

Statement of Community Involvement

November 2024

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document is the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for the London Borough of Croydon. An SCI is a document that explains the process by which a local authority involves the community and other partners in two key processes that affect the spatial development of an area: the formulation of the Local Plan and the consideration of planning applications.
- 1.2 The document is divided into three key parts. There is a brief introduction to the Local Plan which aims to describe the processes by which the council makes spatial plans for the local area. The next section focuses on planning applications and the possibilities for community involvement in considering these. The final part includes important details about the council's system for monitoring and reviewing its community involvement practices. The council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was first adopted in August 2007.
- 1.3 This document is a revision of previous SCIs published October 2012 and January 2019 and has been updated to comply with the relevant parts of new legislation and guidance currently in force. Most recently the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with amendments were enacted/published in December 2023. SCI's are required to be reviewed every five years. This SCI was published in November 2024
- 1.4 Planning Guidance produced by the Government requires that "Local Planning Authorities must set out in their Statement of Community Involvement how they will engage communities on the preliminary stage of plan-making, specifically survey stage and local development scheme."

2 The Local Plan

- 2.1 The [Local Plan](#) is the council's Development Plan Document that outlines the spatial strategy for the local area. Croydon's Local Plan was adopted on 27 February 2018. The Local Plan spatially expressed the spatial vision, strategic objectives and planning policies for the borough setting out the scale and nature of change that is expected over coming years.
- 2.2 The Croydon Local Plan 2018 is now the subject of a partial review, to ensure that the relevant parts of the plan are up to date, to expedite the commitment for five year reviews, to better reflect important local priorities including the Mayor's Business Plan and the commitment of the council towards listening to the views of our local communities and others and to ensure compliance with latest government planning policy and the [London Plan](#). As set out in the [Local Development Scheme](#).
- 2.3 The Local Plan when adopted has an important role to play as it determines how land will be used and developed. In doing so, the Local Plan will often address issues that go beyond the physical use of land, and this should ultimately result in a more sustainable form of development.

Development Plan Documents

- 2.4 Development Plan Documents (DPDs) form the major part of Croydon's local development framework. They include policies and proposals for specific areas of land and are prepared under the regulations set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The primary Development Plan Document is the Local Plan.
- 2.5 The South London Waste Partnership produced a Joint Waste Plan DPD for Sutton, Merton, Kingston and Croydon) in 2012 and which subsequently has been reviewed and adopted in December 2022 to add to the composite "Development Plan".
- 2.6 Local Authorities must publicise and keep up-to-date their timetable for producing their Local Plan and other DPDs and this information is contained within a Local Development Scheme (LDS).
- 2.7 Sustainability Appraisals (SA) are an integral part of producing DPDs and are designed to promote sustainable development through improved integration of sustainability considerations in the preparation and adoption of strategic plans. The first stage of an SA is a scoping report which identifies Croydon's aims for sustainable development and this forms the basis for consultation. Once the DPD is adopted, its effects are monitored by further appraisal.

- 2.8 The **London Plan** is the statutory spatial development strategy (SDS) for the Greater London area that is written by the Mayor of London and published by the Greater London Authority. The GLA arrange the public consultation on the preparation of the London Plan which sits outside the Croydon SCI and LDS.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 2.9. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are not Development Plan Documents but make up another part of Croydon's statutory local development framework. They contain more detailed advice and guidance on policies in the adopted Local Plan or other DPD. These can include various planning matters regarding determining planning applications, further explanation and amplification of the policies in DPDs. They can include design guides, area development briefs and masterplans. SPDs are drafted and consulted upon but not to the same extent as DPDs); as they are not subject to the submission and independent examination stage.
- 2.10. Croydon has utilised Interim Planning Guidance (IPG) documents in the past (e.g. Croydon Metropolitan Centre masterplan) prior to the production of the Local Plan. IPGs follow a similar process to SPDs and while they are not part of the borough's formal local development framework they may be helpful when deciding planning applications without having any statutory weight. IPGs therefore support the local planning policy framework and will follow the good practice in citizen engagement and to be conformity with this SCI.

Duty to Co-operate

- 2.11. The Local Plan is intended to be the main delivery mechanism for all strategies and plans that affect development and the environment in an area. Therefore, the Local Plan needs to be assembled in close liaison and co-operation with all other prescribed bodies on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. Many, but not all of these strategies and plans, are subject to their own community and partner involvement requirements. The government introduced a 'Duty to Cooperate' in the Localism Act 2011 which requires Croydon to work with neighbouring authorities and other public bodies involved in planning when it comes to tackling issues at a larger than local scale. Examples include cross borough infrastructure such as flood defences, transport improvements and waste management.
- 2.12. The 'duty to co-operate':
- relates to sustainable development or use of land that would have a significant impact on at least two local planning areas;
 - requires that councils set out planning policies to address such issues;
 - requires that councils and public bodies 'engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis' to develop strategic policies; and
 - requires councils to consider joint approaches to plan making.

- 2.12. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that authorities are required to produce maintain and update statements of common ground to reflect the operation of the statutory duty to cooperate.
- 2.13. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) introduces several changes, to be announced and implemented through secondary legislation and guidance which will affect the production and delivery of Local Plans and other planning documents including the SCI. Included within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 were provisions for abolishing the “Duty to Cooperate” with a replacement process. However this has not yet been consulted upon nor put in place therefore the existing arrangements remain.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 2.15 As part of the government’s drive to empower communities, neighbourhood forums are able to produce Neighbourhood Plans which support the delivery of strategic policies in Local Plans. As there are no parishes in the borough an established forum is the only way to undertake the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. The Localism Act 2011 gave power to local communities by allowing them to positively plan their own areas using Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and the Community Right to Build. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act has further provisions for enabling communities to be engaged and to influence the planning and development of their areas but to date these are not operative.

How the council designates neighbourhood forums

- 2.16. It is a responsibility of the council to receive, publish, consider and determine applications for designation of neighbourhood forums. These functions comprise four stages which are set out below and are contained in the [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2642/regs/1-4) - legislation.gov.uk.

Stage 1 - receipt

This initial stage does not involve an assessment of the information included within the application but ascertaining that the requisite information is present within the application and whether or not there is an existing neighbourhood forum for the area. If there is already an existing neighbourhood forum for the area and that designation has not expired or been withdrawn, a local planning authority may decline to consider any neighbourhood forum application made in relation to that neighbourhood area (Regulation 11).

Stage 2 - publicity

As soon as possible after receiving a neighbourhood forum application, which the local planning authority do not decline to consider under regulation 11, a local planning authority must publish details on their website and in such other manner as they consider is likely to bring the application to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the area to which the application relates.

Stage 3 - consideration and determination of applications for designation

In reaching a decision regarding designation of a neighbourhood forum, the authority needs to prepare reasons for its decision. If the decision is not to designate, these reasons need to be published as part of the refusal notice referred to below. It is considered good practice for any decision to be recorded in writing along with reasons, regardless of whether the decision is to grant designation or to refuse it.

Stage 4 - publicising a designation of a neighbourhood forum

If approved, as soon as possible after designating a Neighbourhood Forum, a local planning authority must publish (in the same manner as Stage 2) the following:

- a) the name of the neighbourhood forum
- b) a copy of the written constitution of the neighbourhood forum
- c) the name of the neighbourhood area to which the designation relates, and
- d) contact details for at least one member of the neighbourhood forum.

There is no time period currently specified for the determination of applications for designation as a neighbourhood forum, other than the requirement for a six-week period relating to Stage 2 - publicity set out above.

How the council supports the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.17. The council will provide proportionate technical advice and support to set up a neighbourhood forum and the neighbourhood area. In developing the Neighbourhood Plan the council can offer;
- advice on best practice in community engagement
 - check conformity of the NDP (or NDO) against the Local Plan, London Plan, regulations and legislation
 - Assuming it considers conformity has been achieved, the council will arrange and pay for an independent Examination
 - arrange and pay for a Referendum on the NDP (or NDO) should it be found fit for adoption
 - If agreed by a majority, then the council will formally adopt the NDP (or NDO)
 - provide guidance and advice proportionate to funding and services available.
- 2.18. Neighbourhood Plans are DPDs and are prepared by Neighbourhood Forums who will prepare the Neighbourhood Plan mindful of the policies in the Local Plan and work with the Local Planning Authority to ensure that the statutory basic conditions are met. This will involve assembling relevant evidence, formulating planning policies, carrying out public consultation and submitting the Neighbourhood Plan for external examination.
- 2.19. If you would like more information about Neighbourhood Planning, please visit the [Neighbourhood Planning](#) pages on the council's website.

Croydon's approach to Plan Making consultations

- 2.20. The planning system is an important part of our democracy. It provides the opportunity for different views and opinions about development to be expressed by individuals, groups, partners and organisations. Importantly, it allows people to have their say about the future of their neighbourhoods, communities and areas.

This section identifies some of the different types of community involvement that will be used in the preparation of planning documents. One of the council's chief aims is to offer access to those people and groups who are difficult to reach by traditional planning consultation methods. Furthermore, the council is committed to meeting the needs of all partners to encourage greater participation in the planning process.

- 2.21. Croydon intends to achieve effective community involvement in the creation of development plans by:
- Enabling the community and partners to put forward their own ideas and to participate in the development of options and proposals rather than simply commenting on council generated ideas;
 - Investigating community and partners problems, needs, and concerns at the earliest possible stage; and
 - Offering an opportunity for the community and partners to respond to, comment upon, criticise and support policies and proposals
- 2.22. The **Mayor's Business Plan** was adopted in 2022 following the introduction of a Mayoral democratic model in the council's constitution. MBP includes consultation at its heart to ensure that the council;
- listens to and empowers residents to do more for themselves
 - works with residents
 - respects and works in partnership with Croydon's diverse communities and businesses.
- 2.23. Croydon communicates in relation to planning policy by:
- Giving advance notice through the Local Development Scheme to the community and all partners of the intention to prepare a new plan or a planning document;
 - Informing the community and partners about policies and proposals early in the process; and
 - Providing feedback on how views and comments have affected decision making and the influence they have had on the development of a plan or document.
- 2.24. Care will be taken to ensure that when workshops, conferences and events are planned for community involvement, venues are accessible and useable by all people and groups. Where possible, events will be held in buildings accessible by a choice of transport (including public transport) and have access facilities for disabled groups or those with mobility problems. Where appropriate, and when sufficient advance warning is given, translation, signing services, microphones and loop induction systems can be made available.
- 2.25. The council is committed to widening and deepening opportunities for engagement and involvement that includes and extends planning consultation throughout the wider community. An exciting innovation which was introduced in 2024 was a physical presence; the Croydon "Urban Room". The Croydon Urban Room is a space to talk about the future of the North End Quarter and the wider Town Centre. Through conversations, stories, exhibitions and events, the Urban Room will bring together the views of those who live, work and visit the area, to

develop clear priorities for a plan to steer the Town Centre's recovery. It will exist in both “real” space – utilising a unit in the Whitgift Centre and “virtually” with a dedicated web presence:

- 2.16. **Planning Guidance on consultation and engagement** encourages authorities to use social media and other interactive platforms to communicate with local communities and to “reach out” further than traditional forms of communication. Most recently the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 has provisions to encouraged Local Planning Authorities to widen their engagement of local people in the preparation stages of the Local Plan. LURA also encourages local authorities to use digital communication techniques to improve the accessibility of local plan preparation as well as to achieve other efficiencies. A series of pilot schemes are currently underway and as the results are disseminated the council will consider how new emerging best practice can best be applied in the Croydon context.
- 2.17. After Development Plan Document and Supplementary Planning Document consultations, comments are recorded and analysed. In the case of a DPD, a record will be made of all responses received, together with the council’s response to each representation. In the case of an SPD, the statement will incorporate only a summary of the main issues raised.

Table 1 How Croydon involves partners

Ways in which Croydon involves the community and partners:
<p>Local Plan consultee database</p> <p>The council has a list of organisations and partners for consultation and engagement purposes which is kept as up to date as is practicable. Those on this list form the consultee database and will be consulted during the preparation of planning documents. The council is also required to engage with landowners and developers as part of the planning process. Apart from the general opportunity for engagement through the statutory consultation process, the council seeks to directly engage landowners and developers through the preparation of planning policy documents, in order to ensure that development on key sites is deliverable. All consultees on the database shall be consulted by email or letter if requested informing them of planning consultations. Any person/organisation is free to sign up to be on the consultee database. This is easily undertaken by completing an online form.</p>
<p>Printed media and libraries</p> <p>Where required, adverts are placed in local newspapers and council communications (e.g. magazines, e-bulletins) promoting upcoming consultation periods and events. In addition the council aims to supply articles outlining the purpose of consultations and their associated events through press releases. Libraries are sent all consultation documents along with promotional material, such as posters, for display on public notice boards.</p>
<p>Web pages</p> <p>There is a wealth of information about the Croydon Local Plan online at the Planning policy pages You will find information about the plan-making system and updates informing you of progress in the production of the Local Plan. Croydon council advocates online consultation.</p>
<p>Social media and interactive websites</p> <p>Sites such as Facebook, Twitter and the council's Your Croydon website have been utilised to reach as many people as possible and to introduce an interactive approach to consultation. Social media changes rapidly and the council will seek to utilise the most effective mediums when engaging with partners.</p>
<p>Workshops, drop in events, information stands and joint consultations</p> <p>Workshops, information stands and bespoke engagement exercises will accompany consultation periods (where appropriate and proportionate to the consultation subject matter). In addition, the Spatial Planning Service will try and collaborate with our partners from external organisations and internal council departments on joint consultation events in order to reduce consultation fatigue and amalgamate resources. See text for information about the council's "Urban Room".</p>

Engaging less visible members of the community

Examples of those who commonly experience barriers to participation include: people with mental health conditions, people with learning difficulties and disabilities, Gypsies and Travellers, people undergoing/considering or who have undergone gender reassignment, older and young people, pregnant and breastfeeding women, asylum seekers, refugees, people with caring responsibilities, people on low incomes or benefits, Global Majority groups and people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual and transgender (LGBT+). The council will continue to engage with representative groups in order to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010. Some people may not want to participate because sharing their experiences could compromise their privacy. Some people face barriers due to their location e.g. areas of high deprivation. Croydon encourages a broad range of people to participate. Representative groups are regularly engaged in order to advise the council about how to consult certain groups. Opportunities for people to participate in supportive and safe environments, where they feel their privacy will be protected, or via technology such as the internet, also offer useful solutions.

3 Planning Applications

- 3.1 Croydon Council makes decisions on thousands of planning applications each year and it is vital that the community and partners are involved in making decisions in this process.
- 3.2 Applications are normally determined in accordance with the policies and proposals of the statutory [development plan](#) for the area that are set out on our web site.
- 3.3 There is a requirement set out in planning law to consult a specific body, who are then under a duty to respond providing advice on the proposal in question. These consultees are set out in [Planning Practice Guidance](#). Community involvement helps to shape proposals so that they are more acceptable and appropriate.

Table 2 Community and partners involvement in planning applications

Online Planning Register

The [online planning register](#) allows you to view current and previous applications. The register includes planning appeals, planning decisions (including decision notices) and drawings. Users can now register on the system and create and save searches on properties and areas and tailored alerts for these.

Local Publication

Information regarding planning proposals is published in a newspaper circulating in the locality. At present this is the Croydon Guardian if they affect: conservation areas, listed buildings or public rights of way, major developments consisting of 10 or more dwellings, employment development consisting of at least 1,000m² floor space, developments on sites of 1 hectare or more, waste management development relating to mineral extraction, other developments likely to be of wider interest to the community (such as applications for telecommunications masts), and developments which are departures from the policies of the development plan.

Site notices

Site notices are displayed on or near a site for major developments and in the case of applications affecting the character and appearance of conservation areas and/or listed buildings and their setting. The number of site notices will depend on the circumstances of the case. On a case-by-case basis the Council may display a site notice for householder and minor applications. The notices will be fixed to lampposts and/or other street furniture near to applications sites. The site notices will be weather proofed through the use of laminates to ensure legibility for the life of the notice.

Neighbour notification

For all other applications, adjoining properties will be notified in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 which states that planning applications must be publicised by giving requisite notice by site notice in at least one place on or near the land to which the application relates for not less than 21 days **or** by serving the notice on any adjoining owner or occupier. The legislation states that the council should be serving notice on any "adjoining" owner or occupier, the council will decide on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate to widen the scope of consultation such circumstances could include where development might be of interest to those living on the opposite side of the street.

Pre-application consultation

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a duty governing consultation before applying for planning permission with the National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2023) explaining that local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging applicants, even where they are not already required to do so by law, to engage with the local community and statutory and non-statutory consultees (such as the highways or local flood authority), before submitting their planning application. Applicants are encouraged to take-up the pre-application services offered and have regard to any advice that the local planning authority may have provided. The applicant should have regard to any comments or responses generated by the consultation undertaken when deciding whether to make any changes to their proposals before submitting their planning applications. The outputs of such consultation (if undertaken) should be detailed as part of any subsequent planning application.

- 3.4 It should be noted that it does not matter how partners hear about a proposal, anyone can submit comments on an application. The site notice or press advertisement explains where the planning application can be viewed.
- 3.5 We strongly recommend that you look at an application before commenting on it. The planning case officer assesses the planning application taking into account the planning policies that apply to the proposal, as well as other material considerations. This will be based upon the detailed assessment of the case and consideration of the responses received from organisations consulted on the application and any views expressed by people interested in the application (such as neighbours). The publicity requirements mean that we will not receive all of the relevant views until about a month after the council register the application and this will be longer in some cases. It is a requirement of planning law that we make all planning decisions in accordance with the provisions of the development plan.
[Guidance on making a planning application.](#)

4 Monitoring

What happens after a public consultation?

- 4.1. After consultations representations are processed. Depending on which type of policy document has been consulted upon how the comments have been taken into account by the Council in the development of the document is produced. For the case of Development Plan Documents as a minimum the requirements of the relevant regulations will be met.

Measures of success: accessibility, satisfaction, equality

- 4.2. The success of the SCI initiatives will be measured by:
- how effectively the community and local groups have been able to access; the Local Plan documents and supporting information;

- the level of involvement of equality groups; and
- the level of satisfaction expressed by respondents to the publication and consultation process

4.3. The overall level of success will be measured in part through the responses to Local Plan consultation exercises, and through complaints received by the planning department, particularly with regard to consultations on planning applications. Where there is evidence of substantial dissatisfaction with the existing procedures for consultation on either planning policy documents or planning applications the council will consider the need for revisions to the SCI. Additionally, when a DPD or SPD has been the subject of public consultation the council will review it in the light of the comments received and may then make changes, as appropriate. Where a document has had an Examination any comments from the Inspector on matters covered by the SCI will be taken into account.