

## **Local Development Framework Steering Group**

A meeting of Local Development Framework Steering Group was held on Tuesday, 14th July, 2009.

**Present:** Cllr Robert Cook (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr John Fletcher, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Mick Womphrey

**Officers:** D Bage, M Clifford, J Dixon, Mrs C Straughan, Mrs R Young (DNS), P K Bell (LD)

**Also in attendance:** No other person's were present.

**Apologies:** Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Steve Walmsley

### **LDF 14/09      Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Fletcher declared a personal non prejudicial interest in relation to the review of the limits to development and green wedges due to a relative owning land included in the item and friends owning land behind 4 and 8 Butts Lane.

Councillor Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in relation to Employment Land Allocation due to working in the Chemical Industry.

### **LDF 15/09      Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2009**

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2009.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2009 be approved.

### **LDF 16/09      UPDATE ON PROGRESS ON CORE STRATEGY, STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT AND RURAL HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Members were provided with a report which set out a brief summary of progress of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) towards independent examination and adoption and an update on progress on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Rural Housing Needs Assessment, for Members' information.

The Submission Draft Core Strategy and its supporting documents were submitted to the Secretary of State on 27 May 2009. This began the independent examination process.

Inspector Robert John Yuille had been appointed to conduct the examination, which was to be held at Norton Education Centre. Kelly Blakemore had been appointed as Programme Officer. The Pre - Hearing Meeting (PHM) had been arranged for Wednesday 5th August 2009. This would deal with administrative arrangements for the hearing, including the main topics to be examined and the timetable to be followed. The Hearing itself was scheduled to take place between 21st September and 8th October 2009. However, it was not certain how long it would last and the final list of topics for discussion had not been

decided however the Inspector had already requested further information. The examination would take the form of round table discussions.

It was apparent that two issues were already emerging for the independent examination; flood risk and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). There was also an indication that the Wynyard issue could have its own session at the examination, although this was yet to be finalised. The inspector would send further questions for the Spatial Planning team to respond to and could ask for further topic papers.

The Spatial Planning team would continue to respond to requests for further information from the Planning Inspector as well as arranging the necessary expertise to assist in defending the Council's case. In particular, it was considered that a planning lawyer would be required to assist the Council in any discussions about future development at Wynyard. Similarly, should any sessions on retailing or affordable housing be arranged, the assistance of the consultants who undertook the evidential studies for the Core Strategy on behalf of the Council would be sought. In addition, other Council officers and representatives of other organisations, who had contributed to Core Strategy policy formulation, for example Tees Valley Regeneration, Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative, Homes and Communities Agency, had been alerted that their assistance could be required if issues of relevance to their areas of expertise were identified for discussion at the examination.

Members were reminded that they had previously been briefed about the proposed Rural Housing Needs Study. It was stated that this work was likely to be undertaken by Arc4 and the study would have three stages as follows:

- Stage 1: Parish Council/local resident liaison
- Stage 2: Household survey
- Stage 3: Final Report

Members were also reminded that there were three possible approaches to stage 1. These were:

- To engage with each Parish Council individually
- To engage with clusters of Parish Councils
- To have a single community engagement event for all Parish Councils

Michael Bullock of Arc4 and Kirstine Riding, an independent rural housing specialist (known as a Rural Housing Enabler) who worked alongside Arc4 on rural housing projects, provided a presentation to the Parish Council Liaison Form of 15 June on the Rural Housing Needs Study. It was explained that the preferred approach was to have a total of four community engagement events with each event serving a cluster of Parish Councils. This approach had now been incorporated into the draft consultant's brief. The brief also contained a timeline for the study, which was provided in the report.

With regard to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, the draft Level 1 SFRA Report had been received. The Report consisted of three volumes. The content of each volume was provided in the report.

The timeline for completion of the study was follows:

- 29 June to Friday 10 July. Internal and EA/NW Review of the Draft

Level 1 SFRA Report:

- 10 July.
  - 27 July to 12 August
  - 13 August to 26 August
- 2 SFRA Report
- 2nd September

Steering group meeting / “surgery”  
Update Level 1 SFRA with Level 2 output  
Internal and EA/NW Review of the Draft Level  
Final Report

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. A Green Infra Structure working group will be formed.

**LDF  
17/09**

**EMPLOYMENT LAND ALLOCATIONS**

A report was provided advising Members of the sites which the Council intended to allocate for employment uses (B1, B2, B8) in the emerging Regeneration Development Plan Document (DPD). The allocations were based on evidence compiled in the Employment Land Review (2008), but had been updated following monitoring of industrial and business sites in the Borough.

The adopted Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North East set out the maximum employment land portfolio that should be set out in Local Development Frameworks. Policy 18 and 22 of the RSS stated that Stockton should provide a total of 325 hectares (Ha) (255 ha to General Employment Allocation, 70 ha to Key Employment Allocation) with 445 ha to Chemicals and Steel.

It was noted that a footnote to the policy identified that 20 hectares of Stockton’s General Employment Allocation was to be provided at Durham Tees Valley Airport. In addition, Policy 21 of the RSS identified 80 hectares of land at Durham Tees Valley Airport for airport related development.

A further requirement of Policy 18 of the RSS was that Local Authorities undertook Employment Land Reviews based on a 25 year supply of land.

Stage 2 of the Council’s Employment Land Review (ELR) provided a detailed assessment of the local economy and set out the employment land requirement for the Borough. The report identified the needs for Finance and Business services (B1), Manufacturing and Industrial (B2) and Wholesale and Distribution.

Stage 3 of the ELR provided a detailed site suitability assessment, building on the initial assessment undertaken in Stage 1 of the work. It identified which sites should be allocated for Employment uses in the Local Development Framework.

Evidence in ELR Stage 3 was based on available land figures from April 2007; this information was therefore two years out of date. However, officers had been compiling information on the level of available land in commercial areas for monitoring purposes. It was envisaged that this information would be used as site allocations in the forthcoming Regeneration DPD preferred options. At the meeting on the 8th July steering group members would be presented with information compiled so far regarding available land in each area and would

have the opportunity to comment on the sites identified in each area.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.

**LDF  
18/09**      **REVIEW OF THE LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT AND GREEN WEDGES**

Members considered a report which advised that a review of the 'limits to development' and 'green wedges' was being undertaken. The results of the work would form an evidence base for the emerging Regeneration Development Plan Document. Officers would discuss areas which had already been assessed in order to gain Members opinion on the process and provide any pertinent information on sites. Areas not covered would be brought to subsequent Local Development Framework Member Steering Groups for discussion.

It was proposed that the Regeneration Development Plan Document (DPD) would include policies concerning the 'limits to development' and 'green wedge'. In order for these policies to be robust they would be reviewed and updated to reflect the changes made to the landscape since the last review of these policies as part of the Local Plan.

The Regeneration DPD Issues and Options Report asked the question whether or not green wedges should 'be included within the limits to development?' A total of 64 responses were received to this question with 57 wishing for green wedges to be removed from the limits to development thereby strengthening their protection from development. As such officers are currently working on providing each conurbation with its own limits to development.

It was intended that the revised limits of development and green wedges would be consulted upon as part of the Regeneration DPD. A technical paper detailing the methodology and work undertaken in reviewing these policies would support the Regeneration DPD as an evidence base document.

Initial meetings had been held with Planning Enforcement and Development Services in order to ascertain any concerns they had over revising the limits and any areas of interest where changes to the limit could have been experienced.

The limits of development shown on the hard copy of the Local Plan were produced using base map Ordnance Survey (OS) information available at the time. The information from the Local Plan was subsequently digitised by external consultants. However, changes in OS base mapping, improvements in GIS technology, physical changes on the ground and the evidence necessary to produce LDF documents had all necessitated a review of the limits to development. The Spatial Planning Team were in the process of redrawing the limits of development to follow these up-to-date OS base maps.

The limits to development would be drawn where there was a clear break between the urban and rural/open areas. Where possible it was advantageous to draw this limit to development along the most easily identifiable features. Therefore, when looking to draw the limits to development the following hierarchy had been used to determine the strongest boundary.

- 1) Rivers
- 2) Roads and paths

### 3) Back fences and site boundary fences

The review will be conducted in two stages:

- 1) Desk study involving analysis of existing OS data, historic aerial photographs, oblique aerial photographs and discussions with Development Control and Enforcement Colleagues.
- 2) Site visits.

In the process of undertaking the review officers would highlight areas for consideration i.e. those which:

- should be included
- should be excluded
- should be investigated further
- are possible enforcement issues

A 'Landscape Character Assessment' covering the Borough had been undertaken by White Young Green. The study categorized the landscape character types of the rural and green wedge areas within the Borough. The study was currently at draft stage; however, once completed the study would form an invaluable evidence base for informing the review of the Borough's green wedges.

At the meeting on the 8th July officers would present plans to Members showing the existing and proposed limit of development for certain areas (including areas consideration). Officers would also seek opinions on the approach taken and any further information which Members could provide on particular sites.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.

**LDF  
19/09**

### **SPECIAL TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS**

Members were informed of the work undertaken to date in creating a list of areas of 'special townscape character'. These areas would form an evidence base for the emerging Regeneration DPD.

There were a number of areas within the Borough that had a distinctive character and sense of place. These areas were those which were well established, had a mature quality and identity that set them apart from the rest of the urban environment. These areas were those where the fabric of what had made them special had not been fundamentally eroded. At present they had no other recognition/protection of their local distinctiveness.

Special Townscape Character Areas could vary in size owing to the diverse nature of development in Stockton. Generally these areas were of pre-war and inter-war housing characterised by large family houses and set in a spacious environment of mature gardens and specimen trees. Other areas had also been identified as having special character owing to their townscape character or unique historic character.

The character and distinctiveness of many areas within the Borough had been

under pressure from inappropriate development in recent years. National planning policy for housing encouraged the intensification of housing development and in particular development on 'previously developed land'. This coupled with the demographic changes within the Borough towards a need for smaller households, could result in additional dwellings in large garden plots, (new dwellings alongside the original), subdivision of dwellings, or the demolition of large detached housing and their replacement with higher density flatted development. The Council recognised that if a considered approach was not adopted then such developments could contribute to the loss of character or distinctiveness of an area. Redevelopment of this sort could also lead to the loss of local character and distinctiveness through the loss of individual buildings, disruption to the pattern of development and loss of trees and hedges.

The aim was therefore to 'facilitate good design by identifying the distinctive features that defined the character of a particular local area' and note those areas where 'more intensive development was not appropriate'

At the Local Development Framework Members Steering Group held in December 2008 an initial schedule of sites to be assessed for their townscape character was presented to Members. Members were also invited at this meeting to suggest areas they felt were worthy of being included on the schedule of sites to be assessed.

Prior to the assessment of sites a comprehensive methodology was required; however no published 'best practice' guidance on townscape character assessment existed. Owing to this the assessment of the Special Townscape Character Areas had been based on the 'suggested format for a conservation area appraisal' as set out in the English Heritage: 'Guidance on conservation area appraisals'.

The assessment of each area had been based on:

- Analysing Ordnance Survey Maps
- Analysing aerial and oblique photographs
- Field appraisals
- Background/desktop survey
- Discussions with fellow professionals and historic environment experts

Field appraisals and initial desktop assessment of a number of sites had been undertaken for their inclusion as special townscape character areas. These included Oxbridge Lane, Yarm Road (Eaglescliffe), Junction Road, Leven Road, Durham Road and Darlington Road.

Following discussions with colleagues it had been suggested that there were additional areas worthy of being assessed for their townscape character.

Once these additional areas had been assessed for inclusion as special townscape character areas, a detailed assessment of each site agreed as having 'special townscape character' would then be undertaken and incorporated into a report to form an evidence base for policy emerging as part of the Regeneration Development Plan Document (DPD).

Consultation on this evidence base document would be undertaken alongside the Regeneration DPD.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.