

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
28th June 2007

Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF): Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation

COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	All themes
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	All service themes
KEY PRIORITY:	Forward Planning
CANINET MEMBER:	Councillor Stephen Clee
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Head of Planning, Health & Environment
CONTACT OFFICER:	Noel Holdstock, Ext. 2550
APPENDICES	APPENDIX 1 – Core Strategy – Draft Issues and Options paper APPENDIX 2 – Draft Consultation Plan for Core Strategy Issues and Options <i>The appendices to this report have been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details).</i>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek the Cabinet's endorsement of the Core Strategy: Issues and Options paper for the purposes of consultation and to approve arrangements for consultation.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND to Council:

- the draft Issues and Options paper attached at Appendix 1 to this report be approved for the purposes of consultation on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document: Issues and Options, in accordance with Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.
- The Head of Planning, Health and Environment be given delegated power to determine the final format and presentation of the paper.

and to DECIDE that:

- **the arrangements for the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation be undertaken in accordance with the Consultation Plan attached at Appendix 2 to this report.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The background to the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) core Strategy Development Plan Document was reported to the former Prosperity Policy Panel on 4th April 2007. This report also provided the background to the setting up of the LDF Core Strategy Review Panel.
- 3.2 The LDF Core Strategy Review Panel have considered the draft Issues and Options paper and the Consultation Plan and their recommendations were considered by the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 13th June 2007. The amendments recommended by the Committee have been incorporated into the revised Draft Issues and Options Paper and Consultation Plan which are set out at Appendices 1 and 2 to this report..

4. Progress

- 4.1 As part of the early stage of preparing the Issues and Options the Forward Planning Team has held a series of focus group meetings with key stakeholders on the following topics:

Arts Design and Heritage
Economic Prosperity
Environment and Floodrisk – Climate Change
Environment and Floodrisk – Water, Pollution and Waste
Housing
Local Strategic Partnership
Nature and Biodiversity
Leisure and Open Space
Transport

- 4.2 For each group meeting a general topic paper setting the scene for the Core Strategy work was circulated together with a topic specific paper and issues flyer. Copies of the topic papers, flyers and minutes from the focus group meetings were reported to the Review Panel. Issues and option ideas arising from these focus groups have been used to inform the preparation of a draft Issues and Options paper which is intended to form the basis for the initial public consultation.

5. Draft Issues and Options Document

- 5.1 The Core Strategy is intended to be a strategic level document which provides the framework for subsequent Development Plan Documents (DPDs) (for Wyre Forest District the following DPDs are proposed: Site Allocations, Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan, and Development Control Policies).

- 5.2 The Core Strategy is where difficult decisions need to be made in terms of the pattern of development and future place shaping of the District. The Core Strategy should narrow down the arguments, dealing with the area-wide strategic approach so that subsequent DPDs concentrate on detailed non-strategic issues.
- 5.3 A key element of the new LDF system is the concept of front loading of public consultation and engagement, at the early stages of the process in order to try and secure the communities support for the submission proposals. In order to achieve this there is no specific set period of time for consultation, unlike at other stages in the process, instead it is intended that the consultation should be ongoing during the early preparation stages.
- 5.4 The aim of this stage is to ensure that all interested parties have the opportunity to put forward realistic and relevant options for consideration as part of the preparation process leading to the selection of the Preferred Option proposals. All options identified as part of this process will be subject to assessment using the Sustainability Appraisal process to guide selection choice.
- 5.5 The Core Strategy needs to be prepared so that it is consistent with national planning policy and in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy, which will effectively limit the range of options that may need to be assessed.
- 5.6 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Phase 2 Review preferred option should be submitted to Government Office West Midlands (GOWM) at the end of this year and is expected to be approved for submission by the end of October 2007. These proposals will therefore be available to inform the preparation and selection of the preferred option for the District Core Strategy.
- 5.7 A Key aspect of the new LDF system is a move towards Spatial Planning and the development of closer linkages with the Community Strategy. In order to forge these linkages an initial focus group meeting has been held with representatives from the Local Strategic Partnership.
- 5.8 The Planning Advisory Service has published guidance on what a Core Strategy might look and feel like in terms of the structure and components of the document, based on the original advice in Planning Policy Statement (PPS)12 Local Development Frameworks. The guidance advises that the document should contain a spatial vision and strategic objectives for the area together with a spatial strategy, core policies and a monitoring and implementation framework.
- 5.9 In order to provide a starting point for consultees to consider the attached draft Issues and Options paper includes a draft Spatial Portrait and vision and a series of 14 Spatial Objectives. A number of issues and options are outlined, but at this stage it does not include a Spatial Strategy or Core Policies, these will need to be developed in the light of consultee responses as part of the preparation of the preferred option and evaluation of alternatives.

6. Consultation Plan

- 6.1 Details of the proposed arrangements for public consultation are set out in the attached Draft Consultation Plan (Appendix 2 to this report) which is based on the adopted Statement of Community Involvement. As part of the modernising planning agenda, the Government are keen to promote the use of electronic methods for consultation on the LDF documents. As well as publishing the Issues and Options document on the Council's website an electronic submission representation form will also be made available.

7. Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

- 7.1 An initial SA report has been produced to provide an appraisal of the emerging options contained in the main document and this will also be published on the website together with a summary guide.

8. Evidence Base

- 8.1 A further key aspect of the new LDF system is the need to produce a robust evidence base in order to inform strategy and policy development decisions. Effectively a number of specialist studies need to be undertaken to underpin the preparation of a sound Core Strategy, these are set out below, together with a progress update.

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment
(The South Housing Market Area of the West Midlands assessment was published in March 2007. Work is currently being undertaken on a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. Further work on the Local Housing market may be required)
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
(Awaiting Government Guidance to be published Summer 2007. Housing Land Availability database being maintained)
- Employment Land Review Study
(Work currently in progress)
- Retail and Commercial Leisure Study
(Consultants Study published November 2006. Study may need updating from 2021 to 2026)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
(Specialist consultants to be appointed to undertake study during Summer 2007)
- Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit
(Specialist consultants due to be appointed end of June 2007)
- Transportation Study
(Worcestershire County Council have commissioned consultants to prepare a Wyre Forest Transportation Model to assess transport implications of development sites)

9. Next Steps

- 9.1 Subject to approval of the Issues and Options paper by Council on 18th July, the public consultation, is planned to run from 24th July to 10th September 2007.
- 9.2 Following the seven week public consultation on Issues and Options the next stage will be to consider the responses, complete the evidence base and consider the emerging RSS preferred option.
- 9.3 As part of the preparation of a preferred option for the Core Strategy relevant options will need to be subjected to the Sustainability Appraisal process which will need to inform the choice and decision making process.
- 9.4 In order to obtain Council approval to the Preferred Option it is currently anticipated it will be reported to the meeting in February 2008. A statutory six week public consultation will then be required with the Council considering responses before finally approving the submission plan in September 2008. The Council must be satisfied that it is submitting a 'sound' plan as no amendments are permitted following submission.
- 9.5 The process outlined above is based on the current arrangements as set out in the Local Development Regulations. However, in the Planning for a Sustainable Future White Paper the Government has announced it's intention to streamline the LDF process which would involve the demise of the Preferred Option Consultation stage. An update for the Committee will be provided when more detailed proposals are published.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 The costs of undertaking the consultation and obtaining the required evidence base can be met from the LDF preparation budget, together with Planning Delivery Grant.

11. Legal and Policy Implications

- 11.1 As a Development Plan Document needs the Core Strategy to be prepared in accordance with requirements of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. On adoption the Core Strategy will replace parts of the District Local Plan and it will provide the framework for the preparation of subsequent Development Plan Documents which will form part of the Local Development Framework.

12. Risk Management

- 12.1 The submitted Core Strategy will be the subject of an Independent Examination to be conducted by a Planning Inspector who will produce a report with binding recommendations for the Council. The Examination will consider representations but will also focus on whether the submitted plan is 'sound' in terms of the nine tests of soundness as set out in PPS12: Local Development Frameworks. These tests are proving to be extremely demanding, such that to date only 7 core strategies have been assessed as sound. A significant number have either been found unsound or have had to be withdrawn in the light of pre-examination advice given by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 12.2 In order to minimise these risks it will be necessary to follow emerging good practice and maintain discussions with the Government Office for the West Midlands.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 The draft Issues and Options paper provides the basis for engaging and consulting with the general public, consultees and other interested parties, in order to identify all relevant issues and options for consideration in the development of the LDF Core Strategy.

14. Consultees

Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Head of Cultural Leisure and Commercial Services
Strategy Partnerships and Communications Manager

15. Background Papers

- PPS.12 : Local Development Framework and Companion Guide 2004 – Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- Core Strategy Guidance December 2006 – Planning Advisory Service
- West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Spatial Options January 2007 – West Midlands Regional Assembly.
- Report to Prosperity Policy Panel 4th April 2007 on LDF Core Strategy

Officer Contact Details:

Noel Holdstock
Forward Planning Manager
Tel. 01562 732550 (email: Noel.holdstock@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)
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