1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform members of the outcome of the consultation undertaken on the Draft Core Strategy, including the key issues raised by respondents and the proposed changes to the document as a result of these comments. Members are also invited to comment on the proposed changes in light of the comments received before the report goes to Cabinet later in November seeking the Cabinet approval for a further round of more specific consultation on a Publication Core Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the report be noted.

3 MAIN TEXT INCLUDING ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED/ CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

Alternatives considered

3.1 The preparation of the Core Strategy is a statutory requirement and will guide the scale and broad location of development in the borough over the next 15 years. Consultation and engagement with stakeholders and the public is an important element of the preparation of a ‘sound’ plan and it is important that responses received are considered and appropriate changes made before the next stage of consultation.

Consultation undertaken/proposed:

3.2 The Core Strategy has been subject to consultation with development interests, landowners, businesses, government agencies, other GM and neighbouring local authorities, infrastructure agencies and statutory undertakers, the public, council services, partner agencies and the LPSB throughout its preparation. The latest consultation was on a revised Draft Core Strategy produced following the withdrawal of the previously submitted Core Strategy earlier this year.
**Background to the Core Strategy**

3.3 Members will be aware that the previously submitted Core Strategy was withdrawn following Cabinet and Council approval earlier this year. Following this a revised Draft Core Strategy was approved by Cabinet in July for consultation and this took place from 13th August 2012 for six weeks, ending on 24th September. A report and presentation was taken to Townships in September where the public and Township members were given the opportunity to engage in this consultation process.

3.4 Officers have now considered the responses received and set out proposed changes to produce the next version of the Core Strategy for consultation. This is called the Publication Core Strategy and represents the Council’s final version of the Core Strategy that it intends to submit to Government for independent examination.

**Results of the latest consultation**

3.5 A total of 62 representations were received during the consultation. Comments were received from a wide range of bodies and organisations as well as individual members of the public. As well as these specific representations the comments made during the Township meetings in September have been taken into account. In addition we also agreed to take into account the objections made to the two planning applications submitted for the development of new homes on land off Broad Lane, Rochdale. There were 98 specific objections (made by 76 individuals) relating to the planning applications. All comments, along with a detailed response, will be set out in the subsequent Statement of Consultation, the final version of which is submitted alongside the Core Strategy.

3.6 The representations were varied with some site or policy specific, whilst other were detailed and covered a wide range of policies. As well as representations specifically objecting or commenting on the document there were also a number which supported specific policies, references or the general approach within the Core Strategy.

**Key issues raised through consultation**

3.7 The element of the Core Strategy which was the focus of most of the 62 representations (24) was the proposal to release land at Broad Lane, Rochdale for residential development. Most of these were from residents within the vicinity of the site and reasons for the objections included lack of need for additional homes, loss of greenfield land, traffic impact on the existing network, highway safety, flooding and pollution. As noted above additional objections were made in respect of the planning applications. Members will be aware these applications were refused by the Council’s Licensing and Regulatory Committee and are to be the subject of planning appeals whereby many of these issues, and indeed the acceptability of the housing development proposed, can be debated before the appointed Planning Inspector.

3.8 The other key points from the comments received are summarised below under the relevant headings.

**Overall**

- There were no major objections to the overall vision, objectives and Spatial Strategy. Any comments relating to these generally sought clarity or reference to specific sites or areas.

**SO1 – Delivering a more prosperous economy**

- The inclusion of specific retail floorspace targets for each of the town centres was questioned given that evidence supporting these may change during the plan period;

- Changes to the boundary of Rochdale centre were sought to include Central Retail Park;
• The removal of the South Heywood proposal was questioned, particularly in terms of how we now intended to deal with the traffic issues in the area without the proposed link road. There were no representations setting out clear support for the removal of this proposal, although some objectors to the previous scheme were of the view that the revised approach may still result in the South Heywood proposal coming forward in the future; and

• Greater clarity was requested in relation to policy E4 which sets out the mechanism to deliver additional employment land in the future if it is required. This includes a link to the requirement for additional employment land in policy E2.

SO2 – Creating successful and healthy communities

• Some representations questioned the overall approach and evidence relating to the target for additional housing in the borough over the plan period. Some representations argue that the target should be higher to meet need, whilst others question whether there are sufficient deliverable sites to meet the target;

• Whilst a number of representations have objected to the release of protected open land and Broad Lane (referred to above), others have sought the release of further land outside the urban area for housing in Middleton, Norden and Littleborough;

• Some objections were made to the affordable housing policy and, specifically, the impact it may have on site viability; and

• Comments have also been made (often in relation to specific sites such as Broad Lane) on whether there is sufficient community infrastructure, e.g. school places, to support additional homes.

SO3 – Improving design image and quality of place

• There were relatively few comments on these policies and those received are seeking minor wording changes and references to specific sites. It should be noted that a national organisation welcomed and supported the approach to heritage in the Core Strategy and stated that they would cite it as an example of good practice to colleagues within the organisation.

SO4 - Promoting a greener environment

• Whilst there is general support for the policies dealing with climate change and energy (G1-G3), some comments were received regarding the financial implications of meeting some of the targets / requirements set out in the policies. Other comments related to minor wording changes and references;

• There were a number of representations commenting on the Green Belt policy. These generally relate to specific sites which some objectors consider should be identified for future development. Other comments sought more flexibility regarding infilling in the Green Belt and greater clarity in terms of any future review of the Green Belt;

• Most of the comments within this chapter relate to policy G5 which deals with Protected Open Land and are mainly objections to the release of land at Broad Lane, Rochdale; and

• Most of the representations on the remaining policies within the chapter relate to minor wording changes / references. Some comments regarding green infrastructure and pollution were again linked to responses on the proposal at Broad Lane, Rochdale.

SO5 – Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport

• Some objections / comments were received regarding the deletion of the proposed South Heywood link road from M62 junction 19. These, along with other more
general comments, requested greater clarity on how the problems of HGV traffic around Heywood and Birch could be tackled;

- Objections received regarding the indicative route of the proposed town centre link road; and

- Other comments relating to minor wording changes and protecting land to accommodate future transport improvements were also made.

Managing delivery and monitoring progress, Appendices and supporting documents (e.g. Sustainability Appraisal)

- Some comments were received on these parts of the Core Strategy and supporting documents but were mainly related to minor wording changes, points of clarity and references.

3.9 During the consultation, officers also took the opportunity to engage with adjoining district and key bodies and organisations as part of the Duty to Co-operate process. This took the form of a Duty to Co-operate event, as well as individual meetings. These sought to ensure that strategic and cross-boundary issues are properly considered and, where possible, addressed. It also helps to ensure consistency, improve delivery and ensure that our proposals complement rather than conflict with those of adjoining districts, key stakeholders and organisations. This is an ongoing process with neighbouring districts and national and regional bodies.

Proposed changes as a result of comments received

3.10 It is not proposed to make any major changes to the Core Strategy. In general there were no major objections to the overall Vision, Strategic Objectives and Spatial Strategy and therefore the overall approach and the aims and objectives appear to be supported.

3.11 The main single issue raised relates to the proposed release of land for development at Broad Lane, Rochdale and was further highlighted as a result of applications that were received for the development of this site earlier in the year. Given the history relating to this site, the fact that it was included in the previously submitted Core Strategy (as well as the 1999 Unitary Development Plan) and the latest Government guidance means that it is not considered appropriate to remove this site from the Core Strategy at this stage. It should be noted that other representations sought to identify additional Protected Open Land sites elsewhere in the borough. It is considered that if we do not retain the proposal at Broad Lane, it would make it harder to resist proposals on other, less appropriate greenfield sites and which presently carry greater protection from development within the current Unitary Development Plan. The applications for residential development on land at Broad Lane will be subject of planning appeals and the decision regarding the future of this land will be made by an independent Planning Inspector.

3.12 Another key issue relates to comments concerning the deletion of the proposal at South Heywood which was included in the previously submitted Core Strategy and was the principal reason why it was subsequently withdrawn. This proposal did not attract as many comments as might have been expected. Many of the comments received in respect of this instead centred on how we intended to address the existing traffic issues without the link road and the need for greater clarity within the policy (E4) that effectively replaces this proposal. As a result of these comments wording changes will be made to the Core Strategy (notably policies SP3/H, E3, E4 and T1) to provide further clarity on these matters.

3.13 Other changes, most of which are relatively minor, will include the following:

- Minor amendments to improve clarity and update references within the Spatial Portrait;
Some minor changes to the Strategies for the Townships, to take account of any related changes made to other policies within the document e.g. where a specific site reference which should be included has been omitted;

Removal of specific retail floorspace figures within policies E1/R, E1M, E1/H and E1/L. However, the latest evidence will still be included in support of the overall objectives of these policies;

Wording changes to policy E4 to provide greater clarity on the purpose of the policy, the types of site/sites it is aimed at delivering (if required through evidence) and their timing;

Despite comments seeking the release of sites for additional housing in the Core Strategy, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment will be the principal mechanism for identifying sufficient sites to meet the target for additional homes. This will continue to focus on the use of previously developed sites; and

Other minor wording and presentation changes throughout the document to refer to more up to date evidence, improve clarity, add references, improve the presentation and make the document easier to read.

Greater detail on these changes will be included in the subsequent Statement of Consultation.

Next steps

If these changes are approved by Cabinet these will be incorporated into the Core Strategy to produce the final Publication Core Strategy. This will be the version of the Core Strategy that the Council intends to submit to Government for independent examination. This document will be consulted on for a further six weeks at the start of the New Year with comments sought on issues relating to soundness and legal compliance only. The Core Strategy, along with any further proposed minor amendments, will then be submitted to the Secretary of State around April 2013. This will be followed by the Examination in Public around June/July 2013 and, providing the plan is found sound, adoption around autumn 2013.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None in relation to this report

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None in relation to this report

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None in relation to this report

7. CORPORATE AND TOWNSHIP PRIORITIES

7.1 See detailed sections on comments and proposed changes above.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACTS

9.1 There are no (significant) workforce equality issues arising from this report.
9.2 There are no (significant) equality/community issues arising from this report.

There are no background papers