

Note to Accompany Model Representation Form for Statements of Community Involvement

1. General advice on making representations on a Statement of Community Involvement

1.1 Following this final stage of consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), an examination will be held by an independent Planning Inspector. Section 20(5)(b) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004¹ states that the purpose of the examination is to consider whether the SCI is “sound”. This means those who wish to make a representation seeking a change to an SCI which has been submitted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for independent examination will need to show how that SCI is unsound and what needs to be done to make it sound.

1.2 In order to decide whether the DPD is sound, the Inspector will apply a number of tests to the document. It would be helpful to ensure that any representations seeking a change to the SCI are clearly related to the failure of one of the tests of soundness, set out in the Annex to the Representation Form. You should try to support your representation by evidence showing why the SCI should be changed. It will be helpful if you also say precisely how you think the SCI should be changed. Representations should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested change, as there will not normally be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation. After this stage, further submissions will be only at the request of the Inspector, based on the matters and issues he/she identifies for examination.

1.3 Whilst you should endeavour to make clear which soundness test you consider the SCI fails, if you fail to identify a test in relation to your representation seeking a change this will not lead to your representation not being considered, providing it relates to the SCI. Where your representation seeks more than one change (and relates to the failure to meet more than one test of soundness), a separate form should be used for your representation on each change and relevant soundness test.

1.4 Where there are groups who share a common view on how they wish to see a SCI changed, it would be very helpful for that group to send a single representation which represents the view, rather than for a large number of individuals to send in separate representations which repeat the same points. In such cases the group should indicate how many people it is representing and how the representation has been authorised.

1.5. In considering whether you wish to make representations on a SCI you may wish to consider the following principles for community involvement

¹ View at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/20040005.htm>
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which are set out in the document, *Community Involvement in Planning: The Government's objectives*².

2. Principles of community involvement³

- *Community involvement that is appropriate to the level of planning.* Different arrangements for and levels of community involvement will be appropriate depending on the nature of the planning process involved and the authority's circumstances. Planning authorities should ensure that arrangements are built on a clear understanding of the needs of the community or communities which it serves, and put in place arrangements which are fit for purpose.
- *Front loading of involvement i.e. early consultation.* Community involvement policies should provide opportunities for participation in identifying issues and debating options from the earliest stages. Community involvement should happen at a point at which people recognise that they have the potential to make a difference and, crucially, to experience a sense of ownership of local policy decisions.
- *The methods used to encourage involvement should be relevant to their experience.* Consideration should be given to how people are most likely to get involved and what facilities are available to them and to working with agencies such as Planning Aid that can help communities. There is no 'one size fits all' solution if a genuine dialogue is to be established and maintained.
- *Clearly articulated opportunities for continuing involvement.* The process should allow local communities to see how ideas have developed at the various stages, with effective feedback. There should be clear formal stages when involvement should take place, based on the statutory requirements. These stages must occur as part of a continuous programme, not a series of disjointed, one off steps. A 'tick box' mentality, which regards community involvement as simply a process step to be ticked off, is not acceptable.
- *Transparency and accessibility.* The process should be clear, so that people know when they will be able to participate, and the ground rules for doing so. Involvement in the planning system should extend beyond those who are familiar with the system, to difficult to reach groups.

² Published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2004 and available on request from ODPM Free Literature, PO Box 236, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7NB. Email: odpm@twoten.press.net

³ See also paragraph 3.4, *PPS12* and section 7.3 of *Creating Local Development Frameworks: A Companion guide to PPS12*. View at http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_032593.pdf

- *Planning for involvement.* Community involvement should be planned in from the start of the process for plan preparation or consideration of significant development proposals, to enable timely involvement. Consideration should be given to how processes for community involvement in planning can best fit with other involvement processes, particularly in respect of Community Strategies. Project plans should avoid unnecessarily long, drawn out processes.