



RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

please ask for: COLIN HIRST
direct line: 01200 414503
e-mail: colin.hirst@ribblevalley.gov.uk
my ref: CH/EL
your ref:
date: 11 December 2012

Council Offices
Church Walk
CLITHEROE
Lancashire BB7 2RA

Switchboard: 01200 425111
Fax: 01200 414488
www.ribblevalley.gov.uk

Dear Mr Berkeley

EXAMINATION OF THE RIBBLE VALLEY CORE STRATEGY

Many thanks for your considerations set out in your letter of 23 November 2012. I can advise that Members have now had opportunity to carefully consider your comments at a recent meeting of the Council's Planning and Development Committee held on 6 December. A copy of the minute is enclosed for your reference.

Members have noted your concerns regarding the need to update key parts of the evidence base and the implications for progressing the Examination. Having reviewed the options and issues raised the Council would like to seek suspension of the Examination to give time for the necessary updates to be undertaken and for the results of the updates to be considered in terms of the effects on the current strategy.

Members are keen to make progress with the development plan but would respectively request a suspension of six months to enable the necessary work to be undertaken and implications assessed. Given the Council's Christmas closure period and the usual issues of the holiday period I would like to suggest a period to the end of June as the working date for the suspension. Members are aware of the workload and the potential issues that the updates may bring and that six months does provide an ambitious schedule. However, they are keen as indicated to make progress with the Core Strategy and to make best endeavours to meet this timeframe.

The Council has resolved to put in place a focused working group to help progress the necessary work as a priority and to address resource issues to ensure the Examination can resume in a timely manner. The Council has already taken steps to commence the updates required in discussion with its consultants in order to reduce any delays in making progress.

I will contact you again with a schedule of works to address your concerns including the key milestones to enable the review to be monitored and any issues or concerns to be identified early. At this stage, I would anticipate providing you with a monthly progress report unless matters of consequence arise that you should be made aware of sooner.

In the light of your comments I propose to provide an update of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which will build upon the updated housing requirement work provided by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners (to which you refer) with account being taken of any implications of new census data as available. In addition, the Council will undertake a review and update of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in accord with existing guidance and ensuring the aspects of viability you raise are addressed. We are currently in discussion with our suppliers to update the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment as a matter of expediency.

I note in particular your comments regarding the viability assessments which as I read your concerns, raises two particular matters. Firstly, the need to evidence in a robust and reliable way

the implications of the Council's affordable housing policy and requirements. Secondly, to provide an assessment that the wider policy implications of the Core Strategy can deliver viable sites. At this stage, I would propose to undertake this assessment by way of a sample of sites from the updated SHLAA; testing against the strategic site allocation and using as case studies a sample of live sites where applications have been approved. This will provide a range of sites to test viability given that at present we have not identified specific allocations in the Core Strategy other than the strategic site.

The Employment Land and Retail Study provides a range of evidence in one source. I note your comments regarding its datedness and I am also conscious of the matters that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduces since that evidence was prepared. With this in mind I am proposing to review the approach to this area of evidence with the need, in my view, to provide discreet updates relating to employment land and workforce forecasting (with linkages to housing requirements); retail evidence as well as broader town centre health checks and in accord with NPPF, the need to have evidence in relation to broader economic development in the borough.

I note your comments regarding the likely need for main modifications and additional public consultation. At this stage and subject to the need to review aspects of the plan in the light of the updated evidence base, I would be grateful for your view on whether any main modifications would be best undertaken ahead of resumption of the Examination and the setting of potential hearing dates. I would wish to avoid piecemeal modifications being subject to consultation at different stages and would look to address any main modifications in a consolidated period of consultation. I appreciate that it may be your preference to keep this matter under review for the time being pending progress on the evidence base update. I would be grateful however in the meantime for any indication of key areas where you feel at this stage, main modifications may be necessary.

I would like also to draw to your attention that the period of consultation on the proposed amendments to the plan has recently completed. I can advise that we have had 29 responses, which we are currently reviewing, and further information will be provided to you early in the New Year.

I hope that you will be able to give favourable consideration to this request but please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to clarify any aspects at this stage.

Yours sincerely



COLIN HIRST - HEAD OF REGENERATION AND HOUSING

Simon Berkeley – Inspector
c/o Michelle Haworth
Programme Officer
The Examination Office
Council Office
Church Walk
CLITHEROE BB7 2RA

CORE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Chief Executive submitted a report updating Committee on the Core Strategy and asking them to consider the implications for progressing the Examination. Following the submission of the Council's proposed Core Strategy to the Secretary of State for Examination, the Inspector had subsequently responded expressing his view that at present his concerns regarding the extent to which the underpinning evidence base is out of date remain and consequently would not pass scrutiny in his view at Examination. Following these comments, the Inspector had indicated two principal options as a way forward to either suspend the Examination or withdraw the submitted Strategy. Either of the approaches would delay the progress of the Core Strategy and require as a starting point the evidence base to be updated. This would also have resource implications with regard to the use of consultants and staff time.

It was felt that establishing a working group would help progress the work required.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. agree to carry out the necessary work to update the evidence base and seek the agreement of the Inspector to a suspension of the Examination for a minimum of six months;
2. establish a working group to progress the Local Development Framework; and
3. recommend to Policy and Finance Committee a request for additional resources to progress the Core Strategy in line with the proposals as set out in the report and consideration by the proposed working group.

The meeting closed at 9.02pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact John Heap (414461).