

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 21 AUGUST 2014
title: PETITION FROM SAVE LONGRIDGE CAMPAIGN
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: COLIN HIRST, HEAD OF REGENERATION AND HOUSING

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive information regarding the receipt of a petition at Full Council and to provide an opportunity to discuss the issues raised.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area. The Core Strategy vision has strong links to both the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Corporate Strategy vision.
- Corporate Priorities – To be a well-managed authority.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can raise their concerns.

2.2 Petitions offer an opportunity for members of the public, groups and organisations to get more directly involved in the decisions and activities of the Council. Petitions can have a number of aims and objectives including:

- to allow communities to have direct influence in the democratic process;
- provide direct access to elected Members and other key policy makers;
- allow citizens to raise awareness of a particular campaign, put issues on the agenda which might not otherwise be considered by the accountable body;
- stimulate Council debate;
- result in policy changes; and
- give accountable bodies more access to opinion and feedback on policy decisions.

2.3 The Council has an adopted petition scheme which provides further guidance on the procedures involved. Petitions, which have been signed by the requisite number of people (600¹), maybe presented at Council during the public participation session by delegations of not more than three persons. Only one person from the delegation (normally the petition organiser) shall be permitted to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes. The petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes.

2.4 The Council must decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. The Council's response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for, to how many people have signed it, but may include one or more of the following:

¹ Rounded up from 585 – which is based on 1% of the local population of RVBC 58,500 (ONS 2,000 mid-year population estimate).

- taking the action requested in the petition
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out the Council's views about the request in the petition
- considering the petition at a Council meeting

2.5 The Council will consider all the actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in the petition. They may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by referring it to a relevant Committee.

2.6 The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the decision taken, this confirmation will also be published on the feedback on line website.

3 THE PETITION RECEIVED

3.1 A petition was presented to the meeting of Full Council on 15 July 2014 by the Save Longridge Campaign. Minute 143 refers, in which it is noted that Mr Walmsley representing the Save Longridge Campaign outlined that the petition, signed by 900 signatories was seeking to urge the Council to:

- maintain and support the new housing numbers proposed in the Ribble Valley Development Plan;
- support and maintain the 200 homes reduction in the number of new homes to be built in Longridge contained in the Ribble Valley Development Plan known as the 'Longridge Adjustment'; and
- resist the arguments of Taylor Wimpey, Barratts, Millers and Gladmans to increase new home numbers in Longridge and recognise that this is a device by each to build on their chosen sites.

3.2 It was resolved at the meeting that the petition would be put before the Planning and Development Committee and that a formal response would follow in due course.

3.3 The petition raises issues around two key areas of this Committee's remit namely the Core Strategy but also in relation to the consideration of planning applications.

4 THE CORE STRATEGY

4.1 As Members are aware the Core Strategy is currently in the Examination stage and was the subject of formal hearings held in January. At that time issues relating to housing and the proposed Development Strategy were debated in front of and with the Inspector. Following the close of hearings, the Inspector issued an interim letter advising the Council to consider the proposed housing requirement and the treatment of what is described as the Longridge Adjustment, together with the need to refine the approach to smaller/other settlements (settlements other than Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley).

- 4.2 The Council considered those issues and published main modifications including increasing the housing requirement for the borough, with a consequent increase in proposed housing at Longridge under the distribution model. The petition is seeking that the Council continues to support this new proposed figure which is consistent with the Council's approach. Similarly, the Council's position continues the retention of the Longridge Adjustment
- 4.3 The modification as a result of the Inspector's query, is concerned with the mechanism by which the 200 adjustment was distributed to other settlements in the borough. It should be noted that in the interim letter, the Inspector has not raised as an issue the principle of making the adjustment rather he has questioned how the 200 is redistributed to other parts of the borough. Consequently, this aspect of the petition is also consistent with the Council's position being put forward to the Inspector in the Examination.
- 4.4 The petition also urges the Council to resist arguments being made to increase housing numbers in Longridge and recognise that they are aimed at promoting individual sites. Again, this has formed part of the Examination process and the Inspector will be considering the issues that were debated and set out in submissions by a number of parties. The Council's position in relation to the Core Strategy is consistent with what the petitioners are seeking in this regard.
- 4.5 The issues raised in paragraphs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 above are of course the subject of submissions and representations from developers and landowners to the Core Strategy Examination. It will be for the Inspector to consider the representations as he prepares his report, however all the aspects being sought by the petitioners are consistent with the Council's case that has been put to the Inspector.

5 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Having published the main modifications, the Inspector has been provided with all representations for him to consider. No further response has been sought from the Council by the Inspector and as stated, the Council's position remains consistent with what the petitioners are seeking. The additional consultation period currently being held closes on 7 September. So far, the Inspector is seeking that the Council provides any further responses received at the close of this consultation to enable him to prepare his report. At this stage there is no proposal before the Council to alter its position.
- 5.2 Whilst the Core Strategy position is set out above, Members will also be aware that individual planning applications have and are likely to be submitted for sites in Longridge. These will need to be determined on their merits against the framework provided by national policy and the Core Strategy (as proposed to be modified). In doing so, any application will need to be considered against the impact it has upon housing requirements, housing supply and the Development Strategy set out in the Core Strategy. This will be part of that determination process. The impact therefore of approving sites that lead to a significant increase in housing in Longridge for example or are contrary to the Development Strategy set out in the Plan, will need to be taken into account.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The points raised by the petition support the position being promoted by the Council in the Core Strategy and the Examination. The Inspector will consider all the representations made to the consultations and the issues discussed at the hearings. The Council needs to await the delivery of his report before moving to the formal adoption

stage. The petition will be passed to the Inspector for him to consider. Individual planning applications will need to be considered against the relevant policy frameworks and determined through the development management process. Whilst the petition focuses on the Core Strategy, it is important to recognise that decisions taken on applications can have impacts upon the matters raised in the petition such as the overall amount of housing in Longridge. This will be a matter for consideration in the application process.

7 RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – No implications identified.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Council needs to consider the petition within the scope of the adopted petition scheme. Decisions in relation to the Core Strategy need to be informed by a robust evidence base and be justified. At present the aspects raised in the petition support the Council's position as presented at the Examination.
- Political - No implications identified.
- Reputation – There is significant public interest in the Core Strategy process and development proposals in the borough.
- Equality & Diversity – No implications identified.

7 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

7.1 Note the contents of the petition together with the points set out in section 6 of this report and agree that the petition be forwarded to the Inspector with the campaign group being advised accordingly.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Submitted petition – officer files.

For further information please ask for Colin Hirst, extension 4503.

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