



# The Planning Inspectorate

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Andrew Brown  
Minerals and Waste Planning Team  
Bedfordshire County Council  
Thornton Heath  
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Your Ref:  
Our Ref:LDF356  
Date: 03 August 2006

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Dear Andrew

## **BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT EXAMINATION – INSPECTOR’S REPORT**

I am pleased to enclose two copies of the draft report prepared by Inspector Wendy Burden BA(Hons) DIPTP MRTPI following the written representations examination to consider the soundness of Bedfordshire County Council Statement of Community Involvement.

On behalf of the Inspector I would like to thank your Authority for its assistance. I feel sure that this has helped the Inspector minimise the time taken to produce this report that in turn has made an effective contribution towards achieving the Inspectorate's objective of expediting its part of the overall Plan-preparation process.

Your Authority should now carry out a factual check of the draft report. Local Planning Authorities may request an amended report within 10 working days from the date of receipt of the Inspector's draft report, although such amendments must be confined to matters of clarification, or omissions, which need to be resolved. The final report, with amendments from the draft where necessary, will be issued to you without additional charge to the LPA, within 20 working days of the Inspector being asked to consider any amendments. If you do not require clarification, would you please inform the Planning Inspectorate by the end of the 10 day period that you are prepared to accept the draft report as the final version.

The report will be binding upon the Local Planning Authority and will give specific recommendations as to how the Statement of Community Involvement must be changed. I would be grateful if you could notify the Inspectorate beforehand of the



date on which the Inspector's final report is to be published. I also welcome, in due course, 2 copies of the adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

Yours sincerely

Bartosz Bartkowiak  
Local Developments Framework Team

**INSPECTOR'S REPORT**

**BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Inspector: Wendy Burden BA(Hons) DIPTP MRTPI

Date: 03 August 2006

# **Bedfordshire County Council's Statement of Community Involvement (16 June 2006)**

## **INSPECTOR'S REPORT**

### **Introduction**

- 1.1 An independent examination of the Bedfordshire County 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 35 representations were received all of which have been considered. The Council proposed a number of amendments to the SCI in response to representations received, and these have been taken into account in the preparation of this report. Further information was requested from the Council in relation to Test iv and vii and this information is contained in Appendix B to this Report.

### **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, and I am satisfied that this test is met.
- 2.2 This test is met.

### **Test 2**

- 3.1 The SCI explains in Paragraph 4.2 how 'Transforming Bedfordshire' and the 'Bedfordshire and Luton Compact' links to the Local Strategic Partnership, and how these existing initiatives will be utilised in the consultation on the DPDs. I am satisfied that the Council recognises the links between the strategies, the LDDs and the associated consultation exercises.
- 3.2 This test is met.

### **Test 3**

- 4.1 The Council has set out in section 4.1 of the SCI those groups which will be consulted. This list includes the statutory bodies from PPS12 Annex E with the exception of Network Rail which has been consulted but which is listed within a database of consultees. Network Rail should be included with the statutory bodies. This section also states that additional interested parties will be added to this Database on request. The re-organisation of certain consultation bodies should be acknowledged in the SCI and I recommend this be address.
- 4.2 Subject to the following recommendations this test is met.

### **Recommendations**

**R1)** Network Rail be moved from the 'list of database bodies contacted', p56 to the 'specific consultation body' list, p52.

**R2)** The following additional sentence be added at appendix G: "Please note, this list is not exhaustive and also relates to successor bodies where re-organisation occurs."

### **Test 4**

- 5.1 Section 5, and Tables 1 & 3, demonstrate that the Council will involve and inform people from the early stages of DPD preparation and Table 2, p16 sets out the range of methods the Council will employ to do this. It shows that consultation will take place with the key stakeholders during the issues and options stage of DPD production in accordance with Regulation 25. I am satisfied that providing these stages are followed the consultation proposed will be undertaken in a timely and accessible manner. However, the SCI does not address the issue of alternative site consultations which may occur if the DPD is concerned with allocations of land. The Council were asked to address this issue and I recommend the following proposed amendments be made:

**R3)** Insert into Table 1 stage 3 after "Submission of DPD":

"MDPD Alternative Site Consultation Stage

If we receive site specific representations at this time relating to land not identified in the Minerals and Waste Development Framework (called omission sites), they will be subject to a second round of consultation following the end of the initial six week period. This will also be for a six week period, of which all interested parties will be notified. "

Insert after the table:

"The proposers of alternative sites at this stage should have carried out strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal to demonstrate how their

proposed sites are more appropriate and sustainable than ones currently included in the plan.”

Insert into Table 3 after “Examination 1”:

DPD Production Stage	SA/SEA Stage	Who will be consulted	Consultation method and reasons for choice
Examination Alternative Site Proposals	Stage E Submission**	All specific consultation bodies. All other consultees on our contacts database.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal consultation period of 6 weeks</li> <li>• All specific consultees and other consultees on our database will be notified.</li> <li>• Formal notification published in local papers</li> <li>• Paper copies will be available at Council offices and libraries.</li> <li>• All documents will be posted on internet with feedback mechanism.</li> </ul>
Examination Alternative Site Proposals Documentation	Submission	All specific consultation bodies and other parties engaged in earlier stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report of all responses to Alternative Site Proposals</li> <li>• Notification to interested parties previously engaged</li> <li>• Publication on the internet.</li> </ul>

\*\* It is to be highlighted at stage E in the DPD Site Allocation Plan production the proposers of alternative sites should have carried out strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal to demonstrate how their proposed sites are more appropriate and sustainable than ones currently included in the plan.”

## **Test 5**

- 6.1 Tables 2, 3 and annex C set out the methods that the Council propose to use to involve the community and stakeholders. These cover a range of recognised consultation techniques that will present information via a range of different media. The Council acknowledges the benefits and disadvantages of the different methods and indicate at what stages of the LDD preparation the various methods might be employed. The Council clarify in section 4.3, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph the stages at which consultation will take place and who will be consulted at those stages.
- 6.2 The SCI acknowledges in paragraph 3.3 that the Council may have to provide extra support to facilitate consultation with certain groups or individuals. This paragraph explains how the Council will make their

information accessible to all members of society, and sets out how they will meet requirements of the Race Relations Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

6.3 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.

6.4 This test is met.

### **Test 6**

7.1 Section 6 of the SCI explains how the Council will seek to ensure that sufficient resources are put in place to achieve the scale of consultation envisaged. I am satisfied that the Council is alert to the resource implications of the SCI.

7.2 This test is met.

### **Test 7**

8.1 The Council were asked to expand on Section 5, p17 which was weak in defining how the results of community involvement would be taken into account and used to inform decisions. The Council propose to prepare reports at the end of the consultation period explaining how views have been considered and documents changed in light of the community involvement.

8.2 Subject to the following recommendation this test is met

### **Recommendation**

**R4)** Add after the second paragraph in the section entitled 'General point – Giving clear feedback' the following:

'We will be following the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and using Creating Local Development Frameworks: A Companion Guide to PPS12 in the preparation of our DPD's. For example, when analysing the representations to the Preferred Options for the DPD's, as required by Regulation 27, we will consider each representation, in particular:

- The weight of support and objection to the preferred options and proposed alternatives;
- Implications for the integrity of the development plan document's spatial vision and spatial objectives;
- Implications for the findings of the sustainability appraisal;
- Suggestions for rethinking particular options; and
- How they relate to the time and resources anticipated to produce the submission development plan document.

We will then write a response to each representation explaining how we have dealt with it and how it will affect the policies in the submission development plan document. We will use the sustainability appraisal to assess the representations, if necessary meet with those that made representations and then write a report setting out each representation and our responses for the public to view. This report will be on – line and available in paper format.

We are using consultation database computer software that contains all the information set out in the above mentioned Companion Guide Section 8c. This will contain all the responses received through all the consultation relating to the preparation of the Minerals and Waste DPD's and our responses from the Issues and Options stage through to Adoption. This database is on line and any of the information within it can be provided in paper format if required."

### **Test 8**

9.1 Paragraph 7.2 explains that the Council continuously monitors and reviews all consultation documents and that the SCI will be formally reviewed as part of this process. However no recognition is given to linkages with the Annual Monitoring Report and this should be included.

9.2 Subject to the following recommendation this test is met.

### **Recommendation**

**R5)** After Paragraph 7.2, '...preparation of this SCI.' insert the following text: "The success and effectiveness of the SCI will be reviewed through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

### **Test 9**

10.1 The SCI at Section 8, annexes D & E clearly describe the Council's policy for consultation on planning applications. Paragraph 8.1 meets the minimum requirements and provides additional methods of consultation. This distinguishes between procedures appropriate to different types and scale of application, and includes information on how the consultation results will inform decisions.

10.2 This test is met.

### **Other changes proposed by the Council**

11.1 The Council have set out a number of other proposed changes to the SCI in response to representations received on the submission document. These suggested amendments do not affect the substance of the SCI but they do improve the clarity and transparency of the document. I therefore agree that they be made. They are set out in this report at Appendix B.

### **Conclusions**

- 11.2 In the event of any doubt, please note that I am content for such matters, plus any minor spelling, formal, grammatical or factual matters to be amended by the Council, so long as this does not affect the substance of the SCI.
- 11.3 Subject to the recommendations set out in this report, the Bedfordshire County Council SCI (April 2006) is sound.

*Wendy J Burden BA DipTP MRTPI*

INSPECTOR