
Report of Chief Planning Officer

Report to Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration)

Date: 30 October 2012

Subject: Good practice guide to pre-application engagement

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

The Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) requested that a guide for developers was produced which sets out clearly the council's expectations of effective community involvement at the pre-application stage of planning proposals.

Officers have met with representatives from the development industry to assist in the production of the guide and the content deals with principles for effective engagement, level and depth of engagement required and suggests some good practice approaches.

Once the content has been finalised it will be formatted into a booklet or leaflet with graphics and photographs.

Recommendations

Members are recommended

- i. to comment on the draft guide as they feel appropriate
- ii. receive the final version of the guide at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) a position report was presented which outlined the timescale for the production of a good practice guide to pre-application engagement with communities for developers. The Board wished to be involved in the production of the guide and the attached draft content is now presented to the Scrutiny Board for their input and comments.

2 Background information

- 2.2 Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) requested that good practice guide be produced with their involvement, for use by developers for engaging with communities at the pre-application stage.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Whilst it is generally appreciated that pre-application engagement is a valuable part of the planning process and the government has signalled the importance of engagement with communities at the earliest of stage, it is not yet a mandatory requirement. We are waiting for the thresholds for the size of applications which will be subject to the mandatory pre-application engagement. We do not know if the government intends to be prescriptive in the requirements or if it will be up to local planning authorities to decide what is required, according to local circumstances.
- 3.2 This guide has been written so that it can be used now but can be easily adapted once the thresholds and detail of the mandatory pre-application consultation is known. The guide deals with the principles of effective engagement, the extent or level of engagement which is required and approaches and techniques which can be used when engaging with communities.
- 3.3 Just as every development is unique, the programme of community engagement is bespoke, depending on the type of development, size, scale and the nature of the communities involved. The guide advocates a proportionate approach, but clearly indicates that in Leeds there is the expectation that on the biggest and most sensitive applications there needs to be two way dialogue at an early stage, a commitment by developers to engage transparently and willingness to listen and adapt proposals in light of community concerns. In appropriate circumstances, communities should be involved in the establishment of a community forum, examples of this approach are the East Leeds Extension and at Kirkstall Forge.
- 3.4 The guide also describes a range of approaches, media, and methods for effective engagement and provides real Leeds examples of where engagement has been effective.
- 3.5 The guide has been developed with the input of representatives from the development industry, Civic Trust and Planning Aid.
- 3.6 Once the content has been finalised, it will be formatted into a booklet with graphics and photographs.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Members of the development industry, agents, developers, planning lawyers, Planning Aid and Civic Trust have assisted in the production of the guide. The Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services has also been consulted.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.2 Greater and more efficient engagement of the community is likely to result in more people being aware of development and planning issues and allows communities to have a greater input to what happens in the communities in which they live and work, aiding community cohesion.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.3 The effective and expedient determination of planning applications contributes to the overall prosperity of the City and plays a key part in the regeneration and growth agenda. The service makes a key contribution to the delivery of housing growth, a priority in the City Priority Plan 2011-15.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 Pre-application engagement is the responsibility of the applicant who will fund and resource any activity. There are no additional resource implications for the council.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.2 There are no legal implications arising from the report.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 This section is not relevant to the report

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 In Leeds we encourage effective pre-application engagement on major applications and on applications where there may be sensitivities. The guide sets out the council's expectations from developers and encourages developers to use it to programme meaningful effective engagement which allows communities to have an influence over the future shape of the places where they live, adding value to the planning process and resulting in better outcomes for all involved.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are recommended to

I. note and comment on the draft guide as they feel appropriate

II. receive the final version of the guide at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.