

# HEREFORDSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: CORE STRATEGY: DEVELOPING OPTIONS PAPER CONSULTATION

**Report By: Planning Policy Manager**

## **Wards**

Countywide

## **Purpose**

1. To inform Members of the methods of public engagement, consultation and publicity undertaken as part of the Core Strategy Developing Options Paper, and to consider future consultation procedures.

## **Financial Implications**

2. None outside current budgets.

## **Introduction**

3. The Local Development Framework, which will replace the Unitary Development Plan, is now in preparation. An essential element within it is the Core Strategy which will set out a framework for development in the County up to 2026. Full engagement with the public and other key stakeholders is essential to ensure the success of this document as the Spatial Strategy for the whole county. The report which follows summarises the recent consultation programme, notes recent and anticipated changes in legislation, and gives a preliminary indication of further work.

## **Core Strategy Consultation**

4. The Core Strategy Developing Options Paper was reported to Planning Committee at the meeting on 23rd May 2008 and approved for public consultation purposes by Cabinet on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2008. It set out the vision for the County and its places for 2026, and included 9 objectives and 4 strategic spatial options. The Paper also proposed upon a number of "Place shaping" options. This included:
  - options regarding the future role of the City and market towns;
  - the strategic distribution of housing, including an indication of potential directions of growth;
  - the potential for economic diversification;
  - retail provision in the market towns and the integration of the City centre with the Edgar Street Grid redevelopment; and

- any transportation infrastructure requirements

As well as the strategy options and place shaping policies, the Paper includes a number of general policies which would help to manage development. This includes affordable housing, renewable energy, waste and flooding.

### **The Developing Options Paper Consultation**

5. Within the continuous engagement being undertaken in developing the Core Strategy, a targeted consultation on the Core Strategy Developing Options Paper took place from 16<sup>th</sup> June until 8<sup>th</sup> August 2008.
6. The Developing Option Paper, together with a summary leaflet and questionnaire were made available on the Forward Planning webpages [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/ldf) and at Infopoint and libraries across the County. At the end of July, the LDF website had received 5523 hits with 251 copies of the Options paper and 156 copies of the summary leaflet being downloaded. Copies were also sent to 1149 stakeholders, interest groups and people on the LDF database which also includes all parish councils and neighbouring authorities. In addition to this 1,200 summary leaflets and questionnaires were distributed to the Herefordshire Voice Panel. Further updates on these figures will be given verbally at the meeting.
7. A launch event was organised for invited stakeholders on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2008 at Hereford Group Training. 104 stakeholders were invited to view the Developing Options exhibition, give some initial views and ask Forward Planning Officers any questions regarding the possible options. Officers from the Forward Planning team have also given presentations to Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC), of which around 50 parish councillors attended, a number of individual parish councils and groups of parishes when requested, and a number of other interested groups including Herefordshire Environmental Partnership Group, CPRE, Ross Civic Society and the Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Forum to help explain the options and publicise the consultation period.
8. Eight roadshows took place between 1<sup>st</sup> July and 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2008 in Hereford, all the market towns and Ewyas Harold within the rural west. A promotional trailer was used for all the roadshows except Bromyard, where the Infocentre hosted the exhibition. A total of 571 people visited one of the roadshows. People were able to view the exhibition, pick up copies of the Options paper, summary leaflet and questionnaire and officers were available to explain the options further and answer any questions. Exhibitions have also been held at the offices of a number of local employers in order to reach people who would not usually be available to attend daytime roadshows. Officers also attended the Edgar Street Grid Master Plan Launch event on 8<sup>th</sup> July to answer any queries regarding the links between the Core Strategy and the Master plan and publicise the Core Strategy consultation.
9. In order to gain the views of younger people, workshops were undertaken in 2 local High Schools, Whitecross High School in Hereford and John Kyrle High School in Ross-on-Wye. 25 pupils aged from 11 to 18 were asked about how they would like to see Herefordshire develop over the next 20 years and completed a schools questionnaire.

10. The consultation period has been widely publicised using a public notice, press releases, local radio announcements and interviews, posters and newspaper and magazine adverts. An article also appeared in the summer addition of Herefordshire Matters and First Press.
11. Overall the consultation has generated a lot of interest and demonstrated a high degree of public engagement with the process. The responses so far will be analysed and further reports will be brought to this Committee and to Cabinet to develop and agree the preferred option for development in the County for the period to 2026.
12. For the avoidance of doubt, consultation responses received after the formal consultation period end date of 8<sup>th</sup> August 2008 will also be taken into account in the same way as those received during the formal period of consultation – all in the spirit of continuous public engagement.

### **Changes To Legislation**

13. In June 2008, during the Developing Options consultation period, the Local Development Regulations were changed so that the procedure from this stage forward will be different from that envisaged when the Core Strategy Options document was reported to Planning Committee and Cabinet in May. The key differences are:
  - There is no longer any legal requirement to do a formal consultation at “Preferred options” stage
  - The final version of the Core Strategy needs to be publicised for a six week period, after which it can be submitted to the Secretary of State along with the responses arising from the publicity period. In this way the public can see what the Council’s proposed policies are and make representations in response. Then, as before, the submitted policy would be subject to an independent examination, followed by a binding inspector’s report and then adoption.
  - The tests of “Soundness” have been simplified to just three: Development Plan Documents, such as the Core Strategy must be:
    - i. Justified (i.e. be based on a secure evidence base and have been subject to full public involvement)
    - ii. Effective: i.e. capable of being implemented – along with any necessary infrastructure
    - iii. Consistent with national policy
14. Whilst the theory behind the above changes is to simplify the process it remains essential to maintain the degree of public engagement with the Core Strategy and, therefore, it is intended to continue with consultation arrangements based on those outlined in the current Developing Options paper. LDF Task Group will continue to assist in the analysis and response to the Developing Options Paper, and there will be further reports to and involvement of Planning Committee and Cabinet to the eventual Preferred Option, followed by a further round of public consultation before submitting the final version to the Secretary of State. Further time is required, in any event, to develop the evidence base and to feed in the outcome of changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy, especially any revised housing targets. (These are unlikely to become finalised until the latter part of 2009)

15. The dates of the remaining stages in the preparation of the Core Strategy cannot be confirmed at this stage due to uncertainties about progress with the Regional Spatial Strategy and the various studies needed to develop the evidence base. The intention does, however, remain to submit the Core Strategy document to the Secretary of State during 2009/10 with a view to its adoption during 2010/11, in time to replace the relevant parts of the Unitary Development Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION that:**

**Planning Committee note the initial public response to the Developing Options paper and request further progress reports on the emerging Core Strategy.**