

Report of Chief Planning Officer

Report to Outer North West Area Committee

Date: 15 May 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 March Outer North West Area Committee meeting an initial report was presented in response to issues raised at the January Area Committee by WARD (Wharfedale Area Review Development). At this meeting WARD tabled a supplementary note ("WARD Campaign to Reduce Leeds Housing Targets") and it was agreed to have a further discussion at AREA Committee about the issues raised.
2. Following the Area Committee meeting officers have met with representatives from WARD and as a result there is a better understanding of the issues facing local authorities in setting a housing target. However, there are still concerns and these are outlined in this report.
3. This report provides an update on the key issues raised by WARD, including housing targets, Census information, highways and transportation and neighbourhood planning.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that Area Committee:

(i.) Note the key issues raised by WARD and the responses to them;

(ii) Note that the Council will work with the five neighbourhood planning areas in Outer North West, with a focus on securing designation (where not already made) and securing a successful examination;

(iii) Note that a meeting will be taking place with WARD representatives and highways and transportation officers on 22 May, this will be an opportunity to respond to and explore issues raised as Area Committee.

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report provides further clarification to the key issues raised by WARD, including:

- Housing targets
- Highways and transportation
- Census
- Neighbourhood planning.

2.0 Background information

2.1 Members received a report at the March Area Committee which provided an initial response to the paper presented by WARD to the Planning Minister, Nick Boles, on his visit to the area in January. At this meeting WARD circulated to members a supplementary note and it was agreed that a further discussion should take place at Area Committee on these issues and others.

2.2 The WARD report covers a wide and complex range of issues which are critical of the Council and the Department for Communities and Local Government in relation to planning for housing growth, neighbourhood planning and localism in particular. The Council is not aware that WARD has received a formal response from the Planning Minister on the issues raised.

2.3 Following the March Area Committee, planning officers met with representatives of WARD to discuss the issues and a good understanding was reached on the issues facing local communities and local authorities on housing growth issues. It was also agreed that the Council works closely with all communities in Outer North West on the issues raised in the report. This could provide a positive focus for the discussion at Area Committee.

2.4 Given the issues raised in the WARD reports a separate meeting has been arranged between WARD representatives and highways officers for 7th May.

3. Main issues

General Issues

- 3.1 As outlined at the March Area Committee meeting the Council agrees with many of the views expressed by WARD, including delivering social housing that is truly affordable, the need for economic, social and environmental sustainability in new housing development and allowing for the consideration of the cumulative effects of development upon local infrastructure and transport systems.
- 3.2 The supplementary note provides additional information on the points already made and concludes by urging the Council to “obtain and independent assessment of effective demand for housing to obtain a realistic figure of new homes required.” WARD have been advised that, unlike a number of other local authorities, Leeds has obtained an independent assessment in the form of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), update 2011. This has provided information on both housing need and demand (unlike the local authorities mentioned in the WARD report).
- 3.3 A number of communities in the Outer North West area have made representations to the Council’s Core Strategy, submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in April following formal agreement by Full Council (November 14th 2002). The comments made by WARD and others will now be considered by a Planning Inspector, along with the 800+ pages of representations made by house builders and developers who argue that the Leeds housing target is too low.
- 3.4 Many of the issues raised by WARD are now 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.

4.0 Housing Targets

- 4.1 The key point made by WARD is that the Census has proved that the Council has made a “massive over-estimate” of population growth. It is suggested that the 35,000 increase in population (or 5%) is one of the lowest UK urban areas. It is further argued that population growth using Census data must be the best guide to population growth in the future and that the 5% growth in Leeds should lead to a reduced level of growth as anticipated in Bradford, Kirklees, Sheffield, Birmingham, Bristol and Leicester.
- 4.2 WARD argue for flexibility in the setting of housing targets and suggest that it is impossible to predict housing demand beyond 5 years. It is suggested that the Council reviews evidence as it arises in the future.

- 4.3 The Council is of the view that the Core Strategy as submitted to the Inspectorate in April includes credible and defensible housing targets as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Without such evidence being in place, there is a danger that the plan would be found 'unsound', leading to further uncertainties.
- 4.4 The figures quoted by WARD of other local authorities reducing housing targets is different to the Leeds situation as all of the quoted areas exclusively used Census data to establish housing targets in the first place, whereas in Leeds the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) considered both supply and demand which has proved to be more robust and reliable.
- 4.5 While the Council sympathises with the request for flexibility there is a requirement placed upon local authorities to set housing targets for a period of 15 years. The NPPF requires sites to be sustainable, deliverable and viable.
- 4.6 As the Site Allocations document moves forward and identifies potential future housing sites it will be steered by proposed broad distributional rates set out in the Submission Core Strategy. Policy SP7 seeks to distribute 3% of the growth needed in Leeds over the plan period to the Aireborough Housing Market Characteristic Area (HCMA). This area, along with the Outer North West, has the lowest level of proposed future growth in the city e.g. City Centre growth is set at 15.5% and the Outer South West at 11%.
- 4.7 The distribution of housing growth within the Aireborough HCMA will be established in the Site Allocations document and will depend on the sustainability characteristics of a range of sites in the area submitted to the Council. In progressing the Site Allocations process, draft 'Issues and Options' are to be considered by the Development Plan Panel on 30th April and Executive Board on 8th May.

5.0 Highways and Transportation

- 5.1 The WARD report highlights many issues regarding transport provision and congestion on the A65 corridor, and draws mostly on data provided by Leeds City Council. This includes peak spreading, rat-running, lack of highway capacity to accommodate growth and the impacts of new housing developments. These issues, however, are not unique to this area of Leeds.
- 5.2 The latest analysis of vehicle journey times in Leeds shows that additional delays due to congestion on the A65 during 2011/12 added around 30% to journey times in the peak periods (Menston-City Centre). This is slightly greater than the Leeds average, however, seven out of 16 radial routes were worse than the A65 during the morning peak and three in the evening peak.
- 5.3 Analysis of the 2011 census method of travel to work data shows that car usage in the two wards of Rawdon and Guiseley and Horsforth accounts for 73% of all commuting journeys. This figure has not changed since 2001.

Although the Leeds average is 65%, twelve other wards in Leeds have higher levels of car usage than 73%.

- 5.4 Bus usage has fallen significantly in many wards, but at the same time rail usage and cycling have increased. The number of Guiseley and Rawdon residents commuting by train is now the highest in Leeds District, while Horsforth is fourth highest.
- 5.5 Surveys show that overall traffic levels in Leeds District have fallen in recent years, and that this started well before the recent economic downturn. All day traffic in 2011 was around 5% lower than in 2002. On the A65, counts by Nunroyd Park show a 10% fall in traffic between 2002 and 2012, while close to the city centre traffic on the A65 has fallen by 5% between 2004 and October 2012. Peak period traffic levels have also fallen by similar amounts.
- 5.6 The completion of the A65 Quality Bus Initiative in August 2012 represents a further significant investment in public transport on this corridor. In the immediate future, the signalisation of Horsforth roundabout is in the LTP3 programme for 2013/14. Within the next few years the Leeds Rail Growth Package will deliver two new rail stations with associated car parking at Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall Forge. The outcome of the recent Pinch Point bid to DfT for funding to signalise Rodley roundabout is expected next month. If successful it is expected that this would be carried out by 2015. In addition, a new link road between the A65 and A658 has been identified as a priority within the proposed West Yorkshire Plus Transport Fund.

6.0 Census

- 6.1 The recently published Census 2011 shows population growth between 2001 and 2011 for the key wards within the Aireborough housing market characteristic area:

Wards	2001	2011	% change
Horsforth	21,562	21,506	-0.26
Otley and Yeadon	23,037	22,233	-3.62
Guiseley and Rawdon	21,330	22,347	4.55
Total	65,929	66,086	0.24

- 6.2 The Leeds Submission Core Strategy suggests that the Aireborough HMCA should accommodate around 2,300 new homes over the next 15 years. This equates to a 3% growth in housing provision.
- 6.3 While this 3% housing growth may seem to be at odds with the past level of population growth that has occurred within the area as a whole, it is important to note that there is not a direct relationship between population and housing growth. Other factors will influence the need for new housing. First, even if natural change (levels of births in excess of deaths) is low,

trends for smaller households such as divorce will increase the demand for new homes. Second, the effects of an ageing population limit the stock of housing available. Third, the need for affordable housing can be met through new provision of low cost homes, often in association with new market housing.

7.0 Neighbourhood planning and Localism

7.1 The criticisms of neighbourhood planning in the report are premature. The Council has embraced neighbourhood planning as a positive way of building strong working relationships with communities and as a means of finding agreed solutions to many of the issues highlighted in the WARD report. For neighbourhood planning to be a success it requires positive working relationships on all sides, not only between the Council and local communities but also with local business and developers. This is a challenge in some parts of the city but it also an opportunity.

7.2 There are 4 areas in Outer North West preparing a neighbourhood plan, many of them non-parished areas : Aireborough (Guiseley and Yeadon), Adel, Otley, Horsforth. Of these, only Horsforth has been designated (boundary to be revised), although Otley is expected to be designated soon. The Council is working closely with the other areas to ensure that they are designated and, ultimately, that their submitted plans have a successful examination.

8.0 Corporate Considerations

Consultation and Engagement

8.1 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.

8.2 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).

9.0 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

9.1 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.

10.0 Council policies and City Priorities

10.1 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

10.2 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.

11.0 Resources and value for money

11.1 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.

12.0 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

12.1 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.

13.0 Risk Management

13.1 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.

14.0 Conclusions

14.1 In seek to gain a further understanding of the concerns expressed by WARD, officers have subsequently met with WARD representatives, as part of an ongoing dialogue. This has resulted in a greater understanding of issues in relation to the factors involved in settling a housing requirement and housing growth issues within the local area. Within this overall context, further information/updates has also been provided on highways and transport

issues and the Census. In moving forward, the City Council will continue to work with communities on their preparation of neighbourhood plans across the district.

14.0 Recommendations

14.1 It is recommended that Area Committee:

(i.) Note the key issues raised by WARD and the responses to them;

(ii) Note that the Council will work with the five neighbourhood planning areas in Outer North West, with a focus on securing designation (where not already made) and securing a successful examination;

(iii) Note that a meeting will be taking place with WARD representatives and highways and transportation officers on 22 May, this will be an opportunity to respond to and explore issues raised as Area Committee.