

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD AND ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board to which Members of the Economic Development and Transport Scrutiny Panel had been invited to attend was held on 21 January 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor Carr (Chair), Councillors Biswas, Ismail, G Rogers and Rooney.

OFFICIALS: J Bennington, P Clarke, P Clark, C Hawking and E Williamson.

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:**

Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel:
Councillors Hobson, Rehman and Rostron.

Representatives of Communities Under Threat and Campaign to Protect Rural England.

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bishop, Cox, Sanderson and Williams.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Interest
Councillor Carr	Personal/Prejudicial	Matters relating to Housing Allocations – a Member of the Erimus Board
Councillor Hobson	Personal/Prejudicial	Matters relating to Site 44, Longridge – applicant to gain Village Green status for the site

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – REGENERATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A report of the Director of Regeneration was presented regarding the Local Development Framework (LDF) which had been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and once adopted would replace the Middlesbrough Local Plan.

Together the LDF and the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) would form the Statutory Development Plan for the Town. The LDF comprised a series of documents called Local Development Documents (LDDs). The first LDD as part of the Middlesbrough LDF was the Core Strategy, which set the strategic planning framework for the Town over the next fifteen years to 2021 and had been the subject of a public examination before an independent planning inspector in November 2007. The Inspector's Report was anticipated at the end of February 2008.

The Regeneration DPD, the second LDD contained site specific policies and allocations for the development of land for the period up to 2021 and had to be in general conformity with the Core Strategy.

The Regeneration DPD had already been the subject of extensive public consultation as outlined in a report considered at a meeting of the Council held on 9 January 2008. The submission draft had been prepared having regard to the requirements of the Middlesbrough LDF, Core Strategy, RSS for the North East, Middlesbrough Community Strategy, and the representations submitted as part of the earlier consultations.

Specific reference was made to a number of changes to the Regeneration DPD for submission in particular: -

- a) Policies in relation to Greater Middlehaven had been redrafted to include more detail on the level and type of development to be provided, greater design guidance and further details on how and when proposals would be implemented.
- b) Housing Allocations had been updated to reflect changes to planning permissions and new developments. Owing to the rephrasing of some of the strategic sites it had been necessary to identify additional housing allocations, particularly for the early plan periods.
- c) The Town Centre boundary had been redrawn to include more of Greater Middlehaven and the University estate to help support development proposals for both areas and extension to the principal retail area to incorporate part of Cannon Park to facilitate retail growth.

Members focussed on the three main changes to the Regeneration DPD.

Great Middlehaven

Members sought clarification on the overall transport infrastructure, as there were concerns that the A66 and railway line created a significant barrier between the Town Centre and Middlehaven. Other concerns related to problems with heavy traffic and indiscriminate parking especially on match days and lack of appropriate pedestrian access at ground level from the Town Centre to Middlehaven.

In response to comments made regarding the proximity of a chemical plant it was confirmed that the Health and Safety Executive had been consulted and had expressed no concerns regarding the overall proposals for Greater Middlehaven.

A number of suggestions were made by Members, which included the building of a footbridge and creation of a cutting for the railway line enclosed in a tunnel and provision of a level pedestrian route. The Officers indicated that such proposals were likely to incur very significant costs.

The Officers explained that Middlehaven was a large development that would take many years to complete and therefore the planning framework needed to be sufficiently flexible to respond to any changes to ensure that the development was capable of meeting future needs and provide a viable proposition. Subsequent planning documents such as the Greater Middlehaven Supplementary Planning Document would include further detailed design proposals including transport infrastructure.

It was noted, however, that the Council in partnership were developing an integrated package of transport proposals and measures to improve connectivity within Middlehaven and surrounding areas. Specific reference was made to policy REG 3, which included the following principles and areas for further work: -

- impact upon the capacity of the main access points onto the road network principally Newport, Hartington and Middlehaven interchanges on A66 and Albert Road/Queens Square and how this would be addressed;
- provide high quality linkages and transport routes through the development and surrounding areas;
- provision of a bridge across the dock entrance to improve vehicular access to Riverside East and adjoining sites;
- improved public transport accessibility including integration of the railway station and allowing future implementation of a LRT/Tees Valley metro system;

- identification of how proposals for 'the Stitch' providing high quality linkages between the Town Centre and Greater Middlehaven could be incorporated into the transport network and development framework;
- Integration of a high quality pedestrian and cycleway network within the development with linkages to the Gurney Street Triangle Town Centre, Riverside Park and North Ormesby.

Housing Allocations

With the approval of the Chair and Members a statement from Councillor K Walker was circulated at the meeting which requested consideration to proposed changes to the LDF. The statement asked that Members consider increasing the number of new-build properties in the Gresham/Jewel Street areas from 750 to 1,000 dwellings and that the mix of housing included a minimum of 50% affordable properties instead of the proposed minimum of 15%. Given that there were a substantial number of existing residents renting their homes in the demolition area of Gresham Ward it was suggested that a more transparent method of providing such rented property was incorporated in the recommendations of the draft LDF proposals.

A representative of Community Under Threat addressed the Committee and a copy of their Mission Statement together with a detailed note were made available to Members which outlined the group's concerns with particular regard to the prolonged period of decline in the Gresham area which had been exacerbated by delays in the implementation of the overall scheme.

In response to clarification sought on the determination of the percentage of affordable housing target of 15% it was pointed out that this had been based on evidence such as the Regional Housing Strategy and Housing Market Assessment. It was stated in the Regeneration DPD that the affordable housing target would be dependant upon the overall number of units provided within a development, and as such may vary from the figures stated but the equivalent proportion would be sought. It was pointed out that the figures shown in the Regeneration DPD should be regarded as a minimum although evidence would be required to make any significant changes to the percentage.

Housing Market Renewal and the need to provide a viable and sustainable housing area underpinned the proposals for the Gresham/Jewels Street. Such an approach complied with the strategies contained in the Core Strategy. As previously indicated the proposals within the Regeneration DPD provided sufficient flexibility to deliver the regeneration required and to enable proposals to respond to changing circumstances. The Master Plan for the Gresham/Jewels Street area would need to be approved by the Council for the redevelopment of the area before any planning permission would be granted for any constituent part of it.

In terms of any development of the Acklam Hall site reference was made to a number of specific actions which would need to be undertaken including the involvement of English Heritage in respect of Acklam Hall. Any residential development would have to form part of a sensitive refurbishment and new build scheme that respected the grade 1 listed building of Acklam Hall.

Specific reference was made to Site 44 Longridge which been identified as an allocated housing site in the Coulby Newham Master Plan the development of which had been delayed because of the need to replace pylons across the site. The area had been the subject of an application for Village Green status for which there had been a Public Inquiry in December 2007. The Inspector's report was expected end of February or beginning March 2008.

A member of Campaign for Rural England addressed the meeting and reiterated concerns regarding the proposed development of Site 44, Longridge, which they felt had become a political issue. It was considered that the Council's development proposals were not supporting the spirit of the Council's Open Spaces Strategy and Climate Change Policy. An indication was given of changes since the 1970's and in particular environment legislation, which supported the retention of the site as a green space the information on which had been put forward at the Public Inquiry including the period of time the site had been open space.

Reference was made to work undertaken by the Council in support of its Green Spaces Public Places strategy the aim of which was to provide a strategic framework for the continued

development and improvement of the Middlesbrough's parks and open spaces. In pursuance of such policies the Council worked in partnership with such agencies as Tees Forest. Specific details were provided of work, which had been carried out in respect of Marton West Beck and investment in tree planting along the west side of the beck.

Town Centre Boundary

The current Town Centre boundary was considered to be too constrained and therefore it had been proposed to extend the areas to include part of Cannon Park to accommodate additional retail floorspace.

As previously indicated more detailed information would be provided in a Cannon Park Master Plan to identify the precise boundaries and how the LDF principles would be incorporated into the development proposals.

Members discussed the implications and opportunity of specifying the extent of retail uses in particular the take-away type of businesses in areas such as Parliament Road.

It was reiterated that whilst the planning framework needed to provide sufficient guidance as to the level of development it was considered that incorporating precise requirements may result in the framework being too prescriptive and not allow sufficient flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and viability issues.

Members noted the information provided and the Chair advised Members that there would be a further opportunity to make any future recommendations on the issues raised.

ORDERED that all contributors be thanked for the information provided which was noted.