

1. 'Due to the current SARS-CoV-2 RCC has recognised that a number of the "normal" consultation techniques will not be available and new methods of engaging in virtual and electronic formats will be developed.' IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT ANY MODIFICATION OF THE CONSULTING PROCESS MAINTAINS THE PRINCIPLES OF TRANSPARENCY, OPENESS AND FAIRNESS AND DOES NOT EXCLUDE ANY SECTORS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

2. The Local Plan represents an unprecedented departure from all past and current development policy in Rutland and is likely to result in a significant and irreversible change to the character and nature of the County itself, which will have an inevitable impact on the quality of life of a significant number of local residents. As such, it is crucially important that any modification of section 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), which may be deemed necessary in accordance with the new temporary measures provided by the National Planning Practice Guidance (May 2020), does not detract from the spirit of the underlying legislation and the value that should be placed on community engagement in any planning decision let alone one of this scale.

3. In light of this, I would like to raise the following deputation:
 - a. First, how does RCC intend to make appropriate provision to engage with those sectors of the local population that are not on the internet?

The Council will write to notify (and email) all those already on the Local Plan Mailing list to inform them of the consultation and how to access the documents (this includes in the region of 1500 addresses). A poster campaign will also be organised using council buildings, notice boards and by requesting that town and parish councils and parish meetings also use the posters to advertise the consultation.

Regulation 19 requires inspection copy of documents to be available in the Council's principal office. This requirement must be met as a minimum. Arrangements are being put in place to achieve this whilst meeting the Covid 19 restrictions. This will allow those who do not have internet access or a third party with internet access to access the documents. For those who are shielding and therefore not able to come to the office specific solutions will be put in place and made available based on each individual's requirement.

- b. Second, how does RCC intend to address the inevitable impact that the SARS-CoV-2 will have had on local campaigning groups that have been

unable to meet during the lockdown period to discuss any issues in the Local Plan about which they may wish to comment or raise objections?

It is not for the Council to determine how groups meet or continue to operate – that is for each group themselves to determine. It is probable that most will adapt and meet virtually in the same way as parish councils and other groups are doing.

- c. Third, how does RCC intend to address the fact that the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic lockdown not only raises difficulties when it comes to providing adequate opportunities for members of the public to inspect documents but perhaps more fundamentally is likely to mean that many local residents may not even know that the Information exists in order to request its inspection?

In addition to the mailing list referenced in a) above, the council will use extensive online communication about the consultation as well as substantial communications via radio, press, social media and through Parish/Town Councils to residents. A notice will also be placed in local newspapers to publicise the consultation. For those unable to access the web to respond to the consultation a copy of the document and the online form will be accessible (on an appointment basis) at the Council Office as set out above. The Council will also provide a bespoke phone service to those who are shielding and therefore unable to access the documents either online or in the council offices. Copies of document or extracts of it, can be requested at the usual cost.

4. In light of the above, I would ask RCC to commit to recognising the value of local engagement and community involvement in local planning decision making process. In doing so, it is important that any necessary changes to Regulation 19 provide more than a tick box exercise in ensuring community involvement in the Local Plan. In order for this to be achieved in a democratically fair way and for the process not to exclude any sectors of the local community I would recommend that as a minimum RCC commits to the following measures (in order of priority depending on the availability of funding):

It is important to recognise that the only substantive change to the SCI in respect of consultation on the Pre-Submission Plan (Regulation 19 consultation) is that copies of the document will not be available for inspection at the libraries. In all other respects consultation and communication about it will be the same, if not more, than previously planned.

- i. RCC send a mailshot to every household in the County with details of how residents may access and comment on relevant information regarding the Local Plan under any modified Regulation 19 process;

This is not proposed, it is expensive and not proven to be an effective way of communicating the consultation. Other methods outlined above will provide for the same communication and advertisement of the consultation as would normally be undertaken.

- ii. Commit to publishing details of how to access and comment on all relevant information regarding the Local Plan in the local newspaper. Any such publication to be more extensive and informative than merely a press release;

As well as press releases throughout the consultation period, a notice placed in the local papers already forms part of the normal communication strategy for such a consultation. This strategy includes the use of social media and the poster campaign referenced above. These methods form a normal part of the consultation process and have not been changed as a result of Covid or proposed changes to the SCI.

- iii. Consider the effective use of social media stations to inform members of the public how to access and comment on all relevant information regarding the Local Plan;

Extensive use of social media already form part of the normal communication strategy for such a consultation

- iv. Consider engaging in a publicity campaign with local radio stations to inform members of the public how to access and comment on all relevant information regarding the Local Plan.

Radio stations already form part of the normal communication strategy for such a consultation.