

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: *LPC-006-2012/13*
Date of meeting: *26 November 2012*



Portfolio: Planning

Subject: Local Plan – Briefing following Issues & Options Consultation

Responsible Officer: Kassandra Polyzoides (01992 564119)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To note the outcome of the Local Plan Issues & Options consultation; and
- (2) To note ongoing evidence base work for the Local Plan.

Executive Summary:

The Issues & Options consultation concluded on 15 October 2012. There was a large number of representations submitted and interest generated regarding the consultation as a whole. Drop in sessions were well attended and public engagement was generally constructive. Forward Planning are focused on processing and analysing the representations in order to progress to the next stage of the Local Plan preparation, the Preferred Options. The team are also focusing on commissioning, progressing and completing key pieces of evidence work that will inform the Local Plan.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To provide an update on the Local Plan Issues & Options consultation.

Other Options for Action:

None.

Report:

1. The Issues and Options (I&O) Consultation was launched on 30 July and ended on 15 October 2012. The means by which the consultation was publicised included:

- (a) evening drop in sessions around the District;
- (b) information on the Council Homepage and Planning pages <http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/index.php/contact-us/consultation/planning-our-future>;
- (c) our Facebook, Twitter accounts and Forward Planning consultation phone line;
- (d) a static exhibition at the Civic Offices throughout the length of the consultation period including questionnaires and a submission box;

- (e) letters or emails to individuals who were on our database from previous Council planning policy consultations;
- (f) letters or emails to anyone who owns land within any of the potential development/ opportunity areas within the consultation document. This letter was used to ask owners if at this stage, they agreed for their land to be considered;
- (g) consultation boxes (questionnaires, I&O documents, leaflets, posters etc) provided to all Town & Parish Councils;
- (h) consultation boxes (questionnaires, I&O documents, leaflets, posters etc) provided to the residents' associations we had on our database;
- (i) leaflets distributed to Epping Forest District residents;
- (j) leaflets handed out at a number of the District's tube and rail stations, and some rail stations just outside the District; and
- (k) a rotating series of exhibitions at all the Libraries in the District.

2. A detailed report of the consultation methods, including the number of attendees at the drop in sessions is available in Appendix I.

3. The number of representations received was 5625 of which 114 were statutory bodies, 264 landowners, 3158 residents, 2089 group responses. The representations are currently being processed and a decision was made to outsource this piece of work in order to ensure that the timetable for meeting the Local Plan continues on track. As the representations are being indexed the Forward Planning team will be working to analyse the results. The information from the I&Os consultation will be used to inform a series of Member workshops in the new year aimed at EFDC and Town & Parish Members. The programme of workshops is intending to draw out the key themes and preferred options for the district over the new plan period. The output from the workshops will be used to inform the preferred options report for the LPCC and Cabinet in early 2013 that will lead to the preparation of the draft preferred options document for consideration by LPCC. It is currently anticipated that the Preferred Options consultation will take place in the Autumn of 2013. The LDS which was published in June 2012 will be updated to take account of the new target dates. Further details outlining the content of the Member workshops are available in Appendix II.

4. The Forward Planning team is in the process of reviewing the consultation methods used for the Issues & Options to make proposals to Members for the next stage of consultation, eg reviewing sending leaflets or letters to all residents and businesses as most Councils do not follow this approach. It may therefore be a consideration that advertising in the press and on high streets is increased for the next rounds of consultation instead of home delivered letters/leaflets. There are also discussions being had with regards to the drop-in sessions, their overall effectiveness as a method of engagement and their impact on staff and on the timetable. The Essex wide Planning Policy Forum Group that EFDC officers attend will be providing information on other Councils' approaches to Local Plan consultation, which will also be considered as part of the officers proposals to Members for the next stage consultation. Responses to the consultation for the Statement of Community Involvement will be taken into account during this review.

5. The evening drop in sessions, held in towns and villages in the District, were overall well attended and included information boards and all the documentation associated with the consultation. A group of officers was present at each drop-in session to answer questions

and provide information on responding to the consultation.

6. Managers are maintaining staffing levels of the Forward Planning team in order to continue to progress work efficiently and avoid negative impact on remaining staff. Three members of staff have either left or advised their managers they will be leaving by early 2013 and recruitment is taking place to fill these posts.

7. Work on the Local Plan evidence base is ongoing and there are a number of studies being commissioned or considered:

- (a) Climate Change - this will enable a review of existing policies; make them more robust in relation to climate change;
- (b) GRT (a potential Essex-wide update of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) is being discussed with other Essex authorities via EPOA (Essex Planning Officers Association);
- (c) additional work (Glasshouse study) – attempting to identify potentially suitable areas of land elsewhere in the district for glasshouse development;
- (d) SFRA (Level 2 for identified preferred sites);
- (e) Transport Assessment for identified preferred sites;
- (f) Sustainability Appraisal - consultants taking the role of 'critical friend' and Forward Planning team delivering core work; and
- (g) DVDs for individual distribution to the local travelling community asking for information about future needs and advising of the Preferred Options consultation next year.

Resource Implications:

Outside of staffing issues as discussed in the main report and addressing these in a timely fashion an update on the Local Plan budget is due to be reported to Local Plan Committee in early 2013.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Recent appeal decisions related to EFDC would suggest that the Council will become increasingly vulnerable to planning applications if progress of the Local Plan is not made in accordance with the current timetable.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The timely implementation of the Local Plan is necessary in order to provide the Council with effective controls over development in the District. It will also provide a framework in parallel with the Corporate Objectives in determining the Council's long term aspirations and objections.

Consultation Undertaken:

Issues & Options Consultation (July- October 2012)

Background Papers:

Local Plan Issues & Options document
Local Plan Issues & Options questionnaire

Impact Assessments:Risk Management

The Local Plan Issues & Options Consultation has a separate EqIA.

Equality and Diversity

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? Yes

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? Yes

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
The ability for effective engagement to take place with hard to reach/minority groups.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?

By way of choosing a variety of routes for publicising the Local Plan and Issues & Options consultation. By devising specialist formats for ongoing engagement i.e. DVDs.