

**Committee:** Local Plan Leadership Group  
**Title:** Local Plan Project Preferred Options  
Methodology and Work Programme  
**Report Author:** Stephen Miles, Local Plan & New  
Communities Manager

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**Date:**  
29 April 2021

## Summary

1. The report sets out the proposed methodology to preparing the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan over the next nine months and seeks agreement to a provisional work plan of meetings over the period.

## Recommendations

2. The Group is invited to comment on the contents of the report to agree the provisional work plan for meetings until January 2022.

## Financial Implications

3. The approved budget for the Local Plan in 2021-22 includes sufficient provision for the work needed as part of the approved Medium Term Financial Strategy of the Council.

## Background Papers

- Uttlesford Local Plan Project Initiation Document (PID)
- Uttlesford Local Development Scheme (LDS)

## Impact

4.

Communication/Consultation	The draft timetable builds in three stages for people to make representations on the draft Local Plan.
Community Safety	N/a
Equalities	Forthcoming policies will be subject to an Equalities and Healthy Impact Assessment (EqHIA)
Health and Safety	N/a

Human Rights/Legal Implications	Preparation of a local plan is a statutory duty. It needs to meet legal tests and comply with regulations.
Sustainability	Forthcoming policies will need to meet the sustainability objectives of the Council and the Local Plan will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal.
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	N/a

### **Situation**

- On 20 October 2020 the Cabinet approved the Uttlesford Local Development Scheme (LDS) which provides for the preparation of the Local Plan for the district. The first stage of the work, Issues and Options, has been completed on time and in accordance with the approved Scheme. The next stage is the preparation of the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (the Draft Plan) with the agreed timetable for formal consideration by this Group, Cabinet and Council being January and February 2022. In order to achieve this deadline it is necessary to set out the methodology and work plan for this Group between now and those dates.

### **Overview of Process**

- It is vital that this Group provides clear direction during the preparation of the Draft Plan so that officers can carry out the technical work that is required to write the Draft Plan. The workload for the officers is significant especially as the Draft Plan is effectively a fresh whole new plan and not a revised version of the previously withdrawn Local Plan. It is also vital that decisions are made in accordance with the agreed timetable – any slippage in providing direction will mean that the key dates in the LDS will not be achieved.
- An overview of the process is set out in the diagram attached as Appendix 1. The officer work comprises four main workstreams each covering an extensive amount of activity. The site selection will involve many dozens of locations, some strategic in scale; over 52 separate elements of evidence (some of these will be major pieces of work – for instance on transport); engagement with landowners and promoters and fulfilling our statutory obligations of discussions with key stakeholders.

## **Role of Uttlesford Strategic Planning Objectives**

8. In order for officers to assess sites and prepare draft planning policies it will be necessary to set some clear strategic planning objectives. This is identified as a role for the Cabinet informed by the deliberations of this Group. It is proposed that the objectives provide high level direction and are derived from the following:
  - National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF is a statutory requirement)
  - The approved Uttlesford District Council Corporate Plan
  - The Inspectors' findings on the withdrawn local plan
  - Feedback from the Issues and Options Stage
  - Other relevant sources (for instance best practice that arises from the longer term planning response to Covid-19)
9. It is important that these objectives are set at the outset of the development of the Draft Plan to steer the subsequent work and it is proposed to bring a report to the Group in May 2021.

## **Role of the Uttlesford Preliminary Outline Strategy**

10. Once the Strategic Planning Objectives are established then it is recommended that the Local Plan Vision and first Outline Strategy is prepared for consideration by the Group in July 2021. This would provide a framework by which officers could assess potential sites and prepare policies. Like the Objectives, the Outline Strategy would be informed by the considerations above with additional input from the emerging evidence base, especially the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan baseline report.
11. The Vision and the Outline Strategy will be high level and will set out a broad approach to development in the district, it will not identify any specific sites. In essence the Strategy would provide a strategic context which can then be tested through the assessment of sites and preparation of the evidence base. If necessary the Strategy will be modified when the Regulation 18 Plan is drafted in response to evidence that will be obtained after July 2021.

## **Approach to Uttlesford Site Assessment**

12. The site assessment process will be structured in accordance with the government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on land availability assessments. A full methodology for the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) is provided in Appendix 2.
13. The SLAA methodology describes how sites will be identified from a range of sources, including the recent call for sites, and then assessed for their suitability, availability and achievability. The assessment will be used to inform plan-making,

and to demonstrate whether there is a five-year housing land supply for both plan-making and decision-taking.

14. The SLAA does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development. It is the role of the SLAA to provide information on the range of sites which are available to meet the local authority's requirements, but it is for the development plan to determine which of those sites are the most suitable to meet those requirements.
15. A significant portion of the SLAA process can be completed upon expiry of the call for sites on 21 April 2021. However, as the Local Plan work progresses, it is likely that the assessment will need to be updated – for example, once the emerging spatial strategy is known.

### **Local Plan Leadership Group Work Programme**

16. A suggested work programme for the Group is set out in Appendix 3. The work essentially falls into two main categories. The first stage takes place up until the end of July 2021 and provides the direction to the officers working on the site assessments and policy preparation. The second stage will be to receive, in a phased programme, the findings of the various evidence base studies, and to give further direction as to how this evidence should influence the Draft Plan.
17. The work programme represents a heavy workload for members of the Group, especially in reading, absorbing and commenting on all the evidence. Similarly officers will have an extensive amount of work to do and the programme seeks to create 'bite size chunks' of work to make the whole task manageable.

### **Officer Work Programme**

18. In addition to the site assessment work and the preparation of the evidence base (which is inter-related to both the site assessments and policy preparation), officers will also need to engage with landowners and promoters of sites. This is especially important to ensure that the Council's objectives are met. The alternative is not to engage in which case the Local Plan will become a developer led set of proposals with missed opportunities to achieve our aims. This will also assist in addressing the Inspectors' concern around the deliverability of sites (particularly strategic sites). As starting this work as early as possible on the appropriate form, mitigation and supporting infrastructure will allow for more detailed work to be undertaken early on.
19. It is intended this stage of the process will follow the established protocol with meeting notes being kept and available for reference if required. Similarly the

work with other stakeholders (including neighbouring authorities, parish councils, and statutory bodies) will be subject to the same approach.

## Conclusions

20. This paper sets out an ambitious programme of work for officers and members over the next eight months which is necessary to develop a Draft Plan to the timetable set out in the Council's LDS. The role of the Local Plan Leadership Group is initially to assist in the setting of objectives and an outline strategy, by deliberating and making recommendations to Cabinet. These recommendations will inform the work officers undertake in the assessment of sites against the objectives and strategy and the development of policies for the plan. The work of LPLG then moves onto receiving and considering the evidence base and deliberating the implications for the plan.
21. It is important to note that developing a plan is an iterative process, and as the evidence base emerges the members and officers should check that previous considerations still hold. However, care should be taken to keep moving forward otherwise there is a risk of delay and a prolonged period of speculative development in the district.

## Risk Analysis

22.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the timetable proposed in the LDS slips	3 – there are unknown factors in the production of a Local Plan that require consideration and may result in slippage	4 – government intervention would significantly damage the reputation of the Council	The project plan supporting the LDS includes contingency periods to allow for unknown events to be dealt with. This is good practice.
That the local plan is found unsound at Examination and/or fails to meet the Council's objectives	3 – experience from earlier draft local plans demonstrates the risks in relation to soundness and in achieving the	4- failure to adopt the new local plan would significantly damage the reputation of the Council	The project plan and the methodology set out in this report are intended to support the Council's objectives and to substantially reduce the risks of an unsound plan.

	Council's objectives		
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- 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.

# APPENDIX 1

## OVERVIEW OF DRAFT LOCAL PLAN PROCESS

APRIL – DECEMBER 2021

Officer Work									
April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
CALL FOR SITES	SITE ASSESSMENT STAGE 1		SITE ASSESSMENT STAGE 2						DRAFT REG 18 WRITTEN
PREPARE STRATEGIC EVIDENCE			COMPLETE EVIDENCE BASE						
NEGOTIATE/DISCUSS/MASTERPLAN WITH PROMOTORS & LANDOWNERS			→						
CONSULTWORK WITH DTC STAKEHOLDERS			→						
LPLG Work									
April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
AGREE METHODOLOGY	AGREE STRATEGIC PLANNING OBJECTIVES	CONFIRM HOUSING NUMBERS	STRATEGIC CONTEXT	RECEIVE VARIOUS EVIDENCE STUDIES					
			AGREE PRELIMINARY OUTLINE STRATEGY & SETTLEMENT HIERACHY	UPDATES ON DTC & DEVELOPER DISCUSSIONS					
Cabinet Decisions									
	May 27th	June 29th			September 2nd				
	AGREE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	CONFIRM HOUSING NUMBERS			AGREE PRELIMINARY OUTLINE STRATEGY & SETTLEMENT HIERACHY				

## APPENDIX 3

### PROVISIONAL LPLG WORK PLAN

#### APRIL – DECEMBER 2021

#### Red items on the Critical Path

Please also refer to High Level Timetable Chart in Appendix 1

Issues for Consideration. Agendas may vary.

#### 29 APRIL 2021

- LPLG work programme April – December 2021
- Site Assessment Methodology
- Report back on next set of Issues and Options Themes: Leisure, Culture and Healthy Lifestyles and Biodiversity

#### 25 MAY 2021

- Report back on final set of Issues and Options Themes: Local Economy, Homes and Creating New Places and Communities
- Summary of all Issues and Options Representations
- SA Scoping Report
- Strategic Objectives/ Guiding Principles

#### 24 JUNE 2021

- Call for Sites response
- Confirm housing numbers including windfall assumptions
- Duty to Co-operate Update
- Update on Strategic Sites Discussions

#### 29 JULY 2021 (reserve date 3 AUGUST)

- Infrastructure Delivery Plan Baseline (also to SID Group)
- Feedback from Third Parish Workshop including exception site discussion
- Reasonable Alternatives Sustainability Appraisal work
- Strategic Context (informed by Transport Study Strategic Issues, climate change work, and high level conclusions on landscape, heritage and employment work)
- Local Plan Vision and Preliminary Outline Strategy (following Strategic Objectives and SA)
- Approach to Settlement Hierarchy

#### 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

- Heritage Study
- Hatfield Forest Strategy
- Update on Strategic Sites Discussions
- Duty to Co-operate Update

#### 28 OCTOBER 2021 (reserve date 2 NOVEMBER)

- Employment Needs Study
- Retail Study
- Housing Types and Specialist Needs
- Sport, Recreation and Green Space Study
- Green Infrastructure



- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

### **29 NOVEMBER 2021 (reserve date 2 DECEMBER)**

- Landscape Study
- Transport Study
- Viability Study
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan (Part 2)
- Water Cycle Strategy
- Duty to Co-operate Update
- Update on Strategic Sites Discussions

### **DECEMBER 2021**

- No meetings. Officers preparing Draft Reg 18 Plan for meetings in January and February 2022.

### **NOTE**

Final reports on the Sustainability Appraisal, Equalities Impact Assessment and Climate Change Study will accompany the full Regulation 18 Local Plan.

In addition the draft Local Plan will be accompanied by Topic Papers and, where appropriate draft Memoranda of Understanding/Quality Collaboration Partnership proposals for the proposed strategic sites.

SP. 20.4.21