

North Dorset District Council Statement of Community Involvement (January 2006)

INSPECTOR'S REPORT

Introduction

- 1.1 An independent examination of the North Dorset District Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been carried out in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. 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.
- 1.2 A total of 22 representations were received all of which have been considered.

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 although the Council failed to consult adjoining Parish Council's at the Regulation 25 stage. However, this omission was corrected in a subsequent consultation for the Parish Councils and I am satisfied that none of the Parish Councils have been prejudiced by this failure.
- 2.2 This test is met.

Test 2

- 3.1 Paragraphs 4.7 to 4.10 of the SCI set out the role of local community partnerships in North Dorset. Paragraph 4.10 states that joint consultation exercises will be used where appropriate. Paragraph 4.11 of the SCI explains the role of the Dorset Compact.
- 3.2 This test has been met.

Test 3

- 4.1 The Council has set out in Appendices C and D of the SCI those groups which will be consulted. Appendix C includes the statutory bodies from PPS12 Annex E. Appendix D relates to general consultation bodies. The Council makes it clear that the list represents a summary of the types of bodies on the Council's database. It is not exhaustive and will be reviewed regularly.

- 4.2 However, the reorganisation of certain consultation bodies should also be acknowledged in the SCI and I recommend that an additional sentence be added to Appendix C to this effect.

Recommendation

(R1) Add to Appendix C the following text at the end of the second paragraph: "This list also relates to successor bodies where reorganisation has occurred."

- 4.3 Paragraph 4.20 of the SCI sets out how the Council proposes to meet the consultation requirements set down in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

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

Test 4

- 5.1 Figure 2 of the SCI sets out the key stages of Development Plan Document (DPD) preparation. The SCI indicates that a shorter process will be undertaken for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). Early community involvement will be sought with consultation undertaken at the Issues and Options stage. In addition, paragraph 4.1 of the SCI highlights the Council's commitment to frontloading with the aim of maximising community participation at an early stage to build consensus and reduce lengthy examinations at the end of the process. Paragraph 4.20 lists the methods for involving the community in the preparation of DPDs. The table on page 15 of the SCI draws together the elements of paragraphs 4.12 (stages of consultation) and paragraph 4.20 (how the community will be involved).
- 5.2 However Figure 2 should be amended to reflect more accurately the guidance in PPS12 particularly in relation to the concept of options (see 4.13 of PPS12). The third box of figure 2 should refer to preferred options (plural) consultation. In addition the Regulation 32 consultation on site allocation representations should be added.

Recommendation

(R2) Amend figure 2 to refer to the Preferred Options stage and the Regulation 32 consultation

Test 5

- 6.1 Section 4 of the SCI sets out how the Council intends to involve the community in the Local Development Framework. Proposed arrangements are set out for involving the community in each of the documents that make up the LDF at each stage of the process. Consultation methods are set out in paragraph 4.20. These cover a range of recognised consultation techniques that will present information via a range of different media. Paragraph 4.20, point

VIII also notes the Council's intention to investigate special methods tailored to the needs of traditionally hard to reach groups.

- 6.2 The importance of an inclusive approach to community involvement is recognised in paragraph 3.15 of the SCI. The Council will endeavour to specifically involve those members of the community who may be hard to reach or who may suffer discrimination.
- 6.3 Page i of the SCI sets out the telephone number of the Council's Public Relations Office, should any member of the public wish to obtain the document in an alternative format or language.
- 6.4 I am 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 This test is met.

Test 6

- 7.1 Section 6 of the SCI relates to resources. The Council is aware that community involvement will have resource implications in terms of staff time, graphics, advertising and other costs. I am therefore satisfied that the Council is alert to the resource implications of the SCI.
- 7.2 This test is met.

Test 7

- 8.1 Paragraphs 4.21 and 4.22 of SCI set out how the results of community involvement will be reported and how it will inform the content of LDDs. Comments will be recorded and made publicly available together with the response of the Council, the reasons for the response and any changes in response to consultation.
- 8.2 The SCI does not contain any information concerning who will make decisions on the content of LDDs. To rectify this, I set out a recommendation below.

Recommendation

(R3) Insert the following text after the second sentence of paragraph 4.21 of the SCI: "The findings will be considered by officers and members in the preparation and review of DPDs and SPDs."

- 8.3 Subject to the recommendation above, this test is met.

Test 8

9.1 Section 7 of the SCI refers to monitoring. Paragraph 7.8 of the SCI states that the success of the consultation process will be kept under review to determine whether it has been truly representative. Techniques may then be revised if necessary. The Statement will be reviewed as part of the Annual Monitoring process.

9.2 This test is met.

Test 9

10.1 Section 5 of the SCI deals specifically with the Council's policy for consultation on planning applications, meeting the minimum requirements set out in legislation. Notwithstanding the views of some respondents I am not able to require the Council to go further than required by the relevant legislation. However, the SCI should contain further information on statutory consultation periods for development that affects SSSI's. I set out a recommendation below.

Recommendation

(R4) Insert the following text at the end of paragraph 5.8: "In addition bodies such as English Nature will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation."

10.2 Paragraph 5.4 of the SCI sets out how the Council intends to carry out consultation with the public on planning applications. It is clear from paragraph 5.9 and 5.10 how the results of the consultation will be reported and how they will inform decisions on planning applications.

10.3 Paragraphs 5.4 to 5.5 of the SCI differentiate between different types and scales of planning application and clarify the different procedures for consultation that will apply.

10.4 Paragraphs 5.11 to 5.14 of the SCI provide information on pre-application discussions.

10.5 This test is met.

Conclusions

- 11.1 Subject to the implementation of the recommendations given above the North Dorset District Council SCI (January 2006) is sound.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KHolland', written in a cursive style.

Keith Holland

Inspector