

Sutton Valence Neighbourhood Plan
Statement of Community Involvement
January 2015

1. Introduction and Context

The Localism Act of 2011 introduced the ability for communities to become engaged in the planning system and produce their own Neighbourhood Development Plans. This has enabled communities to have a say in how their neighbourhood grows and develops.

Sutton Valence Neighbourhood Plan Group (SVNPG) is overseeing the production of a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) which will comprise a main document ("The Neighbourhood Plan") supported by a series of other documents. The Statement of Community Involvement is one of these documents. Once written and adopted the Neighbourhood Plan, in conjunction with the Local Plan or Core Strategy, will comprise the Statutory Development Plan for the Parish within the Borough of Maidstone and will be the first point of reference for determining applications for development within the Parish.

One of the main aims of the current planning system is to improve the opportunity for people to become involved in the planning of their area by facilitating early involvement in the process and having their input taken into account from the start.

This Statement of Community Involvement sets out how Sutton Valence Parish Council will meet the Government's requirements as set out in the legislation, known as the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 as amended in 2008 and 2009. "The Regulations" make clear that the Council must make sure that community involvement meets the duties set out in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Fair and equal treatment must be accorded to all and action will be taken to ensure the full participation of all individuals and groups. This documents sets out the minimum standards the SVNPG will reach in ensuring that the community is fully engaged in the neighbourhood planning exercise

2. The Aims of Community Involvement

It is recognised that involving the whole community in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan is important if it is to be accepted. As well as the residents of Sutton Valence, consultation will include the people who work regularly in the Parish's local businesses and other stakeholders who have an interest in the future of the Parish. The Group will also engage with stakeholders be they a person or organisation with a stake or interest in a particular issue, either because they will be directly affected by the outcomes, have a technical or professional interest, or may be required to act upon/put into practise the final policies and proposals.

The Government has underlined how important it is to start community involvement at an early stage. The Group will act to ensure as far as possible:

- Concerns that are most important to the community and stakeholders are properly addressed;
- Processes are open and accountable
- The public is made aware of how planning works and understand what can and can not be done through the different parts of the planning system;
- The public understands the final planning policies and thus the planning decisions which will follow on from using these policies;
- Opportunities are available to increase the exchange of information between interested

- parties, including service/utility providers, landowners and neighbours;
- Efficient use is made of local resources, including the skills, knowledge and resources of the community and other people living or working in the parish;
- To develop the skills of the community to help them to participate fully in the planning and development process.

3. Procedure

The consultation will need to make clear:

- What document/s is/are being prepared;
- What stage in the process it is (e.g. first draft, revised draft, formal submission);
- The issues/questions on which views are sought;
- What people are being asked to do (e.g. fill in a questionnaire, attend a meeting);
- When responses will be required;
- How responses will be used and what role they will play in forming the Plan;
- How and when results of the consultation will be made available;
- How decisions will be made using the results of the consultation;
- What the future stages in the process are.

Personal details and information supplied will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

4. Target Groups

The Group will involve all parishioners to ensure key issues are fully communicated and discussed, but also to involve the following groups as appropriate:

- Borough and County Councillors
- Borough and County Councils
- St Mary's Church
- Other religious bodies
- Adjacent Parish Councils
- The business community of Sutton Valence and surrounding area
- Developers/landowners/agents
- Government Agencies
- Service providers and utilities
- National and local amenity, campaign, interest and support groups (such as groups representing environment/conservation/heritage concerns, access/disability issues, and religious/ethnic/race concerns)
- Young people, including Sutton Valence schools and young persons' groups
- Other appropriate groups and organisations including, SE Water, Southern Water.

5. Methods and Resources

- **Printed material** – Plain English will be used and efforts made to avoid jargon and to explain technical terms. Responses will be invited by paper copy via email and on line surveys.
- **Newsletters** – Newsletters are delivered to every house in Sutton Valence thrice yearly. They will include regular updates and progress with a feedback of results.
- **Website** – Information will be made available on the Neighbourhood Plan page of the Parish Council's website
- **Notice Boards** – on all of the Parish Council Notice Boards.

- **Exhibitions and Meetings** – Information will be presented and opportunities provided to ask questions/provide verbal or written feedback on questionnaires, forms, discussion boards, etc.
- **Elected Members** – Councillors will have an important role to play both in expressing the concerns of residents and interested parties and in the distribution of information to their community. Parish Council meetings are open to the public and they will be able to scrutinise the decision-making process directly.

6. Feedback

As well as consulting the public and stakeholders, the Group will provide feedback which allows people to see how their contributions have been taken into account and to maintain their confidence in the process. Feedback needs to be relevant, concise, and easily understood.

Relevant formats will include the Parish Council Newsletters and direct letters/emails and public meetings where relevant.

7. Monitoring

The Statement of Community Involvement will be monitored and reviewed regularly and reported annually to the Group to check that the methods and techniques being used are still the most appropriate and effective.

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