

TEESDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report To: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
16 JUNE 2008**

**From: COUNILLOR JO FERGUS
COUNCILLOR PAULINE CHARLTON
COUNCILLOR OSSIE HEDLEY**

Ward Member: All

**Subject: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK : CORE STRATEGY ISSUES &
OPTIONS – CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 The Core Strategy Issues & Options document was approved for public consultation in November 2007. The 6 week consultation was carried out in November and December. 45 individuals and organisations made representations. This report summarises the comments made in those representations and sets out an appropriate response to each. The basis of our response will inform and guide the preparation of the next stage of the Core Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that:

- (i) Members note the comments received from the Consultation on the Core Strategy Issues & Options and approve the responses set out in Appendix 1**
- (ii) Members endorse the principle of identifying the Gaunless Valley as a key development location, in the next stage of the Core Strategy.**

3.0 LINK TO CORPORATE KEY PRIORITIES/AMBITIONS

3.1 Priority: All

3.2 Ambition: Most

3.3 Outcome: Most (Completion of Stage 1 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy)

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced the requirement to produce a Local Development Framework to replace the existing Local Plan. The Act sets out the basis for preparation of the different stages of the LDF and outlines the requirement for a Core Strategy, the first stage being the preparation and consultation on an Issues & Options document. Responses from this consultation will help shape the final Core Strategy – which will be a County-wide document.

5.0 CORE STRATEGY ISSUES & OPTIONS

- 5.1 Executive Committee approved the Core Strategy Issues & Options document on 29 October 2007 and agreed that it be published for public consultation. The 6 week consultation period generated 436 comments from 45 respondents. (see Appendix 1),
- 5.2 There were some individual respondents; but most were from a range of organisations, both statutory / community groups and commercial bodies commenting on areas of their specialist interest or consultants acting on behalf of clients. Generally, representations were supportive of the Council's approach to the Issues & Options and many felt that we had especially addressed sustainability issues in a forward thinking and comprehensive way. Of particular note were the comments from the Highways Agency, Environment Agency, One NorthEast and County Council, which all welcomed the Council's emphasis on sustainability concerns and our principal objective of developing a Settlement Hierarchy which would direct most development (both housing and employment) to locations where the need to travel is minimised and where supporting services already exist or are most likely to be established.
- 5.3 We set out in the sub-sections below, the most significant subject areas – the issues raised and the key points made, together with a brief summary of our response (Appendix 1 outlines the comments and responses in detail).
- 5.4 **Settlement Hierarchy**
By far the most numerous number of comments received, have been made in relation to the issue of Settlement Hierarchy, responding to our 'Options Summary' in Figure 11 of the document (Tiers One to Three; Options 1 to 8). In regard to questions on Tier One (Rural Service Centres), the majority of comments were made on a need to consider the inclusion of the Gaunless Valley as a third development location – the same status as Barnard Castle and Middleton-in-Teesdale (Option 3). Although not identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy as a Rural Service Centre, most respondents commenting on this issue did feel that there was some merit in designating the 'Gaunless Valley' as a 'Service Centre' (the exact boundaries of which would need to be subject to more detailed analysis), not least because of the opportunities presented by the current range of facilities and community services available

in the area (together with future viability of service provision, due to population numbers) and the need to regenerate the economy of this area. It is apparent that there is significant support for the identification of the Gaunless Valley area as a 'Development Location', of similar status as the 2 Rural Service Centres – and it is recommended that the next stage of the Core Strategy should recognise the area's importance.

5.5 The other main issue arising in regard to Hierarchy, was support (though not clearcut or significant) for use of the Housing Market Areas for choice of (Tier Two) Sustainable Rural Settlements (Option 4) – though there was some backing for the more simple approach offered by Option 5 and selection of settlements on the basis of their services and population – entirely independently of those identified in the HMA work.

5.6 **Renewable Energy**

Another significant area of comment was in regard to provision of locations for Large Scale Renewable Energy Development. Inevitably, conservation of the environmental qualities of Teesdale (particularly the Upper Dale and AONB area) may come into conflict with requirements (in the RSS and Regional Renewable Energy Strategy) for the provision of (wind and water) Energy infrastructure. A number of respondents (mainly environmental agencies) would want to see appropriate protection of such qualities, in any consideration of Renewable Energy development.

5.7 **Open Space, Leisure & Recreation Provision**

There is a recognised absence of an apparent evidence base for Open Space and Recreation requirements in Teesdale. Sport England in particular have made clear that the District does not have a recent Audit of open space needs – playing fields, leisure and sports facilities and other recreational provision and an agreed Strategy to address any shortfalls. This is in breach of a requirement of Government national planning guidance – PPG 17 sets out a need for an Audit and Playing Pitch Strategy and a subsequent Local Needs Assessment covering sport and recreational facilities. This requirement has been recognised and an Open Space and Leisure Facilities Audit is on the point of being commissioned, following a successful capital funding bid.

5.8 **Retail Assessment**

As with the Open Space information needs, a number of respondents have made clear the obvious lack of an up-to-date Retail Assessment for Teesdale – looking at retail needs in Barnard Castle, Middleton-in-Teesdale and the wider District. This is again an important evidence base which needs to be improved and a Retail Study is soon to be commissioned.

6.0 **STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 Financial Implications: None

6.2 Risk:

Risk	Category	Implications
Failure to comply with the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act and related regulations (administered regionally by GONE)	Reputational	Potential for legal challenge of the LDF

6.3 Equality and Diversity: None

6.4 Human Resources: None

6.5 Community Safety: None

6.6 Legal Issues: See Risk

Background papers:

1. **Teesdale Development Framework: Core Strategy Issues & Options document (November 2007)**
2. **Appendix 1**

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