

## **Buckinghamshire County Council Statement of Community Involvement (May 2007)**

### **INSPECTOR'S REPORT**

#### **Introduction**

- 1.1 An independent examination of Buckinghamshire County Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been carried out in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Act), as applied by s18(4) of the Act.
- 1.2 Section 20(5) indicates the two purposes of the independent examination in parts (a) and (b). With regard to part (a) I am satisfied that the SCI satisfies the requirements of the relevant sections of the Act, in particular that its preparation has accorded with the Local Development Scheme as required by s19(1) of the Act.
- 1.3 Part (b) is whether the SCI is sound. Following Paragraph 3.10 of Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks, the examination has been based on the 9 tests set out (see Appendix 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 clear need in the light of tests in PPS12.
- 1.4 A total of 23 representations were received, all of which have been considered. The Council proposed a number of amendments to the SCI in response to representations received and these have been taken into account in the preparation of this report.

#### **Test 1**

- 2.1 The Council has undertaken the consultation required under Regulations 25, 26 and 28 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.
- 2.2 This test is met.

#### **Test 2**

- 3.1 Paragraphs 2.18 – 2.20 and Paragraph 3.19 recognise the links between the Council, the Bucks Strategic Partnership and the Buckinghamshire Community Strategy. Paragraph 2.19 states that the Council intends to make sure that the contents of the Community Strategy and the SCI complement each other to avoid the duplication of consultation exercises. Paragraph 3.19 makes it clear that the Council will ensure that the Minerals and Waste Development Framework (MWDF) is closely integrated with both the Community Strategy and the document entitled 'Getting Closer to Communities Strategy'.

3.2 This test is met.

### **Test 3**

4.1 The Council has set out in Appendix 1 and Paragraphs 2.21- 2.24 of the SCI those groups which will be consulted. The list in Appendix 1 includes the statutory bodies from PPS12 Annex E. It is stated in the preamble to this appendix that the Council holds a database of consultee details and that this will be updated as necessary. Contact details are also provided here. Furthermore, the Council states in this preamble that it will consult with additional local stakeholders where appropriate.

4.2 A representor has requested the inclusion of an organisation in the lists contained at Appendix 1 of the SCI. As the Council has confirmed that this organisation is listed in its database I am content that it does not need to be listed specifically in the SCI.

4.3 There are some minor adjustments necessary to make to this consultee list in Appendix 1, as a result of representations received on the submission document, and I list these amendments below.

**(R1)** Add the following bodies to the General Consultation Bodies within Appendix 1:

The Chiltern Society  
Garden History Society  
Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust

Lastly remove the Countryside Agency from the list of Specific Consultation Bodies within Appendix 1.

4.4 Subject to the recommendation above, this test is met.

### **Test 4**

5.1 Paragraphs 3.1 – 3.18 and Figure 3 of the SCI show that the Council will involve and inform people from the early stages of Local Development Document (LDD) preparation and Paragraphs 3.25 – 3.37 and Appendix 3 set out the range of methods the Council will employ to do this. The Council clarifies in Figure 3 and Appendix 3 the stages at which consultation will take place and who will be consulted at those stages. It shows that consultation will take place with the key stakeholders during the issues and options stage of Development Plan Document (DPD) production in accordance with Regulation 25. I am satisfied that providing these stages are followed the consultation proposed will be undertaken in a timely and accessible manner.

5.2 Figure 2 of the SCI shows the process for the production of the SCI. As this figure details the process that would take place should the

document require formal review the Council should remove the specific dates contained in this figure.

**(R2)** Remove the specific dates from Figure 2.

5.3 Subject to the recommendation above, this test is met.

### **Test 5**

6.1 Paragraphs 3.25 – 3.37 and Appendix 3 set out the methods that the Council proposes to use to involve the community and stakeholders. These cover a variety of recognised consultation techniques that will present information via a range of different media. The Council indicates in Appendix 3 at what stages of LDD preparation the various methods might be employed.

6.2 The SCI acknowledges at Paragraphs 2.24 – 2.25 that the Council may have to provide extra support to facilitate consultation with certain groups or individuals and proposes (at Paragraph 2.25) how it might do this.

6.3 The SCI should, however, be more explicit in explaining how the Council will make its information on LDD production available to all members of society in order to meet the requirements of the Race Relations Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. I therefore have the following recommendation to make.

**(R3)** Add the following to the end of Paragraph 2.25:

“We will also make all LDF documentation available in a variety of formats, on request, such as translations into languages other than English, large print, Braille or audio cassette and use our best endeavours to meet the requirements of the Race Relations Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.”

6.4 I am, however, satisfied that the methods of consultation proposed in the SCI are suitable for the intended audiences and for the different stages in LDD preparation.

6.5 Subject to the recommendation above, this test is met.

### **Test 6**

7.1 Paragraphs 2.38, 3.38 and 4.35 of the SCI explain how the Council will seek to ensure that sufficient resources are put in place to achieve the scale of consultation envisaged. 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 2.40 - 2.41 and Paragraphs 3.41 - 3.44 of the SCI explain how the results of community involvement will be taken into account by the Council and used to inform decisions. The Council also proposes to prepare reports at the end of the consultation period explaining how views have been considered and documents changed in light of the community involvement. The SCI states at the end of Paragraph 3.43 where these will be made publicly available.
- 8.2 However, these reports should also be made available in hard copy at the deposit locations used throughout the consultation process and I therefore have the following recommendation to make.
- (R4)** Add the following to the end of the first sentence of Paragraph 3.43:
- “... and at the deposit locations used during the consultation process.”
- 8.3 Subject to the recommendation above, this test is met.

## **Test 8**

- 9.1 Paragraph 2.42 explains that the Council continuously monitors and reviews all consultation documents and that the SCI will be formally reviewed as part of this process and reported on through the Annual Monitoring Report.
- 9.2 I am satisfied that the Council has mechanisms for reviewing the SCI and has identified potential triggers for the review of the SCI.
- 9.3 This test is met.

## **Test 9**

- 10.1 Chapter 4 of the SCI and also Appendix 5 describe the Council's policy for consultation on planning applications. Paragraphs 4.7 – 4.8 meet the minimum requirements and Paragraph 4.24 provides information on additional methods of consultation. The Chapter also distinguishes between procedures appropriate to different types and scale of application and includes information on how the consultation results will inform decisions.
- 10.2 This test is met.

## **Conclusions**

- 11.1 The Council has set out in its Regulation 31 Statement a number of proposed changes to the SCI in response to representations received on the submission document. These suggested amendments do not affect the substance of the SCI but they do

improve the clarity and transparency of the submission SCI. I have therefore agreed their inclusion in the body of this report.

- 11.2 There are sections of text within the SCI which would become redundant once the document is adopted, for example Paragraph 1.8, Paragraphs 2.12 – 2.17 and Paragraph 2.31. The Council should ensure that these sections are either removed or amended so that they still retain information on the production of the SCI, should formal review ever be necessary, but without the specific timetable information.
- (R5)** Remove Paragraph 1.8 from the SCI and make amendments to other paragraphs which contain timetable information specific to the production of the document.
- 11.3 In the event of any doubt, please note that I am content for such matters as any minor spelling, grammatical or factual matters to be amended by the Council, so long as this does not affect the substance of the SCI.
- 11.4 Subject to the implementation of the recommendations set out in this Report, Buckinghamshire County Council's SCI (May 2007) is sound.

*Wendy Burden BA DipTP MRTPI*

Inspector