
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 28 JULY 2011

EEOSP.46/11 CORE STRATEGY

The Planning Manager (Mr Hardman) submitted report ED.24/11 which set out the draft Core Strategy Issues and Options paper on which a 6 weeks public consultation period was scheduled to commence on 19 September 2011. The Issues and Options paper represented the first statutory stage of the Carlisle District Core Strategy, which as part of the Carlisle Local Development Framework would ultimately replace the Carlisle District Local Plan. It set out what kind of place the Carlisle area would be in the future and identified a wide range of issues that the Core Strategy would need to cover. In order to ascertain the best way to address those issues effectively the document highlighted a range of spatial planning options that could be taken forward in the future. Feedback from the consultation already undertaken had helped to refine the issues and informed the range of options presented in the report.

Following consultation on the Issues and Options paper, the next stage would be the preparation of the Preferred Options to reflect the evolving evidence base and the consultation responses. The sustainability appraisal was currently being prepared in tandem with the Issues and Options Paper.

Mr Hardman explained that consultation was undertaken between 3 January 2011 and 14 March 2011 and almost 1500 responses had been received from a range of bodies and individuals including the public, private and third sector. Mr Hardman highlighted the range of consultation that had been undertaken. The main issues raised during the consultation had been included in the Issues and Options paper which raised the issues and explored a range of options for dealing with them. Views were also sought on the Vision for Carlisle District and it was hoped that the consultation would be a valuable exercise in identifying the preferred approach to tackle the spatial planning issues affecting the Carlisle District to 2030 and meet the objectives of the Carlisle's Vision.

Issues not related to planning issues that had been raised included policing and antisocial behaviour, environmental cleanliness and youth issues. Mr Hardman advised that those issues would not be addressed in the Core Strategy but would be passed on to the relevant bodies with the remit for dealing with those matters.

More recent consultation had involved an officer stakeholder workshop on 25 May 2011 that included officers from the County Council, and the Members' LDF Working Group on 26 May 2011 which had discussed topics from a draft Issues and Options paper.

Mr Hardman recommended that the Panel's findings would be incorporated into an amended report to be presented to the Executive on 30 August 2011 in order to finalise

the Issues and Options paper for referral to Council on 13 September 2011 for approval of public consultation. Mr Hardman advised that it was proposed that a 6 week period of consultation was undertaken starting from 19 September 2011.

Mr Hardman gave a presentation of the Issues and Options Paper that had previously been presented to the Local Development Framework Working Group. The presentation looked at the timescales for the programme, the key issues and the issues and options for each of those issues. Mr Hardman advised that all comments from the consultation had been taken into account and that the Vision had been amended and was now more concise. The consultation had identified 4 specific issues which were Botchergate, theatre, airport and the university and the Core Strategy would ask questions on how the people wanted those issues dealt with.

Mr Hardman then went through the key issues – housing, employment, environment/biodiversity, climate change, rural issues, city centre/retail and heritage and culture. In respect of housing Mr Hardman stated that the main question was whether there should be a target level and if so how the level would be set.

- *The reports talked about sustainability. That was not solely a green issue and was different in rural areas. Therefore the questions should not be too specific.*

Mr Crossley reminded Members that the glossary explained sustainability as an assessment tool to ensure an equal and fair balance across the district.

- *A Member believed that sustainability should also refer to jobs and ensure that existing employment was retained.*

Mr Hardman explained that that issue was covered in the section on employment and that existing employment was important but that there were difficulties in planning as often the land was outside Council control. The consultation would be fed in to ensure the strategy was right on future plans.

- *What was the current housing build rate?*

Mr Hardman explained that there was currently a 4 year supply of housing land with a projected 1800 units over 5 years. The current build rate was approximately 300 per year. He advised that the target was based on a 20 year plan and that there would be peaks and troughs during that time and that the figures were realistic at the present time.

- *Were the housing targets the total number of houses or different types?*

Mr Hardman explained that the target covered a range of properties and was in general open market housing. He advised that with regard to affordable housing there was a variable threshold for smaller developments.

In relation to health and well-being jobs were an important issue as lack of jobs could lead to poverty which had an impact on people's health and well-being.

With regard to the economy Mr Hardman explained that there was a 20 year strategy and the Core Strategy would look at how to ensure there were sufficient employment sites. Education provision was integral to that issue with regard to future skills that was linked to the college and university.

- *There had been an increase in the number of academies in the city but there had also been a reduction in salaries among the lower paid in those academies. While the City Council had no influence over those salaries the impact did affect the City Council.*

Mr Hardman explained that the West Coast Master Plan would impact on Carlisle and renewable energy would link in to that issue. The Core Strategy would need to look at how the City Council could support the energy schemes.

- *It was obvious that things were changing with regard to green issues and a lot of what had already happened had been heavily subsidised. How would that funding be returned? Would it be better to be less specific in the Core Strategy?*

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder advised that it was important that the Council was seen to have an opinion on green issues and stressed that the issues affected the whole of Cumbria. There were many innovative ideas around energy and he believed that it would be better to be specific within the Strategy.

- *Why were the education questions all based on higher education?*

Mr Hardman explained that the Education Authority had its own strategy for primary and secondary education but the Core Strategy would need to make provision for schools. Officers would be involved in that provision and would keep Members informed as the strategy progressed.

- *There were links to the Core Strategy as Carlisle aspired to be a university city and it was important that appropriate employment was brought in to encourage the university status.*
- *The wording of QE5 could be phrased better. Was QE7 a steering question?*

Mr Hardman agreed to review the wording of QE5. He added that the issues around QE7 were based on Government policy.

A member of the public stated that Rickergate was not mentioned in the report and queried whether it was a strategic site. Mr Hardman explained that it had not been mentioned at all in the report but that it may be included at a later stage. The report did not define how extensive the City Centre was as that would depend on the result of the consultation in which the public would be involved.

With regard to retail it was agreed that it would be useful to include the sizes of various stores included in the glossary to assist members of the public. Mr Hardman stated that

Carlisle had some excellent assets but it was not clear what impact internet shopping would have.

- *How valid was the 2009 Retail Shopping Survey to the current consultation?*

Mr Hardman explained that the 2009 study would be updated. Referring to recent press coverage on vacant shops, officers had carried out their own survey and had reached a different conclusion which had been confusing. Officers had to act on the best evidence to set the options paper which would be presented to Members at a future meeting. Recent indicators on internet shopping had been difficult to quantify but that issue would be raised again as part of the project.

- *QR1 used the word “still” within the second bullet point. That was backward looking and should be removed.*

Mr Hardman agreed to look at that question. He advised that the issues of rural shopping had been left open ended as it was difficult to assess and communities may wish to develop rural shopping for themselves.

With regard to climate change Mr Hardman advised that the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was being updated to be more robust and Officers were working with the Environment Agency to update the information. He stated that the question for Officers was whether biodiversity and habitat protection was set at a Cumbria wide level or at a more local level. Mr Hardman explained that the Green Infrastructure Strategy was a separate strategy that would include the river corridors. A workshop had been held to assist the development of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Mr Hardman advised that more work was needed on options and questions.

Members agreed that they were satisfied with the questions in the sections relating to landscape and tourism, heritage and culture.

There was discussion around the need for a 4 star hotel and conferencing centre in Carlisle.

- *A Member objected to the idea that the Culture bid had raised the profile of the City as the issues had been discussed over the previous 20 years yet there was still no firm decision made.*

Mr Hardman explained that the strategy had attempted to cover all options at different levels that would maintain the identity of the City but allow it to develop.

Mr Hardman advised that once the questions had been through the committee process the strategy would be passed to the communications unit for their views on the format of the document and the text to ensure it was clear and understandable. In the past Officers had “tested” documents on non-planning officers and also passed to summer students and people on work experience for their opinion.

- *Would there be a shorter version of the strategy available?*

Mr Hardman advised that the strategy would be available on the internet and Officers had looked at using a similar format to that which the Government used for large documents. There would be a press release and publicity to encourage people to take an interest in the strategy.

- *Was it possible to view the 1400 responses from the consultation?*

Mr Hardman advised that the information was available on a database and could be obtained from Officers if required.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel were happy with the questions listed subject to the amendments suggested by Members.

2) That the strategy should put an emphasis on employment opportunities that already existed and protect current jobs

2) There were questions about the readability of the document and Officers were to look at the text, abbreviations and the format to reduce the bulk of the document.