

**ROTHERHAM LOCAL PLAN STEERING GROUP**  
**Friday, 18th January, 2013**

Present:- Councillor Smith (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor Pickering); Councillors Dodson, Godfrey, The Mayor (Councillor Pickering) and Whelbourn.

together with:- Andy Duncan, Noel Bell and Nicholas Ward (Planning Service) and Carolyn Jones (Ecology Development Officer)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clark, McNeely and Whysall and from Bronwen Knight (Planning Service and Sumera Shabir (Legal Service).

**58. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13TH DECEMBER, 2012**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Rotherham Local Plan Steering Group, held on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2012.

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

**59. ROTHERHAM BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2012 REVIEW**

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Ecology Development Officer seeking support for the revised Rotherham Biodiversity Action Plan and acceptance of the plan within the environmental evidence base of the Rotherham Local Plan.

The report stated that the Rotherham Biodiversity Forum partners published the first Rotherham Biodiversity Action Plan (RBAP) in 2004, which was adopted by the Borough Council. The plan was based on the protection and enhancement of habitats and species prioritised both nationally and locally; the plan provided a comprehensive assessment of the nature conservation value of the Borough area. The 2004 RBAP has been successful in enabling delivery of biodiversity action via targeted site management, project development, guiding survey and monitoring effort. The 2004 RBAP has also formed a key element of the environmental evidence base within the planning framework to highlight the need for habitat and species protection, retention and enhancement.

Since 2004, the national priorities for conservation action have expanded and been refined and new legislation and Government information has been published to guide the next era of biodiversity delivery. Therefore, it is now an appropriate time to review the RBAP to take stock of delivery to date and in the light of the new thinking and increased Government focus.

The review process has involved reassessment of national, regional and local priorities in terms of habitats and species and consideration of a number of key Government documents. The presence of nationally prioritised habitats in Rotherham has been identified, data has been obtained on which prioritised species have been associated with these habitats and again their presence in Rotherham has been identified.

The following are the key changes in the 2012 RBAP document:-

- : The addition of new habitat action plans for traditional Orchards and Inland Rock and Brownfield Land arising from new national habitat priorities;
- : The expansion of the pond action plan to cover all water based habitats;
- : The identification of additional local priority habitats associated with each key habitat group;
- : The grouping of habitats into groups in line with national principles;
- : The change from Ancient and Species-rich Hedgerows to Hedgerows acknowledging the importance of all hedgerows;
- : The identification of locally recorded species with each key habitat group;
- : The acknowledgement of recent legislation, strategies and other plans which influence biodiversity action;
- : The alignment of actions and delivery timescales with regional and national plans and strategies.

The 2012 RBAP will continue to support the preparation and delivery of the Rotherham Local Plan, providing supporting evidence for Core Strategy policies and for future development management policies, particularly in respect of biodiversity, geodiversity, green infrastructure and landscape.

The Rotherham Biodiversity Action Plan (2012) will support biodiversity action and delivery until at least 2020 in line with the England Biodiversity Strategy. Objectives, targets and programmes of action will be prepared with this date in mind but it is acknowledged that action will be needed to continue beyond 2020. The executive summary of the 2012 RBAP was included as an appendix to the submitted report.

The Steering Group made suggestions about the benefits of wide-ranging consultation with local people about the contents of this Action Plan and commented on the following issues:-

- : the importance of preserving habitats for a variety of species, some of which might be located very near to developed areas;
- : the importance of all hedgerows;
- : specific areas within the Rotherham Borough which are habitats for species, but which might also be required for future development;
- : the RBAP has been considered by the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and will also be submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board and to the Cabinet, prior to formal approval by the Council.

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

(2) That the 2012 Rotherham Biodiversity Action Plan be supported and accepted within the Local Plan system.

#### **60. BASSINGTHORPE FARM PROGRESS**

The Planning Policy Manager reported on the progress with the Bassingthorpe Farm area and the prospective development of this greenfield site:-

: groundworks are being carried out, a mining engineering study report of specific, former mine-working areas has been prepared and the necessary remediation works will be recorded in a viability assessment report; estimates are being prepared of the costs of these required works;

: discussions about the prospective development continue with the various owners of land in this area;

: the Local Plan Core Strategy will include a concept framework about Bassingthorpe Farm and there may be targeted consultation with specific stakeholders (eg: the Environment Agency);

: transportation modelling is taking place, to assess the likely impact of the increased amount of vehicular traffic on the developed area.

The Steering Group discussed a number of issues:-

: the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment identifies land with the potential for future development; currently, there was only an initial projection of the number of houses which might be built within the Bassingthorpe Farm area and, as such, did not have any bearing on the five-years' projection of housing development in the whole Rotherham Borough area;

: future public consultation would benefit from the availability of a 'virtual tour' of a scale model of the proposed development;

: all aspects of this proposed large scale development are currently under consideration, include measures to prevent flooding and the necessary infrastructure to support the new community;

: some areas within the overall site will be retained as green space, whilst others might not prove to be viable for development (an assessment of viability will be undertaken).

Agreed:- That further progress continue to be reported to future meetings of the Local Plan Steering Group.

#### **61. STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Senior Planner

concerning Rotherham's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, a key part of the evidence base which will support and inform the preparation of the Local Plan and planning decisions.

The report stated that a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a process that identifies land with potential for future housing development. All local planning authorities are expected to undertake a SHLAA in order to identify an adequate supply of land for housing. This is an important function of the planning system and an evidence-based policy approach is a key principle of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The figures within the SHLAA showed that, in terms of the overall fifteen year supply of housing land, there is potentially enough land to allow for both of the scenarios detailed in the report. However, there is not a large enough supply of deliverable sites to meet the five year supply, plus 20%. This means that there is the potential opportunity for developers to submit applications for planning permission to build on non-allocated sites. The importance of allocating new sites for development, as quickly as practicable, was acknowledged.

Members discussed: (i) the probable availability of land for housing in future years; and (ii) developers retaining land in their ownership for future development. It was noted that the SHLAA is reviewed and refreshed each year.

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

(2) That this Steering Group notes the findings of the updated Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

## **62. ROTHERHAM CORE STRATEGY WHOLE PLAN VIABILITY ASSESSMENT**

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Senior Planner stating that the Council, in conjunction with Roger Tym and Partners, have produced a whole plan viability assessment of the Core Strategy, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework. The submitted report provided further information on the assessment, which will form part of the evidence base for preparing the Local Plan.

The Steering Group discussed the contents of the Whole Plan Viability Assessment final report, including these issues:-

- : the value of land for affordable housing and for residential and commercial development;
- : the impact of the Community Infrastructure Levy (education; transport; green spaces);
- : whether there should be a lower levy to encourage development in areas less attractive to the market.

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

(2) That the contents and the findings of the Core Strategy Whole Plan Viability Assessment document, as now submitted, be noted.

**63. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Steering Group Members noted that the decision of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government was awaited in respect of the possible revocation of the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Spatial Strategy.

**64. DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Rotherham Local Plan Steering Group take place at the Town Hall, Rotherham on Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2013, commencing at 10.00 a.m.