

Committee: Local Plan Leadership Group

Date:

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Title: Development Options Process

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Summary

1. This report describes the process for identifying development options for evaluation in the emerging local plan.

Recommendations

2. That the Group note the process for identifying development options and the next steps in this local plan work.

Financial Implications

3. The preparation of the local plan described in this report is provided for in the approved local plan budget of the Council.

Background Papers

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

Impact

Communication/Consultation	The local plan timetable is in three stages for people to make representations on the draft local plan.
Community Safety	No impact
Equalities	Forthcoming policies will be subject to an Equalities and Health Impact Assessment (EqHIA)
Health and Safety	No impact
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	No impact

Situation

4. On 29 April 2021 the Local Plan Leadership Group agreed a methodology and work programme for preparation of the new Uttlesford Local Plan which set out a five step process of Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA). This report describes the sixth step in the process, the generation of development options (often referred to as 'reasonable alternatives').
5. The preparation of a local plan is required to follow the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework in order to be found 'sound'. One of the fundamental requirements is that the provisions in a local plan can be:

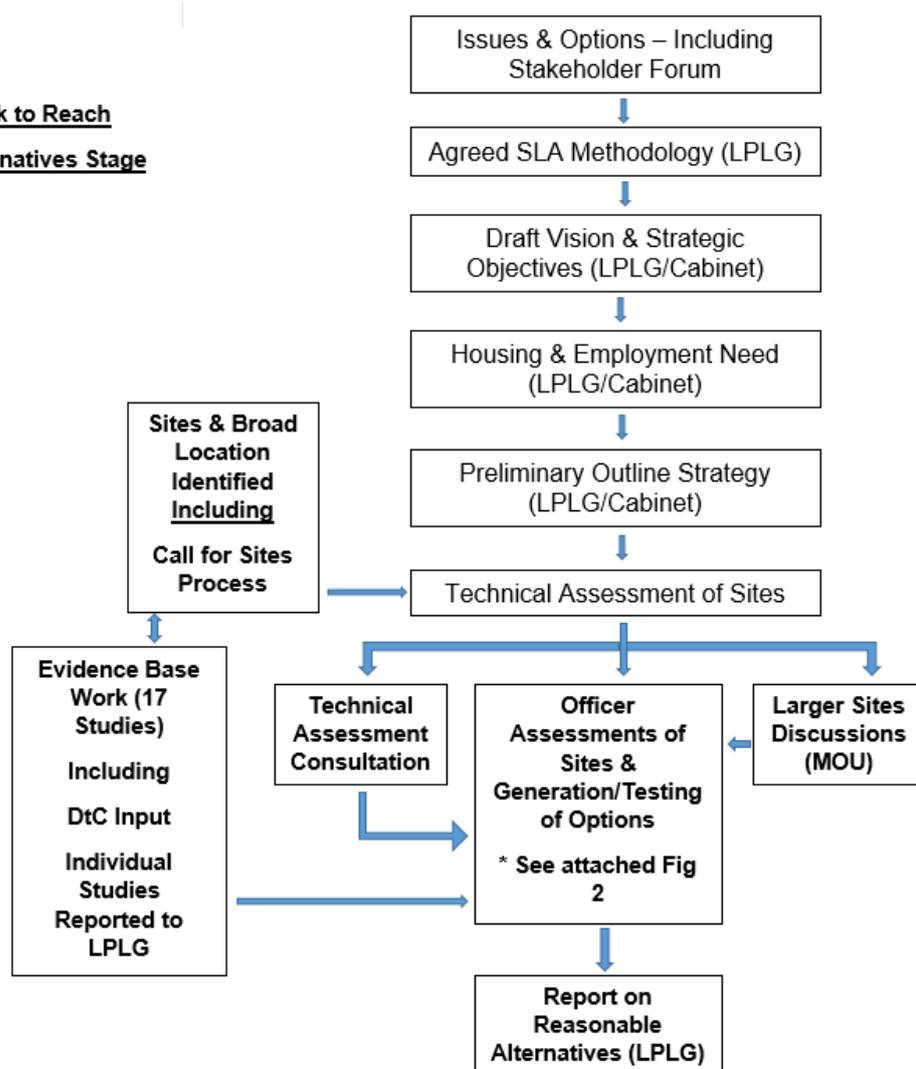
***Justified** –an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;* (ref Para 35 NPPF).
6. Officers are currently preparing a report to the next meeting of the Local Plan Leadership Group setting out the development options to be considered further. It is important to note that at this stage these options are only for evaluation using the evidence base that supports the local plan work. **The Council is absolutely committed to preparing a local plan based on sound and robust evidence and the development options stage is a vital part of the approach.**
7. The identification of development options is informed by the local plan work carried out to date which is summarised in the following diagram:

Fig. 1

SLAA Process

Summary of Work to Reach

Reasonable Alternatives Stage



8. The Local Plan Leadership has already considered reports on the Issues and Options, Draft Vision and Objectives, Housing and Employment Need and the Preliminary Outline Strategy. The Technical Assessment of Sites (which is essentially a factual summary of site constraints) has been published and Town/Parish Councils and site promoters are currently being consulted to confirm the accuracy of the work. In addition, discussions have been taking place with the developers and promoters of larger sites.
9. All this evidence is being drawn together, along with various consultant reports to generate development options for further evaluation. The process for preparing the options is summarised in the following diagram:

Fig. 2
 SLAA Process
 Officer Generation of Reasonable Alternatives

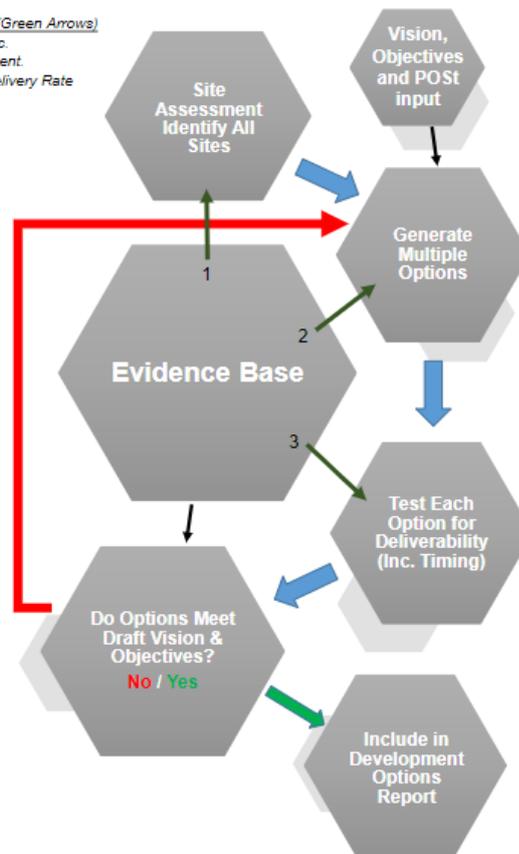
Key:

Evidence Base Studies Being Considered (Green Arrows)

Arrow 1 - Including Landscape, Heritage etc.

Arrow 2 - Settlement Hierarchy & Employment.

Arrow 3 - Infrastructure Needs & Market Delivery Rate



10. The result of this process will be a report to the Local Plan Leadership Group with several development options. Each option will be based on strategic themes because the plan needs to comprise a spatial strategy that delivers the overall local plan vision (rather than being simply a collection of disparate individual sites).
11. The Deliverability testing is an important element in the process. From past experience it is clear that Examination Inspector will need to be satisfied that sufficient land has been provided for housing and employment (in the case of housing this is described as meeting the Objectively Assessed Housing Need) – para 35 in the NPPF) and that this is delivered across the whole plan period. In the withdrawn local plan there was a significant reliance on new communities which only delivered dwellings in the second half of the plan period and the Inspectors highlighted this as a matter of concern.
12. The Local Plan Leadership Group will be requested to make comments on the proposed development options so that officers can then move to the next stage in the process to complete the evaluation of the options. The results of that work will then be brought back to the Group with recommendations for a preferred strategy, as part of the Regulation 18 Stage of the Local Plan

process. The Regulation 18 version of the Local Plan will then be subject to extensive public consultation.

Risk Analysis

11.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the local plan is found unsound at Examination and/or fails to meet the Council's objectives due to: - a flawed Reasonable Alternatives process; and/or - development options being chosen without robust evidence.	3 - Medium risk given the constraints within Uttlesford and the complexity of the process.	4 - Failure to adopt the new local plan would significantly damage the reputation of the Council and the possibility of unacceptable development coming forward in the absence of an up to date adopted plan.	The methodology and process set out in this report are intended to support the Council's objectives and to substantially reduce the risks of an unsound plan.
That the identification of Reasonable Alternatives is delayed	3 – Medium risk given that there are a range of options to be considered	3 – A significant delay would impact on the project timetable which seeks to submit the Regulation 19 local plan to PINS before a Government December 2023 deadline	The methodology and process set out in the report seek to support the prompt identification of Reasonable Alternatives.

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.

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