Core Strategy: Housing Issues and Options

PURPOSE

1. To inform Members about progress on the preparation of the Core Strategy, a key document in Burnley's planning framework and to seek approval of the Core Strategy Housing Issues and Options paper, attached at Appendix 1, as the basis for public comment.

RECOMMENDATION

2. To recommend that the Executive approve the Core Strategy Issues and Options paper for publication as a public consultation document.

3. To recommend that the Head of Planning & Environment Service be authorised to make any necessary minor amendments to the Housing Issues and Options paper prior to the commencement of the consultation period.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

4. The Core Strategy is the one of the most important policy documents the Council produces and a key document in Burnley’s Local Development Framework. It sets the overarching spatial strategy for the borough. It is imperative that progress is made on the housing element of the Core Strategy in order to provide a context for the Area Action Plans that are due to be submitted to the Secretary of State later this year. In addition, failure to prepare a Core Strategy and the planning framework that it provides may restrict the Council’s ability to access funding, protect the built and natural environment and identify strategic sites for development.

5. To ensure that any minor changes to the Housing Issues and Options paper do not result in a delay to the consultation period.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Background
6. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Council to prepare a Local Development Framework, a suite of documents that will set the planning framework for Burnley. The Core Strategy is the most important document in this framework and it provides the spatial interpretation of the Sustainable Community Strategy. All other planning documents prepared by the Council must be in conformity with it. This will include the Area Action Plans. As a general rule, there is an assumption that the Core Strategy will be prepared before other plans.

7. However, in Burnley’s case it was decided to progress work that had already started on drawing up plans for a number of neighbourhoods that were the focus of housing market renewal activity – Burnley Wood/Healey Wood, Daneshouse/Duke Bar/Stoneyholme, Padiham, Piccadilly/Trafalgar and South West Burnley. There was an imperative to progress these Area Action Plans (AAPs) as quickly as possible in order to progress clearance and environmental actions already initiated, and to provide a solid basis for undertaking Compulsory Purchase Orders using planning powers.

8. These five AAPs reached Preferred Option stage (February 2008) and have since been assessed for the likelihood that they will be found ‘sound’ at public examination. Two assessments have been undertaken, one by a ‘critical friend’ (POS Enterprises) and another, more recently, by a Planning Inspector. Following the advice of the critical friend, and in the light of changed Government advice on the preparation of plans, it was decided to delay progression of the AAPs for a period of 6 – 9 months, in order to provide a strategic context for them, as the lack of such a context was a serious concern. This context was to be provided by developing the housing element of the Core Strategy. The Planning Inspector endorsed this approach.

Core Strategy – Housing Issues and Options

9. In drawing up its Core Strategy, the Council must first develop issues and options as a way of involving all of those with an interest in the area as early as possible. The purpose of this issues and options stage is to stimulate discussion in relation to housing and to provide an opportunity to shape and influence the housing element of the Core Strategy. Six potential strategy options have been identified. These range from minimal growth to transformational growth and are intended to provoke debate. No particular option is supported and views are sought on other possible options.

10. The consultation document has been prepared in the context of the national housing market downturn and is based on evidence provided by a recently commissioned Strategic Housing Market Assessment. It is informed by national planning guidance and the Regional Spatial Strategy.

11. It also outlines a number of sites that the Council is considering for housing as part of the preparation of its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment which is a Government requirement.

12. Comments received will be used to get a clearer idea of the housing situation in Burnley as a whole and this will set the context for the Submission Area Action Plans.

Core Strategy – Next Steps

13. Consultation on the Housing Issues and Options document will be followed by an
opportunity to comment on a similar paper relating to the other elements in the Core Strategy, such as employment, transport and the environment. There will then be a final stage of consultation before the Core Strategy is submitted to the Secretary of State for approval. This is called the submission stage.

14. Following its submission, the Core Strategy will be examined by an independent planning inspector who will then produce a report outlining any changes that the Council must make to the Core Strategy before it is finally adopted.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION

15. Last year, the Government awarded Housing and Planning Delivery Grant for completion of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. If similar criteria are used for the coming year, the Council may receive an award for this work. However, failure to meet the timetable set out for the Core Strategy may adversely affect this allocation.

16. Where possible, studies have been carried out in-house. However, there is likely to be additional work which will need to be commissioned in order to provide a robust evidence base, including that relating to the economic viability of sites. In addition, budget provision is required for the actual public examination process itself.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

17. The Core Strategy, when approved, will provide the strategic planning framework for Burnley and a context for the Area Action Plans. In the meantime, these are provided by the Burnley Local Plan.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

18. None externally.

BACKGROUND PAPERS


FURTHER INFORMATION

PLEASE CONTACT: Margaret Whewell Ext 2540
ALSO: Pete Milward Ext 2539
        Gareth Fort Ext. 2543

Appx 1