

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO SPECIAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 8 MAY 2014  
title: CORE STRATEGY – POST HEARING MODIFICATIONS  
submitted by: MARSHAL SCOTT – CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
principal author: COLIN HIRST – HEAD OF REGENERATION AND HOUSING

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To consider modifications suggested by the Inspector following the Examination hearings and next stages of the Examination process.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – The Core Strategy is the central strategy of the Local Development Framework (LDF). It will help in the delivery of housing, employment and the protection and enhancement of the environment, ultimately presenting the delivery strategy for implementing the vision for the Ribble Valley for the next 20 years. As a tool for delivering spatial policy, the Core Strategy identifies how a range of issues relating to the objectives of a sustainable economy, thriving market towns and housing provision will be addressed through the planning system.
- Corporate Priorities – The Core Strategy is the central document of the LDF and sets the overall vision and approach to future planning policy that will aid performance and consistency.
- Other Considerations – The Council has a duty to prepare spatial policy under the LDF system.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Members will be aware that the Council has been progressing the Core Strategy through its Examination stage since the Council's plan was formally submitted in September 2012 and an Inspector appointed to hold the Examination. On 14 January 2014, the Inspector commenced the formal hearings which sat for 5½ days. The hearings took the form of structured discussion around a published list of matters arising from the Inspector's scrutiny of the plan and relevant representations from the development industry, landowners, local community and private and public sector organisations.

2.2 As a result of the hearings, amendments to wording to provide further clarification and explanation of the Plan explored during the discussions were identified, together with a request from the Inspector for additional information and matters to support his consideration of the Plan in relation to a number of topics. The Inspector indicated on closing the hearings that these matters would need to be drawn together and would also need to be published for public consultation in due course.

2.3 On 31 January 2014, the Inspector issued an interim letter stating his view that the Council needed to make a modification to address his concern following the hearings that the proposed housing requirement was too low, and that the settlement strategy

needed to identify from within the second tier of 'other settlements' those more sustainable settlements where growth could be directed. The Inspector also raised as an issue that the distribution of the adjustment made in the housing distribution model relative to Longridge needed to be focused towards the remaining larger settlements or the more sustainable settlements rather than distributed across the borough.

### 3. RESPONSE TO INSPECTORS RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Inspector raised his clear concerns regarding the soundness of the plan and the need to increase the Housing requirement, refine the settlement hierarchy and address the method of treating the Longridge adjustment.
- 3.2 These issues are discussed in the topic paper attached to this report at Appendix 1 and which has been the subject of consideration by the Core Strategy Working Group who have been involved in the development of the paper and its conclusions. The paper has also been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process to ensure confidence in its outcomes. A copy of the SA report is available in the Members' Room for reference.
- 3.3 A key change is the need to work to the higher housing requirement of 280 dwellings per year which is based upon our existing evidence base provided by the previous Housing requirement review considered by Members. The Inspector has concluded that housing and economic growth should "dovetail" and for this to genuinely occur, from the housing updates objective assessment an annual average of 280 dwellings per annum is necessary. It is therefore proposed that the plan is modified to reflect this. In progressing this consultation has been undertaken with our neighbouring authorities under the duty to cooperate and through which authorities recognised that we would need to address the Inspectors concern. Blackburn with Darwin maintain their position presented at the Hearings of objection to the higher figures.
- 3.4 The discussion paper at Appendix 1 sets out the analysis and conclusions in relation to the refinement of the settlement strategy. This results in 9 settlements being identified as more sustainable in development terms and a proposed split between the 9 as Tier 1 villages and the remaining 23 defined settlements being Tier 2. The Longridge adjustment is subsequently distributed to the Tier 1 villages to address the Inspectors comments. This approach has also been the subject of SA.
- 3.5 The resulting Modifications including changes arising during the hearings or those proposed following submission of the Core Strategy are consolidated into the table at Appendix 2. This effectively serves to draw together all the changes to be considered by the Inspector and will be submitted to him as part of the examination. The schedule will also need to be published for 6 weeks consultation. SA has been undertaken and an update on any matters arising as elements are finalised will be given at Committee.
- 3.6 A minor number of modifications are yet to be finalised and are awaiting input from others. These matters are points of clarification that would not be expected to change policy principles. They include the key diagram which relies upon confirmation of the settlement hierarchy, a revised monitoring section and confirmation of wording with other bodies. An update will be given at committee on any outstanding matters with any remain issues to be finalised ahead of the consultation period. In order to expedite this it is suggested that where matters remain to be finalised this is delegated to the Head of Regeneration and Housing in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chair of the Committee.

- 3.7 Subject to Members' agreement it is programmed to commence consultation w/c 19 May and closing on Monday, 30 June. The Inspector has indicated that he wants all responses to be passed to him for his consideration it is not anticipated that the council will propose further modifications in response. Whilst the Inspector in closing the hearings stated that he expected to deal with any outstanding matters by way of the written procedures depending on the nature of the consultation response further hearing days could be scheduled if he felt it was necessary.
- 3.8 In addition to the modifications schedule, information generated during the course of or as a result of matters raised in the hearings, including the SA report will also be published at the request of the Inspector to enable people to have the opportunity to comment on material provided to the Examination.
- 3.9 On completion of the consultation and submission of responses to the Inspector if there are no further sitting days required the Inspector will produce his report to the Council and if the plan is held to be sound (subject to the modifications) the Council will move to the adoption stage. The adoption process would usually be anticipated to be complete within 2 months from receipt of the Inspector's report.

#### 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – Members have agreed a budget to progress the Core Strategy.
  - Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Council has to follow the statutory regulations in preparing the Core Strategy and is currently in the examination stage. Consultation will need to be undertaken and will follow the statutory process. Further hearing days may be required depending on matters raised in consultation.
  - Political – There is significant public interest in the Core Strategy.
  - Reputation – Decisions taken in connection with the Core Strategy will help demonstrate the Council's obligations to fulfil its statutory duties and meet its objective of being a well-run Council.
  - Equality & Diversity – No implications identified.

#### 5. **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 5.1 Confirm the housing requirement to be set at 280 dwellings per annum and that the settlement hierarchy is modified in accord with the proposals set out in Appendix 2 and that the proposed change to the distribution of the Longridge adjustment to the Tier 1 villages is agreed.
- 5.2 Endorse the proposed modifications set out in Appendix 2 to be submitted to the Inspector and together with the relevant supporting documents to be subject to a six week consultation period.

5.3 In regard to those outstanding modifications referred to in paragraph 3.6 above and where no policy principles are to be amended, delegate to the Head of Regeneration and Housing in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chair of this Committee, authority to finalise text as necessary to progress the Examination.

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HEAD OF REGENERATION AND HOUSING

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Examination documents (various).

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

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