

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 01/09/2015

Title:

LOCAL PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Brian Adams]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

Following the Council's decision to withdraw from examination of the Core Strategy, the council has been carrying out a detailed programme of work to address the matters raised by the Examination Inspector in order to prepare an updated local plan for re-submission for examination. An update report was considered by the Executive on 3 March 2015. At that meeting, members also endorsed the direction of travel, which has provided the focus for work going forward. The purpose of this report is to bring members up to date on work carried out, and to seek approval for the provisional timetable for completing Local Plan Part 1.

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

The Waverley Borough 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 are no direct financial implications arising from this progress report. Adequate budget is available to support any costs associated with preparation of the Plan.

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 'Duty to Co-operate'.

1. Background

- 1.1 Following the withdrawal of the Core Strategy in October 2013, work has continued on the preparation of a new Local Plan, building on the foundations of the Core Strategy and addressing the specific issues raised by the Examination Inspector when he recommended the withdrawal.
- 1.2 On 3 March 2015, the Executive received an update report on progress with the local plan. This included feedback on the outcome from the consultation on housing scenarios. This revealed a high level of support for a mixed use development at the Dunsfold Aerodrome site. However, it was also recognised that more work was needed to consider the implications on local infrastructure, and to consider how a scenario including housing at Dunsfold would compare to the alternative of a scenario without housing on the site.

- 1.3 One of the main areas of concern generally, and specifically in relation to the aerodrome site, is the impact on local roads. In order to address this further, the council has commissioned Mott MacDonald to assess in more detail the implications of development scenarios on the road network in Waverley. The consultants started by looking at the implications on the A281 corridor of a development scenario including 1,800 homes at Dunsfold Aerodrome. This has involved looking at the impacts on key junctions on the A281 within both Waverley and Guildford boroughs. It also involves assessing the extent to which impacts could be mitigated. Initial stages have been completed, but more work is needed before that part of the local transport assessment can be completed.
- 1.4 The next stage will be to consider the impacts of development scenarios on the other major transport 'hotspots' in the Farnham area.
- 1.5 A significant amount of other work has also been carried out since the last update report. This includes -
- The new West Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) jointly commissioned with Guildford and Woking Borough Councils.
 - The updated Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), arriving at a current list of 74 potentially suitable sites.
 - Further assessment of employment land, including the continued use of existing sites and whether any could be suitable for housing.
 - Updating the council's Traveller Accommodation Assessment.
 - On-going liaison with infrastructure providers to consider the implications arising from different housing scenarios.
 - "Duty to Co-operate" discussions with neighbouring authorities on cross-boundary issues.
 - An updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which will provide the basis for the assessment of potential development sites in terms of flood risk.
 - Further work on the plan's Sustainability Appraisal, including the need to consider all reasonable alternatives leading to the preferred strategy.
 - Identifying opportunities to provide additional Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

2. Timetable for the work going forward

- 2.1 Attached as Annexe 1 is the timetable for the work going forward. The next key milestones are in October/November 2015 when member approval will be sought for a preferred spatial strategy. This will identify the proposed housing target and the strategy for the distribution of new homes. Following this, the draft plan will be written, incorporating the strategy and identifying the key supporting infrastructure. It will also be necessary to undertake further testing of the emerging plan and its policies through the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment. It will also be necessary to consider the viability implications of the plan to ensure its policies are deliverable.

- 2.2 A detailed project plan has been prepared to manage progress which is reviewed regularly. This includes a risk register to ensure early warning of circumstances which may affect progress. This reflects the fact that the outcome of studies may reveal the need for additional work to be undertaken and that the council is heavily reliant on outside agencies including Surrey County Council, Highways Agency, energy and utility providers to engage in key parts of the work. Experience shows that this can result in delays outside the Council's control. The project plan has been shared with these agencies and confirmation sought that they can deliver their work within the timescales set.
- 2.3 The requirements for preparing local plans can be considered onerous and have been a key factor in holding back the process of plan making across the country. It is helpful, therefore, that the government has recently written to the Planning Inspectorate encouraging a pragmatic approach by local plan inspectors with increased emphasis on early warning of matters which may be of concern so that councils can address these issues fully.
- 2.4 The Government has also recognised that further guidance on plan preparation is needed by signalling their intention to bring forward proposals to significantly streamline the length and process of local plans and strengthen guidance to improve the operation of the duty to cooperate on key housing and planning issues. It has also recently advised that it will intervene where Councils are too slow to put local plans in place, arranging for these to be written in consultation with local people. The timescale and detail behind these announcements is awaited.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The Council remains fully committed to getting the local plan in place as soon as possible. It is a challenging piece of work that depends on the completion of a number of strands of evidence. At this stage, members are asked to note progress to date and approve the provisional timetable set out in Annexe 1.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive approves the provisional timetable set out at Annexe 1 and notes the significant progress which has been made since the Core Strategy was withdrawn.

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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