

Committee: Planning Policy Working Group

Agenda Item

Date: 27 July 2015

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Title: Preparing a Justified Local Plan

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Summary

1. The attached report explains that one of the main failings with the 2014 Submission Local Plan was the absence of a clear audit trail of decisions taken, and proper justification of why some options were rejected.
2. A number of maps are presented which show 'areas of search', or broad areas, all of which the Council proposes to investigate through the Local Plan process, so that there is a clear justification in terms of rejected areas as well as areas eventually taken forward. The process will follow the evolving strategy and the planning merits or demerits of the locations covered by the Areas of Search, rather than by sites submitted by landowners and developers.
3. The report also proposes eight Scenarios for public consultation later in the autumn, four at a lower level of development, three at a higher level of development, and one proposing no additional Local Plan development. These scenarios will form the basis of the first stage of Sustainability Appraisal, or consideration of alternatives, which will be presented for consultation alongside the scenarios and areas of search.

Recommendations

That the report be supported, and that any comments on the contents of the document be supplied to the Planning Policy Team prior to the next Working Group meeting and public consultation later in the autumn.

Financial Implications

4. The costs associated with the approach set out in the report, including the proposed consultation, can be met from existing budgets.

Background Papers

5. None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Formal consultation as the Local Plan develops will be carried out in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement.
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Community Safety	None
Equalities	The Local Plan impacts on all sectors of the community.
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	Appraisal of alternatives to the emerging plan will be undertaken.
Ward-specific impacts	All.
Workforce/Workplace	Planning Policy Team and other officers as appropriate.

Situation

5. This report follows on from early discussion of the Options stage methodology discussed by the Planning Policy Working Group on 13 July 2015. The methodology report stated the following:

“This report addresses the early stages in formulation of the development strategy, from initial preparatory work through to the Options consultation, the first of three public consultations to be undertaken on the emerging Local Plan.

In planning terms, the purpose of the Options consultation is to broaden the Council’s understanding of a range of relevant planning issues related to each of the options set out in the consultation documents. It is to be hoped that new evidence will be presented through the consultation which can then be used in more detailed assessments to follow as the Council works towards the Preferred Options stage. The options consultation may also highlight other options which were not included in the consultation documents.

At the Option stage no detailed work will be undertaken in respect of deliverability. Assessment of potential infrastructure provision will need to be undertaken as more evidence is gradually accumulated.”

“The mapped areas will be represented as elliptical shapes to avoid misunderstandings as to the status, or attribution of any false precision to the exact locations or site boundaries. At this stage it is too early to draw conclusions about such detailed matters.

The scale of development proposed for testing at each of the areas of search is unknown at this stage. However, it is assumed that there will be a mix of large and small scale proposals carried forward for further testing. Indicatively, it is assumed that new settlement options could be up to 15,000 dwellings, that urban extensions will be much smaller and that villages will be smaller still.”

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Without the proposed approach to areas of search and scenarios the Local Plan would become developer-led.	1. Can be addressed and managed through the Working Group discussion forum.	3. The Options stage helps to ensure that the Local Plan is justified when considered against the reasonable alternatives.	Discussion at the Working Group to ensure understanding of the methodology and propose refinements if necessary.

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.