

PARISH LIAISON MEETING

19TH FEBRUARY 2014

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK UPDATE

1. CORE STRATEGY

Introduction

- 1.1 In September last year the Inspector confirmed in his note ([ref ID39](#)) that the B&NES Core Strategy could progress without it having to be based on a new assessment of housing needs for the West of England. He also sought greater clarity on the proposal for Green Belt releases for urban extensions and further public consultation on these proposals.
- 1.2 He subsequently held hearings on 10th & 11th December 2013 in which he sought to establish the appropriate housing target for B&NES. Early in the New Year the Inspector reported ([ref ID44](#)) on his initial findings on the housing figure and the arrangements for the next steps for the Core Strategy hearings.

Inspector's comments on the Housing Target

- 1.3 The Inspector's key conclusions on the housing figure are set out in paras 2.3 & 2.4 of ID/44;

*"I have, however, heard all those existing parties who wanted to be heard who consider the plan unsound because identified need/overall housing provision included in the March 2013 changes are too low and that the supporting SHMA is inadequate. I have not identified any fundamental problem as a result of the hearing on 10/11 December which I need to bring to the Council's attention at this stage and which would require a delay to the further hearings. **I have not been persuaded that overall housing provision in the plan needs to be greater than the around 13,000 homes as now proposed by the Council***

... the discussion at the hearings should proceed on the assumption that the total supply of housing of around 13,000 homes is either about right or should be lower (if, for example, the exception in NPPF paragraph 14 is met)....".

Implications of ID/44 for decision making

- 1.4 This raises the question as to whether this conclusion has any impact for determining planning application or appeals. The Inspector has reached a clear conclusion which is firm enough to enable the Council to give substantial weight to the figure of 13,000 homes being the upper limit of the housing requirement.

1.5 However the Inspector is yet to examine the housing land supply on both brownfield and greenfield sites. The hearings to discuss these matters are scheduled to take place in March/April 2014 and whilst the use of the Green Belt is the most sustainable strategy and is unlikely to be found to be inappropriate, this remains to be tested through the examination process.

1.6 This uncertainty calls into question whether the Council can demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply which is the main reason for the vulnerability from predatory planning applications. It is therefore considered premature to use the Core Strategy to refuse planning applications and for use in appeals on this issue.

Public consultation on Green Belt boundaries

1.7 The public consultation closed on 20th December 2013 and around 1,000 comments were received. A schedule of all the representations is available (from the 14th February) on the Council's website www.bathnes.gov.uk/corestrategy. Paper copies of all of the representations can be viewed at the Council offices at Lewis House, Manvers Street, Bath.

1.8 The Inspector has asked for the Council to prepare Statements of Common Ground with key developers/landowners and these have now been completed. From the 14th February these are available on the Council website at www.bathnes.gov.uk/corestrategy

March/April Hearings

1.9 In ID44, the inspector outlined a draft timetable for the March/April hearings. On 28/2/14 he is due to issue any questions that require pre-hearing statements and will give participants until 7/3/14 to reply. The main areas that he still wants to scrutinise are;

- a. The Spatial strategy (housing/employment distribution);
- b. Housing delivery, including 5 year supply calculation and the SHLAA
- c. Timing and consequences of plan review
- d. The Green Belt allocations & safeguarded land
- e. Other matters arising from the consultation which may include;
 - *flood mitigation strategy*
 - *Affordable housing policies*
 - *Small Green Belt sites on the edge of Bath/Keynsham*
 - *Sites at large 'villages insets' in the Green Belt*

1.10 Following the hearings in March/April, the Inspector may want the Council to consult on a consolidated list of modifications which have arisen from the hearings before he finalises his report.

CIL

1.11 Progress on the Core Strategy has also enabled work on the preparation of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for B&NES to resume. The programme

schedules a draft CIL to be agreed in June 2014 for public consultation. A more detailed report on CIL, and the implications for local communities, will be brought back to a future Parish Liaison Meeting.

2. PLACEMAKING PLAN & NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Introduction

2.1 The scope of the Placemaking Plan was broadly set out in the Launch Document consultation of 2013. The public comments on the Launch Document will shortly be available on Council's website. The key streams of work on the B&NES Placemaking Plan are;

- Preparation of generic district wide planning policies (including an update to the current Local Plan policies)
- Allocation of key development sites not already allocated in the Core Strategy, mainly brownfield development sites in and around Bath
- Work with Town & Parish Councils to identify sites for development and assets for protection in rural areas

Work with Town & Parish Councils

2.2 The Town and Parish Councils have responded positively to working collaboratively with the District Council on the Placemaking Plan. Around forty Parish/Town Councils are involved in this challenging task.

2.3 The deadline for the initial tranche of character and site assessments was the 21st December 2013 and by this date 24 were received. In light of the delay to the Placemaking Plan agreed by Cabinet in November, Parish Councils were given an additional deadline of 2nd February 2014, to date another twelve assessments have been received with a few Parishes needing some additional time to finish the assessments before sending their evidence into B&NES.

2.4 This process has enabled a significant latent local resource to be mobilised to the benefit of local communities which will enable them to have greater ownership of the planning framework for their areas as encouraged by the Localism Act.

2.5 These assessments are now being reviewed. B&NES will respond to the first tranche of assessments in February and to the second tranche in early April 2014.

Rural Facilities Audit

2.6 In light of sustainable development objectives, the Core Strategy seeks to steer new development to those settlements with a better range of local facilities and services. This set out in Policy RA.1 of the Core Strategy. To inform this policy, the Council has committed to work with local councils to maintain an up-to-date record of rural facilities. This update is currently underway and the audit is due to be published during February.

Next Steps

- 2.7 The workstreams described above will come together in the Placemaking Plan Options consultation is due in Autumn 2014, comprising;
- The sites emerging from the work by Parish and Town Councils
 - Proposals emerging from the Enterprise Area Masterplan work
 - Updated policies from the Local Plan and new policies where needed
 - Allocation of other key brownfield sites
 - Outputs from other Council strategies such as the Transport Strategy, the Leisure Strategy, the Green Spaces Strategy, the Economic Strategy and the health & Wellbeing Strategy

Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.8 To date there are eight parished areas with Neighbourhood Plan area designations and one Neighbourhood Plan area which is currently undergoing consultation to become a designated area. Freshford and Limpley Stoke are currently in a final consultation period on their draft revised Neighbourhood Plan before formal submission to B&NES in March 2014. The Plan examination is expected in summer 2014, the referendum in Autumn 2014 and adoption at the end of the year.
- 2.9 The seven other Neighbourhood Plan areas are currently in the policy formulation and evidence gathering stages and are making good progress towards developing their Neighbourhood Plans.

3. GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOW PEOPLE SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD

- 3.1 An update on this work was provided to Parish Liaison Meeting towards the end of 2013. This included setting out the revised timetable for this work agreed in November in the Local Development Scheme. This entails an options consultation in the Autumn of this year and a draft Plan in 2015.
- 3.2 Key tasks identified in order to prepare the DPD include:
- a. On-going site assessment work
 - b. Co-operation with adjoining authorities to ensure a joint strategic approach to provision has been undertaken;
 - c. Assessing the contribution that major development sites can make towards accommodating travelling communities;
 - d. Investigating the scope to regularise existing Travelling Showpeople accommodation;
- 3.3 Over the last few months, work has therefore focused on the site assessments and working with the other West of England UAs to ensure a consistent approach to the assessment of need across the sub-region and arrangements for ensuring that the Duty to Co-operate is met. This work is influenced by processes/timetables in the adjoining authorities.
- 3.4 In recent months planning permission for traveller sites has been granted at Whitchurch and Bathampton and a planning application has been submitted for the unauthorised site at Lower Bristol Road, Bath.