

21 January 2019	ITEM: 7
Local Development Plan Task Force	
Overview of Local Plan	
This report is Public	

Introduction

This report outlines the progress in preparing the Local Plan, leading up to the current publication of the Issues and Options Stage 2 Consultation Document, and provides an overview of the technical work required to inform the preparation of a Draft Local Plan which will be the subject of future public consultation.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's approach to plan-making is that it should be community-driven and infrastructure-led. The need to plan for future housing and economic growth due to population growth and the impact of wider socio-economic factors means that Thurrock and South Essex 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 sustainable way with the necessary supporting infrastructure in place.
- 1.2 The Council has an adopted Local Plan in the shape of the Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development DPD (December 2011). However, In February 2014, the Cabinet gave approval to undertake a review of the Core Strategy and begin the preparation of a new Local Plan.
- 1.3 A key principle underpinning the operation of the planning system is the requirement that local authorities must have an up-to-date Local Plan for their area. The February 2014 Cabinet resolution recognised that a review of the Core Strategy was required in order to address the impact of economic change and a number of significant changes to the planning system at the national, regional and local levels. These included:
 - The need for a more up-to-date statutory planning framework to coordinate the delivery of the Council's ambitious growth strategy for Thurrock;
 - The revocation of the East of England Plan and the requirement for local planning authorities to undertake a fresh assessment of their future development needs;
 - A requirement for the Council to identify a deliverable five-year housing land supply and to bring forward more sites for development to support long term economic growth;
 - Legislative changes that fundamentally affect the form, content and process for preparing a Local Plan; and

- A need to plan for a decision by Government on the route and location of the Lower Thames Crossing and its potential economic transport and environmental impact on the Borough.
- 1.4 The first consultation on the new Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 1) Consultation Document (I&O1), was published in February 2016 and focused on thematic policy areas. During the 6-week public consultation, 70 organisations made formal responses raising 548 separate comments. An additional 500 comments were received from Members of the community at events organised to promote and raise awareness of the Consultation.
- 1.5 Based on the responses received from those who made representations on the I&O1 Consultation Document, the following key challenges for the Local Plan to address were identified:
- Reduce inequalities and create more balanced communities
 - Allocate enough land to meet our housing needs in full in particular affordable housing that meets local needs
 - 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
- 1.6 The challenges listed 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.
- 1.7 Moving forward one of the most difficult challenges/issues to be addressed surrounds the need for more housing (including Council housing) and the lack of suitable sites to accommodate the level of housing required in the urban area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2018

- 1.8 The process of preparing Local Plans must be taken forward in the context of and consistent with national planning policy. In July 2018 the Government published a revised version of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the key changes in policy direction have now been taken into account in preparing the Issues and Options (Stage 2) Consultation Document.
- 1.9 A summary of the key policy changes and messages contained in the NPPF is set out below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key Changes to National Planning Policy Framework

- The introduction of a Housing Delivery Test which will penalise local authorities who fail to meet their housing delivery targets
- The introduction of a new standardised method of calculating housing need for all local authorities
- The requirement that development plans, must as a minimum “seek to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs” to be declared sound
- Changes to the NPPF’s definition of affordable housing to include homes for social rent
- Larger-scale developments (Urban extensions and new settlements) must be well located and designed and supported by necessary infrastructure
- Planning performance agreements (PPAs) are likely to be needed for very large or complex applications
- The introduction of minimum density standards for city and town centres and other locations well served by public transport
- Increased recognition of the importance of the warehousing and logistics sector
- The need for planning policies to promote and support town centre diversification
- The need for Local Plans to clearly identify what infrastructure is required to support future development and the role that developer contributions will play in funding their delivery

- 1.10 The key changes in the NPPF relate to housing development and the need to boost levels of housing delivery. The NPPF identifies the key role that Local Plans have to play in bringing forward new sites for housing. Reflecting this priority, the NPPF sets out a more nationally prescriptive ‘top down’ approach for calculating housing need which then challenges local authorities to allocate sufficient land to meet the need identified or provide strong and compelling evidence why cannot do so.
- 1.11 With the introduction of the new Standard Methodology for assessing housing need, Thurrock’s new local housing target is now 1,173 homes a year. This is lower than the Objectively Assessed Need of 1,381 new homes a year which was set out in the South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2017). However, the reduction in need is due in part to the fact that the Standard Methodology does not take into account whether any adjustments need to be made to the calculation of housing need to ensure that the provision of new

housing addresses any imbalance between the available labour supply and the projected rate of job growth in the Borough. The Government is currently consulting on the new housing methodology.

- 1.12 The introduction of the Housing Delivery Test will also have significant implications for Thurrock with the Council becoming increasingly vulnerable of being penalised by the Government for failing to provide sufficient land to boost housing delivery and meet the Borough's current and future housing needs.

Issues and Options (Stage 2)

- 1.13 The spatial strategy set out in the adopted Core Strategy focuses the majority of new housing development on previously developed land in the urban area. To meet some of the challenges set out earlier in this report the emerging Local Plan will need to look at the possibilities of a combination of denser urban developments and the potential of releasing Green Belt sites to meet our housing needs over the next 20 years. This approach would represent a significant change from the Council's current adopted planning policies.
- 1.14 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 should 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.
- 1.15 In addition to looking at potential spatial options the consultation document will also look at policy options to address issues like housing for older people and other specialist needs, hot food takeaways, the need to protect locally important green spaces and buildings and the provision of sports facilities in the Borough.
- 1.16 Delivering new homes that local people can afford is a key policy principle and an important outcome for the Borough. The Local Plan as a land use document can enable and influence the location and type of new homes and the proportion that should be made affordable. All mechanisms that are available to be used by the Local Plan to secure new Council homes will be used. These mechanisms sit alongside other current Council initiatives to build new Council homes such as new build schemes in the HRA (117 currently in the pipeline), through TRL and by taking the opportunity afforded by the lifting of the HRA debt cap.
- 1.17 To ensure that stakeholders are able to make an informed response to the consultation the Council will publish a range of supporting technical evidence documents alongside the consultation document. These together with the main consultation document will be made available on the Council's website and in hard copy at various locations across the Borough.
- 1.18 The consultation commenced on Wednesday 12th December 2018 and will run until Friday 8 March 2019. The consultation events will be delivered through a

mixture of community-based events and ‘Your Place, Your Voice’ consultation events. Details of which are:

Table 1 – Schedule of consultation events

Type	Location	Venue	Date	Time
Community	South Ockendon	South Ockendon Centre Derry Avenue, South Ockendon, RM15 5DX	Tuesday 15 January	10.30am – 12.30pm
Community	Aveley	Aveley Library Purfleet Road, Aveley, RM15 4DJ	Thursday 17 January	10.30m – 12.30pm
Your Place, Your Voice	South Ockendon	Lime Close Community Club, South Ockendon, RM15 6NN	Saturday 19 January	1pm – 5pm
Community	Tilbury	Tilbury Hub Civic Square, Tilbury, RM18 8AD	Monday 21 January	2pm – 4pm
Community	Stanford le Hope	Hardie Park Hardie Park, Stanford Le Hope, SS17 0PB	Tuesday 22 January	10am-12pm
Community	Chadwell St Mary	Chadwell Centre Brentwood Road, Chadwell St Mary, RM16 4JP	Tuesday 22 January	2pm – 4pm
Your Place, Your Voice	Corringham	Corringham Library St Johns Way, Corringham, SS17 7LJ	Thursday 24 January	5pm – 9pm
Your Place, Your Voice	East Tilbury	East Tilbury Village Hall, Princess Margaret Road, RM18 8SB	Sunday 27 January	2pm – 5pm
Your Place, Your Voice	Tilbury	Tilbury Hub Civic Square, Tilbury, RM18 8AD	Monday 28 January	5pm – 9pm
Community	Bulphan	Bulphan Village Hall Church Road, Bulphan, RM14 3RU	Friday 1 February	2pm – 4pm
Community	Chafford Hundred	The Beacon Centre Drake Road, Chafford Hundred, RM16 6RW	Thursday 7th February	6pm – 8pm
Community	Purfleet	Purfleet Community Hub 53-54, River Court, Centurion Way, Purfleet, RM19 1ZY	Tuesday 12 February	11am – 1.30pm
Your Place, Your Voice	Orsett	Orsett Churches Centre High Road, Orsett, RM16 3ER	Friday 15 February	4pm – 8pm
Your Place, Your Voice	West Thurrock	St Clements Church and Surgery 567 London Road, Grays, RM20 4AL	Saturday 16 February	1pm – 5pm
Community	Grays	Acorns Blackshots Lane, Grays,	Wednesday 20	3pm-5pm

		RM16 2JU	February	
Community	Grays (Central)	The Beehive Centre West Street, Grays, RM17 6XP	Thursday 21 February	2pm – 4pm
Your Place, Your Voice	Grays	St John's Church Hall Victoria Avenue, Grays, RM16 2RP	Saturday 23 February	1pm – 5pm

- 1.19 Following the conclusion of the consultation period all responses will be logged and reported back to Members as a precursor to the preparation of a Draft Local Plan which in turn will be subject to further public consultation at the appropriate time. A new Local Development Scheme (LDS) will need to be produced and adopted by the Council and a draft version of the amended programme for preparing the Local Plan will be reported to the Task Force at its next meeting. The preparation of the new LDS will need to reflect and respond to the risks to the plan-making process caused by the uncertainties surrounding the route and design of the Lower Thames Crossing, together with the timing of that project. It also should be noted that the ability of the Council to bring forward a sound Local Plan and will in turn be dependent on the success of the Council in influencing Government and Highways England to accept the need for significant modifications to the proposed alignment and design of the LTC scheme.

Your Place, Your Voice

- 1.20 Community and stakeholder engagement is an important and central feature of the planning system and in order to engage with as many people as possible the Council launched a series of Your Place, Your Voice (YPYV) community planning events. These events were devised in response to comments that residents felt over whelmed by the technical nature of planning consultations and the volume of Council consultations that all seem to ask similar questions. The community planning events were run on a drop in basis giving local communities the opportunity to feed into the Local Plan and other Council documents and strategies by participating in a range of informal and highly interactive consultation activities.
- 1.21 In total 17 events were held across the borough between February and April 2018. 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 poor air quality
- 1.22 A series of follow up YPYV events have been programmed to run alongside all future stages of the Local Plan, including the Issues and Options (Stage 2) Consultation in order to provide local residents with greater range and more accessible means of engaging with and influencing the plan-making process.

Lower Thames Crossing and implications for the Local Plan process

- 1.23 The proposed alignment of the Lower Thames Crossing threatens to significantly undermine the efforts of the Council to plan to meet its housing needs in full and to support economic growth and the regeneration of local communities. The current alignment will have an adverse impact on the potential to bring forward sites for development along the length of its route for a number of reasons. These include:
- The sterilisation of development opportunities in sustainable and deliverable locations around existing settlements;
 - Poor local connectivity and of a failure to explicitly plan for and design a scheme with the objective supporting the delivery of strategic sites for housing and economic development;
 - The need to mitigate the impact of noise, air quality, severance and flood risk considerations which has led to an increase in land take in locations where future development capacity exists
- 1.24 The full extent of these impacts on the availability of land for development will need to be assessed in more detail through the plan-making process and the ongoing detailed design work and environmental impact assessment work with the Lower Thames Crossing – for example, the desire that where the route passes major urban areas the road should be in a tunnel or in ‘cut and cover’. The outcome of this work will help inform decisions on whether the identification of broad locations for growth or specific sites can be taken forward as development plan allocations. The scheme being promoted by Highways England actively prevents the Council from following the advice set out in the NPPF which requires local authorities to maximise investment in new nationally significant infrastructure in planning for growth.
- 1.25 There is a clear but complex interrelationship which exists between the Local Plan and Lower Thames Crossing Development Consent Order (DCO). Expert advice received suggests that while the Council should proceed with the planned Issues and Options (Stage 2) Consultation, it would need to carefully consider whether it should submit a Local Plan to the Secretary of State before the conclusion of the DCO process (expected in 2021). This is because of the potentially adverse impacts of the scheme, including any future design changes, on the ability of the Council to prepare a sound and deliverable Local Plan. As a consequence of this, consideration will need to be given to amending the Thurrock Local Development Scheme to reflect the further delays to the possible submission and adoption of the Local Plan due to continued uncertainties over the route and alignment/design details of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing.

Table 2 – Local Plan Technical Work Required to inform the preparation of Draft Thurrock Local Plan

Housing	Infrastructure	Transport	Place & Environment	Economy	Spatial Options	Strategic Technical Studies/Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for Sites 4 • Finalise Thurrock Housing Land Availability Assessment (500+ sites) • Prepare Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment • Develop Sites Assessment Criteria and Methodology • Agree PPAs and technical work with land owners and scheme promoters • Prepare Local Plan Sites Report identifying preferred sites/reasonable alternatives/rejected sites • Prepare Local Plan Housing Policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission Baseline Infrastructure Study (informed by YPYV process) to identify current/future needs • Set up Infrastructure Providers Reference Group • Prepare Borough wide Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) • Prepare Strategic Development Areas Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPs) • Develop Community Infrastructure Charging Schedule (CIL) • Prepare Local Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission Transport Baseline Study • Develop/validate Borough wide Strategic Transport Model. • Set up Transport Providers Reference Group • Prepare Thurrock Vision For Movement Study. • Develop Local Plan Transport Strategy • Undertake local area micro-simulation modelling. • Develop Strategic Development Area Transport Access Strategies. • Prepare Local Plan Car 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Thurrock Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) • Complete Thurrock Green and Blue Infrastructure Study • Complete Thurrock Active Place Strategy • Commission Thurrock Green Belt Assessment (GBA) Phase 2 Study • Commission Thurrock Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Phase 2 Study • Commission Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Phase 2 Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) • Update Thurrock Employment Land Availability Assessment (ELAA) • Update Thurrock Economic Strategy • Update South Essex Strategic Retail and Leisure Study • Prepare District and Local Centre Regeneration Strategies • Prepare Local Plan Economy Policies • Prepare Local Plan Strategic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Strategic Development Area Master Plans, Design Codes, Infrastructure Delivery Plans and Transport Access Strategies • Update Lakeside and Grays Development Frameworks • Update Conservation Area Management Plans • Prepare Thurrock Villages Settlement Studies • Develop and test alternative spatial options and supporting transport and infrastructure packages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Thurrock Local Development Scheme (LDS) • Update Thurrock CIL and Whole of Plan Viability Study • Prepare Thurrock Draft Plan Integrated Assessment (includes Health Impact Assessment) • Prepare Thurrock Local Plan Habitats Regulation Assessment Regulation (HRA) Report • Update Thurrock Design Strategy • Prepare Thurrock Design Guides • Identify/establish Strategic Development Area Delivery Models

	Infrastructure Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking Strategy • Prepare Local Plan Transport Policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Thurrock Climate Change Strategy • Develop Thurrock Energy Strategy • Prepare Local Plan Environment, Green Belt and Climate Change Policies 	Retail and Town Centre Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify Preferred Spatial Strategy • Prepare Local Plan Spatial Development Policies • Prepare Town Centre and Strategic Development Area Inset Plans • Prepare Local Plan Development Management Policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and expand YPYV Community Approach.
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Report Author

Sean Nethercott

Strategic Lead – Strategic Service