



PLANNING COMMITTEE: 29th October 2013

DIRECTORATE: Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

HEAD OF PLANNING: Susan Bridge

REPORT TITLE: Amendments to Statement of Community Involvement

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 That the Committee agree to a minor amendment to the approved Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) as set out in this report.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in 2006, following submission to the Secretary of State. The SCI sets out how the Council will consult and involve communities and other stakeholders in the planning process and how it expects planning applicants for major planning applications to do so prior to the submission of their applications.

2.2 Since the publication of the SCI, a number of major legislative and policy changes have occurred, necessitating a full review of the document.

2.3 The full review of the SCI is currently underway to include all new legislation and guidance and to ensure that it is user friendly and fit for purpose. Appropriate consultation will be undertaken on the revised document and will be submitted to the Planning Committee for consideration in early 2014.

2.4 Examination by the Secretary of State on any preparation and alterations to SCI is no longer required and can be dealt with by the Council.

2.5 In the interim period, it is proposed to amend a single paragraph of the SCI in order to minimise postal costs involved in non-essential correspondence. This relates to the removal of the requirement to acknowledge comments received by third parties letters as a result of

planning consultation, and to clarify the position and process on comments made via social media.

- 2.6 Paragraph 3.14 of the SCI currently describes how people may comment upon a planning application:

“3.14 Comments on a planning application should be made in writing or by email within the timescale indicated. Respondents will be encouraged to submit comments by e-mail where they have this facility. All representations (whether for or against the development) will be taken into account when the decision is taken. Anonymous letters will not however be considered. All letters that comment on applications will be acknowledged.”

3. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

- 3.1 It is proposed to amend the current paragraph 3.14 to read:

“Comments on planning applications should be made preferably by using the online form available on the Council website at www.northampton.gov.uk or by email, to planning@northampton.gov.uk, and must include the respondent's name and address.

Comments may also be submitted by letter, posted to: Planning Department., Northampton Borough Council, The Guildhall, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE. Please note however that letters will not be acknowledged by return. If you wish to receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your comments, please provide a valid email address or a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

All comments must be submitted within the 21 day consultation period indicated.

All comments made in respect of a planning application will

- be placed on the application file to enable the case officer to have regard to the comments when determining the application*
- become background papers (as defined in the Access to Information Act 1985) and accordingly will be available for public inspection and will be published on the Council's website, including names and addresses (signatures, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers will be redacted)*

The following will not be accepted

- comments made anonymously; all submissions must include the respondent's name and address*
- public comments on social media sites; all comments for consideration must be submitted directly to the Planning Department, using the methods described above*

Updates on the progress of an application will be supplied directly by email where a valid email address is received, and made available via the Council website.”

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This is a minor change ahead of a full review and will enable the Planning Team to save substantial postal and printing costs where large numbers of comments are received in letter format daily. It will also explain clearly the range of options open to the public in submitting their comments, in particular via e-mail.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Legal advice was sought as to whether consultation should be carried out on this proposed amendment. Legal Services confirmed on 10 October 2013 that this is not material to the main aim of the Statement and is minor in nature; therefore Legal Services agree that it is not necessary to have consultation with members of the public on making such amendments.

6. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 6.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.