

Appendix 1a

Draft Statement of community Involvement (SCI) CONSULTATION STATEMENT

This consultation statement is required in connection with the preparation of Harrow's Statement of Community Involvement. It demonstrates whom and how the Council has engaged at the formal stage of preparing the SCI.

Summary of responses and Comments

The Consultation period for the draft SCI started on 23rd September and closed on 4th November. The Council's updated database was used together with statutory advertisement and the Council website. This was carried in a similar way as the initial four weeks consultation undertaken in July/August 2005. The main purpose was to give opportunity to the different organisations, businesses and individuals to engage in the process of developing the Council's SCI document.

In total about 1500 individuals, organisations, community groups and utility companies were consulted. The table below summarises responses to the tick-box questions on the questionnaire accompanying the draft Statement of Community Involvement:

Table 1:

Consultation feedback summary (as at 25/10/05)	
Returned questionnaires (inc. incomplete)	62
Letters	3
E-mail	3
Returned undelivered (deleted from database)	17
Other deletions on request	13
Amended addresses/contacts	4
Total t	102

Table 2:

Q1. Do you agree with the Council's current approach to the Statement of Community Involvement?	
Totally agree	12
Agree	42
Disagree	0
Declined to answer	6
Q2. Is the Council seeking to involve all the right groups in the production of the Statement of Community Involvement?	
Yes	52
No	2
Declined to answer	6
Q3. Is the Council using the right methods of consultation?	
Yes	47
No	3
Don't know	5
Declined to answer	5

Q4. Are you aware of any particular methods that the Council might use to engage the 'hard to reach' groups?	
Yes	17
No	35
Declined to answer	8

Although the full result of the consultation is not available at the time of the above analysis, the level of response received has been very encouraging and the comments received have largely endorsed the Council's approach and proposed methods of engaging the community. There no radical suggestions in terms of new methods that could lead to any fundamental change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement. There is also a general agreement, by respondent, that the Council is seeking to involve all the right groups.

Main issues raised so far:

Some respondents considered the document to be too long and complicated and do not make easy reading. Other respondents suggested that the Council should do more to take notice of people's views and argued that there is no point having long and expensive consultation processes if local community opinion is judged irrelevant. The main raised so far are:

- The need to encouragement the use of focus groups, either to discuss specific issues or to engage a specific target group, particularly 'hard-to-reach' groups;
- Concerned that document is long and complicated, does not make easy reading. This should not be overly prescriptive and should not include a long list of manes as this would change too quickly;
- Suggestions that schoolchildren/young people should be identified as a specific group to be engaged;
- 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);
- Scepticism regarding the new consultation procedures. Need for Council to take notice of people's views. No point having long and expensive consultation processes if local community opinion is judged irrelevant;
- The need for adequate notice of all public meetings and for consultations to avoid the July/August holiday period where possible; and
- The need for adequate consultation on proposed schemes/developments.

Response and further Comments

Use of Focus Groups – The Council intends to use focus groups as a method of engagement and the commitment to this approach has been set out in SCI paragraph 8.7 and in the appendix tables 2,3 & 4.

The Length style of the SCI document – The Council acknowledges that the SCI is a technical document that might be difficult to follow. Consequently a simplified and shorter version of the document was produced and circulated. The Council would not wish to reduce the scope for using different methods of engaging the community in planning.

School Children – The Council aims to reach different age groups and young people have been identified in the SCI (Appendix C) as a specific group.

BME - The Council aims to reach different community groups and BME have been identified in the SCI (Appendix C) as a specific group.

People's Views – The Council is committed to ensuring that comments, suggestion and views expressed are considered and will make necessary changes. The views expressed at the initial stage informed on the draft document and suggested changes listed below have been taken on board in the revision of the SCI for Submission.

Notice of all Public Meetings – The Council want to enable all people to get involved and various methods have been used to publicise the draft SCI including Press notice, leaflets, libraries and the website.

Consultation on Proposed Schemes – The Statement of Community Involvement embraces the process of consultation on planning application (paragraphs 6.1 – 6.6 & Appendix B). The process of allocating land specific development will be open to public consultation in manner described in the SCI paragraph 4.4 and table 5, appendix D).

Changes sought:

In the main respondents have sought no specific wording changes and the comments received focus on general concepts and issues such as those listed above.

- Thames Water request that they be directly referred to in Appendix C: Other Agencies/Government Bodies) Statutory Sewerage and Water Authorities.
- Mr Dave Worthing requests that 'SPAP' be added to the Glossary and points out several typing and grammatical errors.
- The MOD would wish to be consulted specifically on any proposed schemes/developments in its safeguarded zones that meet the criteria on the relevant plans. They also supplied the Council with new contact details.

Response

The Draft SCI has been amended to take account of:

- 1 All typographical errors identified before printing will be corrected;
- 2 Reference to Sewerage and Water Companies;
- 3 The inclusion of SPAP in the Glossary; and
- 4 The requirement to consult on proposal/development scheme is adequately covered by the development procedure in the SCI.

Comments The Council's commitment to community involvement has been demonstrated by large number of people and organisations consulted at both the initial stage and the current consultation, and also by enlisting a variety of means to engage the community. Under the current planning procedure genuine engagement is a key test of soundness.

The Council's commitment to community involvement has been demonstrated by large number of people and organisations consulted at both the initial stage and the current consultation, and also by enlisting a variety of means to engage the community. The issues raised by respondents have already been addressed in the draft SCI and the changes indicated above reflect the Council's willingness to accommodate and reflect the views of the community and stakeholders in the Local Development Framework preparation. The current planning procedures consider genuine engagement is a key test of soundness and Council is satisfied that its approach and methods would pass the test of soundness.