

# Issues & Options Summary Report



## ISSUES AND OPTIONS SUMMARY REPORT -

Questions we would like your comments on.

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## Introduction

The Council is preparing a new plan to guide the use of land and development in the District. This plan will replace the present plan - the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) - and needs to be ready by 2007. The new plan will be called the Local Development Framework (LDF).

We want everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of the new plan and to begin with we would like to hear your views on what you think are important issues for the development of the District. We do not have an entirely free hand. The new plan has to take account of national and regional policies, build on the exiting UDP and comply with quite specific regulations as to how it is prepared and presented. But that still leaves a lot of areas where the distinctive hopes and concerns of the people of the District can be included.

We have prepared a detailed report on the issues and options that we feel are most important. Please look through that especially if you have strong concerns about a specific issue. This Summary Report however concentrates on what we feel are the most important issues and presents them in a straightforward way:

- where should new development be built
- housing
- economy and employment
- mixed use development
- transport
- green belt and protected areas of search for long term development (PAS)

In the report we ask a number of questions which we would like you to think about and comment on. These are not the only issues facing the District and we would be pleased to receive any comments you want to make on subjects not covered by our questions.

When commenting you need to bear the following point in mind. The LDF will be made up of a number of separate documents covering different topics each of which can be prepared independently. We are not intending to deal with every topic in this first version of the LDF. In particular, retailing/town centres and leisure/open space will be covered separately at a later date.

### How Do I Get Involved?

If you have comments on any of the questions and issues raised in this document or the full Issues & Options Report or you wish to suggest other issues which need to be looked at, either:

- fill in the enclosed form and return it to the address below;
- e-mail your comments to [stratpoludp@wakefield.gov.uk](mailto:stratpoludp@wakefield.gov.uk)
- use the comments form on the Council's web-site at [www.wakefield.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/ldf)

All comments should reach us by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

Send your comments to:

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council  
Spatial Policy Group  
Regeneration & Housing Services  
PO Box 92  
Newton Bar  
Wakefield  
WF1 1XS

Fax: (01924) 306660

If you want to be kept informed of progress in preparing the LDF and be notified of future consultation stages tick the relevant box on the form or e-mail us with details and we will add your name and address to our mailing list.

If you would like to talk to a planning officer working on the LDF about any aspect of this document please contact the Spatial Policy Group on (01924) 306616 / 306620 / 306417.

## What Happens Next?

All comments received during this consultation will be considered carefully by the Council and will be taken into account in the next stage of preparing the LDF, the Preferred Options Report. This will set out the range of policies and proposals which the Council is proposing should form the basis of the final version of the LDF. The Preferred Options Report is due to be published in August 2005 for a six week period of public consultation.

Details of the timetable for preparing the LDF are shown in the Local Development Scheme which can be viewed and downloaded from the Council's web-site, whilst the arrangements for engagement and consultation at each stage will be set out in the Statement of Community Involvement, which is currently in preparation and will be the subject of a separate consultation.

## Information

This Issues & Options Summary Report and the full Issues & Options Report are also available to view on the Council's web-site at: [www.wakefield.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/ldf)

Further copies are available free of charge from the above address or by ringing (01924) 306495.

If you would like an extract or summary of this document on cassette, in large type, in Braille or any other format, please call the Access to Services Implementation Group on (01924) 306764.

دیکھو سنو

اگر آپ کو اس لیفلٹ کی کاپی آڈیو کیسٹ، بڑی  
لکھائی، بریل یا کسی اور زبان میں اس کا ترجمہ  
چاہیے تو ہمیں اس نمبر پر فون کریں:

(01924) 306764

## Context - The Community Strategy

One of the most important documents that we must take into account is the Community Strategy "Fast Forward" which says what Wakefield should be like in the future and is supported by all the key organisations in the District:

*In 25 years time Wakefield District will be a place:*

- *Moving forward motivated by pride and its heritage*
- *Where our people look after themselves and each other so that they are safe and healthy, having the skills and confidence to take more control over their lives*
- *With places that are attractive to live, learn, work and invest in and where our diverse towns and villages work together to promote the well being of the whole of the District*
- *Where together with the younger people of the District we will ensure that the work we do now will stand the test of time*

*To deliver the Fast Forward Vision we need to make sure that we:*

- *are safe and feel safer*
- *are healthy and look after ourselves*
- *are part of a dynamic local economy*
- *are skilful and confident by investing in our people and*
- *live in attractive environments by improving our places*

*The principles we need to guide us relate to how we do things so that whatever we do, we do so in a way that*

- *Engages with and reflects the needs of local communities*
- *Develops cohesive communities*
- *Leads to sustainable improvements*

Fast Forward also states which parts of the District are a priority for regeneration. They are:

- *The Urban Renaissance of Wakefield City*

*Look to transform the city centre as part of the urban renaissance project turning the city into a more attractive and accessible centre. Culturally focused projects at the Wakefield Waterfront, Marsh Way and Westgate and the creation of public spaces in the centre will be components of the redevelopment.*

- *Reconnecting the Coalfield Communities in the South East*

*The major efforts already being undertaken will be continued to deal with the difficult problems in the South East. This will include neighbourhood renewal and reversing a process of abandonment of some housing areas, improving accessibility and tackling low skills and educational attainment together in an integrated regeneration programme.*

- *The Five Towns Initiative*

*We will develop a strong urban renaissance vision linked to new developments at Castleford and use the motorway as a catalyst for development and investment to promote growth in cultural, environmental and manufacturing industries in the Five Towns.*

## Issues for the LDF

### Where should New Development be Built

The new plan needs to show that we have taken account of what is important nationally and to Yorkshire & the Humber Region. The main things we need to take into account are that:

- New development should take place in existing towns and cities, with major developments in the larger towns and cities.
- We should build first in town and city centres and on land that has already been used
- The sites which are easiest to get to should be developed first and you should usually be able to get to new development without a car
- Towns and cities should not be allowed to sprawl together or into the countryside
- New development must conserve and protect our heritage and wild life
- New development should be well designed and make a positive contribution to local people's quality of life.

#### Question 1:

Are these the right principles to determine where new development should be built? If not, what should the principles be?

In order to follow these principles the plan would have to identify which places are considered suitable for additional development and which are not. This would involve ranking settlements by their size and importance. Using the regeneration priorities in the Community Strategy would give us the following ranking:

Wakefield City is the main settlement in the District and would therefore come at the top of the list. In the Five Towns, Castleford and Pontefract are the largest and most important towns. In the South East, it is Hemsworth and South Elmsall/South Kirkby.

In other places new development would only be supported which could be accommodated within the existing capacity of the settlement, was needed to secure sustainable regeneration or was to meet local needs.

#### Question 2:

Should we classify the settlements in the District to help identify where new development should take place? If so, is the proposed classification the right one? Should urban areas be identified specifically?

## Housing

### How many new homes should be provided?

Planning where new homes should be built is one of the most important parts of the new plan. The LDF will have to show how we intend to accommodate all the new houses needed up to 2017. Recently, about 1,150 new homes have been built each year, 20% higher than the target in the UDP. Whilst it used to be that most of the new houses were built on the edges of built-up areas, recently more houses have been built on smaller sites within our towns and city. New houses are needed to provide homes for local people, to replace worn out houses which have been demolished and, in some parts of the District, as a valuable contribution to regeneration. We need to balance out how much housing is needed and where it should be located.

Question 3:

Should we continue to provide for about 950 new homes a year, as in the UDP, or should the number be higher or lower?

Question 4:

Should the level of house-building be higher than in the recent past to encourage regeneration?

### Where should new housing be located?

As well as deciding the total number of houses, we also need to plan where they should go. Based on the regeneration priorities in the Community Strategy new housing in the west of the District would be concentrated in Wakefield City particularly in the city centre. In the Five Towns most new housing development would take place within Castleford and Pontefract with smaller levels in Normanton, Knottingley and Featherstone to achieve sustainable regeneration. In the South East most new housing would be in Hemsworth and South Elmsall/South Kirkby with housing development in other settlements just to meet local needs. In other towns such as Ossett, Horbury, Stanley and Outwood housing development would be restricted to that which could be readily accommodated, whilst in villages and smaller communities new housing development would be to meet local needs.

The Government are keen that new housing should contribute to creating sustainable communities. This will be achieved by accommodating most of the new homes within existing towns on previously used land and by using the sites nearest to town centres first. This is called the "sequential approach".

Question 5:

Should we use the settlement classification and the District's priorities for regeneration to guide where the new housing should be built? If not, what approach should be taken to identify the amount of new housing in different parts of the District?

Question 6:

Should we use the 'sequential approach' (firstly sites within urban areas, then sites which extend established urban areas and finally sites in transport corridors) to identify suitable housing sites within settlements? If not, what approach should be used?

### Windfall Housing

Significant numbers of new homes are built on sites that are not specifically allocated for housing in the plan - this is referred to as "windfall housing". Windfall housing is anticipated in the present UDP and there are specific tests that any windfall development must pass for it to be permitted. This is a necessary way of managing the smaller proposals which appear during the lifetime of a plan but it means that a significant amount of housing is provided in a relatively unplanned way. Most windfall houses are built on previously developed ("brownfield") land but a significant number are on undeveloped ("greenfield") sites. To reduce the amount of windfall housing consideration could be given to limiting the use of greenfield sites.

Question 7:

Should there be a total embargo on windfall housing on greenfield sites or should the size of greenfield windfall sites be limited?

### Housing on Previously Developed (Brownfield) Land

With the Government's emphasis on encouraging development of previously used land many more houses have been provided this way. Wakefield has been working to a target of 61% of all new homes to be built on previously used land. Recently this target has been passed and we are presently building 76% of all new homes on previously used land.

Question 8:

Should the target for the amount of new housing on brownfield land be higher / lower / held at the present level of 61%?

### Managing the Release of Housing Sites ('Phasing')

The new plan will have to control the development of land for housing from 2004 to 2017. Some sites that will be proposed for development will be better located than others. The Government would like us to manage the release of sites so that the infrastructure needed for new housing can be put in place in a co-ordinated way and so that previously used land is developed first.

Question 9:

Do you agree with the suggested approach to managing the release of housing sites?

### Housing Density

Restricting development to previously used land and not allowing our towns and cities to expand does lead to new housing developments being built at higher densities than was usual in the past. This is an important outcome if we are to create sustainable towns and is a policy promoted by the Government. But in some cases the density of development can be too high especially where this damages important local character.

Question 10:

Should the LDF prevent new high density housing proposals which harm the character of the local area?

Question 11:

Should the minimum density for new housing be raised from 30 to 35 dwellings per hectare to make development more sustainable?

### Affordable Housing

As house prices rise across the District, the affordability of housing becomes more important. We currently require housing developers on larger sites to provide 25% of the dwellings as affordable housing. With rising prices should the affordable housing percentage be increased? It must be remembered that too high a requirement for affordable housing could merely put developers off so no housing is built or specific sites which are important to the development of the District do not get developed.

Question 12:

Should the requirement for affordable housing on a site be increased from the current maximum of 25% to 40% or 50%?

### Existing Housing Areas

New housing is only part of the story. Most people live in houses that have been built for some time. Some of this older stock of housing is in a poor state of repair and is not providing decent accommodation. There are proposals to bring all the housing in the District up to a decent standard. In some cases this is best done by introducing some new housing development.

Question 13:

What should the LDF do to improve the existing housing stock in support of the Council's Housing Strategy?

## The Economy, Employment and Mixed Uses

### Economy and Employment Land

Wakefield's economy could be said to be in better shape than it has been for some time. Unemployment is comparatively low and interest in development and investment is comparatively high. One of the main contributions that the new plan will make to the prosperity of the District will be through allocating enough land in the right location to provide the jobs we need for the future. In the last twenty years many of the new jobs created in the District have been related to distribution and warehousing, which took advantage of our central location nationally and easy access to the motorways. Some more recent developments at these motorway sites have created service jobs. In this case the attraction was similar but the important transport connections were with the rest of Yorkshire & the Humber Region.

This recent history raises two critical issues for the plan. There is still strong demand for motorway sites for distribution and other employment uses which rely on good road communications. There is a shortage of these sites in West Yorkshire, so should we plan for more? The service jobs have been very welcome but if we provide any more sites in peripheral locations will they undermine the regeneration of our town and city centres?

It is difficult to predict exactly the needs of the businesses that we want to accommodate in the District, but there are national trends that we can assume will continue. These can best be summarised by a continued decline in traditional manufacturing jobs and an increase in service and knowledge based jobs. How can we plan to make the most of these changes?

In the present UDP we appear to have a surplus of undeveloped employment land. Some of the sites are in locations or have constraints that have meant that to date no one has been interested or able to develop them. Should these sites be deleted or allocated for other uses?

Question 14:

Are there ways the LDF can help to implement the economic strategy other than through allocating land for employment uses and improving the transport network?

Question 15:

How should we decide how much employment land to allocate. Should we base it on past take-up rates or the need to provide jobs or the Council's objectives for economic regeneration or some other method?

Question 16:

Should the LDF make specific provision for different types of employment use, e.g. warehousing / distribution or office uses?

Question 17:

Should we look for alternative uses on existing employment allocations which appear to be surplus or which are no longer considered to be sustainable?

### Existing Employment Areas and Mixed Use Development

Many of the new jobs that are being created and which will be important to the District in the future are not found on traditional industrial estates (often designated as Employment Zones in the UDP) but rather in areas of mixed uses in town and city centres. Also, many of the more established employment areas are no longer exclusively kept for industrial uses. Increasingly employers look to locate in attractive areas of mixed uses and with many new businesses being "good neighbours" the need for segregation has diminished.

One of the ways that we have encouraged and planned mixed use development in the UDP is to designate certain sites, mainly in town and city centres, as "special policy areas". In these areas the plan describes the sorts of use which are appropriate and requires a comprehensive approach to be taken to their development. This has been successful and provides valuable flexibility which helps development to take place.

Some industrial estates and employment areas that have been developed over the last 30 years are showing their age and are already beginning to be redeveloped. This can create a very uneven quality of development and can diminish their attractiveness to investors. Valuable employment land is no longer providing the economic benefit that it did when it was originally developed and these areas are in need of improvement.

Question 18:

Should the LDF identify which Employment Zones should be retained specifically for employment uses and which might be suitable for mixed uses including housing? Should the policy applying to Zones retained for employment uses be strengthened to protect existing uses?

Question 19:

How could the LDF help to revitalise some of the larger, older, industrial estates, e.g. Normanton and Langthwaite Grange?

Question 20:

Should the LDF include a policy promoting general mixed use development in Wakefield City Centre and town centres?

Question 21:

Should we designate 'Special Policy Areas' or 'Mixed Use Development Areas' to show where new development involving a number of land uses can be expected?

## Transport

Transport Policy for the District is set by the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan. (A new Local Transport Plan is being prepared and is being consulted on separately). However, there are strong links between the use of land and buildings and the transport needs that this creates. The LDF needs to make sure that these links are recognised. By far the most important links are the number of new journeys that a new development creates and the capacity of existing roads and public transport routes to accommodate the increase in travel.

If we are to minimise the need to travel and create sustainable communities we need to minimise the number of new journeys caused by new development and maximise the use of existing or planned transport facilities. At its simplest this means that development needs to take place in existing settlements which have good transport connections. Allowing our towns and city to sprawl or to promote growth in the more outlying parts of the District will not create the sustainable settlements that the Government requires.

### The Location of New Development - Accessibility

We will need to measure the "accessibility" of new development proposals against two criteria. Firstly, how easy it is for the surrounding population to get to a new facility and secondly, for new housing developments, how easy it is to get to jobs, shops and other facilities by car and, most importantly, by public transport, walking and cycling.

Question 22:

Are the criteria for measuring accessibility the right ones?

### Transport Provision

Some new developments can be made acceptable because they provide new transport investment both in terms of new roads and, increasingly, new public transport facilities. If these contributions are planned they can provide an effective way of providing new transport investment. In a similar way, we already require plans to be prepared showing how people will get to and from a new development. These are known as "Travel Plans" and cover all aspects of transport for a development including site parking, public transport provision and incentives to persuade people not to use their cars.

Question 23:

Should the LDF specify the basis on which developer contributions to transport improvements will be assessed?

Question 24:

Should the LDF state when Travel Plans will be required and outline their scope and address the mechanisms for delivery and enforcement?

### Parking

The management of land uses can also influence the way roads and public transport are used. For instance, the availability of car parking in our town and city centres directly effects the number of cars that will come to the centres. The LDF needs to balance the need to have ready access to our town and city centres with the need to make our centres attractive and pedestrian friendly. This means that it will continue to include maximum rather than minimum numbers of parking spaces, pursue the reduction of long stay parking except where it serves public transport, maximising opportunities for pedestrianisation, walking and cycling and consider the provision of services such as park and ride.

In some circumstances transport has land use requirements of its own, such as car parks, bus and railway stations which need to be planned for. One new such use that the plan needs to consider is facilities for "park and ride". In Wakefield District these might be sited not only at the more typical locations on the edge of the main centres but also at railway and bus stations and at locations convenient for trips out of the District, to Leeds for example.

Question 25:

Do you agree with the proposed approach to car parking?

Question 26:

Should the Proposals Maps show specific sites for possible park and ride facilities?

## Green Belt and Protected Areas of Search for Long Term Development (PAS)

The Green Belt has been one of the most effective planning designations. Wakefield's first comprehensive Green Belt was drawn up in the Local Plans of 1987. Apart from some changes in 1994, it has remained virtually unchanged and has served its purpose to prevent urban sprawl and keep open land between our settlements. Green Belts are intended to be relatively permanent features and it is anticipated that the new plan will only propose changes in exceptional circumstances.

The present plan includes some land allocated at the edge of settlements earmarked for possible long term development (known as Protected Areas of Search for Long Term Development (PAS)). Many of these sites are now not considered to be in sustainable locations and many are greenfield sites where development would not now be favoured. The plan will need to review these allocations.

Question 27:

Do you agree that the Green Belt boundary should only be altered in exceptional circumstances to support the regeneration of the District?

Question 28:

Should land designated as Protected Areas of Search for Long Term Development (PAS) be excluded from the LDF? If so, should existing PAS land be returned to the Green Belt or be left unallocated?

## Other Policies that will be included in the LDF

The full Issues and Options Report includes another eighteen questions. They are more detailed, relating to specific matters such as:

- Mineral Extraction
- Waste Disposal
- Renewable Energy
- Development in the Green Belt
- Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- Planning Obligations (106 Agreements), and
- Detailed policies, which will help us to protect and enhance our heritage and wildlife.

If you wish to comment on these issues please refer to the full Issues and Options Report.



