

Meeting:	Strategic Planning Advisory Panel
Date:	Tuesday 8 th November 2005
Subject:	Statement of Community Involvement (SCI): First Formal Consultation Responses.
Responsible Officer:	Director of Property Services (Urban Living)
Contact Officer:	Charles Alonge/Claire O'Brien
Portfolio Holder:	Planning, Development and Housing
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Public

Section 1: Summary

At its meeting on 13th September 2005, the Panel noted that progress on the draft SCI was in accordance with the Local Development Scheme (LDS) timetable. The report of the initial consultation was considered and officers were asked to embark on the formal 6 weeks public consultation period. The consultation period took place between 23rd September and 4th November 2005.

This report sets out the results of this exercise. It gives an overview of the responses at the time of this report, highlights the main issues raised by the respondents and indicates changes to be made to the SCI as a result.

Decision Required

The Panel is recommended to:-

- (i) Note the comments received on the first formal consultation on the SCI;
- (ii) Note the proposed minor changes resulting from the consultation, and the need for minor amendments to reflect typographical errors identified.
- (iii) Note progress against the timetable and recommend that Cabinet agree to progress the SCI to the Submission stage and six weeks statutory period.
- (iv) Recommend that the Cabinet should authorise the Portfolio Holder to clear the final printed SCI, in order to meet agreed LDS time table.

Reason for report

The Panel is required to consider the responses to the first formal consultation stage and make recommendation to Cabinet to agree any necessary changes prior to submission to the Secretary of State. Members also need to be advised of progress against the timetable set in the LDS.

Benefits

Public Involvement in the preparation of the SCI is a positive move towards increasing public awareness at the outset of preparing the Local Development Framework. Maximising engagement will enhance the Council's corporate objective of promoting diversity and inclusion. It should also reduce public opposition to policy implementation.

Cost of Proposals

The cost of producing the SCI document is contained within the current Departmental budget. Any associated cost relating to future implementation would be considered in future reports.

Risks

Delaying the SCI would effectively result in the Council's failure to meet the LDS timetable milestones. This may also lead to a reduction in the Planning Delivery Grant (PDG). Equally the failure to proceed accordingly will undermine the Council's commitment to the new planning system as prescribed by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The importance of the provision of adequate resources is important to the success of the whole process.

Implications if recommendations rejected

This will lead to a failure to meet the approved LDS timetable.

Section 2: Report

2.1 Brief History

The draft SCI was developed and a report presented to the Panel at its meeting on 13th September 2005. Following an initial consultation exercise,

the observations made by the respondents, as well as Members, were taken into consideration in the production of the revised document. This was subject to formal public consultation.

2.2 Results of the Consultation

The level of response received has been very good and the comments received have been analysed and these have been enclosed as **Appendix 1a & b**. As the consultation period only finished on 4th November, it will be necessary to provide a verbal report to the Panel on some of the last responses received. The database has also been modified on the basis of the questionnaire returns and this will inform the future engagement process.

The main findings of the consultation questionnaire did not raise any fundamental questions about the Council's approach or methodology suggested in the draft SCI. There is a strong emphasis on:

- the use of use of focus groups, either to discuss specific issues or to engage a specific target group, particularly 'hard-to-reach' groups
- the need to ensure that information is fully accessible, both to BME groups (need for translation and interpretation) and people with sensory impairments and learning difficulties (need documents to be available in a variety of formats)
- the need for the Council to take notice of people's views.
- the use of 'Community Communication Network' screens

No specific wording changes have been suggested by respondents apart from Thames Water's suggestion regarding the need to make reference to 'Sewerage & Water Authority in Appendix C of the SCI. They also wish to be consulted on most major planning applications; in fact, the existing development control procedures already make it necessary for major planning applications to be automatically referred to them.

2.3 Changes to be made to Draft SCI prior to Submission

- Edit text to eliminate typographical errors;
- Reformat text and change layout;
- Include new organisations and names of individuals identified at the consultation stage;
- Include 'Sewerage & Water Authorities' in Appendix C of the SCI;
- Amend database to remove outdated addresses and add new ones; and
- Include the definition of SPAP in the Glossary.

2.4 SCI Submission Timetable

The submission SCI and the accompanying Initial Consultation Statement will go to the Secretary of State on 25th November 2005. The 6-week statutory consultation period will run from 25th November 2005 to 6th January 2006.

2.5 Consultation

The stages for producing the SCI, as set down in the approved LDS, have been followed.

2.6 Financial Implications

Costs are contained within the approved Departmental budget.

2.7 Legal Implications

Before the Council can submit the Statement of Community Involvement to the Secretary of State, the Council must have complied with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. Regulation 26 contains requirements for pre-submission public consultation and participation, and the steps being taken to comply with the requirements of that regulation.

The Council has taken all necessary steps to ensure that the Statement of Community Involvement is ready for submission to the Secretary of State and the subsequent independent examination. In carrying out the independent examination, the Inspector will be concerned with whether the Statement of Community Involvement is sound. Section 3.10 of Planning Policy Statement 12 suggests a test of soundness. The evidence in the Statement of Community Involvement and the steps being followed suggest that the Council's document is capable of being viewed as satisfying the test of soundness.

2.8 Equalities Impact

Effective community engagement promotes equality of opportunity and social inclusion.

Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents

Background Documents:

1. Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
2. Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks.
3. The London Plan (Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London), Mayor of London, February 2004.
Strategic Planning Advisory Panel Report 13th September 2005