

Statement of Community Involvement for Gloucestershire

2nd Review

For Cabinet | June 2020

Addendum to the Statement of Community Involvement for Gloucestershire (2nd Review) concerning the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

As of May 2020

On 13th May 2020 revised national planning policy guidance (PPG) was issued by the Government in response to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The guidance specifically relates to Statements of Community Involvement (SCIs) and plan making. It seeks to avoid possible policy conflicts between achieving effective community engagement and combating the spread of COVID-19. The revisions to the PPG will remain in place until either further changes are made or they cancelled in response to Cabinet Office guidance – [Staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#).

The PPG advises local planning authorities to assess their SCIs and to identify policies that are inconsistent with current guidance on staying at home and away from others or any superseding guidance. Temporary amendments should be made to allow plan-making to progress whilst continuing to promote effective community engagement within the restrictions relating to the COVID-19 outbreak. It is strongly encouraged that online engagement methods are considered to their fullest potential and reasonable measures are put in place to ensure sections of the community that don't have internet access are still able to engage.

For the Statement of Community Involvement for Gloucestershire (2nd Review) the following items have been identified as potentially in conflict with new national guidance and would therefore benefit from a temporary amendment. These are outlined below.

The temporary amendments will remain in force until the Cabinet Office guidance – Staying alert and safe (social distancing) is revised or cancelled.

SCI for Gloucestershire (2 nd Review)	COVID-19 Temporary amendments
<p>Paragraph 15 The County Council will make consultation documents available to view on its website. It may also upload posts using social media to signpost interested parties to consultation events. A limited amount of hard copy consultation documents will also be made available for inspection in the main reception area of the County Council and at the primary offices of Gloucestershire's borough, city and district councils.</p>	<p>Paragraph 15 The County Council will make consultation documents available to view on its website. It may also upload posts using social media to signpost interested parties to online consultation events. A limited amount of hard copy consultation documents will also be made available for inspection in the main reception area of the County Council and at the primary offices of Gloucestershire's borough, city and district councils. However, interested are actively discouraged</p>

<p>Paragraph 17 Consultation documents will be sent electronically to organisations and bodies on request. However, a cost recovery charge may be made for any other requests for hard copy consultation documents whether they are collected in person or sent by post.</p>	<p>Paragraph 17 Consultation documents will be sent electronically to organisations and bodies on request. However, a cost recovery charge may be made for any other requests for hard copy consultation documents whether they are collected in person or sent by post.</p>
<p>Figure 1 Under plan preparation and broad engagement commitments - Minimum 6-week consultation period; Workshops may be held to talk through issues.</p>	<p>Figure 1 Under plan preparation and broad engagement commitments: - Minimum 6-week consultation period; <u>Online workshops and video & telephone conferences</u> may be held to talk through issues. <u>Social media will also be employed for promoting online consultation events. Advocacy through community champions / appointed representatives will be explored to ensure meaningful engagement is still achieved with interested parties who have no or limited access to online services</u></p>
<p>Figure 1 Under draft plan, broad engagement commitments – Workshops and social media may be used for promotional purposes</p>	<p>Figure 1 Under draft plan, broad engagement commitments – <u>Online workshops and video & telephone conferences</u> may be used <u>to talk through issues</u>. Social media <u>will also be employed for promoting online consultation events. Advocacy through community champions / appointed representatives will be explored to ensure meaningful engagement is still achieved with interested parties who have no or limited access to online services</u></p>
<p>Paragraph 22 The availability of consultation documents will be the same as development plan documents. The use of social media and online services should limit the need for hard copy documents at key locations.</p>	<p>Paragraph 22 The availability of consultation documents will be the same as development plan documents. The use of social media and online services should limit the need for hard copy documents at key locations.</p>

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Consultation: Development plan documents (DPDs)	4
Consultation: Supplementary planning documents (SPDs)	9
Consultation: Development proposals and planning applications	11
Table 1: Consultees the County Council will engage with during plan making	5 - 6
Table 2: The plan making stages for supplementary planning documents	10
Figure 1: Key consultation stages and engagement for development plan documents	8

1 INTRODUCTION

1. The planning system touches the lives of everyone who lives in, works in and visits Gloucestershire. However, for many of us we only come into contact with it when we find out about a nearby planning application. To be approved schemes have got to fit into the wider plan for an area, as well as be consistent with national policies issued by the Government.
2. For every new planning document that the County Council produces, or any planning applications submitted to it for determination, the people of Gloucestershire and organisations need to be informed and given the opportunity to air their views as part of the decision making process.
3. To help set out how the County Council will go about this a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for Gloucestershire has been prepared. This statement is also a statutory requirement for the County Council in its role as a planning authority^{1,2}.
4. The SCI covers all consultations undertaken by the County Council in relation to future development plan documents involving strategic and non-strategic policies, including for minerals and waste matters³. It also considers planning applications submitted to the County Council. The SCI has been split into sections according to the type of planning function. Sections 2 and 3 are planning policy and plan making functions related to the production of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents. Section 4 covers development management and the planning application process.
5. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)⁴ includes a requirement to review the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) every five years. The SCI for Gloucestershire was originally adopted in December 2005. A revised (1st Review) SCI was adopted by the County Council in March 2013.
6. This document is a further revised (2nd Review) version of the SCI. It has been prepared in accordance with the latest legislation and was subjected to public consultation between 7th October and 6th December 2019.

¹ A statement of community involvement is required under Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended by the Planning Act 2008; Localism Act 2011; and Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

² County Councils are now recognised as a plan-making authority with responsibilities that could be extended beyond minerals and waste matters under provisions of the Neighbourhood Planning Act.2017

³ Paragraphs 17 to 19 of the further revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) explains what must be included within a local development plan

⁴ Regulation 10A of the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 (SI 2017 No. 1244) introduced the need to review local development documents. It came into force on 28th December 2017.

7. In undertaking consultation and engagement regard was given to wider Government⁵ and County Council policies and the following legislation:
- Human Rights Act;
 - Freedom of Information Act;
 - Environmental Information Regulations;
 - Data Protection Act;
 - General Data Protection Regulations; and
 - Equality Act.

Glossary

8. To further assist in your consideration of this matter, a glossary of common planning terms and phases can be accessed via the Planning Portal at:

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/general/glossaryandlinks/glossary>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

2 CONSULTATION: DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS (DPD)

9. This SCI sets out local guidelines for the preparation of development plan documents that Gloucestershire County Council intends to produce in the future. This involves local development plans containing strategic and / or non-strategic policies, which cover both minerals and waste matters⁶.
10. A key aim of consultation and engagement is to try and build consensus across Gloucestershire on the way in which new developments are assessed. Whilst a consensus is not always possible, consultation also offers the opportunity to improve understanding of key issues that in turn may help to minimise the degree of conflict and delay in putting in place up-to-date, effective and responsive local planning policies.
11. Consultation methods and processes for engagement will be chosen by the County Council on a case-by-case basis to make them as relevant and effective as possible, having taken into account of the different stages of plan-making. Electronic communication, enabling online representations and using social media to share ideas and information will help to maximise effective and resource efficient engagement. However, where these options are not possible or appropriate, the County Council will look to use more traditional methods, such as making hard copies of consultation documents available to view at key locations and sending out notification letters to inform interested parties about upcoming consultation events. Written representations from interested participants in response to consultation events will also be accepted.
12. Table 1 over the page identifies categories of individual organisations that the County Council is committed to engaging with during plan making. 'Specific consultation bodies' are those that the County Council is statutorily required to consult with in preparing new plans and policies⁷. There are a number of other 'general consultation bodies' that the County Council will also consult with as a matter of course, mostly comprising of local organisations and groups that represent the interests of different sections of the community. In addition, there are 'Duty to Co-operate' (DtC) bodies. These are a combination of local planning authorities, county councils and other public bodies not already listed that are subject to meeting statutory DtC requirements and which the County Council believes should be engaged with in respect of strategic planning matters⁸. The list of DtC bodies is flexible in

⁶ Paras 17 to 19 of the further revised NPPF (2019) explains what must be included within a local development plan

⁷ As set out in Part 1, Regulation 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

⁸ Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) introduced the Duty to co-operate in relation to planning of sustainable development. It was contained in the Part 6 Chapter 1 clause 110 of the Localism Act 2011. It places a duty on local planning authorities, county councils in England and other public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in the preparation of development plan and local development documents (and marine plans) in respect of sustainable development and / or the use of land that will significantly impact on two or more planning areas

so much as not all bodies listed will need to be consulted on every occasion. The decision to consult on DtC bodies will be made by the County Council on a case-by-case basis subject to the nature of the strategic planning matters.

13. Outside of the categories set out in the table, other interested parties or individuals who express an interest in plan making will be included on the County Council consultation database⁹. This is a live system that is kept up-to-date regularly in line with the General Data Protection Regulations.

Table 1: Consultees the County Council will engage with during plan making *

Types of consultee	Who this means?
<p>Specific Consultation Bodies-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Agency (EA); • Marine Management Organisation (MMO) • Historic England; • Natural England (NE); • Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd; • Highways England (HE); • Local authorities; parish / town councils; and / or neighbourhood forums within Gloucestershire and those that adjoin the county's administrative boundary; • National Health Service Commissioning Board; • NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group; • Homes England and the Regulator of Social Housing; • Electronic communication providers covering Gloucestershire and communication infrastructure operators with facilities located within the county; • Bristol Water Plc, Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig (Welsh Ltd), Thames Water Utilities Ltd, Severn Trent Water Ltd, and Wessex Water Services Ltd in their capacity as sewerage and / or water undertakers operating within Gloucestershire; • National Grid; Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks; and Western Power Distribution in their capacity as licence holders for either electricity transmission or supply within Gloucestershire; • National Grid and Wales & West Utilities in their capacity as licence holders for either gas transmission or distribution within Gloucestershire; and • Coal Authority.

⁹ Please contact m-wplans@gloucestershire.gov.uk to be added onto the consultation database.

<p>General Consultation Bodies#</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary bodies (national or locally-based) whose activities benefit Gloucestershire – including in respect to health and well-being, heritage, wildlife and wider environmental matters; • Bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic, national groups; and / or different religious groups; and / or disabled persons in Gloucestershire; and • Bodies (including chambers of commerce and trade associations) representing the interests of businesses operating within Gloucestershire. • Other bodies considered to be of relevance to the specific consultation e.g. Nuclear Disposal Authority
<p>Duty to Co-operate Bodies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities with planning responsibilities other than those which adjoin the county’s administrative boundary, which are potentially impacted by a strategic planning matter relevant to the preparation of a local development document undertaken by the County Council; • Mayor of London; • Civil Aviation Authority (CAA); • Office of Rail and Road (ORR); • Transport for London (TfL); • Integrated Transport Authorities; and • Highway authorities other than Highways England and those which are local authorities adjoining the county’s administrative boundary, which are potentially impacted by a strategic planning matter relevant to the preparation of a local development document undertaken by the County Council. • Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (GFirst LEP)*; • Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership*; and • Other Local Enterprise or Nature Partnership(s), which are potentially impacted by a strategic planning matter relevant to the preparation of a local development document undertaken by the County Council. <p>*These bodies are not strictly subject to DtC requirements. However, planning authorities should engage with them and have regard to their activities where they relate to local plan making. In effect a ‘duty to cooperate’ of sorts exists between planning authorities, LEPs and LNPs.</p>

- There are also a number of national organisations that the County Council considers to be potentially important and highly influential in respect of plan-making. However, these organisations do not fall under the consultation categories outlined in the SCI. The decision to consult these organisations will be taken on a case-by-case basis dependent upon the subject matter of the local development plan or supplementary planning document being prepared, the recognised best planning practice at that time, further government guidance and also other legislative requirements. The organisations this is likely to involve include: - British Geological Survey (BGS), The Crown Estate, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and Public Health England,

Consultation periods

14. Consultation events will normally take place for a period of at least six weeks. This is the usual timeframe required by plan making regulations. However, the County Council is able to extend this time to receive representations. The decision to extend consultations will be made by the County Council on a case-by-case basis having considered the scheduling of public holidays or main holiday periods such as Christmas, Easter and the school summer break. The need to avoid unduly lengthy and protracted consultation is of paramount importance to ensure efficient and timely plan making.

Availability of documents

15. The County Council will make consultation documents available to view on its website. It may also upload posts using social media to signpost interested parties to consultation events. A limited amount of hard copy consultation documents will also be made available for inspection in the main reception area of the County Council and at the primary offices of Gloucestershire's borough, city and district councils.
16. Consultation documents will be accessible to view via the online services offered by Gloucestershire libraries including those supported by the County Council¹⁰. Library computers are installed with software enabling magnification, speech and Braille support for people who are visually impaired.
17. Consultation documents will be sent electronically to organisations and bodies on request. However, a cost recovery charge may be made for any other requests for hard copy consultation documents whether they are collected in person or sent by post.

Consultation stages

18. The plan-making stages involving consultation and engagement are largely governed by statutory procedures¹¹. National guidance¹² to support this is also provided. The later, decision-making stages are more formal and more heavily regulated. The County Council cannot deviate from the requirements from the submission stage onwards. Figure 1 presents a basic diagram of the key plan making stages involved in consultation and the broad engagement

¹⁰ Online services offered at libraries in Gloucestershire include:- free bookable computers, free public wifi and subject to availability, computer buddies to help with the use of computers, tablets and getting online.

¹¹ Statutory procedures are contained within the Town & Country Planning (England) (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

¹² Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

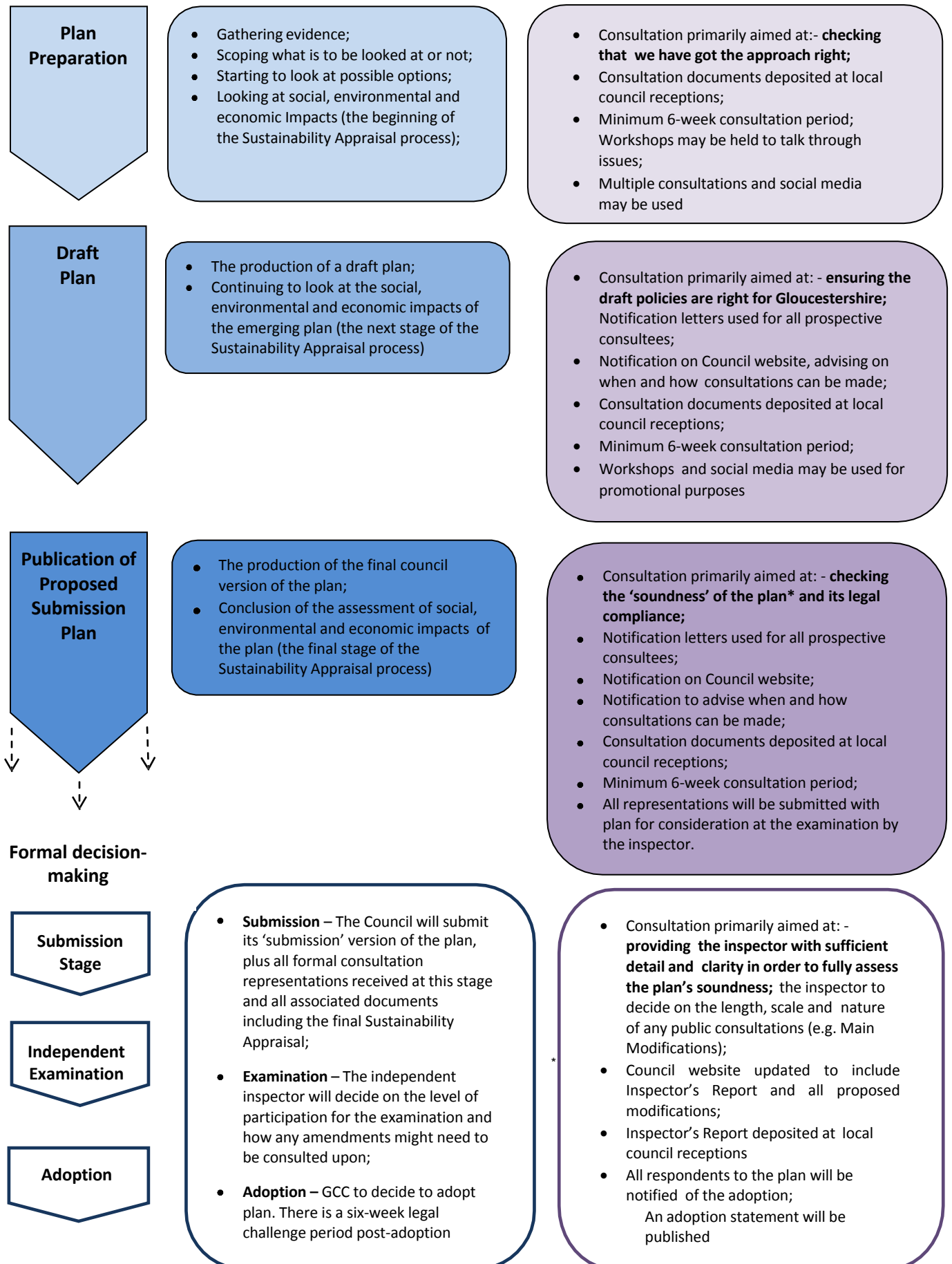
commitments of the County Council.

Figure 1: Key consultation stages & engagement for development plan documents

Plan-making Stages: -

What is being considered?

Broad engagement commitments: -



3 CONSULTATION: SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS (SPD)

19. Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) do not have the same planning status as a development plan document. They are normally used to help in the understanding and implementation of local plan policies contained in development plan documents. SPDs do not introduce new policies. They are adopted by councils without independent examination. However, SPDs are important material considerations in the determination of planning applications.
20. The level and extent of consultation required in preparing an SPD is generally less than that for a development plan document. The consultation methods may also vary according to the scope and significance of the SPD. The aim is for SPDs to be prepared reasonably swiftly so they can be responsive to arising policy implementation matters. SPDs can be extremely influential in ensuring local plan policies are properly reflected in decision making with planning applications. As a consequence, it is important that effective community involvement takes place but that delays are avoided wherever possible.

Consultation periods

21. Consultation events will normally take place for a period of four weeks. However, the County Council may choose to extend this time to receive representations. The decision to extend consultations will be made by the County Council on a case-by-case basis having considered the scheduling of public holidays or main holiday periods such as Christmas, Easter and the school summer break. The need to avoid unduly lengthy and protracted consultation is of paramount importance to ensure efficient and timely plan making.

Availability of documents

22. The availability of consultation documents will be the same as development plan documents. The use of social media and online services should limit the need for hard copy documents at key locations.

Consultation stages

23. As with the preparation of development plan documents, the preparation and adoption of SPDs is governed by statutory procedures¹³. National guidance is also provided to support the process. Table 2 provides a summary of the stages usually involved in the preparation of SPDs

Table 2: The plan making stages for supplementary planning documents

Stage	Stakeholder Involvement
Evidence gathering and preparation of draft SPD	<p>Likely to involve informal and / or targeted engagement with relevant specific and general consultation bodies and other organisations. A site-specific SPD may also include consultation with local communities affected and / or representatives of local communities.</p> <p>Social media will be used to promote consultation where relevant and appropriate.</p> <p>Elected members will receive a report about progress on SPD preparation including a review of the consultation outcomes</p>
Public consultation and preparation of final draft	<p>A period of public consultation regarding the draft SPD will be completed for a period of at least 4 weeks.</p> <p>General and specific consultees will be notified about the consultation along with any other individuals and organisations who have expressed an interest. Social media will also be used to promote the consultation</p>
Representations and finalise SPD	<p>Elected members will received a report about progress on SPD preparation including a review of consultation outcomes (and any changes to be taken forward into the final SPD).</p>
Adoption	<p>Following adoption necessary notifications will be issued</p>

¹³ Statutory procedures are contained within the Town & Country Planning (England) (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 as made by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Planning Act 2008 and Localism Act 2011

4 CONSULTATION: DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AND PLANNING APPLICATIONS

24. The SCI also sets out how the County Council will engage in consultation with the public and other organisations when dealing with planning applications. This includes expectations and commitments surrounding consultation carried out at the pre-application stage. Minimum requirements exist for consulting on planning application and these are set out in law¹⁴.
25. The County Council is responsible for determining certain types of planning applications. It also offers pre-application advice that is encouraged through best practice. The following types of planning application are dealt with by the County Council: -
- Mineral developments including: - extraction; on-site mineral processing; and the implementation of mineral site restoration;
 - Waste management developments including: - composting; disposal and recovery (landfill and energy from waste); recycling; treatment; and bulking and transfer; and
 - Public infrastructure on land under the control of County Council and / or funded by the County Council such as new or extended schools or local roads.

Consultation and engagement in pre-application proposals

26. The County Council encourages prospective applicants to seek pre-application planning advice. This is a chargeable service¹⁵ that offers input from internal technical specialists from within the County Council. Wider consultation including with members of the public or other potentially relevant statutory bodies does not usually take place through the pre-application service although some statutory bodies may be involved¹⁶. Pre-application advice is also not publicised by the County Council and is considered in the first instance to be confidential. However, in the event that the County Council is subject to a freedom of Information request involving paid pre-application advice, the confidential status of the advice may need to be re-assessed. Decisions on disclosure will only occur after legal advice has been sought.

¹⁴ Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)

¹⁵ More information about GCC's pre-application service can be obtained from <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-applications/pre-application-planning-advice>

¹⁶ As of December 2019, the EA, the Canals Trust have sought to be involved in GCC pre-application considerations.

27. The County Council actively encourages prospective applicants to carry out engagement with the local community, relevant statutory bodies and other interested parties during the pre-application stage. This also applies to the County Council for developments it is responsible for. Pre-application is strongly supported in government guidance¹⁷
28. Prospective applicants should think about the various methods available to ensure those that could be affected have been involved. This might include: - sending out targeted notification letters and leaflets; uploading posts to social media; setting up websites that showcase easily readable plans and diagrams to explain emerging proposals; and running public meetings, exhibitions or more involved workshops.
29. A 'Statement of Pre-application Engagement' may be requested by the County Council for proposals that progress from pre-application to the application stage. The statement should be similar to that required under regulations for specific pre-application consultation¹⁸. The failure to carry out meaningful pre-application consultation and / or to produce a robust supporting engagement statement, could risk delaying decisions on any subsequent planning applications. A 'Statement of Pre-application Engagement' should ideally include the following matters:
- Who has been involved;
 - How have they been engaged;
 - What were the issues raised;
 - What recommendations were highlighted by respondents; and
 - What changes have been taken forward into the proposal at the application stage?

The need for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and what matters will need to be considered with subsequent planning applications

30. Some development proposals determined by the County Council may require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This will result in the need to produce an Environmental Statement (ES) to accompany a planning application. Regulations allow for prospective applicants to seek a decision from the County Council as to whether an (ES) is needed. This is called a Screening Opinion and, if required, another document called a Scoping

¹⁷ Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), Section covering: - The value of pre-application engagement, paragraph: 001, reference ID: 20-001-20190315

¹⁸ Part 2, Article 4, Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)

Opinion will detail what matters need to be considered¹⁹.

31. For Screening Opinions the County Council have a 3-week period in which to respond. There is no requirement to undergo consultation for a Screening Opinion. However, a decision to consult some external organisations will be made on case-by-case basis by the County Council to assist in the decision making process. Once a Screening Opinion has been adopted by the County Council it will be publicised on the Council's website. A copy of the adopted Screening Opinion will also be sent to the borough, city or district council of Gloucestershire in which the application is located.
32. For Scoping Opinion requests the County Council is required to provide a response within a 5-week period. Consultation with a number of external organisations is a requirement of this process, although it does not include the general public²⁰. A copy of the adopted Scoping Opinion will be publicised on the Council's website and sent to the borough, city or district council of Gloucestershire in which the application is located.

Awareness raising and notification of new planning applications

33. On receipt of a valid planning application the County Council will either place a notice or request for one to be placed, on or near to the application site. The notice will give details of the application, where further information about it can be found, and the date by which any comments will need to be submitted to the County Council. The site notice must be displayed for at least 21 days, unless the planning application is defined as 'EIA development' and is accompanied by an environmental statement. For EIA development the site notice must be displayed for 30 days²¹. The County Council will also place notices on the Council's website.
34. A public notice of valid planning applications may also be placed in a local newspaper, which is in circulation in the locality of the proposal site. The decision to place a public notice in a local newspaper will be made on a case-by-case basis having reviewed regulations relating to this matter and taking into account the likely scale and significance of the proposed development²².
35. The public notice placed in a local newspaper will also invite comments to be made for a period of no less than 21 days following the publication of the

¹⁹ The Town and Country Planning (Local Authority Consultations etc.) (England) Order 2018

²⁰ Organisation that must be consulted include:- Natural England, Environment Agency, Historic England, the relevant local planning authority and any other body that would be required to be consulted in accordance with Schedule 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 (as amended)

²¹ Part 3, Article 15, Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)

²² Part 3, Article 15, Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)

notice.

36. Where there are people living or working nearby to an application site, the County Council will notify them by letter giving up to 28 days from the date of the letter in which to respond. This period of notice is to accommodate any unforeseen delays in postal collections and deliveries. Generally the County Council does not employ strict thresholds for deciding who to include in nearby consultations. However, it will try to ensure that at least all known properties bordering the application site outlined in red on the submitted plans are sent a consultation letter. The County Council will decide which properties it will consult on a case-by-case basis guided by regulatory requirements and local circumstances.
37. In respect of amendments to applications, the decision to re-consult and the associated timescales for those living or working nearby to an application site will be made on a case-by-case basis by the County Council. Account will be given to the scale and significance of the changes being proposed, the level of interest already demonstrated in the application and other local circumstances. A notification period of less than 28 days may be considered to be appropriate in this circumstance. However, for re-consultations concerning 'EIA development' a period of no less than 30 days from the date published on any updated site notice, will be given for additional comments to be made.

Informing organisations about new planning applications

38. In addition to notifying members of the public about new planning applications, the County Council will look to consult public bodies such as district and parish / town councils. It will also seek to engage with other potentially relevant technical organisations or agencies. In all cases at least 21 days will be given to respond. Most public bodies are already bound by a duty to engage with planning applications and make representations within the 21-day time period. This supports the timely determination of planning applications within the statutory timescales²³. However, the County Council may be agreeable to extensions of time for complex applications. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis, having also considered the scheduling of public holidays or main holiday periods such as Christmas, Easter and the school summer break. The need to avoid unjustifiably delaying the determination of planning applications will also be of paramount importance.

Engagement with the Gloucestershire Design Panel

39. A design review may assist in the determination of certain planning

²³ The statutory timescales are detailed here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/determining-a-planning-application>

applications determined by the County Council. This is carried out locally by the Gloucestershire Design Panel (GDP) – an independent, multi-disciplinary panel of local design professionals seeking to make a positive contribution to the quality of Gloucestershire’s built environment²⁴. The County Council will refer planning applications to the GDP on a case-by-case basis taking into account the scale of development, its potential impact, the visual sensitivity of locality and the likelihood it will set a strong precedent for the design of future proposals. Applicants can self refer their proposals to the GDP for a local design review. The GDP can also invite planning applications to be reviewed.

Dealing with comments made on planning applications

40. The County Council are able to receive comments to planning applications by post or e-mail. All representations received in this manner will be available for public inspection, by appointment at: - Shire Hall, Westgate Street, Gloucester. Comments can also be made online via the County Council website. These comments will also appear on the County Council website for others to see – albeit only the contributor’s name will be associated with submitted comments. All other personal details will be removed. All representations received from statutory, public bodies and / or general consultation bodies will also be made available to view on the County Council website. Endeavours will be made to ensure that comments made by organisations are available to view online within 5 working days of their receipt.
41. In very exceptional circumstances – for example, when a planning application is likely to generate a high level of public interest, the County Council may upload all representations onto the its website, regardless of how they were submitted. Only the contributor’s name will be associated with the electronic version of any postal or hard copy representations. All other details will be removed. This process may take longer than 5 working days to complete.

Making decisions on planning applications

42. Minor and less contentious planning applications will usually be determined under delegated powers by senior officers of the County Council. In all other cases, applications are referred to the County Council’s Planning Committee for a decision.
43. The Planning Committee is made up of elected members who represent communities from across Gloucestershire. All respondents to planning

²⁴ Gloucestershire Design Panel (GDP) <https://www.glosdesignpanel.co.uk/>

applications will be given the opportunity to attend and observe the relevant Planning Committee meeting. Respondents may also be given the chance to speak at Planning Committee meetings. The details on how, when and for how long public speaking can take place is set out on the County Council's website²⁵.

Informing of decisions on planning applications

44. Respondents to planning applications are encouraged to provide an e-mail address for future communications. All those who have responded by e-mail or via the County Council's website will be notified electronically of the decision once it has been made. For those who have submitted only postal details a notification letter will be sent. Endeavours will be made to achieve this soon after a decision has been made.

Monitoring and enforcement of decisions on planning applications

45. The County Council is unable to monitor every site all of the time so members of the public and the wider community play an important role in alerting of any potential breaches of planning control. This can be easily done online through the County Council's Planning Enforcement webpages²⁶. Contact details will be kept confidential. The County Council will also keep you updated with its findings, and we may be in touch to request further information.
46. There are no requirements for the County Council to undertake formal consultation on enforcement investigations, but may work or consult with relevant bodies or individuals to support their investigations.
47. Should any enforcement matter result in an Enforcement Notice, and that Notice is appealed, then the Council is required to formally consult immediate neighbours and anyone that has reported the breach. Representations have to be made within a deadline which the County Council will specify to you in writing and forward to the Planning Inspectorate as part of their deliberations.
48. Further information on the operation of the County Council's Planning Enforcement Service, how to make a report, how an investigation will be conducted and what actions may be taken, is set out in the County Council's

²⁵ <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/speaking-at-planning-committee/>

²⁶ Details available from <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-enforcement/how-to-report-a-breach-of-planning-regulations/>

Planning Enforcement Plan²⁷. Appendix 2 of the Planning Enforcement Plan includes our Customer Service Charter setting out what customers should expect from the County Council.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) proposed within Gloucestershire

49. For major infrastructure developments deemed to be of national importance (e.g. railways, ports, electricity lines etc.) the County Council is a statutory consultee rather than the determining planning authority. These types of developments are known as 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects – NSIPs' and are decided by Government through the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).
50. The process for carrying out pre-application engagement and consultation on NSIP applications is well established and set out in legislation and guidance²⁸. However, it is important that local communities and other interested organisations that support or benefit Gloucestershire are meaningfully engaged. As part of the County Council's early involvement with emerging NSIP developments, it will strongly encourage that the commitments contained in the SCI for Gloucestershire are followed. This will be particularly relevant where prospective applicants seek the County Council's involvement in the preparation of a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)²⁹.

²⁷ Available from <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-enforcement/planning-enforcement-plan/>

²⁸ Planning Act 2008; Localism Act 2011; Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009; Infrastructure Planning (Interested Parties and Miscellaneous Prescribed Provisions) Regulations 2015; Planning Act 2008: *Guidance on the pre-application process* (2015); Planning Act 2008: *Guidance on nationally significant infrastructure projects and housing* (2017).

²⁹ SoCCs are a consequence of section 47 of The Planning Act 2008. Their purpose is to set out how the project promoter intends to consult people living in the vicinity of the proposed nationally significant infrastructure project.