

APPENDIX I

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 30 JANUARY 2012

EXECUTIVE – 7 FEBRUARY 2012

Title:

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

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

Summary and purpose:

The purpose of this report is to identify the main changes that officers consider need to be made to the draft Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy and to seek approval from the Council to consult on the revised Plan.

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. In December 2010, the Council approved the Core Strategy Preferred Options and Draft policies for consultation (effectively the first full draft of the Core Strategy). The purpose of this report is to identify the changes that have since been made to the draft Plan and to seek approval from the Council to consult on the amended Plan.

Background

2. The consultation on the first Preferred Options Core Strategy took place early in 2011. A summary of the key issues coming out of the consultation was attached to the LDF update report considered by the Executive in November 2011.
3. Officers have considered carefully the responses to the consultation, as well as other important developments over the past 12 months, in order to identify what changes are needed to the draft Core Strategy. Of particular significance is the emerging national picture both in terms of legislation through the Localism Act and policy in the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
4. The Council received over 1,300 comments on the first Preferred Options Core Strategy. Some of these do not justify a change in the Plan, others are on matters of detail. Officers have considered the representations received as a result of the consultation, as well as taking stock of other key changes since the first Preferred Options Core Strategy was agreed for consultation. As a result, the Plan has been amended. Officers consider that the changes are of enough significance to justify undertaking a further consultation on the revised Core Strategy, before moving to the formal Publication and Submission stages of the process. A number of changes have been made to the draft Plan. Officers consider the most significant changes to be:-
 - Updating/amending the Vision and Objectives of the Plan.
 - The overall Spatial Strategy (i.e. the Council's broad approach to where new development should go), has been amended, and the approach to delivering new housing has also been amended accordingly. The approach remains that the main settlements should be the focus of most new development, but there are some changes in terms of the role of villages and the broad location of new housing.
 - The target for the number of new homes has been increased so that it is equivalent to delivering the South East Plan 'Option 1' figure of 230 dwellings a year.
 - Current evidence identifies a shortfall between the overall housing target and the number of new homes that can be delivered on land within settlements or other suitable brownfield land. This shortfall is approximately 1,000 and the preferred approach to delivering these

homes is through selected releases of land on the edge of the main settlements, excluding land within the Green Belt, AONB or AGLV. The preferred distribution is for approximately 100 of these homes to be around Godalming with the remainder split between Farnham and Cranleigh.

- The approach to development in the villages has changed. This change relates particularly to the approach to rural exception sites. Current policy says that sites outside villages can be used for affordable housing where this meets an identified local need. The proposed change in policy is in response to the changes proposed in the draft NPPF and the changes to funding for affordable housing. In essence the new policy allows for a small element of market housing to be included in these schemes where it is needed to secure the delivery of affordable housing.
- Various changes are proposed to the policy on employment development. In particular, the employment chapter includes a new stand-alone policy on Dunsfold Park and its current and future role as a location for employment.
- There are some changes to the biodiversity policy to address issues concerning the Wealden Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).
- There are changes to strengthen the requirements of the proposed policy dealing with sustainable design and construction. These include a requirement that new residential developments of 10 or more dwellings meet Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- The section relating to Gypsies, Travellers and travelling Showpeople has been updated to refer to the on-going work to identify land for additional pitches.

Planning for New Homes

5. The most significant changes to the Plan relate to the number of new homes that should be planned for and the broad location of these homes. The previous draft Plan included a local housing target that was significantly less than the South East Plan target. It was a capacity-based target that assumed there would be no need to release any greenfield land. The approach at that time was in response to an earlier consultation on housing numbers, where the majority of those who responded had favoured this lower, capacity-based approach.
6. There are various reasons why officers believe that the target for the number of new homes should be increased. In essence, officers consider it very likely that a Core Strategy proposing the lower housing target would be found to be unsound by an Inspector at the Examination stage. This is partly in response to comments made during the last consultation, and partly in response to other changes in circumstances and experiences with Core Strategies elsewhere. In particular, publication of the draft NPPF made clear the Government's commitment to seeing an increase in the delivery of new homes and a requirement to meet local development needs. One of the criticisms of the earlier target was that it did not give sufficient weight to the evidence of need and demand for new homes in Waverley.

7. The latest version of the draft Core Strategy, at Annexe 1 (circulated as a separate document), proposes a housing target equivalent to the South East Plan 'Option 1' figure of 230 dwellings a year. This was the housing figure for Waverley that was included in the South East Plan when it was submitted in 2006. That figure was subsequently increased from 230 to 250 by the Secretary of State, on the recommendation of the Panel that had examined the South East Plan. As it currently stands, therefore, the housing target for Waverley is 250 a year. However, the South East Plan, like other regional plans, is due to be abolished through the provisions of the Localism Act. Officers consider that there is a case for Waverley to revert to the Option 1 figure. Essentially this is due to a change in circumstances since the South East Plan Panel first recommended the increase in Waverley's figure from 230 to 250. This justification is set out in more detail in the Chapter 7 of the revised Plan.
8. As explained above, there is currently a shortfall between the overall housing target and the estimate of the number of new homes that can be built within settlements or on other suitable brownfield land. This shortfall is estimated to be approximately 1,000 units. The draft Plan explains the preferred approach to meeting this shortfall. This would be through selected releases of land on the edge of the main settlements. The approach excludes land that is within the Green Belt, the AONB or the AGLV. As a result, the main focus for these greenfield releases would be Farnham and Cranleigh as these are the main settlements that are least constrained by these designations.

Evidence Base

9. Officers have continued to revise and update the evidence supporting the Core Strategy. This includes an update to the Employment Land Review earlier in 2011 and an update to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), again focussed on identifying opportunities for new homes within settlements. The updated SHLAA will be published alongside the consultation.

Sustainability Appraisal

10. 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, focussing on the latest preferred options and draft policies. Again, this will be available alongside the consultation.

Next Steps

11. Subject to what comes out of this further consultation, the next stage is to prepare the Core Strategy for Publication. This triggers the more formal consultation on the soundness of the Plan. This is followed by the Submission to the Secretary of State and the Examination of the Plan by an independent Inspector. The anticipated timetable is as follows:-

Consultation on Revised Preferred Options – March/April 2012	
Publication of the Core Strategy	- July 2012
Submission to Secretary of State	- October 2012
Adoption following Examination	- June/July 2013

Conclusions

12. 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

That the Executive:-

1. recommends the Council to agree the Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options and Draft Policies as the basis for public consultation; and
2. authorises the Head of Planning Services, in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder, to agree any final amendments to the document prior to consultation and 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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