

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-021-2019/20

Date of Meeting: 18 November 2019



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Subject: Implementation of the Local Plan: Update on progress

Responsible Officer: Alison Blom-Cooper (01992 564066)

Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the progress of Masterplans and Concept Frameworks, including the use of Planning Performance Agreements and the progress of other proposals at pre-application and application stage be noted (see Appendices A- D);

Executive Summary

Following the October 2018 Cabinet meeting which agreed the governance arrangements for the implementation of the Local Plan, the Implementation Team made a commitment to provide members with regular updates on the progress of Masterplans and Concept Frameworks within Epping Forest District to ensure that members are kept fully up to date.

This report therefore provides members with an update on the progress of Strategic Masterplans, Concept Frameworks and Planning Performance Agreements within the District.

As part of the Independent Examination of the Local Plan, the Council have agreed and signed Statements of Common Ground with all the site promoters of the following strategic sites: North Weald Bassett, Waltham Abbey North, South Epping, West Ongar and South Nazeing. In relation to the Garden Town allocations, which consists of Latton Priory, Water Lane and East of Harlow, the Council were able to sign Statements of Common Ground with all of the principle site promoters.

The strategic sites are progressing well and are all on track to meet the delivery of housing noted within the Housing Implementation Strategy Update 2019 (see [EB410A](#) and [EB410B](#)).

Reasons for Proposed Decision

- To ensure that members are kept fully up to date on the progress of Masterplans and Concept Frameworks and other major proposals being promoted within the District.

Other Options for Action:

Not to update members on the progress on the above issues would be contrary to the commitment made by the Implementation Team as noted in the 18 October 2018 Cabinet Report.

Report:

Strategic Masterplans, Concept Frameworks and other allocated sites

1. [The Local Plan Submission Version 2017](#) (LPSV) promotes a joined up, collaborative and proactive approach to the planning and implementation of key strategic sites across Epping Forest District. The production of Masterplans and Concept Frameworks will ensure that development proposals are brought forward in accordance with the Council's priorities and policies and facilitate the delivery of necessary infrastructure. Such an approach is an important step towards boosting the timely delivery of high quality development and infrastructure within the District.

2. Strategic Masterplans and Concept Frameworks provide an overarching framework to ensure that development is brought forward in a coordinated and coherent way in accordance with high quality place making principles. The planning applications which follow must demonstrate general conformity with an endorsed Masterplan or Concept Framework. As set out in the [18 October 2018 Cabinet Report](#), the Council's Local Plan Cabinet Committee (LPCC) has the authority to approve Draft Strategic Masterplans and Concept Frameworks for consultation. Following the six-week consultation period, Strategic Masterplans will then be taken to Cabinet for formal endorsement as a material planning consideration. The process for Concept Frameworks is broadly similar, however owing to their smaller scale, these will only be taken to LPCC once for formal endorsement.

3. As set out in paragraph 15 of the report to Cabinet on 18 October 2018 a commitment was made to provide members with regular updates on the progress of masterplans and concept frameworks within Epping Forest District to ensure that members are kept fully informed of the progression of each plan.

4. The LPSV has identified site allocations which should be subject to the Strategic Masterplanning approach (see LPSV para 2.90 and 2.91). These include the following masterplans:

- Latton Priory
- Water Lane
- East of Harlow
- North Weald Bassett
- North Weald Airfield
- South Epping
- Waltham Abbey North

And Concept Frameworks (see LPSV paras 2.99 and 2.100) for sites in:

- West Ongar
- South Nazeing.

Inspector's advice following examination hearings

5. Following the hearing sessions for the Independent Examination the Local Plan, the Inspector released her Advice after hearings to the Council on 2 August 2019 ([ED98](#)). Within her advice the Inspector has set out a number of changes to the Plan which are required to remedy issues of soundness in the form of Main Modifications. These include Action 22 to delete proposed allocation LOU.R5 (Jessel Green) and Action 25 to delete the proposed allocation of CHIG.R6 (Limes Farm Masterplan Area).

6. These and the other Actions identified within the advice are being progressed and the Council has responded to the Inspector with the programme of work to establish the precise form of MMs that are required ([ED100](#)).

7. The main area of work which has required careful consideration is the most efficient and expedient way to progress the actions in relation to the Habitats Regulations Assessment taking on board the issues raised with respect to the need for modelling to take account of tall forest vegetation; to look again the causal link between the mitigation measures proposed and the modelling effects shown in the HRA 2019; and to provide evidence to demonstrate the effects on the Forest would not be significant.

8. In parallel the Council has issued an updated position statement ([EB129](#)) to provide information about the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation and the present position with respect to the granting of planning permission for new development that may adversely affect Epping Forest. The Council is continuing to work actively to resolve the current situation that has restricted housing and economic development coming forward in the District since 2018. Working with Natural England the Council is striving to identify potential opportunities to address the backlog of underdetermined applications and is seeking legal advice as to the extent to which permissions can be issued. A further report will be brought to Cabinet at the December meeting.

Current progress on the masterplans

9. Work on the masterplans for the Garden Town sites has continued with EFDC officers liaising with key stakeholders across the 5 Garden Town authorities and relevant site promoters. Stakeholder workshops facilitated by CEG were held in September on behalf of the Latton Priory site promoters. Discussions have also been taking place between EFDC and Essex County Council (Highways) regarding the provision of the access road and sustainable transport corridor to Latton Priory. There have been a series of meetings held between EFDC and the main site promoters at Water Lane to discuss key technical matters. Smaller site promoters have also started to engage in this process. At East Harlow communication is continuing with the main site promoters regarding the response to the Local Plan Inspector's interim advice and the process for undertaking the masterplanning work.

10. The Implementation Team has been proactively engaging with relevant site promoters to progress the other Strategic Masterplan and Concept Frameworks in the District. Some strategic sites are more advanced than others, but good progress has been made. Now that the local plan hearing sessions have been completed there will be a need to progress these in order to ensure that each of the sites will meet their projected delivery of housing, in accordance with the stepped trajectory as set out in the [Housing Implementation Strategy Update 2019](#).

11. For the North Weald Bassett Masterplan area there have been stakeholder engagement workshops held with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Project meetings on green infrastructure/SANGS and open space have also been held with the group of site promoters. Initial internal meetings on North Weald Airfield have been undertaken and the contract for masterplanning has now been let based on the project brief agreed at April's Cabinet meeting.

12. EFDC officers have met with the site promoters for the South Epping masterplan area to discuss the Inspector's concerns regarding the proposed level of housing on the site and sought to agree a way forward in order to demonstrate certainty over delivery.

13. At Waltham Abbey North the site promoters are preparing technical evidence to support the preparation of the masterplan. Discussions on the two Concept Frameworks are still at an early stage in the masterplan process.

Other allocated sites

14. Alongside the Strategic Masterplan and Concept Framework sites, the Implementation and Development Management Teams have been progressing some of the smaller sites proposed for allocation within the LPSV. As with the strategic sites, some of these proposed allocations are further advanced than others, but officers are encouraged by the progress which has been made to date and work continues to progress their delivery in accordance with the Housing Trajectory.

15. The development proposals at St John's site for a mixture of commercial and residential uses, including a leisure centre, are at an advanced stage and were reviewed by the Council's Quality Review Panel in October. It is envisaged that options will be presented to Members at December's Cabinet. The Roundhill residential development proposals were reviewed by the Quality Review Panel in July and officers continue to discuss refinements to the proposals. A revised planning application has been submitted for the Next development proposals at land at Dowding Way. Although the new application represents an amendment to the previous scheme, it has been subject to detailed design discussion with EFDC officers and sent for review to the Quality Design Panel.

16. Appendix A provides an update on the progress of the Masterplans and Concept Frameworks; Appendix B provides an update on the progress of each of the strategic and other allocated sites and Appendix C provides information on other proposals on non allocated sites over 0.2hectares in size or more than 6 dwellings. Appendix D provides information on the schemes reviewed by the Quality Review Panel.

Resource Implications:

As set out in the 18 October 2018 Cabinet Report, the successful delivery of the Garden Town and the other strategic sites within Epping Forest District will require considerable commitment of officer time from EFDC. The noting of the contents of this report do not give rise to additional resource implications.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The work on the Strategic Masterplans and Concept Frameworks has been developed in accordance with Government policy (NPPF) and Planning Law.

Safer, Cleaner, and Greener Implications:

The Local Plan contains a policy designed to promote the notion of making good places to live, work and visit. This will include safer by design principles, sustainable development, the provision of alternatives to the car, energy efficiency and environmental considerations as well as sustainable drainage systems and quality green infrastructure. Strategic Masterplans and Concept Frameworks will be the mechanism for these place-making measures to be delivered in identified Masterplan Areas.

Consultation Undertaken:

Some of the Strategic sites have been the subject of informal public consultation and engagement. However as set out in the Councils Masterplan and Concept Framework Plan Briefing note, these sites will be subject to public consultation in accordance with an endorsed Statement of Community Involvement.

Background Papers:

C-015-2018/19: Governance arrangements for Local Plan Implementation, 18 October 2018

Habitat Regulations Assessment 2019

Risk Management:

If the Council was not to take a pro-active stance on the delivery of Masterplans and major applications arising from the Local Plan, there is a real risk of or development occurring of a type that does not extract maximum value for the provision of social infrastructure and poor quality development may occur.