

Appendix 2: Sustainable Communities Act proposals

These proposals have been developed from a wide range of sources including Sustainable Communities Act workshops, council consultations and direct submissions from the public.

There were a wide range of proposals submitted and not all of them were directly applicable to the Sustainable Communities Act process. Examples of these include:

- Using under utilised land in the borough for food growing;
- Greater support for volunteering; and
- Allowing smaller local companies to tend for council contracts.

Suggestions that have been submitted as part of this process that did not fulfil the Sustainable Communities Act criteria will be considered where appropriate within the council's annual business planning processes.

Submitted as part of the local Sustainable Communities Act process, in consultation with the Sustainable Communities Act Citizens Panel, the council will be submitting three proposals for consideration under Act.



The Sustainable Communities Act proposal form

Using this form

This form should be used to submit proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act to the LGA for short listing. Please complete all sections and then **email a copy to selector@lga.gov.uk**. These must be received by **July 31st 2009**, and you will receive confirmation that the form has been received.

Once submitted, information within this form may be made publicly available, unless you request for it to be kept private. We will treat information submitted sensitively. If you wish to attach any relevant presentations or graphs etc. please attach them separately in the email.

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Section 1: Proposal Summary

Proposing Authority

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Parish councils and other organisations and agencies must seek support and formal endorsement from a proposing local authority (defined in the Act as county councils, district councils (including metropolitan, non metropolitan and unitary authorities), the common council of the city of London or the Council of the Isles of Scilly).

1.1 Lead Authority name

London Borough of Lambeth

1.2 Is this proposal submitted by this authority alone, or is it a joint proposal with other local authorities? (If joint please list authorities)

This proposal has been put forward solely by the London Borough of Lambeth.

1.3 Who is the lead contact (s) in the authority for this proposal? Please provide email address and telephone number - The LGA will direct any enquiries to this contact.

Thomas Man
tman@lambeth.gov.uk
020 7926 2426

Supporting Organisations

Whilst proposals may only be submitted by a local authority, we acknowledge that local partners and outside organisations may wish to register support for the proposal. This is entirely voluntary.

1.4 Please provide details below of supporting organisations to your proposal. Please explain if the organisation is a charity, company, unincorporated association or other body. If a charity or company please provide registration numbers. If a local partnership please explain the relationship to the Local Strategic Partnership for the area.

Not applicable

Summary of your proposal

Please summarise your proposal. You may wish to include:

- The main elements of your proposal
- What issues your proposal is addressing and how it will promote the sustainability of the local community
- Who is affected by this proposal and how?
- Which public bodies might be affected?
- What are the main actions needed from Government?
- What do you expect this proposal to achieve?

1.5 Please enter your summary below (*word limit 1000 words*)

Variable National Non Domestic Rates for those businesses that deliver social benefits

Currently the policy for National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) or 'business rates' is set by national government, which in turn is collected by local authorities and returned to a central NNDR fund. At present there are certain conditions whereby businesses can benefit from reduced levels of business rates e.g. where the rateable value of the property is below a certain threshold or if the business has been designated as a charity. Lambeth Council believes that the current NNDR regime could be used to promote wider positive social benefits. We propose allowing local areas to offer a range of NNDR discounts for businesses that promote sustainability through the services they provide/the way in which they operate as a business.

This discount will apply across all types of businesses located within a borough, on the basis that they meet a pre-determined sustainability/social benefit criteria. We will also be especially interested in these discounts being taken up by social enterprises.

Social enterprises are business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community. Lambeth accommodates many successful social enterprises in a broad array of sectors including health and social care, childcare and the arts. The borough also has the highest membership of the London Social Enterprise Network of any London borough. Well known social enterprises in Lambeth include Coin Street Community Builders and the Employment Café in Brixton. This is reflected in the data which shows a larger proportion of social enterprises within Lambeth (12.38 per cent) compared to London as a whole (8.30 per cent).

Whilst social enterprises would be the key beneficiaries, this proposal aims to offer discounts to any business that provides wider social benefits in addition to their core objectives. This may

include examples such as organisations that aim to reduce their carbon footprint to zero or aim to offset all their emissions. Companies such as these should be recognised for the non-commercial decisions that they have voluntarily made that provide genuine societal benefits. By reducing NNDR duties on organisations that demonstrate a real commitment to providing wider social benefits, this will also encourage other businesses to undertake similarly helpful activities therefore linking into the ethos of corporate social responsibility.

This proposal will directly impact upon businesses based within a local authority. The proportion of the business rate discount will be would reflect the level of social benefit provided by the organisation. The expectation would be that social enterprises receive larger reductions in business rates compared to private sector companies that offer more limited social benefits through their work. This may incentivise private sector companies to provide more positive social outcomes as part of their core business e.g. in addition to any carbon off setting that a business may undertake they may also choose to allow staff to volunteer at local schools etc.

This proposal will affect the local authority as an introduction of a variable discount rate to “business that deliver social outcomes” will mean that there will be a need for local determination of NNDR. The additional burden of carrying out this task could be offset by the provision of broad national guidance and criteria. Thereby creating a level of consistency in the level of discount that could be provided for their social benefit.

This proposal will require central government to reconsider how it approaches its policy on business rates. Specifically it will require central government to:

1. Amend existing NNDR legislation
2. Develop a scheme which sets out variable discounts dependent upon the social benefit provided by the organisation
3. Ensure that systems are in place to recognise the variances in incomes generated by this change to NNDR.
4. Work collaboratively with local authorities and the Valuation Office Agency to ensure that the assessment process is developed as effectively as possible.

This presents a real opportunity for central government to recognise and reward those organisations that provide valuable contributions to the local communities either as a part of their core business or as part of their broader commitment to supporting their locality. Especially in light of the current difficult economic conditions it is even more important to ensure that organisations that contribute to societal goals should receive extra support. Through this process we can also ensure that our more disadvantaged communities continue to receive those social benefits to help them through the recession.

Section 2: About your proposal

The form asks a set of questions to gather as much information as possible to allow for assessment and short-listing by the Selector. A word-limit is stated for each part of the form.

We appreciate that SCA proposals will vary in range and scope, and some questions will be more relevant than others for any one proposal. Please do not feel that answers are required for every questions or that the full word limit need be used in respect of each and every question box. If you are submitting a joint proposal, please include evidence for all areas.

Impact on sustainability (*word limit 2000 words*)

2.1 Please explain how your proposal promotes sustainability as defined locally (for example in your Sustainable Communities Strategy or LAA)

Lambeth First's Sustainable Communities Strategy provides a shared framework for the partnership around seven long term outcomes with the issue of 'worklessness' being the core focus of the partnership. Locally we know that worklessness is one of the key causes of crime, poverty and social exclusion. These challenges often lead to lower than average skills/educational attainment, poor health and poor living environments. Clearly there is a cycle in motion which can only be addressed head-on and as a whole.

This proposal would support Lambeth First's Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA targets. Examples of this include by supporting the following:

1. *Strategic outcome* - Lambeth is a great place to do business with higher levels of investment and business growth
LAA target – Increasing the overall employment rate
2. *Strategic outcome* - Greater wellbeing for households through higher numbers of residents in employment
LAA targets – all targets relating to increasing training and skills for disadvantaged groups
3. *Strategic outcome* – Even more children and young people are on the path to success through the provision of good quality education, training and jobs which reduces the risk of exclusion and offending
LAA target – Improving the emotional health of children
4. *Strategic outcome* - Safe and cohesive places where people are empowered and have the confidence to play active roles in their communities
LAA target – Increasing the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.
LAA target – increasing young people's participation in positive activities
5. *Strategic outcome* – Improved health and wellbeing of people which enables them to live active and independent lives
LAA target – Increasing the number of vulnerable people living independently
6. *Strategic outcome* - Lower levels of poverty and social exclusion in Lambeth by helping more of our socially excluded adults into employment, education and training
LAA target – all targets related to supporting disadvantaged groups into training and employment.
6. *Strategic outcome* - Mixed and sustainable communities with an increased supply of new homes, improved existing dwellings and a high quality physical environment.

The social benefit criteria underpinning the discount scheme would be based upon the Sustainable Communities Act schedule and target those issues. The criteria are broadly consistent with the SCS and LAA.

2.2 Over which geographic area will your proposal impact? (e.g. neighbourhood, town, city, sub-region)?

This proposal would benefit those organisations that deliver social benefits based anywhere within the borough as well as the communities that they serve.

2.3 Who would benefit from your proposal?

The primary beneficiaries would be social enterprises paying reduced levels of business rates, and this in turn will allow them to continue operating particularly given the current difficult economic conditions. In addition this will also benefit local businesses that support wider social benefits, however, as stated previously, there is an expectation that the NNDR discount regime would provide the greatest discount to social enterprises. This will also then impact upon the communities that benefit from the work of/working with the social enterprise in terms of viability of business, the ability to move additional resources on service delivery.

2.4 What steps will you take to mitigate any adverse affects on sustainability from your proposal (if relevant)?

Not applicable.

2.5 What project, activities and changes would take place in your area if your proposal was successful?

As local authorities are the collecting agent for business rates, there will be a need to ensure that adequate information was passed onto the social enterprises and local businesses so that they will be able to take up the offer.

2.6 Does your proposal involve transfers of responsibilities between public bodies in the area? If so what are these? What budgetary implications might be involved?

This proposal does not involve transfer of responsibilities between public bodies.

Local authorities are required to 'have regard' to a set of specific issues when deciding whether to support SCA proposals. These are matters listed in Schedule 1 of the Act, as passed by Parliament¹. It is worth noting that the issues listed in the Act are not supposed to be exhaustive and that ideas can cover anything that promotes the sustainability of the local area.

Many of these matters may not be relevant to any one proposal. If you are submitting a joint proposal please include evidence for all areas.

2.7 Please identify which, if any, of the issues authorities are required to have regard to, are relevant to this proposal and include any data and information which you feel would be helpful in the assessment process.

*Please note: due to the nature of social enterprises and local business and the areas that they can operate within some of the questions in section 2.7 have been answered with the phrase "Not directly relevant". **However** that is not to say that a social enterprise could not deal with the issues raised by that question. Therefore in order to reduce repetition, the answers in this section focus primarily on those issues that are most directly relevant.*

a) the provision of local services

Given that social enterprises in Lambeth comprise over 12% of the business within the borough², it is therefore important to provide additional support to a key sector of the local economy where possible. Social enterprises often provide important employment and opportunities for residents in local communities who would otherwise not be engaged in such activity. Therefore if these organisations are not supported through the economic downturn then there is likely to be a significant negative impact upon the local community.

b) the extent to which the volume and value of goods and services that are- i) offered for sale, ii) procured by public bodies, and are produced within 30 miles (or any lesser distance as may be specified by a local authority in respect of its area) of their place of sale of the boundary of the public body.

An example of a business that provides services within Lambeth is the Southside Rehabilitation Association. They provide training and employment for people with mental health problems. They provide a variety of professional services including printing, catering and cleaning services. If such an organisation was unable to operate due to financial pressures then not only would the borough lose a local service provider, it would also lose an organisation that provides opportunities for those communities that would not necessarily be engaged in meaningful employment and training by mainstream businesses.

c) the rate of increase in the growth and marketing of organic forms of food production and the local economy

Not directly applicable.

d) measures to promote reasonable access by all local people to a supply of food is adequate in terms of both amount and nutritional value

¹ The Sustainable Communities Act is available here : http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070023_en_1

² London Annual Business Survey Boosted Sample Analysis – Lambeth August 2007

An example of a social enterprise that would benefit from a variable business rates system is The People's Supermarket. This is a social enterprise supermarket that will be run and owned by its members. The principles for this shop focus upon making quality foods available at affordable prices, as well as raising awareness around buying and eating health foods as well as developing programmes with local training providers linked to retail and commercial enterprise. Importantly this scheme is designed to improve outcomes for local communities not only in terms of access to quality foods but also in relation to providing employment, business ownership and decision making and responsibility for running an organisation.

e) the number of local jobs

Social enterprises and local businesses often provide valuable employment opportunities for local communities, and in particular targeting those opportunities towards those people who have more difficulty accessing the labour/training market. Therefore it is important to support these organisations to ensure that they continue to offer employment and training particularly to those communities that need most help.

f) measures to conserve energy and increase the quantity of energy supplies which are produced from sustainable sources within a 30 mile radius of the region in which they are consumed

Not directly applicable.

g) measure taken to reduce the level of road traffic including, but not restricted to, local public transport provision, measures to promote walking and cycling and measures to decrease the amount of product miles

Not directly applicable

h) the increase in social inclusion, including an increase in involvement in local democracy

Social enterprises and some local businesses are set up to provide socially beneficial outcomes. They either employ/provide training for those individuals who suffer from social exclusion and have difficulty in accessing these opportunities so they therefore require greater levels of support and assistance.

i) measures to increase mutual aid and other community projects

Not directly applicable.

j) measures designed to decrease emissions of greenhouse gases

Not directly applicable.

k) measures designed to increase community health and wellbeing

Not directly applicable.

l) planning policies which would assist with the purposes of this Act, including new arrangements for the provision of affordable housing

Not applicable.

m) measures to increase the use of local waste materials for the benefit of the community

Not directly applicable.

Existing Barriers

(Please do not write more than 1000 words for 2.8 and 2.9)

2.8 What are the existing barriers to implementing your proposal?

National government sets the policy line and general parameters for implementation of the NNDR system. Through current legislation the system has been set up so that the business rates system allows for the following levels of variation in business rates charging:

1. Unoccupied property rating - In general, there will be no business rates to pay for the first three months after a property becomes empty, as long as it has been previously occupied for a minimum of seven weeks and one day. After that, an empty property rate is of 50% of the occupied charge will be payable. Industrial buildings, listed buildings and small properties with rateable values of less than £1900, pay no empty property rates even after the first three months have expired.
2. Small Business Rate Relief - In April 2005, a new small business rate relief was introduced by central government. This entitles anyone occupying a property with a rateable value of up to £21,500 to relief on their bill.
3. Charitable and discretionary relief - Charities are entitled to relief from rates on any non-domestic property that is wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes. Relief is given at 80% of the bill. Local councils have discretion to give further relief on the remaining bill.

Currently local authorities cannot provide business rate relief/reduction for organisations outside of the above criteria. Therefore the local authority acts purely as a collecting agent of business rates and has no ability to vary the level of rates beyond the parameters set out in points 1 – 3 above.

2.9 What actions are needed by Government to make your proposal possible?

A change in national legislation will be required to introduce a new clause that provides business rate relief for organisations that deliver wider social benefits. In order for this to be effective there will be a need to ensure that:

1. Develop in collaboration with local authorities clear criteria for the range of NNDR discounts available for organisations that provide wider social benefits;
2. The process for applying and receiving business rate relief will need to be kept as simple as possible in order to minimise bureaucracy and ensure maximum take up of the relief.
3. Develop a clear communication channel that will promote the new scheme and encourage take up of the business rate relief.

Part 3: Local Authority Endorsement

This section should be completed by the proposing local authority. (Under the terms of the act this means a county council in England, a district council (including metropolitan, non metropolitan and unitary authorities), a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London or the Council of the isles of Scilly)

3.1 Have consultation requirements been met? (500 words max)

Please confirm that your authority has met the statutory requirements for consultation on this proposal, via one or more panels of local representatives and persons from under-represented groups constituted in accordance with the Act and statutory guidance as set out in [Strong Safe and Prosperous Communities](#).

You may wish to describe who has been involved in discussions and development of the proposal (e.g. council, local community organisations and residents groups, parish or town councils, local partnership bodies, local or national organisations, political parties, church and faith organisations, local businesses or chambers of commerce and others).

If you have not done so already please give brief details of relevant panel meetings.

Please note if you are submitting a joint application please provide details of consultation and local support across all areas.

Following the submission of the original proposal and subsequent development, two ideas were presented at the first Panel of Representatives (Citizens Panel) which was held on 2 July 2009, meeting concerning business rates. Both of the initial ideas were deemed to be inappropriate on the basis that they were not necessarily appropriate for the Sustainable Communities Act process. However during the discussion there was support for a proposal that focused upon the provision of business rate relief to those organisations that provided wider social benefits through their services/operational models. This proposal was developed by officers within the council, and it was discussed and agreed at an informal Cabinet meeting, held on 9 July 2009, before being put forward to the final meeting of the Citizens Panel on 14 July 2009 whereby agreement was reached regarding the submission of this proposal as part of Lambeth's contribution to the Sustainable Communities Act process.

A broad range of individuals were invited to participate on the Citizens Panel was composed of a wide range of individuals and representatives from Lambeth and these included:

1. Community Advocates – Local residents who have been trained to gather gauge public opinion and gather feedback from local communities about what issues are relevant to them and then feed these back into public sector bodies;
2. Community Forum Chairs – Community forums are communities of interest that are area based. They aim to put forward the views, issues and needs of their local area as well as assist in driving forward improvement in their communities;
3. Local residents – residents who had voluntarily signed up to take part in council consultation/focus groups were invited to take part.
4. Youth Mayor/Youth Parliament Representative
5. Lambeth LINK Chair
6. Tennant's Council Chair

Final approval of this proposal was secured at the council's Cabinet meeting on the 27 July 2009.

3.2 What are the views from this consultation? You may wish to provide evidence of local support for your proposal? This might include petitions or letters of support from the public, local councillors, Members of Parliament, businesses, public bodies and agencies? Please describe this evidence below. *(The local authority submitting the proposal is likely to wish to review such material and to summarise its content. Onward submission to the Selector of all original documentation will not normally be required).*

The first Citizens Panel meeting helped to reformulate the original business rates proposals into the proposal that Lambeth Council wishes to submit through the Sustainable Communities Act

process. This proposal was subsequently refined and presented to an Informal Cabinet meeting to which it received the support of Cabinet Members. This proposal was resubmitted to the final Citizens Panel meeting and their support was given to this proposal.

Proposals may include a change/transfer of functions from one person to another. If this is relevant to your proposal please confirm that the duties under clause 2, subsection 3 of the act (consulting with organisations affected by a change in location of a function) have been carried out.

3.3 Please give brief details of consultation with any affected organisations

Not applicable.

3.4 Confirmation of council support

The process for formal endorsement is a matter for local discretion; however we anticipate that authorities will wish to gain political endorsement and clearance for the proposal through the relevant processes at local level. Please give details of how formal approval has been attained.

This proposal has been submitted to the council's Cabinet meeting on 27th July 2009 and was endorsed by the members during that meeting.

3.5 General comments

This is an opportunity for the local authority to express any additional comments or views on the proposal: This may include: *(1500 words max)*

- the council's view of levels of local support for the proposal
- any local opposition or objections that the Selector should be aware of
- relevance of the proposal to the area's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement
- outcome of any local authority discussions with agencies or public bodies affected
- potential regional/national significance of the proposal, if replicated elsewhere
- any major resource implications for the council or its local partners
- any other factors influencing viability and achievability of the proposal

All relevant information has been contained within the response to each question.

Part 4: Assessment by the Selector

SCA proposals will be assessed by the LGA as Selector. This will include consideration, short listing and negotiation with the Secretary of State via the LGA Selector panel made up of councillors from the four parties represented on the LGA

The LGA Selector Panel is committed to undertaking the role in a transparent manner; as such reasons for decisions on proposals will be made available.

There will be no appeals process in relation to decisions of the Selector Panel.

4.1 Do you confirm your agreement to abide by the outcome of the Selector's assessment and decision-making processes?

Yes.

4.2 Would your council, accompanied by the originators of the proposal, wish to make a short verbal presentation to the Selector Panel, should this opportunity be available?

Yes.

Thank you for completing this form.

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1.4 Please provide details below of supporting organisations to your proposal. Please explain if the organisation is a charity, company, unincorporated association or other body. If a charity or company please provide registration numbers. If a local partnership please explain the relationship to the Local Strategic Partnership for the area.

Not applicable

Summary of your proposal

Please summarise your proposal. You may wish to include:

- The main elements of your proposal
- What issues your proposal is addressing and how it will promote the sustainability of the local community
- Who is affected by this proposal and how?
- Which public bodies might be affected?
- What are the main actions needed from Government?
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1.5 Please enter your summary below (word limit 1000 words)

Land banking is the practice of purchasing land with the intent to hold on to it until such a time as it is profitable to sell it on to others for more than was initially paid. This is an issue that has potentially damaging consequences on local communities as development and improvements to an area can be potentially stalled due to land banking organisations wanting to realise a profit on their land asset rather than considering the needs of the local community.

Given how this practice can create real problems for communities by stagnating growth and any potential for improvement, it would therefore seem appropriate to introduce new legislation that would allow local authorities to exercise stronger controls over how land can be acquired. This can be particularly problematic in inner city areas such as Lambeth as there is very limited brownfield land available for development. This proposal would seek to specifically request:

1. That any purchaser of land needs to set out a clear short term (up to 4 years) rationale as to how they will utilise that land and what benefits that would provide.
2. Once that initial time period has expired, if there has been no development of that land, and the owner cannot produce valid reasons why that land has not been developed, they should be required to sell that asset at the prevailing market prices at the time.

This new legislation will directly affect all land buyers, which also includes public sector agencies such as local authorities, to reconsider their strategic view of asset acquisition, as they will be required to set out the usage of that land in very clear terms and also be expected to deliver upon those plans within a specific timeframe. Such a requirement will need to be robustly enforced and organisations will need to be held accountable for delivery against their stated aims and objectives.

This will also impact upon the planning function in a local authority in terms of how proposals are processed and assessed, as the expectation would be that new legislation would increase the burden on planners.

Such legislation will help to reduce any potential anti competitive land acquisition from commercial organisations that may wish to enforce a monopoly within a specific area. This will also help ensure that local commercial organisations are able to remain in business. This level of diversity can only provide positive regenerative effects to local communities.

Section 2: About your proposal

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Impact on sustainability (word limit 2000 words)

2.1 Please explain how your proposal promotes sustainability as defined locally (for example in your Sustainable Communities Strategy or LAA)

Lambeth First's Sustainable Communities Strategy provides a shared framework for the partnership around seven long term outcomes with the issue of 'worklessness' being the core focus of the partnership. Locally we know that worklessness is one of the key causes of crime, poverty and social exclusion. These challenges often lead to lower than average skills/educational attainment, poor health and poor living environments. Clearly there is a cycle in motion which can only be addressed head-on and as a whole.

This proposal would support Lambeth First's Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA targets. Examples of this include by supporting the following:

1. *Strategic Outcome* - Mixed and sustainable communities with an increased supply of new homes, improved existing dwellings and a high quality physical environment.
LAA target – Increasing the number of affordable homes delivered (gross)

This proposal will ensure that land that could other be used productively, e.g. mixed use of commercial and affordable housing, go ahead rather than being stalled by land banking organisations that are speculating on the increase in the value of the land. It will also help to address the universal SCS issues of community cohesion and sustainability by allowing the regeneration and development of communities to happen in a more organic way, without excessive interference from land banking organisations. This in turn will allow communities to develop a more coherent identity as well as ensuring that the local authority can promote developments that provide sustainable solutions.

2.2 Over which geographic area will your proposal impact? (e.g. neighbourhood, town, city, sub-region)?

This proposal would impact across the entire borough, but particular in the major town centre areas.

2.3 Who would benefit from your proposal?

Residents and local businesses will benefit from this proposal because it should facilitate the long term regeneration and improvements to local communities by removing commercial barriers and speculators who are looking to profit from increasing land values.

2.4 What steps will you take to mitigate any adverse affects on sustainability from your proposal (if relevant)?

Companies acquire land for a number of reasons, which may necessitate a longer term view on development and progress. It is therefore important that such matters are taken into reasonable consideration when arbitrating as to whether a development has not progressed for legitimate reasons or purely for speculative purposes. However this may create a disincentive to companies to invest in particular areas.

However documents such as the UDP and forthcoming LDF will set out very clear expectations as to how land should be used and this will allow local authorities to exert more control over how an area develops in relation to their long term vision for those communities and Sustainable Community Strategies.

Therefore it is vital that this proposal is developed in collaboration with local authorities and their planning functions in order to ensure that the legislation is clear and implementable. Given the complexity around planning and the potential cost of dealing with challenges on decisions, it is vital that the criteria for this proposal are expressed as clearly as possible. This will also ensure that developers understand the expectation from local authorities on what evidence is required from them.

2.5 What project, activities and changes would take place in your area if your proposal was successful?

Not applicable

2.6 Does your proposal involve transfers of responsibilities between public bodies in the area? If so what are these? What budgetary implications might be involved?

Not applicable.

Local authorities are required to 'have regard' to a set of specific issues when deciding whether to support SCA proposals. These are matters listed in Schedule 1 of the Act, as passed by Parliament³. It is worth noting that the issues listed in the Act are not supposed to be exhaustive and that ideas can cover anything that promotes the sustainability of the local area.

Many of these matters may not be relevant to any one proposal. If you are submitting a joint proposal please include evidence for all areas.

2.7 Please identify which, if any, of the issues authorities are required to have regard to, are relevant to this proposal and include any data and information which you feel would be helpful in the assessment process.

a) the provision of local services

This proposal ought to make it easier for local organisations to acquire land and assets in their local communities in order to provide and deliver services that respond to local need. This will mean that local developments are focused around the benefit to the local community rather than to a commercial end.

b) the extent to which the volume and value of goods and services that are- i) offered for sale, ii) procured by public bodies, and are produced within 30 miles (or any lesser distance as may be specified by a local authority in respect of its area) of their place of sale of the boundary of the public body.

Not applicable.

c) the rate of increase in the growth and marketing of organic forms of food production and the local economy

Not applicable.

d) measures to promote reasonable access by all local people to a supply of food is adequate in terms of both amount and nutritional value

Not directly applicable.

e) the number of local jobs

Not directly applicable.

f) measures to conserve energy and increase the quantity of energy supplies which are produced from sustainable sources within a 30 mile radius of the region in which they are consumed

Not applicable.

³ The Sustainable Communities Act is available here :
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070023_en_1

g) measure taken to reduce the level of road traffic including, but not restricted to, local public transport provision, measures to promote walking and cycling and measures to decrease the amount of product miles

Not applicable.

h) the increase in social inclusion, including an increase in involvement in local democracy

Not applicable.

i) measures to increase mutual aid and other community projects

Not applicable.

j) measures designed to decrease emissions of greenhouse gases

Not applicable.

k) measures designed to increase community health and wellbeing

Not applicable.

l) planning policies which would assist with the purposes of this Act, including new arrangements for the provision of affordable housing

This would directly impact upon existing planning policy, and significantly strengthen the role and responsibilities of the local authority in relation to the speed and type of development with the borough.

m) measures to increase the use of local waste materials for the benefit of the community

Not applicable.

Existing Barriers

(Please do not write more than 1000 words for 2.8 and 2.9)

2.8 What are the existing barriers to implementing your proposal?

Currently local authorities have only a loose ability to direct how land can be used beyond the UDP and LDF. Whilst there is an open market for land acquisition, this is heavily influenced by those organisations and developers with higher levels of purchasing power. The local planning authority is therefore very limited in how it can direct development above and beyond its key planning frameworks.

2.9 What actions are needed by Government to make your proposal possible?

Central government will need to develop criteria that clearly sets out a clear framework for this process developed in collaboration with local authorities which incorporates the issues below:

1. A clear definition as to what constitutes a reasonable timescale for development.
2. A requirement for developers to justify their acquisition of land with a reasonably detailed rationale as to how that land will be developed.
3. Powers for local authorities to require developers to sell land at market value if they have not undertaken their commitment to develop the land.

Part 3: Local Authority Endorsement

This section should be completed by the proposing local authority. (Under the terms of the act this means a county council in England, a district council (including metropolitan, non metropolitan and unitary authorities), a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London or the Council of the isles of Scilly)

3.1 Have consultation requirements been met? (500 words max)

Please confirm that your authority has met the statutory requirements for consultation on this proposal, via one or more panels of local representatives and persons from under-represented groups constituted in accordance with the Act and statutory guidance as set out in [Strong Safe and Prosperous Communities](#).

You may wish to describe who has been involved in discussions and development of the proposal (*e.g. council, local community organisations and residents groups, parish or town councils, local partnership bodies, local or national organisations, political parties, church and faith organisations, local businesses or chambers of commerce and others.*)

If you have not done so already please give brief details of relevant panel meetings.

Please note if you are submitting a joint application please provide details of consultation and local support across all areas.

Following the submission of the original proposal at the Sustainable Communities Workshop session in May 2009 this was developed by council officers. This proposal was then presented at the first Panel of Representatives (Citizens Panel) which was held on 2 July 2009. This idea was supported by the panel. This proposal was further refined by officers within the council, and it was discussed and agreed at a Cabinet meeting, held on 9 July 2009, before being put forward to the final meeting of the Citizens Panel on 14 July 2009 whereby agreement was reached regarding the submission of this proposal as part of Lambeth's contribution to the Sustainable Communities Act process.

A broad range of individuals were invited to participate on the Citizens Panel was composed of a wide range of individuals and representatives from Lambeth and these included:

1. Community Advocates – Local residents who have been trained to gather gauge public opinion and gather feedback from local communities about what issues are relevant to them and then feed these back into public sector bodies;
2. Community Forum Chairs – Community forums are communities of interest that are area based. They aim to put forward the views, issues and needs of their local area as well as assist in driving forward improvement in their communities;
3. Local residents – residents who had voluntarily signed up to take part in council consultation/focus groups were invited to take part.

- | | |
|----|---|
| 4. | Youth Mayor/Youth Parliament Representative |
| 5. | Lambeth LINK Chair |
| 6. | Tennant's Council Chair |

3.2 What are the views from this consultation? You may wish to provide evidence of local support for your proposal? This might include petitions or letters of support from the public, local councillors, Members of Parliament, businesses, public bodies and agencies? Please describe this evidence below. *(The local authority submitting the proposal is likely to wish to review such material and to summarise its content. Onward submission to the Selector of all original documentation will not normally be required).*

This proposal was submitted as part of the Sustainable Communities Act Workshop event held on 22 May 2009, and received support during the workshop session. Furthermore this proposal has received approval at two Citizens Panel meetings and a Cabinet meeting (as described above).

Proposals may include a change/transfer of functions from one person to another. If this is relevant to your proposal please confirm that the duties under clause 2, subsection 3 of the act (consulting with organisations affected by a change in location of a function) have been carried out.

3.3 Please give brief details of consultation with any affected organisations

Not applicable.

3.4 Confirmation of council support

The process for formal endorsement is a matter for local discretion; however we anticipate that authorities will wish to gain political endorsement and clearance for the proposal through the relevant processes at local level. Please give details of how formal approval has been attained.

This proposal has been submitted to the council's Cabinet meeting on 27 th July 2009 and was endorsed by the members during that meeting.
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3.5 General comments

This is an opportunity for the local authority to express any additional comments or views on the proposal: This may include: *(1500 words max)*

- the council's view of levels of local support for the proposal
- any local opposition or objections that the Selector should be aware of
- relevance of the proposal to the area's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement
- outcome of any local authority discussions with agencies or public bodies affected
- potential regional/national significance of the proposal, if replicated elsewhere
- any major resource implications for the council or its local partners
- any other factors influencing viability and achievability of the proposal

All relevant information has been contained within the response to each question.

Part 4: Assessment by the Selector

SCA proposals will be assessed by the LGA as Selector. This will include consideration, short listing and negotiation with the Secretary of State via the LGA Selector panel made up of councillors from the four parties represented on the LGA

The LGA Selector Panel is committed to undertaking the role in a transparent manner; as such reasons for decisions on proposals will be made available.

There will be no appeals process in relation to decisions of the Selector Panel.

4.1 Do you confirm your agreement to abide by the outcome of the Selector's assessment and decision-making processes?

Yes.

4.2 Would your council, accompanied by the originators of the proposal, wish to make a short verbal presentation to the Selector Panel, should this opportunity be available?

Yes.

Thank you for completing this form.

Please email it to selector@lga.gov.uk by 31 July 2009.



The Sustainable Communities Act proposal form

Using this form

This form should be used to submit proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act to the LGA for short listing. Please complete all sections and then **email a copy to selector@lga.gov.uk**. These must be received by **July 31st 2009**, and you will receive confirmation that the form has been received.

Once submitted, information within this form may be made publicly available, unless you request for it to be kept private. We will treat information submitted sensitively. If you wish to attach any relevant presentations or graphs etc. please attach them separately in the email.

For questions regarding the act or the role of the Selector, please see our [FAQs](#). Any further questions can be directed to selector@lga.gov.uk.

Section 1: Proposal Summary

Proposing Authority

Under the terms of the Sustainable Communities Act, all proposals must be submitted by a local authority, or group of authorities, in England. Any group, organisation or individual may originate or develop a proposal. However all proposals will require Local Authority endorsement and submission to the Selector.

Parish councils and other organisations and agencies must seek support and formal endorsement from a proposing local authority (defined in the Act as county councils, district councils (including metropolitan, non metropolitan and unitary authorities), the common council of the city of London or the Council of the Isles of Scilly).

1.1 Lead Authority name

London Borough of Lambeth

1.2 Is this proposal submitted by this authority alone, or is it a joint proposal with other local authorities? (If joint please list authorities)

This proposal has been put forward solely by the London Borough of Lambeth.

1.3 Who is the lead contact (s) in the authority for this proposal? Please provide email address and telephone number - The LGA will direct any enquiries to this contact.

Thomas Man
tman@lambeth.gov.uk
020 7926 2426

Supporting Organisations

Whilst proposals may only be submitted by a local authority, we acknowledge that local partners and outside organisations may wish to register support for the proposal. This is entirely voluntary.

1.4 Please provide details below of supporting organisations to your proposal. Please explain if the organisation is a charity, company, unincorporated association or other body. If a charity or company please provide registration numbers. If a local partnership please explain the relationship to the Local Strategic Partnership for the area.

Not applicable

Summary of your proposal

Please summarise your proposal. You may wish to include:

- The main elements of your proposal
- What issues your proposal is addressing and how it will promote the sustainability of the local community
- Who is affected by this proposal and how?
- Which public bodies might be affected?
- What are the main actions needed from Government?
- What do you expect this proposal to achieve?

1.5 Please enter your summary below (*word limit 1000 words*)

Improving the local economy

The current recession has had a deep impact upon businesses and high streets within the borough, and this in turn affects surrounding communities and the local economy. Empty shop fronts and vacant properties are obvious visual signs of an economy that is struggling. They also have a negative impact on local communities/their confidence on the local economy. In addition empty shops are potential targets for vandalism, ASB and other forms of crime.

This proposal therefore seeks to redress this issue by introducing new legislation whereby if a commercial property is vacant for a specified timescale, then the local authority is empowered to compel the freeholder to make the property available for temporary usage by third sector/social enterprise for a fixed period of time at a preferential rate. This legislation will be a key catalyst for reinvigorating high streets where the recession has made it difficult for commercial organisations to prosper.

Importantly it will also provide opportunities for social enterprises and cultural organisations, that would otherwise be priced out of the market at standard commercial rates, to have a visible presence in high street locations. This will also allow them to engage with a wider group of potential customers and raise awareness. An example of how this has worked in Lambeth has been in the Herne Hill area, whereby an empty shop, that previously was the Apollo Video Rental store, was used as a site to hold an arts festival during June 2009 hosting a range of local musicians and artists. This was supported by the local Herne Hill Traders Association, and was set up to reinvigorate the local community and economy.

Whilst the Herne Hill example demonstrates how local communities can generate change, if local authorities have greater powers in directing the usage of empty commercial assets then this can act as a catalyst within the area and provide a positive impetus in communities. Another example is the Roundhouse in Camden, north London, which became a thriving cultural venue in the 1960s and 1970s from a disused railway shed.

However a commercial asset has a value associated with it, so therefore further amendments to NNDR legislation will be required to allow properties that have been procured for use under this legislation will no longer have to pay business rates thereby providing an incentive to the freeholder to allow alternative use of their asset.

Government will need to introduce legislation that will provide local authorities to intervene and facilitate the usage of commercial properties that have been unused for six months or longer by social enterprises and cultural groups. In return provision by central government must be made so that properties used in this way are no longer required to pay business rates.

This proposal will directly impact upon communities suffering from the decline of their local high street/commercial centre by creating more diverse usage of those assets which will in turn encourage higher levels of foot fall and commerce within the area. This will positively affect issues such as community cohesion and ultimately create positive regenerative effects within an area.

Section 2: About your proposal

The form asks a set of questions to gather as much information as possible to allow for assessment and short-listing by the Selector. A word-limit is stated for each part of the form.

We appreciate that SCA proposals will vary in range and scope, and some questions will be more relevant than others for any one proposal. Please do not feel that answers are required for every questions or that the full word limit need be used in respect of each and every question box. If you are submitting a joint proposal, please include evidence for all areas.

Impact on sustainability (word limit 2000 words)

2.1 Please explain how your proposal promotes sustainability as defined locally (for example in your Sustainable Communities Strategy or LAA)

Lambeth First's Sustainable Communities Strategy provides a shared framework for the partnership around seven long term outcomes with the issue of 'worklessness' being the core focus of the partnership. Locally we know that worklessness is one of the key causes of crime, poverty and social exclusion. These challenges often lead to lower than average skills/educational attainment, poor health and poor living environments. Clearly there is a cycle in motion which can only be addressed head-on and as a whole.

This proposal would support a number of the strategic outcomes and local area agreement targets as set out in Lambeth First's Sustainable Community Strategy including:

1. *Strategic outcome* - Greater wellbeing for households through higher numbers of residents in employment
LAA target – Increasing the overall employment rate
2. *Strategic outcome* – Safe and cohesive places where people are empowered and have the confidence to play active roles in their communities
LAA Targets – Increasing overall satisfaction with the local area
3. *Strategic outcome* - Mixed and sustainable communities with an increased supply of new homes, improved existing dwellings and a high quality physical environment

2.2 Over which geographic area will your proposal impact? (e.g. neighbourhood, town, city, sub-region)?

This proposal is likely to have a greater beneficial impact to town centres.

2.3 Who would benefit from your proposal?

The key beneficiaries of this proposal will be those social enterprises/cultural groups that benefit from the usage of the commercial asset. This will provide them with an ideal opportunity to engage with a broader range audience. Secondly this will directly improve the local communities and businesses by reinvigorating the local high street and creating more trade and visible activity.

2.4 What steps will you take to mitigate any adverse affects on sustainability from your proposal (if relevant)?

Not applicable.

2.5 What project, activities and changes would take place in your area if your proposal was successful?

Once the criteria for when a local authority can intervene in the use of a property have been clearly defined, it would be imperative for the local authority to constructive relationships with those landlords whose properties are not being utilised and to facilitate the link between the landlord and appropriate organisations wishing to use that asset.

2.6 Does your proposal involve transfers of responsibilities between public bodies in the area? If so what are these? What budgetary implications might be involved?

Not applicable.

Local authorities are required to 'have regard' to a set of specific issues when deciding whether to support SCA proposals. These are matters listed in Schedule 1 of the Act, as passed by Parliament⁴. It is worth noting that the issues listed in the Act are not supposed to be exhaustive and that ideas can cover anything that promotes the sustainability of the local area.

Many of these matters may not be relevant to any one proposal. If you are submitting a joint proposal please include evidence for all areas.

2.7 Please identify which, if any, of the issues authorities are required to have regard to, are relevant to this proposal and include any data and information which you feel would be helpful in the assessment process.

Please note: due to the varied locations of empty commercial assets as well as the variety of social enterprises and cultural organisations some of the questions in section 2.7 have been answered with the phrase "Not directly relevant". However that is not to say that this proposal could not address that specific question. Therefore in order to reduce repetition, the answers in this section focus primarily on those issues that are most directly relevant.

a) the provision of local services

This proposal could help to provide a broader offer of services within local communities, particularly in relation to those communities that have a more traditional high street/commercial centre by providing opportunities for social enterprises and cultural organisations to deal with a larger and more varied customer base.

b) the extent to which the volume and value of goods and services that are- i) offered for sale, ii) procured by public bodies, and are produced within 30 miles (or any lesser distance as may be specified by a local authority in respect of its area) of their place of sale of the boundary of the public body.

Not directly relevant.

c) the rate of increase in the growth and marketing of organic forms of food production and the local economy

Not directly relevant.

d) measures to promote reasonable access by all local people to a supply of food is adequate in terms of both amount and nutritional value

Not directly relevant.

e) the number of local jobs

Not directly relevant.

⁴ The Sustainable Communities Act is available here : http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070023_en_1

f) measures to conserve energy and increase the quantity of energy supplies which are produced from sustainable sources within a 30 mile radius of the region in which they are consumed

Not directly relevant.

g) measure taken to reduce the level of road traffic including, but not restricted to, local public transport provision, measures to promote walking and cycling and measures to decrease the amount of product miles

Not directly relevant.

h) the increase in social inclusion, including an increase in involvement in local democracy

This proposal will have the greatest impact on those communities and areas that suffer from the highest levels of deprivation by diversifying the numbers and types of businesses within a commercial area. This will create higher levels of footfall and greater potential levels of economic activity and diversity within an area.

i) measures to increase mutual aid and other community projects

This proposal can directly benefit community based social enterprises looking to obtain a short term operational commercial premises by providing them with an opportunity to lease at preferential rates.

j) measures designed to decrease emissions of greenhouse gases

Not directly relevant.

k) measures designed to increase community health and wellbeing

Not directly relevant.

l) planning policies which would assist with the purposes of this Act, including new arrangements for the provision of affordable housing

Not relevant.

m) measures to increase the use of local waste materials for the benefit of the community

Not directly relevant.

Existing Barriers

(Please do not write more than 1000 words for 2.8 and 2.9)

2.8 What are the existing barriers to implementing your proposal?

Currently local authorities have the Town and Country Planning Order 1987, which they can use to direct the general usage of a commercial asset. There are a wide number of classifications which range from shop types to industrial usage. However councils cannot directly intervene in when a commercial asset is used or specifically direct who should be able to use an asset e.g. a social enterprise.

Therefore assets can remain under utilised for some time and there is little that the council can do to remedy that situation.

2.9 What actions are needed by Government to make your proposal possible?

The government will need to develop a set of clear criteria for:

1. How long should an asset be vacant before a local authority can intervene and direct the usage of that commercial property?

Lambeth Council would suggest six months being the duration under which an empty commercial asset would qualify for consideration under this new legislation.

2. What types of organisations can take over the leasehold?

Lambeth Council would want these assets to be utilised by social enterprises and cultural/arts groups.

3. How long can these organisations take over the leasehold for?

Lambeth Council would suggest that leases for assets under this new legislation would be short term (up to one year).

4. What will be the level of financial remuneration for the freeholder?

Lambeth Council would suggest that business rates for commercial assets that fall under the new legislation should not be required to pay business rates. This will require additional changes to existing NNDR legislation to recognise this new type of business usage, and therefore ensure that there is no expectation of business rate revenue from assets used for these purposes. Furthermore the rent for the commercial assets used under this legislation should be charged at a heavily discounted rate to the organisation that is leasing the property.

Part 3: Local Authority Endorsement

This section should be completed by the proposing local authority. (Under the terms of the act this means a county council in England, a district council (including metropolitan, non metropolitan and unitary authorities), a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London or the Council of the isles of Scilly)

3.1 Have consultation requirements been met? (500 words max)

Please confirm that your authority has met the statutory requirements for consultation on this proposal, via one or more panels of local representatives and persons from under-represented

groups constituted in accordance with the Act and statutory guidance as set out in [Strong Safe and Prosperous Communities](#).

You may wish to describe who has been involved in discussions and development of the proposal (e.g. council, local community organisations and residents groups, parish or town councils, local partnership bodies, local or national organisations, political parties, church and faith organisations, local businesses or chambers of commerce and others).

If you have not done so already please give brief details of relevant panel meetings.

Please note if you are submitting a joint application please provide details of consultation and local support across all areas.

This proposal was put forward by Cabinet Members following discussions on the proposals put forward through the SCA process on 9 July 2009. It was then developed by officers within the council, and put forward to the final meeting of the Citizens Panel on 14 July 2009 whereby agreement was reached regarding the submission of this proposal as part of Lambeth's contribution to the Sustainable Communities Act process.

A broad range of individuals were invited to participate on the Citizens Panel was composed of a wide range of individuals and representatives from Lambeth and these included:

1. Community Advocates – Local residents who have been trained to gather gauge public opinion and gather feedback from local communities about what issues are relevant to them and then feed these back into public sector bodies;
2. Community Forum Chairs – Community forums are communities of interest that are area based. They aim to put forward the views, issues and needs of their local area as well as assist in driving forward improvement in their communities;
3. Local residents – residents who had voluntarily signed up to take part in council consultation/focus groups were invited to take part.
4. Youth Mayor/Youth Parliament Representative
5. Lambeth LINK Chair
6. Tennant's Council Chair

3.2 What are the views from this consultation? You may wish to provide evidence of local support for your proposal? This might include petitions or letters of support from the public, local councillors, Members of Parliament, businesses, public bodies and agencies? Please describe this evidence below. *(The local authority submitting the proposal is likely to wish to review such material and to summarise its content. Onward submission to the Selector of all original documentation will not normally be required).*

There has been a growing number of incidences whereby empty commercial assets have been used temporarily for arts/creative exhibitions furthermore these uses can develop into sustainable long term success as set out in the executive summary. Furthermore in Lambeth, the Herne Hill example demonstrates that such ventures can be both successful and create a positive impact on local communities.

Proposals may include a change/transfer of functions from one person to another. If this is relevant to your proposal please confirm that the duties under clause 2, subsection 3 of the act (consulting with organisations affected by a change in location of a function) have been carried out.

3.3 Please give brief details of consultation with any affected organisations

None undertaken.

3.4 Confirmation of council support

The process for formal endorsement is a matter for local discretion; however we anticipate that authorities will wish to gain political endorsement and clearance for the proposal through the relevant processes at local level. Please give details of how formal approval has been attained.

This proposal has been submitted to the council's Cabinet meeting on 27th July 2009 and was endorsed by the members during that meeting.

3.5 General comments

This is an opportunity for the local authority to express any additional comments or views on the proposal: This may include: *(1500 words max)*

- the council's view of levels of local support for the proposal
- any local opposition or objections that the Selector should be aware of
- relevance of the proposal to the area's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement
- outcome of any local authority discussions with agencies or public bodies affected
- potential regional/national significance of the proposal, if replicated elsewhere
- any major resource implications for the council or its local partners
- any other factors influencing viability and achievability of the proposal

All relevant information has been contained within the response to each question.

Part 4: Assessment by the Selector

SCA proposals will be assessed by the LGA as Selector. This will include consideration, short listing and negotiation with the Secretary of State via the LGA Selector panel made up of councillors from the four parties represented on the LGA

The LGA Selector Panel is committed to undertaking the role in a transparent manner; as such reasons for decisions on proposals will be made available.

There will be no appeals process in relation to decisions of the Selector Panel.

4.1 Do you confirm your agreement to abide by the outcome of the Selector's assessment and decision-making processes?

Yes.

4.2 Would your council, accompanied by the originators of the proposal, wish to make a short verbal presentation to the Selector Panel, should this opportunity be available?

Yes

Thank you for completing this form.

Please email it to selector@lga.gov.uk by 31 July 2009.