

BTP4



Local Development Framework

Central Lancashire Core Strategy

# Evolution of the Core Strategy

## Background Topic Paper

December 2010



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## **CENTRAL LANCASHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

### **EVOLUTION OF THE CORE STRATEGY**

#### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this document is to explain how the preparation of the Core Strategy has progressed through its various stages, from inception to publication.

#### **Local Development Framework Background**

2. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new "two-tiered" plan system, made up of:
  - Regional Spatial Strategies: prepared by the regional planning bodies. These set out a broad spatial planning strategy for how a region should look in 15 to 20 years time and possibly longer.
  - Local Development Frameworks: a folder of local development documents prepared by district councils, unitary authorities or national park authorities that outline the spatial planning strategy for the local area.
3. These reforms to the planning system aimed to make development plan production faster and more responsive to change and to fully involve local communities before any decisions are made. Chorley, Preston and South Ribble Councils are each required to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF) covering their area. The LDF consists of a folder of individual documents; one of the first documents to be produced is the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is the principal Development Plan Document (DPD) contained in the Local Development Framework; it sets out the general spatial vision and objectives for delivery.
4. LDFs will replace the Local Plans for Preston, Chorley and South Ribble and guide development up to 2026. Each authority has set out timescales identifying which Development Plan Documents will be produced, the order in which they need to be produced and the timescale.

#### **Joint Working of the Central Lancashire Local Development Framework**

5. Joint working on the Core Strategy arose out of a recognition by the three District councils that their local authority areas are strongly connected in terms of:
  - the local housing market;
  - the local economy; and
  - travel to work patterns.
6. To help coordinate the collaborative work a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was set up. This Committee oversees the preparation of LDF documents in an advisory capacity, executive decisions remain with the individual District Councils. The Committee's first meeting was held on 12 June 2008 at Chorley Town Hall. The Committee has 10 Members, including the Executive Member responsible for Planning, from each District together with the relevant Executive Member from Lancashire County Council.
7. The Local Planning Authorities of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble, assisted by Lancashire County Council, decided to work together under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This formal decision to collaborate was a necessary precursor to the production of the joint Core Strategy. Such joint working arrangements have been encouraged by Government as it should lead to better plan making and plans that can better deal with functional areas.

8. There is a great deal of evidence indicating that Central Lancashire is a largely self contained economic area with a single housing market and good connectivity between its main settlements through transport links. Many of the same spatial planning issues are found across Central Lancashire and working together creates the opportunity to address these matters in an efficient and effective way.
9. The County Council has a key role to play in the Joint Advisory Committee bearing in mind that this authority has responsibility for the following key service areas - transport, education, social services and economic development.
10. At the establishment of the Joint Advisory Committee, the commitment by the Councils was to produce a single Core Strategy with scope for this to be extended to other joint LDF documents.
11. In terms of the administration of the Committee, it has been decided to revolve the hosting and clerking of the Committee meetings around the three District Councils, so helping to embed the body into the corporate processes of the authorities.

### **Evidence Gathering**

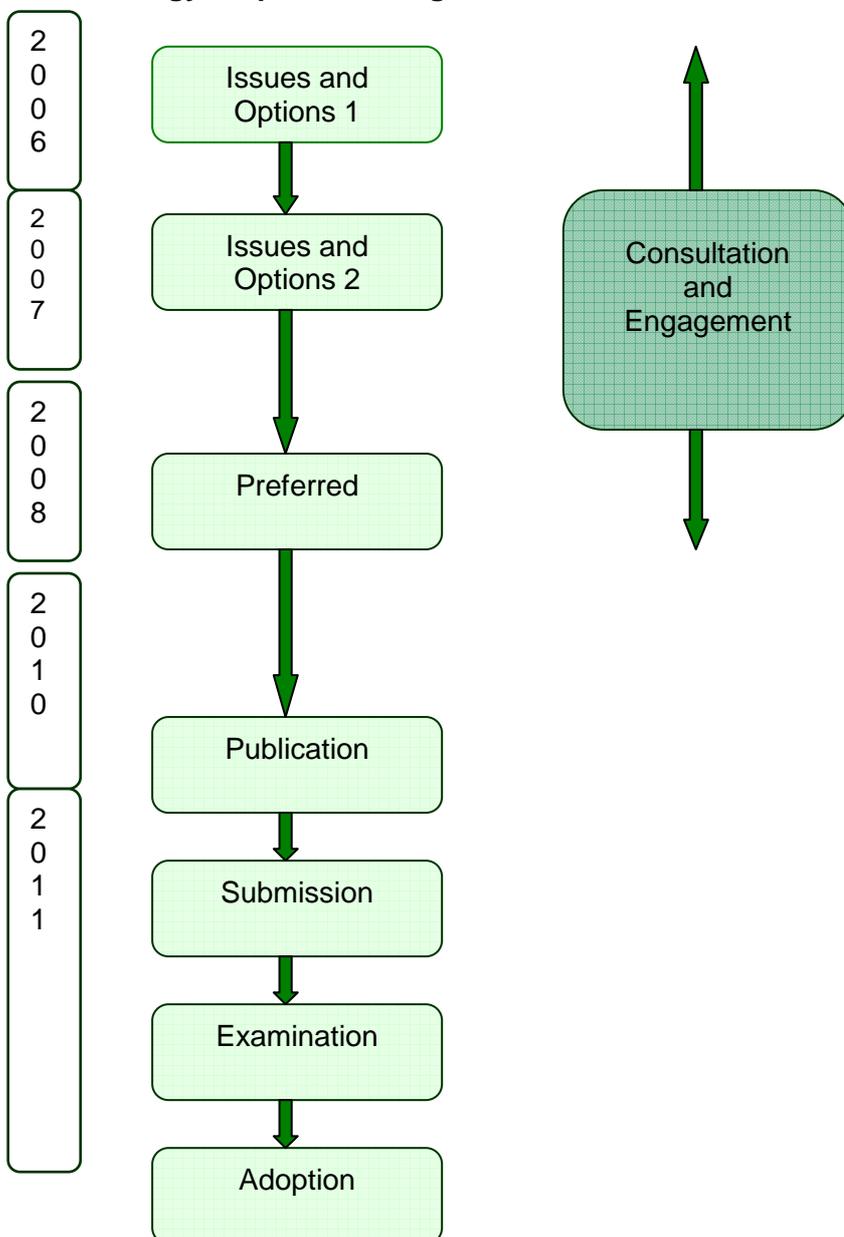
12. The initial joint working involved collaboration on commissioning combined pieces of research necessary to build up the necessary body of evidence to inform the Core Strategy. Much of this work was done by external consultants but some of the work was done jointly in house. The following studies have been completed:

<b>Study</b>	<b>Date of Completion</b>
Central Lancashire City Office Accommodation Assessment	October 2006
Phase 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)	December 2007
Central Lancashire Community Profile Study	July 2008
Central Lancashire Transport Study	October 2008
Central Lancashire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2009)	March 2009
Chorley, Preston and South Ribble Employment Land Review	April 2009
Central Lancashire Strategic Housing Market Assessment	August 2009
Place Perception Studies – Chorley, Preston and South Ribble	Autumn 2009
Impact Study of Central Lancashire and Blackpool Growth Point on the Pennine Lancashire Economy and Housing Market	March 2010

Chorley, Preston and South Ribble Housing Viability Assessments	March 2010
Central Lancashire Retail and Leisure Review	March 2010
Central Lancashire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update (2010)	September 2010

13. Above is not the complete extent of the evidence collected by the three authorities. Also, work has been done on the opportunities for renewable energy in each District, extensive infrastructure planning work (see Infrastructure Delivery Schedule) and the LDF Annual Monitoring Reports.

### Core Strategy Preparation Stages



## Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper

14. The initial issues and options stage of the Core Strategy was completed in two phases of document production and engagement.
15. The aim of the first Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper was to start a debate concerning the big spatial planning issues across Central Lancashire. Involvement was sought of the public, business and voluntary sector organisations from the start. The document sought views on a variety of matters including the location of new development, housing needs, fulfilling economic growth and the protection of the environment.
16. The first Issues and Options Paper was published in December 2006 and the engagement stage concluded in March 2007, a thirteen week consultation period. Applying the principles set out in each authority's Statement of Community Involvement, the consultation was undertaken using various methods of engagement. Such methods included a dedicated website ([centrallancscity.org.uk](http://centrallancscity.org.uk)<sup>1</sup>), placing the document in local libraries, leisure centres and the reception areas of council offices. Leaflets were delivered to the majority of households across the area; posters were displayed in community halls and on Parish Council notice boards. Using the database of over 2000 contact details, all persons and organisations were sent letters inviting comments on the Paper.
17. The first Issues and Options Paper set out the main existing strategies relevant to the Core Strategy. It suggested a spatial vision which the area could aspire to. The paper was divided in to eight themes, suggesting an objective to contribute to the overall vision of each theme. The eight themes were:
  - Where should new development be located?
  - Meeting housing needs.
  - Fulfilling economic growth.
  - Improving accessibility.
  - Protecting the environment.
  - Improving quality of life.
  - Sustaining rural areas.
  - Thriving centres.
18. A questionnaire was produced to accompany the paper and respondents were asked to comment on the vision, the objectives and hence indicate their preferences. Stakeholder events and drop-in sessions also produced detailed feedback. A separately produced schools questionnaire, a more condensed set of the questions in the paper, was distributed to gain pupils' opinions with regard to the future of their area.
19. Throughout the numerous responses, several significant matters emerged. These were regarding the support for maintaining the Green Belt and the backing for reusing previously developed land. The need for truly sustainable growth and the protection of important open spaces was too deemed to be a key issue. The concentration of development in existing main areas and the regeneration of areas in need were also highlighted.

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<sup>1</sup> The term Central Lancashire City was used throughout the first Issues and Options Paper because it was thought this best described how the Central Lancashire area functions as a joined-up entity. However, some respondents considered this an inappropriate term so it was dropped for the second Issues and Option Paper and the web addressed was changed to [www.centrallancashire.com](http://www.centrallancashire.com)

20. According to representations received the vision was deemed too vague, lacking local distinctiveness and not area specific enough. It was also suggested that economic growth was overly emphasised, rather than the document's focus being on sustainable growth. The backing for sustainability was particularly made in the responses with regard to the Fulfilling Economic Growth theme.
21. Respondents suggested under the Location of New Development theme that there should be a sustainable network of urban and rural settlements, meeting development and service demand and minimising the need to travel and the use of greenfield land.
22. Affordable housing was commented on as a significant issue with regard to both housing needs and rural area sustainability. Respondents observed the importance of sustainability not only in terms of locations but also in respect of construction methods.
23. The environment was deemed to be an, if not the most, important issue to be considered. Respondents suggested that the environmental assets of Central Lancashire should be both protected and improved, and efficient use of resources should be promoted. The provision of and access to greenspace was also deemed to be a significant contributing factor in improving quality of life.
24. Support was noted for the hierarchy of thriving centres and for the restriction on out of town shopping developments. Other emerging issues from the first Issues and Options consultation were with regard to concerns about climate change and the deliverability of the policies.

## **Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper 2**

25. In response to concerns that the first Issues and Options consultation had not fully explored views on different spatial options for locating development and other forms of investment a further paper was produced.
26. The Second Issues and Options Paper was initially published for a six week consultation period from 2 November to 14 December 2007. However, as a result of stakeholder requests, the consultation period was extended to 31 January 2008.
27. The following spatial options were the focus of the engagement process:
  - Spatial Option 1: Focus growth on Preston City and the other main urban areas.
  - Spatial Option 2: Target growth to a few priority urban locations but protect suburban areas.
  - Spatial Option 3: Spread growth between all the main urban areas and identified rural service centres.
28. Publication of Paper Two was the opportunity to carry out further consultation with regard to the vision, as it had been criticised for not being locally distinctive, lacking ambition and being too orientated towards economic growth at the expense of environmental considerations. Paper Two was designed to focus on the following key questions:
  - Does the Core Strategy vision cover what you want the area to be like in twenty years time?
  - Which spatial options do you most support, or is there a better alternative?
  - Are the Central Lancashire authorities right to pursue a Growth Point bid?
  - If the Growth Point bid is successful, which of the spatial options would best deliver the additional growth?

29. The main points respondents raised with regard to the vision was that it was still too vague, lacked ambition and did not focus on individual places. It was thought there was too much concentration on economic growth and therefore not enough on the importance of environmental sustainability. It was suggested that the vision establish that the foci for growth are the main urban areas and more should be said about the quality of life, including factors such as deprivation, regeneration, crime, education, health and leisure.
30. Spatial Option 1: Focus growth in Preston City and the other main urban areas. Received the most support (34.1% of respondents voted for this option), there was also significant support for Spatial Option 3: Spread growth between all the main urban area and identified rural service centres (27.4%)
31. The majority of respondents, 47%, agreed that the idea of the Growth Point should be explored. 13% of respondents disagreed, however 40% expressed no opinion regarding the Growth Point. Spatial Option 1 was deemed to be the most supported option with regard to the delivery of additional growth.

### **Preferred Core Strategy**

32. The Preferred Core Strategy was published on 30 September 2008. This proposed a favoured way forward – a suggested set of policy approaches that were considered to be the best to manage change and meet the needs of the area over the next fifteen or so years.
33. An engagement period of twelve weeks was given, taking the representations deadline to 19 December 2008. In order to engage with a range of stakeholders and to encourage their contribution to the Core Strategy, various events were staged across Central Lancashire during the consultation period.
34. A total of 130 representations were received, the majority of them being considered as "formal" (these include representations submitted by councillors).
35. Efforts were made to aid people's ability to access and understand the Core Strategy. Representations could be made in a variety of ways, including an online form, a paper form or letter using a freepost address or via e-mail.
36. The engagement events took place from October to mid December 2008. Some of these were specifically arranged to consider the Core Strategy whilst at other meetings the document was one agenda item for discussion. At most of the events a slide presentation, tailored to the individual audience, was shown followed by a question and answer session.
37. Invitation only events were held specifically to meet the needs of particular interests, such as; infrastructure providers, healthcare providers, neighbouring local authority officers, community voluntary sector, elected Members, Local Strategic Partnerships and environmental groups.
38. Although a variety of venues, formats and times of day were used, attendances for some events were poor. Individuals attending ranged from 2 to 54 although overall nearly 200 people were involved in this engagement. The gaining of "new" interest and contacts into the Core Strategy proved to be difficult as the better attended events were

generally with representatives of organisations who had had previous contact and involvement in the Core Strategy.

39. The two largest events held were for representatives of the four Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and elected Members of the four councils covering Central Lancashire (four in each case as the County level organisation/authority was involved). At the LSP event delegates were asked to focus on specific themes of the Core Strategy whereas the elected Members' event was to look at the Core Strategy as a whole.
40. Preston City Council and South Ribble Borough Council both hold regular community events known as Area Committees/Area For a, in Chorley there is neighbourhood working. These events are opportunities for members of the public, elected councillors and other interested parties to discuss important and topical subjects. Each committee received a presentation on the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy was also on the agenda at Lancashire Locals meetings – County Council led for a.
41. Many of the representations received referred to the Growth Point, the main issue highlighted was that of flexibility and how the Core Strategy needs to be flexible enough to accommodate changes, particularly in terms of housing provision. The economic recession has meant that the original aim of the Growth Point of accelerating housing growth has been overtaken by the requirement to enable and encourage the delivery of housing (especially affordable housing) and enable sites to come forward through Growth Point partnership arrangements of the Homes and Communities Agency.
42. There was concern regarding the impact of growth in Central Lancashire on opportunities and aspirations for growth and renewal in the adjacent housing market areas of Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley. The complementarities between the Growth Point area in Central Lancashire and the Housing Market Renewal areas in Pennine Lancashire were subsequently addressed in the Growth Point Impact Study.
43. The received representations with regard to the delivery of infrastructure were focused on two main issues, developer contributions and the then proposed Community Infrastructure Levy. Mixed responses were submitted with regard to a levy/tariff approach as support was noted for its proposed introduction to aid strategic infrastructure provision, however comments were also received suggesting that due to current market conditions the viability of such contributions may prevent development from taking place.
44. Suggestions were made that the Code for Sustainable Homes goes beyond national planning guidance and whilst the rating is mandatory, assessment is not. It is likely that progressively higher Code for Sustainable Homes will become required by the Building Regulations, any earlier implementation of higher Code levels will need to take account of viability issues.
45. The evidence base of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) was questioned by respondents for the reason that policies had been based on the SHLAA even though it was not available for scrutiny at the time.
46. Policy PCS11(f) – protection of employment premises from redevelopment for other uses – was deemed to be overly restrictive, inappropriate and lacking clarity, specifically with regard to the "other urban" category. Policy PCS11(f) reflects the guidance given on site categories as identified in the Employment Land Review.

47. The issue of graduate retention was dominant amongst representations received with regard to skills and economic inclusion. The need for sufficient, and a wide range of, job opportunities at the appropriate level and subsequent potential for development was highlighted. Respondents also suggested the need for graduate business start ups.

### **Core Strategy – Delivery Supplement**

48. The Core Strategy Delivery Supplement was presented to Members at the May 2009 Joint Advisory Committee. The Supplement was proposed as a partial replacement and a partial addition to the Preferred Core Strategy. It focused on housing due to particular delivery issues and the completion of evidence with regard to housing land availability and housing needs. In addition, the Supplement provided further reference to key provisions of the Regional Spatial Strategy that were not fully recognised in the Preferred Core Strategy, an update on Growth Point progress and a new section with regard to flexibility and risk. This latter addition aimed to seek views on alternative ways of implementing housing planning permissions and risks that these pose in departing from regional planning policy and the most sustainable forms of development. The Delivery Supplement also marked the initial discussion with regard to Strategic Sites, their opportunities, their delivery and development plan status.
49. However, it was subsequently decided to abandon the Delivery Supplement approach as it was not sufficiently informed by the full consideration of all site options and because of ongoing uncertainties associated with the Growth Point itself.

### **The Changes Introduced by the Coalition Government**

50. On 9 June 2010 the Government, in a letter to chief planning officers from CLG Chief Planner Steve Quartermain<sup>2</sup>, confirmed the amendments made to Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3). The changes are as follows:
- The exclusion of private residential gardens from the definition of previously developed land.
  - The deletion of the national minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare.
51. On 6 July 2010 the Secretary of State announced the revocation of Regional Strategies with immediate effect<sup>3</sup>. In the longer term the legal basis for Regional Strategies will be abolished through the "Localism Bill" that will be introduced in the current Parliamentary session. Regional Strategies have been revoked under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
52. Guidance from CLG's chief planner, Steve Quartermain<sup>4</sup>, stated that local planning authorities who are currently bringing forward development plan documents should continue to do so.

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from Steve Quartermain, Chief Planner, CLG (15 June 2010) - <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1615265.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Written statement by Eric Pickles MP - <http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/newsroom/regionalstrategies>

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Steve Quartermain, Chief Planner, CLG (6 July 2010) - <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1631904.pdf>

53. The Core Strategy has been thoroughly checked to ensure that the revocation of RSS does not result in any policy gaps. This is detailed further in the background paper document Proposed Revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Effect on the Core Strategy.
54. However, the decision by the Secretary of State to revoke Regional Strategies was challenged in the High Court and was found to be unlawful. In spite of this the Government still intend to revoke Regional Strategies through new primary legislation and local planning authorities have been advised to proceed with preparing Local Development Framework documents on the basis that RSSs will be revoked.<sup>5</sup>

### **Publication Core Strategy**

55. Prior to the election of the Coalition Government the Central Lancashire authorities has intended to publish the Core Strategy in June. However, this was delayed to take account of the planning changes brought in by the new Government – most notably this led to the introduction of lower housing requirement figures and a changed approach to housing density policies in the Core Strategy.
56. In overall terms compared to the Preferred Options version the Core Strategy text has been revised, re-ordered and shortened. The changes are a natural evolution from the earlier Preferred document reflecting, where appropriate, the representations and other comments made in the autumn and early winter of 2008, the findings of more recent evidence and due account of the latest trends particularly in the local and wider economy.
57. The Publication Core Strategy itemises the influential trends, key challenges and the latest additions to the evidence base that the Core Strategy needs to reflect on and respond to. It also introduces the concept of "place shaping", the significance of economic growth leading to prosperity and the cross cutting themes of Achieving Good Design, Promoting Health and Wellbeing and Tackling Climate Change. The Context has been recast to pick out the particular relevance of other strategies that have a bearing on the Core Strategy. A more focused Spatial Portrait highlights the key features of Central Lancashire and the roles places within the area play. The Core Strategy Vision has been redrafted to align with the Central Lancashire Economic Regeneration Strategy and to allow the provision of the basis for more locally distinctive Strategic Objectives.
58. For the Publication Core Strategy the Spatial Strategy has a clearer emphasis on securing prosperity through sustainable managed growth and without spoiling the distinctive character of the area, marrying the opportunities it has with the need to address pockets of deprivation.
59. The policy with regard to the delivery of infrastructure now aims to cover the likely transition from Section 106 provisions to some form of levy/tariff based approach, underpinned by a schedule of strategic infrastructure to be produced separately. It is likely that a detailed document will need to set out levy/tariff proposals that will be subject to extensive community engagement and probably examination before it could be adopted.

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<sup>5</sup> Letter from Steve Quartermain, Chief Planner, CLG (10 November 2010) - <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1765467.pdf>

60. The newly titled Homes for All chapter covers a wide spectrum of housing issues. Detailing concerns such as the quality of both new and existing properties, the control of new development densities, managing the delivery of housing, with housing requirement figures set at 80% of those in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), pursuing affordable housing in ways that now take account of economic viability but with ambitious headline targets. Research is to be commissioned into how the economic circumstances affecting housing delivery compare to those assumed by the RSS.
61. The Delivering Economic Prosperity chapter brings together several related matters including employment land, retail, leisure and tourism, sustaining the rural economy, education, skills and economic inclusion.
62. The cross cutting theme of Achieving Good Design stresses the importance of well designed buildings and taking full account of Green Infrastructure, landscape character and biodiversity. In addition the text has been clarified to confirm that none of the proposals necessitate any change to the overall extent of the Green Belt. Promoting Health and Wellbeing aims to plan for healthy lifestyles, crime and community safety. The main issues in the Tackling Climate Change chapter are with regards to the Sustainable Homes Code Level 4 and whether the policy should seek to secure new houses are built to this level rather than Level 3.
63. Performance Monitoring now consists of a reduced list of indicators with appropriate targets included in a separate monitoring schedule to be published alongside the Core Strategy.
64. The Publication version represents the Core Strategy the authorities want to adopt. It will be submitted to government and then examined by an inspector before it can be finalised and adopted. Compared to the previous version, the content has been revised with a greater emphasis on managing growth as well as referring to essential strategic infrastructure needed and how it can be funded through developer contributions where there is a funding shortfall from other sources.
65. The Publication version is being placed on public deposit to allow formal representation to be made. The Councils are then required to produce a report identifying the issues raised by the representations. This report, together with the representations themselves will be submitted along with the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State. The target month for this is March 2011. At this point a Planning Inspector is appointed to examine the Core Strategy. The Examination process is likely to include some public hearings. The Inspector will produce a written report with binding recommendations as to how the Core Strategy should be amended before it can be adopted and brought into full force. The target month for this final stage is November 2011.

