

ROTHERHAM LOCAL PLAN STEERING GROUP
Friday, 9th November, 2012

Present:- Councillor Smith (in the Chair); Councillors Akhtar, Currie, Dodson, Godfrey, McNeely, Rushforth, R. S. Russell and Whelbourn.

together with:- Andrew Duncan, Helen Sleight and Ryan Shepherd (Planning Service) and Ann Todd (Press and Publications Office);

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor Pickering) and from Councillors Clark, Steele and Whysall.

46. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2012

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Rotherham Local Plan Steering Group, held on 28th September, 2012.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

47. APPOINTMENT OF PROGRAMME OFFICER FOR CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Senior Planning Officer providing details of the appointment of the Programme Officer for the Core Strategy Examination in Public. Members commented on the proposed funding of this post.

Agreed:- That the report be received and its contents noted.

48. LEGAL ADVICE ON THE CORE STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Senior Planning Officer summarising the legal advice (Counsel's opinion) recently received in respect of the Core Strategy and the implications of that advice as the Core Strategy is prepared for submission to HM Government.

Reference was made to:-

- : the costs of the legal advice obtained;
- : the preparation of the Memorandum of Understanding, which is to be agreed with Sheffield City Council;
- : the need for further housing provision in the Rotherham Borough area;
- : the implication of any delay in submitting the Core Strategy to HM Government;
- : the need to ensure that the Core Strategy conforms with the Regional Spatial Strategy;
- : further public consultation on the schedule of proposed minor amendments to the Core Strategy, prior to its submission to HM Government.

Agreed:- That the report be received and its contents noted.

49. PROGRESS TOWARDS SUBMISSION OF THE CORE STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Senior Planning Officer containing an update on progress towards submission of the Core Strategy to HM Government. The report highlighted the following progress:-

(i) consultants have been appointed to update the Sustainability Appraisal report;

(ii) the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires the Borough Council to demonstrate that the Local Plan is viable; consultants have been appointed to produce a 'whole plan viability assessment' to accompany submission, to demonstrate the way in which the Council has met the requirements set out in NPPF;

(iii) consultants have been commissioned to provide advice on retail objections;

(iv) further legal advice from Counsel on a number of issues has been obtained;

(v) a Memorandum of Understanding with Sheffield City Council on this Council's proposed housing target has been negotiated to enable Sheffield to withdraw their objection to the Core Strategy; Rotherham Borough Council has been advised by Counsel that the Memorandum of Understanding should be renegotiated prior to agreement and signing by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Development.

The schedule of proposed minor amendments to the Core Strategy was appended to the submitted report.

The Steering Group deliberated upon the options for the submission of the Core Strategy.

Agreed:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the emerging schedule of proposed minor amendments to the Core Strategy, as now submitted, be noted.

(3) That appropriate public consultation shall take place, during 2013, on the schedule of proposed minor amendments to the Core Strategy, as soon as they have been finalised.

(4) That, having taken account of the Counsel's opinion received, this Steering Group supports the submission of the Core Strategy to HM Government, for examination, after revocation of the Regional Strategy.

50. BASSINGTHORPE FARM CONCEPT FRAMEWORK

The Steering Group considered initial Local Plan Core Strategy proposals for the future development of the area situated to the north of Rotherham, at Greasbrough, known as the Bassingthorpe Farm site.

The Chairman introduced James Hobson and Richard Walshaw (Signet Planning), Helen Flage (the ATLAS development advisory service) and Anthony Barber-Lomax (Fitzwilliam Wentworth Estates), who were all attending today's meeting for discussion about the future of the Bassingthorpe Farm area. Ward Councillor Sims also attended the meeting for consideration of this item.

Members learned that ATLAS is a Company which provides advice on applications for large development. This services is provided free of charge and offers impartial, independent advice on large development proposals (which most often include residential housing development) and assist with the creation of robust evidence base for this type of development.

Reference was made to the Bassingthorpe Farm Concept Framework, with the importance of Bassingthorpe Farm as a??..... site included in the Local Plan Core Strategy. This site comprised six hectares of development land. The initial proposals were being prepared by the Borough Council in collaboration with Fitzwilliam Wentworth estates, as a neighbouring landowner and with urban design consultants Signet Planning. Members were informed of the importance of convincing a Planning Inspector that the area has sufficient viability for future development which might include, for example, green space, appropriate highways and service infrastructure, health facilities and a primary school.

The presentation of the proposals, by Richard Walshaw (Signet Planning) and the Members' subsequent discussion of the various issues, highlighted the following salient matters:-

: the topography is the key characteristic of the whole area, which slopes downwards in a northerly direction;

: a Green Infrastructure Framework is being prepared for the area, comprising such features as connectivity between the different parts of the site (on foot and by vehicle); and the ecology of the area;

: the area is rich in terms of its historic features (eg: old churches; the Hoover Stand);

: there are important watercourses (eg: the Greasbrough Dyke, Clough Stream) which have associated public rights of way;

: there is the opportunity of creating a circular green corridor around the proposed development sites, to enhance the overall landscape quality of

the area;

: the area has Listed Buildings : eg: Bassingthorpe Farm and the Barbot Hall Farm;

: one specific design feature will be to facilitate the movement and access of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists around the area;

: there are already well-established public transport links to the nearby Rotherham town centre;

: new development may eventually create better pedestrian links with the Rotherham town centre; for example, finding an alternative route to the existing Primrose hill railway bridge link or using a better access route via Rodger Street;

: a decision will need to be made about the future of the Thornhill recreation ground (situated between New Wortley Road and Greasbrough Street);

: the northern area of the whole site includes the gateway to the Wentworth estate;

: there are a number of barriers (around the site) to the overall ease of movement of pedestrians;

: the new development should include improved pedestrian access to the Wingfield Business and Enterprise College;

: the position of roads throughout the site are essential to the new development, especially as they will enhance public transport access to the whole site;

; traffic modelling is already taking place in respect of the whole site, particularly examining all of the principal roads through the area – it will be important to avoid the creation of ‘rat runs’ for motor vehicles through the site (eg from the northern part of the area leading from Rawmarsh); a number of pedestrian and cycling routes will become established;

: the site has several key character areas:- Bassingthorpe Farm; Carr Hill; Cinder Bridge; and the mainly industrial area around Mangham Road;

: in addition, there is the Rotherham urban area (nearer to the Rotherham town centre), which includes the existing Henley Rise residential development and the Thornhill Primary School;

: the area known as Cinder Bridge is capable of being opened up to make good use of the assets of the Greasbrough conservtaion area (perhaps creating an attractive, lower density residential development);

- : the Carr Hill area is the location of the two listed buildings (Bassingthorpe Farm and the Barbot Hall Farm);
- : future development which will create employment opportunities will be better located near to the Carr Hill road (B6089);
- : the area in which Bassingthorpe Farm is situated will accommodate most of the new residential development; and such new development will comprise a variety of different housing densities;
- : the overall design will ensure the connection of walking routes to the existing retail centre in Greasborough;
- : an important suggestion is the possibility of locating a significant landmark (perhaps a tower) which will be visible at a high point of site (eg: at Bassingthorpe Farm or at Carr Hill);
- : a range of different land uses are suggested: the nearby area of Fenton Road is currently considered a sterile environment (in development terms) and it may be possible to create a more vibrant urban environment there, one which may include the benefit of reducing traffic speeds);
- : today's presentation is an initial draft of a range of development concepts; the task will be to try and fuse together all the different concepts; importantly, the intention is not simply to build a large housing estate; new development must contain a vibrant urban centre;
- : the Thornhill recreation ground is considered to be a key development site;
- : it is envisaged that some 2,400 residential dwellings will be constructed; in addition, development which will provide (perhaps minimal) employment opportunities will happen in areas such as Mangham Road and Parkgate;
- : the probable timescale for the development of the whole area is some 15 to 20 years;
- : reference was made to the cost of roads and other site infrastructure; discussion took place on these facilities would be funded by a developer or funded via, for example, the Local Transport Plan;
- : there will be further detailed public consultation about specific development within the site; this process acknowledges the importance of taking into account the views of residents and local people;
- : a number of Task and Finish Groups are being established (eg; green infrastructure group; place making group; transport group);

: discussion took place on the timing and phasing of the delivery of the various stages of development;

: the actual starting point of development is currently under discussion – with reference to the different character areas around the whole site; it was possible that a number of different developers could begin construction work simultaneously, in each self-contained area;

: to date, there had been no discussions with the South Yorkshire Forest organisation; however, it was noted that there is a strong green infrastructure policy for the entire site (eg: consideration will be given to the need to retain an area of farm land within the site);

: it is acknowledged that there will be the impact of the loss of green belt in this area of Rotherham;

: the whole area is an appropriate location for development, given the site's proximity to the Rotherham town centre;

: the protection of wildlife is very important (eg: in areas such as Bassingthorpe Spring Wood);

: the area must comprise an attractive development for the future;

: one of the landowners (Fitzwilliam Wentworth Estates) is making some financial contribution;

: reference was made to the duty of co-operation between adjacent planning authorities; it was noted that a development of this scale will be capable of meeting some of Sheffield City Council's housing need);

: new development and increased levels of vehicular traffic will impact upon local roads serving Parkgate and Rawmarsh (eg: Cinder Bridge Road, Greasbrough Lane, Scrooby Street and Scrooby Lane); there will be similar pressures upon the existing local drainage and sewerage infrastructure;

: there are sustainable plans for future drainage – it was noted that parts of both Cinder Bridge Road and Greasbrough Lane are situated in an area prone to severe flooding;

: the suggested tower at the site's highest point might be a suitable place in which to disguise a mobile telecommunications mast; such a facility might be located in the area near to the former Stubbin colliery;

: future development ought to secure the upgrading of existing roads which are not capable of absorbing increased amounts of vehicular traffic;

: there will be liaison with Yorkshire Water about that Company's intentions to adopt drainage and sewerage infrastructure;

: the area should be brought to life as a virtual scheme, using quality visual aids; the production of a design code document will be useful in the process of engaging with the public;

: there has not yet been any discussions with prospective developers (this process will not begin until the site design allocation is complete);

: ground conditions must be taken account of carefully, because of the area's history of mines-working;

: consultation about the various site allocations will probably begin during 2013 (this process has to balance the detail with the Local Plan Core Strategy);

: reference was made to the possible impact of the proposed tram-train development, which will link the Rotherham town centre and Parkgate;

: the visual impact assessments for the whole area have been completed.

Members thanked the officers and consultants for the interesting and informative presentation. The Steering Group will receive progress reports at its future meetings and progress will also be reported to the Rotherham North, Wentworth North and Wentworth South Area Assemblies.

51. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Rotherham Local Plan Steering Group take place at the Town Hall, Rotherham on Thursday, 13th December, 2012, commencing at 2.30 p.m.