

## BOROUGH OF POOLE

### ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2012

#### REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND REGENERATION SERVICES INCLUDING BUILDING CONSULTANCY ON

#### PUBLIC CONSULTATION FOR CENTRAL AREA PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

#### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek approval to commence public consultation on the Central Area Planning and Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). To be read in conjunction with Draft Community Engagement Strategy for the SPD and Draft Summary Document.

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Members of Economy Overview and Scrutiny committee consider and endorse the draft summary and Community Engagement Strategy and recommend to Cabinet commencement of the first stage of community engagement during January and February 2012.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 The Poole Bridge Regeneration Initiative Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents are a well established part of Poole's comprehensive policy framework for regeneration in the Town Centre. However, all policy documents need to be reviewed as and when key changes of local or national significance occur. Since the documents were adopted in 2004 there have been significant changes to legislation that guides the production of planning policy, locally much has occurred as a consequence of the policy base that was established and globally the economic downturn is impacting severely on the delivery ambitions expected from key regeneration sites.
- 3.2 Since the SPG was adopted in December 2004 following extensive community engagement and masterplanning process the document has been used successfully to guide placeshaping development within the Town Centre over the last 8 years. It is widely regarded by professionals and community groups as a key focus for ensuring the creation of a responsive environment in Poole and in guiding regeneration initiatives. It supplements policies of the Poole Local Plan First Alteration which is gradually being replaced by Poole's Local Development Framework (LDF). With the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2009 and as a consequence of comments made in the Inspector's Report to the Core Strategy with regard to flexibility to ensure delivery in the regeneration area review of the SPG is being progressed. It is a key tool in helping to shape the future for the town centre.

- 3.3 At the time of the Core Strategy examination in public concern was expressed by some of the development industry about the need for greater flexibility in what should come forward on regeneration sites to address primarily viability issues. The Inspector in his report acknowledged that this was an issue and that it may need to be revisited. Since 2009 the economic conditions have worsened creating a difficult environment for development but also creating an equally difficult situation for the Council in recognising that it may not be able to realise all of the ambitions it had hoped for from development. This has inevitably led to a difference of opinion between the Council, the community and developers about what is meant by 'flexibility' in applying planning policy in the regeneration area.
- 3.4 In response to the Inspectors comments the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (Cabe) offered some enabling assistance to look at the Central Area proposals. There were two enabling visits, one to look at the Highways approach and infrastructure and the second to look at the adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance. Mike Hayes, a Cabe Enabler and Planning professional, came to Poole in 2010 and in a meeting with officers and with an agreed brief he reviewed the PBRI SPG. This meeting also included representatives from English Heritage.
- 3.5 This review will also link to the proposed review of the Road and Streets Infrastructure for the Regeneration Area this year, the outcomes of which will inform the SPD.
- 3.6 Mike Hayes' review is summarised in the draft summary and included in the associated papers at Appendix A. He concluded that the documents continue to provide a strong urban design framework to guide development of individual sites, provision of infrastructure and the creation of a unique, high quality place. His report also recognised the recent adoption and continuing updating of the Development Plan position i.e. Poole's LDF in providing a strong policy base upon which to refresh the Urban Design Guidance.
- 3.7 The Cabe report suggested that national planning and urban design guidance had reinforced, and caught up, with the pioneering work of the SPG and that it still responded to the overall context of the town (layout, permeability, heights, scale, mass etc). As was inevitable over time it would require some technical updating and specifically given the emergence of the Localism Bill it would need to embrace engagement with the communities of Poole.

#### **4. The Proposal**

- 4.1 With this background officers have developed the following approach which is now placed before members. Firstly, a draft Summary document has been produced which sets out key issues such as history, related documents and what the refresh work can achieve. Importantly, it also sets out what the document cannot achieve in light of the overarching Core Strategy Framework i.e. the bigger picture for the town.
- 4.2 Secondly, a Community Engagement Strategy which sets out a three stage engagement process has been prepared. This is to enable stakeholders and the community to comment on the review of the SPG throughout its production. The rationale for this is set out within the strategy.

- 4.3 The Localism Act places greater emphasis on local people helping to set out how their neighbourhoods should be shaped. Community Engagement is one way in which ordinary people and their communities can get actively involved. Considerable policy and guidance has been produced to help shape the Regeneration Area and wider Poole Town Centre. The review of the SPD will help set out the detailed approach to securing the right type of place building upon the principles established through the Core Strategy and gaining the support of the community will be a crucial element of the review.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The cost of reviewing and updating the SPG is resourced through the Local Development Framework Reserve. It is also proposed to utilise the local community to help run the engagement process. Failure to update the document could result in delay to the planning process when managing planning applications which could lead to additional costs being incurred by the Borough of Poole.

## **6. Legal Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct legal implications although it is worth noting that the current SPG falls outside of the developing Local Development Framework and therefore will carry more weight once updated and within the framework.

## **7. Risk Management Implications**

- 7.1 The risk to the organisation is twofold. Firstly, operating dated planning policy makes the Council open to challenge when negotiating and determining planning applications. This has credibility implications for the Council as well as potentially undermining the objectives for the town. Secondly, the Council, as has been seen recently in the West Quay planning application decision, can come under intense pressure and scrutiny from, and not exclusively, the general public. This can create tensions amongst the community and place additional resource pressures upon the local authority.
- 7.2 The review of the SPD with wide public engagement will enable the Council to address the emerging localism issues and bring together the many different representatives with an interest in the town. As the review is undertaken the Council will need to be mindful that it may also have to manage planning applications for significant development whilst the guidance is being produced. Involvement of all parties in the review will enable such a situation to be managed appropriately minimising doubt and confusion surrounding the emergence of updated guidance.

## **8. Equalities Implications**

- 8.1 There are no identified equalities issues associated with the revision of the SPG.

## **9. Conclusion**

- 9.1 The review of the SPG will enable the policy framework to be brought up to date and within the current Local Development Framework. The process will enable the community and other stakeholders to be fully engaged in helping

with the review which will hopefully provide a common tool for guiding delivering of much needed regeneration in the town centre.

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## APPENDIX A