



Report of the Director of City Development

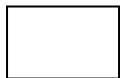
Development Plan Panel

Date: 4 September 2007

Subject: Leeds Local Development Framework – Core Strategy (Issues & Alternative Options)

Electoral Wards Affected:

All



Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity



Community Cohesion



Narrowing the Gap



Executive Summary

1. In July 2006, Development Plan Panel considered a “Core Strategy – Towards Key Issues & Options” paper for informal / early public consultation (September – December 2006). Within the context of this report and following the period of consultation, an “Issues and Alternative Options” paper has been prepared (attached as Appendix 1), for a 6 week period of (Regulation 25) public consultation in October – November 2007.
2. The period of informal consultation (September – December 2006) comprised of a series of events, workshops, presentations at stakeholder meetings – together with the wide distribution of the consultation material. A large number of comments and useful responses were received (and are summarised in Appendix 2). Whilst a number of the comments received focused upon specific issues and the emphasis given to areas of concern, there was overall support for the general scope of the issues and options identified and the use of ‘spatial planning scenarios’ to illustrate particular outcomes – in addressing these issues.

3. A key feature of the Local Development Framework and the preparation of the Core Strategy in particular, is that these documents are being prepared during an unprecedented period of change. These changes do not only relate to the immediate opportunities and challenges resulting from physical development in Leeds but also the consequences of wider policy drivers at an international, national and regional level. For example, the need for action to be taken in response to climate change, transport & accessibility, economic competitiveness, new housing requirements and social inclusion, raise a host of issues, which need to be planned for at a local Leeds scale.
4. An important dimension of the current policy context also relates to the preparation of the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (Yorkshire & Humber Plan), to which the LDF needs to be in general conformity. Following the Examination in Public to the draft Plan in September – October 2006 and the publication of the Panel report in early May – “Proposed Changes” to the draft Plan were due in June. However, via the Regional Planning Board, local planning authorities have been advised that the Proposed Changes process has now slipped to mid September for public consultation (with anticipated RSS adoption Spring 2008). These delays not only present practical difficulties in seeking to prepare the Leeds LDF but also the content of the emerging RSS (whilst reflecting many of the priorities of the Vision for Leeds) raises many challenges. Central to these challenges is the proposals for a much larger housing requirement for Leeds post 2011 until the end of the Plan period (2021).
5. Notwithstanding these difficulties and uncertainties, in order to comply with the milestones detailed in the City Council’s approved Local Development Scheme, it is proposed to take the Leeds LDF Core Strategy process forward via a process of further consultation.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report, is for the Development Plan Panel to consider the attached LDF Core Strategy Issues & Options paper, as a basis for a 6 week period of public consultation (Regulation 25).

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 From earlier reports to the Development Plan Panel, members will recall that following reforms to the Development Planning system (introduced through the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004), local authorities are required to prepare a “Core Strategy”, as an integral part of the Local Development Framework. The purpose of this strategy is to provide an overarching framework for the preparation of Local Development Documents.
- 2.2 In providing the strategic context for these documents at a local Leeds level (and to provide a link with the Regional Spatial Strategy – to which it must be in conformity), is the need to prepare a spatial and land use planning framework, which is sufficiently robust and flexible. Such an approach also needs to have regard to interrelated (environmental, economic and social) drivers for change, together with the context set by the current UDP, the Community Strategy (Vision for Leeds) and emerging policy initiatives (e.g. the Planning White Paper).
- 2.3 Following consideration by the Development Plan Panel of a ‘Towards a Key Issues & Options Paper’ in July 2006, a period of informal consultation has taken place (September – December 2006), together with on going policy development and evidence gathering this year.
- 2.4 The period of informal consultation comprised of a major workshop event with Leeds initiative partners (11 September 2006), workshop/discussion events with Leeds residents, community groups and interested parties, attendance at meetings with stakeholders to present the initial ideas on the Core Strategy, a member briefing and consistent with the Statement of Community Involvement, the dissemination of the consultation material to a wide range of statutory and non statutory consultees.
- 2.5 This early engagement work has in turn been very useful in terms of receiving positive support for the overall approach to the development of issues and options and the development of related spatial scenarios. A number of responses have also been received regarding the scope of the issues and options identified, highlighting areas where these might be improved and in a number of cases have challenged aspects of the approach. Comments received during this stage of the process are summarised in the attached Appendix (Appendix 2) and the Issues and Alternative Options paper revised in the light of these comments.

3.0 Main Issues

Overall Approach

- 3.1 Following the initial period of informal consultation and further technical work, the “Issues and Alternative Options” paper (see Appendix 1) has been revised for further consultation. The key focus of these revisions has been to improve the clarity and structure of the paper, to update and review the Aims, Objectives, Issues and specific questions raised for consultation. In addition, further work has also been undertaken to further scope and refine the development of the ‘spatial scenarios’, as a basis to visualise the impacts of different policy approaches (and to provide a basis of the ‘Key Diagram’, which is required for the Core Strategy).

Structure of the Document

- 3.2 Following the work described in para. 3.1 above, the document is now structured as follows: sections 1 and 2 providing the overall context and background information, section 3 defining the “Vision for the Core Strategy – linking this to specific Aims, Objectives and Themes. Section 4 is based upon the interrelated themes of: “The Environment”, “The Economy”, “Regeneration and Renewal”, “Future Development” and “A Well Connected City”. Each of these themes cover a series of issues, options and questions for a number of related topic areas. Drawing upon the themes, the next section identifies four spatial scenarios, as a basis to explore ‘Leeds in the Future – Patterns of Regeneration and Development’. The final two sections of the paper set out issues around Implementation and Monitoring and provide details of how people can respond to the document. An Sustainability Appraisal has also been prepared for the Core Strategy, consistent with the LDF requirements.

Building the Evidence Base

- 3.3 As members are aware, a key component of the reforms to the Development Plan system, is the need to take into account an ‘evidence base’ in the preparation of planning policies and proposals. Consequently, in the on going preparation of the Leeds LDF Core Strategy, evidence is being drawn from a variety of sources. These include not only the comments received during the informal consultation stage and the scope of related policies and strategies but also the findings of City Council commissioned studies and technical reports. For example, the Leeds Employment Land Review, Housing Market Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and more recently, the Leeds 2050 study, have helped to inform the revised Issues and Alternative Options paper.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) – Draft Yorkshire & Humber Plan

- 3.4 As highlighted in this and in previous reports to the Development Plan Panel, an important feature of the current Development Plan system, is the need for LDF documents to be in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy. Within the Yorkshire & Humber region, the RSS Panel report was issued in May, following the Examination in Public (September – October 2006). In the light of the Panel Report’s 118 recommendations, the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber (GOYH) are currently in the process of preparing a series of “Proposed Changes” for public consultation. This was initially expected in June but has now slipped to commence in September (for a 12 week period), with a view to the Yorkshire & Humber Plan being finally adopted in Spring 2008.
- 3.4 With regard to the Leeds LDF Core Strategy, the emerging RSS presents a number of fundamental issues. These relate to timescales, policy direction and content. With regard to timescales, given that the City Council has submitted it’s revised and updated Local Development Scheme (three year rolling work programme for the preparation of the Leeds LDF) to the Secretary of State in March (which has subsequently been accepted without a direction), it is not helpful that the RSS process has subsequently slipped. Whilst it is understood, given the complexity of the RSS process, that slippage is perhaps inevitable, further delay does cause uncertainty and potentially compromise local authority LDF production milestones (consistent with their own LDS programme).
- 3.5 With regard to the specific content of the emerging RSS, from previous reports to the Development Plan Panel, members will be aware that throughout the RSS process (including the Examination in Public), the City Council has made a number

of representations regarding the scope and content of the draft Plan. Whilst the Panel report has reflected some of these concerns in the recommendations, major areas of concern for the City Council remain. These include the presentation and clarity of the Leeds City Region approach (within the RSS context), the need to link and support strategic ambitions for physical regeneration, environmental protection and economic growth with the necessary infrastructure and the significant increase in the housing requirement for Leeds (post 2011 until the end of the plan period – 2021). As noted in the RSS to the Development Plan Panel in June, the likely increase in the housing requirement is in the order of 4,000 dwellings p.a. (the current requirement is 1,930 p.a.). Given the Council's position on this matter and depending on how the proposed requirements are presented as part of the forthcoming Proposed Changes process, it is likely that the City Council will wish to make further representations at this stage. The consequence of this for the Leeds LDF Core Strategy, is a prolonged period of uncertainty until the Proposed Changes process has been concluded and the Plan finally adopted in Spring 2008. Given the Leeds LDS commitments however, (for both the Core Strategy and the preparation of Area Action Plans), it is not practical or helpful in addressing planning challenges and opportunities in the city to wait until the RSS process has been concluded. The attached Issues and Options paper (Appendix 1) therefore acknowledges the RSS position (and overall direction of travel) and flags up the implications as issues and options for the Core Strategy. This is considered to be a pragmatic approach in moving the LDF Core Strategy approach forward, in the light of the uncertainties described above.

Consultation

- 3.6 Consistent with the City Council's Statement of Community Involvement, a series of consultation events and activities is being planned. Further details of these will be presented to members at the meeting.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 None

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 None other than the "conformity" issues noted above. No specific resourcing issues at this stage, other than to note that the preparation of the LDF Core Strategy is being managed within existing provision. In terms of wider strategy and policy issues, a key dimension of the LDF process, are the regulatory requirements to seek to align resourcing strategies and programmes from a variety of agencies to ensure that the overall intent of policy documents are deliverable.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 This report has provided a brief review of the Leeds LDF Core Strategy process to date and going forward, has set out "Issues and Options" for further consultation. Within this context, reference has been made to the emerging RSS (draft Yorkshire & Humber Plan), emphasising the need to move the Leeds LDF Core Strategy process forward.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 The Development Plan Panel is recommended to:

note the preparatory work being undertaken in the earliest stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document, including consultation with the community and stakeholders, and in particular to note the next stages in the production of the Development Plan Document.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 2