



STRATEGIC HOUSING PARTNERSHIP BOARD

12 June 2006

Business Development Centre, Stafford Park

PRESENT:

Dave Morgan	Borough of Telford & Wrekin (BT&W) - Chair
Mike Atherton	BT&W
Gerry Dawson	BT&W
Nick Cummins	Bromford Housing Group
Rob Kilby	Housing Corporation
David Moss	Beth Johnson Housing Group
Bernie Lewis	Wrekin Landlords' Association
Michael Barker	BT&W
John McNulty	Bournville Village Trust
Chris Winter	BT&W
Catherine Waite	English Partnerships
Susanne Fitzpatrick	BT&W

APOLOGIES:

Jeremy Crabb	T&W Primary Care Trust
Lloyd Bradshaw	Beth Johnson Housing Group
Richard Webb	BT&W
John Broadhead	The Wrekin Housing Trust

1 APOLOGIES

DM welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies were received as recorded above. John Broadhead's apologies were received via email.

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING (2 March 2006) AND MATTERS ARISING

Item 5: the Regional Assembly (RA) has requested comments on housing numbers allocated to local authority areas and specifically the role that Telford will play both in achieving RSS targets and complementing objectives set out in the BC study (including BC & Telford HMRA). MB advised that a draft response has been prepared which will go to Cabinet next week before the formal response is forwarded to the RA.

The minutes were then approved as a correct record.

3 'TRANSFORMING TELFORD'

GD gave a verbal presentation on 'Transforming Telford', a strategy for shaping the town for the future so it can play its part in the renaissance of the Central HMA. The strategy also provides an opportunity to remedy those factors which historically have not worked as well as was anticipated and which are now in need of improvement.

The strategy focuses on three factors:

- 1 What do we want?
- 2 What is stopping us achieving it?

3 What is causing 'blockages'

Housing growth in the town (now standing at 130,000) has far exceeded expectations from when the town was originally built, and the council's objectives regarding future growth are 'robust'.

The first barrier which has the potential to block the town's development is the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) whose philosophy is that there has been a 40-year exodus of people from the MUA's. RSS/RHS are seeking to address the out-flow but limited capacity for growth in the districts and shires creates an opportunity for the continuing growth of Telford in order to meet sub-regional housing needs.

Telford is now part of the West Midlands City Region although it is the only town not categorised as being a 'major urban area'. Being classified as a 'primary' urban area gives Telford an opportunity, using its strong voice, to influence so as to change the rules. We want to influence the RSS so that the MUA's also become known as primary urban areas.

GD further reported that the Black Country (BC Study) has a vision which is not threatened by the growth of Telford as there is no shared housing market. Noted that in a recent survey, nil% of the people in the Black Country aspired to move to Telford, and the Housing Needs Study (2004) confirms this in that only about 4% of Telford's in-migration is actually from the BC.

Regeneration

There are clear objectives regarding regeneration which centre around:

- Re-generating the Town Centre
- Changing the structure of the local economy to make it sustainable for the future
- Regeneration of South Telford

although two things are preventing us reaching these objectives – money, and influence over the decision-making process.

What is the council currently doing?

- Setting up 'Telford First', a company to develop the long-term economic growth of the town, focussing on the regeneration of Woodside/south Telford, and implementing the renewal of the Town Centre, with funding commitments from Advantage West Midlands in place and English Partnerships already in place
- Lobbying Ministers and Whitehall. Professional lobbyists have been appointed to assist with this
- Submitting a report to the Regional Housing Board in two weeks' time regarding the future regeneration of South Telford, and recommending two parts of the Black Country as a primary focus for regeneration. The RHB have committed monies to urban/rural renaissance
- Writing the City Region Plan – GD is writing the housing and social inclusion chapters. The first draft of the Plan will focus on the Eastern Corridor, South Telford and Longbridge

GD is confident the council can do what has been outlined to achieve the three political targets described above. GD/MA/MB are keen to liaise with private companies and RSL's to take this forward.

In response to a query from JMcN, GD clarified that the link between new developments and those planned - in relation to employment and maintaining sustainability of existing estates - is a matter for further consideration.

There is currently a gross under-supply of low-cost, affordable housing, with voids in South Telford at an all-time low. MB commented that "if we carry on with our current level of growth, we won't meet the requirements".

Discussion took place regarding in-commuting: it is considered that new employers will look at where their possible future workforce is to be found, so the rate of growth is important to ensure sufficient employees are available to meet future demand. GD considers the council to have a robust economic development strategy capable of pulling LSC into skills development. MA emphasised the importance of getting the liveability issues and the long-term stewardship of areas in place at the outset in order to support the objectives for transforming and sustaining Telford.

RK commented that the Housing Corporation is convinced by the suggested proposals, but can only act when the RHB feel the same way. He advised the partnership that in order to create more opportunities for HC investment, it needs to put pressure on the HC and RHB for funding.

DM brought the discussion to a close by saying that "decisions are made very fast Regionally, so we need to keep on top of this agenda" and thanked GD for his very comprehensive presentation.

4 REPORT FROM THE SHPB SEMINAR – 26 APRIL

MA thanked everyone who participated in the Housing Seminar, which was well attended with a good spread of participation, good Speakers and from which the workshops sessions had produced some useful comments for consideration.

JMcN agreed that the Seminar was a "very useful and productive day" and asked how it is intended to deliver what is contained in Report 4(a) via the SHPB and what role does the Housing Charter Group (HCG) play in delivering joined-up thinking? DM responded that all the other groups need to feed into the SHPB to ensure information is shared and dovetailed into a cohesive strategy. He considered the Seminar was an excellent platform from which to explore agencies' strengths and weaknesses, and that if it is felt there is a capacity problem, the SHPB needs to address this more effectively and quickly and in a way that does not cause a ripple of dissent.

4(a) Review of identified issues

Feedback from the workshops centred around four objectives taken from the existing strategy:

Workshop 1 To buy or not to buy?

This Workshop discussed how housing need could be met across all tenures, including consideration of the need for affordable housing, market housing, key worker housing etc

Workshop 2 The state we're in?

This Workshop discussed housing condition and quality/energy

efficiency across all tenures

Workshop 3 People who need people?

This Workshop covered housing and vulnerable people including homeless and more vulnerable households such as older and young people

Workshop 4 Housing and the bigger picture

This Workshop explored the links between housing and health, regeneration, the environment, neighbourhood management etc to ensure that plans for housing contribute effectively to sustainable communities

NC commented about investment in the environment in relation to management arrangements – “do we link here to the Housing Strategy or go to the HCG?” In response, MA advised that a review of the relationship of the SHPB with other groups (HCG, Wrekin Housing Partnership, Homeless Implementation & Review Group) is required in order to clarify who the sub-groups are. Establishing focus groups to deliver some of those pieces of work was considered the best way forward, in addition to undertaking more detailed area working (ie cluster groups). There is still some uncertainty about how the cluster model sits with neighbourhood working and with thematic functions?

JMcN advised members that RSL’s will “fall in with the council’s strategic thinking” and that having major housing stocks in the centre of Telford can influence the issue of stewardship and joined-up working.

4(b) The main issues identified from the workshops at the Housing Seminar (shown above) were welcomed by CW and will inform the review of the current Strategy. Comments ensued as follows:

- Would it be better to radically change the format and themes of the existing housing strategy or build on what is in place, recognising that GOWM and external commentators see the existing strategy as very close to “fit for purpose” (CW favoured the latter). A working draft of the new document should be produced in time for the next SHPB meeting in September, with the final document being produced by December 2006.

BL referred colleagues to an old saying: “*set your goals in concrete and your plans in sand*” and to continue to focus on what was originally agreed when the current strategy was prepared and implemented. This was agreed in principle.

- As the SHPB continues to liaise with other groups, the review of the current Strategy can proceed in parallel with development of the City Region
- Agreed that the approach to consultation should be through existing groups/ forum wherever possible

Members of the SHPB are invited to put forward their formal comments on existing strategy with proposals for change to MA/CW as soon as possible.

In response to a question from JMcN, GD explained that work has been done at sub-regional level regarding the impact of migration from Telford to Birmingham, from Birmingham to the Black Country and beyond, but not what the impact is on (our) markets of BME composition.

MB highlighted a fundamental discrepancy regarding the planning process and clarified the Government's revised planning guidelines for the benefit of members. For the most part, planning applications are being processed within a 7-week period.

MA pointed out that Report 4(b) is for information purposes only and is solely a reflection of what was said at the Housing Seminar – it does not seek to make comment on current planning processes.

In conclusion, point 3.6 of report 4(b) 'Updating the Strategy' was agreed.

5 INFORMATION ITEMS

5(a) Housing Care & Support Strategy

A significant increase in the number of older people living in Telford and Wrekin is projected over the next twenty years, with a particularly large increase in the numbers of people aged 70+ and 80+ (see report 5(a), Executive Summary for detailed information).

The council and Telford & Wrekin Primary Care Trust seek to develop an integrated approach to accommodation and care, such that older people will be able to live in 'homes for life' rather than having to move to more specialist accommodation when their frailty or disability increases.

BT&W and T&W PCT are working towards developing a long-term strategy that will see an extra-care housing development programme of up to 500 new homes by 2021, made up of new build and also some existing remodelled sheltered housing schemes.

The long-term objectives require a total investment programme in the region of £35 million from a range of sources. CW reported that Social Services colleagues have already signed up to this initiative particularly in meeting ongoing care costs, and he will take this forward and report progress.

BL is generally in support of independent living: however, the problem with private rented sector accommodation is that when tenants get older and their children leave home, tenants may lose their Housing Benefits and therefore can no longer afford to remain in the dwelling. From a purely economic point of view, BL felt that private landlords could not reasonably afford to keep this type of tenant in his properties, which is a matter of concern for all.

RK advised that there are Government targets regarding the percentage of older people living in rented accommodation. HC is aware that every authority would like more Extra Care provision, but only Telford & Wrekin has the capability to get such a scheme up and running. Noted that GOWM may be able to provide some further guidance on this.

Referring to the map on Page 23 of Report 5(a), JMcN asked for clarification of how 'fit for purpose' the sheltered accommodation will be. CW responded that this will depend on an appraisal of the scheme and adhering to good practice guidelines.

MB considered that there is a need for a formal type of accommodation: "how/when do we ensure development planning processes acknowledge these type of schemes?" Data and policies need to be worked up with partners.

Proposals for an Affordable Warmth Strategy

- 5(b) Report 5(b) – ‘*Developing an Affordable Warmth Strategy*’ (circulated previously) sought members’ support to develop the strategy contained therein. Having considered the report, SHPB members gave their approval.

6 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The following items were suggested for future meetings:

- RK suggested focussing on the RHS and the four HMA’s, and what the WMRA/LGA want HMA’s to do. He felt the Central HMA has not been as proactive as the other three.

The HC is keen to work at HMA level when more impetus is given to developing its remit.

ACTION: GD/MA will liaise on this.

- GD advised that the BC & Telford HMA prospectus prioritises South Telford in relation to Blakenhall and Smethwick etc, and will be finalised shortly.
- JMcN requested an update on the key ‘strategic’ sites including an update on key milestones (JMcN offered to provide an update on Lightmoor) – agreed for all future meetings
- Agreed to invite Sarah Raper to a future meeting to brief for SHPM on the role and objectives of Telford First

7 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Meetings have been scheduled as follows:

28 September at 2.00 pm Wrekin Room, Business Development Centre

7 December at 2.00 pm Wrekin Room, Business Development Centre