

APPENDIX F

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 7TH DECEMBER 2010

Title:

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY – PREFERRED
OPTIONS AND DRAFT POLICIES**

**[Portfolio Holder: Adam Taylor-Smith]
[Wards Affected: All]**

Summary and purpose:

This report summarises the stage that has been reached in the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, and seeks approval from the Council to consult on the Core Strategy Preferred Options and Draft Policies.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The Core Strategy and its policies will have an important role in supporting and delivering Corporate Priorities, including protecting the environment and delivering affordable housing.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

The Core Strategy and its policies will have potential equality and diversity implications. For example, in relation to the delivery of affordable housing and other housing to meet the needs of particular groups.

Climate Change Implications:

The Core Strategy will have an important role in supporting and implementing the local level policies both in relation to mitigating the impacts of climate change and adapting to the effects of climate change.

Resource/Value for Money Implications:

There are no resource implications arising specifically from this report. Progress with planning policy work will continue to be managed within existing resources.

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from the report

Introduction

1. The Council has reached another key milestone in the development of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, with the production of what is effectively a first draft of the Core Strategy. It sets out the preferred approach to dealing with key issues previously identified and also contains the draft policies. Subject to approval from the Council, the next stage will be to consult on the document, starting in January.

What is the Core Strategy?

2. Members are reminded that the Core Strategy sets out the key policies and overall strategy for managing and directing future development in Waverley. The Core Strategy is required to look forward at least 15 years from adoption. Therefore, the end date for this Core Strategy is 2027. The Core Strategy should be aligned with the Sustainable Community Strategy for the area.
3. Before the Core Strategy can be adopted, it must go through the process of independent Examination where the Inspector will assess whether it is 'sound'. There are various tests of soundness set out in relevant guidance. In order to be 'sound' a Core Strategy must be:-
 - Justified;
 - Effective; and
 - Consistent with National Policy
4. Being 'justified' means that it must be founded on a robust and credible evidence base; and should also be the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives. Sustainability Appraisal must be embedded throughout the process of producing a Core Strategy. It plays a particularly important role in the process of evaluating alternatives and identifying the preferred strategy/policy. To be 'effective' a Core Strategy must be deliverable; flexible; and able to be monitored. The Core Strategy must accord with national policy set out in PPSs etc. There is also a requirement that it should be in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the area. This issue is dealt with later in the section on the link between the Core Strategy and the South East Plan.
5. The Core Strategy also provides the policy framework for more detailed work, including the identification of specific sites and the more detailed planning policies for the day-to-day management of development. The intention is that these will be addressed through the proposed Site Allocations and Development Management DPD.

Background

6. Following the introduction of the LDF system, Waverley was one of the first local authorities to submit a Core Strategy for Examination. Unfortunately, not long after this, the first two submitted Core Strategies in the country were found to be unsound following examination. This and other factors led to the

Government Office indicating that it was possible that the Waverley Core Strategy would also be found unsound. As a result, the Council took the decision to seek a direction from the Secretary of State to formally withdraw the Core Strategy, without going through the full time and cost of Examination.

7. Following the withdrawal of the first Core Strategy in 2007, work on the new Core Strategy went back to basics in terms of evidence gathering, identifying key issues etc. Therefore, as part of the evidence to support the new Core Strategy, a number of key evidence studies have been completed. These include the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Employment Land Review (ELR). A full list of evidence studies completed or still being worked on is on the web site.
8. There has also been extensive consultation, including the wide-ranging consultations on key documents as well as very targeted consultation, such as the on-going dialogue with infrastructure providers.
9. Some of the key stages in the production of the Core Strategy to date include:-
 - October 2008: Executive endorsed the draft Spatial Portrait, Core Strategy Issues, the draft Vision and Draft Core Strategy Objectives.
 - January 2009: Executive agreed the Core Strategy Issues and Options Topic Papers for consultation. (Consultation on these and the draft vision etc. took place February-March 2009).
 - December 2009: Executive agreed the further Housing Options for consultation. (Consultation took place between January and March 2010).
 - September - October 2010: Consultation on options for setting a local housing target.
10. Summaries of the responses received to the 2009 Topic Paper consultation; the 2010 Housing Options consultation and the 2010 Housing Target consultation will be available for Members to view on the web site.
11. As explained above, Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a key part of the preparation of LDF documents. The full SA report will be finalised prior to formal publication of the Core Strategy. At this stage an interim SA report is being finalised, which will include the SA assessment of the Issues and Options Topic Papers, the Housing Options consulted on earlier in the year; the options for setting a local housing target and the draft Core Strategy policies themselves.

Link between the Core Strategy and the South East Plan

12. During most of the preparation period of the Core Strategy one of the key influences has been the South East Plan, which was published in May 2009. It was necessary to ensure that the emerging Core Strategy would be in general conformity with the South East Plan. A particularly important factor was the housing target. The South East Plan included a requirement that Waverley should provide for at least 5,000 additional homes in the period

2006-2026. Earlier consultations relating to options for housing were based on the assumption that this amount of housing would have to be delivered. Following its election in May, the Coalition Government announced its intention to get rid of regional plans (including the South East Plan) and the associated targets. Following this, in July, the Secretary of State revoked the regional plans. Guidance was issued to local authorities on the practical implications of this move. In relation to housing targets, the Government said that local authorities would now be responsible for deciding how many new homes to plan for. However, it also made it clear that local authorities would have to justify their housing targets and defend them at Examination. It also said that the setting of local housing targets should be in accordance with Government Policy on housing set out in PPS3.

13. As a result of this, the Council moved quickly to undertake a consultation on options for setting a local housing target.
14. The decision by the Secretary of State to revoke the regional plans was challenged in the High Court and on 10th November the Court found that the Secretary of State had acted unlawfully. The effect of this judgement is that the regional plans, including the South East Plan have been reinstated. The Government has responded to this saying that it still intends to abolish the regional plans in the Localism Bill, which is due to be published later this month. It is estimated that the Bill will be enacted sometime in 2011. In the meantime, the Secretary of State expects both local authorities and the Planning Inspectorate to have regard to the intention to abolish the regional plans as a material consideration in planning decisions.
15. Where does this leave the Waverley Core Strategy? The work carried out since July has been on the basis that the regional tier of planning is gone and that the Council is now responsible for setting local targets, including the local housing target. As it now stands, the South East Plan has been reinstated. However, the Government regards this as being temporary, given its stated intention to abolish regional plans through the Localism Bill. Having regard to this, the Core Strategy is still being prepared on the basis that there is no regional plan. The way in which other Councils and the Planning Inspectorate deal with this matter should become clearer in the coming months. In addition, the current timetable is such that the Core Strategy is not due to be published until July 2011, with submission in October 2011. Therefore, it is anticipated that the Localism Bill will have been enacted and the regional plans abolished before the Core Strategy has completed its passage through Examination.

The Core Strategy Preferred Options and Draft Policies

16. The Core Strategy has now reached the stage where the preferred options for dealing with issues have been identified and the Core Strategy policies have been drafted. Subject to Council approval, it is now proposed that the Preferred Options and Policies be the subject of consultation. The intention is that this consultation will start in January.

The Preferred Options document pulls together the various strands of work including:

- What has come through the evidence studies;
- The feedback from the various earlier consultations; and
- The on-going Sustainability Appraisal work

The key components of the Preferred Options document include:

- The updated Spatial Portrait, Issues and Challenges, Core Strategy Vision and Objectives
 - The overall Spatial Strategy (i.e. where development should go). In essence, this says that new development should mainly be directed to the main settlements, with limited development in the villages, with the exception of small-scale schemes for affordable housing to meet local needs;
 - The local housing target. Having regard to the outcome from the recent consultation this target is based mainly on an assessment of capacity within settlements, without the need to release greenfield land in the countryside;
 - An explanation of broadly how and where this new housing should go;
 - Policies aimed at increasing the delivery of affordable housing through a lowering of the thresholds and an increase in the percentage of affordable housing required;
 - High level policies on other matters such as employment, town centres/retailing, leisure and recreation
 - Environmental policies for the countryside and the built up areas;
 - Policies to protect and enhance biodiversity, including a specific policy for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.
 - Various policies dealing with mitigating climate change and adapting to the effects of climate change.
17. Copies of the Core Strategy Preferred Options and Draft Policies document will be circulated to members prior to consideration of this matter at the Special ELOS meeting on 26th November and the Executive on 7th December. As explained above, the summaries of the outcome from the previous consultations will be available for members to view on the web site.
18. In addition, it is proposed that the following additional documents will be available to coincide with the consultation itself:
- The update to the SHLAA
 - An Interim Statement on Infrastructure
 - An evidence statement relating to Climate Change issues.

Next Steps

19. Following the consultation, the document will be reviewed and amended and then reported back to the Executive with a view to agreeing the final version ready for formal publication. Prior to publication, the final SA report will be completed and it will be necessary to ensure that all the relevant evidence is also complete and ready for submission. It will also be necessary to undertake a formal assessment of the Core Strategy under the terms of the Habitats Regulations. It is currently anticipated that the Core Strategy will be published in July 2011. Publication then triggers the formal consultation on the 'soundness' of the document, with the anticipated date for submission being October 2011.

Conclusions

20. The Core Strategy will play an important role in setting the strategic direction for where development should go, as well as providing the necessary framework or 'hook' for more detailed work, including the specific allocation of sites. This consultation will provide the final opportunity for the community and others to influence the content and policy direction, prior to the Core Strategy entering the more formal publication and submission stages.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive:-

1. recommends to the Council that the Core Strategy Preferred Options and Draft Policies be agreed as the basis for public consultation; and
2. authorises the Head of Planning Services, in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder, to approve the detailed arrangements for the consultation, including the consultation material.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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