

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING PARTY

Meeting: 2 September 2009

At: 1.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillors Sue Derbyshire, Dave Goddard, Lenny Grice, Philip Harding, Kevin Hogg, Peter Scott, David White and Derek Whitehead.

Also in attendance

Jim McMahon	–	Service Director (Transportation & Planning), Environment & Economy Directorate
Dave Bryant	–	Policy Manager, Environment & Economy Directorate
Richard Leyshon	–	Head of Policy, Environment & Economy Directorate
Richard Wood	–	Policy Officer, Environment & Economy Directorate
Chris Braithwaite	–	Democratic Services Officer, Chief Executive's Directorate

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED – That Councillor Sue Derbyshire be elected Chair of the Working Party until the next Annual Council meeting.

Councillor Sue Derbyshire in the Chair

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

RESOLVED – That Councillor Lenny Grice be appointed Vice-Chair of the Working Party until the next Annual Council meeting.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 2 March 2009 were approved as a correct record.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

5. DRAFT PREFERRED OPTIONS DOCUMENT OF THE LDF CORE STRATEGY

Representatives of the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) and made a presentation on the Draft Preferred Options Document of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. The report aimed to set out and justify the intended direction of policy for the Core Strategy, reflecting the aims of local, regional and national policy such as the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Stockport Community Strategy and providing a spatially specific vision for Stockport to be achieved during the lifespan of the Local Development Framework from 2011 to 2026. Consultation on spatial options for development had been undertaken providing consultees with four potential Spatial Options (SOs) for the LDF to focus

on:-

- SO1: focus on Stockport Town Centre/M60 Gateway
- SO2: focus on existing Town Centre, District Centres and Local Centres.
- SO3: focus on the Town, District and Local Centres along with areas in need of regeneration.
- SO4: dispersed development.

From the consultation exercise it had emerged that the preferred option had been a combination of SO2 and SO3.

The presentation and discussion of the report focused on the following key areas:

(i) Climate Change

Representatives of the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director emphasised the need to ensure that in order to achieve the sustainable development of the borough it was important to have regards to the other key objectives of the Council and other stakeholders. They reported that the intended policy direction to ensure effective sustainable development also helped towards meeting targets related to the reduction of the Borough's carbon footprint. Carbon management, rather than requiring a certain percentage of renewable energy in each development was considered the best way forward, although an increase in the exploitation of renewable energy sources in new developments was to be pursued where practical. Carbon management was seen to allow a more flexible approach towards reducing carbon emissions by allowing developers to make carbon savings through increasing the energy efficiency of existing housing where it was not practical to reduce the carbon emissions of a new development.

It was also reported that the sustainable design of developments was seen as a key issue, particularly for the period from 2011 to 2016, as the Government's aim was for all new homes to be carbon neutral by 2016, five years after the LDF was to come into force.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- The difficulty in making new buildings carbon neutral. The definition of "carbon neutral" to be used by the Government was as yet unknown, but it was reported that carbon management would allow significant flexibility in reducing the carbon footprint of new buildings. The possibility of promoting the development of timber-framed houses was raised.
- The difficulty of enforcement of developments that were not carbon neutral. A study was being commissioned to provide evidence of actions undertaken by other authorities to evaluate the options available.
- The need to ensure that increasing the energy efficiency of homes did not cause an increase in the cost of "affordable" housing.

(ii) Inequalities

The reduction of inequalities across the Borough was an overarching issue for Stockport and a key aim of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and the Stronger Communities Strategy. The Local Development Framework was to reflect the aims of

these strategies and ensure that programmes intended at decreasing the level of inequality in the Borough were, where appropriate, enabled by the Core Strategy.

The importance of high quality design of houses was stressed as an important part of shaping places to address inequalities.

(iii) Housing

The key issues to address with regard to housing had been identified as the quality, types, sizes and tenures of dwellings both across the Borough and within communities, along with delivering the quantity required by the Regional Spatial Strategy (450 per year until 2021). It was recommended that an equal split between flats and houses was proposed in the Core Strategy, rather than the greater number of flats which had been developed in recent years. Members noted that they wished to avoid the creation of developments which were not suitable for a long term purpose, particularly with regard to very small flats around the Town Centre and houses with large gardens in some areas.

The level of affordable housing was also noted as a key concern, as there was significant evidence that a large increase on the current level of development of affordable homes would be needed in the next five years in order to meet demand. It was felt that the focus on shared equity housing would need to be reviewed and replaced with social rented housing in some areas of the Borough.

It was also hoped that a target of 90% of housing developments on Brownfield sites could be achieved, and that work was being undertaken on the development of a new housing phasing policy to replace HP1.2.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- The possibility of building more managed and retirement housing to aid people in moving out of under-occupied houses, particularly large houses with only one occupant. It was reported that the Strategic Housing Section was investigating both organisational and financial measures which would make this sort of move easier, particularly for elderly residents looking to move to a smaller property.
- Members agreed that a strong phasing policy with some degree of flexibility could potentially have a strong beneficial impact, particularly in avoiding overdevelopment and in encouraging developers to make use of Brownfield sites. However, concerns were expressed that an effective policy may not be either practical or enforceable.

(iv) Access To Services

It was reported that the strategy and hierarchy of Town, District and Local Centres was intended to continue, with no new centres to be added or existing centres to be deleted. The bulk of additional shopping capacity would be focused in the Town Centre, with smaller scale comparison and convenience shopping capacity in the other Centres. The development of large-scale leisure facilities was also to be focused in the Town Centre with smaller scale developments permissible in the District and Local Centres. It was reported that it was not desirable to create an overprovision of leisure facilities in the smaller Centres. Members stated concerns

about a number of district centres which they felt might benefit from contraction and consolidation into smaller centres with fewer vacant properties, and in particular noted the problems caused by the spread of hot food takeaways in District and Local Centres which had the effect of reducing the shopping offer in these Centres.

The future provision of cemetery land in the Borough was also raised. It was reported that the current capacity was likely to be exhausted within ten years, and that additional capacity would need to be provided. Members stated that they would prefer new greenbelt cemetery sites, rather than reusing of existing cemeteries. The potential of creating woodland burial sites in order to provide new cemetery capacity, and assist in the reduction of carbon output, was raised.

(v) Economic Growth

It was reported that studies undertaken had concluded that there was potential for a significant expansion of the supply of office floor space in the Town Centre following the economy's emergence from the recession, particularly on the A6 corridor in the area from the Civic buildings to Mersey Square. Increased office capacity in the Town Centre could also aid the regeneration of the Town Centre shopping complex and create associated employment opportunities in the Borough, although it was reported that manufacturing employment within the Borough was expected to continue to decline in line with the national trends. The potential for the development of new office space at Woodford Aerodrome after that site was vacated by BAE Systems was also discussed.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- The skills of the staff currently employed by BAE Systems at Woodford needed to be retained, and whether they could be exploited by small or specialised manufacturing firms in the Borough.
- The need for flexibility in the allocation of employment land in the Borough in the Allocation Plan. The possibility of land being exploited for mixed uses such as employment and housing or leisure and employment was discussed.
- The importance of analysing the types of employment likely to be growing in the future and identifying methods of attracting these employment types to Stockport was stated.

(vi) Environment

Representatives of the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director reported that no substantial changes were likely to be required to the existing Environmental policies within the current Unitary Development Plan (UDP), but did make Members aware of the likelihood of a Regional Strategic Review into the use of Green Belt taking place in the near future, which it was felt was likely to promote the release of some Green Belt land for development in specific circumstances. Members supported a small degree of flexibility in the use of Green Belt land, particularly if minor use of Green Belt was required in order to make an otherwise acceptable development permissible by improving areas such as access roads.

In addition, guidance was sought on the flexibility desired by Members on the creation of LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs, on-site or from the use of commuted sums from developments, and the preferred focus of Members with regard to the

recreational use of river valleys. Members supported additional flexibility in the provision of LAPs in order to avoid LAPs being required in situations where there is an existing park nearby.. It was felt that the commuted sums in these situations would be better spent on improving the park in question. Members also expressed a preference for river valleys to remain as informal recreational open space as much as possible.

(vii) Transport

Members were advised of work undertaken to identify “accessibility zones” within the Borough. This work was aimed at recognising those areas of the Borough which were most accessible in order to inform and help to meet the objectives identified throughout the LDF and other Council strategies, with particular reference to the Access to Services objectives. Encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport by locating development in accessible locations was a primary plan objective. In addition it will be necessary to demonstrate to the Government Inspector, who would consider the Core Strategy, that sufficient transport infrastructure will be available to deliver the policies and proposals in the Core Strategy. Transport infrastructure would itself have land use implications, particularly with regard to the SEMMMS Relief Road and potential extensions of the fixed track rail network.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- The potential benefits of the SEMMMS Relief Road, and in particular the integral role it would play in any development at the Woodford Aerodrome site.
- The cases for direct rail links from Stockport to both Manchester Airport and Manchester Victoria.
- The limited capacity for increasing the road network.

(viii) The Town Centre

Discussion of the issues particular to the Town Centre had taken place throughout the consideration of the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director, in particular the potential development of shopping, offices and housing within the Town Centre to regenerate the Town Centre as a mixed use area. It was felt that there was potential for development in the Town Centre to have a significant impact on the Council's intended programme of carbon management, to combat climate change.

A discussion took place with regard to the location of the current and future Town Centre's shopping core area, as some Members had felt that in recent times the eastern end of the Town Centre around the Peel Centre had been performing more strongly than the western end of the Merseyway. The need for flexibility in accommodating shops in locations agreeable to both the shops and the Town Centre as a whole was raised by Members.

(ix) Woodford Aerodrome

It was reported that BAE Systems intended to vacate their current site at Woodford Aerodrome by 2013. Although public consultation on the future use of the site had not been undertaken as the future use of the site by BAE was not known during the

initial issues and options stage, consultation was to take place with all interested parties in the near future. The emerging view from informal discussion was that a mixed use of the site for both employment and residential use was likely to be the preferred option. Decisions on a number of significant issues with regard to any future building on the site would need to be made, in particular the area of land to be developed. The main options on which consultation was to be sought in this regard were to allow development in the areas with existing buildings, to amalgamate the two major separate areas of existing building into one site of equal size to the current developed area, or to allow development of a greater area than had currently been developed by utilising additional greenbelt land. Consultation was also to be undertaken on potential future uses of the runway and surrounding open spaces.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- The benefits of the large areas of greenbelt land on the site being made accessible for informal recreation.
- The need for adequate public transport links to the site.
- The potential future use of the runway as part of a private airfield for small aircraft providing links to Manchester

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

A representative of the Service Director (Transportation & Planning) attended the meeting to provide the Working Party with details of the intended consultation arrangements for further development of the LDF.

Councillors requested that Area Committee Councillors be informed of any consultation meetings in any of the Wards covered by their Area Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME UPDATE

A representative of the Service Director (Transportation & Planning) attended the meeting to provide the Working Party with details of the Local Development Scheme Update, which was intended to go before the Council's Executive in October.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was reported.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – That the date for the next meeting of the Working Party be agreed following the undertaking of a consultation exercise with Members.

The meeting closed at 3.55pm.