

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	8 June 2011
3.	Title:	Local Development Framework: Public Consultation
4.	Directorate:	Environment & Development Services

5. Summary

The report seeks Cabinet approval for public consultation on the Local Development Framework (LDF). The consultation planned for summer 2011 will cover both the LDF strategy in terms of the broad amount and distribution of growth and the detail in terms of initial consultation on potential development sites around all the Borough's communities.

6. Recommendations

- 1. Cabinet approve the Draft Core Strategy and the Sites and Policies Issues and Options documents for public consultation.**
- 2. Cabinet approve the timetable at Table 1 to achieve adoption of the Core Strategy by the end of 2012.**
- 3. Cabinet endorse the LDF Consultation and Engagement Action Plan Summary attached at Appendix 1.**

7. Proposals and Details

Purpose

The Council is preparing a Local Development Framework (LDF) for Rotherham. This is a statutory requirement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (and remains so under the Localism Bill).

The LDF consultation planned for summer 2011 will cover both the LDF **strategy** in terms of the broad amount and distribution of growth and the **detail** in terms of initial consultation on potential development sites around all the Borough's communities.

Two consultation documents contain the detail of our proposals, a "Draft Core Strategy" and a "Sites and Policies Issues and Options" document. This report summarises the key aspects of both documents. **The Draft Core Strategy and Sites and Policies Issues and Options documents will be made available to Cabinet Members prior to the meeting.**

Consultation

In light of the consultation response received to our previous consultation in 2009, and changes to government policy, we have significantly reduced our housing target. Although the regional "top down" target is still technically in place, the upcoming Localism Bill will abolish these targets towards the end of 2011. To accommodate this lower local target we have revised our strategy for how new homes and employment land should be distributed around the Borough.

The forthcoming LDF consultation will set out this strategy but will also focus on the potential development sites in each local community. The headlines of our changed strategy are:

- **we have reduced our housing target by 27%**
- **we have reduced our employment land requirement by 30%**
- **we have reduced the amount of Green Belt land release by 60%**

Learning the lessons from our last consultation, we will look towards:

- localised "drop in" events on potential development sites for each community
- improved pre-publicity for consultations and local events
- advanced briefings for Ward Members, MPs and Parish Councillors
- improved liaison with the Area Assembly network
- closer working with Libraries and Parish Councils on consultations
- early engagement with the local press as a further means of ensuring engagement with and involvement of local people

Key messages for the consultation

- New homes are essential for the lifeblood of Rotherham
- Helping young families on to the housing ladder – affordable homes
- Improving job prospects for Rotherham people
- Good for families, communities and business
- It's a local plan – not a “top down” target
- Long-term plan for the future – not overnight change
- Responding to changing needs of Rotherham people
- Opportunity for Rotherham residents to have their say
- The right development in the right place at the right time

A summary of the LDF Consultation and Community Engagement Action Plan is attached at Appendix 1.

Draft Core Strategy

The Draft Core Strategy sets out the Council's vision for the future development of the Borough and the strategic policies to guide investment and development decisions to achieve this vision.

Vision and objectives

The vision for the future of Rotherham is set out in the Draft Core Strategy as:

Rotherham will provide a high quality of life and sense of place. It will be prosperous, with a vibrant, diverse, innovative and enterprising economy and have the best in architecture, urban design and public spaces. Regeneration of the town centre will offer urban living and a new civic focus. Rotherham will promote biodiversity and a high quality environment where neighbourhoods are safe, clean, green and well maintained, with good quality homes and accessible local facilities and services. It will aspire to minimise inequalities and create strong, cohesive and sustainable communities.

The vision is underpinned by 17 objectives, linking in to the Rotherham Sustainable Community Strategy's themes, covering subjects ranging from the provision of sufficient new homes to protection of the environment.

Strategy

The Council is proposing a lower local housing target of **850 new homes a year**. This figure anticipates the abolition of regional strategies and reflects previous public consultation response. This is in line with an assessment of the latest evidence on future household growth and the capacity available on suitable sites. This will require 12,750 new homes to be built over the 15 year plan period from 2012 to 2027.

Based on a review of employment land, it is considered appropriate to provide for around **230 hectares** of employment land for new economic development with up to an additional **5 hectares** of land to accommodate new office floorspace. The current shortfall of around 60 hectares will be addressed by the further review of preferred development sites taking into account the consultation response.

Policies in the Core Strategy will maintain a “brownfield first” approach and phase release of Green Belt land towards the end of Plan period.

Policies

The Draft Core Strategy contains a suite of 32 strategic policies grouped under four themes designed to meet the main aims of the strategy, which are:

- to implement a long-term **spatial strategy** that steers new development to the most sustainable locations (how much, where and when)
- to create and secure **sustainable communities** that are as self sufficient as possible in terms of employment, retail and local services
- to reduce the Borough's contribution to, and adapt to the effects of, **climate change**
- to ensure that the necessary new **infrastructure** is delivered to support the Plan's spatial strategy (schools, roads, shops, public transport)

As well as providing for new homes and employment, the Draft Core Strategy's suite of policies covers a range of related subjects such as transport, retail provision, heritage protection, flooding, biodiversity, design, greenspace and climate change.

The Draft Core Strategy has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal, which will be made available as part of the consultation.

Sites and Policies document

The public consultation during summer 2011 will show the **strategy** of how much growth we are proposing and where it should go. The **detail** will be covered by presenting to the public all the potential sites for future development in local communities. This will enable local people to give their views on which sites they feel should be developed and which should not. All this information will be publicised and made available at public drop-in sessions throughout the Borough and via our website.

These sites will be taken forward in the “Sites and Policies” document, which will be subject to further public consultation as it evolves. The Sites and Policies document will also propose new designations to steer development to less sensitive locations, for example 11 new Conservation Areas.

Programme for adoption of the Core Strategy

The current programme for the LDF aims to achieve the adoption of the Core Strategy by the end of 2012. This is necessary to ensure the Council is ready to respond to the Localism Bill – to control our own destiny in shaping the Borough’s growth. This is a challenging task bearing in mind the regulatory process that has to be followed. Table 1 sets out the stages required. Any delay in achieving these milestones risks delay to the whole programme.

2011	July/Aug/Sept	Public consultation on Draft Core Strategy and Sites
	Nov/Dec	Cabinet and Full Council approve Publication Core Strategy
2012	Jan/Feb	Core Strategy published for statutory 6 week period
	Mar/Apr	Cabinet and Full Council approve submission of Core Strategy to government
	Apr	Core Strategy submitted to government for independent examination
	July/Aug	Core Strategy examination in public
	Nov	Inspector’s report received
	Dec	Cabinet and Full Council adopt Core Strategy

8. Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report although the consultation planned for summer 2011 will increase pressure on the Forward Planning team’s budget. Corporate assistance with the consultation exercise has been approved and officers from relevant services will be assisting with the consultation.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Cabinet approval of the public consultation is sought to enable progress towards adoption of the Core Strategy and the further preparation and refinement of the Sites and Policies document.

- The supplementing of media relations activity with more direct communication should be considered. Investment in channels such as direct mail may be necessary to ensure adequate levels of communication and engagement. Previous criticisms have included a perceived lack of information about the consultation.
- The Localism Bill will bring in a “presumption in favour of sustainable development” should an adopted development plan not be in place by the end of 2012. This could lead to the Council having to grant planning permission for major (greenfield) development contrary to our priorities, aspirations or locational preferences.

- A failure to achieve timely progress on the LDF could delay the spatial strategy which is required to guide future decision-making on planning applications, and may hinder our ability to mediate potentially conflicting aspirations of any neighbourhood plans that may emerge under the provisions of the Localism Bill.
- The ongoing legal challenges to the government's intention to revoke regional strategies and the targets they contain could have implications for our strategy. On the one hand we may be challenged for consulting on a lower housing target before regional strategies are formally revoked. On the other if we delay we risk not having a plan in place by the end of 2012 and therefore being at risk of speculative development in inappropriate locations. On balance, the need to progress outweighs the risk of challenge. To further mitigate this risk we will consult now on a lower target in our "draft" plan but will not formally "submit" our Core Strategy to government until after the Localism Bill has been passed and regional strategies are revoked.
- Last but not least, failure to make progress with the LDF risks delayed provision of the new homes and employment opportunities that the Borough needs.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The implementation of the LDF will make a positive contribution to all of Rotherham's Regeneration priorities. When adopted, the Core Strategy and accompanying documents will further the objectives of the Corporate Plan and support the delivery of the Rotherham Sustainable Community Strategy by:

- providing sufficient good quality homes to support the priority of Rotherham Safe
- ensuring well designed, decent affordable housing to contribute to the cross-cutting theme of Sustainable Development
- providing employment land to meet the needs of the modern economy and support sustainable communities through access to employment opportunities
- promoting the "town centre first" policy approach to help the regeneration and renaissance of Rotherham Town Centre

11. Background Papers and Consultation

LDF Draft Core Strategy (June 2011)

LDF Sites and Policies Issues and Options (June 2011)

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Appendix 1: LDF Consultation and Engagement Action Plan Summary

Date (2011)	Activity	Comments
16 May – 20 June	Briefing of Members via Area Assembly Co-ordinating Groups	7 meetings
24 & 25 May	Member training on LDF	2 sessions
1 June	Press briefing	Cabinet agenda papers in public domain
2 June	Local Strategic Partnership Chief Executives meeting	LDF briefing
8 June	Cabinet	LDF consultation presented for approval
June	Briefing librarians	Principal librarians contacted and briefed
30 June	Website completed	Ensure links can be created from Area Assembly and Parish Council websites to Council web pages
1/8 July	Consultation launch (date TBC)	Press / radio interviews. Letter / email to all key stakeholders. Hard copy documentation in Council offices and libraries etc. Website live with consultation material and event calendar
1/8 July	Advert placed in local press	Format of a “Statutory Notice” to also include confirmed dates and times of events
7 July	Parish Network Event	
w/c 11 July	Stakeholder Seminar (date TBC)	Actual date and format to be discussed. By invitation
15 July	Briefing of local MPs	Briefing note circulated before launch
1 July – 30 Aug	Around 20 x public drop-in sessions	Advertise all events through posters and flyers made available at publicly accessible venues. Consider placing an advert in local press
1 July – 16 Sept	Around 12 x policy themed workshops , communities of interest and hard to reach groups held	Community Engagement Team / Area Assembly Team / Sustainable Communities Team. By invitation
16 Sept	Consultation closes	
End Oct	Analyse comments and publish Feedback Report	Timing subject to complexity of response and Member approval