

## **St Helens Borough Council Local Plan Examination**

### **Information note on the Statement of Community Involvement**

#### Introduction

The currently adopted St Helens Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (SD015) was adopted in November 2013. It sets out how the Council will involve the community in planning, including in the plan preparation process, specifically the Local Plan preparation process.

The SCI (paragraph 6.7, Table 6.1)) sets out the methods of engagement to be employed to reach different groups in the community in the formal consultation periods in the preparation of the Local Plan, including residents, local businesses, Parish Councils and voluntary groups, amongst others. (Those set out in red are the minimum methods to be employed.) The SCI states that if any of the methods listed cease to be available, the Council will seek to use a suitable alternative method of consultation.

#### Application of the SCI

The St Helens Borough Council (Regulation 22) Consultation Statement (SD004) provides detailed information on how consultation has been undertaken at each stage of the plan preparation process. It demonstrates that the Plan has been prepared in accordance with the SCI, as required by legislation.

Section 3.4 clarifies that consultation at the Local Plan scoping consultation stage (January to March 2016) was undertaken in accordance with the 2013 SCI, including the use of:

- email or written notifications to those on the Council's consultee database, and to the specific and general consultation bodies;
- articles and adverts in the local newspapers;
- posts on Council social media, ie. Twitter and Facebook;
- information pages on the Council website (with links from the front page);
- A4 posters distributed across the Borough; and
- offers of meetings made to stakeholders

Section 3.7 of SD004 sets out that consultation on the Local Plan Preferred Options (December 2016-January 2017) was also undertaken in accordance with the 2013 SCI and the 2012 Local Planning Regulations, including the use of:

- all of the above consultation methods employed for the Scoping stage, and listed above, plus;
- letters sent to properties within 200m of sites proposed to be removed from the Green Belt;
- articles and adverts in the local newspapers, and repeated midway through the consultation period;
- A4 site notices displayed next to sites proposed for development; and
- Copies of the Local Plan Preferred Options document, Policies Map, background evidence-based documents and the accompanying SAs were made available in libraries, at Council Offices, and on the Council website.

In addition, Council officers hosted 15 daytime, evening and weekend drop-in sessions at locations across the Borough to provide information and answer questions. The details of

these sessions are set out in Table 1, SD004. Furthermore, Council offers gave presentations to the St Helens Senior Voice Forum and the St Helens Youth Forum to discuss the Local Plan and seek feedback.

Section 4.2 of SD004 sets out that consultation on the Local Plan Submission Draft (LPSD) (January-May 2019) was undertaken in accordance with the 2013 SCI, including through the use of:

- the LPSD and supporting documents put on deposit at all Council libraries, in the Town Hall and uploaded onto the Council's website;
- email or written notifications sent to all those on the Council's consultee database (including all those who submitted a response at LPPO stage), and to specific and general consultation bodies;
- letters sent to properties within 200m of sites proposed to be allocated or safeguarded for future development (including Green Belt, Brownfield and Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites);
- letters sent to all properties within 50m of an anomaly Green Belt change;
- letters, posters and leaflets to advertise the eleven drop-in events across the Borough, which were for members of the public to view the Plan, maps and discuss matters with officers;
- articles and adverts in the local newspapers (repeated mid-way during the consultation);
- posts on Council social media, ie. Twitter and Facebook;
- information pages on the Council website (with links from the front page);
- A4 site notices displayed next to sites being proposed for development;
- A4 posters distributed across the Borough, including Parish noticeboards, Local Authority facilities and various retail outlets; and
- offers of presentations made to stakeholders.

Articles were published in the local 'St Helens Star' newspaper throughout the duration of the consultation to keep residents informed. Press releases were also communicated via the Council's social media. There was also a permanent advert on the Council website homepage with a dedicated webpage including consultation material relating to the LPSD.

The site notices referred to above were placed at various points surrounding all proposed allocated and safeguarded sites. The eleven daytime and evening drop-in events referred to were hosted by Council officers and spread across the Borough to allow all of the Borough's population an opportunity to attend a localised event.

The consultation methods employed through the preparation of the Local Plan have remained constant throughout, but with some tailoring at various stages to reflect specific Plan issues. However, they have always been in accordance with the adopted SCI 2013.

#### Updating the SCI

Council officers did not consider it appropriate to update the SCI midway through the preparation of the Local Plan on the basis of keeping a consistent approach, but also because the consultation methods being employed were considered to be effective as significant numbers of consultation responses were being received (see SD004 for specific numbers).

However, with the ongoing uncertainties in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council needs to ensure future consultations can be undertaken in a Covid compliant way

(respecting any restrictions that may be in place at that point in time), whilst also ensuring that they are compliant with the SCI.

On that basis, Council officers are currently considering whether an addendum to the SCI, to introduce temporary measures in response to Covid, will be needed to support the Plan through the Examination process, specifically in relation to the main modifications consultation that will likely be required in due course, subject to the Plan's progress through the Examination process.