

Minutes of Special Planning and Development Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, 2 February 2012 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor R E Sherras (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Bibby	J Rogerson
T Hill	D Taylor
B Hilton	M Thomas
J Holgate	R Thompson
S Knox	J White
G Mirfin	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Head of Planning Services, Head of Regeneration and Housing, Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

Also in attendance: Councillors P Ainsworth, R Bennett, R Hargreaves, K Hind (arr. 7.15pm), S Hirst, S Hore, K Horkin, R Newmark, M Ranson, C Ross, I Sayers, G Scott, D Smith and N Walsh.

712 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor S Carefoot.

713 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

714 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Adam Korol on behalf of the Sabden Residents Association expressed the view that developers should not be allowed to change the Ribble Valley and that further development in Sabden would reduce the quality of life for the villagers. He requested that the Council work with Sabden to revitalise the village and that no more houses be allowed to be built in Sabden.

Pauline Wood on behalf of Clitheroe Civic Society expressed surprise at the proposed numbers of homes to be built in the Ribble Valley and remarked that although residents had been consulted, they had only recently realised the impact. She reminded Committee that a petition had been started that already had over 400 signatories and that these people must be listened to.

Doctor Mike Harper on behalf of Save Whalley Village Action Group informed Committee that the people of Whalley had been encouraged to engage with the Core Strategy and that despite opposition the proposed number of houses had increased and that this target was not right for the borough. He expressed the

opinion that it cannot be sustainable for the Ribble Valley to have all these extra houses and that the Borough Council must defend the borough.

Mr Thornton-Bryer, Milton Avenue Protest Group felt that the government had lifted one set of rules without new ones being in place and that the Core Strategy process did not meet public sector requirements. He also expressed the opinion that the Council was leaning towards a maximum number of houses without any reasoning and asked that the Strategy be reconsidered in a professional manner.

Simon O'Rourke, Clitheroe Town Council informed Committee that it was felt that the Borough Council was being driven by developers and that there was a lack of industry to cope with more residents as well as other facilities also being full to capacity eg supermarket car parks and recreational facilities and that the Borough Council needed to maintain the character of the borough.

Steve Rush highlighted comments made by several conservative ministers with regard to avoiding inappropriate development and communities being in control helping to protect green space with less urban sprawl. He felt that locally, there was no one listening to the residents and that the countryside would be destroyed.

Mrs Mallinson felt very strongly about additional development in the Ribble Valley. She reiterated comments made by David Cameron MP and spoke about the need for affordable housing in Ribble Valley and not speculative housing.

Ron Loebell informed Committee that he was concerned that less than 1% of the borough's population had bothered to respond to the consultation, which he felt meant that 99% were either happy with what was happening or didn't care. He felt strongly that residents should have spoken up when they had the chance.

715 REFERENCES FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no references from Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

716 CORE STRATEGY – HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

The Chairman asked permission of the Committee for those Councillors who were not Members to be allowed to speak at this stage in the proceedings.

Councillor Ranson was given permission to speak and remarked that it was extraordinary that people say they are unaware of the Core Strategy considering the length of the consultation exercise and that ultimately the numbers will be decided by an Inspector in that we have to produce figures that can be justified by evidence in front of an Inspector. He informed Committee that the Borough Council does take this very seriously and that we need to be the ones making defensible decisions or the Inspectors will decide for us. He felt it was important that the Core Strategy should be progressed as quickly as possible so that the borough is not swamped by developments.

Councillor Hirst was given permission to speak. He informed Committee that dealing with planning issues was a highly constrained/regulated area with detailed guidance that must be worked to and subject to the independent scrutiny of an Inspector. A number had to be set for the housing requirement in order to control development in the future, and that it needs to be set at a level that is sustainable but that will not be thrown out by the Inspector and so have to start again from the beginning with the whole process.

Councillor Newmark was given permission to speak. He spoke strongly in defence of the Councillors on the Planning and Development Committee who were also residents of the Ribble Valley. He remarked that the Borough Council had lost appeals where applications had been refused in the past because, in the view of an Inspector, the refusal was not based on solid evidence. The consultation process had been lengthy and the proposed housing requirement numbers had been drawn from conclusions on receipt of consultation responses.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing gave Committee a brief roadmap through the report informing Committee why there needed to be established a requirement for housing and that it was fundamental to the Core Strategy moving forward. The Core Strategy also has to reflect national policies and guidance and there was a framework to abide by and relevant evidence to be considered. He reminded Committee that consultants had been appointed to provide the Council with their report and advice and that their key conclusion was that 190 – 220 was an appropriate level of dwellings per annum for the 20 year plan period. It was recognised that the position of housing delivery must be constantly monitored. Their report had been published for consultation and a working group had been established to look at the housing requirement numbers. The consultation had generated 139 responses from a range of respondees, 118 of which had been made by members of the general public and the others were generally of a more technical nature on behalf of landowners, developers and house builders. Some of these detailed responses had been sent to NLP Consultants for further consideration including the counter proposal from Save Whalley Action Group. However, NLP were of the same mind with regard to the housing requirement figure, although they acknowledged some of the points made. He felt that the conclusions and evidence pointed to a figure of 4,400 dwellings over the plan period of 20 years was the right figure to recommend.

Committee discussed various aspects of the housing requirement figure. It was felt by Committee that NLP offer a robust evidence base with recognition of economic growth and the challenges ahead. There was some discussion about when a formal review should be undertaken which would take into account new census figures and other information. Committee were informed that an annual monitoring report that would take into account changing policies and circumstances, would be carried out. It was understood that the Borough Council had to accept more houses being developed in the Ribble Valley and that the housing requirement number had to be defensible.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree for the purpose of the Core Strategy that the housing requirement is set at the middle of the range advised by the Council's consultants namely 4000 dwellings during the plan period (200 dwellings per annum) and

that provision for a formal review to be undertaken within five years or less of adoption of the Core Strategy be included in the proposals.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact John Heap (414461).