

Minutes of Special Planning and Development Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 25 June 2013 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor S Bibby (Chairman)

Councillors:

I Brown	J Rogerson
S Carefoot	I Sayers
B Hilton	M Thomas
J Holgate	R Thompson
S Knox	A Yearing
G Mirfin	

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

Also in attendance: Councillors K Hind and S Hore.

140 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors T Hill, D Taylor and J White.

141 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

142 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

143 CORE STRATEGY – REVISED HOUSING EVIDENCE

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee to consider updated evidence in relation to housing requirements. He reminded Members that the provision of housing was a key element of the Council's land use planning and its role in determining planning applications. In relation to the key elements of the housing evidence base, evidence in relation to housing requirements, gypsy and traveller accommodation, housing land supply Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and a refresh of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) together with viability work had been commissioned. Work in relation to the SHLAA was now close to completion with the principal element outstanding being the economic viability appraisals to provide a basis on which to undertake final testing of identified sites. Although the current review was yet to be completed the adopted SHLAA identifies a more than adequate supply of land for the number of dwellings within the submitted development strategy. To date the refresh of the SHLAA had identified a considerable number of additional sites over and above those sites that are still available from the adopted study. The emerging analysis is once again anticipated to show that land supply is not a

constraint as a matter of principle. However, it was important to bear in mind that sites identified in the SHLAA do not have any status as an allocation nor should it be automatically assumed that they would attain planning permission. Any SHLAA site would still be the subject of the appropriate planning application process or future Local Plan allocations. However, it does provide an important starting point when considering land for allocations.

The Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment had similarly been the subject of a refresh and update. This provides a key part of the housing evidence informing the nature of housing tenures, types and sizes required and in particular the overall need for affordable housing. A copy of the draft SHMA had been made available on the Council's website.

In relation to the overall scale of new housing growth and taking account of work undertaken by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners, the SHMA results recognise the need to increase the housing target towards the figure of 250 dwellings per year to better meet the objectively assessed need. It also recognises that the assessed need is a part of the consideration of establishing the housing target for the borough and highlights the need to underpin the housing requirement with an assessment of other mitigating factors that would need to be taken into account of such as environment and infrastructure capacity. The summary also identified that the Council's current affordable housing target of 30% remains appropriate although the Council would need to consider the delivery rate of new housing such that significant growth related to economic development may result in a lower affordability target being required and this may need to be adjusted following a future review. The report highlighted the need to have regard to achieving growth in the affordable rented sector, as opposed to the social rented sector with a latent potential demand for this type of accommodation being identified. A copy of the review of the overall housing requirement that had been undertaken by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners was included with the report for Committee's information. It was also available on the Council's website.

The consultants update had incorporated a range of new statistical information as well as a series of new scenarios to cover a range of revised projections. In summary the remodelled scenarios demonstrate the impacts of the revised household projections and the growth implications of the economic evidence base. The report emphasised the need for a policy balance to be maintained including the need to recognise the implications of past actual delivery rates and sustainability factors. The consultants had identified that in the light of more up to date information, the lower end of the original range (190 – 220 dpa outlined in 2011) now lacked validity as up to date information and vacancy rates does not support the lower level of growth. Previous concerns about the credibility of economic evidence and how it related to housing requirements had now been superseded by the updated economic evidence. This updated evidence had been used to inform the impact on housing requirements to deliver and support of the economic growth aspirations set out in the employment land review and the Core Strategy. Whilst accounting for other policy issues and the need to achieve a balance through all aspects of sustainability, the economic base forecasts would lead to a housing requirement of some 280 dwellings per annum. Whilst a level of housing requirement at 280 dwellings per annum would address

concerns regarding the delivery of housing to support economic growth and the need to take account of longer term changes in the labour force there was also a need to recognise the constraints on actual delivery, in particular the rural character of the area and its environmental attractions. Additional work to clarify these constraints would need to be undertaken to ensure that these points can be adequately addressed at the Examination to demonstrate why a lower figure was appropriate. NLP concludes that a revised housing requirement within the range of 220 – 250 dpa would be appropriate but it was stressed by the consultants that a figure above 250 must be carefully considered against the wider context of the nature of the borough and the policy context that applies, for example AONB and conservations designations. This was an important part of ensuring that all the policy implications of the Framework were taken into account to ensure that the housing requirements supports in full the delivery of sustainable development. The Council would need to be able to demonstrate that these issues had been considered.

For comparison reasons the distribution of housing as currently set out in the Core Strategy models of spatial distribution had been tabulated to illustrate the implications of both the upper figure in the Litchfield range at 250 dpa and the 280 dpa requirement generated when no mitigating factors are taken into account. The Council's sustainability consultants had been asked to provide an initial view on the implications of the increased housing requirements in relation to the submitted Core Strategy. This had just been received.

The latest evidence would also have an impact with regard to decision making on planning applications and dealing with appeals as the information represents the most up to date evidence the Council has. The current evidence base had established a housing requirement of 4000 houses over the plan period, equivalent to 200 dpa which was currently adopted for decision making purposes. This figure should continue to be the basis for decision making even though applicants and appellants would wish to utilise the most up to date evidence (ie the highest number) for the purpose of progressing their applications. It was therefore imperative to undertake the additional work to support the Council's confirmation of housing requirements as a matter of urgency, not just in relation to progressing the Core Strategy but to enable the Council to deal with the issue when determining applications.

The report of the Chief Executive also highlighted the national policy context but again reiterated that in establishing the housing requirement for the area, it was a fundamental principle that the Council has an up to date evidence base and applies that evidence to make decisions and plan for the needs of the area in an appropriate manner.

The updated housing evidence provides a basis against which to assess the submitted Core Strategy. The GTAA provides an updated position that will need to be reflected in the supporting text of the strategy but does not lead to a fundamental change in the gypsy and traveller policy itself. Although some details in the SHLAA remain yet to be finalised, the overall position emerging is that there appears again to be no fundamental issues around the ability to identify sufficient land to meet the borough's needs, although this would need to

be confirmed through the completion of the study. The update of the housing requirements review identifying a higher range for housing provision meant that the Council would need to undertake further detailed analysis of the implications of the housing growth derived from the requirement review and this would need to be fed into the timetable to progress the Examination of the Core Strategy and would need to be raised with the Inspector for his guidance on how he would wish this to be addressed.

Members discussed the findings with specific reference to the increased number of dwellings per annum required and recognised that the refreshed evidence could substantiate this increase. However, it was also felt that it was important to evaluate the issues raised in the report with regard to economic growth and the demographics of the Ribble Valley area.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. note the findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the housing requirements updated and submit the reports as part of the evidence base to the Core Strategy Examination;
2. endorse the advice of Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners and agree to base further work on the Core Strategy housing requirement on the upper figure of 250 dwellings per annum as identified in the consultants conclusions subject to the outcome of the additional work to address matters of mitigation as identified;
3. agree to seek further guidance from the Inspector appointed to examine the Core Strategy on the emerging implications of the housing evidence base in relation to the submitted Core Strategy and the need to undertake further work in relation to the housing requirement to inform the Examination; and
4. endorse the continued application of the submitted Core Strategy housing requirement of 200 dwellings per annum for the purpose of guiding decisions on planning applications pending consultation on the updated evidence.

144

CORE STRATEGY – PROPOSED MAIN CHANGES

The Chief Executive submitted a report outlining the changes proposed to the submitted Core Strategy. A schedule of the recommended changes was set out for Committee's information. Many of the changes related to an improvement in clarity and interpretation identified in response to the Inspector's original queries or to technical updates to reflect the new evidence reports. These changes would be provided to the Inspector and would need to be subject to public consultation in accord with the applicable regulations in due course.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree to the proposed changes as outlined in the Appendix to the report and endorse their submission to the Inspector.

CORE STRATEGY RETAIL AND LEISURE STUDIES

A report was submitted for Committee's information on the update to the Core Strategy evidence base document in relation to the submitted Core Strategy on retail and leisure matters. Both reports were available for Committee's information and had been carried out by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners.

The broad direction highlighted by both studies confirmed that the current approach to the Core Strategy was appropriate and both studies would provide further information in order that the Council was able to provide robust evidence to underpin and inform the Local Plan. The documents also contained useful information that could help inform the Council's future economic development work.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm.

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