
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 24 August 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor Carr (Chair)
Councillors Cole, McTigue, Rogers and T Ward.

OFFICIALS: G Brown, P Clark, V Flynn, K Parkes and E Williamson

**** AN APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE** was submitted on behalf of Councillor Rooney

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made at this point of the meeting.

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

The Head and Planning and Regeneration presented a report, the purpose of which was to inform the Overview and Scrutiny Board of the June 2005 Submission Draft Regional Spatial Strategy.

Members were advised that this Special meeting had been called to allow the OSB to consider the Regional Spatial Strategy document, prior to its presentation to the Executive on 30 August 2005.

Background

Members were advised that Middlesbrough Council was subject to the North East Assembly time scales, which dictated that there had only been two months to comment on the draft RSS.

It was stated that the Regional Spatial Strategy was a significant document, and formed part of the Structure Plan, which was part of the Development Plan, which culminated as the Local Plan for the town. The RSS was a replacement document for the town's Structure Plan. The emergence of the Local Development Framework also had to be taken into account, alongside the RSS. Documents prepared were based on a long-term view, on a 15-year forward projection.

Members were advised that all planning applications now had to be submitted to the North East Assembly, and any application could be called in by the NEA, however, it was noted that the north east was subjected to the least number of applications being 'called in'.

The Board was advised that changes to the Planning system, introduced through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, were reported to the Executive on 27 April 2004. The Act replaced Regional Planning Guidance with Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Once adopted, the RSS, along with the Local Democratic Framework (LDF) would form the statutory Development Plan for Middlesbrough Council. The LDF and RSS must conform and would also set an upper limit on the amount of housing and employment that could be developed in the period 2004 to 2021.

External Consultation

The Board was advised that in November 2004, the North East Assembly undertook informal public consultation on the draft RSS and approved representations on the consultation draft on 25 January 2005. Following consideration of all representations, the Assembly had revised the document and was then consulting on the submission draft RSS. The statutory consultation stage ran from 13 July 2005 to 5 October 2005 and following this, there was to be an Examination in Public in March/April 2006, followed by publication of the RSS in February 2007. Any comments received from now on would be included in the Public Examination, in 2006.

Locational Strategy

It was noted that this section formed the overall objectives for the rest of the document. Whilst policy was sometimes difficult to interpret with regard to individual developments, overall growth was determined by policy.

Reference was made to Policy 5, which set out the locational strategy for the region. Following Council objections, the amended version supported the core area for the Tees Valley as defined at Paragraph 2.21, namely the Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative Area (SMI). It was felt that the SMI should be given the same priority as the Newcastle/Gateshead initiative.

The Objection raised by the Council was that Policy 7 should be amended to make specific reference to the prioritisation of the core area, the Middlesbrough Stockton Initiative, rather than both banks of the Tees, between Stockton, Middlesbrough and Redcar.

Retail and Leisure

Policy 7 of the RSS sought to locate the majority of the Tees Valleys' new retail and leisure development in the sub-regional centres of Middlesbrough and Darlington. The council had objected to policies 7 and 25 and requested that Middlesbrough was identified as the primary sub-regional centre for the Tees Valley region for retail and leisure purposes.

Economy

Reference was made to Policies 12 and 13, regarding new economic development and investment in core areas of the area's city regions and main towns. Policy 13 had identified Greater Middlehaven as one of the eight flagship schemes to create wider regeneration. As the report referred to 'major mixed use developments', the council had requested that Hemlington Grange was also identified within that policy, especially as similar and even smaller sites were included in the document. Currently, the RSS was refusing to acknowledge Hemlington Grange as a development site, due to its size, but the Council wished to pursue the issue, as the site was so significant.

The Council's objection was that another policy should be introduced after Policy 13, that listed major mixed use greenfield sites that were key to the regeneration of the urban core and Hemlington Grange would be identified within that policy.

Members commented that, as the Hemlington Grange site had previously been the site of Hemlington Hospital, technically it was not a greenfield site, but a mixture of a greenfield and brownfield site.

Housing

Members were advised that the RSS Housing strategy had been revised since the consultation draft. In a more cautious approach, the number of proposed additional net dwellings was reduced by 3,500 to 107,000. Full details of the Sub Regional Housing Allocations for the five sub-regions in the area and the numbers of dwellings quoted in the submission draft RSS from June 2005 and the Consultation Draft dated November 2004, in terms of dwellings, percentages and population, were included in Table 2 on page 5 of the report.

Table 3, on page 6, provided the same details of the Tees Valley Housing Allocations from the November 2004 document and the June 2005 document. Table 4, also on page 6, provided the details for Middlesbrough – Housing Allocations, both dwellings per year and total dwellings, for the November 2004 document and the June 2005 draft, for four periods from 2004 to 2021 inclusive.

A full analysis and explanation of these tables was also included in the report. Members were advised that the Council had objected to the dwelling provision set out in Policy 30 of the RSS Draft, the proposed phasing of 300 new additional dwellings for 2004-2011 was too low and should be 350. Clarification was also sought on paragraph 3.73 of the Draft regarding what was

meant in terms of existing land supply. Also, explicit recognition of a sustainable urban extension at Hemlington Grange should be made in paragraph 3.73.

Members were informed that all local authorities had aspirations to stabilise their population and whilst several urban cores were mentioned in RSS, this was not reflected in the housing allocations above. It was felt that the growth of the north east region would be as a result of the development of sub-regions. It was reiterated that the reduction in the town's population remained a concern and this could be contained if there was control over housing development within other local authorities. It was also commented that Middlesbrough had the capacity to accommodate a greater level of housing than the 5,780 detailed in Table 4 of the report.

Middlesbrough was planning to create its own 'brownfield' site, with the proposed demolition of housing in the Gresham area of the town, and would be allowed to replace these dwellings, albeit in smaller numbers. Middlesbrough also had a lot of small sites being developed, which could accommodate those leaving the Gresham area, as well as the growing number of people who lived alone. This meant that, although the population may be falling, there was still a need for more dwellings in the town, preferably in the Bands D – F, rather than in A – C. It was hoped that, with some elements of society becoming more wealthy, and with mortgages being easier to obtain, that people would move to upgrade their property, thus creating a demand for higher quality housing.

Transport

It was noted that Policy 7 in the draft RSS had promoted the development of a modern integrated public transport network for the Tees Valley. However, that this did not address the need for public transport infrastructure improvements in the core area between Stockton and Middlesbrough Town Centres. The importance of the A19 and A66 was highlighted, however, the council stated that improvements to the highway infrastructure within the core area of the Tees Valley city region needed to be highlighted in paragraph 2.120 of the RSS, as a priority. Policy 51, which sought to rebalance the transport system away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, should also include reference to the proposals for the development of the Tees Valley rapid transit system/bus base solutions. Policy 54 advised that Local Transport Plans should seek to reduce non residential parking standards in locations with good public transport access, especially at strategic public transport hubs such as Middlesbrough. However, the council stated that this could be counterproductive in that town centre business could be encouraged to move their businesses to out of town locations, where parking for staff and customers was less restrictive. The council stated that the reference in Policy 54 to reduced parking provision in strategic public transport hubs should be deleted. Middlesbrough needed a strong economy and steps should not be taken to detract from this.

Members were aware that public transport provision in the town needed to be addressed. Middlesbrough Council was working with the Tees Valley JSU over traffic congestion on the A19 and A66. However, developments planned for Stockton and Hartlepool could have an effect on development in the whole of the north east. Reference was made to a Rapid Transport Plan, which could operate between Stockton and Middlesbrough, although the whole of the area needed to be considered for transport facilities. Other topics discussed included a Metro type system, a direct link being provided to Durham and Tees Valley Airport, a railway station being built in Middlehaven, town centre parking, the Marton Road corridor and the East Middlesbrough By-pass, which members felt should be referred to in the RSS, even though it was no longer listed as a priority by the Council.

Option Appraisal/Risk Assessment

Members were advised that there were two options, either to make representations on the RSS or to make no comment. The latter option would constrain the ability of the Council to allocate sufficient housing land in the LDF and restrict the delivery of key regeneration initiatives, including Hemlington Grange. Also, restricting new housing may restrict the Council's ability to reduce population loss with consequential impacts on Council Tax Revenue and supporting.

Once published, the RSS would form part of the statutory Development Plan and be part of the Council's policy framework. This would have specific implications for the Middlehaven ward, through the promotion of mixed-use development of Greater Middlehaven.

Following discussion, Members agreed to support the Council's objections to the RSS and endorsed the report presented to this at this meeting.

ORDERED as follows:-

- 1. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board endorsed this report and supported the objections raised within it**
- 2. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board invited the Executive to further consider the issues in connection with the East Middlesbrough By-pass.**