day planning applications for development.

A Local Plan should provide the formal statutory framework for sustainable development and economic growth, whilst protecting our most valuable natural and built environmental assets. These 'Plans' can be reviewed in whole or in part and should be responsive to changing social, economic and environmental circumstances.

Since 2011 the Government has been introducing changes to allow people a greater role in shaping their local areas and changes to the planning system set out in the 2011 Localism Act and the March 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide communities with a wider opportunity to become involved in the preparation of local plan documents.

These Local Plan documents are seen as the key to delivering development that reflects the vision and aspirations of our local communities and for this to happen, a wide section of the community needs to be actively involved in their preparation. We must also ensure that in producing these Plans, we consult with our neighbouring Local Authority areas and communities, in addition to the County Councils, to ensure that we are inclusive and take into account those wider issues that cut across administrative boundaries.

Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury currently have their own Local Plan frameworks comprising a number of inter-related Local Plan documents as set out below:

Core Strategy

- St Edmundsbury Core Strategy Local Plan document adopted in December 2010
- Forest Core Strategy Local Plan document adopted in May 2010. A single Issue Review for Policy CS7 Overall Housing Provision and Distribution is being progressed.

Joint Development Management Policies document

- A joint Local Plan document is currently being prepared for use across both authorities in the day to day determination of planning applications

Site Allocations Local Plan documents

- St Edmundsbury is currently progressing its 'Vision 2031' Local Plan documents
- Forest Heath is progressing its Site Allocations Local Plan document.

Further details of the documents being produced and the timescales for consultation and adoption are set out in the councils new Joint Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Moving forward, there will continue to be new Local Plan documents prepared across both Authorities and Officers and Elected Members will need to ensure that their preparation accords with the requirements of this Statement. Officers and Elected Members will also need to ensure that the Local Plan documents that are brought forward are done so in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF), and 'plan-making' legislation as it currently appears within the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

1.1.1 The Procedure for producing our Local Plan documents

What are the key stages in the preparation of a Local Plan document?

There are a number of key stages involved in the preparation of Local Plan documents as set out in the diagram below. These stages are required by Government planning legislation and regulations and are designed to ensure that the process is as transparent as possible and that that communities have sufficient input so that the Plans that are ultimately adopted are robust and justified:



Following the process above there is a set protocol that all Authorities must follow when they wish to bring a Local Plan document through to adoption. It is our intention to go well beyond these 'minimum' requirements as set out for you below.

Stage of preparation	The minimum we will do in preparing our Local Plan documents:
<p>Public consultation on issues and options</p>	<p>We will consult with our communities and stakeholders on the 'Issues and Options' in the early stages of the Plan's preparation. We will advise all those bodies that we consider have an interest in the subject of the Local Plan document and all others we deem appropriate, (including all of those appearing on Local Plan contact list), of the key principles and the evidence required. This will be done in a simple manner so that we build an understanding and encourage wide-ranging debate on the content of the Local Plan document. We must take into account any representations made to us at this 'Issues and Options' stage.</p>
<p>Publication of submission draft Local Plan document</p>	<p>Following consideration of all comments made to us on the '<i>Issues and Options</i>' version, we will publish a complete 'Submission' version of the draft Local Plan document.</p>

<p>Stage of preparation</p>	<p>The minimum we will do in preparing our Local Plan documents:</p>
<p>Public consultation on submission draft Local Plan document</p>	<p>There will be a formal consultation period of at least 6 weeks on the submission draft document. The draft document and a statement of how representations can be made on it will be made available for people to inspect within our principal offices, (see appendix C), and on our websites. A copy of the procedure for making representations will also be sent to each of our statutory consultation bodies and other 'general' consultees whom we consulted at the <i>'Issues and Options'</i> stage.</p>
<p>Submission draft Local Plan document is sent to the Secretary of State and the Planning Inspectorate</p>	<p>Following consideration of all representations made on this <i>'Submission'</i> version, we will submit the Local Plan document, along with its requisite Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment, (SA/SEA), to the Secretary of State for independent inspection/examination, together with a consultation statement, (summarising the representations made to the previous rounds of consultation).</p> <p>As soon as we possibly can following this submission we will make the <i>'Submission'</i> version of the Local Plan document and its associated documents available for inspection within our principal offices and our websites. We will also notify our statutory and 'general' consultees that we have done this. We will also advise those persons who specifically requested to be notified of the submission of the Local Plan document to the Secretary of State.</p>
<p>Independent examination of the draft Local Plan document</p>	<p>An Independent Inspector will decide on the arrangements for examining our Local Plan document. At least 6 weeks before the start of this examination we will make available for inspection, within our principal offices and on our websites, details of the date, time and place of the examination and the name of the person appointed to carry out the examination.</p> <p>An Independent Inspector will decide on the arrangements for examining our Local Plan document. At least 6 weeks before the start of this examination we will make available for inspection within our principal offices and on our websites details of the date, time and place of the examination and the name of the person appointed to carry out the examination.</p> <p>Following this examination and when we are in receipt of the Inspectors report, we will make the Inspector's recommendations and their reasons for making those recommendations available for inspection within our</p>

<p>Stage of preparation</p>	<p>The minimum we will do in preparing our Local Plan documents:</p>
	<p>principal offices and on our websites. We will also advise those whom specifically asked to be notified that the report is available for inspection.</p>
<p>Adoption of the Local Plan document by Full Council</p>	<p>As soon as we possibly can after the Local Plan document is adopted by the Council(s), (should they choose to do so), we will make available for inspection within our principal offices and on our websites the Local Plan document itself, an adoption statement, the SA/SEA and a statement detailing where the Local Plan document is available for inspection and the places and times at which the Local Plan document can be inspected. We will also send the adoption statement to anyone who specifically asked to be notified of the adoption of the Local Plan document in addition to sending the adoption statement to the Secretary of State.</p>

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Consultation on the Strategic Environmental Assessment, (SEA), and Sustainability Appraisal, (SA)

What is a Sustainability Appraisal (SA)/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

Sustainability Appraisals provide an assessment of the social, environmental and economic impacts of each Local Plan document and relevant supplementary planning document. The key aim is to identify and enhance any positive effects whilst minimising any adverse impacts of planning policies.

Our Local Plan documents will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal, (SA), carried out jointly with a Strategic Environmental Assessment, (SEA). These processes will assess the environmental, social and economic implications of the Local Plan document so that the policies contained therein accord with the principles of *sustainable development* and cause least 'harm' to the environment.

Sustainability Appraisal is an iterative process and a SA/SEA report will be published at each stage of a Local Plan document's preparation. This allows any interested party the opportunity to comment on the potential environmental, social and/or economic effects of a particular proposal or policy as it emerges.

Due to their technical nature, these documents will be shared with specific social, economic and environmental consultees for their input but will also be made available to all with an interest in or likely to be affected by the proposal(s) being assessed. Copies will be available either on request or will be accessible on the relevant Council website.

1.2 How we produce our Supplementary Planning Documents

What is a supplementary planning document (SPD)?

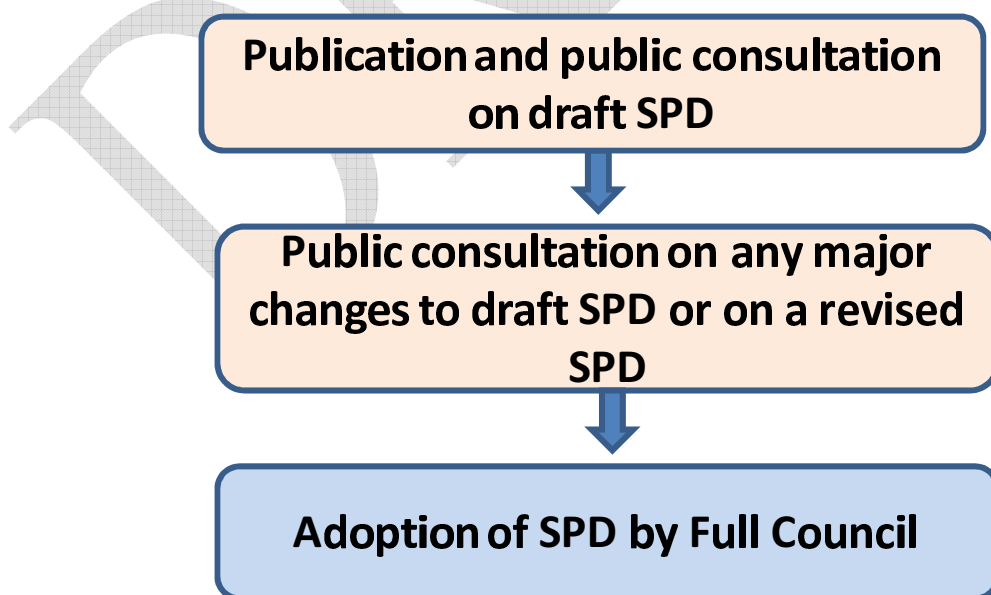
SPDs are documents which are prepared to provide further detailed supporting guidance to existing planning policies. They do not carry the same weight as a Local Plan document but they can still form a 'material consideration' in determining planning applications, (i.e. their content is taken into account).

Supplementary Planning Documents or SPDs add further detail to the policies contained within a 'parent' Local Plan document and again, they can be delivered jointly should we choose. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design or affordable housing. SPDs are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the formal Development Plan.

As with Local Plan documents, there is a procedure for taking a SPD through to adoption, that all Authorities must follow, to ensure that as many people get an opportunity to comment and to ensure that the content is justified and consistent with other local and national policy guidance. Again, we will look to go beyond the minimum requirement, as outlined below, wherever practicable.

What are the key stages in the preparation of a supplementary planning document (SPD)?

Supplementary planning documents require fewer rounds of consultation than a Local Plan document and are not subject to an independent examination. The key stages in the preparation of an SPD are set out below:



<p>Key stage in preparation</p>	<p>The minimum we will do in preparing our Supplementary Planning Documents:</p>
<p>Publication and public consultation on draft SPD</p>	<p>In accordance with the most recent, (2012), regulations, before we adopt an SPD, a draft version, (including a SA/SEA if it is required), will be the subject of a minimum four week period of public consultation. We will make copies of the draft SPD documents and details of when and how representations can be made, available for inspection within our principal offices and on our websites.</p>
<p>Public consultation on any major changes to draft SPD or on a revised SPD</p>	<p>If there are any major changes to the SPD they may be a need to re-consult on the changes or on a revised draft.</p>
<p>Adoption of SPD by Full Council</p>	<p>Once we have considered the representations made on this draft SPD, and made any consequential amendments, we will seek to formally adopt the document. A statement will be prepared setting out who we consulted when preparing the SPD, a summary of the main issues raised by those persons and an explanation how these issues have been addressed in the final version of the SPD. As soon as we possibly can following adoption by Council, (should they choose to do so), we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make available for inspection within our principal offices and on our websites the adopted SPD and an adoption statement. • Send a copy of the adoption statement to anyone has asked to be notified of the adoption of the SPD.

Concept Statements, Masterplans and Development Briefs

What are Concept Statements, Masterplans and Development Briefs?

- **Concept Statement** – a simple, clear expression of the kind of place that a new development should create. It sets out how the policies and objectives of a Local Plan will apply to a specific site in order to deliver the best possible economic, social and environmental benefits. They are prepared by the Local Planning Authority and are the subject of consultation before approval.
- **Masterplan** – a detailed holistic ‘blueprint’ for the development of a site, prepared by a developer but agreed by the Local Planning Authority and subject to consultation before they are approved. A Masterplan will be required where a concept statement has been prepared and on any other sites identified by the authority as requiring a masterplan approach, due the size, location or mix of uses on a site.
- **Development Brief** – a detailed framework for the development of a site where a full masterplanning approach is not required. They are prepared by the developer and are the subject of consultation before approval the Local Planning Authority.

From time to time there will be a need to prepare planning guidance that will provide a detailed framework for the development of specific sites. These will commonly take the form of ‘concept statements’, ‘masterplans’ or ‘development briefs’ and will be prepared either by the respective Council, the landowner or a developer. In preparing such frameworks there will be a need for consultation and engagement which should involve the principles set out in the pre-application section below, (section 2.1 of this Statement). These documents will normally be considered for adoption by the Council and at that time a report of consultation and the changes to the draft document made as a result of the consultation, will also be published.

Other Policy Documents

Other policy documents will be prepared from time to time, such as conservation area appraisals and non-statutory land-use strategies. Consultation on draft documents will take place in accordance with the framework detailed within this SCI and will only be considered for adoption by the relevant Council if a report of consultation and report of any changes resulting from the consultation are published with the final draft.

1.3 How we plan strategically across local boundaries

Under the provisions of the Localism Act, we now have a duty to co-operate on issues that cut-across administrative boundaries. The government expects joint working on areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken for the 'mutual benefit' of neighbouring Authorities.

There is also a requirement to consult and work collaboratively with all partners, including private sector bodies, utility and infrastructure providers, across all administrative boundaries, to ensure sustainable development objectives are met in the preparation of Local Plan documents. Indeed, we will be expected to demonstrate evidence of having effectively co-operated to plan for issues with cross-boundary implications when our Local Plan documents are submitted for examination. We will also consult with neighbouring Parish Councils, where appropriate, in the preparation of our planning documents.

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1.4 Our methods for community engagement

Consultation and community engagement are increasingly significant activities in local government and in order for them to be effective, they need to be approached in a systematic manner. We aim to reduce inequality by ensuring that the needs of harder to reach sections of the communities are also identified, discussed with them and reflected in the planning and delivery of our services.

Some of the ways in which Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury will seek to engage with you are identified in table 1 below.

Specifically, the Councils will try to engage with:

- a) all statutory consultees – those bodies which the government specifically asks us to keep informed with progress that we make with our Local Plan documents and SPDs which include the Environment Agency, English Heritage, Natural England and the Highways Agency;
- b) our Parish and Town Councils and neighbouring Parish and Town Councils where appropriate;
- c) Suffolk County Council and our neighbouring District/County Councils where appropriate;
- d) local bodies and organisations, e.g. business forums; and,
- e) individuals and organisations who have expressed an interest in or a willingness to be involved in the plan-making process, such as interested members of the public, landowners and developers.

We hold a shared 'Local Plan contact list' with details for all of these individuals and organisations. This contact list also contains the details of organisations that act in the interests of a number of harder to reach groups including:

- Age UK Suffolk
- UK Youth Parliament
- Forest Heath Disability Forum,
- Racing Welfare
- Disability Access Group
- Equal Opportunities Commission
- Commission for Racial Equality
- East Anglian Gypsy Council
- West Suffolk Borders Primary Care Group
- West Suffolk Disability Resource Centre
- NHS Suffolk, (via Suffolk County Council)
- West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group.

Table 1: How we will engage with our communities

At various stages in the production of our various Local Plan documents we may utilise some or all of the following methods of community engagement that go far beyond our statutory requirements as outlined within this Statement. An attempt will be made to tailor the method(s) of communication to the requirements of specific groups or communities if it is considered that this will aid their understanding of issues pertinent to them.

Method	Comments
Letters and emails	For environmental reasons, where you have provided us with an email address we will generally use that means of communication rather than sending a letter in the post.
Newspaper articles, press releases and adverts.	Articles written for newspapers and press releases at key stages in a Local Plan document's preparation are a good method of summarising topics and issues in a user friendly manner, with the added benefit of reaching a potentially large audience. We will also place articles in relevant newspapers circulating in the local area should their publication be timely. Press releases will also be made available on the Council websites.
Exhibitions	Exhibitions can provide a visual rather than a written means of putting across ideas and concepts.
Drop-in information sessions	Drop-in sessions in community halls and Council offices provide opportunities for people to have discussions with Council Officers on the content of a draft Local Plan document.
Website/Social Media	<p>Our websites are a useful virtual notice board for the community to engage in their own time and at their own pace. The website also has advantages of online interaction, (including an online representation facility for the statutory consultation stages).</p> <p>We are obliged to make use of our websites under the current planning regulations. We will make use of other forms of social media, where appropriate, to encourage interactions/debate among groups of people and share/exchange information and ideas within virtual communities and networks. Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury's have public access computer terminals at their main offices on which Local Plan documentation and</p>

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	planning applications can be viewed.
Leaflets and Newsletters	Leaflets and newsletters are a good means of cascading information to a large number of people. Distribution can be targeted at specific groups.
Dissemination of information via Councillors	The role of councillors is important as a means of cascading information to both the community at large and to groups on which they sit. Elected members are powerful advocates for local communities and their community leadership role provides them with a major input into the consultation process.
Parish/Town Council Workshops and Briefings	Workshops and Briefings are a useful means of engaging with Parish/Town councils in the development of Local Plan documents and in establishing local opinion on various issues and options. Parish Councils can also undertake local surveys and may produce Parish/Neighbourhood Plans.
Consultation with specific groups and stakeholders	Sharing information via stakeholder groups can be an effective way of disseminating information to a wide range of people.
Focus Groups	We will facilitate 'focus groups' to discover perceptions, opinions and attitudes towards development proposals and other planning matters. Such group settings can enable participants to talk freely with other group members/residents and share concerns.

1.5 Supporting the Neighbourhood Planning process

We are committed to encouraging local people to engage in the planning and development of their own areas. To enable this, we will provide information to local communities on the provisions of the Localism Act that offer them the opportunity to establish their own 'place-shaping' agendas. We will provide guidance and technical assistance where and when our communities wish to produce Neighbourhood Plans and Orders. We will tailor our support to take account of local circumstances, such as the complexity of the Neighbourhood Plan or Order being prepared, the skills and resources of the Authority and the local groups and being mindful to make the most efficient use of available resources.

It must be remembered that the intention is that Neighbourhood Planning is led and owned by local community groups themselves, not the Council and the process will need to have regard to the principles of consultation and engagement as identified within this Statement.

For more information on the Localism Act and/or Neighbourhood Planning, please contact the Local Plans team.

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PART 2 – PLANNING APPLICATIONS

This part of the Statement sets out our own shared service standards, that again we believe go well beyond our minimum requirements, as they relate to the administering and assessment of the planning applications that we receive.

2.1 The Pre-application stage

At the pre-application stage, we fully expect applicants proposing major development or those which involve a degree of sensitivity, to engage in pre-application discussions with Planning Officers. The reason for such pre-application discussion is to determine whether or not the principle of development is acceptable at the outset and to clarify the format, type and level of information required for submission with the planning application itself.

Our applicants are also expected to undertake pre-application consultations with other interested/relevant bodies such as the highway departments, Natural England and/or the Environment Agency. It is hoped that this process will result in the receipt of better applications where all appropriate information is readily available for assessment by the Council and for those commenting on the application prior to it being determined.

Developers are also expected to engage with the community, Parish and/or Town councils and other interested groups, for major or particularly sensitive proposals, prior to the application being submitted. The form and extent of such engagement(s) will vary depending on the particular proposal but may include one or more of the following;

- Public exhibitions,
- workshops,
- drop-in sessions,
- websites,
- provision of a scale model or computer generated image of the proposal showing how it impacts on the surrounding area,
- public meetings,
- presentations to Town/Parish Councils,
- surveys of local residents/businesses,
- use of local media,

For smaller proposals, our applicants are encouraged to consult with their neighbours so that any concerns can be addressed before the planning application is submitted.

Under the provision of the Localism Act there is now a power to demand pre-application consultation on certain larger developments. In other words, the pre-application consultation duty in the Planning Act is being extended to some types of 'ordinary' planning applications. This change requires the applicant to bring their planning application to the attention of the 'majority' of those living in the local area and give them an opportunity to comment on it. The applicant will then have the opportunity to resolve any issues, or provide mitigation if necessary, to make the scheme more acceptable to local people.

2.2 Publicising our planning applications

It is Article 13 of the Town & Country Planning, (Development Management Procedure), (England), Order 2010 that lays down our statutory or minimum requirements for publicising planning applications that we receive. These are set-out below.

The minimum we will do in terms of advertising our planning applications:

In the case of an application for planning permission for a development which:

- a) is the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment, (EIA), accompanied by an Environmental Statement,
- b) does not accord with the provisions of the Development Plan in force in the area in which the land to which the application relates or is situated, or,
- c) would affect a right of way to which Part III of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, (public rights of way), applies,

the Planning Authority must publicise the application:

- by giving requisite notification by a site notice in at least one place on or near the land to which the application relates for not less than 21 days and,
- by publication of the notice in a newspaper circulating in the locality in which the land to which the application relates is situated,
- by publication of the application details on their website.

Major Developments

Proposals for major development can potentially have an impact on a wider area than just the immediate locality of the site. Article 2 of the DMPO (2010) defines 'major development' as development involving one or more of the following:

- a) The winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits,
- b) Waste development,
- c) The provision of dwelling houses where:
 - (i) The number of dwelling houses to be provided is 10 or more, or,
 - (ii) The development is to be carried out on a site having an area of 0.5 hectare or more and it is not known whether the development falls within (c) (i),
- (d) The provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more, or,
- (e) Development carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more.

The minimum we will do in terms of advertising our 'major' applications.

As well as expecting developers to undertake appropriate levels of pre-application engagement, as outlined above, we must publicise applications for 'major development' as follows:

- By site display notice placed on or nearby the site for at least 21 days or by serving the notice on any adjoining owner or occupier,
- by publication of the notice in a newspaper circulating in the locality in which the land to which the application relates is situated,
- by publication of the application details on our website.

Other Applications

For any cases falling outside of the above two definitions, we will publicise planning applications:

- By giving requisite notice by site display in at least one place on or near the land to which the application relates for not less than 21 days or by serving the notice on any adjoining owner or occupier,
- by publication of the application details on our websites.

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

There are different protocols in place in respect of publicising those applications that relate to Listed Buildings or Conservation Area Consent as follows:

The minimum we will do in respect of advertising our Listed Building applications and applications for consent to works in Conservation Areas:

(a) We will publish in local newspaper(s), a notice indicating the nature of the works which are the subject of the application and naming the places where a copy of the application, and of all plans and other documents submitted with it, will be open to inspection by the public during a period of 21 days beginning with the date of publication of the notice, and,

(b) For not less than 21 days display on or near the building a notice containing the same particulars as are required to be contained in the notice to be published in accordance with (a) above,

(c) For not less than 21 days, we will publish on our websites the following information:

- The address or location of the proposed works,
- the nature of the proposed works,
- the date by which any representations about the application must be made, (which must not be before the last day of the period of 21 days beginning with the date on which the information is published),
- where and when the application may be inspected, and,
- how representations may be made about the application.

Any applications for works in 'designated areas' will be expected to conform with the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2013 as this applies to the lowering of thresholds for the submission of accompanying Design and Access Statements and simplification of the content of these Statements.

Article 4 Directions

Both Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury have removed 'permitted' development rights in specific areas by issuing an Article 4 direction. This means that a planning application may need to be submitted for work which normally does not require one.

Article 4 directions are made when the character of an area of acknowledged importance could be threatened by a development proposal. They are most common in conservation areas. Please contact us if you would like more information on Article 4 Directions.

Tree Preservation Order Applications

A Tree Preservation Order, (TPO), is an Order made by a Council in respect of a tree(s) because it is considered to bring amenity value to the surrounding area. The order makes it an offence to cut down, uproot, prune, lop or damage the tree in question without first obtaining the Council's consent. A TPO can apply to a single tree, a group of trees or even woodland.

In the case of Forest Heath a site notice is always put up to publicise any TPO application, (consent for works). In the case of St Edmundsbury, neighbours are notified and where there is a particular public interest, then a site notice is displayed.

Trees in Conservation Areas

Trees in Conservation Areas which are already protected by a TPO are subject to the normal TPO controls. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 also makes special provision for trees in Conservation Areas which are not the subject of a TPO. Under 'section 211', anyone proposing to cut down or carry out work on a tree in a Conservation Area is required to give the Council six weeks prior notice, (the section 211 notice period). The purpose of this requirement is to give the Council an opportunity to consider whether a TPO should be made in respect of the tree.

In the case of Forest Heath, a site notice is always put up to publicise a Section 211 notice. In the case of St Edmundsbury, neighbours are notified and where there is a particular public interest a site notice will be displayed.

2.3 How we will engage with our communities

Site Notices

As mentioned above, we use site notices to advertise all of our planning applications. The site notice includes the date on which the notice was displayed and gives interested parties 21 days from the date of the notice being displayed within which to submit their comments. The notice also specifies the application site address, a description of the proposal, the planning application number and details of where the application can be inspected. It also advises that any representations should be made in writing.

Neighbour Notification

When we receive a valid planning application all occupiers/owners of buildings opposite and adjacent to the application site will be sent a letter notifying them of the application. This is irrespective of the land-use and whether or not the owners/occupiers are separated by a road/track or an area of undeveloped land.

Local Advertisement

In order to fulfil our statutory requirements, we will place an advert in one or more of the local newspapers which may include the Newmarket/Mildenhall Journal, the Bury Free Press and/or the Haverhill Echo. Members of the public are advised that they have 21 days from the date of the advert to submit their comments.

Viewing of Planning Applications

All planning applications are available to view on the Council websites by visiting www.forest-heath.gov.uk or www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk and clicking on the 'planning applications' link on the respective home-pages..

In the case of Forest Heath, all planning applications are also available for public inspection at the Council Offices on College Heath Road in Mildenhall from Monday to Friday between 8:30am and 5pm, (4:30pm on Fridays). It is also possible to view planning applications pertaining to Newmarket at the offices of Newmarket Town Council. Such viewings are by appointment only and you are therefore advised to call them on 01638 667227 beforehand. Newmarket Town Council is based at the King Edward VII Memorial Hall, High Street, Newmarket, CB8 8JP.

For St Edmundsbury, planning applications are available for inspection at West Suffolk House on Western Way in Bury St Edmunds between 9.00 am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday and at Haverhill House, Lower Downs Slade in Haverhill between 9.00 am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

Access to Planning Officers

Members of the public, applicants, their representatives or other interested parties are able to seek professional and independent advice from qualified Planning Officers as part of their more formal pre-application discussions, to discuss a current application or simply for advice or information. This can take the form of letters, emails or through personal visits. It should be noted that once an application has been

submitted, planning officers are normally unable to express an opinion as to the likely outcome of an application until all interested parties have had an opportunity to submit their views and information.

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2.4 How you can give us feedback and comment on a planning application

Comments are welcomed on any planning application that either support, object, or simply comment on particular proposals. Any comments received in writing will be used to help inform the decision making process and are a matter of public record. These can be made in writing to the Planning Officer or can be sent via email. It is also possible to make comments online. All comments received in this manner will be published on the respective Council website.

It is particularly important that you send your written comments to the appropriate planning officer as the responses received through this process may well help decide how the application is ultimately determined, either by delegated powers or by the Development Control Committee. However, for comments to be taken into account they must be a material planning consideration. If it is decided that a planning application will have to go to the Development Control Committee for a decision to be made, there will be the opportunity for an objector and the applicant to present verbal comments to the Committee.

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Part 3. Monitoring and reviewing the Statement of Community Involvement

We will review regularly whether or not the procedures for involving the community, as outlined within this Statement, have achieved a representative level of public involvement across all sections of the community.

Monitoring and review of this engagement strategy will be through the use of existing structures and resources to integrate with service development and delivery. It will be overseen by the Local Plan Working Group, (Forest Heath), and Sustainable Development Working Group, (St Edmundsbury), which will ensure that any difficulties or barriers are overcome and new opportunities created to deliver the vision contained within this document. Community engagement is already imbedded within the culture of both Authorities and is a key Corporate Objective, overseen by the Joint Chief Executive Officer.

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Part 4. Obtaining alternative planning advice

Planning Officers at both Authorities are committed to providing independent and professional planning advice. However, an external body called 'Planning Aid' exists which is a voluntary service linked to the Royal Town Planning Institute, (RTPI), offering free, independent and professional advice on town planning matters to community groups. Planning Aid enables local communities, particularly those with limited resources, to participate effectively in planning matters. Among other activities, Planning Aid:

- Provide information and training on the planning system,
- advise and assist groups in playing their part in the development of plans and policies at the national and local level,
- help communities develop their own strategies for their own area, including advice on producing Neighbourhood Plans and Orders,
- organise educational projects for all age groups.

Contact details for Planning Aid are provided below:

East of England Planning Aid

38 Cambridge Place

Cambridge

CB2 1NS

Tel: (01223) 350 850

e-mail: eeadmin@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

Appendix A: Acronyms

An explanation of the acronyms used in this SCI is provided below:

CAT	Conservation Area Tree
DM	Development Management
DMPO	Development Management Procedure Order
DPD	Development Plan Document
EC	European Commission
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EiP	Examination in Public
FHDC	Forest Heath District Council
GDPO	General Development Procedure Order
GPDO	General Permitted Development Order
LPWG	Local Plan Working Group
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LDS	Local Development Scheme
NDO	Neighbourhood Development Order
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEBC	St Edmundsbury Borough Council
SoS	Secretary of State
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
TPO	Tree Preservation Order

Appendix B: Glossary

Core Strategy – Outlines the key principles regarding the development and use of land in a Local Planning Authority's area.

Development Management Policies Document – This document contains policies which will be applied to ensure that all development meets the overall vision and strategic policies as set out within the overarching Core Strategy. When we make decisions about planning applications, we will take these policies into account.

Development Plan - This includes adopted Local Plans, neighbourhood plans and the London Plan, and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Development Plan Contact List – Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury administer a shared contact list with details of all statutory consultees and all other groups and individuals with an interest in the development plan making process.

Listed Buildings and Conservation Area consent – There is a requirement for separate permission or consent for applications which are either within a conservation area or which affect a listed building. There are also different publicity requirements for such applications.

Local Development Scheme (LDS) – This sets out a programme for the preparation of Local Plan documents. It is a project management tool that identifies which documents are to be prepared, the various stages required in their production together with a detailed timetable.

Localism Act – An Act of Parliament to change the powers of local government in England. The official summary of the Act is: 'To make provision about the functions and procedures of local and certain other authorities; to make provision about the functions of the Local Commission for Administration in England; to enable the recovery of financial sanctions imposed by the Court of Justice of the European Union on the United Kingdom from local and public authorities; to make provision about local government finance; to make provision about town and country planning, the Community Infrastructure Levy and the authorisation of nationally significant infrastructure projects; to make provision about social and other housing; to make provision about regeneration in London; and for connected purposes.

Local Plan – The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the Local Planning Authority, (LPA), in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the Development Plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Current Core Strategies or other planning policies, which under the regulations would be considered to be Development Plan documents, form part of the Local Plan. The term includes old policies which have been saved under the 2004 Act.

Local Planning Authority (LPA) - The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. For west Suffolk this is Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury.

Material Consideration - A factor which will be taken into account when reaching a decision on a planning application or appeal. Under Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, decisions on planning applications 'must be made in accordance with the [development] plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise'.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - Designed to consolidate all policy statements, circulars and guidance documents into a single, simpler National Planning Policy Framework. The new Framework is intended to be user-friendly and accessible with clear policies for making robust local and neighbourhood plans and development management decisions.

Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDO) - An Order made by a Local Planning Authority, (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990), through which Parish Councils and neighbourhood forums can grant planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.

Neighbourhood Plans - A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area, (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Pre-application stage - Discussions may take place and in many cases are expected, between the Local Planning Authority and potential applicants before a planning application is submitted. Pre-application discussions can help to clarify the nature of the proposal and can point to the need for additional material to accompany a planning application when it is finally made.

Shared services - In 2010 Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury formally agreed to a shared services structure with a single Chief Executive and Management Team. This new unified structure has seen staff working across the Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury council boundaries..

Site Specific Allocation Policies - Policies that relate to the allocation of land for development.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) - Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the formal Development Plan, (see above).

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) - This is a tool for appraising policies to ensure that they reflect sustainable development objectives. An appraisal is required by legislation for all Local Plans and many SPDs.

Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) - the European Strategic Environment Assessment Directive, (2001/42/EC), requires an assessment of certain plans and programmes including those related to planning and land-use.

The Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2010 - Contains amendments made to the original 1990 order, (below).

The Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 – This document specifies our statutory requirements as they relate to publicising applications for development in a Conservation Area or that affect a Listed Building.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2013 - Amend the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 to simplify the requirements for design and access statements.

The Town and Country Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) (as Amended 2008) – These are the regulations which govern the preparation of development plan documents and include detail on how we must undertake consultation with the general public and our stakeholders.

The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (DMPO) - A consolidated version of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (GDPO). This consolidated Order includes the original Order and all amendments made to it up until 6 April 2010.

The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (GDPO) – This was the order that laid down the guidelines that Local Planning Authorities needed to follow in terms of advertising and determining planning applications and appeals procedures etc.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (GPDO) - Has been subject to subsequent amendments but is the principal order setting out classes of development for which a grant of planning permission is automatically given.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (England) Order 2013 - Came into force on 30th May 2013 and amends the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, (see above).

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 – Came into force on 6th April 2012. These regulations govern the process by which Local Planning Authorities prepare their development plans and associated documents.

Appendix C: FHDC/SEBC 'Principal Offices'

The places below are referred to within this SCI as our 'Principal Offices' and are the locations in which we will make our Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents available for public inspection.

Forest Heath District

District Council Offices,
College Heath Road,
Mildenhall,
IP28 7EY

Area Office,
31 High Street,
Brandon,
IP27 0AQ

Area Office,
63 The Guineas,
Newmarket,
Suffolk,
CB8 8HT

Information is also made available at Lakenheath, Mildenhall and Newmarket libraries.

St Edmundsbury Borough

West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
IP33 3YU
01284 763233

Haverhill House, (Borough Council Offices)
Lower Downs Slade
Haverhill
CB9 9EE
01440 702271

Information is also made available at Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill, Clare, Kedington and Ixworth libraries.