



Report of: LDF Project Manager

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor M. Forshaw

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SUBJECT: LDF CORE STRATEGY DRAFT OPTIONS

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To agree the Core Strategy Options Paper for public consultation purposes.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.1 That any comments on the Core Strategy Options Paper be forwarded for Cabinet to consider at their meeting on 15 July 2009.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

3.1 That Cabinet agree the content of the Core Strategy Options Paper.

3.2 That delegated authority be given to the LDF Project Manager, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to make any final minor changes to the document prior to its release and to undertake appropriate consultation on the document.

3.3 That the results of the consultation be brought back to the Cabinet, along with a Preferred Options paper for the Core Strategy.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The LDF team have been preparing a Core Strategy paper over the course of 2009. This followed on from initial visioning work and the identification of key issues, undertaken through a series of consultation exercises. These began with workshops being held at the June 2008 LSP Conference, followed by 'Spatial

Forums' in July 2008, and concluded by the Issues Questionnaire in January and February 2009. At these events, key stakeholders, partners of the LSP, Members, Parish Councils, developers, local groups, residents and businesses were all invited to provide their views on key issues and how areas may be developed in the future.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 Following the completion of the 'Issues' stage in March 2009, the LDF Team have begun work on the 'Options' stage of preparation for the Core Strategy. This has involved interpreting the comments received during the 'Issues' stage, and digesting the draft results of open space and housing and employment land studies. Officers have also attended meetings with neighbouring authorities, key stakeholders and infrastructure providers such as United Utilities, the Environment Agency, Central Lancashire PCT, Merseytravel and various County Council departments.
- 5.2 This background work has consequently enabled the LDF Team to prepare a draft vision and objectives for the Core Strategy, which are included within the Core Strategy Options Paper (attached as Appendix 1). Of greater importance, officers have also prepared five draft options for the future development of the Borough, as summarised in Section 6 of this report. The options provide five alternative scenarios by setting out how settlements might expand or develop in the future, and the possible proportions of development that they may accommodate.

6.0 PROPOSALS / ISSUES

- 6.1 It is proposed that Cabinet agree the draft Core Strategy Options Paper attached to this report as Appendix 1. The options have already been considered by Members at Planning Committee and the LDF Cabinet Working Group and any comments from those meetings will be reported verbally. The Options Paper contains a draft Vision and Objectives for the Core Strategy, as well as five Spatial Options and some key issues which the Core Strategy will need to tackle.
- 6.4 A summary of the five Core Strategy draft options is set out below, whilst plans of the options and the full explanatory text behind the options is set out within the Core Strategy Options Paper (Appendix 1). People will be asked if they prefer one or a combination of these options, or indeed if they have another option they feel should be considered through the Core Strategy.

Option 1: Skelmersdale Focus

- 6.5 In this option, the majority of the Borough's development needs will be focused on Skelmersdale. Windfall sites, areas of safeguarded land and the regeneration plans for Skelmersdale Town Centre will be used to meet the needs for housing and employment. However it is likely that some form of expansion to the settlement area, and therefore changes to the Green Belt boundary, would be required.
- 6.6 Ormskirk and Burscough are recognised as Key Service Centres within the Borough and their status will be maintained under this option. However, their

growth and expansion will be restricted to the use of windfall sites and infill sites within the settlement boundaries. In rural areas, only development for a localised need will be encouraged, particularly in relation to small-scale employment and affordable housing within existing settlement areas.

Option 2: Skelmersdale & Ormskirk Focus

- 6.7 Under Option 2, the majority of development will be focused on Skelmersdale, although there will also be a focus on Ormskirk as the 'Key Service Centre' in the Borough. This would mainly involve building on infill sites in the town. However, given constraints with land availability, Green Belt releases may be required in the medium/ long term to provide an expansion to the existing settlement area.
- 6.8 Burscough and the rural areas of the Borough will see similar restrictions as per Option 1. Development in Burscough will generally be restricted to infill sites. In rural areas, only development for a localised need will be encouraged, particularly in relation to small-scale employment and affordable housing within existing settlement areas.

Option 3: Skelmersdale & Burscough Focus

- 6.9 Under Option 3, the majority of development will be focused on Skelmersdale, although there will also be a significant focus on Burscough. This option will seek to make use of infill sites and opportunities for the regeneration of Brownfield sites, and will also require an expansion of the settlement into the Green Belt. Through new development in Burscough, the Council would have to seek to address the significant infrastructure issues that currently prevail, particularly in relation to water-related infrastructure and sewerage provision. Significant development through a comprehensive Masterplan could enable such issues to be tackled.
- 6.10 Elsewhere in the Borough, development will be allowed within the urban area of Ormskirk, with the rural areas being treated as in Option 2

Option 4: Rural Dispersal

- 6.11 As with the other options, Skelmersdale will again take the majority of development. However, in the rural areas of the Borough, some rural settlements will be developed and sustainably expanded, particularly Tarleton and Hesketh Bank (seeking to re-use derelict sites that are located on the urban fringe). Development of other rural settlements will follow a hierarchical approach where settlements will be considered in relation to their current service capacity or where service capacity can be upgraded to a satisfactory level.
- 6.12 With the majority of development focused in Skelmersdale and the rural settlements, this means that the key service centres of Ormskirk and Burscough will have development opportunities restricted to within their urban areas. Less development in these areas may mean that any required infrastructure works in the main urban areas cannot be fully influenced by the Core Strategy.

Option 5: Cross Boundary

- 6.13 Through this option it is still envisaged that the majority of development will be concentrated in West Lancashire, with Skelmersdale providing the most significant focus for development. As with Options 1, 2, 3 & 4, opportunities for infill development, use of safeguarded sites and regeneration opportunities in all settlements will be encouraged.
- 6.14 However, unlike the other options the potential for expansion of any settlement will be ruled out; no expansions into the Green Belt will be considered. Instead the Council will enter into dialogue with neighbouring authorities to see whether any further need can be accommodated outside of the Borough.

Other Issues

- 6.15 The Options documents will also look at other critical issues and consultees will be asked about the future direction they feel should be taken on these matters. None of these, except Skelmersdale Town Centre, would fundamentally affect the Options under consideration, but will be important matters that the Core Strategy has to consider. At this stage we will only be asking some broad questions about these matters. Set out below is a summary of some of the key matters that will need to be considered.

Skelmersdale Town Centre – Should the town centre boundary as set out in the Local Plan be redrawn to match that in the SPD or drawn even wider to facilitate further development options to help drive forward the regeneration scheme? Also how can we best facilitate the regeneration of the Town Centre in the current economic climate?

Edge Hill University – Should the Core Strategy support the continued expansion of Edge Hill University if this can be demonstrated to be beneficial to the local economy, solve student accommodation problems, provide high quality facilities that can be accessed by the local population, and be done in such a way to mitigate the landscape impacts and provide a high quality designed campus?

Ageing Population – How will we best respond through the Core Strategy to the needs of an ageing population across the Borough, in terms of housing, health and access to goods and services?

Gypsies & Travellers and Travelling Showpeople – Should the Core Strategy suggest that permanent sites for Gypsy & Travellers be found in Skelmersdale, the wider M58 corridor or elsewhere in the Borough? Should we consider making the existing sites occupied by Gypsies & Travellers permanent? What are the most suitable sites for Travelling Showpeople?

Climate Change – How do we best make our contribution to tackling the Climate Change issue through the Core Strategy?

Affordable Housing – How and where do we best deliver affordable housing to meet local needs?

Infrastructure Provision - How can we ensure delivery of the necessary infrastructure to support the future development needs of West Lancashire? Should this be achieved through the existing Section 106 process or by implementing the Community Infrastructure Levy once the regulations are enacted?

7.0 FUTURE ACTION

7.1 Following Member approval, widespread public consultation will then commence in September 2009 for a minimum 6-week period. All households will have a leaflet delivered to them as part of the consultation exercise. The responses received to this consultation will help the Council to select a 'Preferred Option', which will be consulted on in early 2010.

7.2 The Council's 'Preferred Option' may not necessarily be one discrete option; it could be a combination of aspects of two or more of the options, or could even be a completely different option if a consultee suggests something more radical which is acceptable.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

8.1 The sustainability implications of the Draft Options will be fully evaluated by a Sustainability Appraisal Team and the findings will be made available in a report alongside the main Core Strategy document.

8.2 Progressing the LDF should in turn help progress the implementation of the key aspects of the SCS.

9.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The increased emphasis on community involvement in the preparation of the LDF will have a significant impact on staff time. Budgetary provision has been made to allow for the evidence base and consultation work required.

10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

10.1 Failure to involve the whole Council could result in a lack of valuable input to the future strategy of the LDF and a lack of corporate buy-in to the resulting strategy. This could possibly lead to the LDF documents being found "unsound".

11.0 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 The LDF Team have prepared five draft options for the LDF Core Strategy DPD, setting out five alternative scenarios for the future development of the Borough.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is no evidence from an initial assessment of an adverse impact on equality in relation to the equality target groups.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Core Strategy Options Paper