

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

10th January 2012

CORE STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Jinny Pearce, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford, Head of Planning and Regeneration
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	Not applicable
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The report seeks a number of endorsements of material related to the previous consultation on Redditch's the Revised Preferred Draft Core Strategy (January – March 2011) and the endorsement of material to contribute towards the evidence base.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** that

- 1) the Officers' responses to the Revised Preferred Draft Core Strategy consultation, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be endorsed as the Borough Council's responses to comments received during consultation;**
- 2) the documents attached as Appendix 2 to Appendix 8 be endorsed to form part of the Evidence Base and, for Appendix 2, to note that it can be used as a material consideration in Development Management decision making; and**
- 3) the Officers' response to the draft national planning policy framework, as attached at Appendix 9, be retrospectively endorsed as the Borough Council's response.**

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3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 There is a need to quickly progress the local plan for an area because of the risk posed with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The uncertainty of the status of the local plan in the context of the national planning policy could mean that the Council is subjected to increased appeals and the financial risk associated with this.
- 3.2 There is also a requirement to have an adopted local plan in place to enable other income towards infrastructure projects either through Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy and to encourage housing permissions and construction to receive the new homes bonus.
- 3.3 The decision to advance a local plan for the area rather than a Core Strategy and the necessary subsequent Development Plan Documents (DPDs) is likely to have a positive effect on longer term financial costs of preparing and examining other DPDs.

Legal Implications

- 3.4 Redditch Borough Council is required to establish a development plan for the area in accordance with the Planning Act 2008 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.
- 3.5 With regard to Appendix 1, there were very few detailed comments on the strategy from other nearby Local Authorities which is not surprising given a lot of the uncertainties with the planning system. However it should be noted that the Borough Council will be legally required to respond fully to other neighbouring authorities' plans under the new duty to co-operate in the not too distant future.
- 3.6 Given the imminent departure of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), the Duty will be in place to ensure co-ordination between authorities. As part of these new arrangements it is envisaged that for any nearby emerging plan on consultation with a possible impact on Redditch, that Officers will present the issues to the Planning Advisory Panel for discussion to inform a response to be subsequently endorsed by the Council.

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Service / Operational Implications

- 3.7 The Revised Preferred Draft Core Strategy was consulted upon between 21st January 2011 and 4th March 2011. Over 300 responses were received by letter and email and also three related petitions have been submitted in response to the consultation material.
- 3.8 Appendix 1 contains a table including a summary of the responses received, an Officer response to the comments and a related recommended action where a change can be identified.
- 3.9 The key points to take from the responses is that local public view is that the development targets should be lower than the previous RSS targets, and that there is little local support for development on any of Redditch's strategic sites. However it is positive that the capacity of Redditch identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment has now been through such a detailed level of scrutiny and debate in many forums and the Council can be confident of its robustness going forward.
- 3.10 Appendix 2 is the Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Guidance. At the Cabinet meeting of Worcestershire County Council this was formally endorsed so that it may form a material consideration in the County Council's planning decisions. It was also commended to the Councils of Worcestershire for their own endorsement, so that it may form a material consideration in all respective Councils' planning decisions.
- 3.11 Worcestershire County Council, on behalf of Redditch Borough Council commissioned Halcrow to complete a Transport Assessment (Appendix 3) to consider the implications of future development in the Borough in accessibility and traffic terms. The Transport Assessment comprises of a Accessibility Report which measures and distinguishes which development sites are the best performing based on local accessibility (ease of access to destinations via public transport, cycle and walking) and wider key destinations such as employment. The second part of the Transport Assessment comprises of a Traffic Impact Assessment tool, which assesses the impact of a number of development sites on the road network.
- 3.12 The update to the Employment Land Review (Appendix 4) represents the 2011 annual update. The update seeks to present a clear picture of the current situation with regard to Employment Land demand, need and supply in Redditch Borough. This update evidences possible employment land targets for the Borough and a portfolio of local employment sites to meet this target which can be considered in drawing up the revised Local Plan.

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- 3.13 The Historic Environment Assessment (HEA)(Appendix 5) combines County landscape character mapping with Historic Environment Record data and an outline Historic Landscape Character assessment. The results have produced 20 distinctive Historic Environment Character Zones which are supported by character statements assessing historic environment survival, potential, documentations, diversity, group value, sensitivity and amenity potential for each zone. The HEA will inform the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Character Zones will inform the determination of development proposals.
- 3.14 A Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Protected Species Survey Assessment has been completed for the Winyates Green Triangle (Appendix 6). It finds that the site supports an interesting mosaic of semi-natural habitats and includes Ravensbank Drive Bridle Track which is designated as a Special Wildlife Site. In relation to protected species, further surveys are recommended for great crested newts, bats, badgers and potentially dormice. Based on the assessment it is concluded that it is unlikely that a large-scale development could be adequately incorporated on this site without significant loss and/or affect to the semi-natural habitats. A smaller development, if adequately located on poorer grassland, whilst minimising damage to, and retaining where possible woodland, hedgerows, ponds and stream habitat, would have a significantly lower impact.
- 3.15 The Affordable Housing Viability Assessment (Appendix 7) has been produced to ensure that optimum affordable housing provision in Redditch is achievable and economically viable on sites identified to meet the Borough's housing target. The Assessment provides the evidence to underpin a robust Affordable Housing policy (Policy 10) in the Core Strategy or its subsequent update in the next stage of plan production. The AHVA tests the appropriateness of the current affordable housing contribution of 40% of dwellings on sites of 15+ dwellings or over 0.5 ha in size. It also recommends an appropriate and economically viable range of site thresholds for which on-site affordable housing provision or off-site commuted sums would be required through S106 contributions.

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- 3.16 The Redditch Playing Pitch (Appendix 8) strategy aims to provide a strategic approach to future playing pitch provision; it will provide direction and set priorities for sports for both the Council and its local partners. The strategy provides baseline data on the current quantity and quality of all the playing pitches in Redditch and identifies gaps in provision. The strategy includes an action plan, agreed with partners, to improve provision for local communities and how this might be achieved. The recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy will be implemented through planning policy documents and by the Council's Leisure Services as appropriate.
- 3.17 Given the emphasis at a national level away from 'spatial plans' where there is a conscious effort for the Core Strategy to reflect and respond to the aspirations of other documents, there is an emerging requirement for a genuine 'local plan' to guide development.
- 3.18 Officers would therefore recommend advancing a Redditch 'Local Plan' (Redditch Local Plan No.4), and the format of the emerging core strategy would be subsequently changed. This change will require additional work, not least to plug the policy gaps from the imminently departure of the West Midlands RSS and the PPS/PPGs at the national level, but also to consider what local development management policy is needed to support the local choices for development. This work is not considered to be an overly time consuming task.
- 3.19 The responses in Appendix 1 have been subject to review at the Planning Advisory Panel. The other attachments and evidence have all also been through Planning Advisory Panel before the Executive meeting.
- 3.20 The Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Guidance (LCA SG) is a non-statutory document that will provide guidance on the application of landscape character principles to development. The LCA SG will ultimately be used to help guide and determine relevant planning applications. Whilst it will not constitute a formal part of the Development Plan, it is intended that the final document will carry weight as a 'material consideration' and so can form part of the reasoning for planning decisions.
- 3.21 Supplementary Guidance differs from 'Supplementary Planning Documents', which are usually produced as part of the Local Development Framework; this document has been prepared by Worcestershire County Council.
- 3.22 The draft version of the Supplementary Guidance and the accompanying SA report were subject to a public consultation from Monday 13th June 2011 to Friday 22nd July 2011.

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- 3.23 The LCA SG will be reviewed on a five-yearly basis in order to incorporate any policy or other changes and in the light of latest LCA development.
- 3.24 The endorsement of this evidence base will allow Officers to continue to prepare a Local Plan for Redditch. Officers will need to continue to work closely with Officers from neighbouring Bromsgrove District and Stratford on Avon District in preparation.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.25 An Equalities Impact Assessment of the previous Core Strategy draft was produced and another will be produced at the time of Policy review.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

As discussed under financial implications there is a potential risk from the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The uncertainty of the status of the local plan in the context of the national planning policy could mean that the Council is subjected to increased appeals. It is therefore proposed to produce a Plan as quickly as possible.

5. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 : Core Strategy Response Table
- Appendix 2 : Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment
Supplementary Guidance
- Appendix 3 : Transport Assessment
- Appendix 4 : Employment Land Review Update
- Appendix 5 : Historic Environment Assessment
- Appendix 6 : Winyates Green Triangle Ecological Assessment
- Appendix 7 : Affordable Housing Viability Assessment
- Appendix 8 : Playing Pitch Strategy
- Appendix 9 : Response to the Draft National Planning Policy
Framework

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6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Revised Preferred Draft Core Strategy (21st January – 4th March 2011)
Employment Land Review (2009)
Employment Land Review Update (2010)
Employment Land Review Guidance Note (2004)
Draft National Planning Policy Framework
Planning Act 2008
Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England)
(Amendment) Regulations 2008
Localism Act 2011
Minutes from Planning Advisory Panel Meetings.

7. KEY

RSS Regional Spatial Strategy.
DPD Development Plan Document.
LDF Local Development Framework.
LCA Landscape Character Assessment.
MAFF ALC – Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food – Agricultural
Land Classification
PPS Planning Policy Statement.
PPG Planning Policy Guidance.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Emma Baker, Acting Development Plans Manager
E Mail: emma.baker@redditchbc.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 64252 Ext 3376