

## ITEM 9 – APPENDIX D

### WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE – 5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2013

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#### Title:

#### **THE WAVERLEY BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN**

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

**[Wards Affected:All]**

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#### Summary and purpose:

Following the withdrawal of the Core Strategy from the Examination, this report sets out the broad programme for taking forward the development of the Local Plan for Waverley. The Executive is asked to endorse the timetable and the broad scope of the work as well as noting the completion of the updated evidence relating to housing need generally (the SHMA) and the specific needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

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

The Local Plan 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 of £68,000 for the commissioning of external consultancy support and evidence reports to underpin the policy work required to produce the new Local Plan. In addition, the 2013/14 approved budget includes a contribution of £100,000 to the Local Development Framework Reserve. The level of this contribution in 2014/15 will be reviewed in the coming months as part of the budget setting process.

#### Legal Implications:

There are no legal issues arising specifically from this report. When the revised Local Plan is submitted for Examination it will be necessary to ensure that it meets the legal tests of soundness, including the new 'duty to co-operate'.

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#### Introduction

Following the withdrawal of the Core Strategy from Examination, the purpose of this report is to give Members an early opportunity to consider the timetable for taking

forward the new Local Plan for Waverley. It also sets out the broad scope of the new Plan and an indication of the resource implications.

## **Background**

The Core Strategy was intended to comprise Part 1 of the new Waverley Local Plan. It was to be followed by a second document, setting out the specific site allocations as well as containing a suite of day-to-day development management policies.

The Core Strategy was prepared against a background of changing planning policy at the national and regional level. In particular, it was prepared in the context of the South East Plan (SEP). In addition to setting housing targets for each district it set the strategic policy framework. As members will know, under the SEP Waverley did not lie within any of the regional growth areas. When elected in 2010 the Coalition Government announced its intention to abolish regional plans, including the SEP. This finally happened in March this year.

In March 2012, the Government also published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This introduced a significant change in Government policy which, coupled with the abolition of regional plans, had significant implications for the development of new Local Plans. The most significant issue for Waverley, and many other Council's, is embracing the national policy shift in relation to planning for new homes. This was the main reason why the Core Strategy Examination Inspector suspended the Examination and why Waverley took the decision to withdraw the Core Strategy from Examination.

When the Core Strategy was submitted for Examination, including its target of delivering 230 new homes a year, the Council felt that the Plan struck the right balance between providing the new homes needed in Waverley whilst also safeguarding the environment and quality of life for Waverley residents. However, having regard to the NPPF, the Inspector was of the view that the Council should update its evidence on housing need, should cease relying on a housing figure derived from the South East Plan and should take a positive approach to providing the scale and mix of housing identified in any updated housing needs assessment.

## **Taking the Local Plan forward**

Although the Core Strategy has been withdrawn from Examination, it is not the case that the Council has to start from scratch with the new Plan. More work needs to be done in relation to the number and distribution of new homes, which may have knock-on effects on other policies. However, the Core Strategy was developed after a number of consultations and underpinned by an extensive evidence base, culminating in the development of key policies on matters such as the role of town centres, delivery of more affordable homes and addressing climate change issues. Much of the evidence base and the policy in the Core Strategy remains relevant and, importantly, is consistent with the NPPF.

The Core Strategy was always intended to be part of a two-stage process in replacing the current Local Plan. It contained the key strategic policies from which both site allocations and more day-to-day policies would be developed at Stage 2. In

taking the new Local Plan forward, Officers believe that a two-stage process should still be followed. However, it is considered that the scope of the work at Stage 1 should be extended to include site allocations. The two stages envisaged are:

- Local Plan Part 1 – Strategic Policies and Site Allocations
- Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies

## **The Scope of the Local Plan**

### Housing needs and location

The key area of work will be to develop a revised strategy for delivering the new homes needed in Waverley, taking account of the findings from the new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This will mean looking at the options for delivering new housing. It will include re-visiting options considered earlier in the process, as well as some new options.

The NPPF makes it clear that the starting point is that the Government expects local authorities to plan to meet in full the objectively assessed need for new homes (both market and affordable) in the housing market areas (HMA). However, it also says that this must be consistent with other policies in the NPPF, taking account of specific NPPF policies that indicate that development should be restricted. Examples include policies for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); the Green Belt; areas protected by the Birds and Habitats Directive; and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Waverley is affected by all of these constraints so, in considering and developing options for delivering an increased number of new homes, it will also be necessary to test the ability of Waverley to accommodate new homes in a sustainable way that accords with the NPPF. This testing will be through mechanisms like Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

### Other matters

Developing a new strategy for meeting housing needs, particularly if the number of new homes being planned for increases significantly, may have knock-on effects on other parts of the Plan. For example in terms of employment needs and the policies needed to address these.

There is also the opportunity to revisit other parts of the Plan, particularly those that the Inspector had indicated he wanted to examine in more detail, to ensure that they are consistent with the NPPF.

The Community Infrastructure Levy would replace the existing Planning Infrastructure Contributions SPD and SPA Avoidance Strategy as a process for collecting infrastructure and SANG contributions. The Waverley Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was subject to public consultation between November-December 2012. Under the CIL Regulations, the levy cannot be implemented until an adopted Core Strategy is in place. It is proposed to run the remaining CIL consultation process in parallel with the Local Plan and submit it to the same Examination.

## Site Allocations

Another significant change proposed will be the inclusion of site allocations within Part 1 of the Local Plan. This has the clear advantage of reducing the length of time taken to identify and allocate the key sites needed to deliver the strategy, thereby reducing the length of time that the Council is exposed to the risk of 'planning by appeal'.

## The Evidence Base

There is already an extensive and up to date evidence base that was developed to support the Core Strategy. Two key elements of that (the SHMA and the Traveller Accommodation Assessment) have only recently been produced and are discussed separately in this report.

At this stage officers have identified the following evidence documents that will need updating/refreshing before the revised Local Plan is prepared for Examination:-

- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) – this provides key evidence on potential housing land availability and is updated at least annually;
- Employment Land Review (ELR) – consultants are already working on an update to the 2011 study;
- Affordable housing viability assessment – it is possible that this will need to be refreshed before the Plan is finalised. It may also be necessary to extend the scope of the viability assessment to ensure that the combination of new policies does not compromise development viability;
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan (this is a 'living document' but will need updating to reflect infrastructure requirements arising from changes to the scale and location of development being planned for);
- Transport Assessment (TA) – this will form part of the testing of the impact of different options for growth;
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) – this may require updating, particularly address any site specific matters.

In addition, a Green Belt boundary review will be required to help to inform any decisions about the potential for existing Green Belt land to contribute to meeting housing needs.

## Timetable

Attached as Annex 1 is a timetable for taking forward the new Local Plan Part 1. This sets out key milestones based on an approach involving consultation on new issues and options, followed by the working up of the new Plan ready for formal Publication. Officers are intending to seek specific support from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). The support on offer covers a range of issues including looking at housing needs, project management, reviewing evidence, community engagement and sustainability appraisal. It is considered that PAS input at an early stage will be very beneficial and may inform the timescale for delivering the new Plan.

In addition, there are some key areas of work that will involve the use of consultants. In particular, it is considered that any review of the Green Belt will require consultancy support.

In due course it will be necessary to amend the Local Development Scheme (LDS) to reflect the new timetable. This document, which is published on the web site, is the project plan for producing the new Local Plan and will cover both stages.

## **Resources**

In terms of staff resources, it is considered at this stage that work can be undertaken within existing staff resources, including the resources agreed at the Council meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> October. However, specialist services will be required to undertake the necessary reviews and consultations. The table below sets out the committed spending as well as details of other anticipated expenditure for the next stage of the process.

Budget 2013/14 (including £100,000 from LDF reserve)	£168,000
Committed expenditure - this includes the SHMA and updated Employment Land Review (ELR)	£35,000
Additional expenditure (estimate)	
Green Belt boundary review	£30,000
Cost of the Examination to date comprising the Inspectorate costs and any additional costs incurred by the Programme officer	£20,000
Potential widening of the scope of the ELR	£10,000
Updating the Sustainability Appraisal (SA)	£10-15,000
Updating the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	£10,000
Consultation costs	£30,000
Updates to the Transport Assessment (TA)	£15,000
Updating the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)	£10,000
Updating the Affordable Housing Viability Assessment	£5,000
CIL related costs	£10-20,000

Members will be reviewing the level of future contributions to the LDF reserve as part of the budget setting process for 2014/15 in the light of the estimated costs set out above and any other programmed costs, including the future examination costs. As the process develops, if additional resources are required, specific approvals will be sought.

## **The new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)**

Members will know that GL Hearn were commissioned to prepare a new SHMA. The consultants presented the findings of the draft SHMA to a joint meeting of the O & S Committees on 21<sup>st</sup> October. The consultants have again placed Waverley within a Housing Market Area (HMA) that covers Waverley, Guildford and Woking. As Guildford and Woking did not commission this SHMA, it does not provide a comprehensive assessment of needs across the whole HMA. This is because neither Guildford or Woking were in a position to commission a study at the same

time as Waverley. However, both Councils have been involved in the process and given the opportunity to comment on the methodology and the emerging findings of the Study. It is hoped that in future it will be possible to more closely align completion of this type of work.

The headline figure emerging from the SHMA is a conclusion by the consultants that the objectively assessed need for housing in Waverley equates to **470** dwellings a year. This figure will be used in the testing of the Borough's capacity to deliver housing in a sustainable way, and in developing options for housing delivery.

### **The Traveller Accommodation Assessment**

A Traveller Accommodation Assessment (TAA) has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements set out in the Housing Act 2004 and the Government's "Planning policy for traveller sites" (March 2012). The report is based on the Surrey Traveller Accommodation Assessment methodology which was developed jointly by all the local authorities in Surrey to ensure a consistent approach when undertaking TAAs. The methodology was developed in consultation with representatives of the travelling community. The assessment comprises of a review of Council data sources and a survey of traveller households currently residing in the Borough.

The TAA identified 151 Gypsy and Traveller households and 13 Travelling Showpeople households living in the Borough. Of these, 82% participated in the surveys. Based on projected supply, there would be a need for 3 plots for Travelling Showpeople but no need for extra pitches for Gypsies and Travellers between 2012-2017. The projected need for pitches/plots in years 6-15 is based on compound growth rates. This indicates the need for a further 39 pitches and 2 plots from 2017-2027.

It is proposed that the preliminary results should be used as a basis for external consultations with representatives of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople identified within the Surrey methodology, Surrey County Council as a site provider, Surrey boroughs and neighbouring local planning authorities prior to finalising the TAA which will form the evidence base for including a target for pitches and plots in a Core Strategy policy and site allocations document.

### **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**

The Council is required to have an SCI, which sets out the arrangements for involving the local community both in plan/policy making and in the consideration of planning applications. The current SCI was adopted in July 2006. Officers believe that this should now be updated, ideally before the next public consultation on the Plan. This will ensure that it is consistent with the latest Regulations and reflects current best practice, for example including the role that social media and mobile technology can play in public consultation/engagement. It is intended that officers commence an immediate review of the SCI.

The importance of wide ranging public consultation on the Local Plan is recognised. Through the update to the SCI officers will actively explore new methods and

techniques to engage. A provision of £30,000 has been identified to ensure continuous and thorough engagement with Waverley's residents and businesses.

### **Conclusions**

Officers are committed to moving the new Local Plan forward as quickly as possible whilst ensuring that it meets the requirements of the NPPF and provides the opportunity for local residents and other interested parties to get involved and comment on the plan as it progresses. Key areas of work will be around identifying alternatives for delivering new housing, taking account of the findings of the new SHMA.

In the meantime, the Executive is also asked to note the findings of the new SHMA and the draft Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

### **Recommendation**

That the Executive:

1. Endorses the scope of the new Local Plan and the new timetable; and
2. Notes the completion of the SHMA and the draft Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

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### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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