

Appendix 6b: Note of SHLAA Steering Group Meeting, 26th March 2009

Darlington SHLAA Steering Group Note of meeting held on 26th March 2009

Present: Valerie Adams (DBC Planning, Chair), Simon Usher (Persimmon Homes), Della Adams (Prism Planning), Tony Cooper (Bussey and Armstrong), Rob McLackland (Taylor Wimpey)

Apologies: Simon Miller (Persimmon Homes), Derek Watkins (Estates)

Not present: Andrea Abbott (Railway Housing Association), Dave Coates (DBC Planning)

1. Consideration of Comments received in Response to consultation on draft SHLAA

The Group considered the schedule of comments and draft responses that were circulated prior to the meeting by VA, and the update to it provided at the meeting by VA.

General Comments: VA highlighted response from Prism Planning and Group agreed with proposed approach to consider whether new sites, broad locations, or windfalls should be used to identify sufficient housing supply. SU explained that housebuilders are not keen on general locations, as these do not give them sufficient certainty. VA explained that whilst the LDF Core Strategy may only deal with broad locations, detailed sites would have to be identified in the subsequent allocations DPD.

Former Corus land, Sources of Supply: the Group discussed whether the affordable housing approach suggested by the site was acceptable. VA explained that provided the applicants had supplied the information required in the Affordable Housing SPD, it was.

HGP Uplift : VA outlined discussion she had had with TVL about this which is reflected in the draft response. Group agreed with proposed response.

Sites at the northern and north-eastern urban fringe. SU queried the approach on all these. VA explained about the significant impact on the strategic highway network comments that had been made by the DBC Highways and the Highways Agency, and that this constraint would be investigated as part of the Connections Study work that has just been successfully tendered for by Urban Initiatives.

2. Site Specific Comments

Sites 10 and 12: Group considered information in draft response table and further information reported verbally by VA from Environmental Health (EHO). The EHO is concerned that the contamination issues are likely to be very significant on both sites, and that the noise issues may not be resolved, due to the continuing presence of the industrial uses to the north and the relocation of Ward Bros to a site immediately to the north of Cleveland Street. Group felt that these PDL sites are the kind that we should be bringing forward and that the onus is on the landowner to do site investigations to establish the nature, extent and costs of the contamination. If these are found to be prohibitive, then this can be reflected in an update to the SHLAA. This would be consistent with approach taken on other sites. Group agreed with proposed response, that takes account of current CTR reservation, and applies standard dwellings capacity assumptions to those parts of both sites outside of the Cross Town Route reservation.

VA pointed out that it wasn't appropriate to apply the same approach to site 48 because over 2/3 of that site is affected by Cross Town Route reservation.

Site 13: VA brought Group's attention to proposed change to this.

Site 17 and 18: Group considered response received for this site, and agreed that these sites could be revisited to see if they were suitable once further work on the locational strategy, including the settlement hierarchy, has been done for the LDF Core Strategy.

Site 18: VA reported that Northumbrian Water have confirmed that the infrastructure works at the sewage treatment works at Middleton St. George will be completed in 2010.

Site 39: Group considered whether the approach taken to this site was consistent with that taken for adjacent Site 8. SU thought that there might be a planning permission for a scrapyards on the site; VA to check. Group felt that the electricity transformer station, the adjacent industrial uses and the outlook of Site 39 differentiated it from Site 8. Also, that if sites had come in as 39 and 8 combined, the approach taken has been consistent with treatment of sites 22 and 49.

Site 41: Group agreed with capacity suggested by the landowner but felt that it was unrealistic to expect this site to deliver houses in 2009/10, as no planning permission has yet been granted. Agreed with proposed build out rate but set back by one year. Group queried whether waiving the affordable housing requirement that the developer seeks was likely to be acceptable. VA explained the guidance set out in the Affordable Housing SPD, but that she had not yet had sight of the material submitted with the outline planning application.

Site 43: VA informed the group that the planning application for this site had been deferred at Committee last week.

Site 44: Group felt that as no site had been identified for the relocation of this business, it was premature to consider that it was available and deliverable. The housing capacity proposed was not accepted, and the landowner had also suggested that the site could be developed for mixed use. Group agreed to keep site capacity and phasing as in the draft SHLAA.

Site 45: VA clarified that the Trust do not now intend to dispose of this site. Group agreed that this should no longer be classed as available.

Sites 50, 53, 55, 58 and 64: Council owned sites. The Group had a discussion about the appropriateness of including sites in the SHLAA where there is no Council resolution to dispose. The arguments that were rehearsed at an earlier Steering Group meeting were outlined, and VA reiterated her view that the 'burden of proof' on Council owned sites was excessive compared to privately owned sites. She doubted whether all of the private landowners who have indicated that their sites are available would actually be prepared to dispose of their land if approached today to sell it, because of the recent falls in residential land values.

SU pointed out that because Council's have a range of obligations, there is no certainty that if a site was vacated (e.g. site 50), that the Council would dispose of it, rather than accommodating another uses. He also felt that even though some politicians are aware of the sites in the study, there is no guarantee that the same people will be in charge when disposal decisions have to be made.

TC felt that a distinction could be made between sites that were currently open space and other sites. The Council has little track record of developing small parts of open spaces to secure improvements to the remainder, so there would be a lot of uncertainty about whether these sites could be brought forward.

The Group agreed that site 50 and site 64 could be retained as developable, but that sites 53, 55 and 58 should not be identified as available or deliverable. The Group agreed all the other draft Steering Group comments, and that VA would make changes to the draft SHLAA to reflect them.

3. Next Steps

Finalising the report

VA to finalise report taking account of agreed steering group responses. This will cause consequential changes to tables and figures that may have an impact on the conclusions. VA will notify the Steering Group members and stakeholders on publication of the final report on 31st March.

Further work

VA explained that there was likely to be a need to identify further sites that can be brought forward to meet LDF requirement, and that updating work would need to begin in the late summer.

All present agreed to continue to serve on the Steering Group. It was suggested that contact be made with Andrea Abbott at railway Housing Association to see if she had the capacity to be involved. If not, an alternative RSL representative should be invited. The Group discussed whether there should be an estate agent on the group, but felt this was not necessary. An invitation will also be issued to Tees Valley Living and to Alan Glew, DBC Housing Strategy & Renewal Manager.