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## Report of the Director of City Development

### Development Plan Panel

Date:10 June 2008

**Subject: Report of Area Action Plans Preferred Options Consultations on West Leeds Gateway**

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#### Electoral Wards Affected:

Armley  
Farnley & Wortley

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Public consultation on the Preferred Options for the West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan (AAP) took place between 26<sup>th</sup> February and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008. This report describes the level of responses received, provides the main 'headlines' arising from the consultation and outlines the next steps to be undertaken in moving forward to the final stage of plan preparation, the publication of Submission Draft AAP.
2. Consultation responses will play an important part in developing the submission draft and a full Report of Consultation will form part of the submission Draft AAP. A further period of formal consultation will take place when the draft AAP is submitted to the Secretary of State; in the intervening time, informal consultation and information sharing will be ongoing.

#### 1.0 Purpose of This Report

- .1 To advise Development Plan Panel of responses relating to public consultation undertaken on the Preferred Options for the West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plans and the proposed next steps.

#### 2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 A series of Area Action Plans (AAP's) are being prepared as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Leeds. They are statutory plans which will set out the council's future planning policy within areas of major change and/or areas in need of regeneration. They focus on the implementation of development proposals and provide a mechanism for ensuring development is of an appropriate scale, location, mix and quality.

2.2 As statutory plans they are prepared under a process prescribed by national regulations. The West Leeds Gateway AAP is being prepared in accordance with the following timetable:

- Early Issues for Consultation stage – Summer 2005
- Issues and Alternative Options – Autumn 2006 (regulation 25)
- **Preferred Options stage (regulation 26) – Feb. to April 2008**
- Submission stage (regulation 28) – Autumn 2008
- Public Examination – June 2009
- Adoption – Jan. 2010

2.3 The West Leeds Gateway AAP Preferred Options Paper was approved by the Development Plan Panel for public consultation on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008 and consultation took place on the Preferred Options between 26<sup>th</sup> February and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008. LDF regulations and council's Statement of Community Involvement require a precise 6 week consultation period and notification to be sent to organisations the council considers to be either interested in or affected by the proposals.

### 3.0 Summary of the Preferred Options Paper

3.1 The AAP Preferred Options Paper detailed how the WLGAAP area could potentially be regenerated based on **7 themes for action**;

- **Design and the Environment, Landscape, Biodiversity and Sustainability;**
- **Greenspace, Linkages and West Leeds Country Park;**
- **Outdoor Advertising;**
- **Design, Signage and Identity;**
- **Transport;**
- **Health;**
- **Employment and Training;**

and **7 Neighbourhood Proposals** where policies and action will be concentrated;

- **Central Armley including Town Street, Mistress Lane, Theaker Lane and Far Fold;**
- **Armley Mills;**
- **Canal Road and Ledgard Way;**
- **Canalside;**
- **New Wortley and the Gyrotory;**
- **Oldfield Lane, Wortley;**
- **Tong Road/Wellington Road Corridor.**

The remainder of this report sets out:

- the consultation methods undertaken
- a summary of responses
- initial conclusions following the consultation
- the next steps

## 4. Consultation

### Publicity

4.1 In order to publicise the plan the following documents were distributed across the AAP area:

- 1000 Preferred Options Main Reports were made available at key locations throughout the area.

- 1500 summary documents providing a more accessible outline of the key proposals and containing the consultation questions was also made available at key locations throughout the area. A copy of the Summary document is attached to this report.
- 4 x1000 publicity postcards were distributed to a variety of public locations including shops, libraries, One Stop Centres, leisure centre and health centres.
- 2500 questionnaires
- 5000 fliers advertising the exhibitions were distributed to local communities, businesses and interested parties.
- 800 Armley Conservation Area leaflets made available to coincide with the wider WLG consultation.
- Visual displays were put up at a number of key locations throughout the Plan area to advertise the events and to outline the Preferred Options.
- A Press Release was issued from the City Council's Press Office and an article appeared in the Yorkshire Evening Post.

### Exhibitions

- 4.2 Exhibitions providing information boards detailing the proposals for West Leeds were put in place at various locations with a range of the above documents.
- 4.3 Drop-in sessions to give local people the opportunity to discuss the Area Action Plan with officers and provide the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback were held throughout the 6 week consultation period. Copies of the flyers, postcards, and Preferred Options document and comments form were available at all events.
- 4.4 The drop in sessions were staffed by Officers from the Development Department with support from Leeds West NW Homes at specified times including day, evening and weekend sessions.
- 4.5 The New Wortley Community Centre Exhibition was also manned by the Royal Town Planning Institute's Planning Aid Staff at various times in order to provide a day long presence and assist people to make their views known via this impartial body.
- 4.6 7 venues were used for the exhibitions:

**Armley Library** – staffed, the exhibition was in place during the whole 6 week consultation period.

**Somerfield supermarket** – staffed 26<sup>th</sup> February – 1<sup>st</sup> March

**Netto Shopping Centre** – staffed 10<sup>th</sup> March 15<sup>th</sup> March

**Armley Leisure Centre** – 17<sup>th</sup> March – 22<sup>nd</sup> March

**Armley Moor Health Centre** – 26<sup>th</sup> March – 28<sup>th</sup> March

**New Wortley Community Centre** – staffed 3<sup>rd</sup> March – 8<sup>th</sup> March

**Highfield Methodist Church Hall** - staffed 2nd April 2008

### Press

- 4.7 A press release was issued from the City Councils Press Office and an article appeared in the Yorkshire Evening Post and Armley Today. The Armley Tourist Board website also posted an article highlighting the WLGAAAP and the opportunity to make representations.

### Briefings and Presentations

- Planning Aid was briefed prior to own events which were held in New Wortley for the benefit of the local community.

- A briefing for local businesses was held at Armley One Stop Centre on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2008.
- A presentation was given to the West Inner Area Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008.
- Wortley Ward Members were briefed prior to the publication of the WLGAAP preferred options document on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2008.
- A briefing was given at the West Outer Area Committee on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2008.
- A briefing was given at the WLG Regeneration Board on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008.
- A workshop was held at St Bartholomew's Primary School on the 20<sup>th</sup> March at which the WLGAAP was discussed and documents supplied.
- An Armley Initiative meeting was attended on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008 with a presentation made about the Area Action Plan and the need for people to get involved in it and submit their comments.

#### Website and Electronic Comments Form

- 4.8 The consultation documents were also available to view and download on the Leeds City Council website ([www.leeds.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/ldf)) along with an online electronic comments form.

#### Mail Consultees

- 4.9 A full set of WLGAAP Preferred Options documents were sent to statutory bodies, libraries, Councillors and adjoining Councils with letter or email notification sent out to all other interested parties.
- 4.10 Postcards and questionnaires were posted through the doors of residents where staff time allowed and local residents in New Wortley were provided with summary documents, main documents and questionnaires which were distributed through letterboxes around the New Wortley estate.

#### Acknowledgement Letter

- 4.11 An acknowledgement letter has been sent to all respondents.

## **5. Responses**

#### Representations Received

- 5.1 **96** individual representations were received. These were from national organisations, government bodies, local groups, local business, consultants and local residents. In addition, Planning Aid reported back on behalf of New Wortley residents who had attended drop in sessions.
- 5.2 As well as the 96 individual responses two petitions were sent in which again raised objections to the proposals for New Wortley, particularly in relation to proposed demolitions. These had **326** and **27** signatures and included names and addresses.

5.3 Overall there were **449** respondents to the consultation.

5.4 The drop in sessions also attracted significant interest and were attended by **310** individuals over the 6 weeks. The most successful of these events were held in the two supermarkets in Armley town centre (Somerfield and Netto), where each four hour staffed event attracted between 20 and 90 individuals.

## **6. Key Headlines arising from the consultation**

6.1 Overall the responses showed a strong support for the wide range of proposals contained in the Preferred Options document. The exception to this related to demolitions and redevelopment opportunities in New Wortley where the support dropped to around 50% of those that responded to the questionnaire. Further to this, there were over 350 signatures on petitions raising their objections to demolition.

6.2 In general however, there was widespread support for the policies that were laid out across the 7 strategic themes and 7 character areas. This included support for improved non-vehicular access, environment, greenspace and safety around the 'Gateway' area and beyond. There was also support for the Plan's emphasis on the retention of existing employment sites. The main messages emerging from the consultation at this stage are detailed below.

### **Central Armley**

- Support for finding a new future for No. 2 Branch Road (Mike's Carpets), a Listed Building which is in urgent need of improvement.
- A need to improve car parking around Armley Town Street in order to support local businesses.
- Support for better traffic management.
- Support for environmental improvements to the streetscene in Armley town centre
- Quality improvements needed to improve the appearance of the retail units on Town Street, particularly the units built in the 1970's.

### **Armley Mills**

- Improved access to the canal towpath is seen as a major issue, particularly for the disabled. This should be provided at Armley Mills as it has the most appealing and safe potential access point in the local area.
- The museum should be developed to include a possible shop and café as well as providing a pleasant picnic area and potentially supporting recreational uses in the vicinity.
- The area around Armley Mills and Dunkirk Hill needs to be made more accessible and an improved environment with better signage for road and pedestrian users.

## **Greenspace/Links/Transport**

- Widespread support for the protection and improvement of greenspace. However, there is a need to set out the basis or justification for the selection of priority sites for investment.
- The PPG 17 review of greenspace should underpin future proposals for greenspace in the WLG.
- Support for improved pedestrian and cyclist links both within WLG and to the city centre and Kirkstall Regeneration Area. These need to be safe, well lit and accessible as presently most major routes are dominated by the car and do not provide an attractive non motorised vehicular alternative.
- Cycle lanes should be separate to the highway in order to make them safe and attractive to cyclists.
- While pedestrian and cyclist links are important, improvements should not be at the expense of biodiversity.
- A new rail halt in WLG area is widely supported.

## **Armley Gyrotory**

- Linkages from the WLG to the city centre for pedestrians and cyclists via the gyrotory need significant improvements as presently it is a very unattractive and unsafe route.
- The access point on to the gyrotory for motorised vehicles from Wellington Road should have traffic lights in line with all the other junctions as it is dangerous at present.

## **New Wortley**

- There were a strong objections raised on the proposed demolition of houses, other than the 'T' blocks in the New Wortley estate.
- The majority of the local community expressed a strong preference for the refurbishment and upgrading of existing properties, as opposed to demolitions.
- Greenspace within the estate should be protected and environmental improvements undertaken.
- Land identified as having development potential adjacent to Phil May Court should be safeguarded and improved as a play area for children as it is a safer environment for children than other local sites as a result of the security provided by overlooking from Holdforth Green.
- Gasholder should be removed if possible as it is unsafe and unattractive.

## Delivery and Implementation

A key dimension of Area Action Plans (and the LDF more generally) is the emphasis placed upon delivery and implementation. Within this context, the response from the Government Office stressed that the document will need to be strengthened in terms of its overall delivery, detailed implementation and monitoring by the time it is submitted for independent examination. This aspect of the plan is therefore a key priority for the council to address (with partners) to ensure that there is a robust and realistic delivery plan in place which is integral to the AAP. Therefore:

- The submission document needs to establish the way that the proposals will be implemented. This should include details on:
  - The sources of funding to support the intended action.
  - Lead agency for implementing each policy and proposal
  - A timetable establishing how and when the proposals contained within the AAP will be taken forward successfully.
  - Refined spatial objectives with clear outputs, targets and indicators to ensure deliverability.

### 7.0 Next Steps

- 7.1 The representations received on the Preferred Options clearly have a major influence on shaping the Submission Draft AAP. A formal Report of Consultation is being prepared and this will accompany the documentation for the next stage and provide an explanation for any changes to the Plan in the light of the comments made. In addition to the Report of Consultation, progression of the AAP and changes to proposals will be charted through its accompanying Sustainability Appraisal.
- 7.2 Consideration is being given to all the comments received in consultation with partner agencies, particularly West Leeds Area Management and Leeds West NW Homes. However, given the comments made at the Preferred Options stage, it is clear that further thought and refinements to the Plan need to be given to the following **key issues**:
1. The scale of proposed demolitions in New Wortley, in consultation with West North-West Homes, and the timing of housing decency works to the properties that remain.
  2. Agree a framework or planning brief to secure the future of Armley Mills, ensuring that it connects into the neighbouring area effectively and realises its full potential.
  3. The need to develop a realistic delivery plan to clearly demonstrate that the AAP will be successful in facilitating the regeneration of west Leeds.
- 7.3 Once the plan has been refined in this way, it will be re-presented to the Panel to seek approval for it to be submitted to the Secretary of State and to be placed on deposit for a final round of consultation prior to it reaching the Examination Stage.
- 7.4 As part of the discussions that will take place to help to finalise the plan over the coming weeks, the views of ward members will be sought, and also the West Leeds Gateway Board.

## **8.0 Conclusions**

- 8.1 This report provides a brief overview of responses on the West Leeds AAP and shows that considerable efforts have been made to ensure widespread engagement. Whilst significant support has been expressed for many aspects of the Plan, there are still a number of key issues to be resolved before it can be finalised.

## **9.0 Recommendations**

- 9.1 The Development Plan Panel is asked to note the comments made on the AAP Preferred Options for West Leeds and note the actions which are being taken to move the plan forward towards adoption.