

# Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

## Consultation Arrangements for Core Strategy – Up To May 2010

Paper by Claire Rodway

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### Introduction

- 1.0 On 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010 the Local Development Framework Panel discussed the ongoing consultation and engagement with the wider community and specific sectors/interests (for example the tourism sector, business interests or environmental interests) which is a fundamental requirement of the production of the Core Strategy (and all LDF plans).
- 1.1 Initial consultation will need to be quite focussed to ensure that responses are relevant and appropriate and will be genuinely useful in informing the production of the Core Strategy. For this reason it was considered that this stage should centre around elected Councillors (both at Parish and Ward level) and representatives of recognised local amenity/residents/interest groups.
- 1.2 A debate took place at two LDF Panel meetings which highlighted the merits of two alternative approaches:
  - (1) Consulting towns and surrounding villages together.
  - (2) Having town and village/rural events as separate entities.
- 1.3 It was decided that the second approach should be followed due to concerns that:
  - The scale of any future development and associated employment etc. infrastructure is very different for towns and villages
  - The relationship between towns and the parishes which they serve is far more complex than mere proximity and different towns may well fulfil different functions for each Parish; Choice, transport, location of employment etc will all influence dependence patterns and these are issues distinct to each Parish
  - Rural views and priorities may be smothered by the town/urban agenda
  - Sheer numbers of attendees may make the workshops unmanageable if all adjoining Parishes are represented, and may prevent any other interest groups attending. For example Honiton has 9 abutting or nearly abutting Parishes and if all sent two delegates then, with the Town Council and Ward Members, optimum workshop numbers would already be exceeded before any other bodies are invited.
- 1.4 Notwithstanding this, it is entirely relevant and appropriate to construct policy on the basis of recognising and planning for the inter-relationship of towns and surrounding hinterlands and catchments. There may be an opportunity to tailor a future LDF (or LSP other process/work area) around this issue.

### Consultation events

- 2.0 It was agreed that during March 2010 the Planning Policy Section will hold one day (afternoon into early evening) workshops in the main towns of East Devon; Axminster, Exmouth (see comments below), Honiton, Ottery St Mary, Sidmouth and Seaton. Events will also be held in six rural villages (to which all Parishes will be invited) to test and refine emerging policy options and proposals. At the same time, consultation will be undertaken with hard to reach and minority groups through face-to-face meetings, surveys, telephone discussions, forums etc to ensure that their views are fairly represented and to ensure that the requirements of the Equality Bill are met.
- 2.1 The Communications and Funding Officer will be coordinating this tranche of engagement work with Policy Officers leading the sessions.

## Town Workshops

- 3.0 Approximately 40 people will be invited to each session, including the Town Council, Ward Members and local interest groups (including business, amenity, local interest etc)..
- 3.1 In the case of Exmouth, LDA Consultants have been commissioned to produce a Development Brief for Exmouth Town Centre, and a visioning exercise will form a fundamental component of this. As the timescale for this consultation dovetails with the LDF workshops, and there is also a town plan group undertaking work there is scope to combine events saving resources and avoiding consultation fatigue. Work on co-ordinating engagement is ongoing.
- 3.2 The Agenda has yet to be finalised but is planned to run as follows:

### **Welcome and Introduction by the Corporate Director/officers:**

#### **Session 1 - Visioning**

This session will briefly introduce the Local Development Framework and explain

- the role of consultation in shaping the Core Strategy
- the RSS requirements and the likely scale and location of future growth
- LDF Panel emerging thinking
- A brief overview of each settlement based on information held by the EDDC
- Community Aspirations - Based on existing work eg Community Plans, responses to Issues and Options Report etc
- Questions and other issues

#### **Session 2 – Workshops (based on a Speed-dating format)**

Attendees will break into 5 themed groups dependent upon their particular interests. Groups are likely to be:

- Community (including needs of different age groups, health, education, police etc)
- Economy
- Environment (including landscape/streetscene/countryside/playing fields)
- Housing
- Transport

Groups will discuss the important aspects of each theme and, on a map base, will produce a record of constraints and opportunities to inform the subsequent session.

Groups will then move onto the next theme.

**Refreshments-** During which results of Sessions 1 & 2 will be collated for Session 3.

#### **Session 3 – Future Development Workshops**

Map based exercise in which smaller groups (approx 4 people each) will discuss the implications of different scales of growth. Each group will illustrate the preferred location of different scales of residential development and the associated employment and infrastructure which it will require. This will build on the information provided in the previous sessions.

### **Reconvene for discussion and closing summary**

#### **Close and issue feedback forms**

## Village Workshops

- 4.0 These evening meetings will be located in six halls, spread across the District, with all Parish Councils and their Ward Members invited to attend. Unlike the Town consultations, which are self-contained and are intended to produce conclusions 'on the day', the Parish sessions are intended to inform Parish Councils about the LDF and provide guidance so that, as a whole Council, they can consider the issues raised formally and provide the District Council with written observations. This will give Parish Councils the opportunity to involve relevant local organisations, draw on information from their residents.

- 4.1 Each meeting will commence with a short introductory session to explain:
- the role of consultation in shaping the Core Strategy
  - the RSS requirements and the likely scale and location of future growth
  - Restrictions on rural development
  - LDF Panel emerging thinking
- 4.2 This will lead into an overview of the information the Policy Section holds on each Parish and the way in which existing information, such as Parish Plans, Housing Needs Assessments, appraisals or similar inform and underpin the LDF rural areas evidence base. Parish Councillors will be asked to identify and provide copies of any recent local research that applies to their community to ensure that the evidence base is as comprehensive as possible.
- 4.3 In a round table discussion, Parish Councillors will be asked to consider the issues and the future of their parishes/towns/villages, including what future development should be permitted and what benefits development could help provide. It is hoped that this will be a lively and informative debate which will enable attendees to really analyse the elements which make for high quality future development and will enable them to guide and inform their own responses to the LDF consultation. Parish Councils have already been asked to include an item on their April Agenda entitled "Informing the Local Development Framework" so that the issues raised in this discussion can be debated by the whole Parish/Town Council with a view to submitting a written response in a standardised format to the Policy Section by the end of April.
- 4.4 There will then be a presentation on Section 106 contributions and associated discussion, before the meeting is brought to a close.
- 4.5 Care will be taken to ensure that attendees are not given unrealistic expectations of the benefits that new development may bring, in the form of developer contributions, and are not led to believe that all of their comments will be incorporated into the Core Strategy, but will be retained and used to inform other LDF work as appropriate. It is intended that feedback will be provided after the meetings and attendees will be kept informed at each stage of the LDF process and invited to participate in further engagement as appropriate.