Local Plan: Regulation 18
Consultation Strategy
2019
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1 Introduction

Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this document is to set out how the Local Authority will consult with residents and key stakeholders for the next Local Plan consultation which is scheduled to start on Monday 19 August and finish on 30 September 2019.

1.2 As well as complying with consultation requirements prescribed in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement 2018, we must address the issues raised in our previous consultation held on the 16 December 2016 to the 24 February 2017.

1.3 Residents from the previous consultation felt that ‘the Council and community should be working together and there should be better communication and transparency’. This consultation strategy aims to do just that. It will set out how the Council will communicate to residents and key stakeholders ensuring transparency and inclusively. It is vital that we are all working together to get a local plan that works for our generation and future generations to come.

Background

A new Local Plan

1.4 Elmbridge’s new Local Plan will set out the vision for the Borough and the approach to development over a 15-year period. It will set targets for the delivery of different types of development, provide guidance on locations as to where this development will take place, and establish which areas should be protected. It will also set out policies by which future planning applications will be determined.

The Strategic Options consultation

1.5 We consulted on the Strategic Options, the first stage in the process for developing a new Local Plan, from Friday 16 December 2016 until Friday 24 February 2017. We received comments from 3,760 respondents.

1.6 All of the consultation documentation including the summary of consultation responses are available to view on the Strategic Options webpage.

1.7 Considering the consultation responses, the new National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Practice Guidance and in particular the introduction of the new Standard Methodology for calculating housing need, it was considered appropriate to review and re-evaluate the options. The review and re-evaluation which has included additional technical work has led to the identification of five options. This includes the original three options which have evolved.

1.8 We are now in a position to share the findings of the review and re-evaluation and the five options with our communities and stakeholders.

Structure of the document

1.9 It is not for this consultation strategy to discuss the actual content of the consultation document. Instead it will set out our strategy for ensuring that people know about the consultation early on and have every opportunity to respond to it.
1.10 The document starts with the early consultation preparation including engagement with our Councillors and the wider publicity methods we will adopt to make sure everyone knows when the consultation will run. It will then discuss the consultation methods we will use, and this responds directly to the feedback from the Strategic Options consultation.
2 Consultation preparation

Engagement with Councillors

2.1 Early engagement with Councillors on progress with the Local Plan is an important part of the process. To begin this dialogue, Members of the Local Plan Working Group were briefed on the key considerations informing the production of the Local Plan. They were asked to note the options which could underpin the Council’s preferred approach and consider the next steps in the Local Plan programme.

2.2 During this discussion, Councillors were keen that all elected members should be briefed about the consultation so that there are no misunderstandings when it comes to talking to their communities about the consultation. They want this to come early in the process and therefore Local Plan discussions took place in April and May to introduce this to all 48 Members of the Council.

2.3 As well as these specific events, Local Plan progress and the planned consultation will be discussed with Councillors at the Member training events scheduled throughout 2019. There have been briefings for new Members that joined the Council after the local elections in May 2019.

2.4 Officers have organised a standalone meeting with leaders to discuss issues arising from the previous consultation and how to communicate better with local people and Councillors making sure everyone has the information they need to respond to the consultation.

2.5 Officers will also organise a series of briefing sessions with Councillors just before the consultation period starts. Two separate Local Plan Working Group meetings are scheduled to discuss this consultation strategy (20 June 2019) and the consultation document (11 July 2019), and these are open to all Councillors to attend.

2.6 A special Cabinet meeting planned for the 24 July 2019 will allow Councillors to discuss the consultation document and determine whether to approve the document for consultation. The Local Plan will be the only matter on the agenda.

2.7 The table below includes key dates for Member engagement.

Table 1: Member engagement timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Proposed Member engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 March</td>
<td>Local Plan Working Group Meeting presenting Local Plan evidence overview and further options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 April</td>
<td>Meeting with group leaders to discuss ideas for the consultation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Member briefing on Local Plan and efficient use of land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 May</td>
<td>Member briefing on Local Plan and efficient use of land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 June</td>
<td>Briefing with Portfolio holder and Leader on draft consultation document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 June</td>
<td>Local Plan Working Group Meeting Post-election assembly: Local Plan Programme and Consultation Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 June</td>
<td>Local Plan Working Group agenda published to Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 July</td>
<td>Local Plan Working Group meeting: reg.18 draft consultation document (high level strategy discussion - recommendation to Cabinet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 July</td>
<td>Member briefing per settlement area (running 15 July till 22 July)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 July</td>
<td>Special Cabinet agenda published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 July</td>
<td>Special Cabinet Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 July</td>
<td>Surrey County Councillor briefing session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wk/ c 12 August</td>
<td>Circa.15/08/19 Member drop in session with officers at Civic Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 August</td>
<td>Consultation begins 19/08/19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Early Publicity**

**2.8** Respondents to the previous Strategic Options consultation felt that there was not enough publicity about the consultation and many people were unaware that it was even happening. It is important that the community is aware of this consultation early so that they can prepare time to read the document, understand the issues / options and answer the questionnaire.

**2.9** From May 2019, publicity will start on the consultation. The Local Plan website will be updated so that the dates of the summer consultation are known. All other communications techniques will be used and could include:

- Posters and Leaflets
- Notice in Elmbridge Review
- Local Press meetings
- Local newspaper advert
- Local radio interview / broadcast
- Webcast by Portfolio holder for Planning Services.

**2.10** In order to address residents’ concerns regarding lack of knowledge about the consultation start date, we want to establish a stronger relationship with residents’ associations and community groups.
2.11 A specific letter has been sent to all residents’ associations and community groups that are registered on our planning database in April 2019. This will inform them of Local Plan progress and advise them that we will contact them in June to organise appointments just before the consultation starts in order to discuss the consultation. This will arm them with the correct information to disseminate to their residents and community.

2.12 After listening to responses from the previous consultation, we feel strongly that this approach will help improve relationships with our community and help to work as a team. It will ensure that these groups, who are the voice of their community, can speak to their residents and start getting the message out to the community through their leaflets/websites and established channels of communication.

2.13 We have also written to Claygate Parish Council and invited their Members to attend an appointment with us before the consultation starts.

2.14 Some respondents of the previous consultation stated that Kingston residents were not informed. Our communications team will speak to Kingston’s communication team to identify the best methods of getting the message across to these communicates on the border of Elmbridge. We will also ask the Chief Executive to begin dialogue with neighbouring authorities Chief Executives.

2.15 As well as discussing the consultation in planning service meetings, we will also notify internal departments such as Environmental Health, Environmental Care and Housing of the consultation. An e-mail note will be created to be posted on all Planning Services e-mails. Summer staff forums will inform all staff of the consultation date.

2.16 Before the consultation starts, we will brief frontline staff in customer services, so they are aware of the consultation and can advise people on how to respond. They can also transfer more complicated calls to the Planning Policy team if required.
3 Consultation publicity arrangements

Consultation requirements

3.1 Appendix 2 of the Statement of Community Involvement sets out the public/stakeholder involvement arrangements for the preparing a draft Local Plan. It states that the draft documents should be published for consultation for a minimum of six weeks and, at the start of the consultation period, should include:

Table 2: SCI 2018 consultation requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stages</th>
<th>Involvement Level</th>
<th>Public/stakeholder involvement arrangements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing a draft Local Plan</td>
<td>Asking what you think?</td>
<td>Publish draft documents for consultation for a minimum of <strong>six weeks</strong>, and, at the start of the consultation period:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Publish the Sustainability Scoping Report or Appraisal as appropriate;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• inform specific consultation bodies;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• inform relevant consultation bodies, other interested bodies and individuals on the consultation database;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• publish electronic copies of consultation documents on the Council's website;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• make hard copies of consultation documents available for inspection at the Civic Centre and Borough libraries;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• issue press release in local paper;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• issue public notice in local newspaper;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• add consultation information on Council’s social media sites; and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• arrange public meetings, exhibitions and focus groups as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 The following sections of this chapter sets out in detail what we will do and how this complies Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement 2018.
Consultation timescales

3.3 The consultation period will run for the six weeks as stated in Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement 2018.

3.4 The date for the public consultation is:

Monday 19 August 2019 at 9am until Monday 30 September 2019 at 12 midnight.

3.5 Many respondents from the previous consultation stated that the consultation period was too short and poorly timed. They objected to the fact that it had started just before Christmas where people were busy and did not have time to consider the information.

3.6 Although this consultation event starts in the summer holiday period, it extends for the whole month of September which should provide people with enough time to read the document and respond. In addition to this, the early publicity will allow people to timetable in an opportunity to read and respond to the consultation during the six weeks. The consultation should not come as a surprise to people.

3.7 The early meetings with residents’ associations and community groups detailed at paragraph 2.9 will also help to publicise the six-week consultation and get people prepared to read and respond within the timeframe.

Consulting people

3.8 Everyone registered on our database will be informed of the consultation by e-mail or letter. This includes specific consultees, residents and key stakeholders. This is in line with regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and Appendix 1 of the 2018 SCI. The consultation letter will include a brief overview of the consultation, where to get the information from and how to respond to the consultation.

3.9 There will be a press release and public notice in the local newspaper in the first week of the consultation. Social media messages using twitter and facebook will also be used to publicise the consultation when it starts and throughout the six weeks to encourage people to respond.

3.10 The residents’ panel will also be notified and asked to spread the message across their contacts and communities.

3.11 E-mails will be sent to all Councillors on the day the consultation starts. An e-mail will also be sent to all of Planning Services to ensure that everyone knows the consultation has started. The e-mail note will also be updated with the link to the consultation webpage.

Consultation documents

3.12 The consultation document will be available online on a Local Plan consultation webpage. This will have a library of consultation documents including the consultation document, response form, statement of representation procedure and supporting documents

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1 And agreed to the Council’s privacy notice under the GDPR 2018.
such as the Sustainability Appraisal assessment, Habitats Regulation Assessment Initial Screening and an Equity Impact Assessment.

3.13 In terms of the consultation document itself, respondents stated that the language used in the document was too complex and difficult to understand. They stated that it should be written in plain English and without the use of technical jargon. Many respondents felt that the document was written in favour of Option 2. One respondent stated that the maps within the document were poor and unclear.

3.14 This consultation document will be simpler in style, written in plain English and with limited technical jargon. All the options will be set out with emphasise on what people think of them rather than pushing towards a specific option. Maps will be available to view on ‘My Maps’ which will allow people see the different options on a map of the Borough and zoom in to their road / area.

3.15 Respondents also felt the response form was too lengthy, complicated and complex. They said that this had been done on purpose to put people off replying. Another respondent said that the time it had taken to fill out was unacceptable and many stated the amount of days it took to complete. Several respondents said it was not user friendly and inaccessible to many. Many felt the questions included were odd and ill-phrased making it difficult to respond and unfair. Others stated it was overwhelming, contained repetition and had an examination like format that put people off completing.

3.16 The feedback form will be much simpler to use and will contain only questions that are relevant to the five options being presented. There will also be a word limit on the comments box as it was difficult for officers to analyse such long responses.

3.17 The consultation document and response form will be available at the Borough’s libraries for people to view. Additionally, the consultation document will be available to view at the Civic Centre during office hours.

3.18 Evidence base documents will be available to view online in the evidence base library. However, many respondents stated that these documents are difficult to understand. Useful summaries will be created for each evidence base so that people can understand the key findings to help them gain a better understanding of the issues. Although these can be downloaded online, hard copies of these documents can be viewed at the Civic Centre by appointment due to the limited availability and cost of these documents.

Public Meetings

3.19 We feel it is very important to talk to people in Elmbridge about the Local Plan. However, it is important that the correct format is taken so that residents and key stakeholders get the best out of these events.

3.20 Feedback from the previous consultation stated that there was a lack of information at Hinchley Wood School and no MP was present. There was also a complaint that people could not get their questions answered at the events because Council representatives were overwhelmed with the volume of people attending. One respondent felt that people with disabilities and older people had not been taken into consideration.

3.21 In order to address these concerns, we will hold six formal chaired panel style consultation events at the Civic Centre. This location allows people to access the meetings
easily and use the Council's parking facilities. These will mainly take place in the first two weeks of the consultation period, which will give people time to respond after attending the events.

3.22 The Civic Centre is accessible and suitable for the elderly and disabled to access. Instead of drop in sessions, the director of Strategic Services, Head of Planning Services and Local Plan Manager will sit on a panel to present and discuss the consultation document. Pre-submitted questions from the community will then be answered.

3.23 Due to concern about the amount of people that occupied Hinchley Wood School, these events will be ticketed. There is the flexibility of providing one mop-up event for anyone that cannot make the six sessions, and this will only be used if needed.

3.24 An information leaflet will be given out at each event however, no evidence base documents will be available at the meetings as they require time to read and digest properly. Hard copies of these documents can be viewed at the Civic Centre via appointment.

Table 3: Consultation panel events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Area focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 27 August</td>
<td>Civic Centre</td>
<td>Weybridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 28 August</td>
<td>Civic Centre</td>
<td>Walton &amp; Hersham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 29 August</td>
<td>Civic Centre</td>
<td>Molesey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 2 September</td>
<td>Civic Centre</td>
<td>Cobham, Oxshott &amp; Stoke D’Abernon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 3 September</td>
<td>Civic Centre</td>
<td>The Dittons &amp; Hinchley Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 5 September</td>
<td>Civic Centre</td>
<td>Esher &amp; Claygate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 11 September</td>
<td>Civic Centre</td>
<td>Possible mop-up event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 Consultation responses and feedback

4.1 A consultation response document will set out the results from the consultation. It will discuss the key issues raised and how these will inform the next stage in the Local Plan production. This consultation response document will be published online as soon as possible. Respondents will be notified of this directly via e-mail or letter, which will inform them that the consultation response document is available to view online.