

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director Partnerships, Planning and Policy (Introduced by the Cllr P Malpas Executive Member for Partnership and Planning)	Executive Cabinet	12 August 2010

## PAUSING THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To inform members of the implications for the Central Lancashire authorities following announcements by central government on the abolition of the NW Regional Spatial Strategy, and the options for the next stages of the LDF, including publication of the Core Strategy.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That the Executive Cabinet note:
  1. That publication of the Core Strategy has been delayed 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 in respect of planning and housing powers;
  2. That officers and Members will consider the position at the next meeting of the Central Lancashire LDF Joint Advisory Committee on 21 September 2010, with a view to agreeing a way forward with Preston and South Ribble Councils;
  3. That officers will continue with preparation for the Issues & Options stage of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.
  4. That officers will revise the Publication Version of the Core Strategy to reflect recent changes to national policy.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The decision of central government to abolish regional spatial strategies will have an impact upon the progress of our Local Development Framework preparations. This report seeks to outline the current situation and reasons why progress of the Local Development Framework is being paused which is to consider the situation and take account of any further emerging guidance from central government.

### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

4. To ensure an appropriate way forward for further LDF activity.

### ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5. Not Applicable

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES



6. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region	/	Develop local solutions to climate change.	/
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances	/	Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	/
Involving people in their communities	/	Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	/

## BACKGROUND

7 The new coalition government has made two related announcements which have an impact on the preparation of the LDF in Central Lancashire. On 9<sup>th</sup> June the government amended Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) on the subjects of ‘garden grabbing’ and housing density. On 6<sup>th</sup> July the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government revoked Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS), a key element of the development plan and hitherto an important driver of the form and content of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy.

8 The Queen’s speech announced a ‘Decentralisation and Localism Bill’, which will include the abolition of regional spatial strategies and the return of decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils. A letter to Chief Planning Officers dated 27 May from the Secretary of State says

*“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.”*

9 Regional Strategies are being revoked under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and will thus no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The abolition of Regional Strategies will require legislation in the “Localism Bill” to be introduced during the current parliamentary session. The revocation of the North West RSS has a bearing on several policy areas as set out in the agreed publication Core Strategy document, including:

- Housing land requirements;
- The proportion of new housing to be developed on previously developed or brownfield land;
- The hierarchy of retail centres;
- Parking standards;
- Employment land;
- Transport policies; and
- Open countryside policies.

## REASONS WHY THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WILL BE PAUSED

10. **Housing Requirements.** The main effect of abolishing regional spatial strategies is in terms of establishing defensible alternative housing provision figures. There are no readily available alternative figures, nor a set methodology for producing them. Although there are nationally produced household projections these are recent trend based figures and need to be carefully converted into housing provision figures based on justifiable assumptions. It may be possible to use data that was used to inform regional planning work but adapt this more to our local circumstances. Alternatively if a completely new approach is taken arrangements will need to be made to procure or provide our own forecasts. Unless there is a fully agreed methodology for calculating housing provision figures authorities can expect to be challenged by objectors and by the Inspector at examination on the method used as well as the outcomes.
- 11 Successful economic development is partly dependent on the right housing offer for key workers and executives – new housing can deliver the accommodation needed in this respect. House building directly pumps money into the local economy and generates retail expenditure. Low house building activity reduces the opportunity to secure affordable housing and make it unfeasible to sufficiently fund major infrastructure works. It can cause house prices to rise and block the workings of the housing market. Unemployment in construction trades is likely to rise and there is a view that this may hinder economic recovery.
- 12 It is intended to present a report to the Local Development Framework Working Group and subsequent Joint Advisory Committee in September to advise Members of the alternative approaches that could be pursued for housing provision numbers and what other changes to the Core Strategy could be done, recommending in each case what the preferred ways forward.
- 13 Officers are proposing a short period of reflection only. Members may consider it prudent to await the detail of further government proposals in respect of revisions to housing and planning powers. However, it may be some time before sufficient detail emerges to clarify just what this means for LDF preparation and how to go about producing alternative document content. To halt progress for a longer period of time would lead to uncertainty, and the absence of a more certain development plan is known to lead to uncontrolled land release (e.g. on appeal) and could alternatively deter investment.
- 14 **Other Matters** A key effect of abolishing the regional spatial strategies is 'losing' the set housing provision requirements but many other regional policies will also go so careful consideration needs to be given to how the most useful provisions are reproduced or saved in some way. The employment land targets for example are derived from the regional requirements albeit already adapted in the Core Strategy to reflect local circumstances.

## **THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

- 15 **Core Strategy.** Officers hold the view that most of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy is likely to be unaffected by changes to housing and planning powers themselves. Even if housing and employment targets were modified, the Core Strategy could probably be altered later in the adoption process. The alternative – i.e. to hold back now – may result in the strategy and the evidence supporting it becoming out of date before it can be adopted, or a situation where further work or wholesale review is required, at considerable expense.
- 16 A recent Planning Advisory Service case study highlights benefits to authorities of having an adopted core strategy as it allows them to:
  - a. move from plan-making to place-shaping: the core strategy sets a clear planning framework that enables planners to get on and deliver the vision and objectives unique to their area
  - b. provide certainty for developers and utility providers: people investing in an area value the strategic clarity that a core strategy provides

- c. influence corporate decisions: an adopted core strategy is a crucial document for the wider council, and the case study authorities are using it to drive change and raise the profile of planning
- d. help colleagues and partners to deliver: it's not just planners that recognise the value of an adopted core strategy – other departments and external organisations are using it for their own benefit too
- e. access more funding and attract investment: the clarity of the planning framework set out in an adopted core strategy has helped the case study LPAs to make the case – directly and indirectly – for more money to be spent in their areas.

17 **Site Allocations.** Even if the Core Strategy were to be delayed, the Site Allocations preparation can continue because the first stage of issues and options does not commit the Council to housing and employment land numbers and it will enable the Council to highlight sites not suitable for development.

18 **Joint Working.** A report on this matter was considered by Chorley LDF Working Group on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2010. In addition, Members & Officers at Preston & South Ribble Councils considered a similar report at the Joint Advisory Committee on 23 June 2010. Both groups were supportive of this approach and it was agreed that additional Member and JAC meetings will be arranged as necessary, the next scheduled meeting of this committee is due to be held on 21 September.

## IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

19 This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	/

LESLEY-ANN FENTON  
PARTNERSHIPS, PLANNING AD POLICY

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
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Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
Progressing the Local Development Framework	15 June 2010	LDF Working Group	***
	23 June 2010	JAC	