

13 August 2018

Report of	Assistant Director: Corporate & Policy	Author	Sean Tofts ☎ 508639
Title	Statement of Community Involvement consultation summary and adoption request		
Wards affected	All		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report follows the completed consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The report summarises the responses from stakeholders during the 6 week consultation that was conducted between the 28th of March and the 9th of May 2018. The consultation draft SCI was predominantly undertaken due to changes within emerging national policy that needed to be reflected at the Borough level.
- 1.2 Officers consider the document to be appropriate for adoption subject to the correction of some minor formatting areas.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To adopt the proposed Statement of Community Involvement 2018 as shown in Appendix One.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 Officers has have considered the consultation responses and found no significant objections to the contents of the SCI.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Committee could decide not to update the Statement of Community Involvement but this would conflict with national regulations and may undermine plan making in the borough.
- 4.2 The Committee could alternatively propose amendments to the proposed Statement of Community Involvement.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Council approved the draft Colchester SCI 2018 on the 19th of March and agreed to undertake public consultation. The document was subject to consultation between the 28th of March and the 9th of May 2018. The SCI required updating to be compliant with regulations under the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 which were laid before Parliament on 13 December 2017, and, subject to parliamentary procedures will be brought into force this year.
- 5.2 A brief summary of the amendments to the document that were included within the consultation draft are highlighted below:

- A new chapter with specific regard to Neighbourhood Planning;
- A concise explanation of Neighbourhood Planning;
- An explanation of the consultation process in relation to Neighbourhood Plans (including table of time frames);
- Support and guidance that will be provided by the Council in relation to Neighbourhood Plans.

- 5.3 For further information on the changes to the regulation please see the committee report pertaining to the SCI for the 19th of March 2018.
- 5.4 Further to the requirement to update the Colchester SCI this process has also provided an opportunity to ensure that the information in relation to community involvement for the development management process was accurate. Minor amendments have been made to text to ensure the document accurately reflects the current procedures. The process has also allowed for the document to be restructured to make it clear and concise. It has also been reformatted to reflect the document style of other Local Plan documents.

Consultation Process and Response

- 5.5 Emails and letters were sent out to consultees prior to the commencement of the consultation and the Council's website was updated to highlight the dates of the consultation. Further to this hard copies of the draft SCI were on display at the Colchester Library and available from Rowan House. Several telephone calls were answered prior to and during the consultation by officers and several requests were met to have printed copies of the document sent out.
- 5.6 12 responses were received to the consultation and are included in full (with redactions as required) in Appendix 2. Due to the nature of the document and the scope of changes being sought through the consultation draft the level of response expected to such a consultation is relatively low.
- 5.7 It is noted that some of the responses offered little commentary upon the SCI itself and focused upon a view that this document forms part of a wider 'tick box' exercise.
- 5.8 Officers note that none of the responses proposed any specific revisions to the SCI document prior to adoption by the Council.
- 5.9 Minor amendments have been made to the document including the deletion of the section in relation to the consultation process. This was only intended to be included for the consultation draft. A formatting error noted with regard to paragraph numbering has also been corrected.

Post Adoption

- 5.10 If adopted the Colchester SCI will be published on the Council Website and become part of the adopted evidence base; superseding the existing version of the document. The new SCI will provide clarity on the extent of community involvement that will take place. It will also set out clear consultation procedures and standards that the Council will follow when undertaking consultations on draft planning policy documents and when planning applications are received.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Plan, and is available to view by clicking on this link:- <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/12745/Policy-and-Corporate>

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The Council's Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 includes a key priority concerning Responsibility. The Statement of Community Involvement provides an opportunity under this theme for residents to get involved in their communities through the planning process.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The document has been subject to a six-week public consultation exercise. The Council's website carried full details of the Draft Document and responses were made electronically and in writing. Officers also spoke to several respondents via telephone and the document was available to view at Colchester Library and from the Council's offices. All responses have been considered without prejudice in the compiling of this report.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 If adopted the SCI2018 will be published upon the Council's website.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 There are no financial implications for the Council

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 There are no community safety implications for the Council.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 There are no health and safety implications for the Council.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 Adopting the Statement of Community Involvement will reduce the risk of the Council failing to adhere to the most recent regulations.

Appendices

- Consultation Responses
- Proposed Final Draft of the Colchester Statement of Community Involvement 2018

Appendix One: Consultation Responses

Chelmsford City Council Response to Colchester Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement Consultation – 2018

Thank you for consulting Chelmsford City Council (CCC) on the Consultation Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This Council considers that the draft is clear and comprehensive and notes the anticipated adoption in Summer 2018.

This Council notes the recognition that as part of the statutory Duty to Cooperate, neighbouring councils and other relevant organisations must work together on strategic planning issues that affect them all as outlined in the Regulations and will continue to support the principle of engagement as set out in the SCI.

The Council notes the commitment to produce separate development plan documents (DPD) for each of the new proposed Garden Communities and that the consultations on the plans for the Garden Community will have regard to the revised SCI.

The Council notes the new section referencing Neighbourhood Plans and support offered in preparing new neighbourhood plans.

Chelmsford City Council will continue to actively engage with Colchester Borough Council on each other's respective Local Plans.

Whilst the content of this document is laudable, there is absolutely no reason to believe that Colchester Council will pay any attention to it when finalised.

It is meant to explain how the Community will be involved & engaged in the Garden Communities and other Planning issues.

Why are Colchester Council even considering it, when for the last 3 years the Council has totally ignored all responses from the public on all matters with the 3 Garden Communities? Does anyone actually think Colchester Council will properly consider and act on the responses of the public as claimed in the SCI? The public are tired of responding to consultations when they know their responses will be ignored as seen in the recent Issue & Options consultation, extended on the very last day to give a 12 week period, presumably to try and boost the number of responses. It achieved only 725 responses via the portal for the 3 Garden Communities and if the original 10 week period had been maintained, then there would have been less than 400 responses. By comparison about 3000 responses were received in the summer 2016 consultation for the Garden Communities.

Philip Jellard

Sir/Madam,

The 'Statement of Community Involvement' is no more than a tick-box exercise. Change is needed in the way the council interacts with residents. The steps taken by the council to date, and outlined in this consultation, do not go far enough.

The West Tey proposal demonstrates that a complete review of the way that Colchester Borough engages with residents is required. An 8,500-signature petition has been ignored. Thousands of responses to consultations run by Colchester over the past three years have been ignored. Letters to the press and talks in the public question time at Local Plan meetings, Cabinet meetings and Full Council meetings have been ignored. Representations forwarded by the MPs have been ignored.

It is time to move from 'Consult & Ignore' and to start listening to your residents.

Regards

Carly Byrne

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Yours,

Siobhan Clarke

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Kind regards

Mark Champion

The 'Statement of Community Involvement' is not a valid document because the council does not interact with residents with a genuine intention of taking on board comments. I have seen comments by the council claiming that 1000 responses is good and there are various positive comments about providing infrastructure. Nothing about the majority of comments being negative.

The West Tey consultation to date demonstrates that a complete review of the way that Colchester Borough engages with residents is required. Letters to the press and talks in the public question time at Local Plan meetings, Cabinet meetings and Full Council meetings and representations forwarded by the MPs have been ignored.

We have a new route for the A12 being proposed through Copford ahead of the Part 1 examination report, and now we have John Spence stating on BBC Look East that the A12 is being rerouted around the new town. And Paul Smith stating that building a new part of the A12 is actually cheaper than widening the existing. Where is the evidence of that questionable claim and why is the due process being ignored by these people? This is pure arrogance and flagrant disregard of a democratic process.

The Localism Act 2011 states the following aims:

- new freedoms and flexibilities for local government
- new rights and powers for communities and individuals
- reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective and ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

It appears to have succeeded on the first point but the rest is directly undermined by the council's actions. It is time for you to consider and address the remainder of these three points.

Regards

Neil Gilbranch

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Yours Sincerely,
Rebecca Greene.

Dear sirs and madam, I wrote to you about this subject because u believe that the head of the council has no intention to respect his constituent's wishes. He seems to believe in a legacy. Unfortunately all the current administration will be known for is one of getting us into debt over the proposed garden communities.

These exercises are only viable if the council actually engages and listens.

Many thanks
Spencer Carter

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I look forward to your response and also voting on May 3rd.

Kind regards,
Julie Hitchcock

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Thus far all councils - Colchester, Essex and Braintree, seem intent on giving preference to future residents whoever they might be at the expense of existing ones.

Rights of way are simply suspended, the countryside is being systematically shut off already.

What exactly do you believe you are creating in North East Essex?

Yours James Millar

Dear Sir/Madam,
West Tey Garden Village

I write against the proposed destruction of green belt areas in West Tey and beyond with regard to the so called "garden villages". I doubt there will be anything "garden" about it and the local area cannot sustain that amount of house building. These will not be "affordable" homes for local people but just a commuter area for those moving out of London.

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Yours faithfully

Mrs Heather Jewson

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The horrendous West Tey proposal demonstrates that a complete review of the way that Colchester Borough engages with residents is required. An 8,500-signature petition has been ignored. Thousands of responses to consultations run by Colchester over the past three years have been ignored. Letters to the press and talks in the public question time at Local Plan meetings, Cabinet meetings and Full Council meetings have been ignored. Representations forwarded by the MPs have been ignored.

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Regards

Mrs L Dear

I think CBC should bring ECC into their 'ideas' stage earlier to check that their thinking is practically possible (highways) and can be funded. There seem to be too many ideas floated by politicians without doing the homework on the feasibility which then mean that public hopes are raised but later dashed.

More joined up project thinking between cbc/ecc please to achieve better long term outcomes.

Equally, CBC shouldn't play the "not our brief" card every time someone mentions highways. They can speak and lobby. They must have some influence, after all, they know the town better than ECC.

Nicholas Chilvers