

Meeting: Executive
Portfolio Area: Environment and Economy
Date: October 2006

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - ADOPTION

Planning and Regeneration

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Members of the conclusions and recommendations of the binding Inspector's report into the Statement of Community Involvement.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Council be recommended to make changes and adopt the Statement of Community Involvement in accordance with the binding recommendations set out in the Inspector's report.

3 BACKGROUND

The Statement of Community Involvement

- 3.1 The Statement sets out what planning policies and planning applications the Council will seek community involvement on, how community involvement will be sought, when community involvement will be sought, and which groups, organisations and individuals should be involved at various stages of the planning process.
- 3.2 The Statement has been developed in accordance with DCLG (formerly ODPM) requirements. This included three stages of public consultation. The final stage of consultation undertaken in Spring 2006 required respondents to state whether they believe the Statement to be "sound" or "unsound" in relation to nine tests of soundness set out in Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12). Only three respondents stated that they believed the Statement was "unsound" and all three wanted their comments to be considered as written representations rather than attend a hearing.

Examination

- 3.3 An Examination to consider the soundness of the Statement can either proceed via a public hearing or written representations. Because no person or organisation wished to exercise their right to be heard at Examination, the independent inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate to carry out the Examination decided that it could proceed via written representations.
- 3.4 The Examination was carried out in August 2006 and the final Inspector's Report was received on 27th September 2006.

Adopting the Statement

- 3.5 Legislation requires that the Council must adopt the Statement of Community Involvement in accordance with the precise recommendations about how it should change as set out in the Inspector's report.
- 3.6 Upon receipt of the Inspector's report, the Council must make a copy available for inspection during normal office hours at the same places that previous versions of the document were made available (the Council's main reception, the Customer Service Centre, the town centre library in Southgate and the Old Town library). We must also publish the report on our website and give notice to everyone who requested to be notified that the report has been published.

Inspector's Binding Recommendations

- 3.7 The Inspector states that "*the starting point for the assessment is that the SCI is sound*" and that changes are made only where there is a clear need in light of the tests of soundness. He states that subject to his recommended changes the SCI will meet all nine tests. He subsequently makes a series of recommendations, most of them based on the changes that we proposed to him at the Examination:
- the list of consultees in the SCI should cross-refer to an electronic database of possible consultees;
 - The reorganisation of certain consultation bodies, such as the Strategic Rail Authority, should be acknowledged, and an additional sentence should be added to allow for successor bodies to be consulted;
 - The SCI does not acknowledge that the Council may have to provide extra support to facilitate consultation with certain groups or individuals, but recognises that the proposed changes that the Borough Council submitted before the Examination may provide this support and he, therefore, recommends that they be inserted accordingly. [The proposed changes are not set out here due to their length but can be viewed in the SCI in paragraphs 25-29].
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4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Council must adopt the Statement of Community Involvement in accordance with the recommendations set out in the Inspector's Report. Copies of both the Inspector's report and the Statement as it reads after incorporation of the Inspector's recommendations are available in the Members' Library.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

The cost of the public consultation programme for the Statement of Community Involvement will be contained within the LDF budget for 2006/07 which was originally estimated at £170,000. It is expected a further £110,000 will be required in 2006/07 as a result of a review of the spending profile and this pressure will be reported to Executive in November 2006.

5.2 Legal Implications

The process of adoption as outlined is in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and its associated regulations. The Statement needs to be adopted by full Council.

5.3 Other Delivery Implications

None.

APPENDICES

- Binding Inspector's Report. A copy of this is available in the Members' library.
- The Statement of Community Involvement, incorporating the Inspector's binding changes. A copy of this is available in the Members' library.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Stevenage Local Development Scheme (Stevenage Borough Council)
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (ODPM, 2004)
- Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations (ODPM, 2004)
- Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks (ODPM, 2004)
- Creating Local Development Frameworks - A Companion Guide to PPS12 (ODPM, 2004)