

STAFFORD BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

MEETING BETWEEN STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – COUNTY SERVICE PROVIDERS & STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETING - 26 SEPTEMBER 2007

Officers in Attendance:-

Ian Baldwin	-	Staffordshire County Council, Development Advice
Chris Smailes	-	Staffordshire County Council, Property Services
Tony Lovett	-	Staffordshire County Council, Development Services
Tracy Haycock	-	Staffordshire County Council, Children and Lifelong Learning
Amanda Smith	-	Staffordshire County Council, Children and Lifelong Learning
Alex Yendole	-	Stafford Borough Council, Forward Planning
Naomi Perry	-	Stafford Borough Council, Forward Planning

Introductions

- Ian Baldwin is the Development Advice Manager for Staffordshire County Council covering Local Development Frameworks and Development Control. Chris Smailes works for Property Services as part of the review team and considers whether properties will be fit for purpose for the 21st Century. Tony Lovett is the Strategic Planning Manager for Staffordshire County Council's Development Services and takes a lead on the Structure Plan / Regional Planning and promotes the County's interests through the planning system. Tracy Haycock is the Principal Schools Organisation Officer and Amanda Smith is the Senior Schools Organisation Officer.
- AY circulated the notes of the previous meeting which were agreed as an accurate account. AY to circulate notes of the meeting with the Social Care and Health, Staffordshire County Council held on the 23 August 2007 as well as the 2007 Housing Monitor prepared by Stafford Borough Council.
- The Regional Spatial Strategy is moving forward based on the 2004 household projections with an emphasis on retaining housing and employment within the Major Urban Areas. However the housing requirements fall short of the Government's expectations for the West Midlands region and it is possible that Shire counties will have to take further housing in order to contribute to the total housing provision in the Regional Spatial Strategy which currently has a shortfall of 40,000 houses in terms of the 2004 figures. The Government Office West Midlands has indicated that it is not content with a 40,000 dwelling gap in the provision for the West Midlands Region. The currently emerging preferred strategy proposes regional housing completion rates over the period to 2016 that would achieve the West Midlands apportionment of the Government's national target of 2 million new homes per year by 2016. However the completion rates currently being proposed for 2016-2026 will not satisfy the 3 million per year national target. The overall strategy (2006-2026) assumes that the Major Urban

Areas have minima figures (which could be exceeded) and the caveat that a review of the Regional Spatial Strategy will be required before 2026. If proposals contained in recent Government documents are realised this review of the Regional Spatial Strategy is most likely to be led by the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands, as early as 2010 rather than the West Midlands Regional Assembly. It is important to note the current short fall in housing provision because the Secretary of State may increase the figures at the Proposed Changes stage of the Regional Spatial Strategy in 2009. In terms of Stafford Borough 70% of new housing is being directed to the County Town of Stafford with reference to cross border working to allow a full consideration of possible means of delivery including adjoining land within South Staffordshire District.

- The Regional Spatial Strategy preferred option is due to be approved on 22nd October 2007 for submission to the Secretary of State in December 2007 with an Examination anticipated in September 2008. It should be noted that the development industry may have physical capacity issues in terms of delivering the high levels of regional housing numbers being proposed. The employment land provision for Districts across the region is based initially on a past development rate methodology with some recognition of specific local issues such as the level of new housing provision proposed in each district. Stafford Borough has a 5 year requirement / reservoir of 40 hectares as its employment land provision. Although the Major Urban Areas may see these areas as being direct economic competitors the Regional Spatial Strategy does identify Stafford as an area of significant development, which would not impact on the employment aspirations of the Major Urban Areas.
- The Regional Spatial Strategy appears to export some housing provision from the Major Urban Areas to the Shire Counties but this is not explicitly recognised through any transparent methodology in relation to employment land provision. Staffordshire County Council has carried out some work on the labour supply and demand, economic needs, age structure etc... for Stafford Borough. There needs to be a balance between large logistic sites and incubator units for new employment opportunities. Staffordshire County Council considers that the economic needs of areas outside of the Major Urban Areas must be accounted for rather than simply match additional employment land provision to local authorities with higher housing allocations. Within the new Regional Spatial Strategy employment land provision in the Major Urban Areas is seen as minima figures. Outside the Major Urban Areas, the currently emerging preferred strategy leaves employment land provision as 'a target' to avoid Districts undershooting or under providing (or indeed overproviding) for employment requirements in the region which has been evident in some Staffordshire Districts.
- A detailed study of the Social Care and Health Property Portfolio within Staffordshire County Council has been undertaken, with a report due to be considered and recommendations presented to Cabinet in November 2007. Although no public output from the project is currently available at this stage the report is being finalised and final conclusions will shortly be drawn together. The new Chief Executive for Staffordshire County Council is currently taking personal

charge of the property review with an emphasis on the regeneration agenda being engaged and enhanced.

- Nine sites for rural exception housing, to provide for affordable needs, were made available many years ago by Staffordshire County Council, including two sites in Stafford Borough but none of these sites were called upon. IB queried the Weston Road area of Stafford in terms of the Residential Development Boundary and asked whether a town boundary would be more appropriate because of economic activities currently falling outside of the Residential Development Boundary. AY agreed to discuss this matter with colleagues within Stafford Borough Council and provide an answer to the next meeting of this group.
- Uncertainty will remain concerning exact housing and employment provision in the Regional Spatial Strategy until it is finally adopted in 2009 and therefore there is a question mark regarding the brevity of Local Development Frameworks. The Regional Spatial Strategy identifies 70% of new housing being in Stafford town but it may be appropriate to look at a new settlement or significant development in rural areas if housing figures increase. Conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy is of course important for the Core Strategy Development Plan Document but all options must be considered. If there are housing commitments and potential in the villages this may narrow the options if these are brought forward immediately.
- It is important to promote the regeneration agenda and increase employment provision across the Stafford Borough area by reducing the amount of business travel in order to create sustainable communities for the future.
- The majority of the County's land holdings are focused around Stafford, south of Stoke-on-Trent and the south eastern areas of the Borough whilst there are very limited landholdings in the western areas. The Government is considering significant release of its estate in order to deliver new housing. Contact for the Ministry of Defence Property Division is Mark Limbrick at Sutton Coldfield. Although the Government's approach has been focused in the south east of England in terms of bringing forward new housing there is likely to be a ripple out effect with implications for other English regions in the near future.
- AY circulated a map setting out the various development options in terms of percentages and also in terms of housing requirements for the Stafford Borough Council area. It was noted that the provision was greater than 100% in order to show a range of options and explore how the strategy might come forward.
- Despite current surplus places the allocation of RSS housing for Stafford Borough will have an impact on education provision, whether in the form of enlarging existing provision or new additional provision. It is impossible to say how much or where the provision is required without identification of possible housing sites. However schools in some areas are currently full and are projected to remain full for the foreseeable future without the addition of new residential development. Rural areas may also be of some concern if significant residential development was proposed. However from initial investigations it appears that the majority of surplus places are within schools in Stafford. Where the

development(s) is of sufficient size to exceed the capacity of the existing provision the County Council reserves the right to require the construction of a completely new school and the acquisition of the land, access and relevant services.

- The Children and Lifelong Learning Directorate does not have sufficient resources to construct buildings and other infrastructure to keep pace with the rate of new development. In keeping with legislation, contributions towards providing additional educational infrastructure have been, and continue to be sought from developers, through Planning Obligations. A review has recently been undertaken to examine the Authority's roles and responsibilities in relation to Section 106 Agreements and to determine how the relationship between the County Council and District Councils in Staffordshire could be enhanced. Following this Scrutiny review, Members of the Section 106 Agreements Member Working Group recommended that the Children and Lifelong learning Directorate:
 - Review and update the existing Education Planning Obligations Policy, to take into account the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and latest Admissions Code of Practice; and
 - Request that each District / Borough Council include education requirements within supplementary planning documents on planning obligations.
- Early in 2008, Staffordshire is hoping to be invited into the Government's Building Schools For The Future project. This will influence the way our pupils are educated in the future. Construction work is planned to commence in 2011 and be completed in 2021. This programme may well have an impact on the size, types and location of secondary schools that we have throughout the county and within the Stafford Borough. Stafford Borough is not an area identified in the first wave of this programme and at this stage it is difficult to say when it is likely to be affected.
- A proposal was put forward to construct a new building at Rising Brook to include provision for a fire station, primary care trust services and social care provision but this was unable to move forward because the size of the proposed site was not adequate to deliver all of the buildings that would be required for these services. It can be very difficult to lever in appropriate funding streams and relevant key stakeholders to deliver such schemes in reality. There is a need for flexibility when bringing forward new development to deliver spatial solutions. Even when a new building is delivered after a few years re-organisation can take place meaning that the County service sites are broken up between various bodies so there is the big risk of buildings being split up between key organisations causing difficulties.
- A programme has been ongoing in terms of property review at the District level by Staffordshire County Council. However this review has stalled because of the Changing Lives agenda. Potentially it is possible to get this review process back on track from November 2007 after the Cabinet report on the Changing Lives recommendations. It is important to identify early development opportunities and work with the Districts in order to consider new areas for built development. A

detailed review of the Youth Service has been ongoing but limited information is known about these results currently. The Strategy Property Unit at Staffordshire County Council has advertised for a new Head of Service who will be in post by January 2008.

- The number of people arriving from Poland to work, with high level skills and potential requirements for new housing must be taken into account, but there is very limited official information about numbers. There are service delivery implications arising from migrant workers suddenly moving into an area as seen in Cambridgeshire. With the increase of migrant workers to that area, there could be a need to find temporary uses of parts of school buildings, for example because of the need to retain flexibility to accommodate changes in service demands. It is easier to relocate temporary uses than construct new schools should demand increase with little warning. There is the possibility of schools accommodating new services, for example a doctor's surgery but this would have child protection and other implications that need care in design.
- There would be significant implications if new housing development is identified in the Green Belt for Staffordshire County Council's landholdings because the County Council owns the majority of land between Rough Close and Trentham Gardens including the area south of Dresden through to Barlaston. The Green Belt implications around Stoke-on-Trent in terms of significant new development was noted but it is thought unlikely to be required because of the Major Urban Area policies operating in North Staffordshire.
- Schools generally have limited parking provision which causes issues with additional facilities, such as health, which have high traffic movements.
- Property services need to link up with the Education service in order to identify sites and respond to the maps and figures circulated. For example Falmouth Avenue is owned by Staffordshire County Council and could be sold for new residential development. However the delivery of this site could have significant impacts on the school catchment areas with increased pupil numbers, which may lead to possible requirement of additional educational provision.
- IB advised that Walton High School is considering selling off some land for housing in order to improve the services and facilities at the school. It is important to consider new housing sites and their impacts as against other sites on the margin of the Stafford urban area which may need to be considered as alternatives. An important piece of evidence is the housing monitor to assess future commitments. There should be options considered regarding the extension and development of Council services through a joined-up process with Social Care and Health. A proforma needs to be produced in order to consider these issues.
- Discussions with Richard Higgs at the County Council will be facilitated by Chris Smailes in the next few days, in order to progress this area of work. Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council need to establish a working group in order to consider these issues in detail.

- It is important to look at the packages of land that can be made available at Falmouth Avenue in order to bring forward housing opportunities in this area but a thorough review of the consequences for Staffordshire County Council land and the property review process is necessary through a corporate approach.
- It is crucial to look at the delivery of sites and potential new housing development whilst taking into account the impact on existing local infrastructure and services such as the provision of education, social services, libraries, recreation, leisure, police and fire and rescue. The housing delivery in identified new areas must now take place with a meaningful discussion in terms of provision and implications for local areas.
- Some service providers at Staffordshire County Council have a different degree of impact arising from new housing development. However Staffordshire County Council Directors Richard Higgs, Keith Cackett and Paula Furnival need to work together in order to move forward and make decisions regarding the new timescales and delivery of service provision through the review process. There will be limited information until after November 2007 when project delivery can begin from January 2008. Earlier in the year the County Council and Stafford Borough's view of accommodating new development at Stafford may have been reflected differently in the Regional Spatial Strategy Spatial Options consultation but it would appear that Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council now have similar objectives in terms of promoting Stafford as a county regeneration initiative. The only difference is the actual scale of development that some officers consider is appropriate. The two authorities need to work together to concentrate on the short to medium term for implementation and delivery.
- Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 11 December at 9.30 a.m. in the Craddock Room, Civic Suite, Stafford Borough Council.

Note prepared by Alex Yendole

Date last revised: 08/01/2009

Forward Planning Section, Stafford Borough Council