

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 11

meeting date: THURSDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2010  
title: DRAFT PENNINE LANCASHIRE SPATIAL GUIDE  
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## 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Members of ongoing work preparing draft proposals for a Pennine Lancashire Spatial Guide intended to provide high-level strategic guidance for planning and investment in Pennine Lancashire.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
  - Council Ambitions – The matters covered in this report relate to the ambition of protecting and enhancing the existing environmental quality of our area.
  - Community Objectives – To maintain vibrant and thriving communities.
  - Corporate Priorities – To contribute to joint working as appropriate.
  - Other Considerations – None.

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The PLACE Partnership brings together the district of Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale, who jointly work on a range of strategic economic housing and planning initiatives in order to deliver overall economic change across Pennine Lancashire. A number of projects have been carried out to produce high level strategies for housing investment, particularly related to the housing market renewal areas, but also having regard to the affordable housing requirements for Ribble Valley. Similarly, work has been undertaken to prepare joint investment programmes relating to the Pennine Lancashire Integrated Economic Strategy.
- 2.2 PLACE has also been taking forward the preparation of the Spatial Guide for Pennine Lancashire which is intended to provide a high level planning framework for the area to help inform the development and in the longer term the closer alignment of core strategies across the area. This work is still being prepared and is yet to be finalised through the PLACE organisation. However given the stage the draft is now at, it was considered appropriate to provide an opportunity for Members to contribute to the process.
- 2.3 Members are invited to review the document and raise any issues for discussion at Committee for feedback to PLACE. A copy of the document has been placed in Level D Members Room for reference. Hard copies will be issued to Members of the Planning and Development Committee only who are asked to bring their copy with them to the meeting.

## 3 THE SPATIAL GUIDE

- 3.1 The Spatial Guide is a non-statutory document and as such will not be subject to the same statutory process as a Local Development Framework Document for example. It

is based on a series of different areas of work being carried out across Pennine Lancashire. Once adopted it would however be anticipated that authorities would have regard to it when drawing up their core strategy and other relevant planning documents.

3.2 Its aim is to support a joined up sub-regional approach by:

- Setting out a spatial interpretation of other strategies in Pennine Lancashire, most notably the MAA, focusing on the area's geography and the roles of places, and setting key strategic priorities in their sub-regional context.
- Complementing the economic focus of the MAA by considering sub-regional environmental issues.
- Providing a framework for future activity in the sub-region, including the development of individual authorities' Local Development Framework Core Strategies and other Development Plan Documents.

3.3 The document is still in preparation and is yet to be considered by PLACE. However, it was considered important for Members to be aware of the work and have an opportunity to express comment at this stage in the process. Ribble Valley Officers have provided comments during the preparation of the document but many of their views have been misinterpreted and thus have been unable to support the strategy as it does raise a number of concerns.

3.4 The document sets out to provide a picture of the area and as such seeks to focus on the issues where a consistent approach is needed across Pennine Lancashire essentially to support and deliver the visions of the Multi Area Agreement (MAA) signed up to by all the districts in 2009.

3.5 The document sets out a portrait of the area and sets out the strategic context and priorities that have been identified. This is broadly helpful but could also be considered too general, promotional in its approach and not necessarily focussing upon those key aspects that a high level strategy should be. Furthermore it does include proposals which have not been through local consultation processes or any full evaluation. The strategic context set out at section 3 is helpful in drawing together the range of strategies that have been produced for the sub-region, however it has to be borne in mind that we are now in a position of uncertainty regarding the future of MAA's, and a situation where the Pennine Lancashire strategies themselves are being refreshed to reflect changing circumstances post election. It is important that the Spatial Guide has regard to what could be very different opportunities to deliver and most likely a shift in those investments that can be committed to. The Spatial Guide should seek to emphasise the core elements that are required to deliver each strategy in spatial terms and needs to avoid being a re-presentation of those strategies.

3.6 The re-expression of existing strategies throughout the sections on economic regeneration and housing leads to elements of duplication. What is most important in terms of the purpose of the Spatial Guide is the reference in both sections to those matters that should be taken into account when preparing LDF's. These references tend to get lost within the overall document and yet its fundamental purpose is to provide this very guidance. An important consideration when looking at the LDF guidance however is to relate this to the implications for Ribble Valley interests. Not all the matters would necessarily suit what may be the best position for Ribble Valley residents. As Members are aware, the Council is progressing the development of its core strategy and will need to consider how it takes onboard the comments received following the consultation. The

Council must not commit to a framework that could reduce the flexibility of the Council to determine its own approach to its LDF policies.

- 3.7 In relation to access and connectivity, the guide reflects Clitheroe's position as a transport hub for public transport and the need for broadband capacity is also highlighted. Similarly the aspiration to improve rail services to Manchester are identified however links to Preston are understated. The guide also suggests pooling of developer contributions to support sub-regional infrastructure projects. This clearly may not support Ribble Valley interests and would have to be carefully considered.
- 3.8 There is an emphasis on green infrastructure and how this contributes towards the quality of Pennine Lancashire. Clearly this is an important matter for an area like Ribble Valley, however it should not be taken as an opportunity to view rural areas as the areas that provide the green spaces for others. The needs of a working rural economy need to be fully taken into account. Where areas are designated because of their natural beauty any promotion of the area for intensive tourism, visitor and leisure uses must be balanced with the environment and conservation interests they deserve.
- 3.9 As a high level strategic guide, mapping is intended to be illustrative. The accompanying key diagram illustrates main features, however it does include proposals such as the 'racecourse' proposal. Whilst this has formed part of previous regional investment plans and programmes, it is misleading to include it on the key diagram. Proposals such as this would perhaps be better represented as an objective within the guide with criteria against which a site could be judged. Similarly the more detailed supporting mapping includes the "racecourse" as a proposal and it should not.
- 3.10 The Ribble Valley areas of change and strategic sites mapping is more significant. It reflects a range of information that has been collated as part of the preparation of the guide. However, officers have been careful not to provide material where issues have not been through proper consideration, in particular given the stage we are at in determining our core strategy. This has translated diagrammatically into the maps presented which in itself raise concern as it suggests a level of change and predetermination that is not actually a reality and should be rejected. Other authorities have taken a different approach promoting SHLAA sites and HMR programmed areas, which, in Ribble Valley's case, was not an appropriate way forward. Clearly it needs to be recognised that other districts are at different stages or have different priorities, however there remains the concern that as presented, the Spatial Guide may be misleading to the public in terms of what status these areas have and should be rejected in its current form.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The production of a Spatial Guide for Pennine Lancashire could be helpful when seeking to co-ordinate investment decisions and synergise planning policies across the Pennine Lancashire area. It does however need to be relatively concise and focus upon the core guidance for LDF production. The guide at present contains some useful material but should avoid reiterating other strategies. Indeed with ongoing work looking to refresh these other strategies, there may be merit in considering a single document for the Pennine Lancashire area. The other fundamental aspect, which must be resolved, is that of the future of the MAA upon which the guide relies. Future Government decisions of the location and function of Local Economic Partnerships (LEP's) may also have a great significance in the future.
- 4.2 A principal concern is the different stages authorities are at in preparing planning strategies or who have different needs and aspirations for housing renewal and

investment. It has been an issue for Ribble Valley in that we are currently establishing that development strategy and in this regard it is difficult to present information that will inform the guide other than existing approved schemes and established settlement patterns. There is a strong concern therefore that the interpretation that may be relevant for other parts of Pennine Lancashire is not appropriate for Ribble Valley. In effect the information that could be presented in the guide would be premature. Whilst it is a non-statutory document it is likely that once adopted through PLACE it will be seen as material by developers seeking to promote schemes in the Ribble Valley area. There is also the question of how the public will perceive this given the open consultation that we are trying to progress.

- 4.3 As indicated there are a number of issues that the Spatial Guide creates for Ribble Valley. Whilst it is a helpful collation of relevant issues across Pennine Lancashire, it requires changes to make it acceptable in terms of its style, approach and content. Fundamentally however, it seeks to predetermine future development patterns in the area that the Council is still in the early stages of determining. On this basis it is suggested that it is not possible to support the Spatial Guide and it should be rejected.

## 5 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – No immediate implications.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Spatial Guide is a non-statutory document.
- Political – No direct implications.
- Reputation – The Council would wish to contribute its view to any document that may impact upon future planning decisions.

## 6 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 6.1 Advise the Director of Development Services of their views on the Spatial Guide, endorse the concerns raised in Section 3 and 4 of this report and reject the Spatial Guide in its current form.

## DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 The Draft Pennine Lancashire Spatial Guide – October 2010.

For further information please ask for Colin Hirst, extension 4503.

CH/CMS (04111010)