

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning and New Communities Joint Portfolio Holders Meeting 6 October 2008
AUTHOR/S: Corporate Manager (Planning and New Communities) / Planning Policy Manager

SITE SPECIFIC POLICIES DPD RESPONDING TO A HOUSING SHORTFALL

Purpose

1. To respond to a request from the Site Specific Policies DPD Examination Inspectors that the Council undertake additional work, including sustainability appraisal and public consultation, and advise the Inspectors of the Council's preferred sites to make up an identified housing shortfall of 2,200 dwellings in order to avoid the plan being found 'unsound'.
2. This is a key decision because:
 - it is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates.
 - it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area of the District comprising two or more parishes:
 - (i) Sites proposed for addition to the Site Specific Policies DPD:
 - Fulbourn
 - Girton
 - Impington
 - Gt Shelford.
 - (ii) Sites considered but rejected:
 - Barton
 - Bourn
 - Caldecote
 - Caxton
 - Fulbourn
 - Grantchester
 - Histon
 - Impington
 - Knapwell
 - Sawston
 - Gt Shelford
 - Stapleford
- it is in conflict with a policy, plan or strategy approved by the Council or a committee of the Council.
- it raises new issues of policy,
- it increases financial commitments (revenue and / or capital) in future years above existing budgetary approvals.
- it requires a virement of funding in excess of the virement limits approved by the Council.

- it is of such significance to a locality, the Council or the services which it provides that the decision-taker is of the opinion that it should be treated as a key decision.

and it was first published in the August 2008 Forward Plan.

Executive Summary

3. A draft public consultation document (see Appendix 1 to this report) has been prepared which sets out a small number of proposed new housing allocations and draft policies to be recommended to the Inspectors to make up the identified housing shortfall of 2,200 dwellings, subject to the outcome of public consultation. It also sets out the process undertaken to arrive at those sites, including other sites considered and rejected.
4. The document includes a number of Appendices that provide greater context to the process and the proposed new allocations. It is supported by a separate full Technical Annex (see Appendix 2 to this report) to provide a robust evidence base. The document is also accompanied by a Supplement to the Final Sustainability Report (see Appendix 3 to this report), which tests the sustainability of the site options considered.

Background

5. South Cambridgeshire District Council submitted the Site Specific Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) to the Secretary of State in January 2006, alongside 5 other plans and in May 2008 submitted the North West Cambridge AAP which together sought to identify how the requirement to deliver 20,000 dwellings in the District between 1999 and 2016 could be achieved. The other 5 DPDs submitted in 2006 have now been adopted. The plan was subject to Examination by independent Inspectors in late 2007 / early 2008, who concluded that there was currently only sufficient provision for 17,800 dwellings. They requested that the Council put forward their preferred sites for making up this shortfall, having undertaken comparative assessment and sustainability appraisal of site options and further public consultation. This is an additional, non-statutory stage in the plan making process.

Considerations

6. A number of areas of work have been undertaken in order to inform the proposed preferred sites for making up the housing shortfall. Each of these steps is explored in detail in the appendix to the draft public consultation document (see Appendix 1 to this report), and in some cases further detailed information is provided in a Technical Annex (see Appendix 2 to this report) which has been published as a separate document. These are (note: appendix number references below relate to the appendices contained within the draft public consultation report):

- Background and the Housing Shortfall (Appendix 1)
- Updating Housing Land Supply (Appendix 2)
- Consideration of the role of the Development Sequence (Appendix 3)
- Identification of Site Options for Testing (Appendix 4)
- Approach to Comparative Site Assessments (Appendix 5)
- Assessment of Site Options (Appendix 6)
- Draft Policies for the new Housing Allocations (Appendix 7)
- Revised Approach to Chesterton Sidings (Appendix 8)

- Sustainability Appraisal Summary Matrix (Appendix 9)
7. Part of the housing shortfall has come from a change in policy approach to the Chesterton Sidings (Cambridge Northern Fringe East) site, which can no longer be relied on for residential development. The opportunity has been taken to include a revised policy approach for Chesterton Sidings in the draft public consultation document.
 8. Updating housing land supply to end of September 2008 has the effect of reducing the housing shortfall to 1470 dwellings.
 9. The proposed preferred sites to make up the remainder of the housing shortfall are:
 - 3 sites within Arbury Park – total 220 dwellings
 - North West Cambridge Area Action Plan – 550 dwellings (not a new site but can be taken into account in meeting the housing shortfall)
 - Land between Huntingdon Road, Histon Road and the A14, North West Cambridge (Council's revised site boundary) – 920 dwellings (either 810 or 270 dwellings by 2016 depending on phasing of the A14 Improvements)
 - Powells Garage, Woollards Lane, Great Shelford – 20 dwellings
 - Ida Darwin Hospital, Fulbourn – 250-275 dwellings (215 by 2016)
 10. The draft public consultation report contains draft policies and supporting text for these sites that would be recommended to the Inspectors to be included in the Site Specific Policies DPD. It will ultimately be for the Inspectors to decide the most appropriate sites to make up the housing shortfall following further Examination sessions early in 2009 but the work undertaken seeks to provide a robust evidence base that the Council's proposed sites are the most sustainable options.

Options

11. The work undertaken has included a detailed comparative assessment of the reasonable alternative site options to make up the housing shortfall and has identified the most appropriate sites having regard to the development sequence and site specific consideration and constraints. It is not considered that there are any other reasonable alternative options that would be consistent with this assessment.

Implications

12. If the Council were not to co-operate with the Inspectors' request, it would leave the Council in a vulnerable position with a known inadequate supply of housing land and having to start the plan making process afresh. This would be likely to result in a period of several years where speculative planning applications for housing development would be received for unallocated land that may not be the most appropriate sites for development and potentially in unsustainable locations, but there could be pressure to grant planning permission either by the Council or through planning appeals to meet the district's housing requirement, a situation known colloquially as "planning by appeal".

13. Financial	There have already been financial implications in terms of advice on this additional non-statutory process. There will be further additional costs including public consultation expenses and legal representation at any further hearings as part of the SSPDPD Examination. Budgeted work on a number of DPDs and SPDs has been delayed.
Legal	This is an additional non-statutory stage in the plan making process which is not guided by regulation. Steps have been taken to assess that risk and mitigate as far as possible through the preparation of a robust evidence base.
Staffing	There has been a significant call on officer resources in the preparation of this work which will continue through the remainder of the plan making process. This has had, and will continue to have, implications for other planning policy work.
Risk Management	Risks as set out in the report.
Equal Opportunities	Ensuring that the Council is able to meet its housing target will ensure that there will be no shortage of housing and associated development which might disadvantage any existing or future residents within South Cambridgeshire

Consultations

14. Consultation was undertaken with a number of key stakeholders in the preparation of the assessments of site options, in particular with the Highways Agency, the local highway authority, the local education authority, the Environment Agency, and with various services within the Council, including Environmental Health and New Communities.

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

15.	Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future
	The proposed preferred new housing allocations provide the most appropriate response to a housing shortfall which will manage growth in a sustainable way.
	Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community
	Whilst not directly delivering services, the proposed new planning policies would provide an appropriate planning framework to secure appropriate high quality services through the new developments that would be accessible to new communities.
	Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work
	The proposed new housing allocations provide the most sustainable response to the need to provide new sites to make up a housing shortfall and the proposed policies will require high quality sustainable developments to be brought forward.

Conclusions/Summary

16. A small number of new housing allocations are proposed to make up the identified housing shortfall taking account of the results of a thorough and consistent assessment of reasonable site options as set out in paragraph 9. It is proposed that the draft public consultation document and its accompanying Technical Annex and

Sustainability Appraisal be agreed and that a 6 week period of public consultation be undertaken with the public, all normal consultees on the DPD process and all those who made representations on the Site Specific Policies DPD. This would then inform the Council's final decision on the preferred sites to recommend to the Inspectors, anticipated in February 2009.

Recommendations

17. The Portfolio Holders are recommended to:
 - (a) Agree for public consultation:
 - (i) the draft public consultation document contained at Appendix 1 to this report
 - (ii) the Technical Annex at Appendix 2 to this report
 - (iii) the Supplement to the Final Sustainability Appraisal contained at Appendix 3 to this report.
 - (b) Delegate any further technical amendments to the Corporate Manager (Planning and New Communities)

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Site Specific Policies DPD (January 2006)
Core Strategy DPD (January 2007)
North West Cambridge AAP (May 2008)
Final Sustainability Report of the Site Specific Policies DPD
South Cambridgeshire Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

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