

Agenda Item No: 12



Cabinet recommendations for consideration by Council at the Annual Meeting of the Council on Wednesday, 7 May 2014

Cabinet – 24 April 2014

150 Lewes District Local Plan – Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document: Focussed Amendments

The Cabinet considered Report No 63/14 relating to a proposal to publish the focussed amendments to the Core Strategy, including a new housing delivery target, in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and, subsequently, to progress the Core Strategy through the Examination in Public process.

The Strategy was to be the central planning document for the District and would set out the long term vision and guide development and change up to 2030. It was being prepared in partnership with the SDNPA and was subject to a long process of preparation, public consultation and inspection following which it had been amended and was almost ready for submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination before adoption.

At its meeting on 18 November 2013, Cabinet had discussed progress on the Strategy since the Proposed Submission Document (the draft strategy) was published. Cabinet agreed that further work needed to be undertaken before it was submitted. Such work had subsequently been completed and had led Officers to conclude that the Strategy would benefit from some limited or 'focussed' amendments before submission, details of which were shown as 'track changes' to the Core Strategy – Proposed Submission Document at Appendix A to the Report.

The most significant proposed changes related to:

- An increase in the overall housing delivery target for the District;
- Amendments to the wording of Core Policy 3 to overcome difficulties

in identifying suitable Gypsy & Traveller sites;

- Amendments to the wording of Core Policy 10 to reflect new advice from Natural England on mitigating the impact of development on the Ashdown Forest; and
- Amendments to Core Policy 14 to reflect changing Government aspirations in terms of building sustainability.

Paragraph 2 of the Report set out details relating to the housing delivery target which, in the Proposed Submission Document (PSD) was 4,500 additional homes between 2010 and 2030 (equivalent to 225 a year) which fell considerably short of meeting the full housing needs of the District. At its meeting on 18 November 2013, Cabinet had agreed the objectively assessed housing need to be 9,200 to 10,400 additional homes between 2010 and 2030, which was equivalent to 460 to 520 new homes a year.

That issue had been raised in public representations received to the PSD and by the Planning Inspector who had conducted the 'critical friend' exercise with the Council last year. The Inspector had advised that it was likely to present a significant concern about the 'soundness' of the Strategy to any Inspector who eventually examined the document.

The Officers had examined options to see if the District's housing needs could be more fully met. The results of that work were detailed in the Core Strategy Background Paper: Justification for the Housing Strategy. However, the findings, and their implications for the housing delivery target, were summarised in paragraph 2 of the Report.

Details relating to amendments to the Core Policies were set out in paragraph 3 of the Report.

Additionally, other minor changes had been made to the text and policies of the Strategy which mainly related to changes in the planning policy context or other circumstances. The Report indicated that they were not regarded as changing the Strategy in any fundamental way, but that they still needed to be published for any public representations to be made.

Paragraph 5 of the Report provided information relating to the proposed consultation arrangements and the next steps in the Strategy process.

A Sustainability Appraisal of the Strategy had previously been undertaken and the appraisal process would be used to identify any further implications from the proposed amendments and published as a background paper. However, it was considered unlikely that any adverse impacts would be identified, an issue which was confirmed by the Interim Head of Planning Policy at the Cabinet meeting.

Cabinet's attention was drawn to the Housing Trajectory graph as set out in Appendix 4 to the Core Strategy – Proposed Submission Document as appended to the Report. It was reported that the graph did not take account of 40 committed dwellings at Ringmer.

With the agreement of the Chair, Councillor Gardiner drew Cabinet's attention to paragraph 6.78 of the Proposed Submission Document and advised that he did not agree with the revised text which deleted "by June 2014" and replaced it with "before the adoption of the Core Strategy" in respect of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan as he felt that the change might hinder progress of the Neighbourhood Plan in the event that the examination and/or referendum did not progress as was anticipated.

Councillors Gardiner and Eiloart expressed their concerns in respect of Core Policy 12 following which the Chair suggested that they discuss such concerns with the Interim Head of Planning prior to the Council's consideration of the Document at its meeting on 7 May 2014.

Recommended:

150.1 That, subject to there being no adverse findings from a sustainability appraisal, as referred to in paragraph 7 of Report No 63/14:

DBSD

(i) The focussed amendments to the Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document, as set out at Appendix A to Report No 63/14, be published for an eight week period for public representations to be made;

(ii) The Director of Business Strategy and Development be authorised to take account of any representations and the sustainability appraisal, incorporate the focussed amendments and formally submit the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for independent examination; and

(iii) The Director of Business Strategy and Development, in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning and the South Downs National Park Authority, be authorised to agree minor modifications to the Core Strategy during the Examination in Public, as deemed necessary to make the document sound (any major modifications will be referred to Cabinet/Council as necessary).

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure that the Core Strategy has addressed the implications of recent changes to national planning policy prior to its submission to the Secretary of State.

To ensure that the Core Strategy addresses any significant issues raised in representations received to the Proposed Submission Document, together with the areas of concern identified by the Planning Inspector who undertook a critical analysis of the document, before submission.

To ensure that the Core Strategy is progressed towards adoption in a timely manner, to provide the Council and National Park Authority with up-to-date policies against which to determine planning applications.

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- † *Councillors are requested to bring with them to the meeting Report No 63/14 which was circulated with the agenda papers for the meeting of the Cabinet on 24 April 2014. If you require a further copy of the document please contact Trevor Hayward, Committee Officer, on e-mail trevor.hayward@lewes.gov.uk or telephone 01273 484359.*