

**Consultation Report**

**Statement of Community Involvement  
and  
Code of Practice**

**(17<sup>th</sup> March – 17<sup>th</sup> April 2014)**

**Development and Regeneration Services**





This document can be supplied in alternative formats,  
please contact:

Sheffield City Council  
Sheffield Local Plan Team  
Tel: 0114 205 3075 Email: [local.plan@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:local.plan@sheffield.gov.uk)  
[www.sheffield.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/localplan)

## Contents

1. Introduction .....	1
What is the Statement of Community Involvement? .....	1
2. The Consultation .....	1
3. Overall Results .....	2
4. Schedule of Comments .....	3
SCI Comments .....	3
Code of Practice Comments .....	6
5. Appendix A: Stakeholder Workshop Notes .....	10
5:00-6:30pm Tuesday 1 <sup>st</sup> April, G42, Town Hall .....	10
Attendees .....	10
Proposed Changes to Consultation on Planning Applications & Policies .....	10
Comment and Questions about the Proposed SCI Changes .....	10
Matters other than the Proposed SCI Changes .....	11



## 1. Introduction

### What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

- 1.1. We place great importance on effective community involvement. We are committed to public engagement in the preparation of planning policy and we have long established procedures to give people a chance to express their views on planning applications.
- 1.2. The [Statement of Community Involvement](#) (SCI) reviews how we will involve communities, businesses and organisations in the preparation of local planning policies and on planning application decisions.

### What is the Code of Practice?

- 1.3. The Code of Practice is designed primarily to assist officers in the Planning Service to deliver the commitments set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), by giving more detailed, practical advice with illustrated examples of notification of planning applications.
- 1.4. The Code of Practice is not a statutory document like the SCI. It is published alongside the SCI so that any interested member of the public can see the guidance that officers are working to.

### The Purpose of the Consultation

- 1.5. Changes to Planning legislation means that there is no statutory obligation for us to consult on the SCI. We have consulted because of our commitment to community engagement and because of the number of changes since the previous version in 2006.
- 1.6. The purpose of the consultation was to gauge public opinion the Draft SCI and Code of Practice.

## 2. The Consultation

- 2.1. Comments were invited between 17<sup>th</sup> March and the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2014. We did the following to encourage comments:
  - Emailed Councillors;
  - Wrote (email or letter) to registered Local Plan and Development Management contacts;
  - Held a Stakeholder Workshop on 1st April in the Town Hall inviting Councillors, businesses, landowners and community representatives (see appendix a for the notes from the workshop);

- Made consultation documents available from our principal office<sup>1</sup>, our website and in alternative formats on request;
  - Used our [online consultation portal](#) for consultees and agents to make comments online;
  - Publicised the consultation through:
    - the Planning Service's [What's New](#) web page;
    - the Council's Twitter account (@SCC) and Planning Service's Twitter account (@SCC\_Planning\_BC);
    - the Council's email alert service
- 2.2. The intention is that this Consultation Report will accompany the report to Cabinet seeking approval to adopt the SCI.

### **3. Summary of Comments**

- 3.1. 34 comments were received. A summary of each comment with a proposed Council response is listed below in the Schedule of Comments. These do not include informal comments made at the Stakeholder Workshop (see Appendix A for the notes from the workshop). 18 out of 34 comments (53%) were objections.
- 3.2. SYPTE support the more concise document, more flexibility within the consultation process, "frontloading" consultation and greater use of electronic communication. They also recognise the need to make cost savings.
- 3.3. Loxley Valley Protection Society expressed concern about the lack of anonymity when commenting on planning applications. We will continue to review the balance between a transparent process and data protection, taking into account national best practice and the advice of the Information Commissioner.
- 3.4. Dore Village Society and the Green Party proposed more neighbour notification letters rather than less. For efficiency reasons we are instead proposing greater use of site notices. We also now provide a tracking service which will automatically email planning application updates to those that have registered for this service.
- 3.5. The Green Party supports the improvements in the visibility and use of site notices.
- 3.6. The Green Party objected to a wider consultation not being triggered if the application may result in the closure of use that provides an important shopping or community role not trigger. We agree and in response have added this to the list of application types for wider consultation in the Code of Practice. The list will also be kept under review to ensure that it effectively captures developments that are likely to generate significant community interest.

---

<sup>1</sup> First Point at Howden House on Union Street.

## 4. Schedule of Comments

4.1. Formal comments are summarised in the schedule below. Comments made at the Stakeholder Workshop are noted in Appendix A.

### SCI Comments

Summary of Comment	Respondent	Proposed Council Response	Change to Document
<b>Support:</b> Agrees with the changes.	Mr Dan Sellers (SCI14)	Support noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Support:</b> Creating a shorter and more streamlined document, as this allows for more flexibility within the consultation process.	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SCI15)	Support noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Support:</b> Understand the need to realign consultation processes in light of resource efficiencies and effective best practice.	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SCI15)	Support noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Observation:</b> Liaising with public transport operators is important, especially on major developments.	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SCI15)	Agree	No change proposed.
<b>Observation:</b> Passenger Transport Executives are not statutory consultees under current Planning legislation. SYPTE and the Transport for Sheffield City Region will have specific requests from large developments to ensure that the impact on the current transport network is mitigated. SYPTE should be mentioned as a consultee for local plans and planning applications.	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SCI15)	SYPTE is listed as a consultee in Appendix B of the SCI 2014. We consult in on planning applications in accordance with a memorandum of understanding between SYPTE and Sheffield City Region LPAs.	No change proposed.
<b>Support:</b> Extended consultation for significant planning documents.	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SCI15)	Support noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Support:</b> Continued commitment to 'frontloading' consultation on planning documents.	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SCI15)	Support noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Support:</b> Greater use of electronic communication. It is more efficient for SYPTE and for them to share with	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport	Support noted.	No change proposed.



Summary of Comment	Respondent	Proposed Council Response	Change to Document
their stakeholders.	Executive (SCI15)		
<b>Support:</b> Making reference to Planning Briefs.	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SCI15)	Support noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Observation:</b> Proposed changes to consultation on planning applications have minor relevance to SYPTE.	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SCI15)	Observation noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Observation:</b> Any planning application that is likely to impact on our infrastructure e.g. bus shelter should be highlighted to SYPTE as early as possible.	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SCI15)	The SCI is primarily about public engagement and does not set out all consultation commitments to other agencies. The Planning Service has service level agreements with most external agencies, including SYPTE. We consult in accordance with a memorandum of understanding between SYPTE and Sheffield City Region LPAs.	No change proposed
<b>Support:</b> Pre-application discussions and where possible continued liaison prior to application submission should be maintained.	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SCI15)	Support noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Object:</b> Unhappy with online planning submission e.g. IKEA: many comments only had an email address and as such should not be considered.	Mr Stephen Dodds (SCI17)	The Council is required by law to accept online planning applications. The Planning Service does not accept any representations submitted with only an e-mail address and requires a name and address as part of a transparent and open process.	No change proposed
<b>Object:</b> Libraries are proposed for holding planning documents so an alternative is needed if a library closes. Alternative needs the accessibility by users of public transport both in travel time, expense, and opening hours.	Mr Stephen Dodds (SCI17)	In practice holding consultation documents on deposit is restricted to suitable properties with public access, such as a library or First Point. Our website provides another option. Publicising a consultation can and has been done on other types of premises e.g. local supermarket.	No change proposed
<b>Object:</b> Current website lacks traffic orders, TRO's.	Mr Stephen Dodds (SCI17)	This is not a planning function and not related to this consultation.	No change proposed
<b>Object:</b> Tinsley Link consultation 3 years ago did not include effect on public transport.	Mr Stephen Dodds (SCI17)	This is not a planning function and not related to this consultation.	No change proposed
<b>Object:</b> Given Sheffield's Gypsy and Traveller populations, it is disappointing to find that no mention of	National Federation of Gypsy Liaison	The section on community profile has been removed as it is better left to annual reports such as the "The State of	No change proposed

Summary of Comment	Respondent	Proposed Council Response	Change to Document
these groups is mentioned in the Community Profile, or in Section 4 "hard to reach groups" or in Section 9 relating to Social inclusion.	Groups (SCI24)	Sheffield". "Hard to Reach Groups" and "Social Inclusion" is covered under "Ensuring Equalities". The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups is registered as a consultee for new planning policies and will be consulted on proposed planning policies as it was for this consultation.	
<b>Support:</b> The majority of this document is clear, concise and covers all the relevant issues.	Loxley Valley Protection Society (SCI25)	Support noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Object:</b> <i>Personal Information on the Internet</i> (3.27 p16): Concerned about the lack of anonymity in the scanning of objections on the web site. It leads to fear of intimidation and could deter people from objecting. Recently made even more transparent by the names of those who comment being put on the document list. If names and addresses are provided, to show objectors are genuine, there should be a choice on whether names are shown on the web site. The personalities involved are not a planning issue and not all local authorities publish these details.	Loxley Valley Protection Society (SCI25)	The SCI explains how the Council strikes a balance between ensuring that the planning application process is transparent and open (minimising the risk of corruption or undue influence on planning decisions), whilst doing everything possible to protect individual's personal data and protection from possible identity theft. Anonymous objections are not acceptable, other than in the exceptional circumstances explained on the Council web site, such as where a member of the public is the subject of personal harassment. Our approach will be kept under review, taking into account national best practice and the advice of the Information Commissioner. An example of this is that discussions with the Council's software supplier are taking place with a view to removing individual representations from the planning application files on the Council web site after an application has been determined and the public interest case for transparency is reduced.	No change proposed, but practice will be kept under review, taking into account national best practice and the advice of the Information Commissioner.
<b>Object:</b> The Woodland Trust should be added to the list of organisations which the Council may consult.	The Woodland Trust (SCI29)	We have over 2,000 consultees so the list in the appendix is not exhaustive. The Woodland Trust is registered as a consultee for new planning policies and will be consulted on proposed planning policies as it was for this consultation.	No change proposed.
<b>Observation:</b> Darnall Forum can provide effective and low-cost assistance with consultation but it will need	Darnall Forum (SCI30)	The SCI states that developers will be asked to fund community consultation at the pre-application stage and	No change proposed, but Darnall Forum offer noted.

Summary of Comment	Respondent	Proposed Council Response	Change to Document
funding.		whilst the Council can give guidance on how this might be achieved, it will be up to developers what they choose to do, with the proviso that little weight will be given to the results if they do not meet the SCI tests of a valid consultation process.	

### Code of Practice Comments

Summary of Comment	Respondent	Proposed Council Response	Change to Document
<b>Observation:</b> The Environment Agency now <a href="#">charges for some planning advice</a> .	Environment Agency (SCI23)	Observation noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Object:</b> The electronic presentation of drawings does not permit an adequate means of assessing the scale of plans. Paper plans should be available for inspection at Howden House.	Dore Village Society (SCI2)	Until recently, most drawings published online included an integrated scaling tool, but not all. All plans that need to be are to scale. New scanning processes introduced from April 2014 integrate a standard measuring tool in all plans. There is no legal requirement for applicants to provide paper plans, the Planning Service cannot afford to print plans and make them available at Howden House and there is no significant demand for this service any more.	No change proposed, but investment made to improve electronic presentation and scaling of plans from April 2014.
<b>Object:</b> Consultation of adjoining neighbours is inconsistent and neighbours on all boundaries of the application property have not always been consulted. A neighbour consultation plan submitted on a location plan with the application would be useful.	Dore Village Society (SCI3)	Some inconsistency in neighbour notification (over and above SCI commitments) was found as part of this review. The new guidance, together with staff training, is designed to improve on that. We commit to notifying affected neighbours that have adjoining boundaries, not neighbours on all boundaries. We do publish a plan (and list) of all neighbours consulted for every application and have recently improved the quality.	No change proposed as neighbour consultation plan already provided, but measures in hand to improve consistency.
<b>Object:</b> Extensions to dwellings and infill housing development can affect neighbours wider afield than those adjoining. Neighbours in adjoining streets may be affected and site notices are not usually displayed there.	Dore Village Society (SCI4)	Agree that development impacts can extend beyond immediate neighbours, and the proposed changes would see greater use of site notices rather than more letters.	No change proposed.
<b>Object:</b> The Code of Practice refers to re-consultation	Dore Village Society	The SCI commits to re-consultation in defined situations	No change proposed. A

Summary of Comment	Respondent	Proposed Council Response	Change to Document
but where amendments to plans are made this does not necessarily take place. Applicants and interested third parties are not notified where drawings are amended and where the LPA is minded to refuse the application.	(SC15)	where there is a legitimate public interest need and the resulting delay to the applicant is justified. It is now possible to receive automatic email notification of all application changes, by requesting the tracking service on the web site, so anyone can request to be notified of every amendment to the application file.	tracking service is available to provide automatic e-mail notification or all amendments.
<b>Object:</b> Where drawings are amended neighbours and interested third parties that have made initial representations should be notified of and permitted an extended period of consultation.	Dore Village Society (SC16)	Where significant amendments justify a further consultation we do set an extended consultation period. (See also response above)	No change proposed (extended consultation periods are provided).
<b>Object:</b> To any reduction in neighbour notification via letter, in particular the proposed reduction in the number of properties either side of a development that are to be notified as part of a wider notification. Neighbour notification should be extended up to 8 properties neighbouring the application site and those directly opposite.	The Green Party (SC119)	Under the existing SCI and at current application levels, the Planning Service is printing and posting around 54,000 neighbour notification letters a year at an annual cost of around £40,000. The statutory minimum requirement is to send no letters at all, provided a single site notice is posted. It is clear that many people find out about larger scale or more controversial planning applications from the Council web site and local media, and that site notices can also help. The Planning Service is sending many more letters than is necessary, which is inefficient and not environmentally sound. Extending neighbour notification to 8 properties either side of an application site cannot be resourced and is not justified.	No change proposed
<b>Object:</b> The list of developments that would trigger a wider consultation is too limited. Where new development has a potential for impact upon community this needs to include potential impact upon local shops or businesses that residents may rely upon. It should include developments that are likely to generate significant community interest.	The Green Party (SC120)	This list is in the Code of Practice and will be kept under review to ensure that it effectively captures developments that are likely to generate significant community interest. It is agreed to add to the list the following development type – ‘Potential closure of use that provides a critical shopping or community role’.	Development type added to list for wider consultation in Code of Practice
<b>Support:</b> Improvements in the visibility and use of site notices.	The Green Party (SC121)	Support noted.	No change proposed.
<b>Object:</b> Proposes extending the notification via email of residents who have registered an interest in local	The Green Party (SC122)	Tracking service already available and being used, but as software improves, the tracking and automatic notification	No change proposed, but Already provided and

Summary of Comment	Respondent	Proposed Council Response	Change to Document
planning applications.		of interested parties by e-mail can be expected to improve further. This is rapidly evolving area of software development outside the scope of the SCI and Code of Practice commitments.	recognised as reasonable that the e-mail service should be improved as software improves and is installed.
<b>Object:</b> The Code of Practice refers to re-consultation but where amendments to plans are made this does not necessarily take place. It seems to be common practice that the initial application (if it is likely to attract a number of comments) is deliberately less controversial, knowing that subsequent amendments are more likely to go through uncontested. We could tighten up on this practice and insist on only the most minor amendments after the initial submission. This would be particularly important where the development affects a conservation area.	Mr Phil Shaddock (SCI16)	Re-consultation takes place according to the defined criteria. There is no evidence to support the assertion that it is common practice for applicants to deliberately submit less controversial proposals and subsequently amend them as they are more likely to go through uncontested. Any amendments to an application that significantly change the application description, site, layout or design require a new application. Only minor amendments and improvements that are responding to representations are not subject to further consultation. There are additional statutory processes where applications affect a conservation area.	No change proposed
<b>Object:</b> Where households have commented on a previous application, if an application is resubmitted for that site, all previous objectors should be informed, not just immediate neighbours. This could mostly be done by email. In cases where this would involve too many letters, a site notice should be put up, in addition to informing close neighbours.	Loxley Valley Protection Society (SCI25)	If there has been a recent similar application in the previous three years, this will be examined and any community groups/elected representatives that might possibly still have an interest, including the secretary/chair of an action group and the organizer of a petition will also be notified. Wider notification will be in accordance with current commitments, not a repeat of historic practices. (Code of Practice) Site notices will be used. Every application is different and you can't rely on the same people living at the same address or be using the same e-mail address. In the past, this approach has led to many hundreds of letters being sent unnecessarily. In the future, CRM (a Customer Relationship Management system) may be developed and linked to the Council's application software to enable a more sophisticated level of personal notification to be carried out, but it will not be available in the immediate future.	No change proposed
<b>Object:</b> In practical terms neighbour consultation dates	Loxley Valley	Consultation periods are set by statute in most cases and	No changes proposed

Summary of Comment	Respondent	Proposed Council Response	Change to Document
should match when neighbours are informed, and consultation times should take account of bank holidays etc.	Protection Society (SCI25)	it is unavoidable that letters are received a few days into the consultation period. The periods allow for weekends and bank holidays. Later representations are still considered where possible and common sense is applied, by avoiding early decisions over the main holiday periods, where possible and appropriate.	

# Appendix A: Stakeholder Workshop Notes

5:00-6:30pm Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April, G42, Town Hall

## Attendees

Graham Withers, Business Manager, Development Management, SCC  
Laurie Platt, Planning Officer, Forward & Area Planning, SCC  
Mavis Butler, Bradfield Parish Council  
Ted Gunby, Carter Knowle & Millhouses Community Group  
Ann Le Sage, Friends of Porter Valley  
Chris Morgan, Bradway Action Group  
Andrew Tabor, Bradway Action Group  
Kevin Pullan, Pullan Homes  
Stephen Wilson

## Proposed Changes to Consultation on Planning Applications & Policies

Presentation slides are in the attached document.



Adobe Acrobat  
Document

## Comment and Questions about the Proposed SCI Changes

Having the date on the site notice saying when it can be removed is useful.

Q: Sometimes a second application quickly follows a first and there's nothing to highlight the changes on the second site notice. Why can't a second site notice be printed on a different colour of paper or printed with the title in a different colour or in italics to highlight a change from a previous application? Otherwise the public may not realise that it is a different notice from the one before.

A: We will consider this suggestion, although there would be additional costs associated with the use of colour.

Q: What if a site notice is vandalised or removed?

A: The Case Officer will check and replace site notices as necessary during any site visits. We also replace any vandalised or removed notices when this is reported. Plus we're proposing more site notices, so if one is removed another is still likely to raise awareness.

Q: Is it the Case Officer that puts up the site notices?

A: Yes, usually it is and this is encouraged. It's in the Case Officer's own interest to get the site notices correct and by putting up their own they're able to learn from any mistakes they make.

Q: Why can't you put names on the neighbour notification letters to prevent them being mistaken for a circular and discarded?

A: Occupier data is never 100% accurate and up to date, and a wrongly named

letter may be even more likely to be discarded. Adding names to the letters would also require more resources. It might be in the future that the data is more accurate and available, but at the moment this isn't feasible. However, we are experimenting with alternatives first address lines that make clearer what the content of the letter is.

Q: For rented properties it's unlikely that a neighbour notification letter will reach the owner of the property.

A: Yes this is an issue, notification is not 100% effective if the owner can't rely on the occupier to share the information with them. However, an owner can register their interest in specific properties or areas through our [Planning Applications Online](#) service and this will trigger notification by email.

Q: Strongly against early Councillor involvement in pre-application discussions because it makes it even more difficult for a member of the public to influence a planning application.

A: Early Councillor involvement doesn't happen often but is recognised as best practice and is encouraged by the Government. The Councillors early involvement does not provide a definitive view but provides the democratic process with early influence. It can prevent a scheme developing in one direction only for it to need a major change as soon as local Councillors add their knowledge of the local area. The SCI also encourages the developer to involve the community at pre-application stage, with Council support.

Q: Why weren't we consulted about the [decision](#) not to submit the [City Policies and Sites](#) to Government?

A: We reported on the pre-submission consultation to Cabinet in December 2013. The lack of a five-year housing supply was highlighted by the consultation. This plus evidence from the Planning Inspectorate and decisions being taken by Inspectors on emerging Local Plans elsewhere in the country meant there was little prospect of the document being found sound.

## **Matters other than the Proposed SCI Changes**

Q: What are the criteria for deciding what goes to committee?

A: For planning applications the criteria are where:

- a) the proposal is a major opportunity for development that represents a significant regeneration opportunity for the City;
- b) the decision would represent a significant departure from policy;
- c) the Council's policy position is unclear or difficult to determine;
- d) the decision would be in conflict with a substantial number of representations made on planning grounds and where the outcome is not clearly predetermined by approved planning policy;
- e) the matter relates to an application submitted by or on behalf of an officer of the Local Planning Authority or a Member of the Planning and Highways Committee where the matter relates to the exercise of a planning function.

Q: Why don't we develop all the brownfield land for housing before we develop on greenfield land?

A: The current Government/market conditions have placed a greater emphasis on viability therefore making it more difficult to develop on brownfield land. We still intend that brownfield land will form the majority of development, but maybe not as high as the current [88% policy](#).



Other comments:

- Sometimes brownfield land is considered as an unsustainable location for housing because of the lack of supporting facilities.
- There should be sequential release of housing sites.
- I didn't receive notification when there was a planning application nearby.

This page is intentionally left blank