

PARISHES LIAISON MEETING – 16TH OCTOBER 2013

BRIEFING NOTE - CORE STRATEGY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Core Strategy is still at Examination. The Examination hearing on the Scope of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) took place on 17th September. The Inspector has agreed that the Examination should continue. This note provides an update on the Examination, some of the key issues raised by the Inspector and the next steps in the Core Strategy process.

2. Examination Update

- 2.1 At 17th September hearing the geographic scope of the SHMA was discussed. Following this hearing the Inspector has issued his conclusions in his note ID/39, which can be accessed below:

http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Core-Strategy/Examination/id-39_inspectors_conclusion_on_scope_of_shma.pdf

- 2.2 In summary the Inspector has concluded that it is reasonable for the Council to have undertaken a SHMA covering B&NES (rather than the wider West of England area) and this provides an adequate basis for the objective assessment of housing needs in accordance with national policy. As a consequence the Inspector will not be exploring housing needs in the adjoining greater Bristol housing market area. The Inspector has also confirmed that the Examination will continue. The Inspector has not yet considered whether the Core Strategy is planning for the right level of housing and this will be debated at future hearings (see next steps below).

- 2.3 Since the hearing on 17th September the Inspector has raised a number of other concerns primarily regarding Green Belt matters – see his note ID/40, which can be accessed here:

http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Core-Strategy/Examination/id-40_inspectors_response_to_bnes47.pdf

The most significant of his concerns relates to 5 year housing land supply. The Inspector considers that a 5 year land supply (plus the necessary 20% buffer) can only be demonstrated if some housing is delivered at the strategic Green Belt locations during the next 5 years. Currently the Core Strategy identifies broad locations for development, leaving the allocation of sites (including identification of a site boundary) and definition of a revised detailed

Green Belt boundary through the Placemaking Plan. In order to deliver housing quickly enough the sites need to be allocated and land removed from the Green Belt in the Core Strategy (see section 4 below).

3. Next Steps

3.1 The Inspector has agreed that the next Examination hearing sessions will be held to debate the amount of housing the Core Strategy is seeking to provide and specifically whether the assessment of housing need set out in the SHMA is reasonable. These sessions are likely to take place in December. The latest news on the Examination (including future hearing dates) can be found on the Council's website at:

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/core-strategy-examination#two>

3.2 As part of the Examination process and in response to the Inspector's concerns set out in ID/40 the Council is currently undertaking work on some further informal potential changes to the Core Strategy. These include the allocation of strategic sites. The informal changes to the Core Strategy will be subject to 6 weeks public consultation (during November/December) to ensure that the Inspector has the full range of views before and at the hearings. As such the Inspector will consider all representations received before further hearings are held to discuss housing supply, Green Belt sites and other matters. These hearings are now likely to take place in early 2014.

3.3 Following these hearings the Inspector is likely to recommend main modifications to the Core Strategy (as submitted for Examination). These main modifications would also be subject to public consultation. The Inspector will then issue his report prior to the Core Strategy proceeding to adoption by the Council.

4. Strategic Sites – community involvement

4.1 As set out above work is currently being undertaken on potential changes to the Core Strategy that would allocate strategic sites for development to address the Inspector's concerns around housing delivery. Sites will be allocated in the five locations in the Green Belt that are currently referred to in the Core Strategy i.e. at Odd Down/South Stoke; Weston; east Keynsham; south west Keynsham; and Whitchurch.

4.2 A significant amount of evidence base work has been done to inform the allocations and much of this was published on 13th September as part of the Examination process. It is also very important that the Council engages local communities as much as possible in the process of site allocation through the Core Strategy and this will be achieved but within the context of needing to

make quick progress. Given the difficulties caused by the lack of control over development in advance of Core Strategy adoption it is critical that delay to the Core Strategy is kept to a minimum.

- 4.3 The Council is seeking to consult on potential changes to the Core Strategy, including site allocations, during November and December. A briefing note to all town & parish councils will be sent out shortly. As part of the work of identifying the sites to be allocated it is proposed that meetings will be held with directly affected town & parish councils during October. In addition during the 6 weeks consultation period exhibitions/consultation events will be held close to each of the proposed sites. This will give an opportunity for officers to explain and discuss the site allocations proposed, as well as the process of making representations. Those that submit representations also have the opportunity to have their views heard by the Examination Inspector (see also para 3.2 above).