

SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report of: The South East Lincolnshire Joint Policy Unit Manager

To: South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee –
5 April 2013

(Author: Peter Udy, Forward Planning Officer, Boston Borough Council)

Subject: Consultation Strategy for the Preferred Options stage of the
Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document (part of the
South East Lincolnshire Local Plan)

Purpose: To seek approval of the Preferred Options Consultation Strategy

Recommendations:

- a) That members consider the contents of this report; and
- b) That the Preferred Options Consultation Strategy be approved, with or without revisions.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 There is a duty to consult the public in the preparation of Local Plan documents and to seek to reach the hard-to-reach groups. The South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee's (Joint Committee's) adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out our approach to public consultation and requires:

- formal consultation exercises to be advertised with notices in the press and on the Boston Borough Council (BBC), South Holland District Council (SHDC) and South East Lincolnshire Local Plan websites;
- notices to be placed in local newsletters, newspapers and public buildings;
- email and letter communication to be sent to statutory and non-statutory consultees;
- the consideration of using social media;
- the use of local radio;
- documents, with summary leaflets, to be available at the BBC and SHDC offices and in local libraries; and
- manned exhibitions and other events, as appropriate, to be held to promote understanding and discussion.

1.2 The proposed consultation strategy set out below is our methodology for fulfilling the requirements of the SCI in respect of the Preferred Options stage of the preparation of the Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD), which, once adopted, will form part of South East Lincolnshire Local Plan. Once approved, this consultation strategy will provide evidence at the Local Plan examination on how we have consulted the public on the draft 'Preferred Options document'.

2.0 PROPOSED CONSULTATION STRATEGY

- 2.1 In considering the SCI and the contents of the emerging Preferred Options document, members were concerned that the means of consultation should be extensive, simple to understand and maximise opportunities for involvement. There was also widespread recognition that the emerging consultation document was both long and complicated and that measures were required to address this issue.

The Preferred Options Consultation Documents

- 2.2 A short and longer summary of the full Preferred Options document will be prepared to accompany the main document to improve understanding and foster discussion and involvement.

The Consultation Period

- 2.3 The statutory consultation period has to be a minimum of six weeks. It is proposed to undertake an eight-week consultation period ending on 28th June 2013 to allow more time for comment after the planned exhibitions in May have finished and to provide time to arrange further meetings if these are requested.

Advertisement

- 2.4 The document will be advertised on, and be available from, the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan website with adverts and links from the BBC and SHDC websites.
- 2.5 There will be publicity throughout the consultation period using local newspapers and radio stations, council newsletters, information screens in the BBC and SHDC office receptions and social-networking sites.
- 2.6 Posters and leaflets will be sent to doctors' surgeries, hospitals, secondary schools, colleges, small retail outlets in villages and parish clerks for display locally as well as the exhibition venues.
- 2.7 It is proposed to hand out leaflets at Asda and Tesco in Boston, Morrisons in Pinchbeck, Sainsbury's in Spalding, and Tesco in Holbeach to publicise the consultation events.
- 2.8 All the parish magazine editors within South East Lincolnshire have been provided with a notice for placement in their magazines advising of the forthcoming consultation in order to raise awareness.

Locations where the documents will be available

- 2.9 Exhibitions will be displayed in the reception areas of both the BBC and SHDC offices for the whole consultation period with copies of the full document, summaries and response forms. The exhibitions will be based on the information provided in the short summary document, i.e. the main proposals, details of consultation events, how to get further information and how to respond.
- 2.10 A copy of the full document with summaries and response forms will be available in all the libraries in South East Lincolnshire (Boston, Crowland, Donington, Holbeach, Kirton, Long Sutton, Pinchbeck, Spalding), two mobile libraries that operate in the area and one access van that visits the house bound.
- 2.11 All parish councils will be provided with a suite of consultation documents.

Exhibition venues

- 2.12 Manned exhibitions will be held for 4 hours between 3pm and 7pm at facilities in Butterwick, Crowland, Deeping St Nicholas, Donington, Gedney Hill, Holbeach, Kirton, Long Sutton, Old Leake, Pinchbeck, Sutterton, Sutton Bridge, Swineshead and Wyberton. These have been arranged for the first half of the consultation period, between the 7th and 24th May.

Hard-to-Reach Groups and other arrangements

- 2.13 The table in the SCI on 'hard-to-reach groups' has been updated and the mail list checked to see that we have the most relevant contacts for the groups listed. These, along with all others on the database, will be contacted by letter/email.
- 2.14 There are Youth Councils operating in Boston Borough and South Holland District and we are investigating how they may be used to make contact with a wider range of young people across South East Lincolnshire.
- 2.15 A workshop with relevant developers and infrastructure providers will be held during the consultation period.

The Website

- 2.16 The full Preferred Options document, the summary documents and response form will be on the South East Lincolnshire website (with links from the BBC and SHDC websites), and interested parties will be able to download the various documents and submit comments in paper form. They will also have the option to make online comments on the Preferred Options document with the ability to have a print-out of their comments and an email alert to any other comments made on their area of interest. In addition, when reading the summary documents, online links will be available to the same topic in the full Preferred Options document so that more detail can be obtained if required.

3.0 OPTIONS

3.1 Members can accept the contents of the Proposed Consultation Strategy or require amendments to it.

4.0 VIEWS OF THE HEAD OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL AND THE PLANNING MANAGER, BRECKLAND AND SOUTH HOLLAND COUNCILS

4.1 The Head of Built Environment and Development at Boston Borough Council has indicated that he will offer his views at the meeting.

4.2 The Planning Manager, Breckland and South Holland Councils states: 'The proposed consultation strategy for the Local Plan is fully supported and is in accordance with the agreed Statement of Community Involvement. The eight week consultation period is a robust timeframe to give all parties sufficient time to consider their responses and as the report sets out there is a good range of consultation methods being deployed which go beyond the legal minimum requirements for consultation. Members' attention is drawn to the commitment to hold a workshop with developers and infrastructure providers which will be key to testing the delivery of the Plan. In addition to the consultation, the Committee will also be advised as the document progresses on how the Duty to Cooperate with neighbouring authorities as set out in the Localism Act 2011 is being met. This is a relatively new requirement and will focus on ensuring that cross-boundary issues are understood and agreed. Parts of the evidence base for South East Lincolnshire have already been prepared in cooperation with neighbouring Councils.'

5.0 VIEWS OF OTHER CONSULTEES

5.1 The Strategic Planning Manager, Lincolnshire County Council, has been consulted and has offered no comments.

5.2 The Monitoring Officer representative for Boston Borough Council and Lincolnshire County Council has been consulted and has offered no comments.

5.3 The Monitoring Officer for South Holland District Council has been consulted and has offered no comments.

5.4 The s151 Officer for Boston Borough Council has been consulted and has offered no comments.

5.5 The s151 Officer for Lincolnshire County Council has been consulted and has offered no comments.

5.6 The s151 Officer for Breckland and South Holland District Councils has been consulted and has offered no comments.

6.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Members have requested full details of the approach to public consultation on the Preferred Options document for their consideration and approval.

7.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS AND TIMELINES

7.1 This report deals with a statutory public consultation exercise, lasting eight weeks, relating to the preparation of a development plan document under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended. The purpose of the public consultation exercise is to seek comments in response to the contents of the Preferred Options document, the results of which will be used to inform the preparation of a draft Strategy and Policies DPD for submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Carbon Footprint & Environmental Issues

8.1.1 There are no carbon footprint and environmental issues.

8.2 Constitution & Legal

8.2.1 There are no legal issues.

8.3 Contracts

8.3.1 A hire agreement was completed for the Curlew Centre in Sutton Bridge and the Market House in Long Sutton. Other venues were phone bookings.

8.4 Crime and Disorder

8.4.1 There are no crime and disorder implications to this report.

8.5 Equality and Diversity & Human Rights

8.5.1 The consultation strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Joint Committee's SCI. This requires us to seek to cater for, and engage with, all sections of the community in preparing our plans, in particular those groups which have been underrepresented in previous consultation exercises (the so-called 'hard-to-reach' groups). Our documents will be available in a range of formats (upon request) and in a range of locations. The use of jargon will be minimised but where it is appropriate to use it, clear explanations will be provided.

8.5.2 The consultation venues are mostly on the ground floor and, if not, there is lift access.

8.6 Financial

8.6.1 The cost of hiring rooms will be met from existing Boston Borough Council and South Holland District Council budgets held for the purpose of Local Plan preparation, and will be in the order of £500. In addition, there will be, as yet, unknown in-house printing costs. It is not intended to go to external printers at this stage of preparing the Strategy and Policies DPD.

8.7 Risk Management

8.7.1 The risk is cancellation of exhibition venues owing to the consultation not being ready.

8.8 Staffing

8.8.1 The current staff at BBC and SHDC will attend the consultation events.

8.9 Stakeholders / Consultation

8.9.1 This report is about undertaking a public consultation exercise.

9.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

9.1 All wards are affected by the consultation although not all will have an exhibition. Given the nature of this exercise, the report author did not consider this report to give rise to a key decision.

Background papers:- None

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Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A - Summary Documents (to follow)