



# Executive Committee

No Specific Ward Relevance

12 August 2009

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## PLANNING FOR PROSPEROUS ECONOMIES

(Report of the Acting Head of Planning & Building Control)

### 1. Summary of Proposals

To consider retrospectively endorsing Officer responses to the Consultation paper on a new Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies.

### 2. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:

**the response from the Acting Head of Planning and Building Control to Communities and Local Government regarding the consultation document on new Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies, as detailed in Appendix A of the report, be retrospectively endorsed.**

### 3. Financial, Legal, Policy and Risk Implications

#### Financial

- 3.1 There is no cost associated with submitting the consultation response.
- 3.2 However, there may be financial implications following the adoption of the Planning Policy Statement 'Planning for Prosperous Economies' due to the monitoring and evidence base requirements set out in the draft strategy.

#### Legal

- 3.3 All consultation responses to Communities and Local Government 'Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies' must be submitted within the designated time period (responses must be returned by the 28 July 2009).

#### Policy

- 3.4 There are no identified policy implications for the Council as a result of the consultation response.

### Risk

- 3.5 Communities and Local Government will not have knowledge of the views of Redditch Borough Council when reviewing policy.

### Sustainability / Environmental

- 3.6 There are no sustainable or environmental issues arising out of the Officers' response to Communities and Local Government 'Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies'.

### Report

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The Planning Policy Statement: 'Planning for Prosperous Economies' outlines the Government's objectives for prosperous economies. In addition, the document sets out 24 policies relating to the delivery of prosperous economies.
- 4.2 The policies are separated into the three distinct categories of plan making policies, monitoring policies, and decision making policies.
- 4.3 These policies have specific implications for the Development Plans, Development Control and Economic Development Unit teams of the Council. For example, if the decision making policies are approved by Government, Development Control will have to apply these policies at the planning application stage of the planning process. In terms of the Development Plans team, the policies contained within the document will need to be appropriately considered and the team will be responsible for ensuring that local planning policy is in line with the policies and that any local planning policy requirements of the document are fulfilled.

#### **5. Key Issues**

- 5.1 Where it is considered that there is insufficient information, or considered there to be an inappropriate requirement of the Communities and Local Government 'Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies', a response has been submitted in relation to the matter. There are five areas where there are considered to be issues with the Communities and Local Government 'Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies' document. Responses have been provided to the areas, and Members are invited to provide retrospective endorsement.

- 5.2 Responses have only been provided to those questions which are considered to be appropriate, therefore a number of the pre-set questions have been left intentionally blank.
- 5.3 Question 3 response form: Other than where specifically highlighted, the process of streamlining policy text in draft PPS4, PPS6 and PPS7 to focus on policy rather than guidance is not intended to result in a change in policy. Are there any policies which you feel have changed in this process? Please tell us what you think has changed and provide alternative wording that addresses your concerns.
- 5.4 Within draft Policy EC1 there is reference to the need for Local Authorities to carry out 'land reviews'. In the past these were referred to as Employment Land Reviews. Of particular concern is the lack of any guidance associated with how to complete the 'land review', and as the Council recently approved an Employment Land Review, it is considered necessary to request that further detail be provided in the PPS regarding this subject, and in addition to this, any guidance that is produced should identify how Local Authorities can update their recently completed Employment Land Reviews.
- 5.5 Question 4 response form: Does the structure of the draft Statement make it easier to understand what is required at different stages in the planning process? Are there any improvements you would like to see made?
- 5.6 It is considered that the draft Statement does make it easier to understand what is required at different stages in the planning process. However, it is considered that certain aspects of the Statement can be improved upon, specifically, the monitoring policy which requires local authorities to carry out monitoring of:
- a) the network and hierarchy of centres;
  - b) the need for further development;
  - c) the vitality and viability of centres.
- 5.7 It is questionable as to how this can be achieved in terms of logistically and from a resource point view, and in the response it is requested that the policy statement make it clear about how Local Authorities are to set about completing this task. It is deemed necessary for further clarification regarding the monitoring aspect of the statement for Local Authorities because without clear direction Officers may have to spend time considering appropriate monitoring systems rather than implementing the correct monitoring systems or carrying out other duties. Potentially the monitoring aspect of the document could require the Council to buy in the expertise required to analyse the data.

- 5.8 The Statement goes on to state that “Local Planning Authorities should...consider setting floorspace thresholds for the scale of edge-of-centre and out-of-centre development which should be subject to an impact assessment and specify the areas these thresholds will apply to and the types of impacts having particular local importance which should be tested”.
- 5.9 It is considered necessary to request further clarification as to whether the floorspace thresholds identified in the document are in addition to Regional Spatial Strategy thresholds levels. It is important to clarify this in order to ensure that the Council’s Local Development Framework is in conformity with the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 5.10 In relation to site allocations, the statement requests Local Authorities to ensure that sites allocated for employment purposes are not simply passed on from one Development Plan Document to a preceding document, without evidence to justify reasonable prospect of the site being taken up during the plan period.
- 5.11 It is agreed that sites should not simply roll on continually over long periods. However, it is considered necessary for Communities and Local Government to provide a definition as to what is meant by ‘reasonable prospect’. It is also considered necessary for Communities and Local Government to be cautious in encouraging the change of site designations from employment uses to alternative uses. The recession has impacted upon the rate of development, for example during the last monitoring period there was no completed employment development in the Borough. Therefore it is likely that a number of sites will take longer to be developed than would have previously been the case.
- 5.12 Question 7 on the response form: Is the approach to the determination of planning applications set out in policy EC21 proportionate?
- 5.13 In terms of those policies that are likely to impact upon Development Control, it is considered necessary for Communities and Local Government to provide further guidance and clarification on the following.
- 5.14 The Statement requires Local Authorities to “assess proposals involving the loss of economic activity in rural locations on the basis of evidence about the impact on the supply of employment sites and premises in that community to ensure the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the area is protected and enhanced”.

- 5.15 It is not considered this to be an appropriate requirement because it is questionable as to whether there is sufficient evidence collated to determine these findings, and it is not clear as to how the Council can be confident that they have appropriate evidence. Officers have requested that Communities and Local Government reconsider the need for this policy. If Communities and Local Government consider the policy to be necessary, Officers have requested that detail be provided as to the amount and type of evidence that could be required.

6. **Other Implications**

Asset Management : None.

Community Safety : None.

Human Resources : None.

Social Inclusion : None.

7. **Lessons Learnt**

Not applicable.

8. **Background Papers**

Planning Policy Statement: Consultation – Consultation paper on a new Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies.

9. **Consultation**

There has been no consultation other than with relevant Borough Council Officers.

10. **Author of Report**

The author of this report is Ashley Baldwin (Planning Assistant), who can be contacted on extension 3124.  
(email: ashley.baldwin@redditchbc.gov.uk ) for more information.

11. **Appendices**

Appendix A – Officers' response to Communities and Local Government 'Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies'

12. **Key to Terminology / Abbreviations**