

South Norfolk Council SCI amendment consultation (summer 2020) - responses

Ref.	Organisation	Comment	Officer response
SCI1	Norfolk County Council	These amendments are consistent with the new regulations/guidance relating to the preparation of Local Plans introduced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in response to the pandemic and as such the County Council supports them.	Support noted.
SCI2	Natural England	We are supportive of the principle of meaningful and early engagement of the general community, community organisations and statutory bodies in local planning matters, both in terms of shaping policy and participating in the process of determining planning applications. We regret we are unable to comment, in detail, on individual Statements of Community Involvement but information on the planning service we offer, including advice on how to consult us, can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals .	Comments noted.
SCI3	Marlingford & Colton Parish Council	The following is a summary - please see letter enclosed/on file for complete response. The amendments to South Norfolk's SCI may be minor, but the changes to the planning regulations that have necessitated the amendments are anything but minor. With the Gov't's Planning White Paper, there is a risk that community voices are further marginalised. The plans include potential zoning systems and for more consultation and planning to take place digitally. Driving activity online can risk excluding a significant number of people and the government seems to have confused the 'digitalisation' of planning with democratic planning and these are, of course, not at all the same. The voices of local people need to be more, not less, included in planning developments. Govt. needs to be much more ambitious wrt. carbon neutral housing. Also great concerns regarding provision of affordable housing and the development of greenfield land. Local councils and planners should not be forced to put developers' profits before public need -both they and central government need to recognise the destructive consequences of their decisions. So these 'minor amendments' in South Norfolk's SCI open something of a Pandora's box and are unlikely to represent either the needs or wishes of the community.	The proposed amendments to the SCI were not influenced by the Government White Paper - the Council proposals were announced before the White Paper was published. The impetus for the amendments was provided by the update to national planning guidance (published in mid-May) which requires local planning authorities to assess their requirements for plan-making consultations against current Government Covid-19 and social distancing legislation. In addition, the amendments do not completely remove the measure to make consultation documents available at the Council offices – they simply reflect that it may not always be possible to do so (given that the offices are currently closed). Consultation documents will therefore continue to be made available at the premises unless it is impossible to do so (e.g. because the offices are closed in the future due to the pandemic). In the meantime, other options remain in place, such as making documents available at libraries (again, where they are open). As the temporary SCI update that has currently been made available states: <i>'In circumstances where hard copies are not available from the Council offices and libraries, we will include in our consultation publicity details of how those without internet capability can access hard copies of the consultation documents. The SCI currently includes a range of publicity measures, including non-digital measures such as articles in local media and posters in local notice boards, which will still be considered as options and which can include details of how to get in touch.'</i>
SCI4	Poringland Parish Council	Thank you for consulting Poringland Parish Council on the temporary amendment to the Statement of Community Involvement. Please be advised that the Parish Council supports the temporary changes.	Support noted.
SCI5	Woodton Parish Council	N.B. This was a late response, received on 09/09/2020. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We welcome that old planning systems are updated, and that speed of processing of applications is being addressed. • Woodton is a small village and although we recognise the need for more housing within most communities, numbers of increases should be carefully monitored. • It is vital that the residents of the community still have the opportunity to comment, support or question any application, however big or small. • Not everyone is able to access digital consultations, and those without this facility must not be marginalised. • Affordable housing must always be available to Woodton residents and developers need to be aware of the needs of the local population and not look at developments purely as a money-making exercise. • Woodton favours small-sized developments appropriate to a rural community. They do not support potentially large areas of housing. • It has always been felt that 'infill' of areas of land for development that enhance the village are hugely preferable to larger scale sprawling areas, that often take place on attractive rural fields. 	South Norfolk Council recognises that not everyone is able to access digital consultations and that these people must not be marginalised. As stated above, consultation documents will continue to be made available at the Council offices unless it is impossible to do so (e.g. because the offices are closed in the future due to the pandemic). In the meantime, other options remain in place, such as making documents available at libraries (again, where they are open). As the temporary SCI update that has currently been made available states: <i>'In circumstances where hard copies are not available from the Council offices and libraries, we will include in our consultation publicity details of how those without internet capability can access hard copies of the consultation documents. The SCI currently includes a range of publicity measures, including non-digital measures such as articles in local media and posters in local notice boards, which will still be considered as options and which can include details of how to get in touch.'</i> Many of the comments raised here relate to the wider Development Plan for the area.