

Report of Chief Planning Officer

Report to Outer North West Area Committee

Date: 25 March 2013

Subject: Response to the WARD report presented to Area Committee and the Planning Minister. Nick Boles

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Otley and Yeadon, Guiseley and Rawdon		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

1. At the last Outer North West Area Committee meeting in January a deputation from WARD (Wharfedale Area Review Development) presented the report previously prepared for Nick Boles, Planning Minister, for his recent trip to Leeds, which included a visit to Aireborough.
2. The issues covered in the WARD report cover concerns regarding planning policy at both a national and local level. This report considers the issues at a local level, including housing land supply, highways and transportation (the A65), neighbourhood planning and localism, the Census and property.
3. The issues in the report fall into three broad categories: issues that the Council either sympathises with, needs to consider further or requires clarification on.
4. Many of the local issues raised are being dealt with by the Council elsewhere (Core Strategy, Site Allocations, neighbourhood planning) but it is clear from the tone of the report that the views expressed are strongly held and based on a lack of confidence in the planning system generally.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that Area Committee:

- (i) Note the issues raised by WARD and the initial responses to them;
- (ii) Agree that officers from planning and highways and transportation meet with WARD representatives to clarify some of the issues and to seek solutions wherever possible.

1. Purpose of this report

- This report provides an initial response to the issues that have been raised in the report prepared by WARD for the visit to the area by Nick Boles, planning Minister, in January. Area Committee members requested relevant officer and a summary of the issues aid a further discussion at Area Committee.

Background information

The paper presented by WARD to the Planning Minister, Nick Boles, includes a wide and complex range of issues which are critical of the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Council in relation to housing growth issues. The Council is not aware that WARD has received a formal response from the Planning Minister on the issues raised.

2. Main issues

General Issues

- 2.1 The WARD report raises a number of issues that the Council has sympathy with, including delivering social housing that is truly affordable, consideration for economic, social and environmental sustainability in new housing development and allowing the consideration of the cumulative effects of development upon local infrastructure and transport systems.

Housing Land Supply

- 2.2 At the Executive Board meeting on 13 March the Council outlined steps that are being taken to ensure that there is a 5 year housing land supply and agreed an interim policy that will assist the Council in strengthening the supply of achievable housing land pending the adoption of the Site Allocations Plan. These steps will put the Council in a stronger position to resist proposals on sites that are unsuitable or unsustainable for housing development, a position that WARD are arguing for in their report and a position that it is hoped that WARD support.
- 2.3 WARD raise a number of issues regarding the Core Strategy and they have already made formal objections to the Council on these matters. These issues are being dealt with alongside other representations as part of the formal consultation process and it is not appropriate to comment on these separately as a special case.

Highways and Transportation

- 2.4 The WARD report summarises some of the findings of the highways consultants report but does not include details on the date of the report, the methodology and the consultants brief.
- 2.5 The highways consultant commissioned by WARD recommends that stronger mechanisms are put in place for addressing the cumulative impact of development and this is agreed by the Council as important. However, the evidence presented by WARD does not offer any solutions on how this could be achieved and there is an opportunity for further dialogue between officers and WARD on this.
- 2.6 The report falls short on the accuracy of data used and fails to take into account recent improvements in transport infrastructure.

Neighbourhood planning and Localism

- 2.7 The criticisms of neighbourhood planning in the report are premature as the working relationships with the Council on neighbourhood plans are at early stages in some areas (Guisely and Yeadon, Otley) or just about to be established (Rawdon). The Council has embraced neighbourhood planning as a positive way of building strong working relationships with communities and as a means for finding agreed solutions to many of the issues highlighted in the WARD report.

Census

- 2.8 The report repeats objections based on the 2011 Census that WARD have already submitted to the Council through the formal Core Strategy consultation process. The Council is currently reviewing the Census material as it becomes available. However, early indications suggest that the assumptions made by the Council in the Housing Market Area Assessments (HMAA) confirm the Census assumptions that have been made.

Property

- 2.9 There is a section at the end of the WARD report regarding property issues which require further clarification from WARD.

3. Corporate Considerations

Consultation and Engagement

- 3.1 This report responds to a number of matters in a paper that was originally prepared for Nick Boles and it is understood that a written response has not been received from the Minister.
- 3.2 In respect to the areas of work that the Council is responsible for that are referred to in the WARD this report covers the Core Strategy, the Site Allocations Plan and neighbourhood planning. The Council has either undertaken a significant amount of consultation and engagement (Core Strategy) or is currently doing so/about to (neighbourhood planning, Site Allocations Plan).

4. Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.1 The Core Strategy, Site Allocations Plan and neighbourhood planning all provide opportunities for a greater focus on equality, diversity, cohesion and engagement. The Site Allocations consultation in the summer and the ongoing neighbourhood planning work with local communities are both offering additional opportunities for new ways of working which will further enhance opportunities for equality, diversity, cohesion and engagement.

5. Council policies and City Priorities

5.1 The housing growth issues outlined in this report link well to all three of the Council's corporate priorities set out in the Vision for Leeds :

- Leeds will be fair, open and welcoming
- Leeds' economy will be prosperous and sustainable
- All Leeds' communities will be successful

5.2 The issues outlined also meets the Council value of 'Working with Communities' and related priority of 'consultation' set out in the Council's Business Plan 2011 – 15.

6. Resources and value for money

6.1 The Core Strategy, the Site Allocations Plan and neighbourhood planning all have significant implications for Council resources and value for money but it is anticipated that a greater focus on engagement, consultation and agreement with and between local communities, the development industry and the Council will result in a more cost effective way of working for all.

7. Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

7.1 The Core Strategy, the Site Allocations Plan and neighbourhood planning are all taking place within a new and fast-changing national planning background which is focussed on economic growth, localism and sustainability often creating testing times for local decision-making. The next 12-18 months will be critical - The submission of the Core Strategy for Examination by the Planning Inspectorate, the Site Allocations Plan will undergo the first phase of consultation and the first neighbourhood planning Examinations are likely to take place subject to the adoption of the Core Strategy. All of these factors will have significant legal and policy implications for the Council and local communities in Leeds.

8. Risk Management

8.1 There is a balance of risks regarding economic growth, localism and sustainability and this is reflected in debates both nationally and locally. It is hoped that future decisions made by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on planning appeals will give comfort to local communities and local authorities that housing growth and localism can work hand in hand and deliver sustainable growth.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 The wide-ranging and complex issues presented by WARD raise issues that the Council either sympathises with, needs to consider further or requires clarification on. Of particular interest to the Council in this mix will be a response from the original recipient of the paper, the Planning Minister, Nick Boles. In the meantime, however, it would be helpful for officers from planning and highways and transportation to meet with WARD representatives to discuss the issues of concern and agree solutions wherever possible.

10. Recommendations

It is recommended that Area Committee:

Note the issues raised by WARD and the initial responses to them.

Agree that officers from planning and highways and transportation meet with WARD representatives to clarify some of the issues and to seek solutions wherever possible.