

Bracknell Forest Borough Council - Statement of Community Involvement (October 2005)

INSPECTOR'S REPORT

Introduction

- 1.1 An independent examination of Bracknell Forest Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been carried out in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. Following paragraph 3.10 of Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks the examination has been based on the 9 tests set out, (see Annexe A). 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 31 representations were received (including 3 late submissions) all of which have been considered. In the "Report of responses to representations received" the Council have indicated those representations, or parts thereof, where they would raise no objection if I were to accept them. To be helpful, in such instances, the Council have suggested wording that I might consider using in recommending amendments to the SCI. This document has been taken into account and where appropriate I have accepted the wording suggested by the Council and incorporated this into the report's recommendations. Further clarification on several matters was also sought from the Council. Their response is attached to this report as Annexe B. This has similarly been taken into account and again the suggested wording incorporated into the report's recommendations where appropriate.

Test 1

- 2.1 Suitable detailed information has been provided in the submission documentation of October 2005 and December 2005.
- 2.2 This test is met.

Test 2

- 3.1 Section 3 of the SCI, which incorporates Figure 1, indicates how the Council's strategy for community involvement links with other community involvement initiatives.
- 3.2 This test is met.

Test 3

- 4.1 Section 5 of the SCI explains who will be consulted. Appendix 1 lists the Specific Consultation Bodies whilst Appendix 2 covers the subject of General Consultation Bodies and Other Consultees.

Appendix 3 goes on to provide details of the “types” of General Consultation Bodies that will be consulted. In accordance with Government guidance the SCI does not identify by name everyone who will be consulted as this would quickly become out of date. Instead, the Council maintain a free-standing register of consultees. However, I consider some minor changes to the SCI are necessary, as outlined below.

4.2 I consider a statement clarifying that the Government Office will be consulted should be added to the end of Appendix 1. I also consider it should be made clear in the SCI how an individual or organisation can be added to the free-standing register of consultees. I consider this should be clarified in both paragraph 5.5 and Appendix 3. As they are a separate entity to gypsies and travellers, I consider a reference to “travelling showpeople” should be added to Appendix 3.

4.3 Subject to the following recommendations, this test is met.

Recommendations:

Add to the end of paragraph 5.5:

“If an individual or organisation wishes to be added or removed from the register of consultees, they should contact the Development Plan Team on 01344 352000, or via email at: development.plan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.”

Amend Appendix 1 by adding the following after the final bullet point:

“The Government Office for the Region (GOSE) will also be consulted.”

In Appendix 3, first paragraph, amend the second sentence to read:

“If you wish to be added or removed from the register of consultees, or if you require information on any record held with your details, please contact the Development Plan Team on 01344 352000, or via email at: development.plan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.”

In Appendix 3, amend row 7, column 2, by inserting “, travelling showpeople” after “gypsies and travellers”.

Test 4

5.1 Section 6, which incorporates Figures 2, 3 and 4, identifies at what stages the community can be involved in the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement, Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). This includes the important early stages.

- 5.2 However, I consider the absence of a title “Development Plan Documents” above paragraph 6.2 should be corrected. I also consider that additional text should be inserted after paragraphs 6.2 and 6.3 to explain the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) elements of the new planning system as they relate to DPDs and SPDs respectively.
- 5.3 Whilst pages 2 and 56 make it clear that the SCI can be made available in other formats/languages, I consider there should be a commitment in the SCI to endeavouring to produce all future documentation in plain English and making it available in other formats/languages upon request. Such text would logically follow paragraph 7.4.
- 5.4 The manner in which the large “pyramid” arrows in Figures 2, 3 and 4 point in one direction but the text box arrows point in the other direction, may be confusing for non-experts. Therefore, I consider Figures 2, 3 and 4 should be amended accordingly. The required consultation (Regulation 32) on site allocation representations should be included in Figure 3.
- 5.5 Subject to the following recommendations, this test is met.

Recommendations:

Insert the title “Development Plan Documents” above paragraph 6.2.

Add the following new paragraph after the existing paragraph 6.2:

“The use of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to inform the production of Development Plan Documents is both a legal requirement and a test of soundness of the document. Although the SA/SEA process is distinct, it must be integral to the plan-making process; therefore there is a very close relationship between the key stages of each process. Four main SA/SEA consultation stages are required for each DPD and the stages where you can comment are noted in Figure 3.”

Add the following new paragraph after the existing paragraph 6.3:

“The use of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to inform the production of Supplementary Planning Documents is both a legal requirement and a test of soundness of the document. Although the SA/SEA process is distinct, it must be integral to the plan-making process; therefore there is a very close relationship between the key stages of each process. Two main SA/SEA consultation stages are required for each SPD (with the potential for an optional third stage) and the stages where you can comment are noted in Figure 4.”

Amend the direction of the text box arrows in Figures 2, 3 and 4 to point upwards rather than downwards.

Insert a new paragraph after 7.4 which states:

"Many of the planning documents prepared by the Borough Council are, by their nature, technical and contain terms and phrases required by legislation or used commonly within the planning system. In order to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by not understanding the terms used in its planning documents, the Borough Council will endeavour to produce them in plain English and, where technical terms are necessary, provide appropriate explanations. Furthermore, to exclude no one from commenting on the planning process on grounds of disability or nationality, the Borough Council will make summaries of its planning documents available in large print, Braille or on audio cassette upon request, and copies in other languages may also be obtained."

Add a Stage 6 to Figure 3 to deal with publication of and consultation on site allocation representations.

Test 5

- 6.1 Section 7 of the SCI explains about the methods of consultation and makes it clear that the methods chosen will depend on the particular subject matter of the document and the preparation stage that has been reached. Tables 1, 2 and 3 set out the "Stages of and methods for engagement" for DPDs, the SCI and SPDs. These tables are supplemented by Appendix 4 which contains a "Suggested Toolkit of People, Places, Methods and Techniques for Community Involvement".
- 6.2 However, the reference to "Table 4" rather than "Table 1" at paragraph 7.8 should be corrected. As travelling showpeople are a separate entity to gypsies and travellers, I also consider a reference to them should be added to Tables 1 and 2.
- 6.3 In order to comply with Regulation 35(2)(b), Table 1 (page 25) and Table 2 (page 28) should be corrected to indicate that publishing the Inspector's Report on the Council's website is "What the Council must do". I also consider the row relating to the Bracknell Forest Senior Citizens' Forum should be deleted from Appendix 4 because they are covered by other general headings in that Appendix.
- 6.4 Subject to the following recommendations, this test is met.

Recommendations:

In paragraph 7.8 replace "Table 4" with "Table 1".

Amend Table 1, row 3, column 3, bullet point 9 by adding “, travelling showpeople” after “gypsies and travellers”.

Amend Table 1, row 8, column 2, bullet point 2, to read:

“Publish the Inspector’s Report and the adoption statement on BF Online”.

Amend Table 1, row 8, column 3, bullet point 1, by deleting “and the Inspector’s Report”.

Amend Table 2, row 2, column 3, bullet point 6, by adding “, travelling showpeople” after “gypsies and travellers”.

Amend Table 2, row 5, column 2, bullet point 2, to read:

“Publish the Inspector’s Report and the adoption statement on BF Online”.

Amend Table 2, row 5, column 3, bullet point 1, by deleting “and the Inspector’s Report”.

In Appendix 4 delete the row relating to the Bracknell Forest Senior Citizens’ Forum.

Test 6

7.1 Section 9 of the SCI covers the issue of resources. I am satisfied that the Council is alert to the resource implications of the SCI.

7.2 This test is met.

Test 7

8.1 Paragraphs 8.1 – 8.8 explain how the results of community involvement will be fed into the preparation of DPDs and SPDs.

8.2 This test is met.

Test 8

9.1 Mechanisms for reviewing the SCI are explained in paragraphs 8.11 and 8.12.

9.2 This test is met.

Test 9

10.1 The Council’s policy for consultation on planning applications is not provided in one place but woven throughout the SCI. Figure 5 indicates how the results of consultations on planning applications

will be reported whilst Table 4 sets out the “Stages of and methods for engagement” in respect of planning applications.

- 10.2 Whilst I acknowledge there is little difference in their meanings, I consider the word “Request” should be replaced by “Encourage” in Table 4, (row 1, column 3, bullet point 2). This ensures consistency with the remainder of the text in that row.
- 10.3 The reference to “SPG” rather than “SPD” in Table 4 (row 1, column 3, bullet point 4) should be corrected. In the last row of Table 4, column 1, I consider it would be appropriate to give an example of development requiring prior notification by the developer.
- 10.4 Below I set out a number of other conclusions and recommendations that seek to further improve the clarity and accuracy of the document, largely in respect of Appendix 7.
- 10.5 I consider pages 1, 2 and 56 should be amended in order to delete text that will be historic and irrelevant in the final version of the SCI. Replacement text should be inserted in these pages and the front cover amended, in order to explain what the document is about and why people should be interested in it.
- 10.6 I consider the first part of Appendix 7 should be amended to explain what is meant by “UAs” and “JSPU”, as referred to later in that Appendix. It would also be helpful if these two terms were explained in the Glossary of Terms (Appendix 6).
- 10.7 The sub-heading for the Table in Appendix 7 (page 49) inappropriately suggests that it only relates to the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy DPD. This heading should be corrected.
- 10.8 In order to comply with Regulation 35(2)(b), the Table in Appendix 7 (page 53) should be corrected to indicate that publishing the Inspector’s Report on the Councils’ website is what must be done.
- 10.9 The final row of the Table in Appendix 7 (page 53) relates to Supplementary Planning Documents. As the Joint Minerals and Waste Local Development Scheme does not include the preparation of any SPDs, this element of the Table should be deleted.
- 10.10 In order to accord with the Regulations, I consider “Adjoining Regional Development Agencies” should be added to the list of Specific Consultees in Appendix 7 (page 54). I also consider there should be a statement clarifying that the Government Office will be consulted. I consider “travelling showpeople” should be added to the “Type of Group Examples” (page 55) because they are a separate entity to gypsies and travellers.
- 10.11 To avoid any possible confusion with Appendices 1-3 of the SCI itself, in Appendix 7, I consider the headings of the Appendices

should be amended to make it clear that they relate to the "Joint Minerals and Waste" Local Development Framework.

10.12 I consider text should be added to Appendix 7 to explain how an individual or organisation can be added to the free-standing register of consultees. I also consider there should be a commitment to producing documents that can be easily understood and providing them in alternative formats/languages upon request.

10.13 It is apparent that the recommendations contained in this report will give rise to a need for further consequential amendments, in order to correct the page and paragraph numbering for example. I am content for such matters, plus any minor spelling, grammatical or factual errors to be amended by the Council, so long as the underlying meaning of the SCI is not altered.

10.14 Subject to the following recommendations, this test is met.

Recommendations:

On the front cover of the SCI add the sub-title:

"How to comment on local Planning issues".

Replace the text found on pages 1 and 2 with the following:

**"BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
FRAMEWORK**

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

FOREWORD

Why prepare the Statement of Community Involvement?

Planning helps define the places where people, live, work, learn and play. Bracknell Forest Borough Council is responsible for developing planning policies and making planning decisions. In undertaking the local planning process, the Council seeks the views of the public. As planning affects all of us, the Council wants everyone to have the chance to become involved in the planning process which shapes the environment around us.

To achieve this, this Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared. It identifies the preferred ways in which the Borough Council will seek to increase people's involvement in the planning process. Its aim is:

"To give all people the opportunity to be engaged in the local planning process which shapes the environment of Bracknell Forest Borough".

This aim accords with the overarching vision in the Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Plan "Living Together Working Together" prepared by agencies which deliver public services, representatives of businesses and people who represent voluntary organisations and the community along with the Borough Council. This vision states that:

"In 2015, the community of Bracknell Forest will be self-confident, socially cohesive, economically buoyant and renowned for its "can do" attitude. Living and working in Bracknell Forest will mean having an excellent quality of life. Local people will be safe and healthy. They will have a home that meets their needs and be able to travel easily around the borough, particularly by public transport. The distinctive, quality environment of Bracknell Forest will be enhanced and the community and learning will be valued throughout people's lives".

Not only does the Statement of Community Involvement allow the community to have an input into enhancing the distinctive, quality environment of Bracknell Forest Borough by commenting on the local planning process, but it also promotes social cohesion by ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to comment. Enabling this ability to comment on the local planning process through the Statement of Community Involvement also supports the goal in "All of Us", the Borough Council's Community Cohesion Strategy, of:

"Promoting community cohesion through participative, community and public involvement in shaping action".

Who should read the Statement of Community Involvement?

The Statement of Community Involvement will be useful to any person who:

- is interested, or involved in, or who may be affected by planning issues and decisions within Bracknell Forest Borough; and
- wishes to find out about, and become more involved in, planning issues and decisions within Bracknell Forest Borough.

The local planning process consists of the Local Development Framework and Development Control.

The Local Development Framework is a new process and comprises a set of documents which together detail the Borough Council's planning policies for the control of, and proposals for, development. The Borough Council has recently begun preparation of its Local Development Framework and the Statement of Community Involvement governs how the Borough Council will engage with people when publicising its emerging policies and proposals and seeking comments on them.

Development Control relates to the consideration of planning applications. The community could be engaged prior to submission, at submission and during the consideration of a planning application. The Statement of Community Involvement details the ways in which planning applications will be advertised (for example, site notices) and how comments might be made (for example, electronic submission via the Borough Council's website).

How should people respond?

The Borough Council often prepares comment forms, in both paper and electronic format, when representations are sought on the documents it produces. In such instances, it is preferable if use is made of these forms. However, comments will always be accepted in other formats (for example, letter or e-mail) and can be delivered in any manner (for example, electronically, posted, in person or by facsimile).

In summary, the Statement of Community Involvement sets out **who** will be consulted, **when** and **how** they can get involved, and the resources for carrying out consultation. It can be **viewed** at main Borough Council offices, libraries, Town and Parish Council offices, and on-line at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk.

Alternative Formats

A summary of the Statement of Community Involvement can be made available in large print, in Braille or on audio cassette upon request, and copies in other languages may also be obtained, from:

The Development Plan Team

Planning and Transport Policy Section
Environment and Leisure Department
Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Time Square, Market Street
Bracknell, Berkshire
RG12 8XP
Telephone: 01344 352000
E-mail: development.plan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Amend Table 4, row 1, column 3, bullet point 2 by deleting the word "Request" and replacing it with "Encourage".

Amend Table 4, row 1, column 3, bullet point 4 by deleting "SPG" and replacing it with "SPD".

Amend Table 4, last row, column 1 to read:

"Development requiring prior notification by the developer, e.g. demolition of a dwelling house".

Add to the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 6:

“Unitary Authority/Unitary Authorities (UA/UAs): Administrative unit of Great Britain. Since 1996 the two-tier structure of local government has ceased to exist in Scotland and Wales, and in some parts of England, and has been replaced by unitary authorities, responsible for all local government services. The six Unitary Authorities within the former Royal County of Berkshire which have responsibility for planning matters are: Bracknell Forest Borough Council; Reading Borough Council; Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead; Slough Borough Council; West Berkshire District Council, and Wokingham District Council”

Add to the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 6:

“Joint Strategic Planning Unit (JSPU): the planning service jointly funded by the six Unitary Authorities within the former Royal County of Berkshire which administers planning matters that have a County, rather than local, impact; such as the structure plan, waste and minerals and provides a range of information services”

Replace the first two paragraphs in Appendix 7 with the following:

“The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has changed the planning system in this country, and the old style Minerals and Waste Local Plan for Berkshire will be replaced with a Joint Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework to be prepared by the Joint Strategic Planning Unit (JSPU) on behalf of the six Unitary Authorities (UAs) lying within the former County of Berkshire. It will be made up of four documents.”

In the Table in Appendix 7 (page 49) replace the sub-heading “Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Development Plan Document” with “Joint Minerals and Waste Development Plan Documents”.

Amend the Table in Appendix 7, page 53, column 1, bullet point 2, to read:

“Publish the Inspector’s Report and the adoption statement on UAs and JSPU websites”.

Amend the Table in Appendix 7, page 53, column 2, bullet point 1 to read:

“Publish the adopted DPD on UAs and JSPU websites”.

In the Table in Appendix 7, (page 53) deletion the section with the title “Adoption and Final Sustainability Appraisal – Stage 4 (Regulation 19)”.

In Appendix 7, change the heading of Appendix 1 to:

“Appendix 1: Specific Consultation Bodies for the Joint Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework”

In Appendix 7, add to the list of Specific Consultees in Appendix 1:

“Adjoining Regional Development Agencies”.

In Appendix 7, amend Appendix 1 by adding the following after the final bullet point:

“The Government Office for the Region (GOSE) should also be consulted.”

In Appendix 7, change the heading of Appendix 2 to:

“Appendix 2: General Consultation Bodies for the Joint Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework”

In Appendix 7, change the heading of Appendix 3 to:

“Appendix 3: Types of General Consultation Bodies to be consulted on the Joint Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework”

In Appendix 7, under the sub-heading “Type of Group Examples” in Appendix 3, add “, travelling showpeople” after “gypsies and travellers”

Add to the end of Appendix 7 the following text:

“Anyone wishing to be informed of the preparation of any of the Joint Minerals and Waste Development Plan Documents or of amending their contact details should notify the Joint Strategic Planning Unit via its website www.berks-jspu.gov.uk or at:

St Mary's House, c/o Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1RF

Telephone: 01628 796749

Facsimile: 01628 796739

Often the terminology and acronyms used in planning, and in minerals and waste planning in particular, can be bewildering for the professional and layperson alike. A glossary providing definitions of the terms and phrases used will be included in each Joint Minerals and Waste Development Plan Document and on the Joint Strategic Planning Unit website www.berks-jspu.gov.uk.

If you have any problem reading the Joint Minerals and Waste Development Plan Documents please contact the Joint Strategic Planning Unit, to arrange for the documents to be provided in an alternative format or language.”

Replace the text found on page 56 with the following:

"CONTACT

Further Information

To discuss further any elements of this Statement of Community Involvement, please contact the **Development Plan Team** in the Planning and Transport Policy Section at **Bracknell Forest Borough Council**. This can be done:

in person between the hours of 8.45am – 5.15pm (Monday to Thursday) and 8.45am – 4.45pm (Friday) at:

Environment and Leisure Department
Time Square, Market Street
Bracknell, RG12 1JD

by post (to the address above), or

by telephone on 01344 352000, or

by e-mail at development.plan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Alternative Formats

An electronic version of this document is available from the Borough Council's website at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk.

A summary of the Statement of Community Involvement can be made available in large print, in Braille or on audio cassette upon request to the **Development Plan Team**. Copies in other languages may also be obtained."

On the back cover replace "01344 351127" with "01344 352000".

Conclusion

- 11.1 Subject to amendment in accordance with the above recommendations, Bracknell Forest Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (October 2005) is sound.



K Holland
Inspector