

Report to Neighbourhood and Community Select Committee

Date of meeting: 15 September 2015

Subject: Local Plan - Update

Officer contact for further information: Ken Bean – Planning Policy Manager



Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

For the Committee to note the progress on the Local Plan

Report:

Under the terms of reference, the Neighbourhoods & Communities Select Committee has requested a regular review and update on the Local Plan.

Project Management/Local Plan timetable

1. A revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) that officers are working to was agreed by Cabinet on 11 June 2015.

Key dates / stages in new LDS adopted June 2015
Council draft for approval - May 2016
Preferred Approach Draft Plan consultation - July 2016 to September 2016
Proposed revisions for submission plan publication discussions - December 2016
Publication Plan to Cabinet and Council - March 2017
Publication for representations - April/ May 2017
Submission to Planning Inspectorate - October 2017
Examination - early 2018
Adoption - September 2018

Key Local Plan Evidence

2. There are a range of evidence base reports that, once completed, will be used to inform the policies included in the Draft Plan Preferred Approach that we will be consulting on next summer. Production of two of the most important pieces of evidence – the Green Belt Review (GBR) and Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) have reached key stages as explained below.

i) Green Belt Review

3. Following Local Councils Liaison Committee on 15 June 2015, 6 weeks was allowed for the Town and Parish councils (and District Cllrs) to provide comments on the draft Stage 1 Green Belt Review and settlement hierarchy papers. The reports on the high level strategic Stage 1 Green Belt Review and the settlement hierarchy are to be considered by Cabinet on 3 September 2015. The Council received 20 responses (out of a possible 24) from Parish/Town Councils and 11 from District Councillors. A number of these detailed comments required changes to the study and settlement hierarchy reports. As part of the report to Cabinet officers prepared a detailed analysis recording comments received and the proposed action / response to them.

4. Consultants, jointly commissioned with Harlow, are being engaged to undertake the more detailed next stage of the Green Belt Review work which should be completed early next year. This work will entail a finer grain, more detailed assessment of the broad locations identified in Stage 1 of the study. It will confirm at a more detailed level:

- The areas where the Green Belt policy designation should remain;
- Any historic anomalies in the existing boundaries or locations where development has taken place, which may therefore suggest minor amendments to the Green Belt boundaries are required; and
- Areas that may be least harmful in Green Belt terms for potential development purposes.

5. The consultant's brief includes provision for workshops with officers, district council members and parish/town council representatives to feed into the work.

ii) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

6. Considerable work has been required under the **duty to cooperate** and working with our **SHMA partners** (Harlow, Uttlesford and East Herts) in particular to update the SHMA and development of an objectively assessed housing need for the area. The revised SHMA is now almost complete and is scheduled to be considered by the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board on 22 September 2015 with a report to the 8 October Cabinet meeting with the objectively assessed need numbers. Once the SHMA has been signed off further work will then be required to develop the housing target for the district.

iii) Other Evidence Work

7. The **economic work** by Hardisty Jones Associates will shortly be complete too, and will also be reported to Cabinet on the 8th October along with the revised SHMA. The economic work will give a range for jobs growth in the district over the new Local Plan period, along with ranges for the other 3 authorities in the Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) which is the same as the SHMA area. Detailed work on **EFDC's local economy** by the same consultants will also provide analysis of the employment sectors in our district which are strongest, how they are predicted to change, and what types of employment space we should look to provide in the Local Plan, for example, small business units, office space etc.

8. There have been delays in the **strategic transport assessment** work being undertaken by Essex County Council using the new VISUM modelling, the initial results received at the end of April 2015 are not complete and require additional work.

9. High level **economic viability work** has also recently been completed. The Dixon Searle Partnership (DSP) has been engaged by the Council to undertake an assessment of the economic viability across the District and advise on the implications for the drafting of Local Plan policies. The consultants were also asked to consider the scope for the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This work is being undertaken in two stages. The stage 1 report reviews economic viability of development at a high level and introduces potential options for Local Plan policy development, including on the proportion of affordable housing and affordable housing thresholds. The stage 1 report also considers the

prospects for the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy across Epping Forest District and advises on broad parameters for viable levels of CIL for various different land uses across the District.

Other matters

Officer and Member Working: Following the development of a revised programme, the policy team are in the process of setting up a number of officer working group meetings to consider draft Local Plan policies as they start to be formulated and these will be happening regularly from October. A programme of member workshops to follow these is also being prepared.

Neighbourhood Plans: Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers are expected to submit their draft Plan for examination shortly. Neighbourhood areas have been agreed for a further 6 Town and Parish Councils (Epping, Loughton, Buckhurst Hill, Theydon Bois, Chigwell and North Weald Bassett), all except North Weald Bassett covering the whole parish area applied for. Most of these Town and Parishes are progressing neighbourhood plans for their areas. An application from Epping Upland Parish Council to establish a neighbourhood area for their parish is currently under consideration and being consulted on.