

LDF Task Group Meeting
13th October 2008
The Bishop's Palace, Hereford

Present:

Group members:

Councillor J Jarvis – Cabinet Member, Environment and Strategic Housing
Councillor A Blackshaw – Cabinet Member Regeneration
Brian Atherton – Ross Chamber of Commerce, (Herefordshire Partnership)
Mark July – Natural England, (Herefordshire Partnership)

Officers:

Philippa Lydford – Herefordshire Partnership
Andrew Ashcroft – Head of Planning and Transportation
Peter Yates – Planning Policy Manager
Chris Botwright – Team Leader, Local Planning
Kevin Singleton – Team Leader, Strategic Planning
Samantha Banks – Senior Planning Officer
Jane Reeves – Senior Planning Officer
Ben Watts – Transportation

Apologies:

Councillor B Wilcox – Cabinet member, Transportation
Wendy Coombey – Hereford Diocese, (Herefordshire Partnership)

1 Welcome and Apologies

2. Notes of Last Meeting

Noted – no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

3. Introduction and Context for the Meeting

Peter Yates introduced himself to the meeting and briefly described the changes in the Local Development Regulations which occurred in June (after the start of the Developing Options public consultation). The key change in the regulations is that a formal “Preferred Options” consultation is no longer required – however instead it was suggested that a programme of carefully targeted consultations should take place next summer – further details as below.

4. Planning Bill

The main provisions of relevance to the Core Strategy were described.

- a. It was proposed to take Supplementary Planning Documents out of the Local Development Scheme and make them exempt from the requirement to be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal
- b. The Bill included a duty for local planning authorities to consider specific policies for combating Climate Change
- c. The draft provisions for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) were outlined. In particular CIL was voluntary and was intended to raise funds for Sub-Regional Infrastructure (in this context it is important to note that Herefordshire is a sub-region on its own). CIL also depended on there being an enabling policy in an adopted Core Strategy – and was therefore directly relevant to the preparation of the Core Strategy.

The Bill is due to complete its progress through the House of Lords by the end of October and could receive Royal Assent before the end of the year.

There was also a brief discussion of the provisions in the Bill for a National Infrastructure Commission – but that would be unlikely to affect Herefordshire.

In the light of the above it was proposed to delay taking the next Local Development Scheme to Committee/Cabinet until the new year – so that it could be prepared in the light of the new legislation.

The new provisions for Supplementary Planning Documents should make them easier to do and active consideration was being given to updating the 2004 Design and Development SPG to include climate change provisions and to create a link between SPDs and Parish Plans. (The value of Village Design Statements was discussed in this context).

The likely form of next year's Local Development Scheme would be a four document proposal: the Core Strategy, a Hereford Action Area Plan, an allocations document for the Market Towns and Rural Areas and a CIL Charging Schedule. This would be subject to a decision by Cabinet.

5. Regional Spatial Strategy Update

An update was provided with a brief explanation of how the Planning and Housing Advice Unit had been set up by Government in March 2007 to advise the Government at national and regional level on population and household increases. This body has convinced the government that significant additional housing allocations must be made in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Three scenarios had been proposed by the consultants for the Government Office of the West Midlands and all of them included an additional 1,200 houses to be allocated to the rural areas in addition to the 16,600 proposed in the RSS Phase 2 revisions. A report will be going to Cabinet on 20th November 2008.

There was some debate as to whether the rural areas allocation was limited to Market Towns or exclusive of Markets towns. It was explained that there is a degree of discretion – to be resolved through the Core Strategy. In summary the RSS Phase 2 proposals recommend 16,600 residential units to be provided in Herefordshire in the period to 2026, however, half of these, 8,300 must go in or adjacent to Hereford itself. The remaining 8,300 need to be allocated between the Market Towns and the rural areas of the County. The latest proposals add 1,200 to the rural allocation – to be accommodated in either or both the Market Towns and their rural hinterlands.

The dates were confirmed – final comments on RSS Phase 2 by 8th December, submission of statements to the Examination in Public by 31st March 2009 and the Examination in Public is scheduled to begin at the end of April 2009 and run through May and June. The Inspector's report and Secretary of State's decision are not expected until much later in 2009.

6. Core Strategy Updates

A copy of the draft Consultation Statement Part 3 was circulated to highlight the methods and extend of the consultation and publicity undertaken in the summer. Headline results from the Developing Options consultation questionnaire were circulated and briefly described – and noted with interest. Further analysis is still needed. In particular the Council's Research Team will be doing more analysis of the closed questions and Forward Planning Team Members will be doing analysis of the "Free text" answers. The possibility of preparing a press release was raised.

The letter from the Government Office for the West Midlands was circulated and discussed. It was noted that, nationally, there are still fewer than 30 Core Strategies adopted and there is not, therefore, a good basis of what an ideal Core Strategy for a rural unitary authority should look like.

A "Visioning Event" was suggested and papers circulated to show a suggested agenda of such an event and an outline of the reasons for doing it. In particular such an event would help define the overall vision of the Core Strategy, raise its profile and give a steer on such key issues as Climate Change and the approach to be taken in Rural Areas. It was suggested that we use in-house facilitators.

There was a general discussion on such issues as to who should attend and whether there needed to be two or more such events. 17th November was already booked as a provisional date.

It was felt that two such events were needed – one for members and one for the Partnership and other stakeholders (especially Parish Councils). A final decision on dates and invitees would be taken in the next few days. The recent workshop event on waste issues was commended as a good format for the event.

There was also some debate on the role of Cabinet at this stage and the extent to which these Visioning Workshops could influence the final version of the Core Strategy.

7. The Next Steps and the Content of the LDF

A suggested timetable for the Core Strategy was circulated and (very) briefly discussed. The suggested timetable highlighted the very tight timescales needed to achieve the original programme. 2009 would be given up very much to completing as much of the evidence base as possible, responding to the RSS, and having a programme of targeted consultations on key issues – all with the intention of preparing a submission document by the end of 2009.

Date for Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold the next LDF Task Group meeting on 12th January 2009 – venue to be confirmed.

For further details please contact:
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