

Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Statement of Community Involvement 2014 Consultation Document

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Statement of Community Involvement 2014 for public consultation purposes.

Recommendation

- 1) That it be recommended to Cabinet to approve the Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Statement of Community Involvement 2014 for public consultation purposes.**

Reasons

To enable the views of the Planning Committee to be taken into account by Cabinet. To ensure the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Local Plan proceeds in accordance with the agreed timetable and to maintain an efficient and effective planning service which supports meaningful community engagement in planning policy and development management.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council is required by Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 to have an adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). There is also a responsibility to monitor and review the SCI to make sure it is up to date and appropriate.
- 1.2 The Joint Local Plan timetable agreed by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Stoke on Trent City Council earlier this year included provision to prepare and consult on a Joint Statement of Community Involvement as an important first step towards the preparation of the Joint Local Plan. The Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Statement of Community Involvement 2014 (Draft SCI) appended to this report has been agreed by Officers from both councils and now requires sign off by both councils prior to going out to public consultation.
- 1.3 Members will be aware that a Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Advisory Group (JAG) has been established to facilitate the development of the Joint Local Plan. The inaugural meeting of the JAG, on the 18 September 2014, received a report on the Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Statement of Community Involvement 2014. The JAG endorsed the contents of the Draft SCI for public consultation purposes and resolved to recommend its approval through each council's respective decision making bodies.
- 1.4 Cabinet will consider a report on the draft SCI at its meeting on the 15th October and Stoke-on-Trent City Council will consider a report on the draft SCI at their Cabinet meeting on 30 October 2014.

2.0 National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 155) requires Local Planning Authorities to undertake *Early and Meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses* in the production of a Local Plan. The Statement of Community Involvement is therefore important not only to help a wide section of the community to express their views on draft proposals but also to ensure Local Plans *reflect a collected vision and set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area*. The involvement of all sections of the community in the development of Local Plans and in planning decisions is also seen as way of supporting the creation of *healthy, inclusive communities* (paragraph 69).

2.2 In respect of development management the National Planning Policy Framework is not so specific. At paragraph 189 it states that *Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties.*

3.0 Key Issues

- 3.1 The current SCI for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council was adopted in 2006. There have been significant changes in development management and planning policy procedures since the adoption of the SCI. The changes have in part been made to improve community involvement practises in order to deliver both an efficient and effective service but also reflect changes to the planning system, including the introduction of the Local Planning Regulations 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012. The Draft SCI formalises these changes and provides the community with a clear understanding of how they can expect to be involved in planning matters. In this way it also helps to manage public expectation. Without an up to date SCI the council risks criticism and complaints from members of the public.
- 3.2 The consultation proposals set out in the Draft SCI attempt to strike a balance between giving confidence to the community that its voice will be heard and delivering a service that is cost efficient. Similarly the level of consultation proposed seeks to support delivery of the Local Plan in a timely manner and to ensure that the local community does not become overloaded with consultation exercises.
- 3.3 The Draft SCI commits both the Borough and City Councils to meeting a list of requirements when consulting with the local community in the process of determining planning applications. However, there are differences in the way the development management service is managed by the two local authorities and it has been necessary to reflect these differences. It is considered that this is necessary to avoid compromising specific local needs of both local planning authorities.
- 3.4 Similarly the proposal to take a common approach to planning policy consultation may attract objections on the grounds that it does not support distinctive communities. However this is necessary to support the legal compliance of the Joint local Plan when it is independently examined by the Planning Inspectorate. Critically the Local Plan would run into difficulty if it was considered that the public consultation that had taken place was inconsistent with the SCI.
- 3.6 The Borough Council's current SCI, adopted in 2006, had the same status as a Development Plan Document in the same way as a Local Plan, and was therefore subject to independent Examination. An amendment to the Regulations in 2008 no longer identifies the Statement of Community Involvement as a Development Plan Document and is no longer required to undergo an independent Examination. It is the responsibility of the Borough to consider and agree to adopt a new Statement of Community Involvement as its policy for community involvement in planning matters. The SCI is not therefore part of the Development Plan Policy Framework but is a supporting document.

4.0 Proposal

- 4.1 The Draft SCI provides a structured approach to engaging with local people and organisations across the two local authority areas on a variety of planning matters. It attempts to describe the main functions of the planning system in a user friendly manner to help local people and organisations understand the processes involved in preparing planning policy documents and determining planning applications. It seeks to ensure no groups and individuals, including hard to reach groups, are excluded.
- 4.2 The Draft SCI is split into three sections. Part One is an introduction to the planning system and explains the background to the Statement of Community Involvement, as well as, stating the benefits of getting involved at an early stage. Part Two focuses on the process of plan making including setting out the key stages in preparing Development Pan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 4.3 The Draft SCI shows who the key stakeholders are and explains when and how people are consulted during the preparation of these documents. This section also shows the councils' commitment towards satisfying the Duty to Co-operate legal requirement. This is designed to

provide the community with information to improve its understanding of the planning policy process rather than being a necessary part of producing a SCI.

- 4.4 Part Three focuses on the process of decision taking in the development management process and describes the types of planning applications the council deals with and explains who, when and how people are consulted on development proposals. The numerous types of planning applications are described in appendix 2 to the Draft SCI. The proposals with respect to the Borough do include some significant changes from current practice, with respect to the acknowledgement of representations and the notification of decisions.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 The views of the Planning Committee on Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Statement of Community Involvement 2014 will be reported to Cabinet. It is expected that Cabinet will take these views into account before it makes a final decision to publish the Draft SCI for public consultation purposes.
- 5.2 In accordance with the agreed Local Plan timetable public consultation on the Draft SCI is scheduled to take place over a six week period from early November to mid December. All comments received will be reviewed and necessary amendments made, before each council takes the steps to independently 'adopt' the Joint SCI.
- 5.3 Prior to going out to consultation the Draft SCI will be formatted and styled to ensure the document is user friendly and this includes adding a glossary. It should also be noted that the Draft SCI is also the subject of further internal comment and may be subject to minor alterations prior to going through the final sign off process.
- 5.4 The consultation on the Draft SCI will be carried out in accordance with the proposals set out in Table 5, Statement of Community Involvement Consultation.

6.0 Background Papers

- 18 Sept Newcastle-under Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Advisory Group Joint Report Agenda

7.0 Appendix

- Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Statement of Community Involvement 2014