

Council
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Item No

Report of Directorate:
People, Performance and Regeneration

Author/ Contact Officer:
Claire Berry
Principal Planning Officer (Strategy)
Tel: (01604) 837834

**Northampton Development
Framework -
Statement of Community
Involvement
Adoption**

Purpose of Report

To inform Council of the binding recommendations of the Inspector who considered the soundness of the Statement of Community Involvement and for Council to adopt the Statement of Community Involvement as amended by those recommendations, as recommended by the Cabinet.

Recommendation(s)

1. That Council adopts the Statement of Community Involvement as recommended by the Cabinet.

Summary and Links to Corporate Plan

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the Borough Council's policy for involving the community, both in the preparation of Local Development Documents (LDDs) and development control decisions. The programme for the preparation of the SCI is set out in the Local Development Scheme.

Consultation was undertaken on the Pre-Submission Draft SCI in February-April 2005 and an amended version, the Submission Draft SCI, was prepared. The Submission Draft SCI was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in June 2005 and was subject to further consultation in June-August 2005. The Submission Draft SCI was then subject to independent examination in December 2005-January 2006. The binding Inspector's Report has been received and the required amendments made to the SCI. Members are requested to adopt the final version of the Statement of Community Involvement as amended, as recommended by the Cabinet.

The Council's Corporate Plan recognises the need for citizen focused services. In identifying the town as an area of major growth, it states "Northampton Borough Council will play a strong and influential role in this renewal agenda, making sure that our citizens' views are represented and the best outcomes delivered for the future of the town."

1. Background

- 1.1. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the Borough Council's policy for involving the community, both in the preparation of Local Development Documents and in development control decisions. The programme for the preparation of the SCI is set out in the Local Development Scheme.
- 1.2. The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 set out the procedures that must be undertaken as part of the process of adopting the Statement of Community Involvement. The process has four key stages:
 - 1) Pre-Submission
 - 2) Submission
 - 3) Examination
 - 4) Adoption
- 1.3. A draft version of the SCI was the subject of consultation during April-June 2004. A total of 80 representations were received to that consultation. An amended version of the SCI (the Pre-Submission SCI) was subsequently prepared which took account of the results of the consultation exercise on the draft SCI and new Government guidance. A total of 136 representations were received to the Pre-Submission SCI. Following that consultation, further amendments were made, and a revised version (the Submission Draft SCI) was published for consultation in June-August 2005.
- 1.4. Twenty-five representations were received to the Submission Draft SCI, from seven organisations and individuals. Of these representations, twenty two were objections and three were supportive.
- 1.5. Under the new planning system the Council is required to prepare a Pre-Submission Consultation Statement and a Representations Statement. Together these statements explain the nature of consultation undertaken as part of the SCI process, summarise the main issues raised in the representations and include a response to the main issues raised, offering, where necessary, possible changes to the SCI that would improve the document. The Portfolio Holder for the Economy and Infrastructure agreed these changes on 11 October 2005.

2. Examination

- 2.1 As required by the new planning system, an Inspector was appointed by the Secretary of State to assess the soundness of the SCI. The assessment undertaken by the Inspector covers nine of tests of soundness. These are not an assessment of objections per se, although in undertaking the tests the Inspector analyses all the representations received on the SCI and considers the content of the Pre-Submission Consultation Statement and the Representations Statement. The tests of soundness the Inspector uses are set out in Appendix A to the Inspector's Report. The Inspector then prepares a report on the 'soundness' of the SCI. Under the new planning system the recommendations contained in this report are binding on the Council.
- 2.1. In the case of Northampton's SCI no-one requested the opportunity to appear before and be heard by the Inspector so a written representations examination was held in December 2005 - January 2006. Further possible changes in response to matters raised by the Inspector and the Government Office for the East Midlands in the course of the Examination were agreed by the Portfolio Holder for the Economy and

Infrastructure on 7 January 2006. The Inspector's Report into the soundness of the SCI was received on 12 January 2006 (Appendix 1 of this report). The Inspector found the SCI to be sound subject to amendments in accordance with the recommendations set out in his report. For ease of reference these amendments are set out in Appendix 2 of this report.

3. Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement

- 3.1. The amendments to the SCI required by the Inspector have been made and the final version of the SCI is attached to this report as Appendix 3. Council is requested to adopt this final version of the SCI, as recommended by the Cabinet.
- 3.2. Following this Council meeting the adopted SCI will be placed on the Council's website along with the Adoption Statement and the Inspector's Report. These documents will also be available at the Council's offices and at all libraries in Northampton. Everyone who requested to be notified of the publication of the Inspector's Report and/ or the adoption of the SCI will be notified. Notice will also be given in the Chronicle and Echo newspaper of the adoption and the times and places where the relevant documents can be inspected. The SCI is subject to a 3 months period when it can be challenged on a point of law.
- 3.3. The Borough Council will monitor the success of the community involvement techniques outlined in the SCI and use the results to review methods to be used in the future. After consultation exercises, the Council will seek feedback from participants about the process and the ways in which they could be involved in the future. In addition, an analysis will be undertaken of those who responded to the consultation to see whether there are any patterns or obvious gaps. This may help to pinpoint any groups that were not reached by the methods used.
- 3.4. In the light of the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation's (WNDC) proposed development control powers it will also be necessary to seek the final adoption of the SCI by WNDC and to work with WNDC to monitor the SCI's effectiveness.
- 3.5. This monitoring will inform the need for a formal review of the SCI in the future.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. The undertaking of community involvement will have financial implications. The existing budget for the local plan/ local development framework contains resources to aid the proposed relevant publicity and consultation on local planning documents.

5. Social Impacts

- 5.1. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the Council's policy with regard to community engagement both in the preparation of Local Development Documents (LDDs) and in development control decisions. The Statement seeks to involve 'hard-to-reach' groups and to ensure that equalities issues are taken into account in providing access to information and different methods of consultation.
- 5.2. The measures included in the Statement of Community Involvement will assist the local planning authority to comply with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

6. Consultees (Internal & External)

- 6.1. All SCI consultees are listed in the Pre-Submission Consultation Statement and the Representations Statement. WNDC will be informed of the adoption of the SCI.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1. Creating Local Development Frameworks (ODPM, November 2003)
PPS12: Local Development Frameworks (ODPM, September 2004)
Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (HMSO, September 2004)
Community Involvement in Planning: The Government's Objectives (ODPM, 2004)
Draft Statement of Community Involvement (April 2004)
Pre-Submission Statement of Community Involvement (February 2005)
Submission Statement of Community involvement (June 2005)
Pre-Submission Consultation Statement (November 2005)
Representations Statement (November 2005)
Inspector's Report - Statement of Community Involvement (January 2006)