

# Local Development Framework Steering Group

A meeting of Local Development Framework Steering Group was held on Tuesday, 10th March, 2009.

**Present:** Cllr Robert Cook(Chairman), Cllr John Fletcher, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Mick Womphrey

**Officers:** C Straughan, R Young, J Elliott, R Richardson, M Clifford, D Bage, L Edwards, J Dixon (DNS); S Johnson (LD)

**Also in attendance:** No other persons in attendance

**Apologies:** Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Steve Walmsley

## **LDF 59/08**      **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **LDF 60/08**      **Minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2009.**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

## **LDF 61/08**      **Local Development Framework:Draft Submission Core Strategy and Schedule of Proposed Changes.**

Members considered a report that presented a Draft Core Strategy Submission document and an accompanying schedule of proposed amendments.

It was explained that the Core Strategy Development Plan Document had been published at the end of October for an 8-week period of consultation, which ended on 22 December 2008. 67 responses had been received, resulting in a total of approximately 280 individual comments. Of these, about 180 were formal objections. The schedule of comments had been considered at the last Member Steering Group meeting on 28th January 2009.

The next stage in the process was for the document to be formally submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for independent examination. This was scheduled to take place in May 2009. Before this occurred the Council was able to make minor amendments to the plan of an editorial or updating nature.

Members were informed that the Spatial Planning team had undertaken an assessment of the comments received to determine:

- whether any indicated that the plan was unsound
- if any updating or clarification was required
- if any editorial changes were needed.

Members were provided with a schedule of the Proposed Changes indicating the changes to be made and the reasons for them. They were also provided with a copy of the draft Submission Core Strategy displaying the proposed changes.

Members were given details of an issue that was currently being addressed

relating to Natural England (NE) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) expressing dissatisfaction over the methodology of the Appropriate Assessment (AA) under the Habitat Regulations. Therefore it was considered that whilst there would be some delay to the submission process whilst the AA was amended to the satisfaction of NE and the RSPB, this could be minimised.

It was noted that prior to submission, a final opinion would be sought from Government Office for the North East.

In terms of the next steps Members were informed that the document and schedule would be revised for Cabinet on 16th April 2009 and would then proceed to full Council on 6th May 2009. Following full Council the Publication Draft Core Strategy with an accompanying schedule of proposed changes and associated documentation, would be submitted to PINS. Members were given details of the process that would be undertaken once a date for the independent examination had been received from PINS.

A revised version of the Core Strategy Diagram was provided to Members.

CONCLUDED that the proposed changes be approved.

**LDF 62/08 Open Space, Recreation and Landscaping Supplementary Planning Document**

Consideration was given to a report that provided an outline of the provisional open space and recreation standards and a draft of the Supplementary Planning Document, which was currently a work in progress.

An update on the areas progressed was provided. It was explained that concerns had been raised about the nature of the proximity analysis undertaken for built sports provision. The Sport England Active Places Power online database had been used. However, in order to ensure greater transparency, it was felt that that an Integrated Transport Network (ITN) analysis should be completed by the GIS team. This analysis used actual road routes to create buffers around open spaces and built sports facilities, solving issues around natural barriers such as the river. The number of households within these boundaries were then calculated as a percentage of total households and used to set a proximity standard.

It was noted that due to progress with the proximity work the PPG17 Assessment was now largely complete. The only area of work that remained was the community centres and village halls section of the built facilities audit. Some further small-scale work was required to ensure that inclusion of centres in the audit was consistent. Due to this, the quantity standard for community centres and village halls had not yet been set.

Another significant area of progress had been the writing of the Supplementary Planning Document which outlined the proposed standard charge, minimum acceptable sizes and the process through which on site open space or contributions to offsite spaces and facilities would be calculated. The document had already been amended in line with comments from Development Services, Countryside and Greenspace and Leisure and Sports Development but further

consultation was currently being undertaken.

The landscaping section of the Supplementary Planning Document was complete and had been produced by Urban Design.

Members discussed the SPD and the approach to identifying the demand for open space and facilities caused by a development and also the approach to the standard charge to off site provision.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.

**LDF  
63/08      Economic Viability of Affordable Housing Requirements in Stockton**

Consideration was given to a report that set out a summary of the findings of the Economic Viability of Affordable Housing Requirements in Stockton Report prepared by Arc4.

It was explained that Arc4 had been commissioned to test the economic viability of the affordable housing requirements set out in Policy CS8 in the Core Strategy DPD Publication Draft.

The study used 14 notional sites, referred to as “beacon” sites, but factored in actual land values for the locations of the sites. Different scenarios had been modelled using the beacon sites. Members were given examples of the scenarios.

Members were informed of the findings of the report as follows:-

- In the still relatively favourable market conditions of late 2007 most sites would be viable with at a level of 15-20% affordable housing provision and with a tenure split of 80% social rent and 20% shared ownership.
- The introduction of Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes seemed on present estimates to reduce the viability of development. A 10% affordable housing target may become the most that could reasonably be achieved on most sites.
- A 15% reduction in house price levels accompanied by a 50% fall in land values and a 5% fall in building costs, a 10% affordability provision would be achievable on most of the sites that remained economically developable; 15% may be achievable on a minority of sites in higher value areas.
- A 25% reduction in house price levels accompanied by a 70% fall in land values and a 10% fall in building costs, affordable housing provision still seemed likely to be viable at a 5-10% level, but not for all sites.

It was noted that as the market conditions would change during the currency of the Local Development Framework, the policies for affordable housing provision should be applicable to a broad range of house prices and land values.

It was considered that the baseline policies for affordable housing provision should be established in the context of market conditions in late 2007. In those circumstances, a target of 15-20% affordable housing provision would be

economically viable for most sites.

It was considered that there was not a strong argument for reducing the threshold for affordable housing targets below the national indicative figure of 15 dwellings. The Economic Viability of Affordable Housing Requirements in Stockton Report also advised that affordable housing policies would need to be applied with considerable flexibility whilst the forecast sale prices remained significantly below these late 2007 levels, otherwise housing development could be substantially discouraged.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.