

Committee: Council
Date: 21 March 2016
Title: Local Plan Update
Author: Cllr Howard Rolfe, Leader

Agenda Item

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Summary

1. This report sets out the background to the preparation of the Local Plan, explains the current status of the work programme and the timetable for its adoption.

Recommendations

2. That Council notes the present position in respect of the preparation of the Uttlesford Local Plan.

Financial Implications

3. The costs of preparing the Plan will be met from existing budgets.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	There are local plan updates sent to town and parish councils, press releases, exhibitions and two formal consultation stages. An “issues and options consultation” has taken place.
Community Safety	Community Safety is an integral part of the Plan.
Equalities	The Plan will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Sustainability Appraisal (SA)/ Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of

	“reasonable alternatives”.
Sustainability	Sustainability is a core principle of the Plan.
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

6. The former Local Plan was submitted in July 2014 and the Examination Hearings took place during November/December 2014. The Inspector who held the Examination Hearings wrote to The Council on 19 December raising serious concerns about the Plan, notably the Objectively Assessed Housing Need and proposals for substantial village expansion at Elsenham. The Plan was withdrawn on 21 January 2015 and a timetable agreed in February 2015 for the preparation of a new plan.
7. The new Plan is being prepared through the Planning Policy Working Group, a cross-party advisory part of Councillors. The meetings of the Working Group are held in public and reports, minutes and recordings of the meetings may be accessed at www.uttlesford.gov.uk/ppwg.
8. The Council undertook a “Call for Sites” during early summer 2015. A total of 322 sites were put forward. The Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) is an assessment of sites for residential or employment use to determine whether they are deliverable. This does not mean that any specific site will be allocated in the Plan. In making this assessment the Council will consider the “suitability”, “achievability” and “availability” of a site.
9. As a first phase of preparing the (SLAA) the Council has been assessing each of the sites submitted through the Call for Sites process. The draft assessments of this first phase were published on the website in February. Town and parish councils and the site promoters have been notified of the publication of the draft assessment of the first phase and ask to comment within a 6 week period on matters of fact.
10. In the autumn the Council consulted on “issues and options” for the new plan. This was a high level consultation which included three sets of questions.
11. The general questions included questions on the vision and development strategy, settlement hierarchy, cross-boundary strategy planning, infrastructure planning, employment, housing tenure mix and affordability, leisure, recreation, and open space, and the natural and historic environment.
12. Areas of Search included questions on a range of locations which the Council is proposing to assess before reaching a view about the suitability of potential areas for development. It also included a question about the sustainability appraisal of the areas of search.
13. Scenarios included questions on the overall level of development, and potential scenarios which illustrate different strategies for delivering

development. It also included a question about the sustainability appraisal of the scenarios.

14. In total 6944 representations were received by 731 people/organisations. The PPWG is receiving reports summarising these representations.
15. The key work being undertaken at the moment is a number of studies that will underpin the evidence base for the Plan. These are in various stages of preparation. They include a strategic flood risk assessment (SFRA); green belt review; employment land review; retail assessment; transport assessment and review of the countryside protection zone.
16. Collaborative working with our partner Strategic Housing Market Area (SHMA) authorities (Epping Forest District Council, Harlow District Council and East Herts District Council) is being undertaken concurrently under the Duty-to-Co-operate. This overseen by the Member Co-op Board. It is hoped that this work will conclude with a Memorandum of Understanding between the Councils relating to strategic planning issues.
17. Once this work has been finalised and sustainability appraisals undertaken the PPWG will determine the strategic direction for the Plan early in the summer before any site specific allocations are considered. Once allocations have been agreed it is hoped that the draft pre-submission plan will be considered for publication by the Council in the autumn. Public meetings and exhibitions will form part of this process, with formal consultation taking place at the end of this year.
18. Once all representations have been analysed it is hoped to submit the Plan to the Secretary of State for consideration in February 2017.

Risk Analysis

19.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the Local Plan is found unsound	There is a likelihood without a sound evidence base, sustainability appraisal and an audit trail of the duty to co-operate	Severe. Decisions about the scale and location of development could be made outside the Council.	Clear understanding of the plan-preparation process, experienced staff and strong evidence base

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.