

South Derbyshire Local Strategic Partnership

Report to the Board

Date of Meeting: 24th September 2008

Agenda Item: 6

SOUTH DERBYSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Issue

The Board previously received a report (in March this year) outlining the background and timetable for the preparation of the South Derbyshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy. The need to co-ordinate this work closely with the LSP and the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) was noted and it was agreed that a further report would be brought setting out how this could be achieved.

This report therefore updates the Board on progress and the proposed arrangements for co-ordination.

Details

To re-cap, the LDF is a generic term for a range of different types of planning policy documents which will set out the vision and strategy for accommodating the growth levels required by the Regional Spatial Strategy.

The first, and most important, of these LDF documents is the '*Core Strategy*' which will set out the overall vision and strategy for developing the district up to 2026.

The regulations governing the preparation of LDF documents are very rigorous and they may only be adopted after having been independently judged against a number of 'tests of soundness'. The tests broadly relate to the following principles:

- That they involved early and effective public consultation which considered all reasonable options in choosing policies and proposals for growth;
- That they are joined-up "place shaping" documents which provide the spatial expression of the SCS;
- That they are supported by robust evidence and show how and when development and new infrastructure will be delivered;

- That they have been subject to a parallel process of ‘sustainability appraisal’, examining the likely social, economic and environmental effects of the emerging policies and alternative options.

Progress on Preparing the South Derbyshire LDF

When the timetable for preparing the Core Strategy was reported to the Board in March it was intended that formal submission of the document to the Secretary of State would take place in March 2009 with final adoption in June 2010. An initial period of consultation on ‘Issues’ was programmed to take place between Spring and Winter 2008.

However, the Government has since recognised that the complexity of the whole process has led to major delays in progressing this work throughout England. New regulations and guidance were therefore issued in July which significantly change the way local authorities are required to approach the task.

The main areas of change are that the Government has moved from a position of prescribing a very detailed and specific process to one which leaves more discretion to the local authorities. Nevertheless, LDFs are still required to be demonstrated to be “sound” according to the principles outlined above.

In addition, the Government has now signalled that “strategic sites” should be included in the Core Strategy – no doubt a reflection of the national policy to accelerate the supply of new housing sites. Thusfar, Core Strategies have only been expected to deal with matters of strategy and principle.

These changes have meant that the planned ‘Issues’ consultation has yet to take place. The Council will also need to revise its Local Development Scheme (LDS) – the project plan for preparing the LDF – early in the 2009, and this will need to be co-ordinated with Derby City Council, Amber Valley Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council with whom the Council is aligning its Core Strategy work.

In the meantime, however, it is intended that an “Issues and Ideas” consultation will be rolled out in October/November. This will gain initial public and stakeholder views on a wide range of issues such as housing, the environment, transport, employment, education and leisure and will mark the first step in establishing the overall LDF vision and objectives to 2026.

This consultation is likely to be followed by an ‘Issues and Options’ consultation, and then a ‘Preferred Options’ consultation before being submitted to the Secretary of State and undergoing independent public examination. The precise timing of these stages will need to be established through the planned revision of the LDS.

Co-ordination with SCS

Whilst the process for preparing the LDF Core strategy involves a much longer timetable than the SCS, co-ordination on the early stages of consultation on both documents will make the most effective use of resources and ensure the respective strategies pursue complementary objectives.

Since the March Board meeting, the Council's Corporate Performance and Policy Officer has taken up post and opportunities for co-ordinating work on the SCS and LDF, including consultation, have been explored. A proposed programme of consultation on the SCS is the subject of a separate report on this agenda and sets out a programme for whom to consult, when and how. It is proposed that this consultation can, where appropriate, cover both SCS and LDF issues. The 'Issues and Ideas' document referred to above can serve as a backdrop to this consultation for LDF purposes and may be complemented by other material forming the focus of SCS issues.

In addition, spatial planning falls within the remit of the LSP's Sustainable Development theme group and further exploration of relevant issues, for example through workshops, may be conducted through that Group.

Recommendations:

1. The Board notes the changes recently made by Government to the process for preparing Local Development Frameworks and the need for a revised timetable for the South Derbyshire LDF
2. The Board notes and endorses the proposed arrangements for co-ordinating consultation and preparation of the LDF Core Strategy with the Sustainable Community Strategy.
3. The revised timetable for preparing the LDF Core Strategy be reported back to the Board, once approved early in 2009.

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