

## Claygate Parish Council Planning Committee

### Response to the Consultation by Elmbridge Borough Council on the proposed amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement

1. Paragraph 4.4.4 of the 2021 Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) states that “The comments we [Elmbridge Borough Council] receive in response to planning applications are a matter of public record. This means that we cannot treat comments as confidential, and they will be made available to view on the council's website alongside the name and address of the person making the comment.” Claygate Parish Council believes that this should remain the position, and opposes the current proposal to redact the names and addresses of persons making comments.
2. We have previously opposed such a change. In January 2023 EBC published for consultation a revised draft of the SCI incorporating the much more far-reaching proposal that no comments at all should be published on the website. This was Option 2 put to the EBC Planning Committee at its meeting on 6 September 2022 which, by 11 votes to 10, preferred that solution to Option 1, which was the change currently proposed.
3. On 23 February 2023 CPC Planning Committee met to consider a response to that consultation. At that meeting Ward Cllr Mike Rollings told the Committee that this had been considered at EBC Cabinet the previous evening, and Cabinet had agreed to reverse the decision taken by EBC Planning Committee the previous September, so that no changes had been or would be made. CPC Planning Committee nevertheless replied to the consultation opposing any change.
4. We had hoped that this was the end of the matter, and do not understand why a change is again being proposed. It was suggested in September 2022 that an advantage of Option 1 would be to “give some privacy to the source of the comment”. There is of course no obligation to comment; anyone choosing to do so knows that their identity will be disclosed. In assessing the weight to be attached to a comment, much depends on knowing where it derives from. This may be clear from the comment (in which case there is no advantage in redaction). If it is not clear, it might be guessed; and if the guess is wrong, this will damage the planning process.
5. **Claygate Parish Council therefore opposes any amendment to the SCI which would result in the names and addresses of people making comments not being published on the EBC website.**
6. We take this opportunity to raise a further issue on the SCI which is not part of the consultation. Para 4.6.3 of the SCI (both the September 2021 and the January 2023 versions) states that in the case of minor applications 15+ objectors or Claygate Parish

Council can have matters referred to East Area Sub-Committee. But when it comes to applications for Permission in Principle (PIP), this is stated to apply where there are 15+ objectors, but no mention is made of CPC. This has been raised with EBC numerous times; EBC officers have agreed that this is an error; they have agreed to put it right when an opportunity arises; but this has not been done. On 5 August 2022 Kim Tagliarini, then Head of Planning, emailed Sally Harman, our then Clerk, saying: "Yes I have spoken to our Head of Legal Services. We will make the amendment however there is a due process to go through and that takes time to program. I should be able to update on timings in Sept. In the meantime as will use the work around we discussed whereby the application will be referred by officers if we receive an objection for CPC on the PIP. It would be helpful if you could alert Natalie Lynch at the same time just in case it is missed by officers." Two years later, the latest draft of the SCI still contains this error. We would be grateful if it could be corrected.

Donna Holt, Chair, Claygate Parish Council  
Anthony Sheppard, Chair of the Planning Committee

12 September 2024