

9 December 2015		ITEM: 14 01104432
Cabinet		
Thurrock Local Plan: Monitoring, Timescales and Engagement Strategy		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Sean Nethercott, Growth and Strategy Team Manager		
Accountable Head of Service: Andy Millard, Head of Planning and Growth		
Accountable Director: David Bull, Director of Planning and Transportation		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

At its meeting on the 12th February 2014 Cabinet gave authorisation for the preparation of a new Local Plan to guide the future development of Thurrock. This report informs Cabinet of changes to Local Plan monitoring and seeks approval for a revised Local Plan timetable. The report also seeks approval to use a selection of innovative consultation activities to ensure that first phase of public consultations on the emerging Local Plan reach a wider, more diverse audience than with previous development plans.

1. Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

- 1.1 Approve the revised timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme – December 2015.**
- 1.2 Grant delegated authority to the Head of Planning and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Transportation to amend the Local Development Scheme if required.**
- 1.3 Endorse Phase 1 of the Local Plan Engagement Strategy.**

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Council has an adopted Local Plan in the form of the Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development DPD (December 2011) December. However, on the 12th February 2014 Cabinet gave approval to undertake a review of the Core Strategy and to begin the preparation of a new Local Plan to guide the future development of Thurrock over the period to 2035.

2.2 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 current Core Strategy is 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.

3. Local Plan Monitoring

3.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires every authority to produce reports containing information on a number of topics including:

- the implementation of the Local Development Scheme
- the progress and effectiveness of the Local Plan, and
- the extent to which the planning policies set out in the Local Plan documents are being achieved.

3.2 Changes brought in by the Act introduced greater flexibility in how Authority Monitoring Reports (AMR) (previously known as Annual Monitoring Reports) can be produced. Before the Act the Council had to publish the AMR annually as a single report. The removal of the requirement to produce a single report and the suggestion by the Government that Council's should aim to publish monitoring information more frequently has prompted the Council to re-evaluate the way it reports on monitoring for planning purposes.

3.3 The amalgamation of the key information reported on in the AMR with other existing Council documents has reduced the level of repetition within existing monitoring mechanisms, improved consistency in reporting and made it easier to update key figures. Appendix 1 sets out the reporting mechanisms for key indicators and topics within the AMR. These mechanisms will be presented as hyperlinks on a dedicated AMR webpage to ensure that information can be easily accessed and is presented in a user-friendly way.

3.4 An analysis of development for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 reveals the following key facts:

- 309 net additional dwellings were completed during 2014/15.
- 6,612 net additional dwellings were completed between 1st April 2001 and 31st March 2015. This is an average build rate of 472 over this period.
- 225 (72.8%) of the 309 dwelling completions that took place in 2014/15 were on previously developed land (PDL).
- 105 affordable houses were completed during 2014/15. The amount of affordable housing as a proportion of the housing completions on sites liable to affordable housing provision under planning policy was 35.4%.
- 829,700 square metres of employment floorspace (B1, B2 and B8) has been consented at London Gateway with approximately 50,000 square meters completed in the last year.

Five Year Housing Land Supply

3.5 The Council annually monitors the amount of new housing that has been built, is under construction, or has planning permission but where construction has not yet started. This is required in order that the Council can demonstrate there is sufficient land available for new housing in the borough for the next five years.

3.6 The latest Five Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement includes sites with planning permission and windfall sites in the five year housing land calculation. It is likely that future reviews will also include sites deemed to be deliverable¹ or developable in the Housing Land Availability Assessment (HLAA). Work on the HLAA is anticipated to be completed in January 2016.

3.7 The Council does not have currently a Five Year Supply of deliverable sites measured against the adopted housing target in the Core Strategy.

3.8 Demonstrating a 5 year supply of housing is a key material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals; and whether policies of the supply of housing are up to date in applying the presumption of sustainable development. Where a 5 year supply cannot be demonstrated the relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date. However

¹ The NPPF states that for sites to be considered deliverable they need to be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that the housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that the site is viable.

the Planning Practice Guidance online resource (PPG) makes it clear that unmet housing need (i.e. lack of a 5 year supply) is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt to constitute the very special circumstances justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt.

- 3.9 The Council is currently in the process of updating its Strategic Housing Market Assessment which identifies the objectively assessed housing need for the borough up to 2037. Once finalised the Council will have a more comprehensive understanding of what the borough's housing needs are going forward. In addition as the Local Plan progresses through the plan making process there may be opportunity for some sites² to come forward ahead of the Local Plan being adopted.

4. Local Plan Timetable

- 4.1 Local Authorities are required to set out in a project plan the timetable for the production of a Local Plan. This document, known as the Local Development Scheme (LDS), identifies the stages that have to be completed before the Local Plan can be submitted to the Secretary of State and then adopted by the Council following an Examination in Public.
- 4.2 The Council's current LDS came into effect on the 1st May 2014 and sets out the timetable for the production of the Local Plan. However, the need has arisen for the Council to amend the programme and timescales for preparing the Local Plan to reflect the ongoing delay and uncertainty to the plan-making process caused by further delays in the Government making an announcement on the route and location of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC).
- 4.3 Notwithstanding the delay considerable progress has been made in developing the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan and in building relationships with key stakeholders and investors in Thurrock.
- 4.4 The Council has prepared a revised LDS (Appendix 2) to respond to the decision making process surrounding the LTC and to ensure that community engagement in plan making is undertaken in a meaningful way. Key dates in the plan making process are shown in Table 1.

² Paragraph 216 of the NPPF states that decision-takers can give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans, according to the stage of preparation of the emerging plan; the extent to which there are unresolved objections; and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework.

Table 1 – Local Plan Timetable

Consultation Stage	Anticipated Date
Local Plan (2015-2035)	
Issues and Options – Stage 1 (Strategic Policies)	February/March 2016
Issues and Options – Stage 2 (Spatial Options and Sites)	October/November 2016
Draft Local Plan	October/November 2017
Publication Draft of the Local Plan	October/November 2018
Submission to the Secretary of State	March 2019
<i>Examination in Public (Hearings)</i>	<i>April 2019 – September 2020 (October/November 2019)</i>
<i>Adoption</i>	<i>October 2020</i>
Supplementary Planning Documents	
Design Strategy - Draft	February/March 2016
Design Strategy - Adoption	September 2016
Design Strategy Technical Annex - Draft	June 2016
Design Strategy Technical Annex - Adoption	December 2016
Planning Obligations - Draft	October/November 2016
Planning Obligations - Adoption	March 2017
Interim Guidance Note	
Affordable Housing – Off Site Contributions	March 2016

5. Local Plan Engagement Strategy

- 5.1 Ensuring that the Local Plan meets the needs of and aspirations of all sections of the Local Community is an essential pre-requisite for a deliverable and successful Local Plan.

- 5.2 In preparing a new Local Plan the Council is required by legislation to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI sets out the activities the Council must legally undertake when preparing a plan along with setting out what the Council may do. The Local Plan Engagement Strategy (Phase 1) builds upon the basic requirements set out in the adopted SCI, providing additional detail about the activities the Council are intending to undertake which go beyond the legal requirements.
- 5.3 Phase 1 of the Local Plan Engagement Strategy (Appendix 3) details the activities proposed during the Issues and Options consultations. These methods will be evaluated after the consultation period has ended. The findings will help to inform future consultation phases.

6. Reasons for Recommendation

- 6.1 To comply with the requirements set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2012 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

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

- 7.1 This report has not been considered by the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

- 8.1 The documents cited within this report support the production of the Council's new Local Plan. The Local Plan guides new development within the borough over the period to 2035. The policies and allocations within the plan will be consistent with and seek to deliver wider corporate objectives.

9. Implications

9.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michael Jones**
Management Accountant

The major costs associated with the preparation of the Local Plan will be incurred during the financial year 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, and 2018/19. Subject to the decision of the Cabinet in agreeing the recommendations set out in this report, it is proposed to re-align existing budgets towards the preparation of the new Local Plan in line with the plan-making programme and timescales set out in the

revised Local Development Scheme appended to this report. There is provision within the on-going budget for the development of the framework, and also a separately identified ear-marked reserve held on the Councils balance sheet.

9.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Vivien Williams**
Planning and Regeneration Solicitor

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a greater flexibility in how Authority Monitoring Reports (AMR) can be produced. That being said the Council is still has a duty to report on the following matters:

- the implementation of the Local Development Scheme
- the progress and effectiveness of the Local Plan, and
- the extent to which the planning policies set out in the Local Plan documents are being achieved.

Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by Section 111 of the Localism Act 2011) requires that a Local Planning Authority must prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme. The scheme must specify the documents which form the Local Plan and include a timetable for their production.

9.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development and Equalities Manager

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) will be conducted as part of the process of preparing the new Local Plan. The Local Plan Engagement Strategy (Phase 1) will ensure that a wider the community, including harder to reach groups, to become fully involved in helping to shape the future planning and development of Thurrock.

9.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

There are no other implications associated with the report.

10. 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):

- None.

11. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – AMR reporting mechanisms
- Appendix 2 – Local Development Scheme (December 2015)
- Appendix 3 – Local Plan Engagement Strategy (Phase 1)

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