

Introducing the Stafford Borough Draft Statement of Community Involvement

1. What is a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)?

- 1.1 *The general purpose of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is to inform the public about how they can get involved in the plan making process and significant planning applications. An underlying principle behind this concept is that the more informed people are about how and when they are able to take part in the planning system, the more opportunities will be taken up, thus leading to more participation and a more efficient and inclusive decision making process.*
- 1.2 *A key objective of the new planning system, which commenced in September 2004, is to strengthen community and stakeholder involvement. This Draft Statement of Community Involvement for Stafford Borough sets out how Stafford Borough Council intends to achieve continuous stakeholder and community involvement in the preparation of local planning policy, set out in Development Plan Documents (DPDs), and significant planning applications. The Statement of Community Involvement will be part of the new Stafford Borough Local Development Framework.*

2. Why is Stafford Borough Council preparing a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)?

- 2.1 *In September 2004 the Government published guidance notes for the new planning system 'Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) - Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)'. PPS12 outlines the procedure for how Local and Structure Plans will be replaced by Local Development Frameworks and the role for Statements of Community Involvement.*
- 2.2 *One of the main principles of developing a sound Local Development Framework is to develop documents through meaningful engagement with the community and stakeholders, which meets or exceeds the minimum standards set out in the Government Regulations. This is the primary purpose of the Statement of Community Involvement.*
- 2.3 *For more detailed information about the work programme for the new Stafford Borough Local Development Framework please refer to the Council's Local Development Scheme.*

3. *When will the Statement of Community Involvement be approved?*

- 3.1 *The Statement of Community Involvement will be a Local Development Document within the Stafford Borough Local Development Framework. Following the consultation on the Draft Statement of Community Involvement a submission document will be prepared and consulted upon before being subject to an independent Examination. After the Examination the Inspector's Binding Report will be published and the Council will then adopt the Statement of Community Involvement.*

4. *How will the Statement of Community Involvement be used?*

- 4.1 *When the Statement of Community Involvement is adopted, the Council has to prepare Statements of Compliance showing how the Council has complied with its Statement of Community Involvement for each stage of preparing the new Development Plan Documents. Similarly Statements of Compliance will need to be completed by planning applicants on significant planning applications. The Statement of Community Involvement provides the Council's pledge to undertake a range of techniques for public consultation and involvement.*

5. *What are the benefits of Community Involvement?*

- 5.1 *Involving stakeholders and the community in plan making and significant planning applications adds legitimacy to the future balance of development in the local context. Decisions are more likely to reflect local values and needs, and provide a more inclusive sense of reinforcing civic pride, when the local community are involved.*
- 5.2 *Stafford Borough Council will also benefit from a greater contribution towards problem solving in the development process, enabling a larger pool of ideas and issues to be considered in the future development of the Borough. Active participation will allow the Council to identify, at an early stage, where there is a general measure of consensus on issues and policies together with areas that may prove contentious.*

6. *How can I get involved?*

- 6.1 *Now is the time to influence the Draft Statement of Community Involvement before the submission document is prepared for consideration by the Secretary of State. Therefore please could you complete the associated Response Form and return it to the Borough Council by **12 noon on Monday 22 November 2004** using the Freepost envelope. This deadline is a statutory six week period and the Response Form must be received by this date.*

7. Free Independent Advice

- 7.1 **West Midlands Planning Aid Service** provides free and independent advice on any aspect of planning to community groups and individuals who cannot afford professional fees. They can be contacted at:

West Midlands Planning Aid Service

Unit 319, The Custard Factory

Gibb Street

BIRMINGHAM

B9 4AA

Tel: 0121 766 8044

Email: wmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

8. Further information

- 8.1 A free copy of the Draft Statement of Community Involvement can be obtained by contacting the Borough Council on 01785 619541. Any part of the Draft Statement of Community Involvement can also be provided on paper in normal type size, in large print, on CD, by e-mail or as spoken word on tape.
- 8.2 More detailed information can be accessed via the Borough Council web site <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/forwardplanning>
- 8.3 All libraries within the Borough hold a file that is available to view on the Draft Statement of Community Involvement. If you wish to discuss the Draft Statement of Community Involvement or anything raised in this paper please contact the Forward Planning Team on 01785 619541 or 619536.
- 8.4 Further information sources and planning guidance is also available on the Internet:

The **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act** can be viewed on the Parliament website at <http://www.parliament.uk/index.cfm>

The **Government Regulations**, Guidance papers and National **Planning Policy Statements / Guidance** notes can be viewed on the website of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister at www.planning.odpm.gov.uk/index.htm

Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands can be viewed at www.go-wm.gov.uk/RPG

The **Planning Portal** is a Government site providing information and advice on the planning system in a user-friendly form. The Portal can be accessed at www.planningportal.gov.uk