

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Meeting of the Executive
17th January 2005

Report from the Director of Environment

For action

Wards affected:
All

Report Title: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Forward Plan Ref: ES-03/04-172

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of a draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for formal public consultation. The SCI is one of the documents the Council must produce under the new planning system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It sets out the Council's proposals for involving the community not only in the preparation of the new development plan but also in the assessment of planning applications.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Executive agrees the draft Statement of Community Involvement, attached as Appendix 1, for public consultation.

Executive
(13/12/04)

Version (No2)
(Date 16/12/04)

3.0 Detail

Introduction

- 3.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has required major changes to the development plan system. It means that the old system of Unitary Development Plans has to be replaced by a new system of Local Development Frameworks. The Executive meeting of December 13th 2004 agreed a draft Local Development Scheme (LDS), which set out which new development plan documents would be produced, together with a timetable for the process of preparing these through to adoption. One of the documents that the Council must produce, and has been timetabled in the draft LDS, is the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

Statement of Community Involvement

- 3.2 The Government, in Planning Policy Statement 12, has issued guidance on the preparation of SCIs. The Council is required to produce an SCI that will set out how it intends to achieve continuous community involvement **both in the preparation of local development documents and in the assessment of planning applications** in Brent. It will be subject to independent examination as if it were a development plan document. In preparing the statement of community involvement the Council will ensure that the community are actively consulted and involved, as required in the preparation of all local development documents. When the statement of community involvement is submitted for independent examination people who have an interest in the planning of the area will be able to make representations, which will be considered at the examination.
- 3.3 SCIs, in reflecting the Government's principles for community involvement, have a number of key principles;
- community involvement appropriate to the level of planning. Arrangements need to be based on a clear understanding of the needs of the community and be fit for purpose;
 - front loading involvement. There should be opportunities for community involvement and a sense of ownership of local policy decisions;
 - using methods of involvement which are relevant to the communities concerned;
 - clearly articulated opportunities for continuing involvement as a part of a continuous programme, not a one-off event;
 - transparency and accessibility; and
 - planning for involvement. Community involvement should be planned into the process for the preparation and revision of local development documents.

- 3.4 The aim of the SCI should be to ensure that all sections of the public, including local groups and organisations, are actively involved throughout the process of preparing any local development document. It is not expected that the statement of community involvement will name specific local groups / organisations where these may change over time. Guidance also states that it should be 'fit for purpose' by recognising the limits of resources available
- 3.5 In preparing the SCI there are a number of statutory stages that have to be followed. This is shown in the chart below which is reproduced from Government guidance.



- 3.6 The first stage of the statutory process is consultation with communities and stakeholders as part of the preparation of the draft, i.e. 'scoping' in the diagram above. This preliminary consultation has been undertaken and took the form of a mailout to approximately 800 local groups and other organisations of a leaflet and questionnaire which consultees were asked to return using freepost. Although less than 40 forms have been returned, there is a clear preference for communication by mail drops but with significant requests for information by e-mail as well. When asked for preferences about participation methods the strongest support was shown for 'one-to-one' meetings but there was also support for Planning for Real workshops and public meetings. .
- 3.7 The draft SCI has now been prepared and, if agreed, will be made available for public consultation for a statutory period of 6 weeks commencing on 24th January 2005. Amendments will be made in light of comments received and then approval will be sought for submission of the document to the Government Office in April 2005. If an examination of the SCI is necessary it is anticipated that this will take place in the Autumn. It should be finally approved and adopted in early 2006.

Content of Brent's Statement of Community Involvement

Executive (13/12/04)	Version (No2) (Date 16/12/04)
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- 3.8 Brent's SCI identifies the following;
- Brent's interested parties i.e. bodies representing different racial, ethnic or national interests in the area;
 - Community involvement vehicles appropriate to Brent;
 - Brent's DPD minimum consultation arrangements;
 - Brent's SPD minimum consultation arrangements;
 - Opportunities for involvement in the consideration of all planning applications in Brent; and
 - Significant Applications in Brent – Community involvement standards.
- 3.9 Before the Statement of Community Involvement is published and made available to the public it will be laid out in a way that is more accessible and attractive and will include a multi-lingual page offering translations in the main minority languages in the Borough.

4.0 *Financial Implications*

- 4.1 Estimates of the cost of processing the LDF to adoption were presented to Executive on 13th December 2004. The costs of undertaking consultation on the new LDF were included in these estimates. These costs are likely to be higher than under the former UDP preparation process because of the emphasis in the new system on a high level of community involvement. The costs associated with the requirement for greater engagement of the local community could be offset to some extent by combining consultation on the LDF with that for the Community Strategy. It is difficult to provide an estimate of the likely savings of joint consultation at this stage but if, for example, there were to be a Community Conference that covered both the LDF and the Community Strategy this could save £10,000 -15,000.
- 4.2 The estimate of annual costs reported to Executive in December is repeated in the table below.

Executive (13/12/04)	Version (No2) (Date 16/12/04)
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	£			
	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8
Possible additional costs				
Additional Staffing Costs	98,000	98,000	98,000	98,000
Public Inquiry costs				130,000
Other Costs	115,000	50,000	25,000	75,000
Minus existing UDP budget	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000
Total additional Costs	178,000	113,000	88,000	268,000
Sources of funding				
Planning Delivery Grant	178,000	113,000	88,000	68,000
Potential growth required				200,000

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has changed the statutory basis for drawing up development plans in England and Wales. The Unitary Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance will be replaced by a Local Development Framework. One of the documents that the Council is required to produce is the Statement of Community Involvement. This has to follow the statutory process outlined in the diagram above.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out Council policy for involving their community in preparing the LDF and in assessing planning applications. The draft proposes an inclusive approach to ensure that different groups have the opportunity to participate and are not disadvantaged in the process. Views have been sought from the community as to how they wish to be involved in the process.

7.0 Staffing Implications

- 7.1 An estimate of a need for additional staff to undertake LDF work was provided in the report to Executive on 13th December 2004. This estimate remains the same. The emphasis on community involvement

in the new system means that greater staff resources will have to be made available for consultation.

8.0 *Environmental Implications*

- 8.1 A more inclusive approach for the local community in the preparation of the development plan will help ensure that a wide range of views are taken into account in drawing up planning policies for the maintenance, protection and improvement of the environment.

Background Papers

Details of Documents:

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004
Brent UDP Revised Deposit Replacement Plan, April 2001.
Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks
Creating Local Development Frameworks - A Companion Guide to PPS12
Town & Country Planning Regulations (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

Contact Officers

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Ken Hullock, The Planning Service, Brent House, 349 High Road, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 6BZ, Tel: 020 8937 5309

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