

Coventry Partnership Housing Theme Group Minutes
12th February 2008

Attendees (members):

Richard Monk (RM) - Chair	Whitefriars Housing Group
Stewart Fergusson (SF)	Midland Heart Housing Association
Stephen Rudge (SR)	Housing Policy and Services, CCC
Niall McChesney (NM)	City Development, CCC
Ayaz Maqsood (AM)	Housing Strategy, CCC
Lynda Bull (LB)	Community Services, CCC
Cllr Gary Ridley (GR)	Cabinet Member, CCC
John Stanway (JS)	Housing Strategy, CCC
Mary Woods (MW)	Midland Heart Housing Association
Bob Wilson (BW)	University of Warwick
Clive Benfield (CB)	Benfield Homes
Kim Fawcett (KF)	Housing Strategy, CCC

Attendees (guests):

Trevor Errington (TE)	City Development, CCC
Joyce Lambert (JL)	Neighbourhood Renewal Team, CCC

1. Apologies:

Tim Brown, Vijay Asi, John Payne, Pat Walsh, Miles Lamour

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes from the last meeting on 4th December 2007 were agreed as accurate.

Canley Regeneration – The street lighting PFI has been approved and start on site is due September 2009.

The Coventry University masterplan is due to go to the University board in March 2008

LSP Business Group – the relationship with the LSP Business Group will be discussed at a future meeting. The Business Group have held their first meeting and minutes are available.

Action – *Minutes from the first LSP Business Group meeting and dates of future meetings to be circulated to members.*

3. Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Update

Trevor Errington (Head of Strategic Planning and Transportation) gave an update on the Regional Spatial Strategy:

- The RSS is being reviewed in three phases. Phase 1 is now complete. Phase 2 is currently out for consultation.
- The Housing section has been the most controversial in phase 2. The housing requirement set by the government for the region was 381,000 dwellings. The RSS preferred option that was submitted has identified land for 361,000 dwellings, which was felt to be the limit that the region could sustain.
- Baroness Andrews has responded to this by letter, stating that the higher target must be met and that an independent consultant will be instructed through the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) to identify further sites for housing. The brief for the consultants has not yet been seen. As a result of this, the period for consultation will be extended, probably to June 2008.

- The sub region considers it has taken its share of the higher original number for regional growth and should not be asked to accommodate any extra dwellings. It is not clear if the regional target for growth will be increased, as the consultant's brief has not been seen.
- In line with regional policy, the growth will be concentrated in urban areas (at least 50%) to reverse the trend of out-migration to the shires, and to ensure that the sites are sustainable with infrastructure, travel to work etc. There is a strong subregional statement that sets out a sequential approach to the order that sites are chosen for development.
- The current preferred option gives Coventry a growth target of 33,500 extra homes by 2026. Sites have been identified within the urban area for 24-26,000 homes. It may be necessary to develop green belt land to accommodate the shortfall, but sustainable brownfield land must be developed first.
- TE emphasised that the Council would have to make difficult decisions on the best locations for the extra homes, but that if the Council did not make decisions, this could be taken out of their hands.
- The RSS makes provisions for joint working between LAs to identify the best land for housing development, including cross-boundary studies. There is debate as to whether development across a boundary could count towards Coventry's growth rather than the neighbouring authority's growth.
- TE will be reporting to cabinet in March on Coventry's response to the preferred option.
- Phase 3 is at the project planning stage and should be completed by summer 2010. This phase includes the provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers, and quality of the environment (incl. flood protection areas).

RM queried whether there had been any discussions regarding boundary alterations. TE replied that there has not, but there is a debate about the existing sub-regional political process regarding boundaries, and that this political process needs to be developed beyond planning issues.

GR expressed concerns with the RSS, as it is deeply unpopular with the local population. GR also expressed the opinion that building these extra homes would not necessarily bring house prices down in the city.

4. Local Development Framework Update

Trevor Errington gave an update on the Local Development Framework (LDF):

- The LDF must be consistent with the RSS and the Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- The first public consultation was on 'issues and options' to identify land that would be suitable for development (including housing). A report will be produced in March 2008. The next stage is to produce a preferred option, which will be consulted on from May onwards.
- A range of views regarding land for housing development was expressed in the 'issues and options' consultation.
- Linked in with the RSS, land must be identified for 33,500 homes by 2026.
- There is the expectation from developers that if there is not enough land identified for housing development, planning permission would be granted for developments in any other location.

GR thanked Trevor Errington and all other officers involved for the work done so far on the RSS and LDF.

GR queried the timing of the consultation reports for the LDF and RSS (due out in March), given the timing of the upcoming elections (in May). TE explained that the timetable was agreed with the Government Office and that a proportion of the planning delivery grant is dependent on these milestones being met.

SF asked whether the LSP Housing Theme Group partners should get involved in the political process with the RSS and LDF now. TE did not feel that there is a role for the theme group until the preferred option is published. Members could consider responding to the RSS if they wished, as any person/group can give a response.

GR raised the issue of the carbon-neutral targets for new homes, and whether the targets for carbon reduction are early enough to make a significant difference. It was stated that over 75% of the homes that will exist in Coventry in 2026 already exist today, and that the requirement for new homes to be carbon-neutral (Code for Sustainable Homes level 6) will not come into force until 2016 for RSL developments and 2018 for private developments. TE stated that it could be an issue for debate, whether to impose earlier targets for developments within Coventry as part of the LDF.

CB responded that purchasers are currently reluctant to pay a premium for sustainability features. He would prefer these targets to be implemented through building control regulations rather than planning obligations to ensure consistency across the country.

SR queried whether there were any changes planned to building regulations. TE offered for Steve Davies (Head of Building Control) to attend the next LSP meeting to discuss this.

5. Holistic Redevelopment of the City

Trevor Errington gave two presentations about current and future development in the city.

The first presentation gave an overview of all the current and future development and regeneration schemes in the city. Major points were:

- There is to be major investment of £9.4bn in the regeneration and employment programme, with the creation of 70,000+ new jobs.
- Regeneration is important throughout the city and is not focused solely on the city centre.
- Plans for 2026 through the RSS include 33,500 new homes; 2.5m square feet of office space; 1.5m square feet of retail space; and population growth to 350-370,000.
- Targets for the city centre include a 100% increase in retail space, development of 6000 housing units, and better transport/ease of movement within the city centre.

The second presentation was 'Changing the Face of the City'. This presentation has been made at ward forums. It concentrates on the redevelopment of the city centre. Major points were:

- There is to be major redevelopment of the city centre in partnership with international architects, The Jerde Partnership.
- There is extensive consultation with residents in the city through the website, ward forums, leaflets and local media. Many people have already put forward suggestions.
- Coventry is currently the 11th largest city in the country, but is the 43rd most important retail destination. To tackle this, there are plans to double the retail space and improve the shopping area.

6. Housing Market Assessment

Ayaz Maqsood updated the group:

- For the purposes of the Housing Market Assessment, Coventry are in the C2 subregion. The C2 subregional partners are Nuneaton & Bedworth, Rugby and North Warwickshire (these are different to the planning/RSS subregional group).
- Outside Consultants produced their initial findings in a draft report in December 2007.
- There are two models used to calculate the number/proportion of affordable housing needed, according to CLG guidelines. The partners have asked that the final report recommend the results of one model only, for clarity and consistency.
- The models currently show a need for between 304 and 328 additional affordable housing units per year in Coventry (depending on which model is used). This is between 18% and 29% of total expected completions.
- The current Affordable Housing SPG requires 25% of units in developments with more than 15 dwellings to be affordable. This has been shown to be achievable and successful.
- The figures cannot be finalised until the RSS preferred option growth figure has been finalised (the above figures have been calculated using the 33,500 growth target).
- More work needs to be done with the consultants to clarify the dwelling type mix within the target of 304-328 units.

- The document will be launched in April/May 2008 in a presentation with the other sub-regional partners.

7. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

Ayaz Maqsood updated the group:

- The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) has been carried out between Coventry, Solihull and Birmingham LAs.
- A draft summary report has been produced.
- There are two scenarios, one of which will be recommended in the final report.
- There are currently two static sites in Coventry – one at Siskin Drive with 22 pitches in need of redevelopment, and one at Burbages Lane with 1 pitch. One scenario in the report is based on these current facilities, the other scenario considers if the Siskin Drive site were to be redeveloped to provide 15 larger pitches instead of the 22 currently provided.
- With either scenario, Coventry's static site provision is greater than the requirement and so no further pitches are needed.
- There was no evidence of need for a transit site in Coventry, but the report recommends one small site. The consultants have been asked to provide evidence that this is needed.
- The report recommends that there is no need for further work on 'bricks and mortar' provision for Gypsy and Traveller households in Coventry.
- The Gypsy and Traveller households that were interviewed gave the opinion that they did not want special treatment.
- The report should be completed within a month.

8. Local Area Agreement/Sustainable Communities Strategy

SR updated the group on the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS):

- The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act requires the Council to prepare a Sustainable Communities Strategy to 2026. This replaces the Community Plan (2003-2010).
- The SCS is to have the same themes as the Community Plan, one of which is housing, with the key priorities of the housing theme being:
 - Improve the quality of housing and reduce homelessness
 - Ensure decent homes, housing choice and support for Coventry citizens
 - Make our priority neighbourhoods good places in which to live.
- The Best Value Performance Indicators have been reviewed and from 1st April there will be 198 National Indicators. Some of these relate directly to the work of the LSP Housing Theme Group.
- It was noted that there is no National Indicator relating to the achieving Decent Homes in the private sector.
- The Local Area Agreement is the delivery plan for the Sustainable Communities Strategy and is negotiated between the local Government Office (GOWM) and the Local Strategic Partnership.
- 35 of the National Indicators are to be agreed with the Government Office to form the indicators through which the LAA will be monitored.
- A number of funding streams are to be the focus of the LAA, and the Partnership can allocate the funding in the way it decides is most appropriate.
- Work is on going in each of the Theme Groups to identify the 35 National Indicators that will form the basis upon which the LAA is monitored.

9. Major Housing Projects in the City – update on progress

No discussion – postponed until next meeting.

10. NRF Choice Based Lettings Project Assessment

Joyce Lambert updated the group on the progress made on the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Project Assessment and Succession Framework:

- The purpose of the project assessment and Succession Framework is to ensure that lessons and good practice from the current programme are not lost but continue past March 2008, and identify any gaps that have emerged.
- The first draft of the report evaluating the CBL project was completed in November 2007 and has been circulated to members for comment.
- JL asked for confirmation that the Theme Group members would be happy to share their experiences and good practice with other groups.
- SR commented that a 6-month review has been commissioned for April 2008 (CBL 'went live' in September 2007). This will give a holistic overview of the views of the CBL users, and ensure that the CBL system is accessible to all. He suggested that it would be more appropriate for the group to share their experiences once this review has been carried out.
- JL will update the report once this review has been carried out.

11. Communications Issues

No discussion

12. Community Feedback

No discussion

13. Any Other Business

No further discussion.

14. Dates and times of future meetings

To be confirmed.