

For the:

- Mid Sussex Site Allocations Development Plan Document (Regulation 19)
- Sites DPD Sustainability Appraisal
- Sites DPD Habitats Regulations Assessment
- Sites DPD Equality Impacts Assessment

1. Background

The Site Allocations Development Plan Document (Sites DPD) is a daughter document to the Mid Sussex District Plan, which was adopted in March 2018. The District Plan sets out a vision for how Mid Sussex wants to evolve and a delivery strategy for how that will be achieved, covering the period up to 2031. The District Plan sets out the district's housing and employment requirements. Whilst the majority of this requirement has already been planned for, there is still a remaining (residual) need that must be found – the role of the Sites DPD is to allocate sufficient housing, employment and other sites in order to ensure the need identified in the District Plan is met.

Community Involvement plays a vital role in the preparation of Development Plan Documents. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, there are two formal consultation periods for DPDs:

- Regulation 18: Preparation of a Local Plan
- Regulation 19: Publication of a Local Plan (Pre-Submission)

The Sites DPD was subject to Regulation 18 consultation in October – November 2019, in accordance with the Community Involvement Plan prepared to accompany the Regulation 18 Sites DPD. This Community Involvement Plan relates to the Regulation 19 consultation.

2. Role and Purpose of the Community Involvement Plan

Mid Sussex District Council adopted its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in March 2019.

The SCI contains 6 General Principles for Community Engagement:

- 1) **Be Timely:** Involve the community as early as possible in decision making
- 2) **Be Inclusive:** Accessible to all those who wish to take part
- 3) **Be Transparent:** Consultation material should be clear and plain-English
- 4) **Be Respectful of Other's Views:** The Council will listen to all views
- 5) **Be Efficient:** Consultation to be proportionate and use resources wisely
- 6) **Be Clear About the Results:** Decisions and results should be made clear

The SCI recognises that there is no “one size fits all” approach to consultation; recognising that each decision that requires community involvement may be for different audiences or different purposes. The SCI therefore requires that a bespoke Community Involvement Plan (CIP) is prepared for each consultation on Planning Policy documents (such as the Sites DPD) so that consultation can be tailored.

This Community Involvement Plan follows the template set out in the SCI. It sets out:

- Who is involved in the production and consultation of the Sites DPD;
- Why people are being involved in the process;
- When and how people will be able to get involved and influence the Sites DPD; and
- How the results of community involvement will be used.

The Sites DPD is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Equality Impacts Assessment, all of which are also subject to consultation at Regulation 19 stage and therefore the same consultation arrangements set out in this CIP.

3. Who is to be involved?

Early engagement

In the SCI, the Council commits to ‘front load’ consultation activity, to identify potential issues and options. This work has assisted in the formulation of policies and has informed and updated the evidence base. Early engagement with stakeholders has been sought from the very start of the process of producing the Sites DPD, including:

- Oversight of the DPD’s preparation has been led by elected Councillors through the Site Allocations Document Members Working Group.
- Town and Parish Councils have been briefed and consulted in relation to the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and methodology for the site selection.
- A Developers Liaison Group, which includes representatives from across the development industry, was also established and consulted in relation to the SHELAA and methodology for site selection.
- Neighbouring Local Authorities and County Authorities; as a result, the District Council has been able to enter into Statements of Common Ground (SoCGs) with neighbouring authorities.
- External organisations, such as the High Weald AONB Unit. It is the Council’s intention to invite relevant public bodies to enter into SoCGs.
- Consulting other statutory consultees, such as Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

SoCGs prepared for the Sites DPD provide an update on agreements made in relation to the District Plan and focus on the issues arising from the allocation of sites. Further information about early engagement during the preparation of the Sites DPD, and details of SoCGs will be included in a Duty to Cooperate Statement to accompany the DPD and will be made available on the Council’s website.¹

Including everyone

The Equality Impacts Assessment (EqIA) that accompanies the DPD considers the needs of people classified as having ‘protected characteristics’.² This assessment concludes that there are a number of future actions to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to engage with the consultation, and particularly in terms of removing barriers of involvement for protected groups.

In terms of consultation, the Council must continue to promote consultation exercises that are inclusive of all, including engagement with representative organisations and monitoring of the

¹ Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/SitesDPD>

² As defined by the *Equality Act 2010*

consultation. This consideration includes things like making documents available on the website, which is equipped with 'BrowseAloud' to make the website more accessible.

There is further analysis of consultation practices and the actions that will be taken to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to engage with the consultation included within the EqIA which accompanies the Sites DPD.³

Who will be contacted?

A number of groups will be directly contacted and asked for their comments. These are:

- District Councillors;
- Town and Parish Councils;
- 'Specific consultation bodies' / 'general consultation bodies' (statutory consultees) as set out in legislation.⁴ These include West Sussex County Council, adjoining local planning authorities, service providers and government agencies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England, and the South Downs National Park Authority;⁵
- Other organisations, groups or individuals that may have an interest in the Sites DPD. These include members of the Mid Sussex Partnership, voluntary services' associations, residents' associations, housing associations, business groups and associations, environmental, countryside and conservation groups, youth and elderly persons' groups and the development industry;
- Representatives of those groups highlighted as requiring targeted consultation by the EqIA;
- Subscribers to the Planning Policy e-mail alerts service⁶; and
- Internal consultees at the District Council.

Elected District Councillors have a key role to play in forming the Sites DPD and will be fully involved in the process through:

- The Site Allocations Document Members Working Group;
- The Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth (any District Councillor can attend and request to speak);
- Full Council (consists of all District Councillors); and
- Councillors will be directly informed and can respond during the public consultation period.

4. Why are people being involved?

We are asking for people's views on the Sites DPD through a formal consultation period. It is important to seek input from the wider public, as the Plan will allocate sites for development in the district and include planning policies that will have an impact upon both the existing and future communities of Mid Sussex.

In order to make the consultation more meaningful, it is important that people understand the context within which the DPD has been drafted and that certain aspects of the Plan may not be able to be changed as a result of consultation:

- At this time comments can only be made on the Submission Draft Site Allocations DPD (Regulation 19), and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment, and EqIA.

³ Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/SitesDPD>

⁴ *The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)*

⁵ Details of these groups are set out in the 'Key Contacts List' available at: www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci.

⁶ To receive news and updates on policy documents being prepared please sign up to our email alerts at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/consultation-monitoring/#topic-planning-policy-email-alerts>

- The Sites DPD has been written in line with Government planning policy and guidance, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and Planning Practice Guidance.
- The Sites DPD has been written in accordance with legislation and regulations.⁷
- The Sites DPD has been informed by the results of the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal. This shows which options have been considered for its strategy and policies and why the options chosen are preferred over those rejected.
- The Sites DPD has been informed by background evidence. The background evidence (and any updates) will be made available to view on the Council's website.⁸

⁷ *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, and other relevant legislation.

⁸ Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/SitesDPD>

5. When will people be involved?

Public Consultation on 'Preferred Options' draft plan (Regulation 18)	Mid Sussex District Council carried out a public consultation for the draft Sites DPD (Reg. 18) from the 9th of October to the 20th of November 2019.
Public Consultation prior to plan submission for examination (Regulation 19)	Following agreement by Council on 22 nd July 2020, the Council will 'publish' the Submission Draft Sites DPD for public consultation for an eight-week period scheduled for 3 rd August - 28 th September 2020 During this time stakeholders can make further representations on the Sites DPD and these will be considered by the Planning Inspector appointed to carry out the examination.

Further details of the timetable are available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/SitesDPD>

The regulations specify a minimum 6-week consultation period for receiving consultation comments. In order to ensure that as many stakeholders are afforded the opportunity to respond (given the Covid-19 situation, and the commencement of consultation during the summer holidays), the Council has deemed an 8-week consultation period appropriate. This will be kept under review as the consultation progresses, and may need to be flexible to respond to any changing Government guidance, the health situation within the district and any local lockdowns/restrictions that may be enforced.

6. How will people be involved?

The consultation will be open to all and we will seek to inform and receive comment from the widest possible range of people. We will:

- Send out a press release, an email alert and utilise social media;
- Put all the details and documentation on the Council's website including an on-line response form. All on-line material will be compatible with 'BrowseAloud' for people who find it difficult to read on-line;
- Utilise electronic methods wherever possible in addition to traditional methods to make it as easy as possible to advertise and respond to the consultation;
- A translation service is available to those for whom English is a second language;
- Send letters or emails to all the 'specific consultation bodies' (statutory consultees) and to all the other organisations listed in section 2 above;
- Send letters or emails to all those who responded to the Regulation 18 consultation, inviting them to comment during the Regulation 19 consultation.

Availability of Documents

Regulation 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out the requirements for documents to be made available for inspection.

35.—(1) A document is to be taken to be made available by a local planning authority when—

(a) made available for inspection, at their principal office and at such other places within their area as the local planning authority consider appropriate, during normal office hours, and

(b) published on the local planning authority's website,

In terms of criterion (a), the Sites DPD consultation documents will be available to view at the Mid Sussex District Council offices during normal office hours. At the time of writing, the Reception is closed to walk-in members of the public due to the Covid-19 outbreak however is open to those with an appointment. In order to comply with government guidance related to Covid, including social distancing, the Sites DPD consultation materials will be available to view to those making an appointment in advance. This can be arranged by contacting the Council's switchboard on 01444 458166 or the Planning Policy Team on PlanningPolicy@midsussex.gov.uk

In terms of "other such places" set out in criterion (a), the Council usually provides hard copy documents of consultation material to Libraries and Help Points. At the time of writing, the district's libraries are preparing to re-open albeit with limited capacity and services. The District Council will send hard copies of the Sites DPD consultation material to each of the libraries and help points and provide instructions for accessing the documentation on the Council website (which could be accessed using library PCs for example). The availability of documents at these locations will be subject to Government guidance and the current health situation – this will be kept under close review during the consultation period and alternative or additional venues/methods will be sought (and locations advertised) if necessary to ensure that stakeholders are able to view the documents in person during the consultation period.

In addition to meeting the legal requirements above, hard copies will also be provided to the Town and Parish Councils within the district – these are not formal deposit points in terms of the regulations (i.e. they are not specified on the Statement of Representations Procedure/Notice of Submission). Document availability at these locations will be at the discretion of the individual Town and Parish Council's and will depend on whether they are open to the public.

The Sites DPD, supporting documentation and evidence base will be available to view on the Council's website at www.midsussex.gov.uk/SitesDPD

Submitting Responses

Comments must be submitted in writing (physical or digital) and cannot be accepted as anonymous. All information received is public information, subject to relevant data protection legislation.⁹

Comments can be submitted via the website, email or by post. A response form will be made available which can be completed and submitted on the MSDC website. All responses can also be returned by:

Post to: Planning Policy, Mid Sussex District Council, Oaklands, Oaklands Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 1SS

E-mail to: LDFconsultation@midsussex.gov.uk

⁹Such as the *Data Protection Act (2018)*

7. What happens to the results?

Following consultation, the Council will submit all responses to the Planning Inspector appointed to carry out the examination for consideration. These will be submitted alongside the Sites DPD and supporting documentation.

The Council is required¹⁰ to summarise the main issues raised and publish a consultation statement that sets out:

- Who was invited to make representations to the draft Sites DPD (Regulation 18), how this was done, a summary of the main issues raised and how they were taken into account;¹¹
- Who was invited to make representations to the Submission Draft Sites DPD (Regulation 19), how this was done, how many representations were received, and a summary of the main issues raised.¹²

Notification that the summary report has been published will be sent to all statutory consultees, Planning Policy email alert subscribers and respondents who submitted a response and expressed a wish to be notified of the submission of the Sites DPD to the Secretary of State.

If you have any comments or queries on this Community Involvement Plan, please contact the Planning Policy team on PlanningPolicy@midsussex.gov.uk or 01444 477488.

If you have a comment or concern with your experience of a Council-led community involvement exercise, you should in the first instance contact the team using the details above. Alternatively, you can contact the Customer Services and Communications Team by phone (01444) 477478 or by writing to Customer Services and Communications, Mid Sussex District Council, Oaklands Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 1SS.

¹⁰ *The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). Regulation 22.*

¹¹ *The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). Regulation 18.*

¹² *The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). Regulation 20.*