



## Cabinet Report

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**Report of:** Simon Green, Executive Director, Place

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**Report to:** Cabinet

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**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014

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**Subject:** Statement of Community Involvement

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**Author of Report:** Laurie Platt (20 53075)

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**Key Decision:** YES

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**Reason Key Decision:** Affects 2 or more wards

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**Summary:** Approval for the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI outlines how we consult on planning applications and planning policy.

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**Reasons for Recommendation:**

The SCI is updated to reflect changes in legislation, budgets, best practice and new technology.

Respondents to the SCI consultation expressed a preference for more consultation but did not reflect the level of resource or the standard provided in comparison with other authorities.

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**Recommendation:**

Adopt the new Statement of Community Involvement.

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**Background Papers:** SCI 2014 Consultation Report  
SCI 2014  
Code of Practice  
Equality Impact Assessment SCI 2014

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**Category of Report:** OPEN

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## Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

<b>Financial Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Catherine Rodgers
<b>Legal Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Paul Bellingham
<b>Equality of Opportunity Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Ian Oldershaw
<b>Tackling Health Inequalities Implications</b>
YES
<b>Human Rights Implications</b>
NO
<b>Environmental and Sustainability Implications</b>
YES
<b>Economic Impact</b>
YES
<b>Community Safety Implications</b>
YES
<b>Human Resources Implications</b>
YES
<b>Property Implications</b>
YES
<b>Area(s) Affected</b>
Whole city excluding area within Peak District National Park
<b>Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Lead</b>
Leigh Bramall
<b>Relevant Scrutiny Committee</b>
Economic and Environmental Wellbeing
<b>Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?</b>
NO
<b>Press Release</b>
NO

## **REPORT TO THE CABINET**

### **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

#### **1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Approval for the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI outlines how we consult on planning applications and planning policy.

#### **2.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SHEFFIELD PEOPLE**

- 2.1 Sheffield has a long standing commitment to effective community involvement in new planning policies and planning application decisions. The proposed changes will take account of how people communicate in a digital age.

#### **3.0 OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- 3.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is about the planning process rather than policy or outcomes. The documents do not directly impact on the sustainability of new development but they affect the way planning decisions are taken and the timescales for taking those decisions. The decisions taken on the type and location of new development do, of course, play a crucial role in determining whether the city operates in a sustainable way. The SCI plays a key role in ensuring that local people have a say in planning decisions taken in Sheffield.

#### **4.0 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- 4.1 A local planning authority has to have a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI says how we will involve communities, businesses and organisations in the preparation of local planning policies and on planning application decisions.
- 4.2 The previous SCI was adopted in 2006 and we need to update it to:
- Adhere to the latest legislation and national planning policy;
  - Review our practices due to increasing budget pressures and continue to consult in the most efficient way;
  - Promote the use of electronic communication and social media;
  - Account for the change from Community Assemblies (and previously Area Panels) to Local Area Partnerships.
- 4.3 The key changes to how we consult on planning applications (outlined in background documents SCI 2014 and Code of Practice) are:
- No longer issuing voluntary site notices;
  - Site notices redesigned to make the key content more eye-catching, laminated to improve legibility, prominence and durability, and with 'Quick Response' (QR) codes added to improve effectiveness for mobile phone users with internet access;
  - Wider notification by letter limited to residential properties and reduced from 6 either side of an application site to 4 and those directly opposite.

Notification practice will be restricted to SCI and Code of Practice commitments, which has often not been the case in recent years.

- 4.4 The key changes to how we consult on local planning policies are:
- Fewer public consultation stages (in particular, no informal draft plan);
  - Greater flexibility on how we consult, depending on the purpose of the consultation. A plan for each consultation will be agreed by the Head of Planning who will liaise with the Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development;
  - Less reliance on libraries and schools but greater reliance on electronic communication e.g. our website, emails and Twitter.
- 4.5 We consulted on the SCI between 17<sup>th</sup> March and 17<sup>th</sup> April. Details on how we consulted and the comments received are included in the SCI 2014 Consultation Report which accompanies this Cabinet Report.
- 4.6 Thirty four formal comments were received, many supporting some of the proposed improvements. Just over half of the comments were objections, two of which were against the proposed reduction in neighbour notification letters.
- 4.7 The SCI 2014 and Code of Practice which accompany this Cabinet Report have been amended in response to some of the consultation comments.

## **5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 Options for how we consult on planning applications and new planning policies have been considered in terms of how effective they are in comparison with how much they cost.

## 5.2 Figure 1: Local Plan Review – Public Engagement Stages

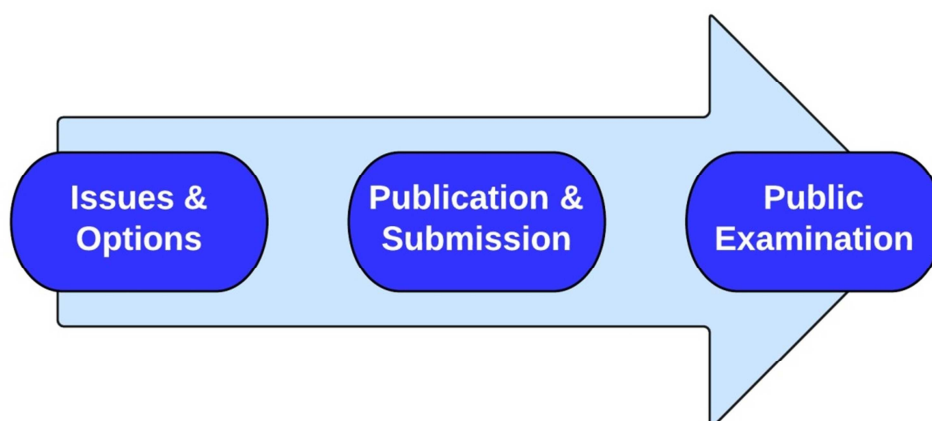


Figure 1 illustrates the public engagement stages of the Local Plan Review. An alternative is an additional consultation on a draft document in between Issues & Options and Publication & Submission. However, this would extend the process by around 6-9 months. The recommended process is supported by recent national Planning Practice Guidance. The SCI 2014 has been changed from the consultation draft to reflect this.

## 6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposed changes to application consultation processes or from the changes to consultation on new local planning policies. All the changes relate to discretionary, additional areas of service.

## 7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The reductions in neighbour notification and stopping of voluntary site notices for planning applications will enable £39,525 savings identified as part of the Planning Service budget savings plan for 2014/15 to be delivered.

7.2 The Head of Planning will liaise with the Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development and will agree a consultation plan for each consultation on new planning policies. This will be done within existing budgets and will require judgement on the effectiveness and costs of different options. The increased flexibility in how we consult on new planning policies will make it easier to adapt to future budget changes. However, the scale of the changes we need to plan for will increase the need and demand for more consultation.

7.3 An additional Local Plan consultation stage would cost an estimated £15,000 plus officer time during 2015/16, with other costs deferred to subsequent years. A multi-year Local Plan budget is currently being assessed.

## 8.0 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment for the SCI was completed and consulted

upon. The engagement outlined in the SCI will have a positive impact on equality of opportunity.

- 8.2 Since the consultation on the SCI we have made changes in the Ensuring Equality section to better reflect our Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's proposed Equality Hub Network.

## **9.0 TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Effective engagement will have a positive impact on planning application decisions and new planning policies that have implications for tackling health inequalities.

## **10.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The planning application and plan making processes conform to national law that takes due account of human rights.

## **11.0 ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Effective engagement will have a positive impact on planning application decisions and new planning policies that have environmental and sustainability implications.
- 11.2 All options, policies and site allocations in the new Local Plan will be appraised for sustainability so that the economic, social and environmental impacts are clearly set out. Wherever possible, the aim will be to find outcomes which are mutually supportive but this will not be possible in all instances. The appraisal will therefore set out how impacts should be mitigated or where compensatory measures will be needed. The Local Plan, when adopted, will make a very significant contribution to sustainable development in the city.

## **12.0 ECONOMIC IMPACT**

- 12.1 Effective and efficient engagement will have a positive impact on planning application decisions and new planning policies that have an economic impact.

## **13.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 Effective engagement will have a positive impact on planning application decisions and new planning policies that have community safety implications.

## **14.0 HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 The reductions in neighbour notification and stopping of voluntary site notices for planning applications will enable savings to be made that might otherwise have to be achieved through additional staff redundancies.

## **15.0 PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.2 The SCI promotes transparency by outlining effective engagement that will be applied consistently across planning applications and policies that relate to private or Council owned land.

## **16.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 16.1 The SCI is updated to reflect changes in legislation, budgets, best practice and new technology.
- 16.2 Respondents to the SCI consultation expressed a preference for more consultation but did not reflect the level of resource or the standard provided in comparison with other authorities.

## **17.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 17.1 Adopt the new Statement of Community Involvement.

Simon Green  
Executive Director, Place

20 August 2014