



Cabinet

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

Statement of Community Involvement for Planning Policy and Planning Applications Addendum – Implications of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Report of the Executive Manager - Communities

Cabinet Portfolio Holder Councillor R Upton

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the Borough Council's policies on community involvement in planning policy preparation and the determination of planning applications. A revised SCI was published and consulted on over a six week period ending on 28 June 2018, and adopted by Cabinet on 12 March 2019.
- 1.2. Due to 'social distancing' and other control measures brought in to reduce the transmission of the Covid-19 coronavirus, this addendum sets out how the Council will consult members of the public on emerging planning policies within Local Plans and planning applications whilst 'social distancing' restrictions are in place.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet adopts the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning Policy and Planning Applications Addendum – Implications of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

The Addendum to the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning Policy and Planning Applications will, if adopted, set out the Council's policies on community involvement in planning policy preparation and the determination of planning applications whilst 'social distancing restrictions' are in place.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that local planning authorities prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI must set out how persons and organisations, who appear to the authority to have an interest in matters relating to development in the area, will be involved in the Council's plan making and development management functions.

- 4.2. The Government has stated that local plan preparation and the determination of planning applications should continue during the coronavirus pandemic. However, they have recognised that, given social distancing restrictions, Councils may not be able to comply with their Statements of Community Involvement. Consequently, the Government has updated the Planning Practice Guidance encouraging a review of the Statement of Community Involvement and amendment of policies where necessary.
- 4.3. For community involvement to be successful during the pandemic, it remains the case that it must continue to involve an inclusive approach based on the differing needs of the various parts of the community.
- 4.4. Whilst engagement and involvement during the pandemic may not be able to involve face-face meetings or events, and locations for displaying documents may be closed, the Council still wishes to use effective means to enable people to be informed and to contribute throughout the plan-making process. The continued aim is to ensure that all groups in the Borough are involved in the process early enough for people to be able to have an input, and to address the needs of those groups of people who traditionally have not been involved in the process but may have specific needs to be met or addressed. It is important that all views are sought, not just those of people with a direct interest in a land use proposal.
- 4.5. During engagement on emerging planning policies, the Addendum highlights that face-to-face meetings and events are unlikely to occur whilst social distancing measures are in place. However, as pandemic controls change, face-to-face meetings may be able to occur.
- 4.6. In addition, the Council will leave consultation documents on display at locations open to the public. However, where public buildings remain closed during the pandemic, the leaving of documents on display will not be able to take place. Where public buildings are able to reopen during the pandemic, it will still have to be decided whether it is feasible and safe to use particular locations for displaying consultation documents. It is recognised that such controls may change over time and therefore the appropriateness of displaying consultation document in particular locations will be kept under review.
- 4.7. The Council will continue to make use of social media and provide documents for inspection on a public website. In addition, where appropriate and feasible for the consultation stage concerned, the Council will consider the use of methods such as virtual exhibitions and video conferencing.
- 4.8. As with engagement on planning policies, depending on the restrictions in place, face-to-face meetings are unlikely to take place during consultations on planning applications. Consequently, pre-application exhibitions or other public events may not be able to occur and applicants are encouraged to engage with local communities through other measures, for example social media.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

Cabinet could choose not to adopt the draft Addendum to the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning Policy and Planning Applications. This option is considered inappropriate as the Council, depending on the restrictions in place, may be unable to comply with the consultation requirements and could consequently face successful legal challenges to its planning decisions.

6. Risk and Uncertainties

Due to social distancing restrictions, the Council's existing Statement of Community Involvement is no longer up to date. It would therefore be unsatisfactory to continue to place reliance on the existing SCI.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7.2. Legal Implications

It is a statutory requirement for the Council to have a Statement of Community Involvement in place covering community engagement in relation to development plan preparation and the determination of planning applications.

7.3. Equalities Implications

This addendum to the Statement of Community Involvement recognises that consultation methods may be affected due to social distancing measures and contains safeguards that ensure no group or individual would be disadvantaged.

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no direct community safety implications arising from this report.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	The SCI will assist the development of land use policies that meet the housing, employment, recreational and leisure needs of residents, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment.
Efficient Services	The SCI addendum will ensure effective and efficient consultation with stakeholders on planning issues occurs whilst social distancing measures are in place.
Sustainable Growth	The SCI will assist the development of land use policies within the Local Plan that will deliver sustainable housing and economic growth

The Environment	The SCI will assist the development of land use policies that protect and enhance the environment
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9. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet adopts the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning Policy and Planning Applications Addendum - Implications of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

For more information contact:	Richard Mapletoft Planning Policy Manager 0115 914 8457 email rmapletoft@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers Available for Inspection:	Rushcliffe Statement of Community Involvement - Adopted March 2019 http://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/planningpolicy/localplan/communityinvolvement/
List of appendices:	Appendix 1: Rushcliffe Statement of Community Involvement for Planning Policy and Planning Applications - Implications of the Coronavirus Pandemic