

REPORT TO: Cabinet 1 July 2019

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Lead Cabinet Member for Planning

LEAD OFFICER: Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Executive Summary

1. This report presents the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for adoption following the conclusion of public consultation. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017, state that LPAs in England must review their SCI every five years to ensure it is up to date and reflects current legislation and best practice. The SCI has been prepared to ensure that the LPAs are in accordance with this regulatory requirement.
2. In the context of the Greater Cambridge area, the new SCI sets out how Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Councils as part of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service will consult on planning policy documents and planning applications, ensuring that the two councils are consistent in their approach to engagement with local communities. The SCI will replace the adopted SCI of Cambridge City Council (2013) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (2010).

Key Decision

3. No - This is not a key decision because it responds to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Regulations, setting out the way in which communities and stakeholders will be provided with an opportunity to engage in planning matters. It was first published in the June 2018 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that Cabinet agrees:
 - (a) to adopt the Statement of Community Involvement (2019) for Greater Cambridge, prepared jointly with Cambridge City Council.
 - (b) that the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development is granted delegated authority, in liaison with the Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, to make any editing changes identified prior to publication.

Reasons for Recommendations

5. This report presents the SCI for adoption following the conclusion of the public consultation period. Whilst there is no mandatory requirement for consultation on a draft SCI, Cabinet agreed at the meeting of 9th January 2019, that the draft SCI should be published for six weeks to ensure that the needs and aspirations of

communities and stakeholders are understood and taken into account in finalising the document. The consultation on the draft SCI commenced on Monday 11 February and concluded on Monday 25 March 2019.

6. There were a total of 12 representations received during the consultation period and they have been considered when preparing the SCI attached at Appendix 2. Of the 12 representations received, seven were objections, four were comments/no comments and one was support. These are set out in further detail in the Consultation Statement (attached at Appendix 2).

Details

Background

7. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) introduced the requirement for local authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement, and new regulations came into force on 6 April 2018 which requires that SCIs must be reviewed at least every five years from the date of adoption. The current Cambridge City SCI was adopted in November 2013 and the SCI for South Cambridgeshire District Council was adopted in 2010. Short addenda to both documents were adopted during 2018, setting out the approach of both Councils to providing support to Neighbourhood Forums/Parish Councils that are preparing Neighbourhood Plans or Neighbourhood Development Orders.
8. The SCI sets out how the public will have an opportunity to engage in the planning process in Greater Cambridge. The SCI describes how the public, businesses, interest groups and individuals within the local authority areas can get involved in the creation of local planning policy and the planning application process aiming at shaping where we live, work and trade.
9. The SCI gives an introduction to the overall planning process, and then moves into detail about how stakeholders can get involved in the preparation of plans including Local Plans (which includes Area Action Plans), Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans. A further section identifies the mechanisms by which stakeholders will be provided an opportunity to engage in the planning application process. Finally, an overview of the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan or Order is provided, followed by the broad support available to community groups that are preparing such documents.
10. The SCI is drafted to reflect the requirements of planning regulations and provides examples where the Local Planning Authorities (LPA) may, if resources permit, use methods of engagement that move beyond the regulatory requirements. It is important that the SCI does not commit the LPAs to actions that cannot be resourced in all cases, as this could then call into jeopardy decisions and actions taken. This does not, however, preclude the Council from choosing to use additional mechanisms to increase community engagement as and when it is considered appropriate to do so.
11. Whilst there is no mandatory requirement for consultation on a draft SCI, Cabinet in January 2019 agreed that the draft SCI should be published for six weeks. The

consultation period was carried out in accordance with the requirements for Supplementary Planning Documents (see Table 2 of the SCI attached at Appendix 1).

Considerations

12. Each Local Planning Authority must prepare and maintain a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), and new regulations that came into force on 6 April 2018 require that this must be reviewed at least every five years from the date of adoption. The existing SCI was adopted more than five years ago and has now been reviewed. Adoption of this updated SCI will ensure that the council is fulfilling its legal responsibilities.
13. The SCI sets out the broad parameters that will be put in place to guide community engagement in the overall planning process. It is important that the SCI does not commit the authority to using engagement mechanisms that will give rise to disproportionate costs or delays to any planning process.

Options

14. Members may decide to:
 - Adopt the Statement of Community Involvement without amendments;
 - Adopt the Statement of Community Involvement with amendments; or
 - Not agree to adopt the Statement of Community Involvement.

Implications

15. There are no significant implications. The Equalities Impact Assessment (attached at Appendix 3) further supports this.

Consultation responses

16. There were a total of 12 representations received during the consultation period and they have been considered when preparing the SCI attached at Appendix 2. Of the 12 representations received, seven were objections, four were comments/no comment and one was support. As shown in further detail in the Consultation Statement (attached at Appendix 2), a number of the objections referred to the difficulties of navigating and responding to planning applications using the Cambridge City Council Public Access online platform (Idox). All of the SPD representations are available to be read on the online consultation system at <https://cambridge.jdi-consult.net/localplan/>.
17. A detailed response to these issues has been set out within the Consultation Statement. In summary, a single amendment is proposed to the SCI on the basis of the representations received, which is to include direct links to the webpages for viewing or commenting on planning applications for both Councils (see page 17 of Appendix 1). A small number of editorial corrections have also been made in addition to some further explanation on some of the terminology referred to in the document.

Effect on Council Priority Areas

- **Growing local businesses and economies**

18. The SCI will allow stakeholders and communities to shape the way in which they can engage in planning matters, including, in due course on the Joint Local Plan.
 - **Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in**
19. The SCI will allow stakeholders and communities to shape the way in which they can engage in planning matters, including, in due course on housing needs of existing communities.
 - **Being green to our core**
20. The SCI identifies that there may be further opportunity to make more use of digital communication means within the overall planning process, and this will be kept under review as the shared service continues to take shape. This has the potential to reduce how much waste we generate.
 - **A modern and caring Council**
21. By seeking to make best use of digital communication means, the Council will reduce the costs of achieving effective engagement in planning matters. The use of technology improves access to the Council's planning service so businesses and residents can track the progress of planning policy documents as part of plan making as well as planning applications.

Background Papers

Where the [Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Statement of Community Involvement

Appendix 2 – Consultation Statement (Summary of main issues and SCI changes)

Appendix 3 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Report Author: Terry De Sousa – Senior Planning Policy Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713074 / (01223) 457371