

<b>9 March 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>Local Development Plan Task Force</b>	
<b>Thurrock Local Plan - Next Steps</b>	
<b>This report is Public</b>	

## **Executive Summary**

This Note summarises the steps that the Council propose to take to prepare a sound Local Plan in accordance with all relevant legal and procedural requirements and consistent with national policy.

### **1. Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 It is anticipated that the process for preparing a draft Regulation 18 Local Plan for publication and consultation will take 24 months to complete (January 2022), with a further 12-16 months elapsing before a further Regulation 19 Local Plan is consulted upon and submitted for Examination (June 2023). Following submission of the Local Plan, it is anticipated that both the Examination and process for adopting the Local Plan will take a further 12 months to conclude with the Plan being formally adopted by the Council in 2024.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the timetable set out above is contingent upon the level of resources available to complete what is one of the most complex Local Plans in the UK and the ability of the Council to manage and mitigate the impact of Lower Thames Crossing Development Consent Order (DCO) process, the parallel production of the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan and proposed further changes to the planning system on the timescales for preparing the Local Plan.
- 1.3 This note summarises the Council's emerging approach for dealing with the issues raised above and highlights the need for the Council as a whole to take collective ownership of the Local Plan process and work collaboratively to ensure that the resulting plan assists in the implementation and delivery of wider corporate priorities and strategies.

### **2. Lower Thames Crossing**

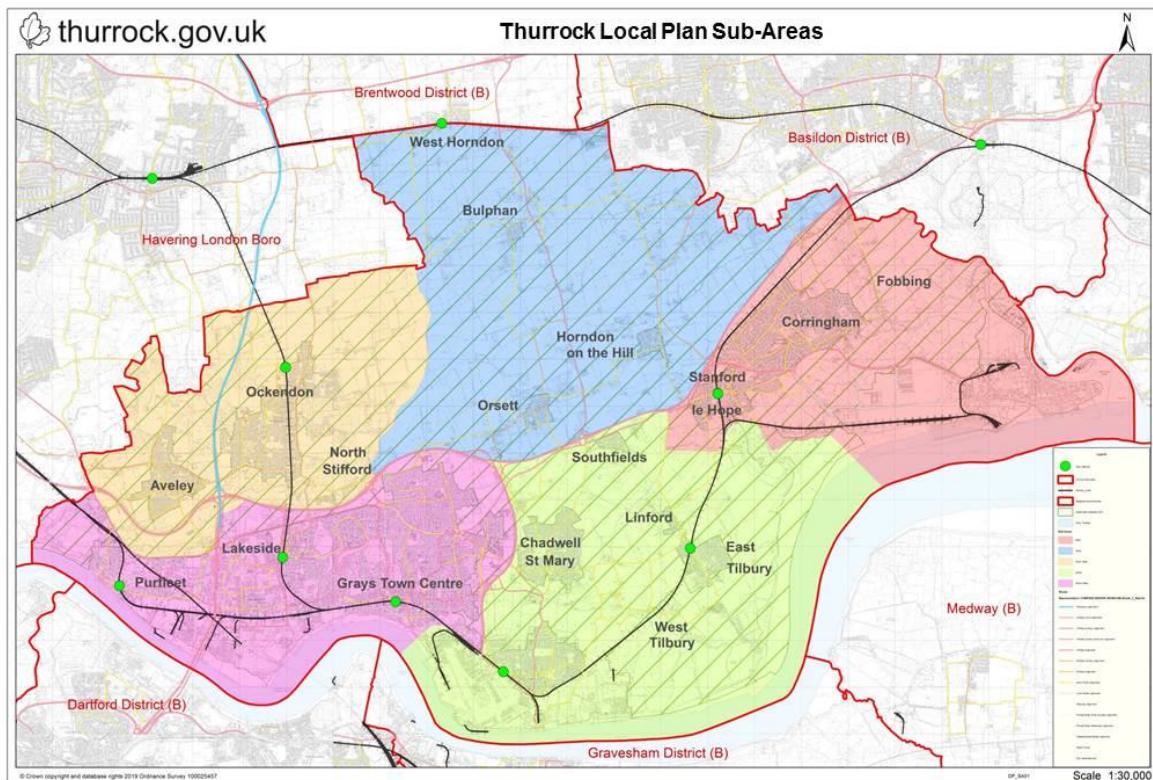
- 2.1 The proposed development of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) has, and will continue to have, significant implications for the Local Plan process not only in terms of the timescales for its preparation but also in relation to the Council's ability to bring forward a sound Local Plan which meets relevant legal requirements.

- 2.2 A number of Options for taking forward the preparation of the Local Plan in the face of the difficulties and uncertainties surrounding the Lower Thames Crossing proposal have been considered. The Options considered included the following;
- not preparing a plan until the LTC DCO process has been concluded;
  - the preparation of a partial plan with a shorter plan period and reduced development targets focused on land outside the influence of Lower Thames Crossing;
  - asking neighbouring local authorities to meet any shortfall in Thurrock's ability to accommodate its own future development needs; and
  - the production of a full plan which assumes the timely provision of critical strategic infrastructure required to support development along the route of the LTC should Government decide to progress the scheme.
- 2.3 All the Options considered reflected the fact that submitting a Local Plan in advance of the resolution of the LTC DCO process is fraught with risk given the design, routing and delivery of the scheme has yet to be fixed. Therefore any plan which is based on the current proposal might prove unsound and undeliverable should the scheme continue to evolve and be markedly amended before a Consent Order has been issued.
- 2.4 Following discussions with officials from MHCLG, Homes England and the Planning Inspectorate, it is minded to proceed with the Option of preparing a full Regulation 18 and 19 Local Plan which meets the totality of the Borough's future development needs over the full plan period. In adopting this approach the Council will need to assume that the alignment of the LTC will not change significantly over the next 2/3 years and that it will be possible to come to an agreement with Government and Highways England that the provision of any additional infrastructure including better local connectivity will be fully funded and delivered early in the plan period to support any land allocations along the LTC Corridor. This decision reflects the following considerations:
- It is the only Option which allows the Council to meet its development needs in full and in a range of sustainable locations;
  - The Option strongly supports the regeneration of existing communities and makes the most effective use of historic infrastructure investment;
  - The adoption of this approach provides the Council with a strong narrative when bidding for additional government funding support to deliver a comprehensive and transformative development strategy for Thurrock; and
  - It also assists the Council in resisting proposals for inappropriate development in unsustainable locations whilst also providing developers

with the confidence and certainty they need to invest in Thurrock and deliver strategic development projects.

- 2.5 In order to manage the risks associated with the LTC the Council will prepare the Local plan in such a way that enables it to quickly extract out of the emerging spatial strategy a ‘partial plan’ which meets the development needs of the Borough over a shorter timescale without necessitating the abandonment of the overall spatial strategy (A ‘Plan within a Plan’ approach).
- 2.6 In order to do this it is proposed to divide the Borough up into five character areas and develop a planning and delivery strategy based around the capacity of those areas outside the zone of influence of the LTC to begin making a contribution towards meeting the Borough’s developments in the early part of the plan period, with the assumption being that any major development areas adjacent to the Lower Thames Crossing would not begin to deliver at scale in the early part of the plan given the long lead in times associated with developments of this nature.
- 2.7 **Figure 1** below illustrates how this might work in practice with any future allocations in the Thurrock Urban Area, The Fens, and the Corringham/Stanford-le-Hope areas capable of being developed in isolation of the Lower Thames crossing. Further Opportunities also exist to bring forward development in sustainable locations at Aveley and Chadwell St Mary during the early part of the plan period.
- 2.8 Reflecting this approach it is intended to prepare a Local Plan which follows the broad structure set out below:
  1. Vision and Strategic Objectives
  2. The Spatial Strategy
  3. Strategic Policies and Proposals
  4. Thematic Policies
  5. Strategic Character Areas (SCA)
    - Place-making principles
    - SCA policies and proposals (includes identification of Strategic Development Locations)
    - Inset Plans for Strategic Development Areas and Centres
    - Scale, distribution and phasing of development and infrastructure
    - Infrastructure Delivery – priorities and proposals
  6. Development Management Policies
  7. Monitoring and Implementation Framework

**Figure 1 – Thurrock Local Plan Sub-Areas**



### 3. Developing the Local Plan Evidence Base

- 3.1 The 24 month programme for preparing the Draft Local Plan can be broken down into two broad but overlapping 12 month periods of work which involve developing the evidence base followed by the iterative development and production of the plan itself.
- 3.2 Reflecting the foregoing, the approach to developing the Local Plan evidence base (abbreviated) over the next 12 months is proposed to include the key work stages set out in **Figure 2** below.

**Figure 2 Local Plan Technical Work**

#### Key Tasks

1. Complete Housing Land Availability Assessment.
2. Complete Baseline Infrastructure Needs Study.
3. Complete Baseline Transport Needs Study.

4. Undertake Sites Assessment Technical Study to identify potential supply and sites for allocation to be based on set criteria – e.g. deliverability; sustainability; accessibility; regeneration impacts, impact on green belt and other NPPF Footnote 6 considerations in order to provide evidence on capacity; infrastructure; mitigation; delivery; and phasing.
5. Commence Integrated Assessment process to provide an assessment of the sustainability, health and equality impacts of alternative spatial options/broad locations for growth and individual sites.
6. Roll out the Thurrock Design Charrette-led community engagement process.
7. Commission formal master planning and infrastructure planning work in partnership with landowners/scheme promoters/stakeholders for major development locations.
8. Update Green and Blue Infrastructure Study /Green Belt Stage 2 Assessment and Land scape Character Assessment Studies to identify necessary mitigation.
9. Update 2017 South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment and Thurrock Employment Land Availability Assessment to produce new economic forecasts to input into Local Housing Needs Assessment
10. Update 2017 SE Strategic Housing Markets Assessment by way of new Local Housing Needs Assessment to set out benchmark Standard Methodology needs figure and any economic uplift adjustments if required.
11. Undertake Housing Delivery Strategy Study to identify potential mechanisms for boosting levels of housing delivery.
12. Prepare Housing Delivery and Allocations Topic Paper
13. Work with scheme promoters, MHCLG, Homes England and infrastructure providers to identify and develop effective delivery models.
14. Adopting the Local Plan and Development Management Planning Performance model, work with scheme promoters to bring forward planning applications in parallel with the Regulation 19 Local Plan to help evidence the deliverability of strategic other Local Plan allocations.

- 3.3 In addition to the 'pure' planning policy work outlined above the Council would also undertake parallel work in relation to the Integrated Assessment, Transport Planning and Infrastructure delivery and place-making work streams as set out on the appended Technical Work Schedule **Appendix 1**
- 3.4 Given the extensive and cross-cutting nature of this work, the full and proactive involvement of all the Council Services is essential to the preparation of not only the Evidence Base but also the production of a plan which secures the effective delivery of wider cross directorate priorities and strategies. It should be noted that work already being undertaken or proposed in other service areas has a key part to play in informing the preparation of the Local Plan, with the proposed refresh of Housing, Economic Development, Public Health, Waste, Transport and Grays/Tilbury Town Centre Strategies to name a few, being important in setting a context for the Local Plan as a tool for their delivery.

#### **4. Appendices**

- 4.1 Appendix 1: Proposed Local Plan Technical Studies