



Pre-submission Consultation Statement: Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

This statement sets out details of the initial consultation conducted by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council in relation to the development of the Statement of Community Involvement (Government refers to this as the pre-submission consultation stage). This consultation was carried out in accordance with regulation 25 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

This statement identifies:

- 1) Who was consulted
- 2) The method(s) of consultation
- 3) A summary of the main issues raised in the consultation
- 4) How these issues have been addressed in the Statement of Community Involvement

Who was consulted

Statutory Consultees:

- South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA)
- London Borough of Sutton
- Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames
- Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
- Mole Valley District Council
- Highways Agency

General Consultees included the following groups:

- Residents Associations
- Political Parties
- Local Strategic Partnership Members
- Local Conservation Associations
- Developers
- Schools / Colleges
- The general public and other identified stakeholders

Methods of consultation

Statutory consultees were invited by letter to complete a survey that helped to identify the most appropriate methods and techniques for consultation.

Additionally an Open Evening was held in the Town Hall on 21st October 2004 to inform residents and other interested parties about the introduction of the Local Development Framework.

The event was publicised in the Local Guardian newspaper, on the Council's website and letters of invitation were sent to identified local stakeholders. Notices also were displayed on numerous public notice boards throughout the Borough.

The evening provided an opportunity for attendees to meet staff and Council members, find out information, ask questions and most importantly, to put forward opinions on how they would like to be involved in the preparation of the Local Development Framework. A survey was distributed to those present to help identify the degree of interest in community involvement in the planning system and the preferred methods of involvement. The survey was also made available on the Council's website. A follow up letter was sent to attendees to thank them for their interest and to encourage them to complete the survey. Additionally a copy of the survey and an explanatory letter were sent to those identified local stakeholders who did not attend the open evening. This provided an additional opportunity for their input. A six-week period was given for the return of surveys.

A summary of the main issues raised from the consultation

The questions posed in the survey were organised under the following headings: planning applications, the preparation of planning policy documents, planning issues and 'about you' (socio-economic data).

35 hard copies of the survey were returned by post and 6 were completed electronically over the website. The sample size is therefore relatively low.

Summary of responses:

1) Consultation and Participation Satisfaction Levels

- 56.4% of respondents are satisfied to some degree with the way in which they are consulted on planning applications.
- 59% of respondents are satisfied to some degree with the way they can access the information they need on planning applications.
- 53.8% of respondents are satisfied to some degree that they are able to participate in the planning process.

2) Helpfulness of Methods Currently Used by the Council

Planning Applications

- It is clear from responses that some methods are considered more helpful than others. The three most helpful methods were identified as: hard copies being available for inspection in the Town Hall, direct mailing to adjacent owners of a property and notices being put up at proposed development sites.
- Suggestions for other methods of consultation that the Council should consider include:
 - Improving the information available on the website.
 - Informing people what has been decided after consultation.
 - Going back to having a full list of applications in the local papers.
 - Extending direct mailings to more than just the adjacent owners.
 - Ensuring reception has all copies of papers and applications.

Preparation of Policy Documents

- Just under one third of respondents (13) had been involved in the preparation of the last Local Plan.
- Of those, eight had been involved by making representation at Local Plan Inquiry and eight through attending exhibitions.
- Nearly all respondents (95%) are interested in hearing about the future preparation of the Local Development Framework.
- They would prefer to hear about this by:
 - 1st: Attending open evenings / workshops.
Attending exhibitions.
 - 2nd Information on the Council's website.
 - 3rd Information in Borough Insight.
- 83% of respondents indicated they are interested in participating in the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- The three most accessible and convenient methods to participate in the LDF preparation included formal written consultation, attending workshops / open evenings and completing questionnaires.

3) Planning Issues

Some planning issues concerned respondents more than others. Those that concerned respondents the most were general development control policies, the location of housing and community facilities.

How these issues have been addressed in the Statement of Community Involvement

The various methods that were identified by respondents as being more useful have been incorporated into the SCI. Documents will be readily available on the website and at various other accessible locations throughout the Borough and open days will be held where possible. Questionnaires will be provided alongside the consultation documents. The Statutory Planning Application consultation guidelines have also been exceeded to widen the number of people involved.

A section has been included in the SCI which details how the information gained from consultation will be dealt with, and how feedback will be given to participants keeping them informed of progress / decisions.

It was shown that the majority of respondents wished to be involved in the preparation of the Local Development Framework. As a result, a database has been established which contains contact details for stakeholders and interested parties. This will be updated regularly to ensure those who express a desire to be involved will be consulted.

Through incorporating these views, the Statement of Community involvement should help to boost the satisfaction and participations levels regarding consultation on planning matters.