

Social Value: Guidance Note for Major Developments

Introduction

The Wirral Local Plan was adopted on the 31st March 2025. The Local Plan introduced Policy WD20, requiring that all Major developments submit a social value statement at planning application stage. Major development is defined in the Local Plan Glossary as development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

The purpose of this guidance note is to support you to develop your social value statement, which it is suggested should include an Employment and Skills Plan, forming part of your Planning Statement. Your social value statement and Employment and Skills Plan should set out how the proposed Major development will contribute to local employment, skills development, and supply chain opportunities for local businesses.

What is social value?

Social value is a term used to describe the additional social, environmental and economic benefits that an organisation and its supply chain can make to society, by contributing to the well-being and resilience of individuals, communities and society in general. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires public authorities to consider economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services contracts. Wirral Council has adopted a definition of Social Value as follows:

"A commitment to using our influence and resources to help deliver the Wirral Plan: to drive economic growth, improve the local environment and support vulnerable people – while ensuring the best possible value for money while providing goods and services for the people of Wirral"

Why social value is important in Wirral

Theme 4 of the Wirral Council Plan 2023-27 is people focused regeneration. Key outcomes identified are:

- More investment secured and created to deliver regeneration in Wirral
- More jobs created and more people in good quality, sustainable work
- More quality, environmentally sustainable and affordable homes
- More businesses (including community/social enterprise) established and survive

The Council measures the value of social value committed by our suppliers. Further information on Wirral's priorities and associated strategies can be found on our Wirral Intelligence Service Website [here](#). In additions to this, all key datasets have been mapped geographically [here](#); this local insight website provides specific data pertinent to individual neighbourhoods which can assist in informing social value outcome priorities by place.

How to prepare a social value statement and what it should include

The remainder of this guidance note sets out the Council's suggested approach to demonstrating compliance with Policy WD20 of the Wirral Local Plan. The aim of the Policy is to ensure that development delivers wider benefits to the community and relates to the elements of social value relating to skills development, local labour and use of local supply chains. It applies to Major developments, and all relevant Major applications are required to provide a social value statement to comply with the policy (see validation checklist: [here](#)).

Local Plan Policy WD20

Policy WD20

Social Value

- A. Proposals for Major development should demonstrate how they are designed and are to be delivered in a way that seeks to increase social value, as defined in supporting text to this policy and in a manner proportionate to the nature of the development proposed.
- B. Major development proposals are required to provide a social value statement that explains how the development will secure and deliver social value that would arise from the proposals:
 1. Local labour policy for construction and occupation of the development covering skills and training provision including apprenticeships; and
 2. Local sourcing of products and materials for construction.

Implementation

The Council expects a Social Value statement to be included as part of a supporting Planning Statement for the proposal. A section 106 agreement or unilateral undertaking will be expected (or a condition imposed) in relation to skills training, local labour employment, and local spend on Major schemes including an agreed construction phase employment and skills plan.

Where Wirral Council is the procuring authority for the development, applicants must ensure that social value commitments made during procurement are reflected in the planning application's social value statement.

Complying with Part A of WD20

To comply with Part A of the Policy, developers are expected to set out their approach to social value for the development they are applying for. This should be proportionate to the scale of the development. The statement should include a project overview which sets out a description of the development, estimated timelines and an overview of anticipated workforce requirements and construction materials.

Complying with Part B of WD20

To comply with Part B of WD20, you should evidence how your proposal will contribute to the following key objectives:

- Support the creation of local employment opportunities, including for underrepresented groups.
- Promote skills development and training for Wirral residents, especially in sectors related to the construction and ongoing operation of the development.
- Strengthen local supply chains by through engagement with Wirral businesses and providing fair access to procurement opportunities for SMEs and VSCs. This may include attending local supplier events and working with the Council and its partners to identify suitable local providers.

This should be proportionate to nature of the development proposed. To support the delivery of these objectives, our guidance is that a mobilisation meeting with Wirral Council's Economic Growth Team should take place 8 weeks ahead of development commencing.

Local Labour and skills

The recommended approach for complying with WD20 B (1) relating to Local labour and skills is through the submission of a social value statement including an Employment and Skills Plan.

Appendix 1 to this note sets out an example template of an Employment and Skills Plan for the Construction phase. However, applicants are free to set out their approach to complying with Policy WD-20 as they wish and should not feel limited to delivering the outcomes suggested in the template. While an Employment and Skills Plan is required for the construction phase of each Major development, an Employment and Skills Plan for the occupation phase will not be relevant for every Major development (for example new housing or speculative built offices/industrial buildings). The Council encourages the submission of an Employment and Skills Plan for the occupation phase where practical and a template is included in Appendix 2.

The following sets out the considerations applicable to local labour and skills. Not all will be relevant to every proposal.

Local Labour

Developers will be expected to provide details of their approach to the use of Local Labour at both construction phase and (where relevant) during occupation of the completed development. Options for addressing this requirement include:

- **Local Recruitment:** Targeting Wirral residents for job opportunities, including apprenticeships, training, and placements.
- **Partnerships with Local Organisations:** Achieving local recruitment targets by collaborating with the Council's Economic Growth Team, local employment support organisations, the Council's commissioned employment and business support services, colleges, and community groups.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** Regularly tracking and reporting on the percentage of the workforce that is drawn from the Wirral area, with clear targets set during the planning stage.

Skills Development and Training

A key element of social value is the upskilling of the local population. Developers should look to:

- **Offer Apprenticeships and Training:** Provide opportunities for young people and adults to gain skills through apprenticeships, work placements, or other forms of on-the-job training.
- **Collaborate with Local Educational Institutions:** Work with Wirral Met College and other training providers to create tailored training programmes and work experience opportunities that meet the skills and needs of both the development and the local community.
- **Deliver Training on Site:** Where possible, ensure that a proportion of the workforce receives training and skills development directly on the development site (such as through construction skills academies), helping to build sustainable careers in construction and related industries.

Engaging Underrepresented Groups

To maximise the social value of development projects, Developers will be expected to demonstrate that they have engaged with groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the workforce. Full details of groups that we consider to be underrepresented in the workforce are listed in Appendix 1, but include:

- **Young People (16-24):** Provide targeted opportunities for young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET).
- **Long-term Unemployed:** Create pathways to employment for individuals who have been out of work for an extended period.
- **Minority and Underrepresented Groups:** Ensure that employment and training opportunities are accessible to women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and individuals with disabilities.

Local Supply Chain

Supporting the local economy is a key component of social value. Developers are encouraged to:

- **Utilise Wirral-Based Suppliers:** Use local businesses and suppliers wherever possible to ensure that the economic benefits of the development are felt within the community.
- **Develop a Local Purchasing Strategy:** Identify opportunities for, and committing to, local purchasing goods and services from local suppliers.
- **Participate in local supplier engagement activities:** Maximise reach and promotion of opportunities through 'Meet-the-Buyer' sessions and local forums hosted by the Council or our partners such as Wirral Chamber of Commerce.
- **Develop Supplier Development Programmes:** Help local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to meet the procurement requirements of larger projects, through training, mentoring, and capacity building.
- **Support Local Intelligence:** Working with the Council and our partners to identify gaps or weaknesses in our supply chains and working with us collaboratively to explore ways to address them (e.g. skills training routeways, accreditations).

Monitoring and Evaluation

Developers should put in place mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on the social value outcomes related to skills, workforce, and local spend. Where work is sub-contracted, Developers are expected to communicate their social value commitments and monitor the performance of subcontractors against the agreed social value targets (i.e. local spend, local employment).

Examples of the KPIs that Developers should consider are outlined in Appendix 3 (Quarterly Monitoring Sheet). These should include:

- **KPIs for Local Employment:** Developers should set measurable targets for the proportion of the workforce and subcontractors drawn from the Wirral area.
- **Skills Development Metrics:** Reporting on the number of apprenticeships, training, and local labour schemes created as a result of the development.
- **Local Spend:** Tracking and reporting the amount of local spend as a result of the development. For all Major developments, we expect 20% of labour and 20% of spend to be Wirral-based. Other best practice targets are listed in Appendix 3.

The Social Value Statement should outline the KPIs they propose to adopt, showing how they intend to deliver on these targets.

Conclusion

Wirral Council is committed to ensuring that new developments create meaningful and lasting benefits for the community. Developers are expected to play their part by contributing to skills development and prioritising local labour, ensuring that their projects not only contribute to the local economy but also help to build a skilled and sustainable workforce for the future.

As part of the planning process, developers are required to submit a social value statement to outline how their project will contribute to the local community. A suggested Employment and Skills Plan template is provided in Appendix 1 for the construction phase, and a separate template is provided in Appendix 2 for the occupation phase (if applicable). Appendix 3 provides an example Quarterly Monitoring Sheet highlighting the KPIs that Developers should consider.

For further information or a discussion regarding the development of your social value statement, please contact Wirral Council's Economic Development Team at economicgrowthservice@wirral.gov.uk