

# **Report to Neighbourhood Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 19 September 2017**

**Subject: Update of the Local Plan**

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**Committee Secretary:** V Messenger, ext. 4265

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## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

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

### **Executive Summary**

- The full report detailing the findings from the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan consultation was presented to the Cabinet on 11 July 2017.
- Work to progress the Draft Local Plan and associated evidence base is progressing towards the Regulation 19 Pre Submission Publication.
- The Council continues to work closely with stakeholders through the progression of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Neighbourhood Planning, Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board and Developer Forum as required in order to progress matters in relation to infrastructure, the Duty to Cooperate and future delivery.

### **Draft Local Plan consultation**

1. A report to Cabinet on 11 July 2017 set out the detailed findings of the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan Consultation that took place between the 31 October 2016 and 12 December 2016. The Council received 3,387 responses from 3,072 respondents. A summary of the key issues raised, together with the Council's response to these issues was provided. The full Consultation Report from Remarkable which provides both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the feedback received to the consultation was a background paper to the report and is available on the Council's website. Officers will be reviewing the draft policies in the plan in the light of the consultation analysis and other key evidence studies/work which is currently underway.

### **Update on Local Plan progress**

2. Work is progressing to inform and support the Regulation 19 Pre Submission Publication Plan. The key workstreams are:
  - **Site selection** – work has commenced on the assessment of approximately 168 sites comprising a mix of new or amended residential/traveller sites and employment sites. The methodology for the process has been published on the Council's website, together with the list of sites being assessed;
  - **Transport modelling** – work is continuing to be undertaken by Jacobs on behalf of Essex County Council / Epping Forest District Council to model the transportation impacts of the growth planned, and consider how improvements to sustainable transportation and key junctions can help to facilitate growth;

- **Open Space, Playing Pitch and Indoor Sports Facilities Studies** – the three interlinked studies are well progressed, and will help to identify requirements for future development which will inform the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
  - **Infrastructure Delivery Plan** – a significant amount of work has been undertaken and continues to progress in order to identify the infrastructure required to support future growth, together with how this will be funded and delivered. The work is being informed through discussions with infrastructure providers, EFDC / ECC Officers, local councillors (District / Town / Parish), neighbouring local authorities, and landowners / site promoters;
  - **Local Plan Viability Study** – work is being undertaken to update the initial work undertaken in 2015, and to consider in greater detail the viability of growth planned taking into account the latest policy requirements;
  - **Employment Studies** - Joint work to update the employment need within the Functional Economic Market Area and the District to inform the work on site selection;
  - **Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment;** and
  - **Monitoring, housing trajectory and Housing Implementation Strategy** – there is a need to ensure that the monitoring systems moving forward are as accurate as possible in order to ensure that the Council is able to monitor progress against the plan and forecasts for delivery. The Council's housing position with regard to the plan trajectory and the five year housing land supply position will be of particular interest. An updated Housing Land Supply Statement is being prepared which will provide further details and inform the production of a Housing Implementation Strategy in due course.
3. The Council is also leading on work to develop a joint strategy and an 'Action Plan', with other relevant local authorities, which will address potential adverse impacts on the integrity of Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), as required under the Habitat Regulations 2010, and in accordance with the agreed Memorandum of Understanding. As the coordinating competent authority in relation to Epping Forest SAC, the Council is facilitating ongoing discussions and the work with relevant neighbouring local planning authorities, the City of London Corporation and Natural England.
  4. In order to inform the ongoing site selection and Infrastructure Delivery Plan process, the Council held meetings with a number of Parish and Town Councils who are producing Neighbourhood Plans at the beginning of August. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss and consider work being undertaken in respect of site selection and infrastructure planning to inform emerging Neighbourhood Plans and the Local Plan.
  5. The current stage of plan making is to prepare a Pre-submission plan for publication and to publish it under Regulation 19 taking account of the comments on the Draft Local Plan and the further evidence based work being undertaken. This will be the document that the Council considers is ready for examination. The Publication Plan must be published together with other "proposed submission documents", for a six-week period to seek stakeholder representations as to the soundness and legal compliance of the Plan before it can be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.
  6. Further details in relation to progress with the Local Plan and future timescales will be reported to Cabinet on 14 October 2017.

## **Update on Local Plan implementation and delivery**

7. The Cabinet also considered a report on 15 June 2017 on the implementation of the Local Plan which agreed to establish the appropriate process and arrangements and put in place the necessary resources, agree the approach to the production of Strategic Masterplans and the introduction of Planning Performance Agreements. As part of this work a review of the skills within the Council is underway in order to identify the resources and skills required to take this work forward to deliver the Local Plan.
8. On 6 June 2017 Developer Forum workshops took place specifically in relation to the emerging Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The morning workshop considered the infrastructure requirements relating to the proposed sites in the Epping Forest Draft Local Plan around Harlow which form part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. Discussions focussed on the principal strategic infrastructure requirements which will be needed to inform the infrastructure delivery approach for these sites. Representatives from Harlow Council (including officers and IDP consultant), East Herts District Council, Essex County Council and Thames Water were in attendance, in addition to relevant landowners and site promoters. The afternoon session focussed on the proposed allocations across the rest of the District and considered infrastructure requirements on a settlement by settlement basis.
9. The next meetings of the Developer Forum (Strategic Sites around Harlow and Sites across the Rest of the District) are due to take place on 8 September 2017. These meetings will receive an update on progress with the Local Plan and Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. There will also be a presentation in relation to the Community-led Housing project (as reported to the previous meeting of this Committee).
10. At the present time the Planning Policy team continues to liaise with all relevant landowners / developers through the Developer Forum only. This ensures a consistent and effective use of limited Council resources. However, during the Autumn the Planning Policy team, together with colleagues from Development Management, will be undertaking meetings with relevant landowners and promoters of strategic sites in order to discuss entering into Planning Performance Agreements, and further consider how relevant Strategic Masterplans will progress.
11. In the meantime, the Council is holding discussions with Essex County Council and Harlow Council to consider and confirm how the local authorities will form an integral part of Planning Performance Agreements.

### *Harlow and Gilston Garden Town update*

12. Work has been commissioned to establish interim governance arrangements, prepare a project programme (including a proposed structure of the team), establish a Quality Review Panel and undertake work on the proposed sustainable transport corridor. Consultants have been appointed to prepare a spatial vision and design charter for the Garden Town and this work is progressing well.
13. Interim Governance arrangements were approved by the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board on 31 July 2017 and are now being implemented. This includes the extension of the existing EFDC Local Plan Developer Forum to encompass all the sites in and around Harlow and to operate as a Garden Town Developer Forum. This will provide a basis for the long term planning and implementation of sites identified for allocation in the Local Plan and provides a basis for the coordination and management of Strategic Masterplans. A Garden Town Officer Steering Group and Member Board have been introduced which meet monthly.
14. A Garden Town Support Officer has been appointed on a one year fixed term contract. The Support Officer will play a key role in coordinating the work associated with the establishment and progression of the Garden Town, and will oversee key projects as required.

**Reason for decision:** not applicable

**Options considered and rejected:** not applicable

**Consultation undertaken:**

**Resource implications:** the preparation of the Local Plan is being prepared using existing Planning Policy Staff and consultants as per the Local Plan budget reported to Cabinet in December 2016. Further details of resource commitments and requirements associated with the Local Plan will be reported to Cabinet on 12 October 2017.

Budget provision: Local Plan Budget

Personnel: Planning Policy Team

Land: N/A

Community Plan/BVPP reference: NA

Relevant statutory powers: NA

Background papers: Cabinet report 15 June 2017, Cabinet report 11 July 2017

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: The Draft Local Plan has been subject to an Interim Sustainability Appraisal and further Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment will be undertaken prior to the publication of the Regulation 19 Plan.

Key Decision reference: (if required)