

What is a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)?

- Planning policy and decisions for new development need to take into account a range of different considerations
- SCI sets out how the Local Planning Authority will engage and consult with the community and stakeholders on planning matters
- Covers both engagement on planning policy (e.g. Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans) and determination of planning applications



The need for a new SCI for Somerset

- Each of the existing 5 Local Planning Authorities (County and Districts) have their own separate adopted SCI's. There is therefore a need to prepare a new single SCI for Somerset. A draft SCI was agreed for consultation on 18th January 2023 by Exec.
- Need consistent approach to how we engage with our communities on planning matters across the new unitary authority area.
- The purpose of the SCI is to act as a high-level document setting out the minimum the Council will do in terms of statutory/legal requirements for consultation. More detailed Communication and Engagement Strategies are being prepared (e.g. Local Plan).

Consultation Undertaken

- 6 weeks public consultation undertaken earlier this year (1st February to 16th March)
- Included engagement with agents, local groups and the various planning/regulation committees of the former Councils
- 164 responses received in total, including from local residents/businesses, agents, Parish/Town Councils and civic groups
- The final draft is supported by a consultation statement which includes a review of all comments received and subsequent changes the document. Main changes are summarised on the following slides.

Main changes made following consultation

Paragraph 1.7 (introduction)	Additional wording to refer to key importance of engaging with parish/town/city councils and other local groups in all aspects of the planning system. This was following feedback that wording in this regard should be strengthened in the document.
Paragraph 1.14 (equalities and diversity)	Amended text to be clear that information can be made available in different formats, such as large print, easy read, audio and braille. This text now better reflects the Council's wider equalities and accessibility policy.
Paragraph 2.55 (Conservations Area)	Changes to text regarding consultation to be clear that conservation area appraisals and boundary reviews will include appropriate local community consultation.

Main changes made following consultation

<p>Paragraph 3.8 to 3.12 (Pre-Application Stage)</p>	<p>Section comprehensively amended following feedback to strengthen the expectation for pre-application engagement with local communities, including Parish, Town and City Councils. Section states this should be early enough to genuinely inform proposals. Pre-app fees details included. Examples of consultation methods also now included, and reference made to Quality Review Panel.</p>
<p>Paragraph 3.27 (How do we consult)</p>	<p>Further wording following feedback from parish Councils to be clear that where consultation periods do not align with parish meetings then case officers will be pragmatic in terms of agreeing extensions of time.</p>
<p>Paragraph 3.29 (How to comment on planning applications)</p>	<p>Wording amended to be consistent with the equalities section and be clear that comments can be made online, via email or post, with details included on site notices and notification letters.</p>

Main changes made following consultation

Paragraph 3.39 to 3.40 (Decisions)	Section comprehensively amended to refer to the Council's constitution and make reference to the procedures set out here in terms of planning committee arrangements, public speaking and the referral processes.
Paragraph 3.47 (Enforcement)	New enforcement section added following consultation feedback. This links to the Council's published enforcement policy and how people can report a breach.
Appendices	Appendices reviewed based on comments received to improve clarity and name additional specific and general consultation bodies where required.

Any Questions?



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