

20 January 2016

ITEM: 6

Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thurrock Local Plan Progress Update

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 updates on the progress that has been to date and seeks the Committee's views on the approach being adopted by the Council in developing the Plan in an open and inclusive way.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the Committee note the report and provide comment on the approach being adopted by the Council in preparing a new Local Plan.**
- 1.2 That the Committee continues to receive regular progress reports on the preparation of the Local Plan and provides oversight of the Plan making process.**

2. Introduction and Background

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

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 include:

- 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 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 proposed Lower Thames Crossing and its potential economic, transport, and environmental impact on the Borough.

2.3 The process for preparing and adopting Local Plans is set out in the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. An overview of the plan-making process is set out in Appendix 1. Any failure to comply with or follow the steps set out in Appendix 1 could lead to the plan being found unsound with the significant risk that the Government could step in and impose a new plan or development on the Borough.

Local Development Scheme (LDS)

2.4 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.

2.5 The Council's previous LDS came in to effect on 1st May 2014. However, the need for the LDS to be revised arose because of 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).

2.6 With further announcements on the Lower Thames Crossing now expected early in 2016 a revised Local Development Scheme was approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 9th December 2015. Key dates in the plan-making process are set out in Table 1. A copy of the Local Development Scheme is attached as Appendix 2 to this Report.

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

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

- 2.7 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 will do to engage the local community and stakeholders in helping to shape the future development of Thurrock.
- 2.8 Following public consultation earlier this year, Council approved the adoption of a new SCI at its meeting on the 25th November 2015. A copy of the

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.

- 2.9 Following the adoption of the SCI, the Council has prepared a Local Plan Engagement Strategy (Phase1) which builds upon the basic requirements set out in the SCI, providing additional detail about the activities the Council are intending to undertake to involve the public in the plan-making process which go beyond the legal requirements. This reflects the fact that different consultation approaches will need to be evolved to meet the needs of different stakeholders and sections of the community, including harder to reach groups.
- 2.10 A copy of the Local Plan Engagement Strategy (Phase 1) is attached as Appendix 4 to this Report.

Developing the Evidence Base

- 2.11 Notwithstanding the delay by Government in making an announcement on the Lower Thames Crossing, good progress has been made in in developing the evidence base for the Local Plan and in building relationships with key stakeholders and investors in Thurrock to ensure that the emerging plan is realistic, deliverable and supported by all sections of the community.
- 2.12 National planning policy guidance states that Local Plans should be based on an up-to-date evidence base and reflecting this requirement the Council has commissioned a number of key 'building block' technical studies to inform the preparation of the document. Studies underway, or are in the process of being commissioned, include work in identifying the future housing, employment, shopping, transport, leisure and recreational needs of the Borough over the period of the plan to 2035. In addition to these studies the Council has also commissioned the preparation of a Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan which will be prepared and updated at each stage of the plan-making process.
- 2.13 It is anticipated that the first of these studies will be completed in spring/summer 2016 and it is proposed to both update and seek the views of the Committee on the outcome of this work and their implications for Thurrock at future meetings over the course of the following months as progress on preparing the plan continues.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Local Plan (Regulation 18) Issues & Options 1 Consultation (February/March 2016)

- 3.1 Following the adoption of the SCI in November and approval of the revised LDS in December 2015, it is now proposed to take a report to Council on the 24th February seeking authorisation to publish the Thurrock Local Plan Issues & Options 1 Consultation Document which will then be the subject of a six week public consultation event in February and March 2016.

3.2 The purpose of the Issues and Options 1 Consultation Document will be to obtain the views of stakeholders and the community on the key issues that the Local Plan will need to address and the potential range of solutions or options for meeting the Borough's future development needs and for protecting and enhancing its built and natural environment. Some of the key issues upon which the public could be given the opportunity to consider and comment on include the following:

- What would you like Thurrock to be like in 2035
- What needs to happen in Thurrock to make it a more attractive and prosperous place to live?
- How can new development be better used to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities?
- What types of homes are needed? And where should they be built?
- What types of jobs are needed? And where should they be located?
- What types of shops and leisure are needed? And where should they be located?
- What other infrastructure improvements are needed in Thurrock to support existing and new communities?
- What kind of things should we be doing to protect and enhance Thurrock's heritage assets and buildings of local importance?
- What kind of things should we be doing to protect and enhance natural assets and open spaces of local importance?

3.3 The list of issues set out above is not intended to be either definitive or exhaustive but is simply designed to stimulate discussion amongst stakeholders and the local community on the direction of travel that the Local Plan takes in meeting Thurrock's future development needs. Reflecting this approach Members of the Committee are asked to comment on the list of issues identified above and to suggest additional or amended questions which might be included as part of the Issues and Options 1 Consultation Document.

3.4 The scope, nature and wording of the questions for consultation will be finalised in January, leading to the production of a range of consultation papers, including summary non-technical documents, to help generate interest in the Local Plan process and obtain comments and views back from all sections of the community. These documents will then be submitted to Council on 24th February together with a report seeking approval to publish them for consultation for a six week period.

- 3.5 Following the conclusion of the consultation period all responses will be logged and reported back to Council as a precursor to the preparation of the Local Plan Issues and Options 2 Consultation which will be held in late 2016. At that stage of the process the public will be consulted on a range of policy and development options which will be based on the responses to the Issues and Options 1 Consultation process and the emerging findings from the development of the Local Plan evidence base.
- 3.6 As the plan-making process develops it is proposed to bring further reports back to this Committee highlighting progress made and seeking the comments and views of Members on key issues as they arise.
- 3.7 The major costs associated with the preparation of the Local Plan will be incurred during the financial years 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, and 2018/19. The costs of preparing the Local Plan will be met from existing budgets and from income derived from planning application submissions, in line with the programme of activity set out in the approved Local Development Scheme. This also includes a separately identified ear-marked reserve held on the Council's balance sheet.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Committee is requested to provide its views on the approach being adopted to prepare the Local Plan, in order 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).

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

- 5.1 The Local Plan will be the subject of extensive public consultation at each stage of the plan-making process in accordance with the approach and practice set out in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) adopted by the Council in November 2016.

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

This report sets out how the on the preparation of Local Plan will be undertaken in a manner consistent with wider corporate objectives. 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. Compliance with the SCI will ensure that the consultation process associated with the new Local 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. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Chief Accountant

Set out in the body of the report.

7.2 Legal

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

Set out in the body of the report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

Set out in the body of the report at section 6.

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):

None

9. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1 – Plan Making Process (National Planning Practice Guidance)
Appendix 2 – Local Development Scheme (December 2015)
Appendix 3 – Statement of Community Involvement (November 2015)
Appendix 4 – Local Plan Engagement Strategy

Report Author:

Sean Nethercott
Growth and Strategy Team Manager
Planning and Transportation