

Local Development Framework Steering Group

A meeting of Local Development Framework Steering Group was held on Tuesday, 22nd July, 2008.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Mick Womphrey

Officers: J Dixon, Miss L Edwards, Mrs J Elliott, Miss R Richardson, Ms C Straughan and Mrs R Young (DNS), Mrs T Harrison (LD)

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr John Fletcher, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Steve Walmsley,

LDF 30/08 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

LDF 31/08 Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2008

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on the 18th June 2008.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of 18th June 2008 be agreed as a true record.

LDF 32/08 PROPOSED POLICY ON STUDENT ACCOMMODATION LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

A report was given to Members on the current issues and evidence on student accommodation associated with Durham University Queens Campus in Stockton and detailed how this would inform emerging policy in the Local Development Framework.

Stockton Borough Council did not have any planning policies to guide officers when dealing with planning applications for student accommodation. The Local Plan contained no specific targets or precise allocations for this particular use and the housing needs of students had not been separated out in either the 2006 Local Housing Assessment or the ongoing current update.

Previous applications for student accommodation indicated that there was no clear consensus about the amount and type of accommodation that was required. Furthermore, it was unclear what impact students were having on existing residential areas around the Borough.

Therefore, it had been decided to gather evidence on student accommodation; set out an action plan for guiding planning officers on how to deal with applications for student accommodation and use statutory planning policy to give clear guidance for prospective developers in the future.

A number of sources had been investigated from Durham University and the Council's Housing, Regeneration and Development Services sections in order to develop the evidence base.

Information gathered from the University indicated that there was currently an oversupply of student accommodation within the Borough. The Accommodation Office was aware of 119 bed spaces not let for the next academic year. Normally nearly all had been let by June. The number of second and third year students who had signed up to rent rooms in the new Bridge development had led to this oversupply of bed spaces in the private sector for the next academic year. There were around 2,000 students based at Queens Campus. This number was predicted to grow to 2,200 over the next 5 years, and then to around 2,700- 2,800 in the medium to long term subject to funding.

The Council's Private Sector Housing section indicated that the main concentration of student accommodation was within the Parkfield, Oxbridge and Mandale, Victoria wards. This had brought difficult to let properties such as bed sits back into use, and was considered overall to have had a positive impact on the regeneration and viability of the housing within these wards.

Therefore, it was considered justified that information about the existing supply of student accommodation and details about how the proposed development would meet market demand, should be gathered when student accommodation planning applications come in to demonstrate how the proposed development would meet a proven need.

This evidence base had informed the following policy in Core Strategy Policy 8 (CS8) Housing Mix and Affordable Housing: "Proposals for student accommodation will have to demonstrate how they will meet a proven need." It was hoped that this would be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances.

As the Core Strategy was a strategic document it had been decided that the Regeneration Development Plan Document would contain a more detailed criteria based policy which would require applicants to submit various pieces of evidence to demonstrate that there was a proven need.

Due to the timescales involved in the adoption of the above documents a note for officers dealing with planning applications in the interim period would be produced. This would have little material weight as it would not be an adopted policy in accordance with statutory procedures but was hoped that it would help to clarify the procedure of dealing with student accommodation applications with development services officers.

Members agreed that a policy was needed that looked at how much accommodation was needed and how much existed.

During evidence gathering Members requested that information be obtained on how many student accommodation places were unlet and for how long of both private let and purpose built student housing. If the data protection act allowed Officers could check on the Council Tax database to discover all the privately rented student accommodation and therefore gain a more accurate figure of student housing.

Members observed that parking allocations for student accommodation were far less than other developments, which raised concern if they became regular housing. Members were advised that such developments were not suitable for

regular housing due to the internal layout. However, such a change of use would be required to go to Planning Committee at which point the parking issue would be addressed.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. Further evidence to be gathered to inform the policy
3. A revised report will be referred back to the Members Steering Group.

**LDF
33/08**

**OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND LANDSCAPE SUPPLEMENTARY
PLANNING DOCUMENT
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

A report provided Members with an update of progress made on the Open Space, Recreation and Landscape Supplementary Planning Document. It also identified future tasks necessary to the document's production.

The need to set local provision standards outlined in Planning Policy Guidance 17: planning for open space, sport and recreation demanded a robust locally derived evidence base. Audits of existing provision should be compared to an investigation of local need to determine and support local standards for open space and recreation provision.

The Open Space Audit, published in 2005, provided an understanding of the quantity and quality of open space in the Borough. However, the audit only provided a view of a particular point in time so updates were required. An update had been undertaken using a variety of methods. GIS was used to identify open space sites where planning applications had been received and was investigated further. The consistency of the inclusion of play areas, informal sports areas and sports facilities was achieved using information from other departments. Information from other departments was also used to identify sites that had been improved. The results of public consultation were used to update the audit where appropriate and areas of new development were surveyed for the first time and newly created spaces added to the audit.

In order to understand local needs the Recreation and Leisure Survey was undertaken in cooperation with the Countryside and Greenspace Team and Arts, Leisure and Culture. This survey was undertaken by a social research company who interviewed a sample of 2700 residents of the Borough on a face-to-face basis. The sample was selected to ensure that the Borough was represented both spatially and in terms of its social characteristics. An additional questionnaire was available online and in paper form so every one had the chance to comment. There were 239 responses to this part of the survey. The recreation and leisure survey had resulted in information about the activities people did, the facilities people used and also their aspirations about activities and facilities. The survey was designed in such a way as to allow different analyses - it had been analysed on a number of different spatial areas and also

on social characteristics. Another questionnaire was distributed to groups such as Sports Teams, Community Groups, Parish Councils and Residents Associations, to access their specialist knowledge about needs around particular activities or around particular areas.

The inclusion of standards for recreation facilities in the document required that an audit of built facilities be undertaken. This audit had a smaller scope than the Open Space Audit due to the different form of access associated with built facilities. Facilities associated with Tees Active, Community Centres associated with the Community Development Team, Youth and Community Centres associated with Children Education and Social Care and Village Halls from an audit undertaken by the Tees Valley Rural Community Council were included. The Audit would contain both quantitative and qualitative elements.

Local Standards would be set using the Audits and recreation and leisure survey for quantity, quality and access. The quantity standard would be calculated by comparing the level of provision in different areas to the population and evidence of perceptions of need based on the Recreation and Leisure Survey. Varying existing levels of provision would be analysed to determine a reasonable standard of the amount of different spaces per population.

Access standards would be derived by using GIS to calculate the population within different distances of existing open space. To achieve this, varying distance boundaries were applied to open spaces and facilities to assess the amount of area covered. This would then be related to information gathered through the Recreation and Leisure Survey, in which people were asked what type of space they thought, should be more of near their home. To determine an appropriate standard, the coverage of spaces within certain distances would be matched to the percent of the sample that thought they were appropriately provided for. The result would be a distance standard that outlined how far people should expect to travel to different spaces and facilities

Quality standards would be derived using the Audits of existing provision and national benchmarks for high quality open space and facilities. This could then be checked against people's local perceptions, identified in the Recreation and Leisure Survey. The result would be a standard that outlines, for each type of space and facility, the level of quality that should be expected from the Borough's spaces and facilities.

Officers clarified that Stockton Borough Council would set its own local standards in relation to provision whilst adhering to the national quality standards. The Council looked at improving quality as well as quantity of space.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.

**LDF
34/08** **“PLANNING THE FUTURE OF VILLAGES IN STOCKTON ON TEES
BOROUGH”:
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Members were updated on the progress of the “Planning the Future of the

Villages in Stockton” consultation events. All the consultation events had been undertaken and the deadline for questionnaire responses was 29th July 2008. Questionnaires which had been received provided a wide range of opinion.

Drop-in-sessions had been held in all of the villages covered by the study. An exhibition had been set up at every session showing the results of the facilities audit and sustainability study. Officers explained the purpose of the studies to residents and discussed the future role of development limits with them. Residents were able to provide feedback on the content of the reports and the future role of development limits in their village via a questionnaire.

After the first meeting it was observed that the questionnaire had been confusing, therefore Officers amended the questionnaire. It would be acknowledged that responses from the first meeting would not be accurate on questions altered.

Officers were looking at ways to analyse the responses received and how to compile a report which incorporated the results of the facilities and sustainability studies.

The questionnaire responses would provide a clearer understanding of resident views and opinions on the future planning context of the villages. The research was intended to inform emerging policy as part of the Local Development Framework.

The application of Core Strategy draft policy CS1 would ultimately be informed by the report that was being produced as it would evaluate which of the villages were considered to be “sustainable settlements.”

Further policy recommendations would be made to inform the Regeneration Development Plan Document.

It was anticipated that the report would be referred to Cabinet in October 2008.

Officers were requested to put the word 'rural' in the title of the village study to give definition. It was observed that the report clearly defined the remit of the study. However, Officers would amend the title.

Members were advised that the study had not taken into account public right of way. However Officer would incorporate wording into the report that the Council would maintain existing rights of way.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.

**LDF
35/08**

**SUBMISSION CORE STRATEGY: PUBLICATION DOCUMENT
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Members were provided with the latest draft Submission Core Strategy which was scheduled for publication in September to inform and update Members.

As part of the publication stage, representations would be invited from residents and stakeholders.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.