

**Committee:** Local Plan Leadership Group

**Date:**

**Title:** Call for sites

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## Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to seek views on the information that should accompany the call for sites, thereby enabling the Council to proceed with issuing the call for sites in accordance with the Local Development Scheme.
2. The report follows the Group's consideration of *Areas of Search and the Local Plan Development Strategy* on 28 September, and a subsequent workshop which was held on 14 October.

## Recommendations

3. That the Group confirms its preference from three alternative options for the mapping to accompany the call for sites, and endorses the proposed approach to preparing a site submission form (subject to any amendments to be agreed with the Portfolio Holder).

## Financial Implications

4. None.

## Background Papers

5. The following appendices accompany this report:

Appendix A – Desktop sources of sites

Appendix B – Connectivity map (formerly referred to as 'Areas of Search')

Appendix C – Context maps

Appendix D – Example site submission form

## Impact

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Communication/Consultation	Mapping would be an important form of communication with site promoters and the community. It could also harm community engagement activities if its purpose is not clearly understood.
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Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	The call for sites is integral to the approach of identifying all potential sites, which will allow sites and alternative spatial strategies to be compared in terms of their sustainability as the Local Plan is prepared.
Ward-specific impacts	All wards. The call for sites will be District-wide.
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

## Situation

### Background

7. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out a method for assessing housing and economic land availability, which planning authorities should use to inform decisions on the allocation of sites in Local Plans.
8. The PPG describes how the process should start with identifying “as wide a range of sites and broad locations for development as possible”. This is to be achieved by first carrying out a desktop review using various sources (such as those listed in Appendix A), and then issuing a ‘call for sites’ aimed at as wide an audience as possible to identify as many opportunities as possible.
9. Once the sites have been identified, planning authorities can carry out assessments of their suitability, availability and achievability. These assessments can then be considered alongside other factors, such as a preferred spatial strategy, to inform decisions on which sites should be allocated in the Local Plan.
10. With the now-withdrawn Local Plan, the Council adopted an unconventional approach among planning authorities of identifying ‘Areas of Search’ at an early stage.
11. At the Group’s meeting on 28 September and subsequent workshop on 14 October, officers outlined how an ‘Areas of Search’ map could be used alongside a call for sites. The advantages and disadvantages of the approach were described and discussed.

12. The meeting and workshop did not produce a clear consensus. A number of alternative suggestions were made, ranging from the use of no maps to the use of highly-detailed maps.
13. This report sets out three options for the use of mapping alongside the call for sites, all of which are considered to be appropriate.

### **The options**

14. **Option 1** is to use no maps. This is considered the conventional approach, for two main reasons: first, the guidance in the PPG does not refer to the use of maps to guide the call for sites; and, second, it is a common approach among planning authorities.
15. **Option 2** is to use the map previously presented to the Group and included here as Appendix B, albeit without the title 'Areas of Search' which was inherited from the now-withdrawn Local Plan and was considered potentially misleading.
16. The potential advantage of Option 2 is that mapping the better-connected areas of the District improves the proposals put forward by site promoters. For example, it may encourage people with land in those areas to put it forward for consideration. It may also make those with land elsewhere seek to address the poorer connectivity in their submissions, perhaps by providing for additional infrastructure.
17. The main disadvantage with Option 2 is that the appearance of areas on a map can be seen as a predetermined decision on where development will be located. This is not the case and clear communication is therefore important to build the understanding that no such decision has been made.
18. **Option 3** is to use a set of context maps. This is considered to fall somewhere between Option 1 and Option 2, in that it provides mapping to inform and hopefully improve site submissions but does not go as far as plotting areas.
19. It is envisaged that the context maps would comprise two elements:
  - i) The existing interactive constraints map, which is available on the Council's website and is routinely used in connection with decisions on planning applications. Link available at:  
[www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/5010/My-maps](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/5010/My-maps)
  - ii) The three maps in Appendix C, which display the following additional information:
    - Train stations
    - Planned rapid transport route (Cambridge South East)
    - Major employment areas
    - Landfill sites
    - Overhead power lines

- 2017 population estimates, by parish
- Primary schools
- Secondary schools
- National cycle route

20. By having ready access to the context mapping on the call for sites webpage, it is expected that site promoters would be encouraged to make better-informed submissions than they would otherwise.

### **Selecting an option**

21. In selecting a preferred option, Councillors should be mindful that given where we are in the Local Plan process the call for sites should be neutral regarding the future spatial strategy. It will only be possible to confirm the strategy taking into account a range of other factors and evidence, and not before the first consultation ('Issues and Options') has concluded.

22. With this in mind, any mapping for the call for sites should not be used to indicate what may or may not be deemed appropriate locations for development.

### **Site submission form**

23. Whichever option is selected, the site submission form that the Council publishes alongside the call for sites is a useful tool for ensuring well-informed submissions. Many of the details requested in the form will be relatively basic, such as contact details, site area, known constraints etc. However, the form also provides an opportunity to seek information capable of adding value to the site assessment and allocation processes.

24. For reference, a copy of the site submission form used for the Council's last call for sites is included at Appendix D.

25. Full Council noted at its meeting on 30 April 2020 that "Council is committed to holistically planned new developments which enhance the natural environment, provide timely and necessary physical and social infrastructure, and offer high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities. This will involve implementing the TCPA's Garden City Principles on all applicable developments, regardless of scale."

26. Bearing in mind this commitment, and noting its application to all scales of development, it is proposed to amend and improve the question on Garden City principles in section 8 of the previous form as follows:

- i) Remove the threshold (500 dwellings/ 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> employment floor space) so that all submissions must explain how the Garden City principles would be applied.

- ii) Increase the prominence of the question and expand it to a series of nine sub-questions, such that each principle must be addressed in turn.
- iii) Elaborate on each of the nine principles in the guidance notes, to help site promoters understand how they can be relevant to sites of all scales. For example, 'long-term stewardship' could take the form of a new community interest company in the case of a new settlement, but it is also relevant for a small edge-of-village development containing a public open space because it would require appropriate ownership and funding arrangements to become a valued community asset.
- iv) If either of the mapping approaches described in Option 2 and Option 3 above is selected, highlight that the mapping should be taken into account as reference material when answering the question.

## Risk Analysis

27.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The approach is not agreed in time to allow the call for sites to proceed	1 – The call for sites can be issued quickly using internal resources	3 – Issuing the call for sites too late could undermine the Local Plan timetable in the Local Development Scheme	A number of alternative options have been presented in this report, each of which is considered appropriate.
The mapping described in Option 2 could harm community engagement on the spatial strategy	3 – The map could be seen as a predetermined decision on development locations	4 – A loss of trust could undermine efforts to prepare a Local Plan with effective and inclusive community engagement	Defining a clear role for the map as a means of informing site submissions. Communicating this role clearly when issuing the call for sites and throughout the Issues and Options consultation.

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.