

APPENDIX K

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 29 NOVEMBER 2011

Title:

UPDATE ON THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY

[Portfolio Holder: Adam Taylor-Smith]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

The purpose of this report is to bring Members up-to-date with the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy and to identify the work that needs to be carried out to take it forward.

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 Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy sets out the key policies and overall strategy for managing and directing future development in Waverley over the next 15 years. The purpose of this report is to bring members up-to-date with the preparation of the Core Strategy.

Background

2. The Core Strategy is being prepared against a background of rapid changes to the planning system that are being introduced by the Coalition Government. These include the Localism Bill, which will bring forward significant changes to the planning system including the abolition of regional plans and the introduction of neighbourhood planning. Radical changes are also being made to national planning policy in terms of the proposed National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Core Strategy Preferred Options and Draft Policies

3. The Core Strategy was last formally considered by the Executive in December 2010, when it agreed the 'Core Strategy Preferred Options and Draft Policies' as the basis for public consultation. The Portfolio Holder and Executive have been regularly briefed since then, particularly in relation to the changing national planning position and Members will recall that the Council has recently submitted a robust response to the consultation in respect of the NPPF.
4. Members are also reminded that in September/October 2010, there was also a specific public consultation on options for setting a local housing target. The outcome from that consultation was that the majority of respondents favoured setting a housing target based on the capacity to build within settlements and other suitable brownfield land. That target figure was less than the South East Plan target.
5. The outcome from that consultation fed into the Core Strategy Preferred Options and Draft Policies. In relation to housing numbers, Members also favoured the capacity-based approach and as a result the housing target in the Preferred Options document was for the provision of 2,591 additional homes between 2010 and 2027 (an average of 152 dwellings a year over that period).
6. The consultation on the Core Strategy Preferred Options and Draft policies took place in January – March 2011. A total of 1338 responses were received from 286 respondents. Attached as Annexe 1 is a summary of the main issues coming out of that consultation. More detailed chapter-by-chapter summaries of the responses are also available to view on the web site.

The Localism Bill and the implications of the forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

7. Although one of the key provisions of the Localism Bill is the abolition of regional plans, until that provision is enacted, the South East Plan remains in force, along with its housing targets. However, in planning for the future, the Core Strategy will be the vehicle for setting the housing target. The key point is that whatever target is selected it will need to be evidence based and justified at the Core Strategy Examination.
8. Notwithstanding the Localism Bill and the draft NPPF, the process for getting a plan adopted still involves an external examination, at which the Inspector will consider the soundness of the Plan against specific tests. In fact the draft NPPF adds some additional tests. One is the whether the plan has been prepared in accordance with the 'Duty to Cooperate', which is a new legal requirement in the Localism Bill. The Inspector will also be considering whether the Plan has been 'positively prepared'. According to the draft NPPF this means a strategy that seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements.
9. In terms of the LDF there are three particular issues arising from the draft NPPF that need to be considered:-
 - Whether the Council should re-visit the overall housing target, given the emphasis in the NPPF of supporting housing growth and meeting identified needs for housing.
 - Whether the plan should deal with more issues. Until now, we have been told not to repeat national policy in local plans. However, the NPPF contains much less policy/guidance than currently exists in the PPSs and PPGs. It will be important, therefore to identify and possible policy gaps arising from the replacement of current national policy. For example, PPS5 contains a number of national policies on heritage that have not been reproduced in the NPPF.
 - A further test will be whether the Core Strategy (or Local Plan as it is likely to be called in the future) complies with the NPPF generally. A further piece of work, therefore, will be to assess the new 'Local Plan' against the NPPF to test compliance, before it reaches the formal submission stages.

Taking the Core Strategy forward

10. Based on the consultation outcome and the emerging national picture, and having regard to what has happened elsewhere in terms of Core Strategy examinations, Officers have identified a number of key issues that will need to be addressed in taking the Core Strategy forward. These are summarised in the attached Annexe 2. In terms of timescale, the current plan is as follows:-
 - Executive – 10 January 2012 – report identifying key changes to the Core Strategy
 - Executive – 7 February 2012 - consider draft revised Core Strategy – recommended for consultation

- Council – 21 February 2012 – draft Core Strategy approved for consultation.

Conclusions

11. In terms of moving the Plan forward, the most significant issues for the Council to consider will in relation to the number of new homes and where/how they will be accommodated. The Council will need to decide whether to continue with the target set out in the current Preferred Options document, or to re-visit the target. This, in turn, may have implications for the broad distribution of housing. However, this is not the only issue that needs to be addressed. Officers and the Council will also have to reach a decision on whether and how to amend the Plan to address the other key issues set out in Annexe 2.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive endorse the programme of dates set out at paragraph 10 and the key issues at Annexe 2 to take the Core Strategy forward.

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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