



AGENDA ITEM: 14

CABINET:
14 January 2014

PLANNING COMMITTEE:
16 January 2014

**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 30 January 2014**

Report of: Assistant Director Planning

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor M Forshaw

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**SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT BRIEFS FOR HOUSING SITES AT GROVE FARM,
ORMSKIRK AND FIRSWOOD ROAD, LATHOM / SKELMERSDALE**

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To recommend the draft development briefs for the allocated housing sites at Grove Farm, Ormskirk and Firwood Road, Lathom / Skelmersdale for public consultation 6 February – 21 March 2014.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

2.1 That Cabinet approve the draft Grove Farm and Firwood Road Development Briefs (Appendices A and B to this report) for six weeks of public consultation from 20 February to 4 April 2014, subject to any minor amendments made by the Assistant Director Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, following consideration of the draft Briefs by Planning Committee and Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as per recommendation 2.2 below.

2.2 That the Assistant Director Planning, be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to make any necessary minor amendments to the draft Grove Farm and Firwood Road Development Briefs, in the light of agreed comments

from Planning Committee and Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee, before the document is published for consultation.

- 2.3 That Call In is not appropriate for this item as this report is being submitted to Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 January 2014.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

- 3.1 That the content of this report be considered and that agreed comments be referred to the Assistant Director Planning.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 4.1 That the content of this report be considered and that agreed comments be referred to the Assistant Director Planning.
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5.0 BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 (WLLP) was adopted by Council on 16 October 2013. Policy RS1 of the WLLP allocates nine sites for residential development, and specifies that the development of three of these sites must be in accordance with development briefs / masterplans to be prepared for the sites. The three sites in question are Yew Tree Farm, Burscough, Grove Farm, Ormskirk, and land at Firwood Road, Lathom / Skelmersdale.
- 5.2 The masterplan for Yew Tree Farm will take the form of a supplementary planning document, and is the subject of a separate Cabinet report. For the Grove Farm and Firwood Road sites, development briefs are being prepared.
- 5.3 The purpose of a development brief is to inform developers and other interested parties of the site's constraints and opportunities, and to outline the type and amount of development expected or encouraged by local planning policy. In addition, the development brief can provide detail relating to expected infrastructure required to deliver a sustainable development, based on the most up to date evidence.

Grove Farm, Ormskirk

- 5.4 The development site at Grove Farm, Ormskirk, is currently being promoted by housing developer Taylor Wimpey. The Council is aware that the developer has already undertaken work with regard to the site's development, for example soil and ground condition surveys. This information, along with other desktop-based information available to officers, has been useful background material during the drafting stage of the development brief.

- 5.5 The site is expected to deliver 300 new homes over the period 2012-2027, with delivery expected to commence from 2015/16. Given the site is under the control of a single land owner and Taylor Wimpey have been active in promoting it, this timescale is reasonable and development is likely to come forward in a timely manner.
- 5.6 The development brief will provide greater certainty to the developer and other interested parties regarding the sites constraints and opportunities and the local planning expectations which will help manage some of the key issues associated with the site. These include the site's former designation as Green Belt, management of waste and surface water flows that will be generated by the development of the site, and access to the site from the A59.

Firwood Road, Lathom / Skelmersdale

- 5.7 The Firwood Road site will be expected to accommodate 400 dwellings. The site comprises several distinct parcels of land under separate ownership. The majority of the landowners have formed a consortium and are represented by a local professional agent. There are a number of existing residential properties on the site (several of whose occupants are part of the consortium, or are represented by consortium members), as well as a former railway line (which is intended to form part of a Linear Park between Skelmersdale and Ormskirk), two roads, a pond and some woodland.
- 5.8 Whilst there has been significant interest in the site from a number of volume housebuilders, no housebuilder is at present signed up to develop the site. Information from the Coal Authority shows that there are issues arising from the historic mining activity undertaken in the area. These issues do not necessarily preclude the development of any particular area of the site. A detailed ground condition survey will be necessary to determine exactly what could be built on which parts of the site. Given such a survey has yet been undertaken, the draft development brief for the site is less detailed than the brief for the Grove Farm site. It is expected that the landowner consortium will await the results of the forthcoming Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) examination in public, regarding the applicability of CIL to the site, before any detailed ground condition survey is commissioned and undertaken. Notwithstanding the above constraints, it is anticipated that the delivery of the first housing units on the site can be achieved in the 2015/16 financial year.

6.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 6.1 A number of meetings have been held with the promoters of the Grove Farm site, and with the consortium of landowners and their agent in respect of the Firwood Road site. This has allowed discussions to take place in relation to the known constraints on the sites and to establish respective parties' development intentions in relation to the deliverability of the sites.
- 6.2 These discussions, along with a desktop analysis of the sites' opportunities and constraints have informed the formulation of the draft development briefs attached at Appendix A and B of this report.

- 6.3 The draft briefs set out a vision for each of the sites and establish key principles that should be borne in mind by developers and other interested parties through the development management process. They also note specific circumstances in relation to the sites that the Council would wish to see addressed through a planning proposal.
- 6.4 For Grove Farm these include treatment of surface water generated by the site and the management of foul flows generated from the site, in light of the constraints issues associated with the New Lane waste water treatment works. The draft brief also places great emphasis on the treatment of the Green Belt transitional zone to the northern boundary of the site, in order to ensure a robust buffer is incorporated to limit the impact of the development on the expanse of Green Belt beyond the site.
- 6.5 In terms of Firwood Road, the draft brief seeks to integrate the site with the surrounding residential area to support community cohesion, linking new homes with existing neighbourhoods to the east and south of the site. The document also guides development to take advantage of the topography and landscape around the site, and to assist in the delivery of the proposed Linear Park connecting Ormskirk to Skelmersdale.
- 6.6 Whilst the Council is satisfied that the draft briefs are truly reflective of the context, constraints and opportunities for both sites, a period of public consultation will allow views to be collected and a process of review and refinement to take place.

7.0 NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 Assuming that Cabinet (and, subsequently the Assistant Director Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, as per recommendation 2.2 above) endorse the briefs for consultation, the consultation will take place for six weeks, from Thursday 6 February to Friday 21 March 2014.
- 7.2 Following the consultation period, all comments submitted to the Council will be processed, responses will be prepared where necessary, and the development brief(s) amended as appropriate. It is anticipated that a final version of the development briefs will be brought to Cabinet in July 2014, and that the documents can be published for use in development management from that date.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS / COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 8.1 The allocation of the two development sites has been subject to sustainability appraisal throughout the preparation process for the West Lancashire Local Plan. One of the purposes behind the preparation of development briefs for the site is to facilitate the development of the land in a sustainable manner.
- 8.2 The provision of market housing, affordable housing, accommodation for older people, open space and other community benefits, plus the anticipated application of the Community Infrastructure Levy to the sites, is consistent with

the principal aims and objectives of the West Lancashire Sustainable Community Strategy.

9.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 All resources required to prepare and consult on the Development Briefs are covered by the existing Planning Service revenue budget. Delivery of the Grove Farm and Firswood Road sites will have considerable potential for positive financial implications in the form of income through the Community Infrastructure Levy, New Homes Bonus and Council Tax.

10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 A failure to set out clearly the expectations of the Council in relation to the development of the two major sites at Grove Farm, Ormskirk and Firswood Road, Lathom / Skelmersdale, could result in a missed opportunity on the part of the Council to secure the maximum benefit from the sites' development. By preparing development briefs, and by consulting the public and other interested parties on the said development briefs, the optimal development of the sites can be achieved.

Background Documents

West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Development Plan Document

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

- A. Grove Farm, Ormskirk – Draft Development Brief
- B. Firswood Road, Lathom / Skelmersdale – Draft Development Brief
- C. Equality Impact Assessment
- D. Minute of Cabinet 14 January 2014 (Planning Committee & Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee only)
- E. Minute of Planning Committee 16 January 2014 (Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee only)