

Theme: Local Development Frameworks

BBP Regeneration is a specialist property and regeneration consultancy providing advice to public and private sector clients at all stages of the development process. Our experience in property development and our understanding of its economic, social and political context helps clients achieve their regeneration objectives effectively and efficiently.

This newsletter profiles the recent development in Local Development Frameworks:

- The key emerging issues which are leading to a new, more rigorous approach to planning strategy
- How BBP have helped to steer a complex new town development near Cambridge through the public enquiry process

The Importance of Evidence under the New Planning System

The recent rejection, at enquiry, of the Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) for Lichfield and Stafford—the first to be taken for examination under the new planning system—has reinforced the importance of developing sound evidence bases for Local Planning Documents.

Whilst the rejection of the documentation presented at the EIP has caused some frustration to planning professionals, developers and site owners, we believe that it serves to highlight the importance of developing a more robust approach to the formulation of the strategies and policies required to deliver sustainable communities.

The new system, introduced by the Planning Act 2004, aims to streamline the local planning process and promote a pro-active approach to managing development and delivering change.

The system is delivery focused and it acknowledges the importance of both sustainability and local aspiration. This is why, at its very core, the approach put forward demands that authorities develop comprehensive and robust evidence bases upon which spatial policies can be developed.

It is this solid foundation which allows adopted policies to evolve without the need for periodic wholesale reconsideration.

Our early experience indicates that there are some tough decisions which need to be addressed within the Core Strategy. There are others, however, which should be determined in later Development Plan Documents (DPDs) such as Site Allocations DPD or Area Action Plans. Site-specific decisions often need to be given more robust consideration at a later point in the LDF process but must be logically linked to the evidence base of the Core Strategy.

The chain of conformity of Development Plan Documents requires that the evidence base for the Core Strategy is sound and complete at the point of submission; and that it supports application of the Core Strategy policies across the District as a whole. Otherwise, the Core Strategy may well be thrown out.

Our early experience also indicates the importance of robust option appraisal at the consultation stage - this must include identification of *all* the appropriate options. Option appraisal has been at the core of Government guidance on project selection and this is now an essential ingredient in the new "front loaded" planning process.

The development of a sound evidence base requires inputs from a spectrum of professionals to ensure that the social, environmental and economic context is correctly understood, recorded and interpreted.

Various disciplines must come together, cohesively, to develop the LDF but their collective rationale must underpin all the documents which flow from the Core Strategy, including the Sustainability Appraisal, Development Control Policies DPD, Site Allocations DPD and the Area Action Plans.

Communication and understanding across and between these professional disciplines is one important aspect, another is the identification of a leading consultant around which the delivery team can be focused. BBP has found its multi-skilled, cross disciplinary approach valuable in providing this bridge between the elements of delivery team; both between disciplines and also between public and private sectors. We can therefore provide, not just specialist regeneration, property market and development inputs, but also that essential management expertise to help deliver robust policy documents.



BBP are helping to develop the evidence bases to support regeneration Shoreham Harbour, West Sussex (above) and Aldgate, London.

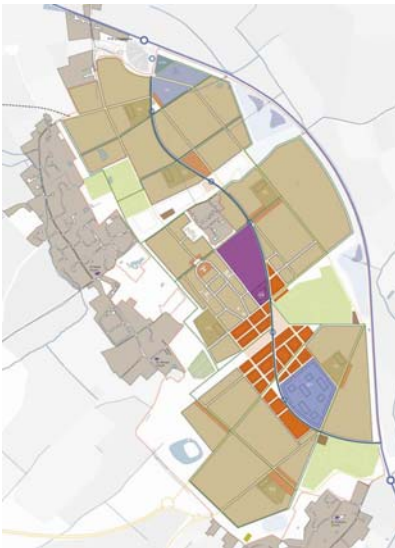




View of Northstowe Site

“There are nine ‘tests of soundness’ on which a Development Plan Document can be challenged and potentially fail. Objectors will scrutinise and challenge the robustness of the evidence base on which it is founded, particularly if the Local Authority is relying on data from a housing needs survey instead of a strategic HMA. Careful attention should be paid to preparation of supporting evidence as much as to the DPDs themselves.”

**Shannon Kelley,
Senior Consultant**



An Early Indicative Plan of Northstowe

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Delivering Major Development Under the Planning Regime

Northstowe is a New Town of up to 10,000 homes which is to be built on a former airfield site between the villages of Oakington and Longstanton, about 7 miles from Cambridge. The development will be delivered jointly by English Partnerships and Gallagher Estates.

Employed by EP to consider the principles underpinning the development of Northstowe, BBP worked with Cambridge Econometrics to scrutinise the rationale for the proposals, building from its base assumptions and focusing in particular on demographic projections for the future population of the New Town.

This process helped us to establish a defensible evidence base for housing numbers, tenures and types, with the assistance of housing modelling expertise provided by ORS, and to estimate supporting community infrastructure - such as primary and secondary schools and retail facilities - by projecting and segmenting demographic and key sectoral data and relating this back to the market and affordable development mix.

We also assembled an evidence base for the level of local employment premises which would be sustainable, taking into account the likely profile of Northstowe residents, public transport accessibility, proximity to Cambridge and desired sustainability in terms of local residents also working locally. The model which we developed also encompassed employment types and patterns, and included trends in homeworking. These were reflected back into income levels, spend patterns and travel requirements - all factors which impact on morphology, demand, mix and value.

Undertaking this analysis provided the client with an evidence base which could be presented at the LDF Examination in Public in support of the development. It gave the Inspector confidence in the proposal and the policy justification for the development.

In particular, our evidence base:

- showed that the level of affordable housing proposed in the Core Strategy, 50%, was based on District-wide, not local, requirements. We provided evidence for the Northstowe Area Action Plan - based on demographic and housing modelling - that a figure of 35% was more appropriate for the New Town. We also provided evidence for an appropriate split between social rented and intermediate housing;
- showed that the housing mix suggested by the Core Strategy was based on a survey of current residents and would not be a sufficient evidence base to assess housing demand and need in Northstowe. This is partly because we expect the New Town to be influenced by people moving into the Greater Cambridge sub-region over the next 15-20 years, and partly because the Housing Needs Study is not forward looking in terms of population and employment change, unlike the forthcoming Strategic Housing Market Assessment to be prepared in accordance with PPS3; and
- showed that the provisions made for employment space in the Area Action Plan were based on land area as opposed to quantum of employment and maximising the balance between local jobs and housing. We also demonstrated that the policies were potentially over-prescriptive in terms of location and the uses permitted. This could severely limit the flexibility to develop effective detailed strategies and policies for economic development.

BBP's approach has taken a holistic view of sustainability, including building a model of development which takes account of the interaction of housing demand, demographics, employment patterns, commercial and community needs and thresholds.

This approach has been accepted by the Planning Inspectorate and provides a model for future planning strategy which meets the requirements of the new planning regime.

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