

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	19 th MARCH 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	15
TITLE:	STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ADOPTION		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	REGENERATION, TRANSPORT AND PLANNING
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	ALL
LEAD OFFICER:	MARK WORRINGHAM	TEL:	0118 9373337
JOB TITLE:	PRINCIPAL PLANNER	E-MAIL:	mark.worringham@reading.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a planning document that details how consultation and community involvement on plans and major developments will be carried out. It is a statutory requirement to have a SCI in place.
- 1.2 The existing SCI was adopted in 2006. However, with work expected to begin soon on reviewing the local plan, it is important to revise the SCI to take account of recent changes, learn from experience, and make it more appropriate to current circumstances.
- 1.3 A draft version of the SCI was approved by Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 20th November 2013 (Minute 22 refers). It was subject to consultation between November 2013 and January 2014. A revised version, taking accounts of the results of consultation (Appendix 3), has been produced, and is proposed to be adopted. Committee is also asked to approve the responses to the comments received (within the Report of Consultation in Appendix 2).

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the responses to representations received during the consultation on the Draft Statement of Community Involvement, undertaken between November 2013 and January 2014 (as set out in the Report of Consultation at Appendix 2), be agreed.

2.2 That the Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix 3) be adopted.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is part of a local authority's set of planning policy documents, and its purpose is to set out how the local planning authority will involve the community in producing planning documents, as well as on planning applications and pre-application enquiries. It discusses who will be consulted, when, how and for how long. It is a statutory requirement that a local planning authority should have a SCI.

4. THE PROPOSAL

(a) Current Position

4.1 The Council adopted its existing SCI in July 2006, after going through two consultation stages and an independent examination. Its role was to provide the basis for undertaking consultation and community involvement in producing the Local Development Framework (LDF).

4.2 The existing SCI therefore was used in designing and carrying out community involvement in producing the Core Strategy (adopted in January 2008), Reading Central Area Action Plan (adopted January 2009) and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted October 2012), as well as a number of Supplementary Planning Documents providing more detail on these documents. The Council is now at a stage where the main LDF documents have been produced, and now intends to work towards replacing these documents with a single Local Plan. The process for undertaking this is set out in the Local Development Scheme, approved by Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 9th July 2013 (Minute 8 refers), and amended by Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 20th November 2013 (Minute 19 refers), and it includes production of a revised SCI.

4.3 A revised SCI represents an opportunity to bring the document into line with new Council consultation guidance, to reflect the substantial recent experience of community involvement, to streamline processes to make the most of resources, and to slim down the document to make it more concise.

4.4 The Draft SCI was approved for community involvement by Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 20th November 2013 (Minute 22 refers). Consultation started in November 2013 and lasted until 24th January 2014. The response was fairly limited, with only five respondents. The main representations of substance related to the section on pre-application consultation on development proposals, with two respondents arguing that the requirements were a little onerous for

applicants given the need to make the process as swift as possible. The representations are summarised in Appendix 2.

(b) Option Proposed

4.5 Committee is recommended to agree the response to the representations (as set out in Appendix 2) and adopt the SCI incorporating the proposed amendments (Appendix 3).

4.6 Once adopted, the SCI will be used as a basis for carrying out consultations on planning policy documents, and for consultation on major development schemes. Among other documents, it will inform the production of a new Local Plan for Reading.

4.7 In response to the comments received, and also to further internal discussion, a number of amendments are proposed to the SCI. In summary, the main changes proposed are:

- Updates to reflect that this will be the adopted document;
- A glossary of terms;
- Reference to cases where there is a statutory requirement for pre-application consultation, which currently only relates to certain types of onshore wind development;
- Clarification of thresholds for pre-application consultation for mixed use developments and developments for other uses (other than residential, retail, leisure and employment); and
- Slightly reducing the laboriousness of the requirements for pre-application consultation to reduce burdens on the developer and the Council.

(c) Other Options Considered

4.7 There is one alternative option, which is not to produce new versions of the documents and instead continue to rely on the 2006 version.

4.8 This option would continue to fulfil the statutory minimum requirements. However, it would result in a consultation approach which does not target resources most efficiently and which does not reflect the Council's current consultation guidance.

5. **CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 The SCI will contribute to achieving the following strategic aims, through ensuring that planning policy takes account of the views of the community:

- The development of Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley;
- Establishing Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit;

- Promoting equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The SCI sets out how community involvement on planning matters will be carried out. The Draft SCI was subject to a period of consultation between November 2013 and January 2014. This was carried out in line with the existing SCI, adopted by Council on 27 June 2006 (minute 17 refers).

7. EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Scoping Assessment, included at Appendix 1 identifies that an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is relevant to the SCI. The EqIA (also at Appendix 1) identifies that there are positive impacts for many of the protected characteristics, but particularly on age and racial groups, as defined in the Equality Act. This is because some of these groups have traditionally been underrepresented in consultation in the past, and are now specifically targeted in the SCI. Compliance with the duties under S149 of the Equality Act 2010 can involve treating some persons more favourably than others, but it is not considered that there will be a negative impact on other groups with relevant protected characteristics.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A SCI is a requirement under Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The 2004 Act was amended by section 180 of the Planning Act 2008, which streamlined the process of production, including removing the need for independent examination. An additional amendment to Section 18 was made by Schedule 12 of the Localism Act 2011 to reflect neighbourhood planning.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The work undertaken on drafting the documents and the expenditure on community engagement has been, and will continue to be, funded from existing budgets. There are no other direct revenue or financial implications arising from this report.

Value for Money (VFM)

- 9.2 The SCI will provide value for money in that it specifically considers how resources could be most efficiently used in carrying out community involvement, particularly including through electronic communications. It also considers how to target specific groups and areas to make best use of resources.

Risk Assessment

9.3 There are no direct financial risks associated with the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- Planning Act 2008
- Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- National Planning Policy Framework (2012)
- Statement of Community Involvement (adopted June 2006)
- Local Development Scheme (July 2013, as amended November 2013)
- Working Better With You - Community Involvement Guidance (2012)

APPENDIX 1: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed:

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

Directorate: DENS - Directorate of Environment and Neighbourhood Services

Service: Planning, Development and Regulatory Services

Name: Mark Worringham

Job Title: Principal Planner

Date of assessment: 11/02/14

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service?

To set out how community involvement on planning documents and decisions will be carried out.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

The local community and other stakeholders will benefit through being involved in planning documents and decisions at a time and in a way when there is a genuine opportunity to shape the results.

What outcomes will the change achieve and for whom?

The community will have a genuine say in planning documents and decisions. For planning policy documents, specific efforts will be made to reach previously underrepresented groups, e.g. younger people, ethnic minorities and people in certain areas of Reading.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

Local residents, community and voluntary groups, local businesses, relevant developers and landowners, infrastructure providers, statutory consultees. All stakeholders would like a greater say in the planning process, and in a manner which enables them to have a genuine influence.

Assess whether an EIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc)

Yes No

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, feedback.

Yes No

If the answer is Yes to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because: N/A

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- Consultation
- Collection and Assessment of Data
- Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive

Consultation

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Local residents, community and voluntary groups, local businesses, relevant developers and landowners, infrastructure providers, statutory consultees	Consultation involved notifying consultees of the documents, publication on the website, availability in key offices, press releases, social media etc.	November - December 2013

Collect and Assess your Data

Describe how could this proposal impact on Racial groups

In the SCI, ethnic minority groups have been specifically identified as being groups whose involvement should be specifically sought due to their underrepresentation in previous consultations. Impacts are therefore expected to be positive.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)

No impacts on gender/transgender are anticipated.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Disability

The SCI specifically identifies the need to ensure that consultation methods and materials are accessible to all. Impacts are therefore expected to be positive.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

No impacts on sexual orientation are anticipated.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Age

In the SCI, younger people (under 40) have been specifically identified as being groups whose involvement should be specifically sought due to their underrepresentation in previous consultations. Impacts are therefore expected to be positive.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Religious belief?

The SCI does not specifically identify measures aimed at specific religious groups. However, following the SCI guidelines will make consultations appropriate to the groups that are likely to be affected. Impacts are therefore expected to be positive.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Make a Decision

Tick which applies

1. No negative impact identified Go to sign off
2. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.
Reason
3. Negative impact identified or uncertain

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

The results of consultation exercises will continue to be analysed to identify whether any particular groups are particularly excluded from the community involvement processes.

Signed (completing officer) Mark Worringham Date: 11th February 2014
Signed (Lead Officer) Mark Worringham Date: 11th February 2014