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Report by City Development to the Scrutiny Board (City Development)

Date: 19th February 2008

Subject: Aire Valley Leeds AAP - Consultation

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. The Aire Valley Area Action Plan (AVLAAP) is being prepared as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Leeds. LDF's were introduced in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and guidance on their preparation including the process for public consultation is set out in Planning Policy Statement 12. In addition, the City Council adopted (February 2007) the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which also provides guidance and minimum requirements for public consultation. This report outlines the method and approach for consultation on the AVLAAP which far exceeds that required by this guidance.
2. In the past, consultation on plans followed a format whereby the City Council would initially prepare a draft for comment. Under the new planning system, the intention is for interested groups and organisations to be given the opportunity to influence the shape & form of plan documents as they are prepared right from the outset. This is known as "front loading".
3. Regulation 25 of the Act sets out the need to consult on Issues and Options. The Council resolved to do this in two stages, firstly to identify Issues and then secondly to identify Alternative Options based on those identified Issues. This is then followed by identification of the Preferred Options (Regulation 26). Consideration also has to be given to ensure that the objectives and options suggested in the AVLAAP can be identified & tested through the Sustainability Appraisal process.
4. Consultation on the AAP was carried out in the context that a regeneration programme had been in place in Aire Valley Leeds since 2000 and the City

Council's Executive Board approved a Strategic Vision for the AVL in April 2002. It identified broad objectives and development principles for the area and these included the opportunity for the area to become "the window" to Leeds, strengthening and delivering the City's role as regional capital by diversifying its economic base and offering innovative opportunities for living, working and recreation, bringing maximum benefit to local people and the city as a whole. This meant that there was already a general awareness of Aire Valley Leeds and whilst continuing to raise awareness and invite comment we also had to avoid "consultation fatigue".

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide City Development Scrutiny Board with an overview of the process for consultation on Area Action Plans, focussing on the following issues:
 - Has the reason for the consultation been explained adequately to the client and or service user?
 - Has the process of consultation been applied fairly and effectively?
 - Has the consultation followed either national or local processes?
 - Has the consultation resulted in the City Development Department incorporating a change to a policy, procedure or process?
 - Has the timescale allowed for consultation been sufficient?
 - Have adequate resources been made available to ensure progress following consultation?
 - Has the consultation not only been effective but proportionate?
- 1.2 To consider any further issues raised under Session 1.
- 1.3 To hear from clients who contributed to the consultation.
- 1.4 This report uses Aire Valley Leeds AAP to provide an overview of the consultation processes.

2. CONSULTATION ON THE AIRE VALLEY LEEDS AREA ACTION PLAN

Background

- 2.1 The process for preparation of Area Action Plans is outlined in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This requires that the Council identify "Issues and Options" relevant to the Plan area and undertake informal consultation. Preferred Options are then identified and consultation is carried out for a statutory period of six weeks. Following this consultation a draft Area Action Plan is prepared and submitted to the Secretary of State and a further six week statutory consultation period commences. In summary for each Area Action Plan there is a period of informal consultation and two periods of formal consultation. In practice, consultation is ongoing throughout the AAP process as there is frequent dialogue with residents, community groups and landowners in terms of answering queries and attending meetings to explain the AAP process and gain an insight into local issues to assist with the drafting of the plan. Consultation is fundamental to the process of preparing an AAP.

Stage 1 Pre – Production Consultation

- 2.2 Work had been progressing on the AAP since early 2005. At this initial stage the community were advised of the AAP process and the early issues which had been identified. Aire Valley Leeds (AVL) is an unusual case in that there is no resident population or community living within the AAP area. For the purposes of the AAP the “residential community” refers to the “Target” surrounding communities identified over the last seven years through the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB VI) Initiative. Initial involvement with the community was via the Area Management Committees and with Aire Valley Regeneration Board and landowners/investors. Consultation explored issues and questions along the following lines:
- what is your vision for Aire Valley?
 - what do you want the AVLAAP to achieve?
 - what should be the objectives for the AVLAAP?
 - are any objectives overarching or more important than others?
 - what issues do you want to see addressed?
- 2.3 The questions were used to help formulate options through an ongoing consultative process. The aim was to offer stakeholders the opportunity to influence the overall intentions and shape of the AVLAAP and to provide for the input of original thoughts & ideas. In terms of material, the right balance was needed between giving enough information to stimulate thought about the issues (and the direction of existing strategies & policies) and not too much in the way of detailed proposals (which may incorrectly suggest that the City Council had decided future plans already, thereby undermining the purpose of consultation).
- 2.4 The Issues and Options for AVL were approved at Development Plan Panel on the 25th May 2005 and subsequently at Executive Board. Consultation was carried out between July and September 2005. The City Council introduced the consultation with an explanation of the process and the consultee’s role, as follows:

Issues & Options consultation extract

Consultation

At this initial stage, we are seeking your input to help formulate objectives and identify key issues affecting the area so that we can start preparing options for how the area might be developed. We will then consult more widely on these options. Based on the responses received, we will prepare a draft Plan for submission to the ODPM, with formal consultation and public examination.

How can you get Involved?

- To help understand the context and issues involved we have prepared a consultation document which contains a plan of the area, introduces the main issues and raises a series of questions. An abridged version of this document is also available.
- We would like to hear your views on the issues. Have we identified the right issues? Which issues are most important to you?
- The consultation documents are available below together with a comments form. An online comments form is available at the end of this page.
- If you have any queries about the discussion document, contact Richard Askham on 0113 247 8184 or e-mail ldf@leeds.gov.uk

- 2.5 The material was distributed to all the consultees identified in the SCI (see Appendix 1) and via Area committees (within the “Target communities”), the Aire Valley Leeds Regeneration Board and at the Hunslet Gala and leaflets were given out at all EASEL events (immediately prior to the consultation period). Electronic newsletters were sent to over 400 businesses within Aire Valley. With the aim of enabling consultation and opening up discussions an “Abridged Version” (shorter, easy to read document) of the Issues Document was used (which set out the Issues identified). A wide range of views emerged from the consultations, these are detailed in Appendix 2 and were used to assist in the preparation of the Alternative Options. These included both verbal responses recorded at meetings and events and written responses. In the absence of any specific proposals at the Issues and Options stage of the AAP and in the context of other plans also being prepared, the level of response was as anticipated. The expectation was that the level of interest in the plan would increase as awareness of the process grew and more detailed proposals emerged.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS - April 2006

- 2.6 In April 2006 the Alternative Options were published for consultation, subsequent to consideration at Development Plan Panel (4th April) and Executive Board. The Consultation Document set out the background, purpose and what had happened so far. It also reminded people that a number of other key documents have also been prepared, including a draft Transport Strategy, Housing Market Assessment and an Employment Land Assessment and that AVL also features in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

- 2.7 In introducing the Alternative Options the challenge that AVL presents was set out along with the series of opportunities that are unique in Leeds and the wider region. The next steps were also identified:

*The **next** stage of AAP preparation is known as the “preferred options stage” and feedback from this consultation and additional work such as the Employment Land Review will assist the City Council in “pulling together” the preferred option/s for the Area Action Plan. There will then be further consultation on the selected preferred option/s in 2007. At the same time a Sustainability Appraisal Report will identify the likely social economic and environmental effects of those options.*

At this informal stage of producing the Area Action Plan, the Options were kept wide ranging to encourage a full discussion about the future of the area. The Alternative Options represent different degrees of change in the area from minimal change (a ‘business as usual’ approach) to those which would potentially bring about transformational change, maximising the regeneration opportunities available in AVL. Feedback from the Issues stage was also set out.

- 2.8 Further assistance was put forward to give some guidance and structure to what is a complicated process and plan. The Options put forward recognised that we were not dealing with a blank canvas. AVL already has existing uses and some industrial areas which will stay for the foreseeable future. It is home to businesses employing 15,000 people, whose jobs we need to sustain, in addition to the prospect of creating many more new jobs. For this reason we chose to focus the options on 8 broad locations within AVL. These are the areas that had been identified as key development opportunities or areas of significant change. This was not to say that the AAP will not apply to other areas or have detailed policies which relate to them. People were urged that if they did not agree with the approach or thought that other locations should have been included, then they should **please tell us by filling in the questionnaire provided**. They were also reminded that whilst considering “non-employment” uses we still need to maintain an appropriate supply of employment land and aim to generate some 30,000 new jobs.
- 2.9 The Format of the Options was also set out with the possible land uses and transport proposals for AVL and how these had been grouped under headings:
1. Employment uses (office, industrial and distribution uses)
 2. Alternative uses (housing, leisure, recreation and waste management,)
 3. Transport

For each land use and the transport *options* some background information and context was given to help define the Options.

Consultation on the Alternative Options

- 2.10 Details of the consultation events, the comments made at those events and those via questionnaires or by other written comments and the Council’s response are all set out in the Report in Appendix 3. The following represents a summary of the efforts made to consult and make people aware of Aire Valley,

the AAP and the Options. We continued to build and improve the database of consultees. We tried new methods to reach more people, to make more people aware of the opportunity to participate, and to influence development and regeneration of the Aire Valley. Workshops were introduced at the **Alternative Options** stage and worked well engaging with community groups and land owners and stakeholders in facilitated discussion groups, following presentations. All of the Options were appraised in the Sustainability Appraisal and people were invited to comment on that appraisal.

- 2.11 **Part 1** in Appendix 3 refers to the events and responses in the **Issues** consultation and **Part 2** refers to the **Alternative Options** consultation and a schedule sets out a summary of all the representations and the Council's response as to how we might take things forward. This emphasises the iterative nature of the process and the "audit trail" setting out how the issues informed the alternative options and they too in turn have influenced the Preferred Options.

3. Preferred Options

- 3.1 The AVL Preferred Options were published in October 2007 and took into account the views and comments received during the Alternative Options stage, as indicated in Appendix 5.

Consultation Programme Procedures & Methods

- 3.2 Drop-in sessions or meetings with communities and stakeholders were arranged for venues both in and surrounding the Aire Valley at: Hunslet Library, the Skelton Grange Environment Centre, St Hilda's Church, East Leeds Leisure Centre and Belle Isle Family Learning Centre. Leaflets were distributed at all seven of the EASEL (East and South East Leeds) DPD "drop-in" sessions, held prior to the start of the AVL consultation period. Information was made available on the Council's website. Over 7,000 postcards in total were distributed to the surrounding community areas (Over 6500 postcards via local schools, over 450 postcards sent to people on the AVL Database who have attended previous consultation events and commented on previous proposals and 430 postcards sent to businesses in Aire Valley). 35 local Aire Valley businesses were sent summaries of the Aire Valley Preferred Option document. Telephone contact was made with representatives of the main community groups and community associations around the AVL area. Officers provided details of the consultation strategy to local forums and area committees. Presentations were made to both the Inner and Outer East Area Committees as well as the Aire Valley Leeds Investors Forum (part of Aire Valley Leeds) during the consultation period.
- 3.3 The section below expands in more detail on the methods of consultation used and can be divided into 4 principle methodologies:

Methodology 1

- 3.4 In October 2007 the Preferred Options Consultation Paper on the AVLAAP was published. It was accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal Report. The Sustainability Report commented on the likely significant environmental social and economic effects of the preferred options of the Plan. Aire Valley Leeds Preferred Options and supporting documents were made available for inspection and comment, at the council's Development Enquiry Centre at

Leonardo Buildings, Rossington Street and at the Central Library. The documents were also made available at local libraries and One Stop Centres adjoining the Aire Valley area (see Appendix 6 for details). The documents were published on the Councils website at www.leeds.gov.uk/ldf

- 3.5 Comments could be submitted by accessing the online form on the council's website or documents could be requested by telephone or email ldf@leeds.gov.uk. Large Scale plans, with explanatory panels were displayed at the Development Enquiry Centre and then in the foyer of the Civic Hall.

Methodology 2

- 3.6 Direct contact was made to stakeholders including Leeds residents, community groups, key consultees, and major landowners, who had commented during the previous informal consultation stage and who already formed part of an extensive database developed for the AAP through earlier consultation processes. This information built on existing council mailing lists. These groups and individuals were notified of the AAP consultation and given the opportunity to make comments. In addition to direct contact, advance notification of the consultation was made through the following channels:

- Formal advertisement in the Yorkshire Evening Post 4th Oct 2007
- A Press Release on the 5th Oct 2007
- Over 6500 Postcards distributed via schools adjoining the Aire Valley area.
- Over 450 Post cards sent to people on the AVL Database who had attended previous consultation events and commented on previous proposals (see Appendix 6)
- 430 Postcards sent to all businesses in Aire Valley.
- 35 local Aire Valley businesses were sent summaries of the Aire Valley Preferred Option document.
- Statutory consultees and key stakeholders were sent full information packs containing a comprehensive selection of consultation documents (main document, plus summary, poster, postcard, leaflet and questionnaire).
- Advance briefing was given to elected members (joint briefing with EASEL AAP) on Monday 19th March 2007.
- Local Ward members sent Aire Valley Leeds Preferred Option and supporting documents (see example letter in Appendix 6).
- 12 "difficult to reach" groups were sent information pack and offered a council officer to attend meetings to discuss the preferred options.
- Posters put up in public buildings in areas adjoining the Aire Valley.
- "Flyers" were distributed at EASEL AAP consultation events in June/July 2007.
- Senior Council Officers were notified of the consultation on Aire Valley.
- Information about the consultation events was made available on the Council website.
- Information about the events was made available on the Aire Valley Leeds website.
- Aire Valley Leeds Board received reports on the Consultation Strategy
- Leeds Voice environmental group received a presentation on the 6th November 2007 (see Appendix 6).
- The consultation events were advertised in the Aire Valley Leeds electronic news letter, 'Aire Waves'.

- Article in 'About Leeds', the Council newspaper, and sent to all households in Leeds.
- Article in the Newsletter for Community and the Voluntary Sector published by Neighbourhoods & Learning and circulated in East and South Leeds.
- Banners to advertise event venues on the day were erected to advertise the daily events.

Methodology 3

- 3.7 A series of public exhibitions and consultation sessions where people could 'drop in' were held in the Aire Valley and in the surrounding communities adjoining the Aire Valley: These events were held at:

Monday 8th October 2007: Hunslet

Hunslet Library (1:00pm – 5:00pm)

Wednesday 10th October 2007: Cross Green/Richmond Hill

St. Hilda's Hall, Cross Green Lane (3:30pm – 7:00pm)

Thursday 11th October 2007: Middleton

Belle Isle Family Learning Centre (3:30pm – 6:00pm)

Friday 12th October 2007: Halton Moor/Osmondthorpe

East Leeds Leisure Centre, Neville road (3.30pm – 6:00pm)

Monday 15th October 2007: Burmantofts/Richmond Hill

Skelton Grange Environment Centre (noon – 8:00pm)

Tuesday 16th October: Investors Forum

Town Hall, Leeds (6:00pm – 8:00pm)

Large scale display plans and a non-technical summary were available to complement the full document. Staff from City Development and Environment & Neighbourhoods were on hand to explain and discuss the AAP proposals. The events were targeted towards the beginning of the consultation period to ensure maximum time was available for responses to be made.

Methodology 4

- 3.8 Attendance by officers at meetings such as local forums, partnership meetings and area committees within east and south Leeds held during the consultation period. The Area Committee meetings were attended on the following dates:

- East (Inner) Area Committee 24th October 2007 (and special meeting 9th November - to ensure briefing with 5 Community Forums)
- East (Outer) Area Committee 6th November 2007
- South (Inner) Area Committee were sent consultation information pack

Consultation Deadline

- 3.9 The deadline for responses to the consultation was 16th November 2007 terminating the formal six week consultation period. When considering the numbers who have commented it should be emphasised that Aire Valley does not include any major housing and therefore does not have a residential community. It should also be noted that Regeneration is progressing in many of the adjoining residential areas (EASEL & Beeston Hill and Holbeck) where

consultation is simultaneously being carried out, which may seem to have more direct relevance to residents daily lives, in that those regeneration projects involve and affect local housing and services rather than the prospect of future employment opportunities. At the **Preferred Options** stage we attempted to engage further with the surrounding communities by distributing over 6500 postcards via the local schools. This should have made many local families aware of the AVLAAP and consultation events that were being held in their neighbourhood. Some residents (17) did attend and virtually all the landowners or their agents came to at least one event.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 At the informal stages of consultation (Issues and Alternative Options) the consultation period was extended to ensure people had sufficient time to respond taking into account committee meeting dates etc; however the Preferred Options is a formal consultation and is bound by the guidance to be over a 6 week period.

Why did we attempt to consult with only the surrounding wards and communities.

- 4.2 It should be emphasised that the preparation of the AVLAAP is within the context of the Leeds Local Development Framework overall. City wide awareness raising about the LDF is an ongoing process, through the City Council's web site and consultation district wide on a series of LDF documents (including the adopted Statement of Community Involvement). Given the nature of the AVLAAP and the need to target limited resources, it was considered most beneficial to direct these to communities in close proximity to the plan area. In addition, all of the consultation material was made available for organisations and residents city wide to comment.
- 4.3 Material, by way of fliers, leaflets, posters were distributed – along with the use of the web, the media and networking opportunities – to provide detail and raise awareness of the Aire Valley and the emerging plan. The document, due to the nature of the planning and regeneration issues within the area, covers multi-faceted problems. In order to make these challenges and opportunities more accessible to the wider public, a shorter and more simplified version of the consultation document was produced. The use of graphics, illustrations and photographs were also utilised to make it a more attractive document to read.
- 4.4 The full summary of comments and results of the questionnaire and a table indicating who responded and how, will be set out in the Preferred Options consultation report (a draft of which is attached as Appendix 6). Every person and group who has indicated their interest in the AAP and all those who have previously been consulted will receive a short summary of the Preferred Options consultation, how they can view a full summary of the consultation results, what happens next and how they can get involved at the next stage/s.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 That the Scrutiny Board notes and comments on the contents of this report, with regard to public consultation undertaken as part of the Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan.