

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Council Meeting – 15 June 2011

To receive recommendations to the Council from the Executive.

Councillor Williams

Taunton Deane Core Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Plan

At its meeting immediately preceding Council, the Executive gave detailed consideration as to whether the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Sustainability Appraisal should be published in July/August for public consultation and submitted to the Secretary of State in October 2011.

The Core Strategy is the key plan within the Local Development Framework and sustainable development is a statutory objective. Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning (PPS12) states that spatial planning is a process of place shaping and delivery which aims to:-

- Produce a vision for the future of places based on evidence, a sense of local distinctiveness and community derived objectives;
- Translate this vision into a set of policies and land allocations together with the public sector resources to deliver them;
- Create a framework for private investment and regeneration that promotes economic, environmental and social well being for the area;
- Coordinate and deliver the public sector components of this vision with other agencies and processes;
- Create a positive framework for action on climate change; and
- Contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development.

Adequate infrastructure planning is an essential process in developing a sound Core Strategy and PPS12 recommends that the infrastructure planning process should identify:-

- Local infrastructure needs and costs;
- The phasing of development;
- Sources of funding; and
- Responsibilities for delivery.

The Core Strategy sets out a vision for the Borough and eight strategic objectives together with indicators to measure success. For each objective there is a core policy:-

- (1) Climate Change;
- (2) Economy;
- (3) Town and other Centres;
- (4) Housing;
- (5) Inclusive Communities;
- (6) Accessibility;
- (7) Infrastructure; and
- (8) Environment.

The plan sets out an employment-led strategy, with homes balanced to jobs. The priority is to regenerate Taunton Town Centre, with the majority of the remainder of growth being accommodated in sustainable mixed use urban extensions served by public transport corridors. Existing green wedges will be enhanced and new green wedges created.

The employment led strategy seeks to provide at least 11,900 jobs and 17,000 homes over the period up to 2028.

Taunton is the strategic focus for this growth with about 13,000 homes (of which over 3,000 will be affordable), Wellington is a secondary focus with about 2,500 homes (of which about 625 will be affordable) and the rural areas up to 1,500 homes. The Core Strategy only allocates strategic sites. The subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Document will allocate smaller sites in Taunton, Wellington and the rural centres. Wiveliscombe and Bishops Lydeard are identified as major rural centres for up to 200 additional homes. Cotford St Luke, Creech St Michael, Milverton, North Curry and Churchinford are identified as minor rural centres for up to 50 homes.

Central to the delivery of the Core Strategy's proposals are a number of sustainable mixed use allocations. At Taunton about 5,000 homes and 22.5 ha of employment will be provided at Monkton Heathfield and about 900 homes and 1 ha of employment at Priorswood Nerrols. About 10 hectares of employment land is identified as a long term reserve at Walford Cross.

Further broad locations for growth after 2016 have been identified at Comeytrove/Trull for between 1,000 and 2,000 homes and at Staplegrove for between 500 and 1,500 homes. Taunton town centre is the focus for shopping, leisure and office development and will also provide about 2,000 homes. At Taunton a broad location will be sought for a strategic employment opportunity after 2016.

Strategic sites for sustainable mixed use urban extensions at Wellington provide for about 900 homes and the relocation of the two main employers at Longforth together with a Northern Relief Road and reopened railway station and a further 900 homes at Cades/Jurston. At Chelston a strategic inward investment employment site of 8.67 hectares is allocated for a single user.

Six strategic development management policies are proposed for general requirements, development in the countryside, gypsy and traveller site selection criteria, design objectives and delivery, and use of resources and sustainable design.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) gives details of the infrastructure that local service providers and the Council have identified as key to supporting growth in Taunton Deane and in meeting the objectives of the Core Strategy.

Local authorities can choose to charge Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on new developments in their area. The money can be used to support development by funding infrastructure that the local community needs. It applies to most new buildings (residential and non-residential) and charges are based on the size and type of development.

The IDP has been prepared to reflect the level of growth proposed in the emerging Core Strategy. It takes account of the number of dwellings which have already received planning permission and the infrastructure requirements arising out of the development allocated in the Core Strategy. Since the Core Strategy does not account for the timing and location of every single dwelling that contributes towards meeting strategic housing requirements, the IDP cannot similarly account for all the infrastructure requirements arising.

Whilst the IDP covers the whole of the Core Strategy timeframe, the emphasis is on the first five years (2011-2016). To allow for uncertainty that attaches to longer-term requirements, it is proposed to review the IDP annually in consultation with other service providers.

The IDP has identified that the level of infrastructure required to support development is unlikely to be funded fully from developer contributions. With this in mind, the document identifies the following actions which should be taken in order that the growth outline in the Core Strategy is accompanied by sufficient infrastructure:-

- The Council should not take an overly optimistic view about public funding;
- An appropriate balance should be struck in identifying the maximum level of developer's contributions that can be achieved without making development unviable;
- Opportunities should be maximised to secure funding from other sources (such as the New Homes Bonus);
- Clear priorities should be determined for the use of funding that may become available; and
- Mechanisms such as deferred payments and sharing in value uplift should be explored.

Securing contributions from developers will be key to the delivery of infrastructure and services and preliminary analysis suggests that contributions in the region of £15,000 per dwelling (excluding affordable housing) will need to be sought.

The majority of the IDP consists of an analysis of infrastructure needs, grouped under the following headings:-

- Physical Infrastructure (e.g. Flood alleviation, transport);
- Utilities (e.g. electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment and telecommunications);
- Social and Community Infrastructure (e.g. education, health, faith, sports and recreation, arts and culture, children's play, community halls); and
- Green Infrastructure (e.g. green wedges, country parks, open spaces and links).

The IDP does not deal in any detail with affordable housing, although the need for this has been taken into account when assessing the level of contributions that developers are likely to have to make. This viability assessment indicates that with about £15,000 per dwelling contribution package, 25% affordable housing is possible.

The principles of sustainable development are at the heart of the planning system. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process is intended to ensure that through plan-making, Local Planning Authorities have considered social, environmental and economic concerns when producing Local Development Frameworks. The carrying out of SA is mandatory on any new or revised Development Plan Document.

The SA process is divided into five stages:-

- Stage A: Setting the context, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope;
- Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects;
- Stage C: Preparing the SA Report;
- Stage D: Consulting on the Core Strategy and SA Report; and
- Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the plan.

Initially it was proposed to formally expose the Core Strategy, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Sustainability Assessment to public consultation in March/April 2011. However, it was deemed that this would be too close to the Borough Council Elections and would therefore be in breach of the “purdah” regulations.

In the circumstances, to both move the lengthy Local Development Framework process on and to prevent any implications which could arise if there were to be any further significant delay in publishing the three documents, it is **recommended** that:-

- (1) the Core Strategy, Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Sustainability Appraisal all be approved for publication; and
- (2) the relevant Executive Councillor be authorised to agree any minor changes to the documents that may be necessary prior to publication.