



Report for: Cabinet

Date 7th December 2011

Subject: Progress and Next Steps on Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategy

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1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report sets out the latest position on the progress being made towards preparation of the Council's Core Strategy and reports back on the findings of the recent 'Special Contacts' consultation exercise 'have your say on where we build homes'. The report also invites Cabinet to consider the approach to be taken to identify key housing sites in the next stage of the Aligned Core Strategy.

2. Background

2.1 As part of the process of preparing the Aligned Core Strategy, a consultation exercise was undertaken between July – September 2011 on three documents:-

- Housing Provision Position Paper
- Locally Distinct Housing Issues for Gedling Borough Council
- Draft Climate Change Policy 1

2.2 The purpose of these consultation exercises was, in part, to seek views on the housing requirement for Gedling Borough for the period up to 2028 and to look at the implications for the Borough in terms of how the housing requirement should be accommodated. A brief summary of how the housing requirement has been derived (July 2011) is set out in **Appendix A**. The consultation exercise sought views on four possible options for accommodating the majority of the housing requirement.

- 2.3 Following on from this exercise, a further consultation exercise was undertaken which ended on 11th November 2011, through the delivery of a Special Contacts leaflet to every household within Gedling Borough. This leaflet set out in broad terms the pros and cons of each of the four options in an accessible and user-friendly format and was produced to (a) raise local awareness, and (b) give all households an opportunity to comment. The results of this consultation exercise are set out at **Appendix B** and should be considered alongside the previous consultation exercise which sought views from a wider geographical area and from a wider range of consultees.
- 2.4 Alongside the consultation exercises undertaken over recent months, work has been ongoing with regards to the evidence required in order to assess the sustainability, viability and deliverability of the four options. Any strategic sites identified in the next stage of the Aligned Core Strategy must demonstrate how these three tests are met, otherwise there is a risk of the Strategy being found unsound.
- 2.5 The ‘Locally Distinct Housing Issues for Gedling Borough Council’ document concluded that, in considering how the Borough’s housing requirement should be accommodated, the most appropriate approach was to secure the development potential of the Gedling Colliery/Chase Farm site with the support of additional land from Mapperley Golf Course.
- 2.6 This option was pursued on the basis that it was a sustainable location that carried the potential to kick start a comprehensive re-development including the proposed Gedling Country Park, a new supermarket, school, health centre and range of other community facilities.
- 2.7 Running in parallel to the consultation, appraisal work has been undertaken to assess the viability and deliverability of a combined Mapperley Golf Course/Gedling Colliery scheme.
- 2.8 Although the scheme carries the potential of being financially viable, there are significant risks involved and some compromises that the Council would have to accept, such as a much larger than desired number of homes on the golf course and a smaller proportion of affordable homes. In addition, the appraisal also showed that there was a significant upfront funding gap (in the region of £10m) associated with the cost of the Gedling Access Road for which there was not an identified source of funding. As such, without alternative public financing and a more realistic risk profile, there are concerns that the development is unlikely to be deliverable.
- 2.9 In view of these conclusions, it is recommended that the Mapperley Golf Course site no longer be proposed for development and that consideration be given instead to alternative sites in order to meet the Borough’s housing requirement.

- 2.10 The alternative sites considered will each have their own unique context and set of issues raised which will need to be considered and justified. In undertaking this work, there is a need to demonstrate that sites are sustainable in planning terms, financially viable and are deliverable within the required timescales.

3.0 Options for consideration

- 3.1 As set out in the Locally Distinct Housing Issues for Gedling Borough Council, there are three remaining options that should be considered further as part of the ongoing work to prepare the Pre-submission Draft of the Aligned Core Strategy. It is likely that a mixture of these options will be needed.

Additional homes at Top Wighay Farm

- 3.2 In addition to the 500 dwellings already allocated at Top Wighay Farm, there is scope to bring forward some of the safeguarded land to the north of the allocated site. The number of houses needed to fund the Nottingham Express Transit extension in order to make the larger extended site sustainable would result in a significant loss of Green Belt land and could result in problems of Hucknall coalescing with Newstead and Kirkby in Ashfield. In any event, given its potential impact on Hucknall, Ashfield District Council is unlikely to support a significant extension, and this may compromise the ability of the Aligned Core Strategy to conform with the Duty to Co-operate. However, it may be that a smaller number of additional houses could be allocated which could be served by the existing highway network and discussions will be progressed to explore this further.

New Farm, Redhill

- 3.3 The difficulties of being able to provide access to the site without further compromising the movement of vehicles on Mansfield Road, and the knock on impact on air quality resulting from more standing vehicles mean that this site would be difficult to deliver without significant highway improvements. The layout of the current road network means that this would be extremely difficult. On this basis, the New Farm site is unlikely to be considered to be deliverable unless evidence to the contrary is provided.

Villages

- 3.4 The growth of the villages could result in the opportunity to invest in and develop new community facilities, as well as extending new facilities. Similarly, growth could fund the provision of, or enhancement of public transport. However, development in the villages could result in the loss of areas of Green Belt land and would need to be considered carefully with regards to the character and setting of these communities. On this basis, it is considered that further work should be undertaken to explore the allocation of sites in the villages.

Other Sites

- 3.5 Whilst the sites above may meet the majority of housing need, other sites could also be re-considered in light of the need to provide an adequate housing land supply and the Governments drive to invigorate the economy by promoting house building. Therefore it is proposed to review both existing employment land allocations and to revisit those sites in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

Designation of sites in Aligned Core Strategy

- 3.6 As part of the work required to prepare the Pre-submission Draft of the Aligned Core Strategy, consideration will also need to be given to how the Mapperley Golf Course site should be identified within that document, on the basis that it is not to be brought forward for development through the Core Strategy. Given the location and nature of the Golf Course and former Gedling Colliery spoil tip, these areas may be considered for inclusion in the Green Belt. Clearly, it would be helpful for the Golf Club if any on-going uncertainty could be minimised but the Council will also need to be mindful of the national guidance relating to the designation and purpose of Green Belt. Consideration will also need to be given to how the Gedling Colliery site is identified.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 A report is being prepared on the three consultation exercises undertaken between July – September 2011. The intention is that the Report of Responses document be considered by members in conjunction with the next key stage of the Aligned Core Strategy, which will be the Pre-submission Draft document. The Report will set out how the responses have been taken on board and informed the Pre-submission Draft.
- 4.2 In addition, officers propose to undertake the necessary further assessments as identified in paragraphs 3.1-3.5 and report these findings to Cabinet early in the New Year. Subject to Cabinet agreement, the Pre-submission Draft of the Aligned Core Strategies will be taken to Full Council seeking authorisation to go out for a further six week period of consultation.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet agree that;

1. The Mapperley Golf Course site not be considered further for allocation in the next formal stage of the Aligned Core Strategy (the Pre-submission Draft)
2. Subject to approval, and as a consequence of 1 above, officers consider alternative sites for allocation in the Aligned Core Strategies in order to meet the Borough's housing requirement as set out in paragraphs 3.1-3.5 above.

3. Officers give consideration to the appropriate method of protecting Mapperley Golf Course and the former Gedling Colliery spoil tip from future development; and
4. To continue with the work to progress the Aligned Core Strategies in accordance with timescales agreed with the other Greater Nottingham authorities.

Appendix A - Housing requirement (July 2011)

- 1 The housing requirement for Gedling Borough for the period 2011 – 2028 is 7,268 dwellings. In order to meet this housing requirement, account can be taken of both dwellings that have already been granted planning permission (and, as such, it is assumed will be completed within the plan period) and sites allocated in the Gedling Borough Replacement Local Plan that have not yet come forward for development.

Housing requirement 2011 - 2028	7,268
Planning permissions as at April 2011	- 1,698
Unimplemented allocations On sites already allocated to provide homes - comprised of 1,120 Gedling Colliery/Chase Farm; 400 North of Victoria Park and Teal Close; 40 Wood Lane; 110 Dark Lane; 500 Top Wighay Farm; 80 Newstead Sports Ground.	- 2,250
Remaining requirement	= 3,320

- 2 The unimplemented allocations comprise the sites listed in the following table.

Gedling Colliery/Chase Farm (planning application submitted but not yet determined)	1,120
North of Victoria Park and Teal Close (dependent on completion of the Left Bank Flood Alleviation Scheme which is due to become operational late 2012)	400
Wood Lane	40
Dark Lane, Calverton (planning application submitted but not yet determined)	110
Top Wighay Farm allocation (Local Plan gives capacity as 595 but reduced to 500 through the development brief for the site)	500
Newstead sports ground	80
Total	2,250

Appendix B – Options

Results of Special Contacts consultation

- 1.1 Question 1 of the Special Contacts leaflet asked ‘where should we build the houses?’ The percentage and number of respondents expressing a preference for each of the 4 options was as follows:-

	% of total respondents	Number of respondents
Option 1 (Top Wighay Farm)	44%	1,455
Option 2 (New Farm)	3.4%	114
Option 3 (Villages)	13.5%	448
Option 4 (Mapperley Golf Course/Gedling Colliery)	38%	1,291
Total		3,308

- 1.2 As residents were asked to enter their postcode as part of their response, we are able to establish that, in essence, those living in the rural areas would prefer the houses to be built in the urban areas and those living in the urban areas would prefer the houses to be built in the rural areas.

- 1.3 The key reasons given by respondents for their preference was as follows:-

Option 1 (Top Wighay Farm):-

- Least disruption to green belt land/environment (25%)

Followed by:-

- Availability of adequate infrastructure/transport links (18%)
- Potential to provide larger number/wider choice of housing in area (16%)

Option 2 (New Farm)

- Availability of public services/amenities in the area (24%)

Closely followed by:-

- Availability of adequate infrastructure/transport links (22%)
- Least disruption to green belt land/environment (15%)

Option 3 (villages)

- Option will not stretch existing resources/impact on existing communities (45% - this was the key reason given, by some margin)

Option 4 (Mapperley Golf Course/Gedling Colliery)

- Least disruption to green belt land/environment (28%)

Followed by:-

Area is currently underused (20%)