



STRATEGIC HOUSING PARTNERSHIP BOARD

22 February 2007

Business Development Centre, Stafford Park

PRESENT:

Mike Atherton	Telford & Wrekin Council (Acting Chair)
Kevin Whitby	Bournville Village Trust
Lloyd Bradshaw	Beth Johnson Housing Group
Dave Pritchard	The Wrekin Housing Trust
Paul Williams	National Housing Federation
Helen Collins	Bromford Housing Group
Bernie Lewis	Wrekin Landlords' Association
Michael Barker	T&WC
Paul Donohue	T&WC
John Acres	Redrow Homes
Chris Winter	T&WC
Sarah Williams	English Partnerships
Susanne Fitzpatrick	T&WC

APOLOGIES:

Cllr Dave Morgan	T&WC
Richard Webb	T&WC
David Moss	Beth Johnson Housing Group
John McNulty	Bournville Village Trust
Rob Kilby	Housing Corporation
John Broadhead	The Wrekin Housing Trust

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

MA welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

MA took the chair and explained why Cllr David Morgan was absent and asked attendees to extend their good wishes for a speedy recovery.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received as recorded above.

3 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING (28 September 2006) AND MATTERS ARISING

- SSF's apologies had been presented but are not recorded.
- PW reported on a House of Commons reception scheduled for April/May. Research has been undertaken on six offers – further research continues on the delivery of major, high-quality schemes.

MA thanked all who had contributed to the affordable warmth workshops.

The minutes were then approved as a correct record.

4 **RSS REVIEW/LDF UPDATE**

MB gave a presentation on the RSS review, the statutory framework for development in the West Midlands region until 2021 which identifies key challenges and the policies designed to tackle them. Underpinning the RSS is:

- **Urban renaissance** – developing in major urban areas to enable them to meet their own economic and social needs
- **Rural renaissance** – meeting the economic and social needs of rural communities whilst maintaining their uniqueness

The RSS partial review has significant impact on the future growth rates for Telford and Wrekin and covers a wide variety of subjects, including housing, environment, economy, waste, employment, transport (ie park and ride to ease congestion), car parking, road charging, the role of airports, climate change, environmental appraisal and sustainability. It is proposed to take place in three phases:

- Phase 1: examination in public began in January 2007
- Phase 2: launched in November 2005. Issues being examined include housing figures, employment land, centres, transport and waste
- Phase 3: beginning in 2007, looks at critical rural services, recreational provision, regionally significant environmental issues and the development of a framework for provision of gypsy and traveller sites

The Government has published new household projections which are higher than envisaged: they outline three options:

- Option 1: Continue with the same rate of growth (2021-2026)
- Option 2: 24% higher level of growth
- Option 3: 51% higher level of growth

At Regional level, the following will result from the three options:

- Option 1: 381,000 gross new dwellings
- Option 2: 491,200 gross new dwellings
- Option 3: 575,000 gross new dwellings

The consultation document seeks feedback from partners on which option they consider most appropriate for the region to achieve an adequate level of affordable housing - and provision of housing for those who cannot compete in the open market. Should the proportion of affordable housing be determined at local level or should the Region decide? MA considered the former to be the most appropriate for Telford and Wrekin, a sentiment echoed by members.

As the Regional Economic Strategy Review runs in parallel with the RSS review, MB stressed the importance of the two strategies complementing one

another in order to achieve optimum effectiveness. Details can be found on the Regional Assembly's website: www.wmra.gov.uk.

What the RSS review means for Telford

- A level of housing allocations to meet need. Telford and Wrekin currently has an allocation of 1,330/annum up to 2011, falling to 700/annum in successive years up to 2021. The options for the revision of RSS aim to extend the allocation to 2026
- Economic restructuring and development
- Creation of sustainable communities (balancing education/employment)
- Supporting regeneration
- A population to support local facilities and services

MB highlighted the following:

- Annual Build Rates: potential distribution of new dwellings 2001-2026 (applies to some larger sites in the borough - Lawley, Lightmoor, Ketley)
- Employment: the land available amounts to some 210 hectares acquired from TDC/CNT
- Office Employment: building for a *“modern, innovative, forward-looking level of higher-quality, higher paid, science-based employment”*
- Transport: should there be a Regional parking standard or should this be developed locally? (Item for consideration in the consultation exercise)
- Environment: focuses on waste, moving away from land-fill, and how waste could be apportioned to wards within the borough

MB clarified that the figures quoted in his presentation are an *officer assessment* of the situation: the report will be presented at Cabinet on Monday for ratification. Noted that Telford is bidding to become one of the Government's 'growth points' – therefore consideration needs to be given to other pieces of work to determine the feasibility of some of the forecasted projections.

Comments received on the presentation:

- BL found the in-migration of labour “staggering” and asked whether it is possible to manage the situation utilising the borough's current labour force rather than attracting migrant workers? MB responded that skills development is an issue in Telford and feels there is a need to make the local workforce better equipped for jobs which will become available in the future, particularly in the fields of science and technology. Although there is a clear link between employment and housing, research has demonstrated that a prospective employer will be less likely to invest in Telford if housing is not readily available for the incoming workforce
- MB reported that Telford was originally intended to be much larger than at present, and must continue to evolve if the Centre is to become a functional

economic unit. In order to meet the economic needs of the population, consideration needs to be given to the existing provision when set against the forecast of what is needed in order to produce a template of “*what we believe Telford should look like in twenty years’ time*”

CW commented that further guidance is awaited from Government: local authorities are being encouraged to work together to produce a needs analysis that is accepted Regionally. MB felt that although guidance will be useful, decisions need to be made at local level, a sentiment echoed by LB

- PW asked for an update on the sub-regional Housing Market Area (HMA) Assessments. MB responded that there is a link between the RSS/RHS but no formal processes are in place to dovetail the two and encouraged members to highlight this in their response to the consultation document
- Discussion took place around *consistency* of affordable housing provision: MB is aware of concerns regarding the high level of affordable housing provision and is anticipating representation from various organisations, lobbying for the provision of a lower level of housing despite local housing needs
- EP historically owns a large amount of land in Telford that is rife for development. SW clarified that the available land is not solely for housing use - it is also allocated as land for employment and various internal projects are underway to develop the infrastructure.

MA felt there were “*some great challenges but also some opportunities*” and thanked MB for his comprehensive presentation. He encouraged members to respond to the consultation documents.

Comments on the RSS review will go to Regional Assembly who will prepare a ‘preferred options’ report by November/December 2007, following which it will be examined by an independent inspection body. The report in its final form will be available in early 2008.

MB’s slides and those from the Regional Assembly giving more detail, will be attached to the minutes.

5 **NEW GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR STRATEGIC HOUSING**

MA referred to the report which seeks to strengthen, streamline and reform the governance arrangements for the council’s strategic housing role in recognition of the changes in national housing policy and local circumstances. It seeks to enhance Member and officer involvement at strategic and monitoring levels, and its key recommendations form the basis of the wider review for each of the officer sub-groups that will report to the SHPB.

Members maintain a commitment to work proactively - and on an equal basis – with all housing providers. Membership on the WHT Board has been reduced to three (shortly to reduce to one).

SW referred to the last bullet-point on Page 3 of the report and queried the word 'unwilling'. PD responded that the wording may not adequately reflect its meaning and recognises that what is required does not necessarily tally with RSLs' intentions.

JA reported that the report makes no mention of the *spectrum* of housing which is needed (currently 80% private/20% social) and reinforced the fact that all types of tenure are needed.

In response to a query from BL re: 'right to buy', DP clarified that tenants who transferred to WHT did retain their right to buy. Other tenants are able to exercise a right to acquire and through more recent initiatives, may acquire a percentage share in their property.

The report also contains proposals to establish a Housing Core Members' Group to provide a member-led tier of governance for the strategic housing role. The Group's remit would be to:

- Influence and inform local housing policy and strategy
- Monitor performance against housing strategies and indicators (including RSL and other provider performance)
- Provide feedback and a forum for consultation

The Group will be chaired by the lead Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and have responsibility for ensuring reports are made on issues of interest and concern to Cabinet (and to the LSP via the SHPB). A Special joint meeting of the SHPB and the new Core Members' Group is to be called in June to consider development opportunities and seek a political/strategic steer.

MA asked members to consider the report in full and welcomes comments.

6 PROPOSED MERGER OF ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS AND THE HOUSING CORPORATION

SW explained that synergies between EP/HC bring together funding streams and investment decisions and the two organisations are already working in tandem on projects within the borough, although each will retain its distinct role until the merger.

Noted that legislation is required to set up 'Communities England' (CE) and once passed, CE will take over some functions from the DCLG.

The regulatory role of the HC is still under review. Margaret Ford heads the transition team who will work towards setting up a business plan, define chairmanships etc. Specifics of the relationship between the proposed 'Communities England' and the Audit Commission are not yet known, although the two organisations mirror one another in terms of regional structure. HCo welcomes the merger of EP/HC but is hopeful that political influence will not stand in the way of the proposals.

7 UPDATE ON STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITES

Telford Millennium Community (BJHG)

- Contractors on site for a mid-March start
- Taylor Woodrow are setting up a marketing suite
- First social handover expected end 2007/early 2008
- Stewardship aspects of the development are progressing well

Lawley (BJHG)

- Phase 1: contractor clearing and preparing the site prior to the onset of the bird nesting season
- The development will include parks and play areas
- Agreements are being finalised to determine the social housing mix
- Phase 1A planning consent is progressing: first handover anticipated in 2008

Lightmoor (BVT)

- Phase 1 progressing well – Phases 2 & 3 ongoing
- First 40 homes are complete - 10 residents in situ
- Wimpey phase of the development: 18 homes complete. First tenants expected mid-March
- Crest Nicholson will be on site shortly
- Planning of Phase 1 underway to provide the school early in the development, which MB considers will be “spectacularly good “

Woodside South Telford HMRA

- West 1: environmental works completed
- West 2: Corillian appointed and will commence on site on 5 March for a four-month development which will include parking, fencing, remodelling of roadways/footways and provision of 480 dwellings
- No direct investment in property improvements - this will be achieved via the housing improvement programme
- Local Centre: brief prepared (shops/residential)
- Former centre: now demolished. The Dolphin pub has been acquired by T&WC
- North Area (3 storey properties) and South Area (densely populated): preliminary assessment work and feasibility study undertaken. Not out to stakeholder consultation at this time

MA informed members that there remains a substantial funding gap for future phases of the Woodside project but that work is in hand to identify appropriate sources.

BL asked to be involved in the consultation, together with other stakeholders. Note was made of the need for stakeholder consultation.

SW clarified that the Woodside development is a five to seven-year programme, one of an evolving schedule of development within the borough.

MB reported that sites are coming forward with planning consent and that in the longer term, will have to look at LDF (to 2021) in order to match the current RSS. There is a need to consult with EP and other land owners to formulate a template for future development (ie to serve Telford's needs beyond the next fifteen years).

Telford Town Centre

- Development around the town centre will contain residential and retail development
- Vision documents have been prepared: the area action plan for Central Telford is progressing well
- T&WC has two discrete roles as landowner and planning authority, and is looking at different projects to “*put our aspirations on the ground*” in conjunction with partners
- The owners of the shopping centre (USS) have put the centre on the market for sale, and there have been some expressions of interest. The new owners may look at acquiring new land holdings and need to work with the council to make the town an attractive one
- Car parking: BL is concerned that employees will have to pay £40/week to park which will detract from the feasibility of the commercial development within the borough. MB explained that public transport will be high on the agenda to make the town centre as accessible as possible

8 ADULT SOCIAL CARE RESTRUCTURE

MA reported on the new arrangements for Adult Social Care, which reflect the national development proposals for an adults/children's split in order to move away from a *thematic* approach to one of *delivery*. The structure will comprise:

- Head of Service Development (strategy and commissioning)
- Head of Performance & Standards
- Head of Housing Needs & Community Care
- Head of Prevention & Protection

The reorganisation will integrate services, but divide Housing across three functional areas which will keep the strategic housing role focussed. A copy of the new organisational structure will be attached to the minutes.

9 REVISED REGIONAL STRUCTURES

Regional housing structures have historically not had democratic accountability – this has now been remedied following the merger shown on a diagram circulated at the meeting.

10 PROGRESS REPORT ON LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY (2007-2010)

CW reported that work is advanced in drafting the first revision of the Housing Strategy and will make a formal presentation at a future meeting to capture members' comments.

11 CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT PROGRAMME

Central Government funding on DFG has more than doubled - £57m in 1997 to £121m in 2007. In addition, local authorities contribute to this programme – therefore for 2006-07, a total capital expenditure of about £230m will help 40,000 disabled people with a variety of much-needed adaptations to ease mobility and secure access to the basic facilities in their homes. This represents an average grant of £5,750 per applicant.

However, the Government has been aware for some time that the quality of support under the programme has been less than satisfactory and in 2004, commissioned a wide-ranging inter-departmental review to consider what changes are necessary. The report tabled sets out the problems and challenges facing the DFG programme.

MA welcomed comments on the scope of the review and reported that £450m has been allocated, with a projected spend of £900,000. The consultation period is open until mid-April, a summary of which will be published by 6 July at www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1152861.

CW explained that DFG is recognised by the Regional Housing Board and offers a wider approach to housing (ie built to 'lifetime homes' standard).

KW considered that better use could be made of previously-adapted properties within the borough. BL concurred that no mechanics are in place to rehouse a household with a disabled person into suitably-adapted existing vacant dwellings.

12 PREVIEW OF THE JOHN HILLS REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL HOUSING

Ruth Kelly had commissioned John Hills to report on social housing which has resulted in a 200+ page report entitled '*Aims & Means – The Future of Social Housing*', a summary of which was tabled and on which CW provided a brief resumé:

- More attention needs to be given to existing housing stock rather than relying on new build
- Suggestions on how to create more mixed income neighbourhoods
- Supporting livelihoods, promoting the welfare of those who might be excluded from the employment market etc
- A more varied range of options for tenants eg flexible tenure, part ownership, feeder systems, allowing people to buy their homes

The Local Government Information Unit's briefing on the report is available at: www.lgiu.gov.uk/briefing-detail.jsp?id=1367&md=0§ion=briefing.

The report has been generally welcomed, but the final analysis is not new or surprising and reinforces the need to establish mixed communities with the right social/educational/employment background. HCo commented that creating truly mixed communities will be a challenge.

13 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

JA asked whether Jim Claydon, National Chairman of the Royal Town Planning Institute, could attend the 12 July meeting. Members were unanimous in their agreement.

14 **FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on **3 May 2007 at 9.30 am** in the Severn Room, Business Development Centre.

Note: a Special Meeting is to be called in June (as discussed earlier in the agenda). The date/time/venue will be notified in due course.