

**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEES:**

**South East Area- 4<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

**Cowley Area- 6<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

**North Area- 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

**Central, South West Area- 12<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

**Environmental Scrutiny Committee- 18<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

**North East Area Committee- 19<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

**East Area Parliament- 20<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**Date of meeting- 8<sup>th</sup> August 2005**

**Report of: Planning Policy Manager**

**Title: Statement of Community Involvement**

**Ward: All**

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**Key Decision: No**

**Lead Members: Councillors Ed Turner and John Tanner**

**Scrutiny responsibility: Environment**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Area Committees and the Environment Scrutiny Committee are asked to:**

- 1. note the contents of this report; and**
- 2. highlight any particular issues they may wish to be considered by the Executive Board.**

**That the Executive Board agrees to:**

- 1. approve the draft Statement of Community Involvement for consultation with members of the public;**
- 2. authorise the Planning Policy Manager to alter the text of the Statement of Community Involvement and to make any necessary editorial corrections.**

## **Summary**

1. The purpose of this report is for Executive Board, the Area Committees and Environment Scrutiny Committee to consider the draft Statement of Community Involvement before it is circulated for public consultation. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the City Council's policy on how it will consult on the development of future planning policy documents and on planning control decisions.
2. The Area Committees and Scrutiny Committee are asked to highlight any particular issues to be considered by the Executive Board. The Executive Board is asked to approve for consultation purposes the draft Statement and also to authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any editorial corrections that are necessary prior to consultation.

## **Council's Vision and strategic aims**

3. It is a statutory requirement to produce the Statement of Community Involvement and to consult during the production of the document. The production of a Statement of Community Involvement will also help to achieve the strategic aims in the City Council's vision to build opportunities for people to lead their lives independently and engage actively in local decision-making.

## **Background**

4. The new planning system introduced under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 replaces local plans with a local development framework. A local development framework is similar to a local plan in that it will detail policies and proposals to guide development in Oxford. However, whilst the local plan was produced as one large document, the Local Development Framework will consist of a series of documents. This change of format means that the plans are more flexible and relevant to changes in Oxford as each document can be amended or updated over time, as required.
5. The Statement of Community Involvement is one of the documents within the Local Development Framework. Once it is adopted, the soundness of other documents in the Local Development Framework will be judged partly according to whether the consultation followed the methods set out in the Statement of Community Involvement.
6. The City Council already has a good track record of involving the community, such as action planning events in developing local plan proposals. We have also encouraged developers to arrange public exhibitions, leaflets and publicity before major planning applications are submitted. We wish to build on this experience in improving future consultations, and development of the Statement of Community Involvement will help to achieve this.

## **What's Included in the Statement of Community Involvement**

7. The Statement of Community Involvement shows how the City Council intends to involve the community in the preparation and review of planning policy documents. It identifies the different community groups that need to be involved in the planning process and it outlines the various techniques that the City Council intends to use to involve them effectively. The document shows that different techniques are likely to be suitable for different stages of consultation and for consultation on different types of documents. The Statement of Community Involvement also sets out methods of consultation for planning applications and shows how the requirements of the regulations will be exceeded. It will act as a guide for developers on how they should consult when they propose a major development and it will enable the community to know how and when they will be involved in the planning process.
8. An Independent Examination will be held by an independent Inspector. The purpose of the examination will be to test whether the Statement is 'sound'. The soundness of the Statement will be tested against a number of criteria, which have guided what is included in the draft document. These tests include:
  - whether the authority has complied with the minimum requirements for consultation as set out in the statutory regulations;
  - how the Statement links with other community involvement initiatives such as the Community Strategy;
  - whether the Statement identifies in general terms which local community groups and other bodies will be consulted;
  - how the community and other bodies can be involved in a timely and accessible manner;
  - whether the methods of consultation to be employed are suitable for the intended audience and for the different stages in the preparation of Local Development Documents;
  - whether the Statement clearly describes the authority's policy for consultation on planning applications.

## **Consultation to prepare the draft Statement of Community Involvement**

9. The importance of community involvement, particularly at the early stages of document preparation, is heavily emphasised in Government guidance on the new planning system. It was also important to ensure that this advice was followed in the consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement itself. Thus, a consultation exercise has already been carried out to inform the production of this draft Statement.
10. Questionnaires were sent to individuals and groups that the planning department has previously had contact with, as well as representatives of groups that traditionally do not get involved in the process, in the

hope of being able to start a dialogue with these groups and to find out the methods that are likely to be the most effective ways to contact them in the future. The questionnaire was also sent to all councillors.

11. The questionnaires asked by which methods respondents would most like to be informed about planning policy and major planning applications, and also which methods they would find most useful for giving their comments. The results are summarised in the draft Statement of Community Involvement. This helps to ensure that the consultation methods that the Statement says the City Council will use are actually those methods that the community would like to be consulted by.

### **Financial, legal and staffing implications**

12. As explained above, it is a statutory requirement to produce a Statement of Community Involvement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Statutory regulations also set out the broad content of the Statement and the public consultation required prior to its adoption.
13. Another document within the Local Development Framework is the Local Development Scheme. The Local Development Scheme has been approved by the Council and sets out the programme of work for the production of planning policy documents in the next three years. The Local Development Scheme sets out milestones for the production of documents, including the Statement of Community Involvement. A key performance indicator in assessing Planning Delivery Grants in the future will be whether the milestones set out in the Local Development Scheme are met by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.
14. In terms of staffing, the consultation and further production of the Statement of Community Involvement will be met from the current staff resources of the Planning Policy team and also input from planning control and conservation teams. Further input will also be required from officers in other Business Units, particularly with regards to using their experience in consultation matters.
15. After the consultation process, the public examination may require the hiring of a Planning Inspector and this cost will be met from existing budgets. However, Government advice is that the preferred method of dealing with objections will be by written representations.
16. Consultation on future development plan documents as required by the Statement of Community Involvement may require the use of consultants to facilitate appropriate workshops or exhibitions, and again it is anticipated that this can be met from existing budgets.

## The next stages of consultation

17. Any comments from Committees and the Executive Board will be included in a revised draft document. The Board is also asked to authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any minor editorial corrections to the text. The remaining stages towards adoption of the document are set out in the table below:

Stage	Anticipated date	Consultation process
Initial statutory consultation on the revised draft Statement (after this committee round).	September 2005-mid October 2005 (6 week statutory consultation)	All those who returned the questionnaire and appropriate statutory groups will be informed the draft Statement has been published. Standard comment forms will be available.
Statement revised and a summary of comments reported to committees and Council.	Mid October-Dec 2005/Jan 2006	Comments received will be carefully considered and the Statement revised to take on board the views expressed where appropriate.
Statement submitted to the Secretary of State	Early in 2006 (6 week statutory consultation)	Public consultation using the same methods as the draft. Any comments made at this stage will be submitted for Independent Examination
Examination	June 2006	
Inspector's binding report	July 2006	
Adoption and publication	September 2006	

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY:  
Portfolio Holders: (portfolio responsibility Councillor Ed Turner and John Tanner)  
Planning Services Business Manager: (Michael Crofton-Briggs)  
Planning Policy Manager (Mark Jaggard)  
Planning Control and Conservation Manager: (Peter Baguley)  
Legal and Democratic Services: (Lindsay Cane)  
Financial Management: (Claire Ried)

## Appendix: draft Statement of Community Involvement for public consultation