

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Development Services
2.	Date:	13 October 2008
3.	Title:	Rotherham Town Centre Strategic Development Framework: Interim Planning Statement
4.	Programme Area:	Forward Planning, Environment & Development Services

5. Summary

A final Interim Planning Statement for Rotherham Town Centre has been produced taking account of comments received during consultation on the draft version. This report seeks authorisation to adopt the final document as an Interim Planning Statement.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet Member resolves:

- I. To approve adoption of the Interim Planning Statement which can then be taken into account when determining planning applications**
- II. That the Interim Planning Statement will form part of the Local Development Framework evidence base**
- III. To refer this report to Planning Board for information.**

7. Proposals and Details

Consultation

At the meeting of 21st April 2008 Cabinet Member approved public consultation on the draft Rotherham Town Centre Interim Planning Statement (minute number 246). This document is intended to update the Strategic Development Framework produced in 2005 to reflect new information, analysis and progress with the Renaissance programme.

Consultation took place between 4th May and 6th June 2008 in line with the approved consultation statement. As a result representations have been received from thirty two individuals and stakeholders both externally and from within the Council. Comments were also collated from a number of workshops.

In brief, comments covered a range of issues from technical and site specific issues to more general considerations, including:

- Government Office raised concerns about the weight and status of Interim Planning Statements and that the document is addressing issues that ought to be considered as part of LDF Development Plan Document preparation.
- Site specific comments relating to development principles and guidance for developers
- Broader comments relating to acceptable uses for sites (although it should be noted that it is beyond the scope of the document to re-allocate sites)
- The Environment Agency raised concerns regarding the approach to flood risk
- Points were raised regarding the need for detailed analysis / consideration of site-specific options
- Comments on the Sustainability Appraisal highlighted a number of shortcomings. Whilst it is not considered that these affect the overall conclusions of the Appraisal, it is acknowledged that these should be addressed as part of Sustainability Appraisal of Local Development Framework documents which this Interim Planning Statement will inform.

The detailed consideration of comments and proposed changes to the Interim Planning Statement is set out in a Consultation and Feedback Report. Due to the size of this document it is not included here, but along with an amended final Interim Planning Statement, will be available in the Members Room from 6th October. These documents are also available on the intranet in the Planning and Regeneration document library.

Main changes to the Interim Planning Statement

Main proposed changes to the document include:

- A scaled back approach to dealing with flood risk. This still seeks to help implement the Flood Alleviation Scheme, but acknowledges the Environment Agency concerns that this does not negate the need for developers to undertake the sequential and exception tests as set out in PPS25.
- Amendments to site development principles
- Updates / corrections to text including aligning the town centre vision with that in the Draft Community Strategy, and taking account of newly published Regional Spatial Strategy and national Planning Policy.

- Clarification of the status of the document and how it is intended to inform Local Development Framework (LDF) preparation.

This report now seeks authorisation for the Council to adopt the document as an Interim Planning Statement which can be taken into account when determining planning applications.

Weight and status

New Planning Policy Statement 12 (published June 2008) points out that Local Planning Authorities should not produce planning guidance other than Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) where the guidance is intended to be used in decision making or the co-ordination of development. However SPD preparation is currently constrained by the absence of appropriate saved Unitary Development Plan policies and suitable Local Development Framework policies have yet to be prepared and adopted. Considerable resources have been expended on consultation and drafting of the Interim Planning Statement and it would not be appropriate for it to be abandoned. Whilst acknowledging that it does not carry the full weight of adopted SPD it is proposed that the document be adopted as an Interim Planning Statement which can be taken into account when determining planning applications.

Preparation and consultation has been undertaken in line with the requirements for Supplementary Planning Documents set out in national Planning Policy and relevant Regulations in anticipation of it being converted to SPD once suitable LDF policy linkage becomes available. It is also understood that enactment of the Planning Bill in early 2009 may enable preparation of SPD directly linked to policies in the Regional Spatial Strategy which now forms part of Rotherham's statutory Development Plan. This may create an earlier opportunity to convert this Interim Planning Statement into SPD linked to Policy SY1B4 of Regional Spatial Strategy.

It is also proposed that the Interim Planning Statement forms part of the LDF evidence base with key issues and site allocation options carried forward into current preparatory work on the Regulation 25 stage of the LDF Allocations Development Plan Document and the emergent LDF Core Strategy. These documents will allow for more detailed consideration of a number of the issues identified by consultees.

Pending adoption of the Core Strategy and Allocations Development Plan Documents, the Interim Planning Statement will provide an updated planning context and material planning consideration (albeit without the full weight of adopted SPD) for consideration of planning applications that are to come forward under the Renaissance Town initiative in the interim.

8. Finance

Adoption as an Interim Planning Statement will incur only minor financial cost to the Council related to making copies of the document available to the public. It is envisaged these can be covered from the existing forward planning budget.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The Interim Planning Statement is intended for use in informing planning decisions. Whilst this report acknowledges that it does not carry the full weight of adopted SPD following the introduction of new Planning Policy Statement 12, a failure to adopt the document or utilise it as part of the LDF evidence base will limit the potential to influence development and to assist in supporting the Rotherham Renaissance aspirations.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The update of the Strategic Development Framework supports the aims of:

- Rotherham Community Strategy
- The Rotherham Economic Plan
- the ongoing Rotherham Renaissance programme
- the delivery of the objectives of the South Yorkshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder.

It contributes to the following Strategic and Cross Cutting Themes:

- Rotherham Achieving –developing Rotherham town centre as a destination providing a mixed economy of specialist and quality shops, markets, housing and cultural life for all age groups,
- Rotherham Alive – assists aspirations to further improve cultural and leisure facilities, including a new central library, theatre and art gallery.
- Rotherham Safe - reinforces the town centre’s role as a place for urban living in attractive environments.
- Rotherham Proud – promotes strong and cohesive communities and develops strong relationships between people of different backgrounds.
- Rotherham Fairness – promotes equality in terms of choice and opportunities.
- Rotherham Sustainable Development – maintains sustainable development.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Available in Members’ Room from 6th October:

- Interim Planning Statement (final version)
- Consultation and Adoption Statement including the Feedback Report (a summary and consideration of comments received)
- Sustainability Appraisal

The documents are also available on the intranet in the Planning and Regeneration document library (under Rotherham town centre IPS).

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