

Policy and Resources Committee	
Meeting Date	5 th November 2025
Report Title	Local Plan Review - Statement of Community Involvement – Consultation Feedback
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins – Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Joanne Johnson - Head of Place
Lead Officer	Anna Stonor – Principal Planning Officer (Policy) and Christopher Mansfield Planning Officer (Policy)
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To recommend the updated Statement of Community Involvement, as set out in Appendix III, to Full Council for adoption.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Policy and Resources Committee on 17th October 2024, it was agreed that the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), subject to minor changes as minuted, be published for public consultation.
- 1.2 A six-week public consultation period on the draft SCI was therefore undertaken. This ran from 21st May to 2nd July. The results of this consultation were reported to Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group on 16th September 2025.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to present the results of the public consultation (Appendix I), to present the amendments requested by Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group on 16th September 2025 and the responses to that (Appendix II), to present the proposed changes to the draft SCI (Appendix III) and to recommend that the SCI document proceeds to Full Council for adoption.

2 Background

- 2.1 The SCI sets out how the community can get involved in local planning matters. It explains how people can play a part in the preparation of Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents, as well as the consideration of planning applications and dealing with unauthorised development. It also sets out what is expected from those proposing developments.
- 2.2 Local Planning Authorities are required to produce SCIs and review them every 5 years. The current SCI was adopted in 2018 and updated in 2021 largely to reflect health guidelines related to COVID 19. As such, the SCI is now in need of

a refresh, and as such, on 16th of October 2024, the draft SCI was agreed for consultation at Policy and Resources Policy Committee, with minor changes.

- 2.3 The draft SCI went out for consultation on 21st May for six weeks. Letters/emails were sent to statutory consultees, relevant borough, district, town and parish councils, residents, stakeholders, organisations and businesses on the Council's consultation database. It was also advertised on social media such as Facebook and Swale Means Business and documents and covering letters were sent to Council offices and libraries in the borough. There was also a page dedicated to the SCI on the Council's website.
- 2.4 The consultation website attracted 149 visitors and 638 page views with submissions from six individuals, two Parish Councils, two Local Authorities, one business, one utility company, three statutory consultees and one developer. The questions that garnered the most responses were 1, 4 and 7.
- 2.5 The majority of comments were supportive of the document overall, although many suggested amendments, which have been included where these improve clarity and understanding and don't have a significant resource implication for the Council unless the benefits merit the costs.
- 2.6 Comments from the public consultation included:
- criticism of historic approach to consultation by Swale Borough Council
 - concern that those without access to computers/digital engagement may be left out of the consultation process
 - need for varied engagement approaches to reach wider sections of the community
 - requirement for applicants to carry out engagement and to report back on their own community consultation processes and how these have influenced their applications
 - adding glossary
 - adding references/links to legislation and more detailed explanation of system/processes
 - seeking direct engagement with tourism operators/caravan park owners
- 2.7 A spreadsheet of comments received and proposed changes to the SCI as a result of the public consultation can be found in Appendix I.
- 2.8 At the Planning and Transportation Working Group on 16th September 2025, members suggested a series of further amendments to the draft SCI. These comments, and responses to them, are presented as a table in Appendix II.
- 2.9 The updated draft SCI (dated October 2025), including amendments following the public consultation and following the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group (shown with grey highlight) can be found in Appendix III.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To recommend the updated Statement of Community Involvement, as set out in Appendix III, to Full Council for adoption.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 That members propose to Full Council to reject some or all of the suggested changes to the SCI as set out in Appendix III.
- 4.2 That members do not recommend adoption of the SCI set out in Appendix III and retain the current version.
- 4.3 It is a legislative requirement to update SCIs every five years, and it is beneficial to have an up-to-date SCI published in advance of the next consultation phases of the Local Plan. The Local Plan can then be consulted on in line with the new document. As such these alternatives are not considered recommended options.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Specific consultation for the draft SCI took place on the 21st of May for six weeks. Officers have worked with colleagues in the Planning Applications and Planning Investigations teams in preparing and updating the SCI before and after consultation. The draft SCI has also been reviewed by Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group at their meeting of 16th September 2025.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposals in the report align with the following Corporate Plan action: A Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart.
Financial, Resource and Property	The Local Plan work programme is fully funded across a combination of base budget and committed reserves and central government grant.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Updating the SCI every five years is a legislative requirement, therefore publishing an updated SCI will help meet the Council's statutory requirements.
Crime and Disorder	There are no direct crime and disorder impacts arising from this decision.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No implications identified at this stage.

Health and Wellbeing	No implications identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No implications identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No implications identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	The SCI enables all members of Swale society to be involved in the planning process.
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: SCI Public Consultation Responses and Summaries
- Appendix II: Table of Comments and Amendments following Planning and Transportation Working Group, 16th September 2025
- Appendix III: Draft Statement of Community Involvement, October 2025

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group, 17/09/2024 19:00](#) and [Minutes Template](#) for Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group Committee on Tuesday, 17 September 2024, 7.00 pm
- 8.2 [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Policy and Resources Committee, 16/10/2024 19:00](#) and [Minutes Template](#) for Planning and Resources Committee on Wednesday, 16 October 2024 7. Pm
- 8.3 Details of Public Consultation (including Draft SCI), May to July 2025: <https://swale.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/local-plans/local-plan-review/public-consultation#h2>
- 8.4 Agenda, reports and minutes of the PTPWG, 16th September 2025: [Agenda for Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group on Tuesday, 16 September 2025, 7.00 pm](#)