



AGENDA ITEM: 5

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

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Middlesbrough Local Development Framework – Core Strategy Preferred Options

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Summary

1. A new planning system was introduced by the Government in 2004. As a result of this the Council now has to prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF). A core component of the LDF is the preparation of the core strategy. This document should set out the principal elements of the planning framework for the town, and should comprise a spatial vision and strategic objectives, a spatial strategy, and core policies.
2. Middlesbrough's LDF core strategy has been produced having regard to the consultation undertaken on the Issues and Options paper during July 2005. This core strategy, the preferred options stage, will be published for consultation in December 2005. A submission version will then be produced having regard to consultation responses and submitted to the Secretary of State in the summer of 2006. The core strategy appended to this report is very much a working document that is still in preparation. It provides the Overview and Scrutiny Board with an opportunity to be involved in the process of preparing the core strategy from the beginning. If necessary there will be a further opportunity for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to call the core strategy in for consideration once it has been to Executive.

Introduction

3. In 2004 the Government introduced a new planning system that saw local plans and structure plans replaced by LDFs and Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). Together the Middlesbrough LDF and the RSS for the North East will form the statutory development plan for the town. The LDF will comprise of a series of documents called Local Development Documents (LDDs). One of the the first LDDs to be produced as part of the Middlesbrough LDF is the core strategy.

4. The core strategy is important because it sets the strategic planning framework for the town over the next fifteen years. Middlesbrough's core strategy will look forward to 2021. All other LDDs will need to be in conformity with the core strategy, and as such it is important to ensure that it will deliver and facilitate the Council's priorities and aspirations over that period and aid the bidding process to secure funding.

Evidence / Discussion

5. The core strategy document is comprised of the following components:
 - a) spatial portrait, vision, and objectives;
 - b) strategic policies that provide the planning framework for delivering the spatial vision and objectives;
 - c) development control policies; and
 - d) monitoring framework.
6. These are expanded on in more detail below.

Section 2: Spatial portrait and issues

7. This is the first section of the core strategy and sets the context of the LDF as a whole. The spatial portrait shows the main attributes of the town in terms of its geography, economy, environment, social, and cultural characteristics. From this portrait it should then be possible to identify the issues that need to be addressed in the LDF. These should draw upon the Community Strategy, other local initiatives such as the Stockton-Middlesbrough Initiative (SMI) and any other relevant strategic objectives.
8. The issues identified include:
 - a) addressing population decline;
 - b) reinforcing Middlesbrough's role as the principal centre of the Tees Valley city region;
 - c) creating a balanced housing market to meet the needs and aspirations of the population of the town both now and in the future;
 - d) improving education attainment; and
 - e) the successful implementation of a number of regeneration initiatives such as Greater Middlehaven and Greater Hemlington.

Section 3: Spatial Vision

9. The spatial vision should be both comprehensive and ambitious, setting out how the town will have changed by the end of the plan period in physical, economic, social and environmental terms. It should not be restricted to matters that can be implemented through the planning system, but should also give expression to other strategies and programmes.

10. The vision is detailed in the core strategy, but includes:
- a) developing Middlesbrough into a dynamic and vibrant city at the centre of a prosperous and growing Tees Valley city region;
 - b) Middlesbrough is a place where people want to live, and inward migration is increasing;
 - c) the successful regeneration of Greater Middlehaven, Greater Hemlington, and other initiatives; and
 - d) improvements in education attainment, and maximising the benefits of the University and Middlesbrough Colleges.

Section 4: Spatial Objectives

11. These are derived from the issues and spatial vision. They illustrate, in a meaningful way, how the strategy contributes to the outcomes outlined in the spatial vision. The core strategy contains fourteen spatial objectives.

Sections 5 to 11: Strategic spatial policies

12. These identify how the spatial strategy expressed by the vision and objectives will be delivered. The core strategy sets these policies out under six topic headings; these are detailed below. These policies should only be 'high-level' strategic policies that are necessary to deliver the spatial strategy.

Spatial strategy and core development principles

13. Underpinning the policies and proposals of the LDF is the spatial strategy and a set of core development principles. These principles provide a context for not only the preparation of the strategic policies of the Core Strategy and other development plan documents, but also a framework within which the spatial vision will be achieved. They are themes that run right through all policies and proposals, and which will need to be considered when assessing all development proposals. These are principally:

- a) the regeneration of Greater Middlehaven;
- b) the regeneration of Greater Hemlington;
- c) the regeneration of the Older Inner Middlesbrough housing area;
- d) the regeneration of Grove Hill;
- e) reinforcing and strengthening the role of the town centre as the principal centre of the Tees Valley city region; and
- f) the creation of the green blue heart to assist in the delivery of the SMI and the regeneration of the area between Middlesbrough and Stockton town centres.

Competitive business infrastructure

14. Ensuring that a competitive business infrastructure is in place in Middlesbrough means bringing forward land and premises to support the retention and expansion of existing businesses, promote enterprise and attract inward investment. This part of the core strategy contains the strategic policies that will assist in the delivery of the economic aspects of the spatial vision. Areas covered include:

- a) identification of strategic employment allocations;
- b) development of Riverside Park as a strategic employment location;
- c) promoting and facilitating growth in the digital economy sector including the creation of a cultural industries quarter (Boho); and
- d) the protection of existing employment sites and premises.

Revitalising the housing market

15. Delivering sufficient additional new homes in Middlesbrough, is central to achieving the core strategy's spatial vision of a wide range of housing opportunities in sustainable communities. It will be essential to Middlesbrough's future economic prosperity that these homes are provided in a variety locations, which offer a wide choice of high quality housing, in terms of style, size and tenure in order to meet the needs and aspirations of current residents and future migrants. New housing needs to complement the comprehensive package of measures proposed to restructure the housing market, including the selective demolition of housing that no longer meets modern aspirations, improvements to existing dwellings and to the environment. Policy areas covered in the core strategy include:
- a) increasing the supply of housing to meet the aspirations of the economically active population and the identification of strategic housing locations;
 - b) supporting the delivery of housing market renewal;
 - c) creation of a balanced housing stock; and
 - d) restricting apartments in those locations where they do not support delivery of the Council's priorities.

A 21st century retail and leisure centre

16. Middlesbrough Town Centre is one of the North East's strongest performing shopping centres, only Newcastle and the Metro Centre contain more retail floorspace. The town centre is the focus for the service based economy, is a key driver in the wider town economy and is an important source of employment. The town centre is also the focus for a vibrant evening economy based on the Middlesbrough Leisure Park including the cinema, restaurants, pubs and clubs. In addition, the Borough has a strong network of district and local centres meeting the day to day needs of residents. Core strategy policies therefore seek to:
- a) develop and expand the town centre to provide opportunities for further growth as the principal centre of the Tees Valley city region;
 - b) identify principal use sectors within the town centre; and
 - c) develop strategic leisure provision within the town.

A regional centre for education, health and culture

17. Middlesbrough has the opportunity to establish itself as one of the North's most significant cultural and education centres. This can only be achieved by building upon and continuing improvements in the education, health and cultural aspects of the town. Good community facilities are essential to maintain and improve the quality of life of the people living and working in Middlesbrough. The Council's

vision, Raising Hope, is built upon a foundation of education and care of our children and young people and support for vulnerable people in Middlesbrough. These are also central themes of the Community Strategy. Core strategy policies therefore seek to:

- a) support and facilitate the continued growth of the University and the contribution that it makes to the economic prosperity of the town;
- b) support and facilitate implementation of the Building Schools for the Future programme and any future school rationalisation programmes; and
- c) promote access to high quality health care facilities for all.

Connecting Middlesbrough

18. Transport has an important influence on the quality of life and economic prosperity of Middlesbrough. An efficient and effective transport system is essential if the spatial vision is to be achieved. This means not only creating a transport network within Middlesbrough that allows communities to access those facilities and services they need, but also one where linkages with areas outside of Middlesbrough are effective and efficient. These external linkages will be required to ensure that Middlesbrough develops at the heart of the Tees Valley city region. The core strategy seeks to achieve this by:

- a) establishing a set of core transport principles;
- b) identifying measures and improvements within the A19, A66, and East Middlesbrough transport corridors to facilitate growth and the Council's development priorities;
- c) improving access to public transport and increasing the choice of transport modes available; and
- d) identifying measures to improve safety and reduce road accidents.

Creating a quality environment

19. Whilst Middlesbrough is highly urbanised in character it also has significant expanses of open space such as the beck valleys, green wedges, and green flag parks, that provide a recreational and visual resource, whilst also providing valuable habitats for wildlife. The LDF will seek to protect and enhance these areas which contribute to the attractiveness of the town. These areas will be increasingly important to contribute to the overall attractiveness of the town to realise future regeneration plans. The core strategy will seek to deliver this by:

- a) identifying an open space strategy;
- b) creation of a green blue heart as part of the SMI;
- c) protecting biodiversity, geodiversity and historical sites; and
- d) minimising flood risk.

Section 12: Development control policies

20. LDFs should include a set of generic policies containing criteria against which planning applications can be considered. This part of the core strategy is currently in the process of being drafted.

Conclusions

21. The core strategy has been prepared in accordance with Government requirements. It sets out the strategic planning framework for taking the town forward and delivery of the Council's aspirations and Community Strategy. The principle underlying Middlesbrough's core strategy is the delivery and implementation of regeneration initiatives to create a prosperous town that is the principal centre of the Tees Valley city region, is a town in which people want to live, and one in which they have pride.