

To: City Executive Board

Date: 22th January 2014

Report of: Head of City Development

Title of Report: DESIGNATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To designate two neighbourhood forums (Summertown/St Margaret's and Wolvercote).

Key decision? Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor Colin Cook

Policy Framework: Designation of neighbourhood forums will be able to produce neighbourhood plans. Adopted neighbourhood plans will contain statutory planning policies to guide development in the neighbourhood plan areas.

Recommendation(s): That City Executive Board:

1. Designates the two proposed neighbourhood forums.

Appendix 1- Maps of the designated neighbourhood areas that the forum applications relate to

Appendix 2- Applications received

Introduction

1. The Localism Act has introduced new rights and powers to enable communities to get directly involved in planning for their areas. Interested communities will be able to come together through a neighbourhood forum and produce a neighbourhood plan. The contents of the neighbourhood plans will be shaped by the local communities. They are about being able to say where new houses, businesses, shops and so on should go and what they should look like. Once plans are adopted they will become part of the statutory development plan, and therefore an important consideration when making decisions on planning applications.
2. City Executive Board is asked to consider two proposed neighbourhood forums for designation. Neighbourhood forum applications must link to a

designed neighbourhood area. The neighbourhood areas the forum applications relate to are Wolvercote (following the ward boundary) and Summertown and St Margaret's (following both ward boundaries). Maps of the areas are shown in Appendix 1.

3. Planning Regulations set out the requirements for designation of a neighbourhood forum. The neighbourhood forum applications received (see Appendix 2) should be judged against these criteria. The proposed neighbourhood forums have been advertised for a statutory period of six weeks (31st October- 12th December) and comments were invited. A summary of comments received is shown in Appendix 3.

Compliance with planning regulations

4. The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 include the criteria that must be met in neighbourhood area applications. The application all include the following, as required by the Regulations:
 - a name of the proposed neighbourhood forum;
 - a name and contact details of one key member of the proposed forum ;
 - a copy of the written constitution of the proposed neighbourhood forum ;
 - the name of the neighbourhood area to which the application relates and a map of this area;
 - a statement which explains how the proposed neighbourhood forum meets the conditions contained in section 61F(5) of the 1990 Act.
5. The Regulations say that a local planning authority may designate an organisation or body as a neighbourhood forum if the authority are satisfied that it meets the following conditions—
 - It is established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of an area that consists of or includes the neighbourhood area concerned (whether or not it is also established for the express purpose of promoting the carrying on of trades, professions or other businesses in such an area).
 - Its membership is open to—
 - individuals who live in the neighbourhood area concerned;
 - individuals who work there (whether for businesses carried on there or otherwise); and
 - individuals who are elected members of a county council, district council or London borough council any of whose area falls within the neighbourhood area concerned.
 - Its membership includes a minimum of 21 individuals each of whom—
 - lives in the neighbourhood area concerned;
 - works there (whether for a business carried on there or otherwise); or

- is an elected member of a county council, district council or London borough council any of whose area falls within the neighbourhood area concerned.
 - it has a written constitution.
6. The applications received are attached in Appendix 2. Maps are provided that show the designated neighbourhood areas the forum applications relate to (Appendix 1). Information is provided for each application to show the conditions outlined above are met. Each is established for the purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area; has an open membership; includes more than 21 members (ward councillors having all been involved) and has a written constitution.

Consultation responses

7. The City Council has a statutory requirement to publicise for 6 weeks any qualifying applications we receive to designate a neighbourhood forum (which gives qualifying groups the status they need in order to develop a neighbourhood plan).
8. The receipt of the forum applications was publicised with the intention of raising awareness within and around the relevant areas. Comments were invited, giving people the opportunity to raise objections. Known local groups were contacted directly by letter or email.
9. Only one organisation or body can be designated as a neighbourhood forum in each neighbourhood area. If a designation is made, no other organisation or body may be designated for that neighbourhood area until that designation expires or is withdrawn. This was made clear on the consultation material.
10. Few representations were made during the publicity period. English Heritage sent a general letter about how they may be involved in neighbourhood planning and English Nature confirmed that they had no comments.

Environmental impact

14. This stage of the neighbourhood planning process only involves the designation of a forum. No Sustainability Appraisal is required for this stage; however, as plans are drafted it may be necessary to carry out Sustainability Appraisals for any plan assessed as having potentially significant environmental effects.

Equalities impact

15. Consideration has been given to the public sector equality duty imposed by s149 of the Equality Act 2010. Having paid due regard to the need to meet the objectives of that duty the view is taken that the duty is met.

Financial implications

16. The City Council is obliged to offer a certain degree of help to groups as they produce their plans. As well as this, the City Council must consult on draft plans, organise an examination and run the referendum. These requirements will be met from the current resources of the Planning Policy team, supplemented by grants available from central government to district councils for each neighbourhood plan.

Legal implications

17. Officers consider that the information provided by the neighbourhood groups is adequate to show that the statutory requirements for the designation of neighbourhood forums are met.

Risk assessment

18. A risk assessment has been undertaken. No significant risks were identified.

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List of background papers: None