

LDF Task Group Meeting - 25 June 2007

Council Chamber Brockington

Group Members Present:

Cllr John Jarvis (Chairman) – Cabinet Member, Environment & Strategic Housing
Brian Atherton (Vice Chairman) – Herefordshire Partnership
Cllr Brian Wilcox – Cabinet Member, Highways & Transportation
Cllr Adrian Blackshaw – Cabinet Member, Economic Development & Community Services
Mark July – Herefordshire Partnership.

Officers present

Andrew Ashcroft – Head of Planning Services
David Nicholson – Forward Planning Manager
Kevin Singleton – Team Leader: Strategic Planning
Tim Watton – Senior Planning Officer
Samantha Banks – Senior Planning Officer
Emma Lawrence – Planning Technician
Phillipa Lydford – Herefordshire Partnership Officer

Apologies: Wendy Coombey – Herefordshire Partnership

1. David Nicholson (**DN**) welcomed the members of the Group to this inaugural meeting. Group Members and Officers introduced themselves. It was agreed by the Group that Cllr John Jarvis would chair the Group with Brian Atherton undertaking the role of Vice-Chair.
David Nicholson and Philippa Lydford (**PL**) gave a presentation to introduce the Local Development Framework (LDF) and emphasised its key relationship with the Community Strategy. **DN** indicated that the role of the Task Group would be to:
 - Consider the broad spatial development of the County
 - Ensure consistency and coherence across the Council and Partnership
 - Take account of national and regional concerns and apply locally; and
 - Help to develop a distinctive local spatial Core Strategy.
2. A detailed and varied question and answer session followed from the presentation. Mark July (**MJ**) asked for an explanation of the extent of scrutiny of the LDF. **DN** indicated that Regional Assembly will advise whether the LDF is considered to be in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). In addition the Council will have to demonstrate to an Inspector that the plan is sound. Government have laid out various tests of soundness. The Planning Inspector will examine the Plan holistically and will produce a binding report – there is no scope for the Council to reject his recommendations. **DN** emphasised that it will be vital that the Herefordshire core strategy is distinctive. Other Plans have failed partially because they have not shown that they are specific and locally distinctive.
3. Cllr Brian Wilcox (**BW**) had concerns with working within an environment which seemed to be constantly changing - particularly so shortly after adopting the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). **DN** recognised that changing advice and circumstances had always faced Planning. He indicated that planning is continually going through iterations of cycles. The Council were fortunate for the moment as the UDP is saved for 3 years providing a period of stability to put the policies into effect. As the Core Strategy advances it will gain weight and eventually replace elements of the UDP. The new housing requirements arising for example through the Growth Points initiative would be affirmed through the RSS review and then established in the LDF.

4. **BW** – Asked if local flexibility was being taken away if Inspector does not agree with the Council? Andrew Ashcroft (**AA**) responded indicating that the Inspector will look at key guidance notes to assess the relationship between national policy, regional strategy and the Core Strategy. They will indicate if the plan does not tackle key issues or does not have a sufficiently strong relationship with the community strategy. However, if the links are clear and the Core Strategy is locally distinctive it is unlikely to be a problem.
5. Cllr Blackshaw (**AB**) asked about the timetable for the Core Strategy **DN** - indicated that it is proposed to sign off and submit the Core strategy by June 2009. At that point the examination of the Strategy by the Inspector would begin.
6. Cllr Jarvis (**JJ**) asked whether Inspector's decisions elsewhere were being used to provide guidance for the Herefordshire Core Strategy? **DN** – Answered by indicating that the experiences of examinations elsewhere and were being actively considered so as to learn from the experience of others.
7. **MJ** asked if the Sustainable Community Strategy subject to similar independent scrutiny as the LDF? **PL** answered that there was no independent scrutiny of the Sustainable Community Strategy. **JJ** Asked if the definition of sustainable development had changed? **DN** responded that the meaning of sustainable development is much the same as that considered in the UDP. **MJ** commended the use of definition from the UK 2005 Strategy for sustainable development.
8. **JJ** asked when organisations such as Highway and Environment Agencies would be involved in the Core Strategy? **DN** explained that these agencies sit below the LDF Task group as major stakeholders. Officer level discussions are already taking place, especially in the context of Growth Point studies. **AA** indicated that if appropriate stakeholders such as the Highways Agency could be brought into the group for several months if necessary.
9. Kevin Singleton (**KS**) then gave a presentation regarding the Herefordshire Core Strategy. The presentation:
 - outlined how core strategies fit into the LDF;
 - detailed the key elements of a Core Strategy;
 - outlined the timetable and context for the Herefordshire Core Strategy;
 - described the forthcoming issues consultation in September; and
 - Described the work being undertaken on the development of the evidence base.
10. Tim Watton (**TW**) then described the work that had been undertaken to date in respect of issues gathering and suggested a list of emerging issues. Group members emphasised that in identifying issues other surveys that are being undertaken should be assessed so that there is no duplication of work. Other areas of Herefordshire Council which undertake consultation should have their results reflected in the development of the LDF where appropriate.
11. Detailed discussions followed regarding the wording of the emerging issues. It was emphasised that these were the starting point and consultations undertaken over forthcoming months would ensure that the issues would be developed. The list of issues were to be used by the Task Group as a starting point for developing a vision for the County, and a strategy to achieve the vision
12. **PL** asked how the list of issues had been identified? **TW** responded that this was the result of a combination of issues identified in the Community Strategy and other strategies such as the LTP, evidence base studies, dialogue with

community groups and stakeholders. It also took account of responses to the Herefordshire Matters article (May 2007) which represented an initial “call” for issues and was distributed to households across the County. It is important at this stage to identify a full range of issues at this stage to enable a comprehensive range of options for the Strategy to be developed.

13. In considering the scope of issues it was emphasised that the issues should reflect the whole of the County although it was apparent that as the Core Strategy developed it would be necessary to express issues at a more detailed, place specific level. Brian Atherton (**BA**) suggested that the term ‘regeneration’ could be replaced with ‘raising the wealth level’. However, **AB** indicated that the word regeneration is important in the context of this area of the West Midlands. **JJ** made the point that in many instances issues could be interpreted in either a positive or negative way, so it was important to be clear about the point of view.
14. Due to time constraints it was agreed that a meeting would be required to complete the discussions upon the identification of Core Strategy Issues. The date for the next meeting was set for 19th July at 9:30am at the Council Chamber, Brockington.

Action Point : Working examples of the key issues proforma would be circulated to the Task Group prior to the 19th July.

Next Meeting : 19/7/07, 9.30am, Council Chamber Brockington.

Diary Dates : Future Meeting of Task Group 12/12/07, 9:30 am, Three Counties Hotel.

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