

Cabinet
Council

13 March 2012
20 March 2012

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (City Development) - Councillor Bigham

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of City Services & Development

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Options for a new housing target for Coventry 2011 – 2028

Is this a key decision?

Yes

To approve publication of the document at Appendix 1 for public consultation for a period of 6 weeks, between Monday 26th March 2012 and Thursday 10th May 2012.

Executive Summary:

Independent consultants have been working on a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) that estimates the housing need for Coventry up to 2028. This will inform the Core Strategy, and is a crucial evidence document.

The consultants have now provided the Council with a draft Interim Report. This includes a number of different scenarios for the future development of Coventry, and estimates the numbers of new homes needed for each scenario.

The purpose of the proposed consultation document at Appendix 1 is to canvass the views of all residents and other stakeholders, as to which of the different housing numbers is preferred. The results of the consultation will inform the final Core Strategy.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is requested to:

- 1) Recommend that the Council approve the "Options for a new housing target for Coventry 2011 – 2028" document for a six week period of public consultation beginning on Monday 26th March 2012 and ending on Thursday 10th May 2012

The Council is requested to:

- 2) Approve the "Options for a new housing target for Coventry 2011 – 2028" document for a six week period of public consultation beginning on Monday 26th March 2012 and ending on Thursday 10th May 2012

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1:"Options for a new housing target for Coventry 2011 – 2028"

Other useful background papers:

SHMA draft Interim Report Technical Summary, January 2012, available to download at www.coventry.gov.uk/ldf

Coventry's Economy: Employment Land Requirements Update, January 2012, available to download at www.coventry.gov.uk/ldf

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

Yes

20 March 2012

Report title: Options for a new housing target for Coventry 2011 – 2028

1. Context (or background)

1.1 Independent consultants have been working on a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) that estimates the housing need for Coventry up to 2028. This will inform the Core Strategy, and is a crucial evidence document. The consultants have now provided the Council with a draft Interim Report. This includes a number of different scenarios for the future development of Coventry, and estimates the numbers of new homes needed for each scenario.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 The Coventry Core Strategy (CS) will set out the overall development strategy for the city during the period to 2028. The CS was subject to a period of public consultation during the autumn of 2011. Opinion was largely polarised between local residents' broad support for the principle of protecting the Green Belt, and representatives from the development industry who would of course like to see Greenfield / Green Belt land identified for development.

2.2 It was clear within the objections received to the "Proposed Core Strategy" that the basis for the decision to protect the Green Belt is being questioned: in other words, objectors are pointing out that there is no specific evidence available yet to support the overall strategy. The purpose of the proposed consultation is to respond to this specific challenge.

2.3 It is important that the key aspects of the strategy are subject to proper consultation, in order that the CS itself is legally compliant. The risks associated with not undertaking the proposed consultation include possibilities that:

- At the next stage of the process, the independent Inspector may consider the CS to be not legally compliant, effectively requiring the Council to undertake the consultation exercise that is currently proposed anyway; or
- A legal challenge is launched at the very end of the process, which may be very costly to defend, and if successful would leave Coventry open to a "presumption in favour of sustainable development" as described by the draft National Planning Policy Framework.

2.4 It follows that the risk of failure associated with the 'do nothing' option is too high, and the consequence of failure is too great from both a reputational and a financial position. The proposed consultation will significantly reduce the risks identified above at paragraph 2.3, and at relatively low cost.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 It is intended that consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. This will include:

- Writing to all statutory consultees and neighbouring Councils, enclosing a copy of the document and confirming how and when comments should be made;
- Writing to all others on our database of consultees to notify them that the consultation is underway, and how they can access the document;
- Placing copies of the document in all publicly accessible Council offices, and all libraries in the city;
- Placing a copy of the document on the Council's web site, together with details of how and when comments should be made; and
- Stakeholder workshops to discuss the options contained within the document.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 It is intended that a period of public consultation will begin on Monday 26th March, and end on Thursday 10th May (extended beyond 6 weeks to account for three bank holidays). The outcome of the consultation will be reported to Cabinet during Summer 2012.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

5.1 Financial implications

The only costs resulting directly from the recommendations in this report are associated with the proposed consultation and are principally concerned with printing and postage of letters and the document itself. These costs will be absorbed within existing budgets.

5.2 Legal implications

The proposed consultation period of 6 weeks is the usual minimum specified by the regulations, and by the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement, for a planning policy consultation period.

The proposed consultation will ensure that the Council can demonstrate that it has considered all reasonable alternatives when choosing its new housing target, and that it has involved the local community and others with an interest in the process. This substantially increases the chances that, in due course, the Core Strategy will be found to be legally compliant by the independent Inspector. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 2004 sets out the relevant provisions governing the matters raised in this report

6. Other implications

There are no other specific implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

The proposed consultation will contribute to a number of the Council's core aims as follows:

- A prosperous Coventry: Choosing the right housing target will ensure that sufficient new homes are provided to meet the needs of local people, and that businesses are not deprived of staff through a lack of housing;
- Making Coventry an attractive and enjoyable place to be. Choosing the right housing target will strike the correct balance that provides enough new homes for local people, and protects the Green Belt from inappropriate development;
- Providing a good choice of housing. This is a key requirement when choosing a housing target;
- Making places and services easily accessible. Choosing a housing target will, in practical terms, ensure that the right amount of new development happens to ensure that services are viable and accessible;
- Developing a more equal city with cohesive communities and neighbourhoods. One of the benefits of choosing the right housing target will be that more people will be adequately housed; and
- Improving the environment and tackling climate change. Choosing the right housing target will bring about improvements to areas in need of investment, and will protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The key risk associated with the proposal is concerned with those who are promoting Green Belt and other Greenfield land for development seeking to call into question the options figures that are contained within the "Options for a new housing target for Coventry 2011 – 2028" document.

This risk has been managed by including a high housing number (that exceeds the identified capacity of Coventry's previously-developed land and would therefore implicitly require Greenfield / Green Belt development) within the range of options that are being consulted on.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

6.4 Equalities / EIA

An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed to inform this decision. This is because it is a technical options consultation, to be carried out in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

At this point, there are no implications for (or impact on) the environment, as the proposal is to carry out a technical consultation exercise. Detailed assessment of these issues can be found in the Sustainability Appraisal Report (SA/SEA) that will be made available during the consultation period. The SA/SEA considers each of the options that are the subject of the consultation.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

No direct implications for partner organisations. Potential implications for neighbouring Councils, in connection with discharging the Duty to Cooperate as introduced by Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011, are not clear. The Council, together with its partners across the region, is formulating proposals for a mechanism to administer the duty.

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