

Report of	Meeting	Date
Deputy Chief Executive	Planning Committee	Thursday, 8 November 2023

Statement of Community Involvement

Is this report confidential?	No
Is this decision key?	Not applicable

Purpose of the Report

- To present members with a draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in relation to consultation procedures to be undertaken by the Council for planning policy and development management functions.

Recommendation to Planning Committee

- That the Committee consider and provide comments on the draft Statement of Community Involvement contained at Appendix 1, in advance of a formal decision being made at the next meeting of Full Council.

Reasons for recommendations

- To bring the SCI to public consultation so that residents, communities, and stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved from an early stage and offer comments to improve the document.

Other options considered and rejected

- Do not take the SCI to consultation – this does not reflect the purpose and aims of the SCI and would not enable community involvement before adoption.

Executive summary

- The SCI sets out how the local planning authority will consult and notify the community, businesses, and other organisations or 'stakeholders' about the development of their area. It also explains how people can get involved with the planning process, for example through the various stages of the Local Plan's production and during the consideration of planning proposals.
- An SCI is required under Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and conforms with the relevant regulations for both plan making and development management.

7. South Ribble Borough Council is responsible for producing different types of planning documents. Each type of document carries a different weight, and each requires a different level and/or nature of engagement with the local community and other stakeholders.
8. For example, in planning policy there are different types of policy documents, primarily Development Plan Documents (DPDs) (e.g., Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) each requiring a different level of engagement with the local community and other stakeholders. The process for producing different types of policy document varies, and consequently, so do consultation arrangements and procedures.
9. The requirements for consultations on planning applications are set out within the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and the consultation carried out depends on the application type that is being considered.

Corporate priorities

10. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Background to the report

11. South Ribble Borough Council published its current SCI in 2013. Since then, there have been significant changes made to planning legislation, regulation, and guidance. The document reflects on the suitability and effectiveness of approaches to community engagement described in the previous version of the SCI. Therefore, it includes new methods of consultation that make effective use of modern technologies and resources.
12. South Ribble Borough Council recognises that it is important to provide the necessary resources and opportunities for communities and other interested parties to comment and engage throughout the planning process. Community involvement facilitates discussions and feedback that can influence decision making.
13. The attached draft SCI conforms with the relevant regulations for both plan making and development management.

The Purpose and Aims of the Statement of Community Involvement

14. The SCI sets out how the local planning authority will consult and notify the community, businesses and other organisations or 'stakeholders' about the development of their area. It also explains how people can get involved with the planning process.
15. This document reflects on the suitability and effectiveness of approaches to community engagement described in the previous version of the SCI, and it makes effective use of modern technologies and resources.
16. South Ribble Borough Council recognises that it is important to provide the necessary resources and opportunities for communities and other interested parties to comment and engage throughout the planning process.

Community Involvement in Planning Policy

17. The Council is now at an advanced stage in preparing a new Local Plan in partnership with Chorley Borough Council and Preston City Council. As part of the plan making process, each Authority will review and where necessary update their SCI as plan-making legislation requires that consultation on the various stages of the Local Plan process is carried out in accordance with the Statements of Community Involvement.

General Consultation Methods

18. South Ribble Borough Council maintains an up-to-date consultation database so that anyone or any organisation who wishes to be informed of the progress of planning policy can be contacted.
19. All current adopted policy and supplementary resources are available online.
20. Contact details are provided for the Planning Policy, Technical Support and Central Lancashire Local Plan Teams for enquires and support in accessing documentation.
21. The SCI confirms that the Council will meet its obligations under the Duty to Cooperate required by Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Specifically, the Duty requires local planning authorities to:
 - Engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with any local planning authority, or other prescribed body, potentially affected by a strategic matter; and
 - To develop strategic planning policies to address such issues and consider joint approaches to plan making.

Development Plan Consultation Methods

22. The SCI breaks down each stage of Local Plan preparation and outlines the purpose of consultation and engagement at each level. The minimum consultation period during both the preparation and publication stages is 6 weeks.
23. Relevant statutory consultees must also be consulted during the Local Plan preparation process.
24. Consultation events are held both in the day and evening, to allow interested parties to attend at their convenience. These are usually held across the five neighbourhood areas in the Borough, although these may be subject to change depending on availability and suitability.
25. During formal consultation periods in Local Plan preparation, hard copies of documents will be available at local libraries and the Civic Centre. Documents and plans will also be taken to consultation events where the planning team will be on hand to answer any queries.
26. Any representations made in response to a consultation on a draft DPD are published on the Council's website. The requirement to publish a Consultation Statement reflects the Government's desire to strengthen both stakeholder and community involvement in the planning process.

Supplementary Planning Documents

27. A Supplementary Planning Document is also subject to a process of consultation and engagement with relevant parties. The Council will carry out at least one consultation

during the preparation of an SPD before it is adopted, for a minimum of four weeks. Any representations made in response to a consultation on a draft SPD are published on the Council's website.

28. Members of the public, local businesses, organisations, and interested parties from the consultation database will be consulted, as well as statutory consultees.
29. Following consultation on a draft SPD, a consultation statement will be published at least 4 weeks before the document is formally adopted by the Council. The consultation statement will list all the responses received as a result of consultation, with the Council's response, and identify any changes that have been made to the document.

Neighbourhood Development Plans

30. Neighbourhood Planning is a way for communities to have a say in the future of places where they live and work. It gives neighbourhoods the power to produce a plan that directs development in their local area.
31. Neighbourhood Plans, once adopted, form part of the development plan, therefore decisions on planning applications must take account of them.
32. The Council has a statutory duty to support local groups in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. However, the responsibility to produce a Neighbourhood Plan lies with the qualifying body, e.g., the relevant Parish Council.
33. Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been drawn up and submitted to the local planning authority, the local planning authority must carry out a statutory consultation on the proposed Neighbourhood Plan before it is examined by an independent and suitably qualified person. This stage will be subject to a six-week consultation.
34. A Neighbourhood Plan is subject to an examination by an Independent Planning Inspector, full details of the Inspector and examination process will be published on the Council's website. A Neighbourhood Plan will also require a referendum, details of which will also be made publicly available.
35. The planning policy team are on hand to support with neighbourhood planning through GIS support, advice and guidance as required and will assist with examination.

Community Involvement in Development Management

36. The requirements for consultation on planning applications are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. The consultation carried out will depend on the application type.

Permitted Development

37. To assist in determining whether a proposed householder development is likely to be permitted development, self-assessment sheets are available on the Council's website.
38. The planning team are available to provide basic advice to members of the public without charge. The planning pages on the Council website also provide links to useful websites that provide planning information and resources. Additional support can also be provided by contacting the Technical Support Team.

Pre- Application Advice

39. South Ribble Borough Council welcomes and encourages applicants and developers to seek pre-application advice from the Council prior to the submission of a formal planning application.
40. For major pre-application enquiries the Council may seek advice from internal and external consultees. During the pre-application discussions officers will also advise developers on whether the proposals would benefit from a process of community involvement before the application is submitted.

Planning Applications

41. Neighbour notification by letter is the principal method of consultation on most planning applications – in such cases, letters are sent to all owners / occupiers of properties that immediately adjoin the boundary of the application site. Some applications must be advertised in a newspaper and site notices may be displayed.
42. Neighbours / interested parties are given 21 days to respond in writing to the notification. Comments may be made on any planning application, by anyone, regardless of whether or not they were consulted individually. All planning applications (with associated documents) received by the Council can be viewed via the public access portal.
43. The views of statutory consultees and the public are important in making decisions on planning and related applications. However, they are just one consideration amongst several in the overall decision-making process and must be weighed alongside local planning policy set out in the development plan and related guidance, national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, and other material planning considerations.

Planning Committee

44. The Council allows public speaking at Planning Committee meetings, subject to a number of criteria, details of which are published on the Council's web site.

Planning Appeals

45. Appeals are examined by an independent Planning Inspector appointed by the government. When an appeal is received, we will notify in writing all those who made written comments upon the original application. Copies of their comments will be forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate and the Council will inform people how to make further representations to the Planning Inspectorate.

Next Steps

46. Approval is now sought to go out to public consultation on the revised Statement of Community Involvement.

Consultation on the Draft Statement of Community Involvement

47. Consultation on the draft SCI will be held for four weeks.
48. The consultation will follow those methods described in the draft SCI. Those on the consultation database will be contacted, notifying them of the consultation and inviting them to comment. Ward and Parish Councillors will be notified to enable them to inform their residents of the consultation.

49. Letters and emails will be sent to interested parties and the consultation will be advertised online inviting interested parties to view the draft SCI and submit comments.
50. Responses will be collated on the online platform Citizen Space (with alternative provisions) and comments will be analysed after the consultation ends. These comments will be reviewed, and amendments will be made where appropriate.
51. Below is a proposed timetable to progress the draft SCI to adoption.

Time Period/Date	Key Milestone
January/ Early February	Consultation on the draft SCI is held
February/March	Analysis of responses and amendments
27 March 2023	Brought back to Council to recommend approval for adoption of the new SCI

Financial and Legal Implications

52. One of the reasons for updating South Ribble Borough Council's SCI is to ensure that it complies with the most up to date planning regulations and national policy.
53. There are no new consultation methods proposed that do not already exist at the current time, therefore the financial implications remain the same as existing.

Equality and diversity

54. The primary purpose of the SCI is to provide the necessary resources and opportunities for communities and other interested parties to engage throughout the planning process. Consultation methods seek to ensure that opportunities are maximised to enable participation from a wide range of stakeholders.
55. An impact assessment has not been completed as the purpose of the SCI is to demonstrate equality and diversity in the planning process.

Risk

56. The risk of delaying or disapproval of a consultation period will delay the adoption of the revised SCI at a key stage of emerging Local Plan, whilst the current version is no longer compliant with current national planning requirements.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

57. There are no direct financial implications of this report as this report is to seek approval for public consultation.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

58. There are no concerns from a Monitoring Officer perspective with this report. What is proposed is designed to comply with our duties under the relevant legislation. Our existing SCI was agreed back in 2013 – hence there is clearly a need to update our current procedures to encompass all current consultation processes open to a council.

Background documents

N/A

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Statement of Community Involvement 2023

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This decision will come into force and may be implemented five working days after its publication date, subject to being called in in accordance with the Council's Constitution.