

ROCHFORD DISTRICT CORE STRATEGY - PREFERRED OPTIONS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' approval of the draft Rochford Core Strategy Preferred Options document for consultation and community involvement. A copy of the document has been sent out under separate cover. It is intended that the recommendations of the Sub-Committee will be considered at a meeting of Full Council on 15 October.

2 PURPOSE OF THE CORE STRATEGY

- 2.1 The Core Strategy is the main, overarching policy document of the Rochford District Local Development Framework. It sets out the spatial planning strategy for the District until 2021 and, where appropriate, beyond. Once adopted, the Core Strategy will be the senior document in a hierarchy of Development Plan Documents produced by the Council.
- 2.2 The Core Strategy sets out how the Council will deliver the spatial aspects of its vision and the Sustainable Community Strategy, as well as how regional and national policies, such as those contained within the East of England Plan, will be applied locally.
- 2.3 The Core Strategy is also closely linked with the Council's corporate plan and vision.
- 2.4 The Core Strategy does not set out detailed development control policies or specify the exact location of land for future development. Such details will be included within other Development Plan Documents that form part of the Local Development Framework. These Development Plan Documents must conform to the policies within the Core Strategy.
- 2.5 The Core Strategy covers the following themes: housing, Green Belt, economic development, environmental issues, transport, retail and town centres, character of place, community infrastructure, and leisure and tourism.
- 2.6 The Council's approach must be sound and as such it is necessary for the policies to be underpinned by a comprehensive evidence base. In addition, the policies and proposals in the plan are subject to a sustainability appraisal – a process whereby the economic, environmental and social consequences of policies are assessed. The sustainability appraisal is being prepared for the Council by independent, external consultants.
- 2.7 It is also important that the Core Strategy reflects the views of local communities and the preferred options explained in the document have been determined having regard to the results of previous consultation exercises. A summary of the main concerns raised by the public and other stakeholders,

together with how these issues have been addressed, is included in the Rochford Core Strategy Preferred Options document.

3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORE STRATEGY

- 3.1 The production of the Core Strategy is an iterative process that is subject to a number of formal stages.
- 3.2 The Council produced an Issues and Options document in September 2006. Following consultation and community involvement, a number of development options were ruled out as being unsustainable, unviable and / or undeliverable.
- 3.3 The next stage involved the production of a Preferred Options document. This was subject to community involvement between May and July 2007. Representations from both members of the public, statutory bodies and other organisations raised concerns about several issues, not least that insufficient detail had been provided about the general locations for development. Having regard to the consultation responses, the Council resolved to commence production of a revised Core Strategy Preferred Options document.
- 3.4 Since the production of the first Core Strategy Preferred Options, the Government has published revised guidance on the production of Local Development Frameworks. This guidance, detailed in Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12), gives the Council scope to provide more detail about the general locations for new development, though site specific allocations must still be reserved for other Development Plan Documents.
- 3.5 The Council's revised Core Strategy Preferred Options has been developed having regard to the results of previous consultation and community involvement and extensive evidence base, details of which are included in the document's introduction.
- 3.6 One of the Core Strategy Preferred Options' primary purposes is to explain to the community what the Council's preferred approach is and to enable the public to have their say on this.
- 3.7 It is intended that the Rochford Core Strategy Preferred Options document will be subject to a six week period of public consultation and participation. Subject to Members agreeing the Core Strategy Preferred Options, arrangements are in hand to prepare for the community consultation and engagement in accordance with the requirements of the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. A draft of the consultation proposals is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.8 The results of the consultation will be used to inform the preparation of the Submission version of the document. The Submission version will be subject to further consultation before being scrutinised by an independent inspector at

an examination in public. If the plan is found to be sound by the inspector the Council may then adopt the Core Strategy.

- 3.9 The Core Strategy is scheduled to be submitted to the Government for independent examination in August 2009.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There is an issue with Regulatory Risk if the Core Strategy fails to comply with the relevant sections of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 or secondary legislation.
- 4.2 The Government has indicated through the recent publication of revised Planning Policy Statement 12 that it is essential for districts to make rapid progress in the preparation of their Core Strategies. In particular, in relation to residential development, Planning Policy Statement 3 on Housing explains very clearly that: 'Where Local Planning Authorities cannot demonstrate an up-to-date five year supply of deliverable sites, for example, where Local Development Documents have not been reviewed to take into account policies in this PPS or there is less than five years supply of deliverable sites, they should consider favourably planning applications for housing, having regard to the policies in this PPS including the considerations in paragraph 69'. Furthermore, PPS3 also points out that Local Planning Authorities should not refuse planning applications solely on the grounds of prematurity.
- 4.3 Without an adopted Core Strategy and a five-year supply of housing land, the District will be vulnerable to speculative applications for housing development, which may not be in accordance with the Council's vision for the area. Ad hoc applications for housing development will also put at risk proposals for the delivery of new infrastructure.
- 4.4 The Core Strategy seeks to take advantage of development opportunities within the District that will provide social, economic and environmental benefits. Failure to progress the Core Strategy may jeopardise the chance to deliver such benefits and to deliver the Council's vision for the future of the District.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Failure to progress the Local Development Framework may significantly affect the award of Government grant money provided through the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that the costs of preparation of the Rochford Core Strategy can be met from existing budgets and the Planning Delivery Grant.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Core Strategy will have a fundamental impact on the District's environment, as outlined within the document.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL**

That, subject to comments from Members, the Rochford Core Strategy Preferred Options document be approved for consultation and community involvement.

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Background Papers:-

None.

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