



Report of	Meeting	Date
LDF Joint Officer Team	Central Lancashire LDF Joint Advisory Committee	23 June 2010

PROGRESSING THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To outline the possible implications of progressing the Local Development Framework in the light of the new government's announcements to abolish Regional Strategies and further control developments within residential gardens.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That a period of approximately 4 weeks be taken to allow Officers and Members at Chorley, Preston & South Ribble Councils to consider the situation and take account of any further emerging guidance from central government.
3. That Officers continue with preparation for the issues & options stage of the Site Allocations Development Plan Documents.
4. That Officers further report on emerging advice and guidance on the abolition of Regional Strategies and other relevant matters as soon as information becomes available.
5. That further meetings of the LDF Working Groups and the Joint Advisory Committee be arranged as appropriate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

6. The joint Central Lancashire Core Strategy has received all the approvals it needs to proceed to its next stage - publication. However the new government has announced its intention to abolish Regional Strategies and has already introduced some controls to restrict 'garden grabbing'. In the North West the Regional Strategy covers a wide range of spatial planning matters the most significant loss in terms of abolition will be the housing provision figures.
7. The Core Strategy as presently drafted is based on the regionally produced housing requirement figures although there is some flexibility built in regarding actual provision year by year. It is presently unclear how housing figures would be produced locally. New house building as well as helping to meet housing requirements also has a number of other housing and economic effects. Actual construction rates since 2003 have fluctuated generally in line with the state of the national economy but overall have been broadly in line with the Regional Strategy figures for Central Lancashire. The government has separately

made some changes to national housing policy intended to restrict garden grabbing, further controls may be introduced. With public deadlines approaching for publication of the Core Strategy in particular, decisions need to be taken on how to proceed with the LDF work.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

8. To clarify immediate timescale intentions whilst giving discretion to review progress at later dates.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

9. To not publish the Core Strategy soon and delay work on Site Allocations until further government information/guidance is issued.

BACKGROUND

10. The joint Central Lancashire Core Strategy has received all the approvals it needs to proceed to its next stage - publication. Our timetable was to publish by the end of June. Work is also underway on Site Allocations, our intention is to produce separate but similar LDF documents for each District starting with an Issues and Options Discussion Paper for community engagement by September. These timescales now need to be considered in the light of proposed changes in the new government's approach to planning and housing.
11. The new government has announced its intention to abolish Regional Strategies. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has written to Council Chief Planning Officers to state that this abolishment will be done rapidly and so 'return decision making powers on housing and planning to local councils'. He goes on to state there will be a formal announcement on this matter 'soon'. The full text of the letter is reproduced in Appendix 1. The government has separately already introduced controls over 'garden grabbing' – development within dwelling curtilages.

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

12. Regional Strategies – formerly known as Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) basically act as a bridge between national planning policies and Local Development Frameworks. The North West RSS has sub-regional components based around the City Regions and the County areas. It has wide policy coverage over all key topic areas not just housing and incorporates a regional transport strategy.
13. The North West RSS sets out settlement and retail centre hierarchies, recognises the Central Lancashire ('Greater Preston') area as a functional entity with a key role to play in the wider City Region. It favours no early strategic Green Belt review and identifies amounts of land required for future employment development but only at the County area level. In term of housing however it does set District level housing provision figures (minimums of 417 per annum in South Ribble and Chorley and 507 in Preston, 1341 in total) as well as a target to locate at least 70% of this development on previously developed land. The North West RSS was due to be replaced with a new Regional Strategy known as RS2010 a version of this may still be published as an informal document by July.
14. The housing provision figures in RSS were derived from nationally produced District level household projections refined through a series of assumptions into dwelling requirements and took account of a predicted optimistic future economic performance for the region

thus making it quite positive about household formation rates and migration trends. In short it set policy based housing figures not ones founded on past trends.

15. It is not clear at what local level the government envisages new future housing requirements being based. Before RSSs took on the role of setting housing provision figures this was done by County Structure Plans. Following the demise of Structure Plans Lancashire County Council no longer has a strategic planning role. Furthermore resurrecting Structure Plans does not appear a likely option following the creation of numerous unitary councils around the country. District Councils have not themselves previously set housing provision figures.
16. The Central Lancashire Core Strategy refers to the RSS housing figures, however the key policy for locating such development – Policy 1 does not specifically refer to the absolute quantity of housing. It is the policy on housing delivery – Policy 4 – that provides a mechanism for managing the supply of residential development land coming forward and sets a tolerance of actual performance of plus or minus 20% of RSS levels before intervention is considered necessary.

ROLE OF NEW HOUSING AND RECENT TRENDS

17. The provision of new housing is inter-connected with various other activities. It is normally one of the most economically viable forms of development and so can usually cross-subsidise affordable housing provision and contribute to wider infrastructure delivery. It is a form of economic activity in its own right as well as being able to provide the right types of residential accommodation to support business growth. New home occupiers tend to purchase many new goods to furnish, decorate and equip their dwellings.
18. Since 2003, the theoretical start date of the North West RSS, rates of house building across Central Lancashire have fluctuated from year to year and between Districts but the general pattern is as follows:
 - a. Between 2003 and 2006 house building rates for Central Lancashire as a whole (average 1582 per year) and in all but one District in one year exceeded RSS levels, it was at a time of a rising housing market
 - b. Then between 2006 and 2009 there was a period of housing policy restraint and overall completions fell (except in Preston) below RSS levels averaging 1107 per annum across the whole area, the housing market peaked during this period
 - c. In the most recent year the overall number of completions was 616 but Chorley exceeded its target, the housing market was generally at a low ebb
 - d. Ignoring the most recent year as being exceptional, the average annual completions for Central Lancashire as a whole were 1345 compared to the RSS target of 1341

DEVELOPMENT IN RESIDENTIAL CURTILAGES

19. So called 'garden grabbing' has become a particular feature of established residential areas in South Ribble and Chorley with mixed outcomes for development proposals at appeal. The Core Strategy seeks to control this form of development through design and density policies. The government has now changed national planning policy for housing to remove the normal minimum density requirement of 30 dwellings to the hectare and reclassified gardens as greenfield instead of brownfield land. It is not clear whether other controls will be brought in intended to restrict this form of development.

A WAY FORWARD

20. Although the government is aiming to rapidly change planning powers it is not yet clear just how long this might take and, without Ministerial/CLG guidance, what work local councils will need to do in respect of LDF preparation. In short future changes to housing and planning powers could necessitate changes to the Core Strategy but we do not yet know what detailed alterations may be needed and so no possible amendments can be prepared at the present time. Clearly much work to date has gone into producing the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and most of its content is not directly or solely dependent on the RSS or a change in approach on garden grabbing. Site Allocations work is at a much earlier stage where decisions do not need to be made on the amount of new housing but at a later stage these documents would help direct developers' attention from unallocated garden land to appropriate identified sites.
21. The Core Strategy has a stepped path to final adoption. The publication stage is next with a 6 week deposit period for representations. This is followed by the document's submission to government, the public target date for this is September. Thereafter the examination stage would start, presided over by an Inspector; a period that could take about 6 months. The Councils have discretion over when to publish and submit the Core Strategy. It could also be withdrawn later in the process although at that stage (examination) there would be potentially abortive costs incurred – Planning Inspectorate's fees and Programme Officer staff costs.
22. It is likely that there will be more information and guidance emerging from government (this has been promised soon) which will help the Councils decide in what form the Core Strategy should go through to examination. Members will be kept informed and additional meetings can be arranged so that a decision can be taken whether or not to proceed to the next stage. The publication version of the Core Strategy could have a reference in it to this possibility citing the government's intentions to make changes to housing and planning powers.
23. In terms of Site Allocations, although the first stage of producing LDF documents has yet to be reached it is coming up to 3 years since the call for site suggestions was started. The first document preparation stage is engaging on issues and options; committing to allocating sites to meet prescribed land requirements comes later after a further interim, preferred options, stage. Bearing in mind that most of the land allocated for development in the authorities' Local Plans has been implemented there is a potential policy vacuum arising and the prospect of more planning applications being submitted as the recession eases. Therefore the Site Allocations process could commence, but halted later if necessary.

There are no Background Papers to this report

Report Author	Tel	Email	Doc ID
Julian Jackson	01772 536774	Julian.jackson@lancashire.gov.uk	JAC Report – Progressing the LDF

TEXT OF LETTER FROM SECRETARY OF STATE FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO LOCAL AUTHORITY CHIEF PLANNERS DATED 27th MAY 2010

I am writing to you today to highlight our commitment in the coalition agreements where we very clearly set out our intention to rapidly abolish Regional Strategies and return decision making powers on housing and planning to local councils. Consequently, decisions on housing supply (including the provision of travellers sites) will rest with Local Planning Authorities without the framework of regional numbers and plans.

I will make a formal announcement on this matter soon. However, I expect Local Planning Authorities and the Planning Inspectorate to have regard to this letter as a material planning consideration in any decisions they are currently taking.