



# statement of community involvement 2013





## Introduction

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the community and other stakeholders will be consulted on planning policy documents and planning applications. It exceeds the minimum legal requirements for consultation set out in the Planning Acts and regulations.

It has been kept deliberately short to ensure that as many people as possible will read it and understand our approach.

## General Principles of Planning Consultations

We will apply some general principles to our planning consultations. Where consultations are being undertaken by others, we will expect them to apply these too.

- Involvement will be open to all regardless of gender, faith, race, disability, sexuality, age and social deprivation.
- We will continue to co-operate with neighbouring boroughs and public bodies to ensure that strategic matters are appropriately addressed.
- We will seek views of interested and affected parties as early as possible.
- We will choose consultation processes which balance appropriately: cost and time constraints; community impact; and available resources.
- Consultation publications will be clear and concise and avoid unnecessary jargon, without understating the complexities of any decision.



Example of a Workshop



Community Planning Event

- We will inform those who respond to a consultation of later stages in the process.

## Planning Policy Consultation Database

Over time, we have built up an extensive database of organisations and individuals wishing to be involved in our consultations. Any individual or organisation wishing to be included may be added to the database at any time.

## The Local Plan and Development Plan Documents (DPDs)

The collection of DPDs that make up the statutory plan for a Local Planning Authority are referred to as the 'Local Plan'. We prepare DPDs containing policies for development and related issues. They must be supported by evidence, generally accord with national policies and be subject to an on-going process of sustainability appraisal, to ensure that the policies are soundly based on economic, social and environmental grounds.

Consultation is required at various stages in their preparation, including "Proposed Submission" stage, after which they are submitted to the Government. An independent Planning Inspector then carries out an Examination into the document, considering the views of interested people, before suggesting recommendations on the document that can be put before the Council for adoption.

The following approach applies to Development Plan Documents.

## Who we will Consult

- Statutory organisations including councils, infrastructure providers and government bodies whom we consider may have an interest in the subject of the document;

Based on the subject of document we will consult the following groups as we consider appropriate:

- Organisations representing local and national geographical, economic, social and other communities or other relevant interests;
- Local businesses, voluntary and other organisations;
- Those residents whom we consider it appropriate to invite representations;
- Others who have expressed an interest in the issue or matter, including those on our consultation database;
- The wider public.

## When we will consult

- Firstly, we will ask for ideas, views and information from organisations, individuals and communities where appropriate.
- After considering the initial comments and the relevance of previous consultation results, where applicable, we will consult, for a minimum of 6 weeks, on the document(s) which explain issues to be considered and which may include potential options.
- We will consider the need to prepare documents for additional consultation stages setting out further options, information, greater detail or a preferred option or other useful content.
- Once we think there has been an appropriate level of community involvement we will formally publish the "Proposed Submission" document (or equivalent under any revision to the relevant regulations) inviting representations for a period not less than 6 weeks.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. In certain circumstances and following this it may be necessary to engage further with the community on part of, or on the overall document before submission of a revised version to government. This may be owing to specific matters raised in representations or changes to government policy which may have occurred after the initial pre-submission consultation.

## How we will consult

- When appropriate and helpful we may publish a brief consultation statement outlining our intentions before we commence consultation.
- We will contact appropriate organisations and individuals directly by post or electronic means.
- We will include with this initial notification either an internet link to the consultation documents on the SBC website or a CD containing relevant material.
- We will leave consultation documents on display at locations open to the public such as council offices and libraries.
- We may publicise consultations by methods such as leaflets, newsletters, press release, public notice, social media, existing forums, community events, public exhibitions, workshops and joining with other consultations where feasible and appropriate.
- All consultation documents will be published on our website, and this will include all supporting documents.
- We will provide a hard copy of a document as soon as reasonably practicable after it has been requested. Documents will be sold at a price reflecting publication costs.
- Consultees are encouraged to respond to all consultations online via our consultation portal ([www.southend.gov.uk/ldfconsultation](http://www.southend.gov.uk/ldfconsultation)) as this is the quickest and most effective method of responding.
- Response forms will be available electronically. Responses made via letter, email and petition not using this format are also accepted. However, at Proposed Submission stage where comments must relate to legality and the soundness of the plan we will expect all responses to be duly made using our proposed submission template.
- We will make available comments received or a summary as soon as it is feasible after the close of the consultation. We will explain how consultation comments have been taken into account when decisions are taken. This is not necessarily required for the Proposed Submission Publication stage



of DPDs as representations made at this stage will be considered during examination.

- Arrangements will be made, on request to make all documents available in alternative formats, including Braille, should this be required. All documents will be made available in other languages on request.

## Supplementary Planning Documents

We prepare Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) to provide guidance and more detailed advice, and to qualify information contained in a Development Plan Document. Again, they must be supported by appropriate evidence and generally accord with national policies.

We will carry out at least one stage of consultation before we adopt. A planning inspector is not involved as an Examination in Public is not required as part of the process. SPDs may not require Sustainability Appraisals where they are not site specific or relate to a DPD that has undergone a Sustainability Appraisal.

The same general methods of consultation, described for DPDs, as set out above, will be used for Supplementary Planning Documents. However, the criteria for 'When we will consult' will be as follows:

### When we will consult

- First, if appropriate, we will ask for ideas, views and information from appropriate organisations, individuals and communities.
- After looking at any initial comments and assessing the relevance of previous consultation results we may carry out informal consultation before we prepare a formal draft Supplementary Planning Document.
- We will then consult on a draft version of the Supplementary Planning Document for a minimum of 4 weeks.
- After considering the responses to the draft, we will consider the need for further consultation.



Community Planning Event

- Once we consider that there has been an appropriate level of community involvement we will adopt the Supplementary Planning Document.

The Local Development Scheme, published on the Councils website, charts the key stages in Development Plan Document preparation.

For the latest information on the Local Plan, Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, please visit the relevant planning pages on the Councils website [www.southend.gov.uk](http://www.southend.gov.uk)

## Neighbourhood Plans and Development Orders

Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders are taken forward by qualifying bodies and communities themselves. They are not prepared by the Council; therefore, this SCI does not prescribe what methods of community engagement they must follow. It will be for the qualifying bodies and communities to decide an appropriate level of community engagement in relation to the size and complexity of the Plan. Nevertheless the Council will expect this to meet the requirements set out in appropriate legislation and to follow wherever possible the general principles and techniques set out in this SCI.

The Council will have a statutory obligation to be involved in certain stages of Neighbourhood Plan preparation as detailed in the appropriate regulations.

## Planning Applications

We are keen to encourage developers to discuss their proposals with planning officers before submitting an application. This can confirm whether the principle of development is acceptable and clarify the format, type and level of detail required to enable us to determine an application. Pre-application advice is currently provided on request and its procedure and associated cost is available on our planning website.

On receipt of a planning application the Council will display a site notice or advise neighbours by letter or email and take account of any relevant consultation responses. In some cases, particularly major development proposals, there are extra publicity requirements, including advertisement in the local press. Similar requirements apply to applications involving listed buildings, conservation areas, those involving a departure from the development plan and those affecting a public right of way.

To ensure early public involvement on major development proposals or locally sensitive schemes the developer will be encouraged to carry out public consultations before making a planning application.

Before making a major planning application (10+ dwellings or 0.5+ ha of residential development or 1000+ square metres of building space or 1.0+ ha<sup>2</sup> of development land), prospective applicants should:

- Talk to the Council planning officers about their application, and consider these discussions when preparing their proposals;
- Talk directly with relevant statutory consultees to minimise technical objections to their application;
- Consult the local community on overall and specific aspects of the proposal;
- Consider the consultation responses received, and take them into account before making their planning application.

Before making other types of planning application, prospective applicants should also consult both the Council planning officers and people likely to be affected and consider their views before finalising the proposal. The latter may be as simple as talking over plans with a neighbour.

<sup>2</sup>. The subsequent listed consultation methods may not be necessary for some small scale development on large sites.

Where applicable planning applications should be accompanied by a document explaining what consultation has been carried out by the applicant, including technical and public involvement and how it has influenced the planning application proposals.

In addition to the site notice and/or neighbour notifications the Council will publicise a weekly list of planning applications on our website and in other public places as appropriate.

Planning applications are public documents and can be viewed at the Council offices and on the Council's website. Public Access is our internet service that allows you to view and comment on planning applications. [www.southend.gov.uk/public-access](http://www.southend.gov.uk/public-access)

The Council will consider the submitted consultation statement in addition to any comments received on the planning application.

The Council will allow applicants and objectors to make a short statement on planning applications which are considered by the Development Control Committee. A guide to commenting on planning applications and Development Control Committee is available on the Council's website and published leaflets.

The Council will publish the decisions on all planning applications on its website which will, where required, include the reasons for the decision. Please refer to the relevant planning pages on the Council's website: [www.southend.gov.uk](http://www.southend.gov.uk).



Round the table discussion at a Community Event

Planning legislation inevitably is amended and updated. The current relevant Planning Acts and regulation can be found at the official home of UK legislation: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Please contact the Strategic Planning team at Southend-on-Sea Borough Council for further information regarding current legislation.

### Independent Planning Advice

Independent advice on planning is available from the Planning Aid website ([www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)). Planning Aid provides free, independent and professional town planning advice and support to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay planning consultant fees. It complements the work of local planning authorities, but is wholly independent of them. Planning Aid can assist people with their own planning applications or can help them to comment on planning applications or planning policy consultation documents.

If you have a query regarding the information set out in this Statement of Community Involvement or a specific question relating to a specific consultation or other planning policy matter please contact us at:

Corporate Director for Place  
PO Box 5557, Civic Centre,  
Victoria Avenue,  
Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6ZF,  
e-mail: [ldf@southend.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@southend.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 01702 215408 or 01702 215004

