

Statement of Community Involvement - Statement of Consultation

Thurrock Council

November 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is a Statement of Consultation?

- 1.1 A Statement of Consultation says how we have prepared a planning document and identifies who we have consulted and when. It also sets out the comments that we received and how we have amended the consultation document in response to these comments. This allows people who have commented to see how their comments have been taken on board.

What is a Statement of Community Involvement?

- 1.2 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) identifies how the Council will engage and consult with the local community and other stakeholders on planning matters by defining how and when they can get involved in the preparation of planning documents and in determining planning applications.
- 1.3 Thurrock's previous SCI was adopted in December 2015. Local planning authorities are required to review and update their SCI every five years. Work on an update started in 2019, however, progress was halted in 2020 due to the Council focussing its resources on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council has now carried out a full review of the SCI, taking into account the changes proposed in the draft SCI, as well as subsequent legislative changes, revised national guidance and the Council's Collaborative Communities Framework to produce the draft SCI.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 The revised draft SCI was published for consultation for a period of seven weeks from Friday 15th July until Monday 5th September 2022.

Who did we consult and how?

- 2.2 As required by national legislation, we consulted a number of 'specific consultation bodies', which are recognised as statutory organisations and also informed all groups and forums on the Council's consultation database that the consultation on the revised SCI had commenced and they were invited to comment on it.
- 2.3 The document was available to view on the Council's consultation platform at www.consult.thurrock.gov.uk and in hard copy at libraries throughout the Borough. Those wishing to comment could do so through the Council's online consultation platform, by downloading a copy of the response form, or by completing a hard copy of the response form which was available at the local libraries.

Who responded to the consultation?

- 2.4 In total, we received comments from six different individuals and ten organisations. This included three from other local authorities.

- 2.5 Appendix 1 sets out a summary of each comment received during the consultation, who the consultee was and the Council's response to each comment.

How has the document changed?

- 2.6 A number of changes have been made to the final version of the Statement of Community Involvement as a result of comments received during the consultation. These are mainly to add clarity and further detail. These changes can be seen in Appendix 1 under the heading 'Council's Response and Actions'.
- 2.7 A number of changes have also made to the final document due to the outcome of the Community Equalities Impact Assessment that was undertaken, as well as minor spelling and grammar changes which were identified when finalising the document.

3. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – Table of Responses

Ref. No.	Consultee/ Organisation	Agent	Summary of Comments	Council's Response and Actions
001	Southend City Council		The SCI seems thorough and has no additional comments.	Comment noted. No action required.
002	Natural England		<p>Supports the principle meaningful and early engagement of the general community, community organisations and statutory bodies in local planning matters, in terms of shaping policy and participating in the process of determining planning applications.</p> <p>We are unable to comment on individual SCIs.</p> <p>All planning consultations should be sent electronically to the central hub – consultations@naturalengland.org.uk</p>	Comment noted. No action required.
003	The Coal Authority		<p>Thurrock Council lies outside the defined coalfield and therefore, the Coal Authority has no specific comments to make on the Local Plans/SPDs.</p> <p>It will not be necessary for the Council to provide the Coal Authority with any future drafts or updates to the emerging plans. This letter can be used as evidence for legal and procedural consultation requirements at examination, if necessary.</p>	Comment noted. We will not update or consult the Coal Authority of any further drafts of emerging plans
004	Transport for London (TfL)		Pleased TfL is identified as one of the Duty to Cooperate bodies and have no further comments.	No comments or actions needed.
005	Marine Management Organisation		The Marine Management Organisation will review documents and respond directly should a bespoke response be needed.	Comments noted. No action required.
006	Historic England		Supports the general aims and approach to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.	Comments and email addresses noted.

Ref. No.	Consultee/ Organisation	Agent	Summary of Comments	Council's Response and Actions
			<p>Local Plans – Welcome acknowledgement of Historic England as a specific consultation body and as a statutory consultee under the Duty to Cooperate at Appendix A.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Plans – Would welcome notification of proposed neighbourhood planning areas as well as consultation on draft plans.</p> <p>Planning Applications – Welcomes consultation at an informal level, where issues may benefit from early involvement.</p> <p>Please note consultation email addresses: eastplanningpolicy@historicengland.org.uk (planning policy and neighbourhood plans) or e-east@HistoricEngland.org.uk (for planning applications).</p>	<p>We will consult Historic England on any proposed neighbourhood planning areas and consult them on any draft neighbourhood plans.</p> <p>Comments noted regarding informal engagement in planning applications where issues may benefit from early involvement, particularly where they are likely to impact the historic environment.</p>
007	Brentwood Borough Council		Welcome the publication of the draft SCI and look forward to continuing ongoing engagement and joint working on strategic cross boundary matters.	Comments noted. No actions required.
008	Castle Point Borough Council		Have no direct comments on the draft SCI. Would like to be engaged on future planning policy documents and their preparation to identify and work together on cross boundary issues.	Comments noted. No actions required.
009	Individual		<p>Having your say on planning applications 4.21 Would like guidance and clarity on people's option to have their details kept private. Agree that comments should be made public, but people should be able to remain anonymous. There are people at risk who may be scared to respond for fear of being identified. The SCI and Planning</p>	Comment noted. This is outside the scope of this consultation but it has been raised with the relevant team with a request for further review.

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			<p>Portal should state that requests can be made to ensure people's comments remain anonymous if they wish, with no explanation needed.</p> <p>General comments Would like the Council to improve comms and promote things more.</p> <p>Extra time should be given to comment on applications and consultations around Christmas or summer holidays.</p> <p>The Portal is unreliable. People have trouble logging in and documents often won't load. This puts people off taking part.</p> <p>It is essential that those organising consultations are knowledgeable about the local area and that all info is available to the public whether they attend consultation events or view materials on or offline.</p> <p>People want to have their say on what is going on where they live and work, but the process is poorly promoted, complicated or frustrating. More should be done to include residents and the Council need to listen and act upon what is being said.</p> <p>Response Email Address Had issues with the "&" in the growth&strategy email address.</p>	<p>Comment noted. The Council endeavors to extend consultation periods that fall within key holiday periods.</p> <p>Comments regarding the Council's consultation portal and communication issues have been shared with the relevant team.</p> <p>Comments noted. Email address amended following issue raised. The new email address is localplan@thurrock.gov.uk</p>

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010	Essex Police (Designing out Crime Department within Local Police Support Unit)		<p>Section 3.8 Acknowledges the inclusion of the PFCC as a designated strategic consultee. The Designing Out Crime Office (DOCO) role can positively influence the reduction in crime in all its form, throughout the life cycle of developments, creating safe and secure environments. Response will not be limited to the DOCO, but may be obtained from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads Policing Unit • Counter Terrorism Security Advisors • Strategic Change department. <p>Each response should not be treated in isolation.</p> <p>3.36: Health Impact Assessment (HIA) The DOCO supports constructing well designed places, buildings and communities that promote sustainable communities and health and wellbeing. However, they must also be safe, secure and accessible. Mitigating opportunities for crime is about building strong, cohesive, vibrant and participatory communities. Encouraging residents and users of places to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for their surroundings can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing, and safety of a community.</p> <p>3.41: Community Infrastructure Levy Preparation Stages Additional demands will be placed on policing due to housing development and major infrastructure growth as there is potential for an increase in associated number of incidents that may require an emergency response.</p>	<p>Comment noted about liaising with Essex Police to align infrastructure proposals and funding opportunities for future policing provision.</p>

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			<p>Essex Police would welcome the opportunity to liaise with the planning department to align infrastructure proposals and funding opportunities for future Policing provision.</p> <p>4.7: Pre-planning Early Engagement Good design and early co-ordination can avoid conflicts that may not easily be resolved once construction is complete. Crime must be a material consideration when designing new homes and community facilities. The perception and fear of crime can influence the synergy and sustainability of the wider community.</p> <p>Essex Police DOCO have welcomed the current partnership process with Thurrock and involvement in strategic planning meetings, charettes and engagement in pre-planning consultation.</p> <p>4.21: Comments Publication It may be inappropriate to disclose in the full comments and observations provided by Essex Police, especially in regard to nationally significant projects or specification of police estates. Essex Police request anonymity or where appropriate, obscuring sensitive information from public view.</p>	<p>The Council reviews all comments on applications and information which is deemed sensitive is redacted prior to publishing them.</p>
011	Industrial Chemicals Ltd	Lawson Planning Partnership Ltd	<p>Section 3 – Plan Making</p> <p>Supplementary Planning Documents and Interim Planning Guidance Notes preparation stages</p> <p>Table 2 – The Council should continue to set a 6 week minimum consultation period, as in the adopted SCI (2015). 4</p>	<p>The SCI identifies a minimum 4 week consultation in line with planning regulations. Where consultations fall within key holiday periods, the</p>

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			<p>weeks does not provide sufficient time for large or complex organisations to review and respond to potentially detailed and lengthy consultation documents, particularly around holiday periods, such as Easter, summer or Christmas.</p> <p>Community Infrastructure Levy Preparation stages Table 3 – The Council should continue to set a 6 week minimum consultation period, as in the adopted SCI (2015). 4 weeks does not provide sufficient time for large or complex organisations to review and respond to potentially detailed and lengthy consultation documents and supporting evidence, particularly around holiday periods such as Easter, Summer or Christmas.</p> <p>Section 4 Development Management Pre-application Stage</p> <p>Planning Performance Agreements text box: The text relating to PPAs should be amended to reflect the NPPF positive presumption in respect of sustainable development and allow for staged payments for major projects to take account of financial risk considerations. Text should be amended to read (additions in bold): Planning Performance Agreements The Council is committed to dealing with major planning applications in a positive, timely and effective way. The Council promotes the use of pre-application discussions for all proposals. However, for some proposals a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) is encouraged as they can</p>	<p>Council will endeavor to extend consultation periods.</p> <p>The section has been amended as follows: Planning Performance Agreements The Council is committed to dealing with major planning applications in a positive, timely and effective way. The Council promotes the use of pre-application discussions for all proposals. However, for some proposals a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) is encouraged as they can provide bespoke ongoing advice <u>and bring forward a faster and more effective planning process.</u></p>

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			<p>provide bespoke ongoing advice and bring forward a faster and more effective planning process.</p> <p>The Council will take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to the PPA process, working closely with promoters, agents and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues at all stages of the process. A PPA can be used at the pre-application stage, the application stage, after a decision has been made or for any combination of these stages. It sets out the actions, resources and timescales for handling a particular planning application. The Council will take a flexible approach to PPA and give consideration to financial viability considerations and phased payments, where appropriate.</p> <p>It is essential that there is engagement between developers, the Council, the local community and relevant stakeholders in order to gain maximum benefit from a PPA. The level of community engagement will be dependent upon the type of development proposal and will be identified in the PPA.</p> <p>Local Communities Para.4.9 – the draft SCI should be amended to include the possibility of virtual exhibitions taking place at other times, not just in exceptional circumstances. Digital methods have proven to be a useful engagement tool, allowing people access to information at a time and place convenient to them. The use of a live chat facility at pre-published times enables queries to be posed and responded to in a similar way as a face to face conversation.</p> <p>How and who the Council consult on planning applications</p>	<p>The text has been amended to the following: Para. 4.9 It is recommended that pre-application consultation carried out by applicants with local communities should be in the form of meetings, presentations and/or exhibitions, <u>in person and in a digital format.</u></p>

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			<p>Table 4 – The Council should continue to use both Site Notices and Letters to adjoining properties for minor development, otherwise people may not see the site notice if they don't directly see it and miss the opportunity to comment.</p> <p>Having your say on planning applications</p> <p>It would be useful to include a telephone number at paragraph 4.18 of the SCI (2022) for the development management plan team, as seen in the 2015 SCI.</p>	<p>Table 4 sets out the statutory minimum which the Council would follow. The type of notification used would be based on suitability.</p> <p>The document sets out the ways in which comments can be submitted to the council. A new paragraph (para. 4.22) has been added which includes information on where to get assistance when responding to planning applications, as per below:</p> <p><u>4.22 For help when submitting comments on planning applications, further information is available at www.thurrock.gov.uk/planning-applications, or contact the Development Management Team at:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Email:</u> development.management@thurrock.gov.uk • <u>Phone: 01375 652652</u>
012	Forum		<p>Para. 4.8</p> <p>There has been a lack of willingness to engage with the community through the forums. It is a legal duty under the Localism Act 2011 for local planning authorities to consult with prescribed public bodies. Assumes that a registered</p>	<p>The council notifies and engages on planning applications in line with national legislation. Community forums are not considered to be prescribed public bodies and as such may not be contacted directly. However, the council publishes</p>

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			<p>forum constitutes such an organization. Questions whether residents are stakeholders.</p> <p>Para. 4.5 Please give details of pre application recommendations to Gothards Field development in East Tilbury, or examples where NPPF guidelines have been followed for early engagement with the community.</p> <p>Para. 5.9 Can a designated forum be set up and make a Neighbourhood Plan if there is no local plan in place, as this was advice given by planning.</p>	<p>a weekly and monthly list of planning applications which are available to view on its website. It is not the purpose of the SCI to set this out. Queries regarding specific applications can be sent to Development Management using the contact details set out within the SCI.</p> <p>A neighbourhood forum can be designated and it can prepare a neighbourhood plan whilst a new Local Plan is being prepared. A neighbourhood plan should be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan so if the neighbourhood plan comes before a new local plan it is recommended that the neighbourhood forum and council work together to ensure conflicting policies do not arise. This should avoid a situation where the neighbourhood plan becomes out of date as soon as the local plan is adopted.</p>
013	Individual		<p>It is not acceptable when considering planning applications that only immediate neighbours are informed when it affects others in the near vicinity. All planning applications should be sent to everyone affected.</p>	<p>The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015, including the amendments set out in Part 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Authority Consultations etc) (England) Order 2018, sets out the publicity and notification requirements for planning applications. Statutory requirements for notifications and consultation vary for different types of application, and the type of notification</p>

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				will be dependent on the nature of the application. In the case of major or controversial applications, where the Council considers there to be a wider impact resulting from a development proposal or where the Council is required, it will also display public site notices in proximity to the application site.
014	Individual		<p>Page 22 Questions why applications accompanied by EIA, not in accordance with the Development Plan or affecting a PRoW not have to have letters sent to neighbouring properties?</p> <p>Suggests that letters should be sent to adjoining properties where it is not guaranteed that site notices will be seen.</p>	The methods of consultation and notification for the different types of applications, as set out in Table 4, are based on national requirements and are the minimum that the council would do.
015	Individual		<p>Page 24 – 4.24 Reference to the public being allowed to speak at the meeting seems to indicate that anyone can attend the planning meetings and speak.</p> <p>Suggests the text “under certain conditions, a member of the public can speak for, and one against, the application.”</p>	<p>Comments noted. Anyone can attend a planning committee meeting and listen to the discussion. Anyone who has written to the Council about the planning application will be contacted when it is due to go to committee and told how they can speak at the committee.</p> <p>The text of the SCI has been amended to read <u>“Meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee are usually held every 4 weeks and members of the public who have written to the Council about one of the planning applications will be contacted and told how they can speak at the meeting.”</u></p>
016	Individual		<p>Page 24 – 4.21 Thinks that showing the commenter’s identity and address on the consultation portal is a negative.</p>	Comment noted. This is outside the scope of this consultation, but it has been raised with the relevant team with a request for further review.

Ref. No.	Consultee/ Organisation	Agent	Summary of Comments	Council's Response and Actions
			Thinks full details are provided to the Council when submitting comments, but they should not be publicized, as it may deter people from making valid and useful comments.	
017	Individual		Consultation needs to be comprehensive and better than currently undertaken, ensuring that it goes to all residents.	Comments noted.
018	Individual		<p>There is a lack of consultation at local level, in part due to the lack of any parish councils. There is also an assumption by some Council officials that they know what is best.</p> <p>Community Forums provide a ready made structure for consultations at ward level and these should be used more than they are at present. Forums have to play catch-up on submitted planning applications, which creates suspicions and cynicism in residents' minds and does the Council's reputation for transparency no good at all.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>The council notifies and engages on planning applications in line with national legislation. As such, forums may not be contacted directly. However, the council publishes a weekly and monthly list of planning applications which are available to view on its website.</p>

