

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

2nd November 2011

Draft Core Strategy 2- Consultation Responses

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor C.B. Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Officer	Mike Dunphy
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The purpose of the Core Strategy is to set out the vision, objectives and key policies which will guide development within the District for the next 15 years.
- 1.2 Members will recall that at Full Council on 19th January 2011 Draft Core Strategy 2 was approved for consultation purposes from 21st January 2011 to 15th April 2011.
- 1.3 A report detailing the results of the consultation has now been prepared which summarises all of the responses received, provides an officer response and suggests action to be taken where appropriate.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members note both the contents of this report and publication of the consultation responses.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Consultation element of preparing a Core Strategy is an important and significant undertaking, and every effort was made to reach as many people as possible. The level of response demonstrates that the methods used to engage with communities were in the main successful. Various methods to advertise the consultation were used, for example it was advertised in a number of local newspapers (Bromsgrove and Redditch Standard & Bromsgrove Advertiser), the 'Village' magazine, as well as it being available on the District Council's website, in local libraries, at the Council House and the Customer Service Centre. The website contained information on the document itself, the consultation process, together with links to other relevant documents such as the Sustainability Appraisal and the evidence base. A static exhibition was also prepared which, for the majority of the period, was displayed in the Customer Service Centre.
- 3.2 A number of 'drop-in' days were also held where planning officers were on hand to discuss elements of the document in an informal setting supported by exhibition material, rather than a formal

public meeting. These drop in days were held over 3 weeks at the end of February to the beginning of March at the Council House, Dolphin Centre and at an empty retail unit in the High Street. They were held at different times during the day and week including the weekend and evening times in order to reach as many people as possible. In order to spread the message more widely, Parish Councils were invited to host 'drop-in' days, where BDC Officers would be on hand to explain exhibition material and answer queries face to face. Such drop in days were held at Barnt Green on 8th March from 12-7pm and Wythall on 21st March from 9am-8pm in the village hall. Overall it is estimated that Officers spoke face to face to approximately 1010 people over this 12 week consultation period. Letters and emails were sent to all consultees held on the LDF database which includes statutory consultees, organisations and individuals who had previously expressed a wish to be consulted. Statutory Consultees received hard copies of the document and other consultees received notification and a summary leaflet which also detailed where the full document could be viewed and details of the drop in days.

- 3.3 The consultation attracted over 3300 responses which were received via email, by post and via the online questionnaire.
- 3.4 The responses have been received from a variety of sources including organisations, private companies and private individuals. A Response Report has been prepared which, due to its length (over 4000 pages), is available for viewing in hard copy in the Members Room or available on the website at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/corestrategy. In order to allow the document to be as penetrable as possible by people who responded to the consultation it has been split up into various sections including a section for each of the development sites, a parish councils section, a consultants section, and a general section which includes responses from various organisations and individuals who responded to the whole of the document.
- 3.5 A good proportion of the responses purely focused on opposing development in one specific area, whilst a smaller proportion commented more generally on the strategy as a whole. The comparatively high response rate was not entirely unexpected as for the first time in the Core Strategy process land allocations were identified in the form of strategic/ development sites. This high level of response was received despite the majority of these sites being previously been identified as Areas of Development Restraint (ADR) within the current Development Plan which was adopted in 2004. Widespread misunderstanding of the status of ADR's was demonstrated during the consultation with many people believing that the land was either Green Belt and/or protected from future development. This is one of the reasons this confusing terminology

was not used in DCS2 with preference given to the more unambiguous term of “development site”.

- 3.6 The policies which generated the most comments were connected with the site allocations in CP4 Bromsgrove Town Expansion sites comprising Norton Farm (30), Perryfields Road (21) and Whitford Road (287) and Other Development sites in particular Alvechurch (8), Barnt Green (164, a petition with 487 signatures was also received), Catshill (42), Hagley (872), St Godwalds Road (40) and Wythall (613). Responses from Redditch residents were also sent in (68, a petition with 1016 signatures was also received). Some of the responses received on the development sites relate to issues which are generic across all development sites. Wherever possible in the interests of fairness and consistency a standard response has been prepared to such issues. These concerns cover matters such as the capacity of local schools and health facilities, impact of development on the highway network, impact on air quality, impact on the natural environment and loss of greenfields. Some responses questioned the housing figures with some considering figures should be based on the RSS Preferred Option of 2100 and others considering it should be considerably higher and based on the latest population projections and needs.
- 3.7 Uncertainty regarding the planning system was apparent in many of the responses for instance in relation to the status of the Regional Spatial Strategy, the emerging Localism Bill, emerging guidance and various ministerial statements on the philosophy underpinning the new planning system. Wherever possible such queries have been answered with as much clarity as is possible whilst acknowledging that at the present time there is a state of flux in the planning system.
- 3.8 Particularly useful responses include for example, updates of information, suggestions for improvements and pointers on how to strengthen the evidence base and the Core Strategy document itself.
4. **Financial Implications**
- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations contained within this report, although the ability of the District Council and its residents to benefit fully from development that takes place across the district will be affected by the contents of the Core Strategy/Local Plan.
- 4.2 Copying and any subsequent costs for publicity will be met from the existing budget which exists for the Core Strategy.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Core Strategy once adopted will become part of the Statutory Development Plan for the District required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Amendment Regulations.

6. Service / Operational Implications

- 6.1 Whilst the substantial response rate demonstrates the success of the consultation there have been resultant resource implications in its handling in order to ensure the responses are given due and careful consideration and are responded to in a meaningful manner. For future consultations the method of dealing with responses will be reappraised to ascertain whether efficiencies can be made whilst still complying with relevant Regulations.
- 6.2 The responses to the consultation will inform the next version of the Core Strategy/Local Plan as is indicated in the actions proposed in the response report.

7. Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 7.1 The Core Strategy is likely to have an impact on many different aspects of peoples lives including living, working, shopping, leisure and educational choices together with the ability to make a direct contribution in the decision making process. Public consultation has been and will be extensively undertaken throughout the process and this is likely to take on even more significance as the new planning system and the opportunities for collaborative democracy i.e. Neighbourhood Planning, unfold.
- 7.2 An advert will be placed in the Together Bromsgrove magazine and other relevant places, advertising the publication of the responses and clearly identifying where the responses can be viewed.
- 7.2 An Equalities Impact assessment will be undertaken on the final submission version of the Core Strategy. Attempts will be made to ensure all sections of society are consulted and are involved in the process as the plan progresses towards completion.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The most significant risk is that without an up to date and sufficiently detailed plan, planning applications may be submitted and development across the district may take place in an ad hoc and

unplanned way. This could also cause resentment from local communities, and undermine the solid planning principles the council has with the current local plan currently being updated via the production of the Core Strategy.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Draft Core Strategy 2 Consultation Responses Report - available at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/corestrategy

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