

REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK OPTIONS PAPER CONSULTATION (MARCH 2009): REPORT OF CONSULTATION**

Date: 25 June 2009

Member Reporting: Councillor Mrs Knight

Contact Officer(s): Sarah Ball, Team Manager – Strategy and Plans Tel: 01628 796112

Wards Affected: All Wards

1. SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Advise Cabinet of the outcome of the recent consultation (The 'Options Paper') on the Local Development Framework (LDF) undertaken in March-May this year;
- To recommend that the Report of Consultation, subject to amendments, be endorsed and
- That the preferred approach to accommodating development density options within the LDF, be agreed.

1.2 The Options Paper builds on previous work and the outcomes of previous community engagement. (Refer to http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/pp_ldf.htm). Key to the Options Paper are the strategic options themselves which describe the ways in which the LDF can contribute towards addressing key issues and challenges whilst realising the vision and objectives. They centre on the ways in which the Government's requirement for new homes to be built in the Borough (6,920 homes between 2006 and 2026) could be accommodated, taking into account national, regional and local constraints to development.

1.3 Consultation on the LDF Options Paper (including the summary newsletter) has now closed. Key trends from the consultation, as set out in the Report of Consultation, include:

- The importance of the Green Belt
- A preference for higher density in the settlements as a way of accommodating development (although the result is not clear cut in terms of the other density options proposed which may lead to a view that a variety of solutions to accommodating development may be required);
- An indication of a preference for accommodating development in small sites, if greenfield land is required (but again this result was not wholly conclusive).

2. RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) **The Core Strategy Options Paper: Report of Consultation (and accompanying Report of Detailed Consultation Responses) be endorsed;**

- ii) **The results of the consultation be taken into account in developing spatially specific options and that the preferred approach to accommodating development requirements in the LDF as set out under para 3.7 of this report be endorsed as a basis of the next LDF consultation exercise.**
- iii) **That the Core Strategy Options Paper: Report of Consultation (and accompanying Report of Detailed Consultation Responses) be made available on the Council's website.**

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?

Respondents will know the results of the consultation and the general way forward for managing development in the Borough:

- Higher density development in town centres;
- The use of land across all the main settlements to deliver housing development;
- Attention to the provision of new and improved infrastructure to accompany growth.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Associated 'Options Paper'

- 3.1 The Council started the formal stages in the consultation on the Local Development Framework (LDF) in March 2009.
- 3.2 The Options Paper builds on previous work and the outcomes of previous community engagement. From the 'evidence base' of supporting studies and from the pool of opinion from the wider community expressed through the previous work on the LDF and other Council surveys, it was been possible to establish the key characteristics and issues facing the Royal Borough.
- 3.3 The Options Paper set out a draft vision for the Royal Borough and presented a number of objectives. Key to the Options Paper was the management development density options.
- 3.4 The Options Paper also put forward a number of key development management policies which will, subject to the public consultation, be included in the LDF.

LDF Options Paper Report of Consultation

- 3.5 Of a total of 2163 responses, 96% were from residents (with 92 responses received from statutory consultees, developers and local interest and amenity groups and parishes etc).
- 3.6 Key trends from the consultation include:
 - The importance of the Green Belt (*61% of residents rated the Green Belt highly important*);
 - A preference for higher density development (*47%*) (while a general preference for higher density levels was expressed this was tempered by reference to accounting for location and character, This indicates that a variety of densities across the Royal Borough could be appropriate);

- An indication of a preference for accommodating development in small sites (56%), if greenfield land is required (but again this result was not wholly conclusive);
- In terms of employment - any new land required, should be on land next to town centres or other existing employment areas (74%);
- General agreement in relation to the overall vision for the LDF and general agreement regarding the objectives and aims as set out in the LDF Options Paper.

3.7 In light of consultation and the evidence base already gathered, a preferred approach to accommodating future development in RBWM could be:

- 1) Protect the Green Belt and ensure there is no net loss;
- 2) Higher density development in the town centres and to a lesser extent in the settlements generally, with a particular focus on Maidenhead;
- 3) Target a range of densities at other locations outside centres (according to sustainable settlements work, transport corridors etc.);
- 4) An allowance for windfall sites that reflects the position at the Borough regarding many smaller sites whilst being mindful of guidance guarding against over-reliance on windfalls as a source of overall housing supply;
- 5) Employment growth based upon existing employment areas and possible extensions, whether in town centres or edge of settlement;
- 6) Flexible approach to use of employment land for housing in suitable locations provided sufficient alternative land can be provided elsewhere;
- 7) Allied to growth, the provision of infrastructure and community facilities such as transport, sewerage and schools to ensure development is adequately serviced.

Next Steps

3.8 The preferred approach as outlined above will inform further consultation and progression with the LDF Core Strategy. The programme hereafter is as follows:

- Late Summer 2009 - consultation on the preferred approach for managing development growth;
- Autumn 2009 – final drafting of the Core Strategy;
- December 2009 – approval of the completed Core Strategy (and Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan) will be sought by Council. (Council would therefore be approving a vision for the Borough, a strategy for accommodating future development and key policies on the location of development.);
- January 2010 - the completed Core Strategy would be subject to ‘pre-submission’ consultation;
- March 2010 - submission of the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State;
- July 2010 - programmed Examination of the Core Strategy by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State;
- If found ‘sound’, the Core Strategy is expected to be adopted in December 2010.

4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	To agree the recommendations of the report.	Recommended. It is important that the Report of Consultation is made publically available and that the LDF is informed by the views of the community in the next stage of the process.	Revenue: Costs include additional or updated LDF related studies and a further round of consultation funded by current revenue budget. Capital: N/a
2.	To take no action on the consultation.	Not recommended. Failure to take into account the views of consultees would put the Core Strategy at risk of being found unsound. Failure to make the results of consultation publically available means that the LDF process would not be wholly transparent.	Revenue: None Capital: None

4.2 Risk assessment

- 4.2.1 A number of risks are identified with not moving forward with the LDF:
- Short term: losing appeals in the absence of any management strategy and a reduction in the policy planning proportion of reward income (total worth £128,000 last year)
- Medium term: jeopardising progression of the Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan
- Long term: Loss of reputation and ultimately Government intervention.

As indicated in para 3.7 above, moving forward with the LDF means that key decisions will need to be made regarding accommodating future development requirements. Progress will be scrutinised by the Government Office for the South East and the soundness of RBWM plans tested by the Planning Inspectorate at an Examination. The importance of the evidence base to support the LDF including consultation results is critical to success at Examination and to minimising any potential risks of being found 'unsound' and incurring additional costs.

5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

- 5.1 The consultation began on the March 6th 2009 and ended on the 22nd May 2009. To date, 2163 responses have been recorded and processed in relation to the Options Paper, providing an indication of the views of the community, interest groups and other statutory consultees. This is a higher response than previously achieved and reflects the various ways the consultation was carried out including a Borough wide

letter drop, radio airtime, press and drop in sessions. A report summarising these has been prepared. This 'Report of Consultation' is available in Group Rooms, Members' Rooms and from Democratic Services (http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/pp_ldf.htm). It is proposed that the Report of Consultation is published on the Council's website.

5.2 The Consultation Report has been prepared in line with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement and in accordance with relevant legislation¹.

6. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

6.1 To be completed following the meeting of the Panel on the 17th June 2009.

7. IMPLICATIONS

The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A

Background Papers:

Local Development Framework Options Consultation (March 2009); Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment; Townscape Assessment; Strategic Flood Risk Assessment; Green Belt Boundary Study (Proposals for New Green Belt Land); Sustainability Appraisal; Employment Land Review; Retail and Leisure Study

¹ Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (amended 2008).