Dear Mr Hollox

Rotherham Core Strategy: Preliminary Thoughts

Further to your letters of 6 and 18 January 2014, I am writing to respond to the issues on which you requested further information.

Early review of Core Strategy and Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)
We welcome your positive approach to progressing with the examination and preparing your final report, which would enable the Council to move towards adoption of the Core Strategy. We have carefully considered your comments on the potential for an early review of the Core Strategy, and preparing a new SHMA for Rotherham’s housing market area.

We acknowledge your comments regarding the housing target set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of your letter of 6 January. As such we are of the view that any Core Strategy review should be triggered by the findings of a new SHMA. Should the SHMA indicate that further housing beyond that accommodated by the Core Strategy is required then the Council acknowledges that an early review of the Core Strategy will be necessary. A Main Modification which sets this out in Policy has been drafted for your consideration.

The Council is beginning discussions with neighbours regarding production of an updated SHMA, working to secure input and co-operation as appropriate. Sheffield City Council has recently completed a SHMA (November 2013) however initial discussions have indicated the potential to build upon this work to produce an up-to-date SHMA for the entire housing market area. At Sheffield City Region level there is also a commitment to update population and household projections. This will provide an indication of longer term needs and provide an important input into the SHMA. Given the above we believe that work to produce an updated SHMA could begin in the near future and be completed by December 2014.

We have considered the implications of this timetable for the progression of both the Core Strategy and Sites and Policies documents. It is our view that the Main Modification drafted for your consideration would support progression towards adoption of the Core Strategy.
Strategy and provide for the early review of the Core Strategy, as set out in your letter, should the SHMA indicate this as being necessary. Completion of the SHMA by the end of 2014 would also enable the Council to consider the findings before progressing to the Publication stage of the Sites and Policies document early in 2015; therefore minimising any delay to the preparation of this document.

Affordable housing
The Council has previously provided evidence regarding affordable housing in its response to matter 2, during the hearing sessions and in document ED/47 (affordable housing figures explanation).

Since the introduction of the 25% affordable housing policy, twenty three applications that triggered the policy have been determined by Planning Board, with the condition that they should deliver 25% affordable Housing. Of these applications, fifteen have been delivered:
- eight schemes are delivering 25% affordable housing;
- one scheme is delivering 15% affordable housing after an independent viability appraisal; and
- six permissions are delivering 10% affordable housing at Waverley (as an overall planning condition of this site).

The remaining eight sites have not yet been developed:
- two are currently going through the process of an independent viability appraisal;
- a particularly challenging site involving the redevelopment of shop units and a 1930’s cinema is currently stalled;
- one scheme is stalled as the developer has gone bankrupt;
- in one case the developer is looking at submitting a mixed use scheme;
- the final three sites are still in the possession of the landowner, and have not yet been taken to the market.

The Council is seeing an upturn in the number of applications coming through, which have not yet been determined but will trigger the policy and should deliver 25% affordable housing. There is, however, usually a time delay of a few years between planning permission being granted and final delivery. Further, most affordable housing units are delivered in the later phases of a housing development, normally when a minimum of 70% of the open market homes have been built.

Minerals map
As confirmed in Focused Change 129 (RSD/2), the Council intends to include a map within the Core Strategy showing the broad extent of mineral resources in the borough. The Council has now drafted this map based on data licensed from the British Geological Survey. For clarity this map is included within the schedule of minor changes (ref: MIN53) which the Council intends to make on adoption of the Core Strategy.

I hope you find the above information helpful.

Yours sincerely

Ryan Shepherd
Senior Planning Officer
Planning and Regeneration Service