

4 July 2018		ITEM: 4
Planning, Transportation, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Thurrock's Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2)		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: Key
Report of: Sean Nethercott, Strategic Lead - Strategic Services		
Accountable Assistant Director: Andy Millard, Assistant Director Planning, Transportation and Public Protection		
Accountable Director: Steve Cox, Corporate Director of Place		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The need for growth in housing and employment due to population and lifestyle changes and an evolving economy means that Thurrock and the wider South Essex sub-region will change considerably over the next 20-30 years. Having an up-to-date Development Plan is a key component in ensuring that the Borough grows in a way that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable with the necessary supporting infrastructure in place.

This report provides an overview of plan making in Thurrock and sets out proposed changes to the emerging development plan and the way we will consult with communities and other key stakeholders in the future.

1. Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- 1.1 Comment on the Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) document (appendix 1) and the Local Plan Engagement Strategy (appendix 2)**

1.2 Comment on the South Essex Statement of Common Ground, revised Local Development Scheme and Draft Statement of Community Involvement (appendix 3)

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The need for growth in housing and employment due to population and lifestyle changes and an evolving economy means that Thurrock and the wider South Essex sub-region will change considerably over the next 20-30 years. Having an up-to-date Development Plan is a key component in ensuring that the borough grows in a way that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable with the necessary supporting infrastructure in place.
- 2.2 In February 2014 Cabinet gave approval to undertake a review of the Core Strategy and begin the preparation of a new Local Plan. It was intended at that point that the Local Plan would address both strategic and detailed planning issues relating to housing, employment, retail, infrastructure and the environment. Since then the situation across South Essex has evolved and there is increased recognition that there is a need to explore opportunities to develop a more coordinated planning approach across the wider area to better manage change and ensure that Local Plans being prepared by individual authorities are found sound by an Independent Planning Inspector and fulfil Duty to Cooperate¹ requirements.
- 2.3 On 11 July 2018 Cabinet will be asked to approve the following documents which will enable the Council to pursue a more coordinated approach to plan making across South Essex:
- South Essex Statement of Common Ground
 - Local Development Scheme – July 2018
 - Statement of Community Involvement (Draft) – July 2018
- 2.4 More information on these documents is included in the attached Cabinet Report (Appendix 1)

Key challenges to be addressed through the emerging development plan

- 2.5 In order for the emerging plan to be successful it needs to address a range of economic and social challenges that, left unchecked, will lead to long term

¹ Under the 2011 Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local planning authorities have a legal duty to cooperate with other local planning authorities and organisations to seek to address strategic planning matters.

decline and increased inequalities. These challenges include but are not necessarily limited to the need to:

- Reduce inequalities and create more balanced communities
- Allocate enough land to meet our housing needs in full
- Secure sustainable economic growth and create a wider range of local employment opportunities
- Ensure that our centres are vibrant and remain relevant to the communities they serve
- Create welcoming and engaging spaces and places for young people
- Plan for healthier places that encourage people to be active and have a positive effect on the mental wellbeing
- Deliver essential strategic and local infrastructure to support new development and regeneration
- Protect the integrity of the green belt

2.6 The challenges listed in this section have been identified using evidence from local strategies and technical studies, national policy, and responses received to the previous consultations. This list should not be seen as exhaustive and will be developed further as work on the emerging development plan continues.

2.7 Moving forward one of the most difficult challenges/issues to be addressed is surrounding the need for more housing (including affordable housing) and the lack of suitable sites to accommodate the level of housing required in the urban area.

Understanding how many homes we need

2.8 Thurrock is part of the South Essex Housing Market Area as such we need to work the other authorities in South Essex to assess how much housing and what types of housing are needed across the sub-region. In May 2017 the South Essex Authorities published an update to its Strategic Housing Market Assessment²; this update used the 2014 population and household projections as well as the latest economic trend data to determine that 1,381 new homes per year are needed in Thurrock which is the equivalent of 31,763 over the plan period. Figure 1 sets out more detail about how the need figure has been worked out.

² The methodology used to prepare the South Essex Strategic Housing Market was consistent with government guidance at the time of publication. This guidance is currently being reviewed as such we will need to commission a further update to the study in the coming year.

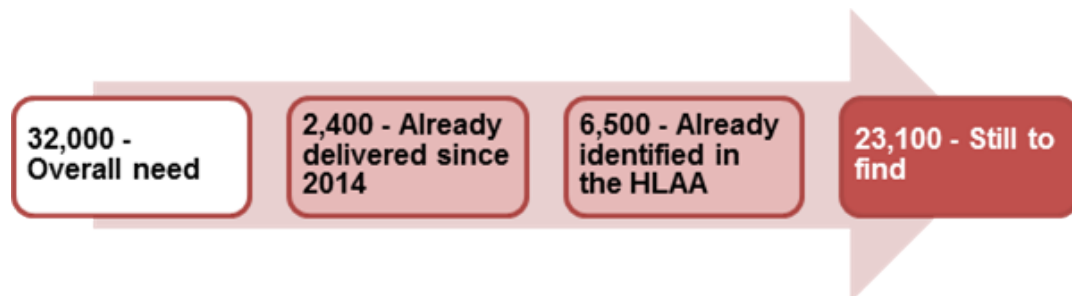
Figure 1 – Breakdown of Thurrock’s objectively assessed need figure

Stage	Adjustment	Number of dwellings per annum
2014 population and household projections		869
Adjustment for hidden needs such as older children still living at home. These people are not homeless or in urgent housing need but would like to own or rent a home of their own.	107	976
Affordability adjustment - House prices are much higher than local people can afford. Increasing supply should help lower prices and make it easier for people to rent or buy.	98	1074
Economic growth adjustment	307	1381
Plan period 2014-2037	1381 x 23 years	31,763

- 2.9 National planning policy states that local authorities should ensure that Local Plans aim to meet their areas objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in full. As such the starting point for preparing the new Local Plan is that we should aim to allocate enough land to provide for 1,381 dwellings per year over the plan period to support future economic growth, and to boost the supply, range, quality and affordability of housing to meet the local community needs. Setting a housing target lower than the assessed figure would require the Council to approach neighbouring authority or authorities through the Duty to Co-operate to see if they are able to accommodate all or part of the unmet housing need.
- 2.10 The latest draft of the Council’s Housing Land Availability Assessment (HLAA) has indicated that within the urban area there is only the capacity to deliver

approximately 6500 new homes which would leave a shortfall of almost 23,000 – See Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Meeting our full housing needs



- 2.11 The urban area capacity could be increased but it would require new Local Plan to look at including policies that promote higher density development and incentivise development through reducing development costs/planning obligations like a lower affordable housing target (which would improve the financial viability of the schemes). There could also be opportunities to increase capacity by identifying new sites and/or making it easier for sites in other uses like employment, retail and recreation to come forward for residential development. It is worth noting that even if all of these measures were implemented it would still be unrealistic to assume that the Borough's housing need could be met by sites just in the urban area which means that there is now a real need to explore different spatial options for development and look at how sites in the green belt can play a positive role in meeting our future housing needs and enhancing existing communities.

Risks of not meeting the housing target

- 2.12 The Government has legislated through the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 the requirement for all areas to be covered by a Local Plan.
- 2.13 Where a local authority fails to meet these requirements, the Secretary of State may declare that the draft Local Plan is not sound. The Secretary of State also has the power to intervene and direct the review and/or preparation of a Local Plan which depending on the circumstances, could be undertaken by another authority or jointly in partnership with surrounding authorities. In all instances the failing authority could be liable to pay the full or a proportion of the costs involved in producing the local plan.
- 2.14 The National Planning Policy Framework requires Local Plans to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites to meet the housing needs of the area for 5 years with a further supply of developable sites (or at least locations for them) for years 6-10 and, where possible for years 11-15. A Local Plan that does not

meet the requirement could be found unsound through the Local Plan Examination process.

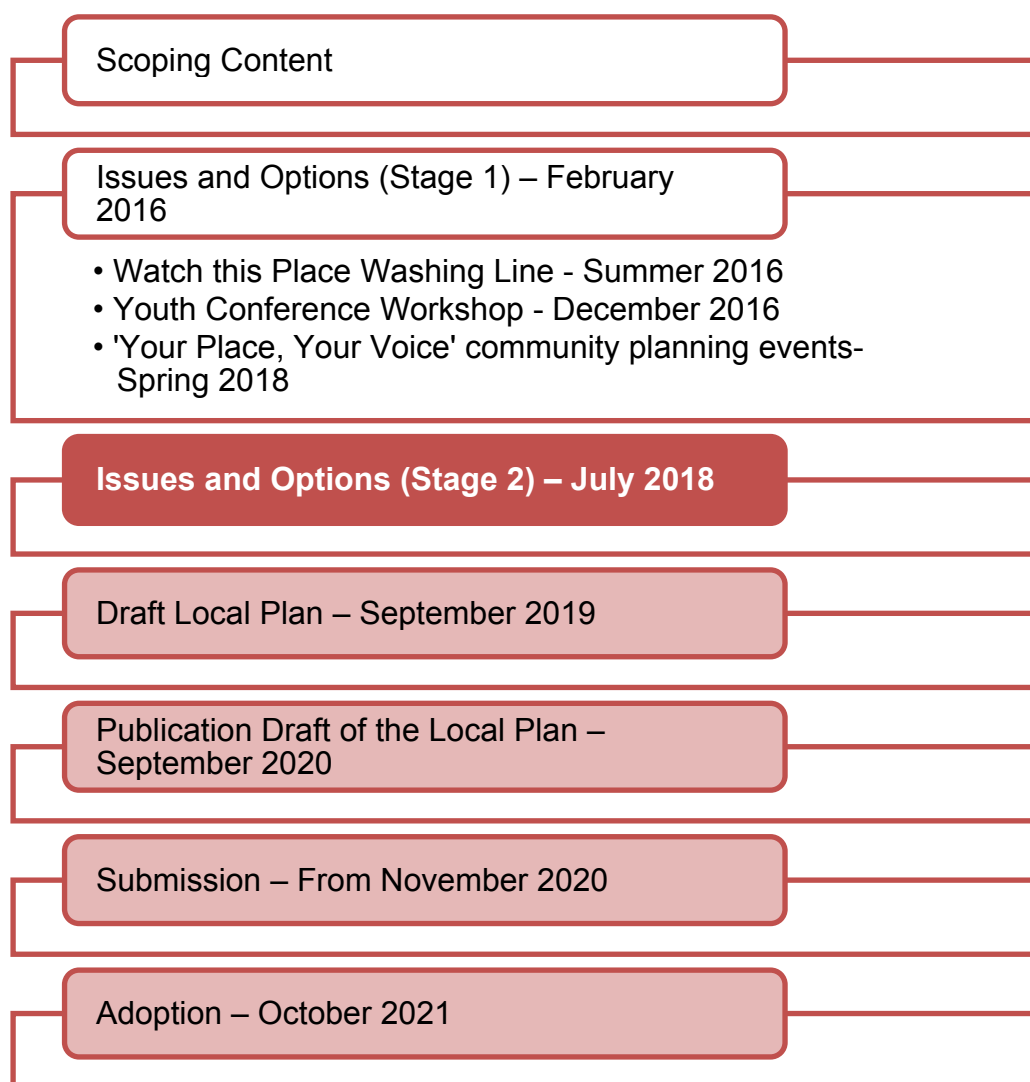
- 2.15 The housing White Paper 'Fixing our broken housing market' set out a series of proposals designed to increase the rate of housing delivery across the country. Further detail on a number of these reforms was set out in 'Planning for the right homes in the right places' in September 2017. This included proposals for the introduction of a Housing Delivery Test, whereby local authorities who fail to meet their housing targets by 2018/19 and provide a rolling 5-year housing land supply (plus 20% buffer) will effectively lose their ability to determine where development goes. To put this in context, Thurrock currently has a 1.2 year five year rolling land supply and would therefore be liable to sanction under the proposed Housing Delivery Test.
- 2.16 For those authorities who fail the Housing Delivery Test there will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development which would make it potentially easier for developers to get planning permission for housing development on appeal to the Secretary of State where it can be demonstrated that the Local Plan is either out-of-date or fails to allocate sufficient land to meet future housing needs. This could lead to sporadic development in the Green Belt and fail to maximise the benefits that future housing growth could bring to the local community.
- 2.17 In addition to the threat of intervention and possible sanctions from Government (as has been seen locally and elsewhere in the country – including Castle Point), an ongoing failure to adopt a sound and deliverable Local Plan would also:
- Lead to a whole generation of local people being put at risk of not being able to find decent or affordable housing in the Borough;
 - Undermine efforts by the Council to boost the supply of affordable housing through a lack of viable and deliverable sites for development;
 - Undermine opportunities to support the future regeneration and renewal of existing local centres and communities
 - Prevent the provision of new community infrastructure which requires large sites including primary and secondary schools to meet existing and future needs due to the constraining nature of the Green Belt boundaries in Thurrock and a lack of suitable sites in the urban area

- Raise a serious risk that, without an adequate supply of housing to meet workers needs locally, firms could relocate or switch investment to other locations as workforce availability declines.
- 2.18 Alternatively, if job growth continues without the necessary housing growth, increased levels of in-commuting are likely to result, thereby putting additional strain on existing transport networks and further congestion on the roads.

Plan making in Thurrock – The journey so far

- 2.19 The emerging Local Plan is currently at the issues and options stage of plan making. This stage is all about finding out what the main challenges are and developing options for how these challenges can be addressed. The formal and informal consultation stages that have or will be undertaken in preparing the Local Plan are set out in Figure 3.
- 2.20 Following approval of the document by Full Council it will be subject to a period of public consultation which will commence on Monday 30 July and run until Friday 19 October. Appendix 3 details the range of consultation activities proposed to be undertaken by the Council to support the consultation process.

Figure 3 – Key stages in preparing the Local Plan



2.21 In total 17 events were held across the Borough between February and April. Across all of the events there were a number of issues which were consistently raised including:

- Poor and failing infrastructure
- Lack of affordable homes and homes for older people
- Anti-social behaviour, drugs and crime
- Neglected open spaces
- Congestion and air quality

2.22 The information collected from individual events is still in the process of being organised/ inputted electronically, once this work has finished the Council will produce a findings report for each community and publish the information online so it can be used by the Council and other key stakeholders to inform emerging plans, strategies and projects including the emerging Local Plan.

The statements listed in Figure 4 are a sample of some of the local issues and opportunities that were raised at the community planning events.

Figure 4 – YPYV community planning events – local issues

Aveley
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned about social cohesion and the lack of integration between the different sub-areas of Aveley (Kennington's, Aveley Village, New Village) • Parking is a big problem along the High Street • Opportunity to enhance sport and recreation at Belhus Park • Need for more CCTV and police patrols • HGV movements are an issue in the High Street and on Ship Lane
Bulphan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to protect local historical features • Fly tipping and littering is a big issue • Need to improve street lighting • Would like better access to a shop and/or public house • Need for more housing for young families and local people
Chadwell St Mary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People do not feel safe especially in the evenings • More activities are needed for younger people • Outdoor gym and/or exercise facilities are needed • Need to provide more facilities around the towers like a GP or shop • Environment needs to be made more accessible to people with mobility issues and/or prams
Chafford Hundred
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more GP places • Access and parking around schools is a big issue • Need a local information board and more signage • Electric charge points needed • Need for more older persons housing

Corringham

- New/improved health facilities are needed
- Traffic and speed management issues need to be addressed
- Parking around Gable Hall school is a problem
- Concerned about new development in the green belt
- Costs of leisure facilities is a barrier to people being more physically active

East Tilbury

- Too many takeaways
- Need for more community based activities/events
- Community centre/hub needed
- Drug dealing is a problem
- Homes for older people are needed

Grays

- Need to improve the riverfront
- Parking in the centre costs too much
- Opportunity to improve the evening economy
- Issues with derelict and vacant land
- State Cinema when renovated should have a pop up performance space

Horndon on the Hill

- Need for sheltered housing and/or older persons housing
- Need for a community café
- Issues in some areas with speeding and dangerous driving
- Need to improve/expand doctors surgery
- Grass verges need to be better maintained

Orsett

- Orsett hospital needs to be protected
- Speed management is needed on School Lane
- There is a fly tipping problem on Fen Lane

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more community and youth activities in the Southlands area • Opportunity for business start-up units
Purfleet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More variety of shops/facilities are needed • Need for a community café • Need to improve parks • Create better access to the riverfront • Community recycling facilities are needed
South Ockendon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug taking and dealing is a problem on Derwent Parade • Need to look at ways to the green the local environment
Tilbury
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martial Arts Academy is an important community asset • Environmental improvements to parks and open spaces are needed • People do not feel safe in the evenings • Parking around the civic square is a problem • More affordable exercise classes are needed
West Thurrock
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fly tipping is a problem on Fourth Avenue • Congestion is a big problem • There is a need for more community spaces • Cycling and walking routes into Grays could be improved • Evening bus service could be better

2.23 The Council's current spatial strategy in the adopted Core Strategy focuses the majority of new housing development on previously developed land in the urban area. The emerging Local Plan will need to look at a combination of denser urban developments and releasing several green belt sites to meet our housing needs over the next 20 years. This approach represents a radical change from the Council's current adopted planning policies.

- 2.24 The purpose of the Issues and Options (Stage 2) consultation document is to seek views from communities and key stakeholders about how Thurrock should develop and grow in the future and where, in broad terms, new development could be located to meet identified needs. It is important to note that at this stage in plan making the Council will set out all potential spatial options for growth without stating a preference or referring to specific sites.
- 2.25 Once the consultation period has ended the Council will need to consider all of the received comments and identify the policy options that best address the future challenges facing the borough.
- 2.26 It is anticipated that the Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) consultation document will be considered by Full Council on 25 July 2018. Appendix 2 contains a draft version of the consultation document.
- 2.27 Following approval of the document by Full Council it will be subject to a period of public consultation between Monday 30 July and Friday 19 October. Appendix 3 details the range of consultation activities proposed to be undertaken by the Council to support the consultation process.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Council's current spatial strategy in the adopted Core Strategy focuses the majority of new housing development on previously developed land in the urban area. The emerging Local Plan will need to look at a combination of denser urban developments and releasing several green belt sites to meet our housing needs over the next 20 years. This approach represents a radical change from the Council's current adopted planning policies.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 It is essential that the Council has an up to date Development Plan in place and the supporting documentation that will help drive its delivery.

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

- 5.1 Progress statements on the emerging Development Plan are regularly presented to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of each elected political party. Reports are also regularly prepared for the Planning, Transportation and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee and presentations made to Group meetings. This engagement will continue as the Development Plan emerges.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The Local Plan has an impact on the delivery of all of the Council's corporate objectives.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: Laura Last
Management Accountant

There is a dedicated budget for plan making to cover the basic costs of preparing planning policy documents. This budget is supplemented by a separate YPYV consultation funding pot that was allocated to the service by Cabinet early this year.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: Benita Edwards
Interim Deputy Head of Law (Regeneration)

The current system of plan making is contained in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, and supported by the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

Pursuant to Section 17(3) of the PCPA 2004 the Local Planning Authority's local development documents must (taken as a whole) set out its policies relating to the development and use of land in its area.

If any of the Authority's planning policy documents meet the definition set out within Regulation 5 of the 2012 Regs, they must be prepared as local development documents and be known as a local plan. Therefore any document produced by the Authority which provides for the development or use of land which the Authority wishes to encourage within a specified period, or allocation of sites or development management policies which are intended to guide development, it is likely to fall within the statutory definition and therefore be part of the local plan and therefore subject to the statutory procedure.

The Authority also has a statutory duty pursuant to Section 13 of the PCPA 2004 to keep under review matters which may affect the development of its area.

Under Section 17(6) PCPA 2004 the Authority must keep under review its local development documents in light of any review of its policies.

The Secretary of State's powers pursuant to Section 27 of PCPA 2004 apply where they think that the Authority are failing or omitting to do anything necessary in connection with the preparation, revision or adoption of a development plan document. They may prepare or revise a plan or direct that the Authority or another do so.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: Natalie Warren
Strategic Lead, Community Development and
Equalities

The Council has a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment opportunities. The adoption of a new SCI will ensure that the consultation process associated with the emerging Development Plan 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. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

There are no other implications associated with the report.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Local Plan Issues and Options – Engagement Strategy (Phase 1) - https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/local_plan_engagement_strategy_phase1.pdf

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 - Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) - Consultation Document

- Appendix 2 - Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) - Engagement Strategy
- Appendix 3 – Development Plan Support Documents Cabinet Report and Appendices

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