



Report of	Meeting	Date
Joint LDF Officer Team	Central Lancashire LDF Joint Advisory Committee	19 November 2009

LDF PROJECT PLAN

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To explain the key parts of the Project Plan, particularly the envisaged tasks to produce the Publication version of Core Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That the report be noted and the Project Plan endorsed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The Core Strategy is at a more advanced stage of preparation than the Site Allocations documents and the Project Plan concentrates on the upcoming stages for each as well as covering evidence and administrative tasks relevant to the joint working as a whole. The report highlights those tasks of particular significance especially those that have key dependencies and higher levels of risk.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

4. To secure Member understanding of and backing for the Project Plan.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5. None.

BACKGROUND

6. Members were reminded of the preparatory stages of LDF Development Plan Documents at the JAC meeting in October:
 - Issues and Options
 - Preferred Options
 - Publication
 - Submission
 - Examination
 - Inspector's Report
 - Adoption

7. The joint Central Lancashire Core Strategy reached the Preferred Options Stage in September 2008 and as agreed at the last meeting will get to its Publication stage in June 2010 with the Site Allocations documents reaching the first stage in September 2010. To achieve these publication dates Member approvals will need to be gained by March and June respectively. The attached Project Plan concentrates on these immediate upcoming stages with a particular emphasis on the Core Strategy. As far as the latter is concerned a visit from a senior Planning Inspector has given your Officers a clear steer as to what the document should cover and what evidence should inform it. This advice has been taken fully into account in framing the Project Plan which in part builds upon the work previously done for the aborted Delivery Supplement version of the Core Strategy.

PROJECT PLAN

8. The Project Plan comprises a table outlining the scope of the tasks (Appendix 1). A chart displaying the envisaged timing and duration of the tasks will be presented at the meeting. This report provides further information on the main tasks, dependencies and higher levels of risk. The tasks are split into document content and process ones for the Core Strategy, evidence, administration and, for Site Allocations, initial tasks.

Core Strategy

9. The main content tasks for the Publication version of the Core Strategy are:

- a. **Revise Strategic Objectives and Vision**

Deciding what the Strategy is setting out to do arises directly from the spatial planning issues that are faced. Presenting the big issues at the start of the document helps focus attention on the matters of truly strategic significance and will help suggest appropriately framed place-specific/locally distinctive objectives. These will replace the existing strategic objectives which are too general. Moreover, revising objectives will help inform whether the policies are worded appropriately to address the big issues and will also enable more effective Sustainability Appraisal to be done. The ultimate aim is to help realise the Vision for what Central Lancashire should be like in 2026. Refining the Vision was done for the Delivery Supplement. The aim is to present Members with revised objectives at the January JAC meeting.

- b. **Build in flexibility**

This is something the Planning Inspectorate is keen to see, particularly in view of the uncertain economic future. However this aspect but is difficult to incorporate without undermining what might be termed the 'Plan A' Core Strategy. The outcomes of further work on this will be reported to Members in January.

- c. **Review Spatial Portrait**

The Preferred Core Strategy includes quite long descriptions of the main places in Central Lancashire, explaining what they are like and what roles they perform. It is proposed to move much of this analysis to a background Topic Paper and concentrate on the importance of place shaping and protecting the character of our settlements in the Strategy itself.

- d. **Update Cross Boundary Issues and Relationships**

The spatial planning approach includes taking account of outside influences on the Plan Area and a key aspect of this is the relationship of growth in Central Lancashire with the regeneration efforts in Pennine Lancashire. A jointly commissioned research report on this is due to be completed in January.

e. Review Spatial Option

Deciding the future locations for development and other forms of investment is the key overarching role of the Core Strategy. The on-going work on site allocations options will inform this but the Strategy must take the lead and be firmly based on what the evidence and analysis demonstrates is the most appropriate, sustainable pattern of development. The spatial policy needs to be clear and unambiguous otherwise it will be exploited by developers and landowners in ways that are inappropriate.

f. Revise Other Chapters

The overall approach is intended to be to update the policies and justifying text to reflect the latest circumstances and the outcomes of the most recent evidence and research whilst at the same time slimming down the document. This can best be done by producing separate Topic Papers that set out the main outcomes of the evidence and explain how these have influenced the content of the Core Strategy itself. These Topic Papers will greatly improve the prospect of the Strategy being found sound as they will directly inform the examination stage and the Inspector's deliberations. In the absence of other tangible information the Topic Papers will need to reinforce key requirements such as how much employment land is needed.

g. Delivering Infrastructure

Infrastructure planning is not an exclusively Core Strategy matter as it will inform site allocations work and the approach to the Community Infrastructure Levy, if the authorities choose to pursue this. But in any event the envisaged Section 106 tariff approach in the Core Strategy will need to be revisited. Aside from that the Strategy will need to identify the key essential pieces of infrastructure that need to be delivered.

10. Key process tasks for the Core Strategy are:

a. Consideration of Preferred Options representations and comments

Some of the work (who was invited to be involved and how, what views were made) has been done and reported to Members at previous JAC meetings (January and March 2009). The key remaining task is setting out how the representations have been taken into account. This cannot be completed until the final form of the Publication version of the Strategy has been approved (in March) but initial proposals can be set out at the January JAC meeting.

b. Sustainability Appraisal

The main shortcoming of the Appraisal work to date is that it has not been embedded in the Core Strategy and the linkages with it made explicit. The examining Inspector will need to be satisfied that the Appraisal has directly informed the policy outcomes.

c. Consideration of Published Version representations

The formal representations made during the six week Publication stage (June and July 2010) will need to be quickly reviewed by the authorities to establish what the main issues arising are as these will help the Inspector decide which matters are to be examined. This is not intended to be an opportunity to make further changes the document but some matters may be capable of being resolved through minor alterations which could be suggested to the Inspector. A summary of the representations, issues arising and possible minor changes are required to be

submitted to government along with the Published Core Strategy within a few weeks of the close of the deposit period – the target date is September 2010.

d. Preparations for Examination and Hearing

This work concerns the preparation of the authorities' case in support of the Core Strategy and will focus on the matters that the Inspector wants to examine. Clearly it is impossible to know beforehand the full scope of this work but it is expected that the examination will be rigorous and wide ranging culminating in the hearing sessions themselves.

e. Responding to Inspector's Report

Members will appreciate that the Report is binding on the authorities and so the scope for 'negotiation' with the Inspector is very limited. However there is a fact check stage of producing the Report where there may be an opportunity to influence the final 'recommendations' through pointing out errors. The authorities are expected to quickly point out any such matters and so there will need to be an intense period of work going over the draft Report.

Background Evidence

11. The key pieces of evidence gathering remaining to be done/completed are:

a. Transport Model

This Growth Point funded work is underway and is essential for future transport scheme funding bids and should be very useful for site allocations work by being able to assess cumulative effects of proposed development sites.

b. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

This ongoing work is currently being reviewed for the first time and is proving to be a significant challenge as the outcomes need to be agreed with house builders who now seem more pessimistic about the short term (5 year supply) outcomes than previously.

c. Housing Viability Study

This key research is underway and is assessing the viability of housing developments taking account of scheme values weighed against a range of possible levels of affordable housing contributions and other s106 costs. This is crucial work in establishing the proportions of affordable housing that can be secured from market housing schemes and the minimum site size thresholds such contributions can be viably sought.

d. Retail and Leisure Review

This about to be commissioned review is required to pull together the previous studies on these matters and provide a consistent evidence base across Central Lancashire identifying needs to 2026.

e. Sport and Recreation Review

This soon to be started review will provide a consistent approach to indoor and outdoor sports and play space provision across the Plan Area building on earlier separate studies.

Site Allocations

12. The main initial tasks for the site allocations work are:

a. Assessment of sites

This is on-going work has already been initially reported to Members and involves assessing all the site suggestions in a consistent criteria-based way.

b. Reappraisal of 'Other Urban' employment sites

The 'Other Urban' sites were identified as lesser quality ones in the Employment Land Review. They comprise a large number mainly in use or last use for employment purposes. The reappraisal is to establish whether any of them could be more appropriately re-used for other forms of development, particularly housing.

c. Scoping of allocations to review

The authorities have discretion as to which uses and site-specific policy areas are to be included in the LDF site allocations work. Some Local Plan saved policies may still be fit for purpose but a review needs to be carried out so as to scope the extent of the site allocations task. Failure to do this risks an Inspector agreeing with representations calling for an unchanged policy or allocation to be reviewed.

d. Justification and policy text for Issues and Options

This is the main part of the Site Allocations documents text. The intention is to have a consistent approach to the background reasoning and policy approaches across Central Lancashire and this can best be done coordinated by the joint team of Officers.

e. Selecting possible sites for Issues and Options

The main difference between the Site Allocations documents covering each District will be the actual sites listed under each policy as they will be specific to each local authority area. This is a task for the home Officer teams reporting to 'local' Members for approval.

f. Choosing map based software for on-line engagement

There is an opportunity to engage with local communities on the site options through an electronic map base that allows people to see the proposed location and boundaries of sites and make comments directly on-line using tailored software. The same system for doing this across Central Lancashire would lead to financial savings and other economies.

g. Engagement and Publicity Planning

There is likely to be a great deal of interest in the site allocations proposals so it is particularly important to properly prepare for the engagement process and carefully publicise the opportunity.

There are no background papers to this report.

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