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| 10 July 2013 | | ITEM: 15 01104227 |
| Cabinet | | |
| To Approve for Public Consultation a Review of the Core Strategy Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres and Land at Arena Essex | | |
| Report of: Regeneration, Highways & Transportation – Councillor Andy Smith | | |
| Wards and communities affected: All | Key Decision: Yes | |
| Accountable Head of Service: Andy Millard – Planning and Transportation | | |
| Accountable Director: David Bull – Planning and Transportation | | |
| This report is a public report | | |
| Purpose of Report: To seek Cabinet’s approval for public consultation on the “Core Strategy Focused Review of Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres and Land at Arena Essex, West Thurrock – Issues and Options” Document. | | |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council’s Core Strategy was formally adopted in December 2011.

In January 2013, the Government formally revoked the *East of England Plan* (Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)).

Prior to its revocation, the RSS formed part of the statutory development plan for Thurrock , providing strategic planning policy guidance on a range of matters, including, the designation and development of the northern part of the West Thurrock and Lakeside Basin as a new Regional Town Centre. As a consequence of the demise of the RSS, the Council now intends to undertake a Focused Review of Core Strategy Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres to provide replacement and up-to-date guidance on the following matters:

- The criterion to be met before the northern part of the Lakeside Basin attains the status of a Regional Town Centre;
- The process for identifying future strategic retail requirements at Lakeside in the period after 2019; and
- The quantum of additional comparison goods floorspace required to meet future shopping needs at Lakeside over the period 2019 -2026.

It is also proposed to consult on the removal of the Arena Essex Site, north of the A1306, West Thurrock from the Green Belt, in order to facilitate it's possible development as a new sustainable urban community thereby complimenting Lakeside's development as a new Regional Town Centre.

As the proposed Focused Review of the Core Strategy is a policy issue, this Report stands to be considered by Cabinet as opposed to the Council's Planning Committee.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 That the Cabinet agree for publication the "Core Strategy Focused Review of Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres and Land at Arena Essex, West Thurrock – Issues and Options" Consultation Document.**
- 1.2. That any minor drafting and formatting amendments as maybe required be delegated to the Director of Planning and Transportation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Highways & Transportation.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 The Council adopted the Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development in December 2011. The Core Strategy is the key strategic planning document for the Council. It sets out the key planning policies for the future development of the Borough over the plan period to 2026.
- 2.2 Following the adoption of the Core Strategy, the Government announced, in December 2012, that it intended to place an order before Parliament to revoke the East of England Plan (the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)) with immediate effect from the 3rd January 2013. Prior to its revocation, the RSS formed part of the statutory development plan for Thurrock, providing strategic policy guidance on a range matters including the designation and development of the northern part of the Lakeside Basin as a new Regional Town Centre. As a consequence of the demise of the RSS, it is now necessary for the Council to undertake a Focused Review of the adopted Core Strategy and Policies for Management DPD in order to ensure that the policy approach and intentions of the former RSS Policy ETG2: Thurrock Key Centre for Development and Change are more properly articulated in the guidance provided by Core Strategy Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres.
- 2.3 Although the Core Strategy already reflects the RSS Policy intention to secure the designation of the northern part of the Lakeside Basin as a Regional Town Centre, the loss of the detailed policy framework established in the former Policy ETG2 creates a policy vacuum which can only be addressed through the preparation of a formal revision to Core Strategy Policy CSTP7. Therefore in order to ensure the proper planning and development of Lakeside as Regional Town Centre, it is now necessary to revise the Policy CSTP7 so that it provides up-to-date guidance on the following matters:

- The criterion to be met before the northern part of the Lakeside Basin attains the status of a Regional Town Centre;
- The process for identifying future strategic retail requirements within the emerging Regional Town Centre at Lakeside in the period after 2019; and
- The quantum of additional comparison goods floorspace required to meet future shopping needs at Lakeside over the period 2019 -2026 consistent with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the plan period for both the Core Strategy and the Council's emerging Site Allocations Local Plan.

- 2.4 In addition to replacing the policy guidance lost through the revocation of the East of England Plan, the Focused Review of Policy CSTP7 also provides an opportunity to ensure that the new policy is consistent with the Council's emerging regeneration strategy for Grays Town Centre and the proposed development of Purfleet New Centre. It is therefore proposed to refresh the policy approach and supporting text in the current version of Policy CSTP7 to more properly support and guide the complimentary development of the Borough's wider network of town, local and neighbourhood shopping centres.
- 2.5 Policy ETG2 of the East of England Plan also identified the key role that residential development has to play in securing the regeneration and remodelling of the wider Lakeside Basin and West Thurrock area. Reflecting the delivery of this policy objective, opportunities currently exist to promote the creation of a high quality residential neighbourhood, including new community, education, retail and leisure uses on the Arena Essex Site which is located on land north of the A1306, West Thurrock.
- 2.6 The development of the Arena Essex site (see attached Plan) as a sustainable community could also contribute towards meeting Thurrock's future housing needs as well as complimenting the adjacent development of Lakeside as a new Regional Town Centre. However, the site is currently located in the Green Belt. Therefore, in order for it to be developed as a residential neighbourhood, the Council will need to demonstrate, consistent with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that "exceptional circumstances" exist to justify it's removal from the Green Belt. The proper mechanism for considering whether or not this site should be released from the Green Belt is through the statutory development plan system. Consequently, the Council proposes to undertake a Focused Review of the adopted Thurrock Core Strategy in order to facilitate the release the site from it's existing Green Belt designation.
- 2.8 The Arena Essex proposals were previously consulted upon as part of the Council's earlier "Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development Focused Review: Broad Locations and Strategic Sites Issues and Options" Consultation in January 2013.

3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

- 3.1 At this early stage of the Focused Review process, the Council is seeking the public's views on the key issues to be addressed and the broad scope and direction that a revised Policy CSTP7 should take in providing guidance on management and development of Thurrock's network centres. Among the key issues which the public are being consulted upon are the following matters:
- The development of a overarching strategy to guide the future transformation of the northern part of the Lakeside as a Regional Town Centre;
 - The scale and nature of any additional retail and leisure development required at Lakeside over the period 2019 – 2026;
 - The phasing of development and the funding and delivery of supporting infrastructure including transport;
 - The need for additional retail, leisure and other town centre uses across Thurrock's wider network of town, local and neighbourhood centres;
 - The regeneration of Grays Town centre and the scale and nature of the demand for additional retail, leisure and other related town centre development; and
 - The future role and development of Thurrock's network of smaller local and neighbourhood centres.
- 3.2 The Focused Review of Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres will be subject to a Sustainability/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) at each stage of the plan-making process. The SA/SEA includes Equality and Health Impact Assessments and will be available for public Inspection together with the Issues and Options Document over the public consultation period.
- 3.3 In order to inform the Focused Review of Policy CSTP7, the Council has commissioned the update of a number of studies to inform the testing and development of policy. These include the preparation of the Lakeside Sub-Regional Retail Study, the Lakeside Master Plan and Investment Strategy, together with additional technical work being undertaken in developing complimentary regeneration strategies for Grays Town Centre, Purfleet New Centre and the Boroughs wider network of Local Centres.
- 3.4 The Council will consult a wide range of stakeholders including public agencies, business groups, landowners and developers as well as community groups and the general public. The public consultation exercise will run for a six week period beginning the end of July 2013.

- 3.5 As the future development of the Lakeside constitutes a strategic issue or priority as defined by Paragraph 156 of the NPPF, Thurrock Council, as local planning authority for the area is required under the 'Duty-to-Cooperate', introduced under Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011, to ensure that neighbouring Authorities and other prescribed bodies are given an opportunity to "engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis" in the development of new strategic planning policies and plans. In order to give practical effect to this intention, the Council proposes to arrange briefing sessions and presentations for the Duty-to-Co-operate authorities on the development of the supporting technical evidence base and the proposed revisions to Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres.
- 3.6 Following the close of the consultation period the representations received will be reported to Members and a draft version of the revised Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres prepared for publication and consultation later in the year.
- 3.7 A final Pre-Submission version of the policy will then be published for consultation. At this stage, the process of preparing the Site Allocations Local Plan and the Focused Review of the Core Strategy Policy CSTP7 will become fully aligned, with both documents being subject to further public consultation and comment prior to their submission to the Secretary of State and a conjoined Examination in Public (EiP) during Summer 2014. Thereafter it is envisaged that both documents could be formally adopted by the Council in late 2014.
- 3.8 The process for considering the release of land at Arena Essex from the Green Belt will also follow the same timescales and programme as the Focused Review of CSTP7; Network of Centres. In order to inform this process the Council will, as part of the overall master planning of the northern part of the Lakeside Basin, need to consider the various options for taking forward the development of the Arena Essex site. This will include the nature, scale and mix of uses which could be developed, together with the creation of improved linkages across the A1306 to Lakeside.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- 4.1 Cabinet is recommended to agree and approve for consultation the "Core Strategy Focused Review of Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres and Land at Arena Essex, West Thurrock and Issues and Options" Consultation Document. The Focused Review of the policy is being undertaken in order to ensure the proper planning and development of Thurrock consistent with agreed national and local planning policy objectives and the Council's corporate priorities.

5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 The Report has not been considered by the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 6.1 The Core Strategy sets out the Council's strategy, policies and proposals for spatial planning in the Borough over the period to 2026 consistent with wider corporate objectives.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michael Jones**
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mjones@thurrock.gov.uk

The major costs associated with the preparation of the "Core Strategy Focused Review of Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres and Land at Arena Essex, West Thurrock- Issues and Options" Consultation will be incurred during the financial years 2013/14 and 2014/15. Provision has been made within the 2013/14 base budget in respect of this, with the longer term cost implications addressed within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Telephone and email: **01375 652087**
David.lawson@bdtlegal.org.uk

The Core Strategy Focused Review of Policy CSTP7: Network of Centres and Land at Arena Essex, West Thurrock - Issues and Options" Consultation is being prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

The consultation referred to in this report is being carried out under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
Telephone and email: **01375 652472**
sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk

The Council has a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment opportunities. An Equality Impact Analysis (EqIA) has been conducted in respect of the Core Strategy as an integral part of the Interim Sustainability Appraisal. This is a statutory requirement and obligation placed on the Council. The public consultation process in respect of the Focused Review will be carried out in accordance with the Adopted LDF Statement of Community Involvement Document. This will ensure that the consultation process will provide an opportunity for all sections of the community, including

harder to reach groups, to become fully involved in helping to shape the future planning and development of Thurrock.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- National Planning Policy Framework – www.communities.gov.uk
- Adopted Thurrock Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development Plan Document (December 2011) - <http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/planning/strategic/>
- Site Specific Allocations and Policies Local Plan – Further Issues and Options Consultation (January 2013) - <http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/planning/strategic/>
- Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development Focused Review: Broad Locations and Strategic Sites - Issues and Options ,(January 2013) - <http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/planning/strategic/>

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- None

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