

Committee: Planning and Licensing Committee	Date: 8 July 2020
Subject: Statement of Community Involvement Update, Temporary COVID-19 Guidance	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Phil Drane, Director of Planning and Economy	Public
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Summary

Local planning authorities are legally required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI is an important part of the Council's Local Development Plan and sets out how the Council will engage with the local communities through the planning process. As part of the Local Plan process the Council last updated its SCI in December 2018. National Planning Practice Guidance has recently been updated with temporary guidance on plan-making during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The guidance requires that the Council consider how its SCI needs to be updated in light of COVID-19 restrictions, such as the need for people to stay at home or socially distance. The guidance is temporary and to be kept under review. Updates are specific to the plan-making process, such as having hard-copy documents on deposit in physical locations and consultation events in physical locations.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve the revised Brentwood Borough Statement of Community Involvement enclosed in Appendix A.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. Each local planning authority must prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), Part 2, Section 18. The SCI is an important part of the Council's Local Development Plan and sets out how the Council will engage with local communities through the planning process in terms of both plan-making and decision-making.

2. The SCI outlines the Council's standards for community involvement in the planning process and identifies how the Council will achieve these standards. The SCI clearly sets out how, when, and who will be consulted on:
 - a. Plan-making (Planning Policy) processes, such as:
 - i. Brentwood Local Plan (LDP);
 - ii. South Essex Joint Strategic Plan (JSP);
 - iii. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); and
 - iv. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).
 - b. Decision-making (Planning Development Management) processes, such as:
 - i. Planning applications; and
 - ii. Planning appeals.
3. The current Brentwood Borough SCI was adopted in 2018 (Item 276, Planning and Licensing Committee, 11 December 2018). Since then, and in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, temporary emergency measures and guidance have been introduced by the Government to address inconsistencies between consultation requirements and current measures resulting in people staying at home and/or socially distancing.
4. To ensure that the SCI continues to be legally compliant with government guidance while maintaining active, meaningful and continued involvement with local communities and stakeholders through the planning process, it is considered necessary to temporarily update the document.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

5. Temporary COVID-19 plan-making guidance has been issued by Government through Planning Practice Guidance. This should be read in parallel with existing guidance. Where there is a conflict between the two sets of guidance, the COVID-19 plan-making guidance will supersede current plan-making guidance until further notice (Planning Practice Guidance, paragraph 076, Reference ID: 61-076-201200513).
6. The proposed changes to the Brentwood Borough SCI are set out as incorporated changes in Appendix A. These are highlighted to identify where changes are proposed. Proposed changes include:
 - a. Documents are not currently available to view at the Town Hall or libraries due to these buildings being closed or with reduced opening hours due COVID-19. The Council will make all plan-making documents available to view on the Council's website;
 - b. In person exhibitions and workshops are not currently permitted. Online exhibits and workshops, video conferencing, and social media posts will be utilised instead where appropriate to do so;
 - c. Those individuals without access to the online consultation portal can still send in written representations;
 - d. Letters and questionnaire will still be sent to consultees where an email address has not previously been provided; and

- e. All of the above will be kept under review as COVID-19 related lockdown measures change and/or Planning Practice Guidance changes.
7. The temporary guidance will stay in effect until further notice from the Government. Once Planning Practice Guidance is revised the SCI will either revert back to the 2018 version or have further updates brought to committee for approval, as relevant.
8. If the updated SCI is approved, the revised document will be published on the Council's website in line with requirements.

Reasons for Recommendation

9. In accordance with temporary COVID-19 Planning Practice Guidance updates from the Government, the Council has reviewed its SCI and identified temporary measures to address inconsistencies between plan-making consultation measures and national restrictions. To ensure that the SCI continues to be legally compliant with government guidance while maintaining active, meaningful and continued involvement with local communities and stakeholders through the planning process, it is considered necessary to temporarily update the document.

Consultation

10. The Planning Practice Guidance states that public consultation is not required when preparing or publishing an SCI. Local planning authorities are required to publish the SCI on their website.
11. The Brentwood Borough SCI has been updated to ensure it continues to be legally compliant with current temporary plan-making guidance while ensuring active, meaningful, and continued involvement with local communities and stakeholders through the planning process.
12. The temporary guidance will stay in effect until further notice from government. Once the temporary COVID guidance is lifted the Council will revert back to the 2018 adopted SCI.

References to Corporate Strategy

13. The Council's Corporate Strategy 'Brentwood 2025' sets out a number of key objectives, including to grow our economy through the adoption of a new Local Development Plan for the borough.

Implications

Financial Implications

Name/Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Director of Corporate Resources
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14. There are no financial implications.

Legal Implications

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15. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Amendment Regulations 2017 provide the legal basis for the current plan-making system. These are supported by the revised National Planning Policy Framework (2018) and Planning Practice Guidance.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Director of Planning and Economy

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16. There are no economic implications.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

17. It is important that there is no discrimination to those in particular community groups who may be disadvantaged as a result of the temporary changes. The changes mainly affect hard-copy documents being on deposit in physical locations and physical consultation events. COVID-19 measures mean that these things are not possible or may be limited depending on lockdown restrictions. The Council is committed to helping people access information through the plan-making process that is available for consultation. This may need to be considered on a case by case basis depending on individual needs.

Background Papers

- Statement of Community Involvement Update, Item 276 Planning and Licensing Committee, 11 December 2018
- Planning Practice Guidance, paragraph 076, reference 61-076-201200513, revision date 13/05/2020, "How should local planning authorities respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic when progressing local plans?"
- Planning Practice Guidance, paragraph 077, reference 61-077-201200513, revision date 13/05/2020, "Should the Statement of Community Involvement be reviewed and updated in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?"
- Planning Practice Guidance, paragraph 078, reference 61-078-201200513, revision date 13/05/2020, "How can a Statement of Community Involvement be reviewed and updated to comply with COVID-19 guidance?"

Appendices to this report

- Appendix A: Brentwood Borough Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), Temporary COVID-19 Amendments, July 2020