



Report of	Meeting	Date
Joint LDF Officer Team	Central Lancashire LDF Joint Advisory Committee	29 January 2009

## **FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOINT LDF WORKING AND THE NEED TO REVIEW LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To outline the opportunities for joint LDF working in addition to the Core Strategy and to explain why it is appropriate to review the Local Development Schemes.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. That the suggestions in the report be supported.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT**

3. There are opportunities to work jointly on Site Allocations and Supplementary Planning Documents as well as the Core Strategy – the report suggests ways this can be done. If these were adopted there would also be a need to update the document production programmes in the Local Development Schemes to reflect more joint working and the revised preparation procedures that now apply to LDF documents. Additionally the Growth Point, should it go ahead, raises the expectation of faster LDF timescales and some resources to enable this.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

#### **(If the recommendations are accepted)**

4. To support further Officer work in refining the shape and nature of future LDF document preparation.

### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

5. To present ways forward at a future JAC meeting without introducing the matters first as set in this report.

## BACKGROUND

6. Local Development Frameworks are made up of a range of documents. These include Development Plan Documents that are part of the statutory development plan that contain formal policies and proposals including the allocation of sites for development or protection there from. The Core Strategy is a Development Plan Document. However there are other LDF documents, such as Supplementary Planning Documents, that give guidance on how policies and proposals should be implemented.
7. Councils are required to set out what LDF documents they intend to prepare (over at least the forthcoming three years) in Local Development Schemes. These Schemes describe the envisaged content of each document, present a programme of key milestone dates for their preparation and estimate what resources (staff etc) that are to be devoted to these. The Government monitors progress against these milestones (Housing and Planning Delivery Grant settlements have been based on this performance) and the Planning Inspectorate uses the Schemes to programme their availability of Inspectors for examinations.
8. The Schemes and revisions to them are required to be submitted for approval to the Government Regional Office. The most recent Schemes from the Central Lancashire Councils date from March 2007 and have much common content in terms of documents to be produced and milestone dates. More recent revisions to the Schemes have not been done because of national delays in bringing in changes to the preparation procedures for documents and Schemes.
9. The revised procedures mainly relate to Development Plan Documents – removing the requirement for a Preferred Options stage and adding a 'publication' stage prior to submission. Supplementary Planning Documents no longer have to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal.
10. Current government advice to councils is to reduce the range of LDF documents to be prepared and to only produce those that are essential. In particular authorities are being advised that a large number of detailed development control policies (such as those typically contained in old style Local Plans) are no longer necessary. Policies in Regional Spatial Strategies and LDF Core Strategies can be cited in determining planning applications as can the provisions of national Planning Policy Statements.
11. It was with this advice in mind that the Central Lancashire Preferred Core Strategy contains quite detailed development control type provisions. Originally the authorities had intended producing Development Control Policies Development Plan Documents. Government has even queried whether Site Allocations Development Plan Documents are required, reminding authorities that sites (albeit strategic ones) can be allocated in Core Strategies.
12. When a site is 'allocated' as part of the development plan it means it is specifically identified for a particular purpose and its extent on the ground is clearly shown on a map known as the Proposals Map. When a site is allocated for a particular type of development in this way it means that the principle of that use has been set much like with an outline planning permission.
13. The term 'allocation' is most commonly used in relation to proposed development uses but in its wider meaning it also covers other land use designations such as the extent of the Green Belt and other designations that safeguard land from development. In fact any site identification that precisely shows where a particular policy is to apply in respect of specific area(s) of land and/or buildings can be termed an 'allocation'.

14. The terms of reference for the Joint Advisory Committee already includes advising on joint working in addition to the Core Strategy and the content of Local Development Schemes.

## **OUTLINE OF REVISIONS NEEDED TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES**

15. In accordance with the Government's advice the intention now in Central Lancashire is to concentrate on two types of Development Plan Documents – the Core Strategy and Site Allocations. In addition to these a range of Supplementary Planning Documents will be needed. The Preferred Core Strategy refers to a number of these (see Appendix 1) but this should be seen as a provisional list that is subject to refinement. It is no longer necessary to include Supplementary Planning Documents in Local Development Schemes but it would be helpful to interested persons to know of such intentions.
16. The milestone document preparation dates in the Schemes will need to be reviewed if only to reflect the revised procedural stages but there is an opportunity to also change the timescales to accord with the latest intentions and resource availability. This most particularly relates to the Growth Point.
17. The Government has emphasised all along in respect of the Growth Point proposals that they must be progressed through the LDF process and not outside it. However the Growth Point initiative is based on accelerating housing development in particular. So the councils' Growth Point submission documents have suggested a speeding up of LDF document production. This however has been based on a presumption that the Growth Point related grant awards will provide the necessary additional finance to appropriately increase staff and related resource provision that can benefit the LDF preparatory work.
18. It is not yet known whether the councils will commit to going ahead with the Growth Point. Part of this decision depends on reaching an understanding and agreement with Government as to how the grant awarded could be spent. It is anticipated that these matters will be resolved in February 2009 clearing the way to deciding how the LDF work programme may be revised for submission of revised Schemes in March. It is envisaged that precise proposals to revise the Schemes will be presented to the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee.

## **FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOINT WORKING**

19. These further joint working opportunities amount to ways in which the authorities can work together on Site Allocations and Supplementary Planning Documents.
20. In terms of Site Allocations, the work can be divided into two tasks. Deciding on the appropriateness of sites for development and land for other policies to apply to is a local, District level matter. Having said that, criteria common to Central Lancashire as a whole for assessing the suitability of development sites is being devised by Officers from the three Districts.
21. The task that can most efficiently be done jointly by the Joint Team is devising standard wording for policies that will refer to the sites to be allocated. Using this consistent approach should make for more robust Site Allocations documents. The extent to which the documents will be 'tied together' requires further thought but one option is a combined or coincident examination hearing. However keeping the timing consistent will be important and supportive of the Core Strategy itself.

22. The approach to producing Supplementary Planning Documents could be different. A few of these are likely to be specific to one District but most are likely to need to offer guidance in a way that needs to be consistent across Central Lancashire. In these latter respects it ought to be possible and efficient for the different Councils to specialise on particular topics, capitalising on local expertise, and for each such Council to do most of the preparatory work on individual documents that all the authorities can come to adopt.

There are no background papers to this report.

<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Tel</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Doc ID</b>
Julian Jackson	01772 536774	Julian.jackson@lancashire.gov.uk	JAC Report Jan 09 - Further LDF joint working.doc