

# **Report to Neighbourhoods and Community Services Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 17 November 2015**

**Subject: Local Plan Update**

**Officer contact for further information: Ken Bean**

**Committee Secretary: A Hendry**



---

## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**To note the progress on the Local Plan**

### **Reasons for Report:**

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

---

## **1) Local Plan Timetable and Member Engagement**

The next key stage identified in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) is Council approval of the Draft Plan Preferred Approach next May ahead of full public consultation which is anticipated between July and September 2016.

### ***Member Briefings and Workshops***

Dates during November have now been set and advertised for holding a further series of all Member, (including Town and Parish Council representation), evening briefing and workshop sessions. The purpose of these workshops are to inform members of emerging key issues that the draft Local Plan will need to cover and to ensure that Member views and concerns are aired at this formative stage so that they might be taken account of in the policy drafting.

The first of these on 2<sup>nd</sup> November considered the Historic Environment, the Natural Environment and Green Networks. The next workshops arranged for 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November will focus on the economic strategy (including food production, glasshouse industry, tourism and live/work) and affordable housing / housing for an ageing population respectively.

## **2) Key Local Plan Evidence**

Before a draft plan can be produced it is necessary to finalise the raft of evidence base reports that, once completed, will be used to inform the policies included in the Draft Plan Preferred Approach that we consult on. Work has recently been completed on key pieces of technical evidence relating to housing and jobs numbers as explained below. These housing and economic evidence reports can be viewed via the Local Plan pages

of the Council's website.

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

1. In relation to housing, an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has been produced in conjunction with the other authorities within our Housing Market Area: East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford. The final SHMA was formally considered by the SHMA partners at the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> September and was then subsequently added as part of the Local Plan evidence base, together with the related economic and employment evidence, following consideration at the 8<sup>th</sup> October Cabinet meeting.

2. What the SHMA provides us with is figures for Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) for Epping Forest District and the other three Districts named above. The OAHN figure in Epping Forest District is 11,300 dwellings up to 2033 but it is important to understand that this is not the housing target for the District. Although the Council has yet to determine its housing target the production of the SHMA represents an important milestone towards doing so. Deductions can be made from the OAHN figure to take account of completions since April 2011, permissions already granted and also a windfalls allowance. Since completion of the SHMA in October, the Government has published the Housing and Planning Bill; this has necessitated that consideration be given to potential impacts for the SHMA, particularly in relation to starter homes and gypsy traveller accommodation. Officers are currently considering whether additional work in relation to the SHMA is likely to be needed, and if so, the likely extent of this.

3. Having established the housing need, the next steps that need to be taken in order to arrive at a housing target include determining affordable housing need, considering constraints, policy aims and other evidence. It is therefore necessary to take account of constraints such as areas of green belt, Epping Forest and flood plains which indicate that development should be restricted. If, having completed the other pieces of evidence, it is demonstrated that our identified housing need cannot be fully met within Epping Forest District, it will then be necessary to discuss with our SHMA partners whether some of our objectively assessed need might be accommodated within the wider SHMA area.

### ***Economic and Employment evidence***

4. An Economic Evidence report for West Essex and East Herts commissioned jointly by EFDC and East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford Councils has recently been finalised. Local Plan Inspectors pay particular attention to the need for jobs and housing requirements to be aligned. Therefore, this study was commissioned on the same basis as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, to cover the four authorities and to inform all four Local Plans across the 'Functional Economic Market Area'.

5. A second more detailed report covering 'Economic and Employment Evidence to Support the Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy' has also been completed for EFDC alone. It identifies jobs growth in the range of 400-455 additional jobs per year from 2011-2033 and provides a detailed analysis of the assessed economic need, in terms of employment floorspace and type to be provided though the EFDC Local Plan. In addition this document provides the floorspace breakdown of what this need might be in order to inform the new Local Plan.

## ***Green Belt Review***

6. Government guidance and emerging Inspectors' reports make clear the need to undertake a comprehensive Green Belt Review of the entire District before the release of any Green Belt land is considered. It is important to remember that the outcome of the Green Belt Review is only one, albeit an extremely important, piece of the evidence base that will inform the Council's future plan-making decisions.

7. Following completion of stage 1 of the Green Belt Review for the District, external consultants have been appointed and are currently undertaking a more detailed assessment of the broad locations identified in stage 1. The consultants' brief includes provision for workshops with officers, District Council members and Parish/Town Council representatives to feed into the work.

8. This stage 2 work will confirm at a more detailed level:

- i) The areas where the Green Belt policy designation should remain;
- ii) 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
- iii) Areas that may be least harmful in Green Belt terms for potential development purposes.

9. It therefore follows that, simply because a parcel, or part of the parcel, is being appraised as part of the more detailed work, this does not necessarily mean that it should / will be allocated for development in the emerging Local Plan, or that the Council would look favourably on a planning application.

## ***Settlement Capacity Work***

10. The Council is also undertaking a settlement capacity analysis of the 10 largest settlements in the District, namely Epping, Theydon Bois, Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Loughton/Debden, Waltham Abbey, North Weald Bassett, Chipping Ongar, Lower Nazeing and Roydon. The purpose of the work is to ensure that the District can address as much of its housing requirement as possible within our existing settlements, and so minimise the potential need to utilise Green Belt land for development. Like stage 2 of the Green Belt Review, the results of this work will be used to inform, and published alongside, the consultation Draft Plan Preferred Approach.

## **3. Neighbourhood Planning**

11. Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers have finalised their draft Plan which, following publication for a six week period for representations, goes forward to independent examination. There are seven other Parish and Town Councils that have applied to designate neighbourhood planning areas for their areas which have been approved (Chigwell, Epping, Buckhurst Hill, Theydon Bois, Loughton, North Weald Bassett and Epping Upland). With the exception of North Weald Bassett and Epping Upland Parishes, the areas approved cover the entire parish. Given the location of North Weald Bassett and Epping Upland Parishes immediately adjacent to Harlow's administrative boundary, a number of important strategic cross boundary matters were

identified that are not within the remit of a Neighbourhood Plan to address. The Council therefore decided that the northern edges of these parishes bordering Harlow should be excluded from the Neighbourhood Area designation.

#### ***4. Duty to Cooperate***

12. Officers and Members continue to meet regularly with appropriate authorities, principally through the Cooperation for Sustainable Development officer group and Member Board, to consider a wide range of cross boundary issues. In addition to the SHMA, Employment and Green Belt Review work reported above, the Lea Valley Food taskforce continues to develop a programme for growth around one of the District's historic and still important sectors. The Lea Valley glass house industry was one of the matters considered at the Enfield, Essex and Hertfordshire Border Liaison Group Member meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> October. This meeting also received presentations on Crossrail 2 and the Hertfordshire Transport Vision, both of which are currently the subject of public consultation.

13. Officers have also been involved in transport work being undertaken by the London Borough of Enfield, opposing reference to construction of a new access road in the North East Enfield Area Action Plan and are keeping a watching brief on wider transport work being undertaken as part of Enfield's Northern Gateway Access Package (NGAP). An update of the NGAP transport work was also provided at the recent Border Liaison Group Meeting.