

# APPENDIX A

## WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 15<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2013

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**Title:**

**CORE STRATEGY**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Robert Knowles]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

The Council submitted the Core Strategy (CS) for Examination in January. The first of the Examination hearings took place on 5<sup>th</sup> June, with the focus on the new 'duty to co-operate' and housing needs. Following the Hearings, the Inspector informed the Council that further work needed to be undertaken to update the assessment of the housing market before the CS could progress. As a result, the Council decided in July to seek a suspension of the Examination while it commissioned an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment. In the light of the emerging findings of the new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), it is now considered that the only course of action is to withdraw the Core Strategy from the Examination. Authority is therefore sought from the Executive and Council to do this.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

The Core Strategy and its policies will have an important role in supporting and delivering Corporate Priorities, including protecting the environment and delivering affordable housing.

**Financial Implications:**

There is existing budget provision for the commissioning of external consultancy support and evidence reports to underpin the policy work required to amend the core strategy. It is currently considered that the existing budgets will be sufficient to meet the costs of the work that will be required.

**Legal Implications:**

In the light of the findings of the emerging SHMA, it is the professional view of the Head of Planning Services that the Core Strategy will be found 'unsound' by the Planning Inspectorate when assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework. This would be a significant risk to the Council's ability to plan and manage development in the Borough, and to preserve and protect the special rural character and important landscape characteristics of the countryside. It is recommended therefore that the only viable approach is for the Council to withdraw its existing core strategy, to revise it in the light of the new evidence in the SHMA, and to resubmit in due course.

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## **Introduction**

1. The Examination Hearings commenced on 5<sup>th</sup> June, with the focus on the new 'duty to co-operate' and issues concerning housing needs. Following the first hearing the Inspector wrote to the Council setting out his preliminary view, firstly, confirming that the Council had met the legal duty to co-operate, but, secondly, advising that a new SHMA should be produced.
2. The Council commissioned consultants to carry out a new SHMA in July 2013 and although the SHMA is not finalised, the clear indications are that the new figure for housing need will be in the region of 470 homes a year. Work has not yet taken place to 'test' whether this level of housing can be accommodated in a sustainable way. However it is inevitable that planning for levels of housing significantly above that proposed in the submitted Core Strategy will result in changes that cannot be accommodated within the Plan as it is currently drawn up.
3. Continuing with the present examination will cause further delay and cost as it is clear that, in the light of the SHMA findings, there is no prospect that the Plan will be found to be 'sound' by the Planning Inspector. It is therefore considered that withdrawing the Plan and starting a process of review and amendment provides the quickest route to getting a new Plan adopted.
4. Withdrawing the Plan does not mean that the Council has to go back to the start. There has been considerable work to produce the current strategy alongside a number of consultations. A number of the policies are likely to remain relatively unaffected and much of the evidence base is either up-to-date or needs only minor refreshing. The key issue on which the Council will need to focus, and undertake consultation on, is delivering the levels of market and affordable housing identified in the SHMA, so far as is consistent with the NPPF.

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## **Recommendation**

That the Executive recommends to Council that

1. the core strategy be withdrawn from the present Examination; and
2. at its meeting in November, the Executive receives a detailed project plan to take forward a revised Core Strategy.

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## **Background Papers**

Draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment October 2013 (To be published on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2013)

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## **CONTACT OFFICER:**

**Name:** Matthew Evans

**Telephone:** 01483 523298

**E-mail:** matthew.evans@waverley.gov.uk