



| Report of | Meeting | Date |
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| Joint LDF Officer Team | Central Lancashire LDF Joint Advisory Committee | 15 th March 2011 |

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND POLICIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT – OVERVIEW OF ISSUES AND OPTIONS ENGAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATIONS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To present an overview of how the Issues and Options stage of consultation went for the three District Councils and the main points raised in the representations received.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That the report be noted

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. This first consultation stage for Site Allocations and Policies has been done concurrently by the three District Councils using broadly consistent approaches. Attempts were made to notify as many people as practically possible and offer a range of ways to engage and respond. Many hundreds of representations have been received by each authority and these, in numerical terms, are predominantly from residents especially where local development proposals are already in the public eye.
4. Residents have been generally sceptical of the need for development and concerned about predicted adverse impacts. Other parties have typically focused on their specific sites/areas of interest. Community engagement appears to have worked best where opportunities were given to properly discuss matters arising in considered ways. However a challenge for the next stage of consultation will be to find ways of explaining to the public at large why some development is needed, what the associated benefits could be and what safeguards can be secured.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

5. To keep Members informed.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6. None.

BACKGROUND

7. Issues and Options is the first full consultation stage of producing a LDF Development Plan Document (DPD). At this stage the local authority's position is that it has made no decisions on the content of the plan. It is seeking to stimulate interest and responses from a wide range of parties on how the local planning issues being faced could be resolved in site and policy-specific ways, taking the Core Strategy as a broad indicator as to what is needed where.

ENGAGEMENT

8. The three Central Lancashire District Councils collaborated to produce similar Issues and Options Discussion Papers to present key local planning matters, raise questions and indicate potential sites (for development and other uses) selected from those areas of land previously suggested (mainly by landowners and developers) in the earlier 'call for sites'. The process was also designed to stimulate views on how, through policies, development should be managed and 'sensitive' sites protected from being developed.
9. The consultation was timed to occur at the same time in each District and was also coincident with the public deposit of the Core Strategy. This enabled a joint mail out of letters (over 3000) to all interested parties referring to both types of plans. Attention was also drawn to the availability of the information using press releases, articles in Council newspapers and locally displayed posters. All three Councils produced leaflets advertising upcoming events but only Preston Council tried to get them to all local residents.
10. Copies of the Discussion Papers were available to view in libraries and rural post offices as well as at the Council offices and on the authorities' websites. An on-line interactive map (seamless across Central Lancashire) showing the locations of the sites was created and designed to enable comments. Paper forms were also available for respondents to use.
11. Various efforts were made to take the engagement process out to local people using venues such as local markets, supermarkets and on-street locations. South Ribble and Preston Councils used the established Area Committee/Forum arrangements to meet local people. Some parish council meetings were attended by Planning Officers, this method was extensively used in Chorley Borough. Public attendances at these different events varied from just a few people to over 200.

REPRESENTATIONS

12. The volume of responses in each District was quite high, running to many hundreds in each case. Unlike the Core Strategy representations (that came from approximately 120 different parties) the numbers were swelled by many more local resident representations compared to landowner/developer and agency interests. This was particularly so where there was (coincidentally in terms of timing) already on-going large development planning applications/appeals.
13. Across all three Districts common concerns/views expressed by residents were:
 - Loss of greenfield sites/open space to development and concerns about settlements coalescing
 - A belief there is adequate brownfield land to cater for foreseeable development needs
 - Scepticism that significant numbers of new houses need to be built

- Concern about increase pressure on various types of local infrastructure but particular fears of increased road traffic congestion
- Increased risk of flooding
- Loss of wildlife habitats to development

14. Landowners' and developers' representations not surprisingly generally focussed on the development potential of specific sites. Official agencies tended to limit their points to their own areas of interest/expertise.

COMMENTARY ON THE HOW THE STAGE WENT AND NEXT STEPS

15. Some residents claimed to be unaware of the consultation until very late in the process so actual or de facto extensions to the response deadline were granted. Even in Preston many householders claimed not to have received notification leaflets and attempts here to pass the word via community radio, Facebook and Twitter media seems to have had only limited success. A solution could be more personalised contact but a mass mail out of letters for example would be very expensive.
16. The best forms of face to face engagement in terms of receiving constructive considered feedback came at events that included facilitated round table discussions with residents and in situations where people were willing to stop and devote time to talk.
17. The on-line response forms were of limited benefit with concerns about them timing out and being too text space restrictive. Web access proved difficult for some people in terms of navigation and the interactive mapping was often found complicated to use. Clearly there is scope to improve the design of all these features for future rounds of consultation.
18. Perhaps the most fundamental aspect to take account of at the next (Preferred Options) stage of engagement is to find better ways of explaining why new development is necessary, the benefits it can bring and what safeguards can be put in place to minimise the impact of development/improve its design.

There are no background papers to this report.

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