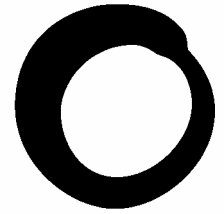


January 2005



**Friends of
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Briefing

Local Development Schemes: An Overview

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Local Development Schemes

The local development scheme (LDS) is a critical part of the local development framework. It is a public statement setting out details of which local development documents will be produced, in what order and when. Producing the local development scheme is a priority for all authorities, as it will set out the timetable for document preparation over the coming years.

The LDS is the starting point for local communities to find out what local planning policies relate to your area. It will set out the current policies which relate to the planning of your area and also outline the programme for the preparation of local development documents over a 3-year rolling period.

Schemes will need to show by 31 March 2007 how sustainable development will be met through efficient and high quality planning and development management processes.

Whilst initial local development schemes should focus on the first 3 years from commencement of the Act, they should also indicate any work that has been undertaken prior to commencement. In addition, schemes should indicate in general terms what future work is proposed beyond 2007, particularly in terms of reviewing or supplementing the documents proposed in the local development scheme. They should set out complete timelines for production, from evidence base development to adoption, for all documents whose preparation commences within the first three years.

Local development schemes must be submitted to the Secretary of State (through the relevant Government Office) by 28th March 2005 (within 6 months of the commencement of Part 2 of the Act). This also applies to county councils in respect of minerals and waste development schemes.

Comprehensive survey and monitoring information will be needed to develop evidence bases which help authorities to identify opportunities, constraints and issues for their areas. A lot of basic information is likely to be collected already. Authorities will need to assess and build on this to ensure they have sufficient social, environmental, economic and physical information to identify the spatial characteristics of their locality. Local communities, stakeholders and commercial interests should be involved in the development of the evidence base.

Transitional Arrangements

On commencement of the Act, all existing adopted local plans, unitary plans and relevant structure plan policies will automatically be saved for three years. Transition to local development frameworks should take place as quickly as possible whilst maintaining sufficient continuity to guide development decisions. Local development schemes will therefore be required to show for each 'saved' policy:

- if it is to be replaced, deleted or merged;
- the timing of the above; and

- within which development plan document any replacement policy is located.

The following scenarios illustrate different transitional arrangements at commencement:

- Recently adopted plan – authorities will need to reflect saved policies in the local development scheme. Key considerations for future document production will include how relevant and up to date these policies are. For example, if the plan has been through a protracted preparation process, it may be appropriate to review policies sooner rather than later.
- Review plan at inquiry and the Inspector has been appointed – plan preparation should continue under existing development plan procedures. On adoption or approval, policies will be saved for three years. The scheme will need to set out whether saved policies will be revised over the period up to March 2007 and if so, how and when.
- Review plan at 1st deposit stage (but no Inspector appointed) – plans should continue under transitional arrangements i.e. re-deposit, but with a binding Inspector's report and no modifications stage. On adoption, the same principles as explained above will apply.
- Significant work undertaken towards review but 1st deposit not reached – authorities should move to local development framework preparation on commencement. Issues papers and any consultation undertaken should be adapted to assist with the preparation of local development documents.

Approach to the Local Development Scheme

The following approach is recommended in terms of preparation:

Step 1: scope main issues to be addressed by the local development framework. Based on their initial evidence base preparation and appreciation of their locality, authorities should identify key issues to be addressed by the local development framework and sustainability appraisal. Identifying local issues and main areas of change will help to inform decisions on any area action plans or area-based supplementary plan documents to be produced. Consideration of the key issues for main policy themes (e.g. housing, environment and economy) will inform the approach to the core strategy and whether there is a need to produce separate development plan documents on subjects such as housing.

Step 2: review the existing plan. Authorities are not starting from scratch. They should assess existing development plans, in particular considering:

- how up-to-date they are;
- consistency with national planning policy and regional planning policy;
- relationship with local strategies and initiatives including
- the community strategy, local transport plan, and areas identified for regeneration; and how well they promote and deliver sustainable development.

Step 3: develop working assumptions on the core strategy and local development framework contents. Each authority will need to consider:

Local Development Schemes: An Overview

- the likely content of the core strategy;
- whether any local development documents need to be prepared in parallel. (For example, an authority may choose to prepare an area action plan for a key site in parallel with the preparation of their core strategy);
- whether any documents are to be prepared jointly with one or more authorities;
- locations and roles (in general terms) of potential action area plans;
- the need for supplementary planning documents;
- the main technical studies required to develop a robust evidence base;
- anticipated committee cycles which local development document production will need to be synchronised with; and
- a logical sequence for the production of documents, taking into account the links between them and their impacts upon other strategies.

Format and content of the Local Development Scheme

The published scheme should be a concise, accessible and user-friendly document. It should not be longer than 20-25 pages, and in many instances could be shorter depending on the scope of the local development framework. Authors should bear in mind that it will be their community's main source of information on the local development document programme so a positive and promotional tone explaining the authority's proposals will be crucial. The scheme should clearly set out the timetables and milestones for document preparation and their proposed content.

They should be written in plain English and must contain:

- An introduction – setting out contents together with a brief overview of its role and explanation of the terminology used.
- Brief description of proposed local development documents – possibly in table form, showing each local development document to be produced, its status, role and content, geographical coverage and position in the chain of conformity.
- Explanation as to how the local development framework will be structured, particularly how different local development documents interrelate. This will include the relationship with the relevant regional spatial strategy (or spatial development strategy in London) and between local development documents i.e. the chain of conformity, especially between the core strategy and other documents. This should include a brief description of how sustainability appraisal will relate to various stages of document preparation.
- Details of any documents that are to be prepared on a joint basis with other local planning authorities.
- In the transitional period, which 'saved' policies are to be replaced, deleted or merged over the period of the scheme. This should also identify if the authority intends to save policies beyond the 3 year period and its approach to supplementary planning guidance.

Further Reading:

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks

Planning Policy Statement 12 companion guide

Both available from ODPM website

<http://www.odpm.gov.uk>

If you need more information or guidance please call or email Tim Sander on :

0113 389 9954 or tims@foe.co.uk

For other planning related resources please see:

<http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/local/planning/resource/index.html>