

Committee: Uttlesford Planning Policy Working Group

Agenda Item

Date: 26 January 2015

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Title: Local Plan update and next steps

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Summary

1. This report details the outcome of the Local Plan Examination and appends the two reports from the Inspector. The report then outlines the next steps in the work programme and a likely timetable for completing this work, including an update on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Recommendation

2. To note the report.
3. To comment on the work plan and timeline set out.

Financial Implications

4. None –expenditure can be met from existing budgets and the Planning Reserve.

Background Papers

None

Impact

5.

Communication/Consultation	Future work will be subject to public consultation
Community Safety	n/a
Equalities	The updated plan will be subject to an EQIA
Health and Safety	n/a
Human Rights/Legal Implications	n/a
Sustainability	The updated plan will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal, including and

	Strategic Environment Assessment
Ward-specific impacts	Affects all Wards
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

6. The Uttlesford Draft Local Plan was submitted for Examination in July 2014 and the Examination Hearings started in November 2014. In the second week of Hearings the Inspector delivered his Summarised Conclusions (Appendix 1) and halted the Hearings so the issues contained in the last two days were not heard.
7. Full Council received an update report at its meeting of 18 December 2014, following the closing of the Examination and agreed:
 - Council authorises the Chief Executive in consultation with all the Group Leaders to advise the Planning Inspectorate that the council will take the appropriate steps to prepare revisions to the submitted Plan to address the soundness issues as confirmed by the formal report of the Examination, once it has been received;
 - Council instructs officers to prepare a revised Local Development Scheme for the preparation of a revised Plan for consideration by a new Working Group or similar body and thence for Cabinet which will include the steps outlined in paragraph 11 (a–e) of the report;
 - Council notes that a report will be prepared for the Working Group and thence for Cabinet identifying those aspects of the Plan which have not been challenged by the Inspector as a basis for preparing a revised plan; and
 - That a further report be brought to Council prior to submission of the revisions to the plan.
8. The Inspector published his final report on 19 December 2014, this is attached at Appendix 2. The Council considers that the Full Conclusions supersede the Summary of Conclusions document, which is now obsolete. Following the third resolution of Council above a report will be prepared for a future Working Group identifying the elements of the Plan which the Inspector found Sound, or Sound subject to Modification.
9. The Council now needs to move forward to prepare an updated plan taking on board the comments made by the Inspector. This process will not be simple or quick due to a number of different issues. The Inspector made clear that the new Objectively Assessed Housing Need should be based on an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This work was commissioned during 2014 as a joint piece of work with Epping Forest, East Herts and

Harlow councils. The first phase of the work is due to report in February/March 2015 with an update mid-2015 to take into account more up-to-date household figures from the Office for National Statistics.

10. Once the figures for the whole SHMA and for individual authorities have been received detailed discussions will need to take place between the four authorities to ensure that the total needs of the SHMA area are delivered. Members will be aware of the physical constraints of the Harlow area, but be aware of its desire/need for growth, and the national policy constraints of Epping Forest due to its 92% Green Belt coverage. These Duty to Cooperate discussions will need to cover all these issues before agreeing a final figure for each individual authority, together totalling the SHMA area requirement.
11. These discussions will need to be informed by the Metropolitan Green Belt reviews being carried out by the other three authorities, together with Strategic Land Availability Assessments, as well as discussions with the Greater London Authority. It is anticipated that these discussions will take place in the latter half of 2015.
12. The Council will need to carry out a call for sites for the additional housing required. This is to ensure that all potential available sites can be put forward, assessed and considered as part of the process. The Council will need to carefully consider the assessment criteria for any site proposed together with the level of supporting information and include this as part of the call for sites.
13. Once the assessment of sites has been concluded there will be a need for public consultation on the available options following which the Council will need to select site(s) to put forward as draft allocations and carry out a pre-submission consultation.
14. Additional evidence work will be required to be commissioned to ensure the selected site(s) are adequately assessed and supported.
15. While the existing evidence base is still relevant, there will be a requirement to review the evidence base, commission additional requirements as well as ensure the complete evidence base is up to date.

Projected time-line

Jan – June 2015 – Completion and publication of Strategic Housing Market Assessment

July – December 2015 – Duty to Cooperate discussions and conclusions

July – December 2015 – Call for sites

January – April 2016 – Assessment of sites, Regulation 18 public consultation, site specific evidence base development

May – June 2016 – Regulation 19 Local Plan Pre-submission consultation

July/August 2016 – Local Plan submission

Winter 2016/17 - Examination

Risk Analysis

16.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
SHMA report is delayed.	2. Some delay has already been experienced owing to further work being commissioned.	2. This will delay further work on the Local Plan.	Officers attend steering group meetings and liaise with officers in other Councils to keep consultants to timetable.
Duty to Cooperate discussions take longer than expected or no agreement is reached	2. Given the sensitivities surrounding the issue of housing numbers there is likely to be some reiteration of the process.	3/4. This will delay further work on the Local Plan and if no agreement is reached could have a serious risk on the Local Plan Examination process.	Member and officer attendance at the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board. Work to ensure that all participants are aware of the need for timely and clear decision making.

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.