

CORE STRATEGY – PROPOSED SUBMISSION DOCUMENT

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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision No

Purpose of Report

1. This report is concerned with the progression of the District Council's Core Strategy. It reports to Members the proposed content of a number of sections of the Core Strategy Proposed Submission document.

Summary of Report

2. In September and November 2008 a series of Topic Papers were reported to the Better Environment Advisory Group (BEAG). These Topic Papers identified the representations that were made on the Core Strategy Pre-Submission document as well as the District Council's response to these representations. The content of these Topic Papers has been used to inform the draft sections of the Core Strategy, together with further engagement with key stakeholders, additional evidence base work and the content of national and regional planning policy. This next stage of the Core Strategy is known as the 'Proposed Submission' stage. This means that the version to be agreed in the spring/summer will be the Core Strategy that the Council wishes to be submitted to Government for Examination by a Planning Inspector.
3. This report is only concerned with parts of the Proposed Submission document. These parts are generally the non housing and employment elements of the Core Strategy, as well as policies that are not dependent on the content of the adopted South East Plan or other outstanding evidence for determining the direction that the policy takes.

Recommendation

4. **Members are requested to note the contents of this report and comment on the content of the sections of the Core Strategy Proposed Submission document that have been drafted to date.**
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Background

5. The Mid Sussex Core Strategy is the key overarching document in the Local Development Framework. It will set out the District Council's strategy up to 2026, including its vision for the area, locations for major housing, employment and related development, and strategic policies for that period. All subsequent Development Plan Documents will need to be in conformity with the Core Strategy.
6. The vision for the Core Strategy, as well as the wider content of the document, will need to closely reflect the content of the Sustainable Community Strategy, which will set out a long-term, sustainable vision for the area with a number of local priorities. The Sustainable Community Strategy has been developed over the last year with an extensive public consultation exercise undertaken in Summer 2008. Comments made during this public consultation exercise have helped shape a revised version of

this strategy, which will be considered by the Local Strategic Partnership and the Council in early 2009. Consultation on the draft strategy confirmed that the major thrust of the document should be under four key themes, namely, economic vitality, protecting and enhancing the environment, cohesive and safe communities and healthy lifestyles. It is considered that the emerging Core Strategy fully reflects these four themes. The Sustainable Community Strategy is due to be adopted before the end of March 2009.

7. The Core Strategy Proposed Submission document needs to be primarily prepared against the policies contained within the South East Plan. The South East Plan was due to be finalised in early 2009, however recent indications are that this could now be late spring (i.e. end of June). The content of the final South East Plan is going to be key for a number of policy areas in the Core Strategy. This includes the policies that will detail the housing numbers and strategy, and a number of the generic policies concerned with issues such as coalescence and infrastructure. These have all been the subject of objections to the draft South East Plan. For this reason Council will not be asked to finalise the Proposed Submission Core Strategy until the South East Plan has been adopted. This puts in doubt the intended date in the draft Local Development Scheme for consideration of the Proposed Submission Core Strategy by Council in April 2009.

Production of the Core Strategy to date

8. Work on developing the Core Strategy has been ongoing for a number of years. Issues and options consultation commenced in June 2004 and continued through to September 2007 (Appendix 2 of the Core Strategy Proposed Submission document provides further detail on this consultation). During this time part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy was also produced. Along with the outcomes from the Issues and Options consultation and the Sustainability Appraisal process, this evidence base was used to inform the content of the Core Strategy Pre-Submission document.
9. The Core Strategy Pre-Submission document and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal report were issued for consultation in January 2008. A total of 5,667 representations were made on these documents. All these representations were acknowledged and made publicly available in June 2008. The representations were then collated into a series of topic papers that were reported to and considered by members of the BEAG in September and November 2008. A final set of topic papers, which incorporate comments made by members at these BEAG meetings, have been placed on the District Council's website and distributed to the libraries and help points in the District.
10. As well as the preparation of the topic papers, further evidence base work to inform the Core Strategy has also taken place since the Pre-Submission document was consulted upon in early 2008. This evidence base work has included the Strategic Transport Study, the Appropriate Assessment, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Rural Issues Background Paper and a further Employment Land Review. It should be noted that this evidence base will, in the main, influence the content of the housing and employment sections of the Core Strategy. Therefore the sections of the Proposed Submission document that are subject to this report have generally not been influenced by the findings from this evidence base.
11. Some of the evidence base work, identified in the previous paragraph, has yet to be finalised. This includes the Strategic Transport Study and the Appropriate

Assessment. Where such evidence base has yet to be completed, policies and sections of the Core Strategy that will be influenced by the findings of this evidence are not being considered as part of this report. These policies will be considered at subsequent BEAG meetings. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (or SHMA) is nearing completion, and the results of this study, together with proposed affordable housing, housing mix and density policies, will be considered by the Better Lives Advisory Group on 28th January. Members of BEAG are encouraged to attend the BLAG meeting so they have a full picture of the Core Strategy policies. The BLAG meeting will be preceded by a presentation on the SHMA to which invitations have been sent out to all District Members and representatives from the Town and Parish Councils.

12. On-going engagement with key stakeholders has also formed a significant role in progressing the Core Strategy towards the Proposed Submission stage. This engagement has included trying to resolve stakeholders concerns over certain aspects of the Core Strategy (as expressed in their representations to the Pre-Submission document) and attempting to seek agreement with the Town and Parish Council's over the content of the spatial sections of the Core Strategy that are of relevance to them. The 'Three Tiers Groups' set up in each town have been key to this engagement, and notes of these recent meetings are appended to this report (see Appendix C).

The Proposed Submission Document

13. In June 2008 the Regulations that set out the procedural requirements for producing Development Plan Documents, such as a Core Strategy, were amended¹. Under the previous system the District Council would have undertaken the Pre-Submission stage for the Core Strategy and then amended the document for submitting to the Secretary of State for Examination. At the same time as submitting this document, full public consultation would have been undertaken by the District Council with all representations received being considered by the Planning Inspector who was undertaking the Examination.
14. As a result of the recently introduced Regulations the District Council is now required to undertake a 'Proposed Submission' stage prior to formally submitting the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State. The purpose of this Proposed Submission stage is that if, during the consultation on this document, key fundamental issues are raised that cast doubt over the soundness of this document, these issues can be addressed prior to formally submitting the document. This reduces the likelihood that the plan is found to be unsound at Examination. If such an instance were to occur the document would need to be returned to Council, and probably further consultation carried out prior to submission.
15. However, assuming that such a 'showstopper' does not emerge during the Proposed Submission consultation, the document will then be submitted unchanged to Government. This means that the Core Strategy Proposed Submission document needs to be considered the Council's 'final word' on its intentions, and must be sound and capable of being defended at Examination. The proposed timetable for progressing the Core Strategy can be viewed in Appendix B.
16. Appendix A to this report contains the Core Strategy Proposed Submission document that has been drafted to date. As already alluded to elsewhere in this report, this

¹ The full title of the amended regulations is 'The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008'

draft document only contains certain sections and policies of what will be the full document. Where certain sections and policies are not being considered at this BEAG they have been removed from the document. However, reference is made to where in the document these sections and policies will go and a reason is given for why they are not being considered at this stage (this is generally the need for an adopted South East Plan or further evidence base work has yet to be completed that will influence upon the content of these policies). The sections and policies that are subject to this report are identified below (the full text for these sections and policies can be viewed in Appendix A). An explanation for some of the key changes made to these policies and sections, since the Pre-Submission document was published, is also given.

Section 1 – Introduction

17. This section of the Core Strategy has been amended to reflect the stage of production the document has reached as well as the recent amendments made to the regulations that concern the production of Development Plan Documents.

Section 2 – Characteristics

18. A number of comments were made on the Pre-Submission document that suggested relatively minor changes to this section of the Core Strategy. These suggested changes were generally where further or more up-to-date data was provided to the District Council or where additional characteristics were considered worthy of inclusion. Such suggested changes have been incorporated into this section. In addition, a few changes have made to reflect a change in data or a change in circumstance since the Pre-Submission document was published. It should also be noted that Sections 2, 3 and 4 have been re-ordered in the draft Proposed Submission document. This is on the advice of the Government Office for the South East and is done in order to set the scene for Mid Sussex prior to detailing the spatial vision.

Section 3 – Issues, Problems and Challenges

19. As previously mentioned in this report it is important that the content of the Core Strategy complements the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Sustainable Community Strategy identifies challenges to be addressed and a number of objectives that will sought to be achieved. Changes have therefore been made to this section of the Core Strategy to ensure that these two documents do complement each other. Other changes made to this section are as a result of comments received on the Pre-Submission document.

Section 4 – The Spatial Vision

20. It is important that the Spatial Vision for the Core Strategy complements the vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Changes have therefore been made to the Spatial Vision to ensure that these two documents are more closely aligned and complement one another. These changes have been agreed with the officers who are preparing the Sustainable Community Strategy. Other changes made to this section are as a result of comments received on the Pre-Submission document.

Core Policy 3 – Gypsies and Travellers

21. The Topic Paper prepared for this Core Policy identifies a couple of suggested amendments to the policy/supporting text for the purposes of clarity. This includes

making it clear that the policy criteria will also apply to planning applications as well as proposed sites in the Allocations Document, and will also relate to sites for Travelling Showpeople. These changes have been made to the policy/supporting text that will appear in the Proposed Submission document.

Core Policy 5 – Tourism

22. Changes made to this policy and supporting text are as a result of comments received on the Pre-Submission document. It was suggested that the importance of the public rights of way as an element of tourism infrastructure should be made clear, hence the supporting text has been amended to reflect this. In addition, text has been added to reflect the need for new tourism related development to protect the character and appearance of the District, and cross-references made to the Design policy that will ensure this.

Core Policies 8 and 9 – Cultural Activities and Facilities, and Open Space, Sport and Recreation

23. As a result of comments received on these policies at the Pre-Submission consultation stage there has not been a need to make significant alterations to either policy and the supporting text. Amendments have made to reflect that the District Council will no longer be preparing a Cultural Strategy. Instead, a Leisure Strategy is to be produced and it is anticipated that this will be adopted in May 2009. The policy now refers Leisure Activities and Facilities, rather than Cultural activities. Core Policies 8 and 9 have also been merged, although the objective of this combined policy remains the same.

Core Policies 10, 19 and 22 – The Town Centre policies for Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath

24. These three policies provide over-arching support for the revitalisation of the three Town Centres. They also commit the District Council to a review of the three Town Centre Master Plans. There is little reason to change the essence of these policies, particularly as the comments received on them, at the Pre-Submission consultation stage, were generally in support of the over-arching aim of revitalising the town centres.

Core Policy 31 – AONB/Proposed National Park

25. During the consultation stage on the Core Strategy Pre-Submission document, one or two respondents highlighted a couple of factual errors within the supporting text for this policy. These errors have been corrected in the Proposed Submission document. Apart from these relatively minor changes, the policy and supporting text have not been altered.

Core Policy 33 – Sustainable Resources

26. As identified in the Topic Paper, which is concerned with this Core Policy, the adopted version of the Planning Policy Statement: 'Planning and Climate Change – Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1' was published after the Core Strategy Pre-Submission document had been approved for public consultation. To ensure compliance with this key piece of national planning policy a change of approach has been required for the Core Policy on Sustainable Resources (the Topic Paper provides further information concerning this issue). Essentially, as a result of the PPS on Climate Change, building sustainability standards need to be identified in a

Development Plan Document, and not a Supplementary Planning Document, need to be specified in terms of nationally recognised standards, such as the Code for Sustainable Homes, and be clearly linked to evidence. The direction this policy is now taking has been very much informed by the content of the Sustainability Appraisal report for the South East Plan – Proposed Modifications. The supporting text to this policy (see Appendix A) explains how this is the case.

Core Policy 39 – Transport

27. As this policy is very generic and over-arching there were very few representations on it and no substantive issues were raised. Many localised transport issues will be addressed in the Core Policies that set out development principles for the towns and principles for strategic developments.

Core Policy 42 – Design

28. Changes made to this policy are in part due to the comments received on the Pre-Submission document. Such changes include making reference to issues such as landscape character and local distinctiveness. Other changes made to this policy and supporting text are as a result of the Commission of Architecture in the Built Environment (CABE) providing some ideas for improving its content and making it more locally distinctive.

Core Policy 43 – Change of Use and Redevelopment

29. No fundamental issues in respect of this policy were raised during the Pre-Submission consultation and there are no changes of circumstances, such as a change in national planning policy, that merit the policy being significantly changed.

Additional Policy Areas

30. Topic Paper 13 (reported to BEAG on the 30th September 2008) identified where respondents to the Pre-Submission document had suggested additional policy areas for inclusion within the Core Strategy. In a number of instances, such suggestions were considered to be not feasible as the policy would either be just repeating national and/or regional planning policy, or was already being addressed elsewhere within the Core Strategy document. Despite this it has been considered appropriate to have a generic Core Policy on flood risk, which draws upon the findings from the District Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The wording of this policy and supporting text has been agreed with the Environment Agency.

Appendix 2 – Details of Community Engagement

31. Further community engagement work that has been undertaken since the Core Strategy Pre-Submission document was published for consultation has been documented in this section.

Appendix 3 – Key Drivers of the Core Strategy

32. This appendix has been updated to reflect additional plans and policies that have been prepared in the last year and have an influence on the content of the Core Strategy. The main changes focus on the Sustainable Community Strategy, which will be adopted before the end of March 2009 thereby replacing the Community Strategy, which was extensively referred to in the Pre-Submission version of this appendix.

Appendix 5 – Relationship of Core Strategy to Local Plan Policies

33. Changes to certain Core Policies, as well as the addition of further policies, have resulted in additional/different Local Plan policies being replaced. This appendix has been altered to reflect such changes. This table will be further updated when all the Core Strategy policies have been considered by BEAG and/or BLAG.

Appendix 6 – Evidence Base for the Core Strategy

34. As mentioned earlier in this report, additional evidence base work has been undertaken since the Pre-Submission document was published. These additional pieces of work have been highlighted within this appendix. It is important to note that some of this additional evidence has yet to be finalised.

Appendix 7 - Glossary

35. Any additional abbreviations used in the Core Strategy have been referenced in this appendix.
36. As previously mentioned the above sections and policies form Appendix A of this report. All changes made to the Core Strategy, since the Pre-Submission document was published, have been identified as track changes.

Next Steps

37. The proposed timetable for the progression of the Core Strategy can be found in Appendix B of this report. This timetable includes the dates for formal engagement with Members on the Core Strategy over the coming 6 months. It should be noted that this proposed timetable differs slightly from previous versions that have been circulated to Members. It is now considered highly unlikely that the Core Strategy Proposed Submission document will be able to be considered by Council in April 2009. The main reason for this is due to the anticipated delay in the final publication of the South East Plan (see paragraph 7 of this report). With this being the case it is now considered that the Council meeting on the 22nd July is going to be first opportunity for the Core Strategy Proposed Submission document to be considered for approval against the backdrop of a published South East Plan. Although there is an initial delay in the Core Strategy timetable it is still predicted that the document will be adopted by the end of 2010. This is due to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) considering that the draft Local Development Scheme submitted by the District Council shows excessive time between consulting on the Proposed Submission document and formally submitting it to the Secretary of State.
38. The proposed changes to the timetable for progressing the Core Strategy will need to be reflected in the District Council's Local Development Scheme. A revised Local Development Scheme, reflecting the Core Strategy timetable in Appendix B of this report, will be considered by Cabinet later in the year.
39. In addition to engagement with Members and other key stakeholders (i.e. Town and Parish Council's, service providers, developers) over the coming months it is worth noting the content of section 9.0 and Appendix B of the Core Strategy update report (Item 6) taken to the Better Environment Advisory Group on the 1st July 2008. These sections of this report detail the further evidence base work that is currently being undertaken as well the community engagement that will be taking place over the coming 6 months to inform the Core Strategy Proposed Submission document.

Financial Implications

40. There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations of this report.

Other Material Implications

41. There are no direct material implications associated with the recommendations of this report.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Draft Core Strategy Proposed Submission document (in part).
- Appendix B – Timetable for progressing the Core Strategy.
- Appendix C – Notes of meetings of the Three Tiers Groups since November 2008.

Background Papers

- Core Strategy Pre-Submission Document (January 2008)
- Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Core Strategy (January 2008)

Both of these documents are available to view on the Council's website, see: www.midsussex.gov.uk/corestrategy.

- Report to Cabinet (3rd September 2008), Item 7 – Revised Local Development Scheme, see: <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/Nimoi/sites/msdcpublic/resources/fullreport29%2Epdf>
- Report to Better Environment Advisory Group (1st July 2008), Item 6 – Core Strategy Update, see: <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/Nimoi/sites/msdcpublic/resources/fullreport26%2Epdf>
- Topic Papers prepared on the Core Strategy Pre-Submission document, see: <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/corestrategy>