

INSPECTOR'S REPORT

LONDON BOROUGH of HOUNSLOW

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Inspector: Mary Travers BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

Date of Hearing: 19 June 2006

File Reference: LDF000134

London Borough of Hounslow - Statement of Community Involvement (January 2006)

INSPECTOR'S REPORT

Introduction

- 1.1 An independent examination of the London Borough of Hounslow Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been carried out in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Following paragraph 3.10 of Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12): Local Development Frameworks, the examination has been based on the nine tests set out (see Annexe A to this report). The starting point for the assessment is that the SCI is sound. Accordingly changes are made in this binding report only where there is a clear need in the light of the tests in PPS12.
- 1.2 A total of 33 separate individuals or organisations made written representations on the SCI, all of which have been considered. A requested hearing was held on 19 June 2006: the attendance sheet listing those present is attached. At the hearing the Council presented a schedule in response to my request (Annexe B); this contains proposed factual corrections and minor amendments to the SCI. I have taken this and the proposed amendments to the SCI set out in Appendix E of the Council's Regulation 31 Statement into account in the assessment that follows but for convenience, my recommendation on all of these matters is contained in paragraph 10.2 below. Since this report is into the soundness of the SCI I have not referred to matters raised in the written representations or at the hearing unless they result in a recommendation for a change.

Test 1

- 2.1 This test is dealt with in the pre-submission consultation statement. The Council has complied with the requirements of Regulations 25, 26 and 28 in preparing the SCI.¹
- 2.2 This test has been met.

Test 2

- 3.1 Section 2 of the SCI provides a helpful introduction to the new planning system and Section 4 sets out the wider context for planning in the Borough. It explains the role of the Local Strategic Partnership, the interrelationship between the Hounslow Community Plan and the Local Development Framework (LDF) and how the LDF will help to deliver the spatial elements of the Community Plan. The Council's own Executive Business Plan and

¹ The regulations are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004. (Statutory Instruments 2004 No 2204)

other corporate strategies are briefly described and it is made clear that the SCI will be consistent with and will inform related corporate policies. Section 7 describes the Council's general practices of consultation with the community and this demonstrates that the processes for the production of local development documents (LDDs) and for community involvement in planning applications will be linked into the Council's wider consultation activities, including its Hm magazine and the Council's website. The role of the Council's Steering Group is explained in paragraph 15.6-15.7. By such means, the opportunities for joint working and shared consultation activities will be maximised wherever possible.

3.2 This test has been met.

Test 3

4.1 An SCI should identify in general terms which local community groups and other bodies will be involved in the preparation of the LDF and in making decisions about planning applications. Section 8 describes the 'community of communities' that lives or works in Hounslow while Section 9 defines the main target groups or stakeholders who will be involved, including the specific and general consultation bodies; Appendix 2 contains a list of these bodies. Paragraph 7.31 explains how the planning consultation database is maintained and the SCI makes clear that anyone who wishes to become involved and be included in the database can do so.

4.2 Section 9 demonstrates that the Council will consult with bodies only if the subject matter is likely to affect them and that they may consult with bodies other than those listed in the database or in the SCI if this would be appropriate.

4.3 The general methods of consultation are set out in Section 7. Table 1 of Section 9 explains which types of engagement are likely to be used with different groups/stakeholders and in the development of various LDF documents. The methods described clearly exceed the minimum requirements set out in the Regulations.

4.4 This test has been met.

Test 4 and Test 5

5.1 These tests are considered together as they are interrelated.

5.2 Figure 6 of the SCI shows the stages in the production of development plan documents (DPDs) and Figure 7 identifies the key stages for community involvement. Table 2 (pages 20-26) lists the methods that will be used to involve the community throughout the process and the outcome expected at each stage. Paragraphs 5.2 and 10.4 emphasise the role of the community and other stakeholders at the very earliest stage of plan preparation, and Table 2 illustrates how the Council will seek continuous involvement

with the community in the process leading to statutory adoption of DPDs. The reference to the Local Development Scheme in paragraph 10.3 helps the reader to find the timetable for the production of the various documents. The involvement stages and consultation methods for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are set out on page 27 and in Table 3 (pages 28-29). Also, Tables 2 and 3 show how the community and other stakeholders will be involved in the process of sustainability appraisal for DPDs and SPDs.

- 5.3 Reading the SCI as a whole it is clear that a range of community involvement methods will be used that are appropriate and accessible for the needs of various groups and for the type of document and that the advantages and limitations of the methods have been taken into account. The SCI shows that full consideration has been given to the importance of targeting hard-to-reach groups; it outlines a range of consultation methods that may be used to reach as many individuals and groups in the community as possible (see for example paragraph 6.4, Section 8, paragraphs 9.4-9.6, Table 1 and Appendix 3).
- 5.4 These tests have been met.

Test 6

- 6.1 As paragraphs 6.4 and 14.3 acknowledge, the availability of resources constrains the opportunities that can be made available for community involvement. Therefore it is important that the SCI is based on realistic, achievable objectives rather than aspirations. Section 14 gives details of the staff resources for the delivery and management of the SCI and it outlines the financial implications. This makes clear that some costs will be met through existing budgets and that priority is given to the use of the Council's own consultation methods where existing budgets have been allocated for their use. The Residents Panel, the Council's magazine and website and the facilities available in the public libraries are examples of existing resources that can be harnessed in this way. Section 14 also sets out indicative costs of various consultation mechanisms and includes a risk assessment; this highlights awareness of the need to strike the right balance in the extent of consultation that is carried out, monitor its effectiveness, and manage expectations about what the SCI can deliver. Reading the document as a whole, it is clear that reasonable consideration has been given to the link between resources and the type/scale of community involvement proposed. However, it should be made explicit that the Council will seek to link consultation exercises on different LDDs where this would be appropriate.
- 6.2 Recommendation
- (i) Insert a new sentence at the end of paragraph 14.3 as follows: Where appropriate, the Council will seek to link

community involvement initiatives on different Local Development Documents (for example, where a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and a Development Plan Document (DPD) are prepared in parallel because the detail set out in the former is fundamental to the early delivery of policies in the latter).

Test 7

- 7.1 Section 10 of the SCI describes the stages in the production of DPDs and SPDs and explains what each stage will achieve in terms of community involvement and engagement. Tables 2 and 3 explain the outcomes that are expected at each stage and show how the results of community involvement will be fed into the preparation of LDDs. This builds on the General Principles of Consultation set out in Section 6 of the document which strive for continuous engagement and purposeful involvement. There are explicit references to the formal processes for reporting back on the outcome of community involvement. Overall, the SCI makes clear how all those who wish to be involved in shaping the future of the Borough can do so.
- 7.2 This test has been met.

Test 8

- 8.1 Section 15 explains how the SCI will be monitored as part of the monitoring process for the LDF that feeds into the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). It describes the ways in which the Council will evaluate the success of the consultation methods and seek the views of participants in this regard. The circumstances that could lead to a review of the SCI are outlined and there is a stated commitment to consider the need for a review of the SCI one year after its adoption. The contribution that can be made by the Council's Steering Group to the monitoring and review process is explained.
- 8.2 This test has been met.

Test 9

- 9.1 Sections 11-13 of the SCI clearly describe the Council's policies and procedures for consultation on planning applications, including how the results of consultation will be reported and will inform decisions. The various procedures for consultation on applications of different types and significance are explained in Tables 5a-c. Table 4 lists the techniques that will be used to involve the community in different types of application and paragraphs 13.8-13.9 explain when and how it would be appropriate to seek community involvement before an application is made. Reference is made to the potential for supporters/objectors/applicants to be heard at

committee meetings. Overall, the SCI sets out clear policy and procedures which exceed the minimum requirements of the legislation and form a sound basis for community involvement in planning applications.

9.2 This test has been met.

Other Matters

10.1 As referred to above, a number of amendments that the Council proposes in response to the representations or to correct/update the SCI are set out in Appendix E attached to the Council's Regulation 31 Statement and in the schedule submitted at the hearing. I have considered these in terms of the tests of soundness and I recommend that the SCI should be amended as proposed by the Council in these documents. The correction of typographical and factual errors and any factual updating of the SCI that may be required are matters for the Council to address.

10.2 Recommendation

- (i) Amend the SCI in accordance with the details proposed by the Council in Appendix E of the Regulation 31 Statement and as set out in the schedule submitted by the Council at the hearing (attached as Annexe B).

Conclusion

11.1 Subject to the above recommendations the London Borough of Hounslow Statement of Community Involvement (January 2006) is sound.

Mary Travers

Mary Travers
Inspector

ANNEXE A

Examination of the soundness of the statement of community involvement

3.10 The purpose of the examination is to consider the soundness of the statement of community involvement. The presumption will be that the statement of community involvement is sound unless it is shown to be otherwise as a result of evidence considered at the examination. A hearing will only be necessary where one or more of those making representations wish to be heard (see Annex D). In assessing whether the statement of community involvement is sound, the inspector will determine whether the:

- i. local planning authority has complied with the minimum requirements for consultation as set out in Regulations;¹
- ii. local planning authority's strategy for community involvement links with other community involvement initiatives e.g. the community strategy;
- iii. statement identifies in general terms which local community groups and other bodies will be consulted;
- iv. statement identifies how the community and other bodies can be involved in a timely and accessible manner;
- v. methods of consultation to be employed are suitable for the intended audience and for the different stages in the preparation of local development documents;
- vi. resources are available to manage community involvement effectively;
- vii. statement shows how the results of community involvement will be fed into the preparation of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents;
- viii. authority has mechanisms for reviewing the statement of community involvement; and
- ix. statement clearly describes the planning authority's policy for consultation on planning applications.

From: Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks

Annexe B

Proposed Changes to the SCI 19th June 2006

No.	Section	Page No.	Paragraph	Amendments to the SCI
1	Section 13 - LBH Standards for consultation on Planning Applications	Pg 38	13.14	Amend Para 13.14 to read as the following: 'Full planning permission requires development to start usually within 5 years for those applications received before 24 th August 2005. For those applications received 25 th August 2005 a planning permission will require development to start within 3 years.'
2	Section 8 - Who to involve in the Planning Process	Pg 12	8.2	In the absence of a population statistic being available to be included into SCI, the following sentence should be included into the SCI in Para 8.2: 'Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender communities are represented in the Borough.'
3	Section 10 - Standards of consultation on Development Plan Documents	Pg 25	Table 2 'Standards for consultation on DPDs'	Amend second row and fourth column of Stage 3 Examination table it state the following: 'Those who have outstanding representations and/or are requested to appear by the Inspector'. The seventh column of the second row (re outcome) should be amended to read as follows: 'Having taken account of all the evidence, the Inspector makes a binding report which sets out any changes that are required in the DPD'.
4	Section 11 - Development Control Consultation Process Section 13 - LBH Standards for Consultation on Planning Applications	Pg 30 Pg 33 - 39	11.3 Table 5a, 5b and 5c	Amend references to 10 units and 1000sq metres where they occur in the SCI to make clear that they refer to 10 dwelling units and 1000 sq metres of commercial floorspace.

No.	Section	Page No.	Paragraph	Amendments to the SCI
5	Section 12 – Minimum Legal Requirements for Consultation and Publicity	Pg 32	12.2	<p>Insert the following sentence in as a footnote to bullet 1 of paragraph 12.2:</p> <p>‘A ‘departure’ is a planning application for development which does not accord with the development plan in force in the area.’</p>
6	Section 13 – LBH Standards for Consultation on Planning Applications	Pg 39	13.18	<p>Amend the second sentence of paragraph 13.18 to the following:</p> <p>‘The views of the area committee will be taken into account in the delegated decision making process or will be reported to the Sustainable Development Committee if an appropriate scheme can be negotiated.’</p>
7	Section 14 – Resources and Management	Pg 41	14.8	Amend Paragraph 14.8, to refer to ‘tests’, not ‘test’.
8	Glossary	Pg 45	Planning Inspectorate (Pins)	<p>Amend the reference to ‘reporting on planning applications’ to the following:</p> <p>‘reporting on planning applications that fall to be determined by the Secretary of State’</p>