



Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-027-2014/15

Date of meeting: 6 October 2014

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| Portfolio: | Planning Policy | |
| Subject: | North Weald Bassett Masterplan Study | |
| Responsible Officer: | Anna Cronin | (01992 564119) |
| Democratic Services Officer: | Gary Woodhall | (01992 564470) |

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To note the completion of the North Weald Bassett Masterplan Study, and accept it into the Local Plan Evidence Base.

Executive Summary:

This report seeks the acceptance of a key piece of technical work into the Local Plan Evidence Base for consideration as part of the preparation of the preferred option for the Local Plan. A copy of the full Masterplan Study is available in the Members' Room, and an Executive Summary is appended to this report.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

Adopting this technical work into the Local Plan Evidence Base will enable the Council to work towards a sound new Local Plan, which uses robust information. This in turn means that the new Local Plan would be far more likely to be accepted at Examination in Public by the independent Inspector.

Other Options for Action:

Not to accept into the Local Plan Evidence Base or ask for additional work to be undertaken

Report:

Introduction

1. Following the Council's decision as landowner in August 2013, as a result of the Deloitte study, that a mixed use approach to the North Weald Airfield which retains the aviation activities would be the most appropriate, it was agreed that in order to inform the Local Plan a more detailed Masterplan exercise was required, to consider the way the Airfield relates to the wider village in the context of the other sites around the village put forward for consideration for development by their owners. Such a study would focus on feasibility, deliverability and potential options for development, and provide evidence as part of the assessment process leading to consultation on a Draft Local Plan.

2. The purpose of the study was to ensure that the implication of the decision for the 'mixed use' option for the Airfield was considered in relation to North Weald Bassett village. The Masterplan study has included consideration of the viable mix of land uses and associated infrastructure that should be considered across the village (and wider area where necessary), long term Green Belt boundaries, potential phasing of any change and mechanisms for delivery. Such a study was considered to be needed for North Weald Bassett for a number of reasons:

- The Council has expressed its intention as landowner to release part of the airfield site for development and this therefore needs to be addressed and the site considered as part of the portfolio of sites proposed by all landowners to go forward. The Airfield is only one of a number of possible development sites around the settlement which have been put forward by their owners.
- The possible mixed use of Council owned land at North Weald Airfield could be a key part of the eventual Plan strategy, particularly because it is a significant site in size and a previously developed site in the potential basket of sites from which development allocations will be selected.
- The overall area of land covered by North Weald Airfield is significant when compared to the size of the existing village and so any development there will need to be handled sensitively. (That is not to suggest that other developments should not also be handled sensitively).
- Given Government emphasis on ensuring the best use is made of publicly owned land, it is appropriate that North Weald Airfield is now fully considered in its wider context to ensure any approach to development respects the grain of the existing village and could function properly in terms of supporting infrastructure.
- The choices in terms of the viable delivery of the Airfield and other SLAA sites need to be reviewed for plan making, hence a number of alternative options for the configuration of uses on those sites put forward are being considered.

3. Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners (including Alan Baxter Associates transport consultants and infrastructure engineers, and GL Hearn property consultants) were commissioned in November 2013 to undertake a Masterplan study for North Weald Bassett village, to identify a vision for the village and to provide a clear framework of options for future development and investment. The Masterplan covers transport and movement considerations, provision of new homes, economic opportunities, including the role of North Weald Airfield, shops and community services for the village and the role of open space, including the identification of a long term defensible green belt boundary. The study will feed into the Local Plan process and will form part of the evidence base to inform future planning decisions taken by the Council. The work has now been completed and the final report received. Members are therefore asked to note it and accept it as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan.

The Study

4. The work undertaken by the project team was in two phases. Stage 1 saw a review of policy documents including key background and technical documents together with an urban design and heritage review and a review of the transport and utilities within the settlement. Building on the existing evidence base the property consultants GL Hearn undertook a market review of all the relevant property market sectors, analysing how the local markets have performed. A socio economic review was undertaken to understand the future social infrastructure requirements. The sites identified in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment following the Council's 'call for sites' for the Local Plan were reviewed, along with the Deloitte report and the four possible sites identified at the airfield.

5. As part of establishing the key issues and priorities for North Weald Bassett the consultants undertook a range of engagement including an Officer Working Group session on 21 January 2014, a community workshop session at North Weald Village Hall on 25 January 2014 attended by around 85 people, and a landowners' discussion session on 13 February 2014. In addition individual interviews were carried out with key stakeholders. These workshops and discussions helped to identify an underlying set of principles to inform any future development and against which the potential options could be tested at stage two of the project. Any new development in North Weald Bassett, aside from small scale infill, would take place on land which is currently within the Green Belt. The study therefore sought to consider the suitability of sites in relation to their contribution to the national aims and purposes of the Green Belt and policies set out within the National Planning Policy Framework – the methodology used is consistent with that reported to Cabinet on 23 June 2014.

6. Based on the feedback the consultants developed an overarching approach and key principles. The overarching aim of any new development should be to improve North Weald Bassett and make the settlement more sustainable and help to better meet the needs of residents. The principles established to help meet these goals were:

- a sustainable commercial centre;
- easy access to green space;
- appropriate density range of between 30 and 40 dwellings per hectare;
- improving movement;
- preserving rural views; and
- providing community uses.

7. During stage 2 of the project the study team developed Masterplan options for any future development based on the development principles and the suitable parcels of land established during stage 1 of the project. These alternative scenarios were tested against existing facilities, viability and infrastructure requirements. The draft spatial options were reviewed with Council officers through the Officers Working Group on 15 May 2014 which included key stakeholders. A community exhibition on the two broad spatial options was held at the North Weald Village Hall on Saturday 28 June 2014 between 11 and 3pm. Leaflets advertising the exhibition were distributed to all residents' homes in the village and a briefing meeting was held with members of the Parish Council prior to the event. The exhibition was attended by approximately 160 people. Following the exhibition the material was displayed on the Council's website and comments requested by 14 July 2014. Visitors to the

exhibition were invited to complete a feedback form and residents and stakeholders could also email feedback to the Council. 35 feedback forms were returned, along with 9 written representations. A further workshop was held with officers on 12 August 2014 on how the proposed options might be delivered, should the Council decide to take them forward, and provided a further opportunity for comment. All the comments received including those from one of the landowners' have been carefully considered and taken into account in the consultants' final report. As a result of the comments the key changes made to the final report and to the material shown at the June exhibition are as follows:

- **Landscape character:** Clarified references to the importance of landscape and existing evidence of landscape sensitivity and use of existing hedgerows/watercourses as boundaries where possible.
- **Baseline analysis** - references to Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, TPOs and culverting have been added.
- The land ownership and call for sites plans included in the report make it clear that the land is currently in private ownership, and green shading has been removed to avoid any confusion that it is public open space.
- The plans illustrating the community feedback received at the workshop on 25 January 2014, and which were shown at the exhibition on 28 June, have been annotated to make it clear that they show an amalgam of views and there were contradictory views expressed.
- Alterations to the green infrastructure plans to clarify that the proposal for a Country Park to the south of the village is in Scenario A only as an aspiration that could potentially be enabled through housing to the south of the village.
- **Infrastructure** - Updated transport measures and cost estimates, risks and role of CIL/S106 in the chapter on infrastructure and implementation considerations.

8. The final Masterplan study sets out two scenarios, each with three growth options, and these formed the basis of the community exhibition and consultation (see attached indicative plans). **Please note that in the final reports the scenarios have been switched around from those shown at the community exhibition so that Scenario A is now Scenario B and B is now A.**

9. In the final report **Scenario A** proposes new homes both to the west and to the south and east of the settlement (ranging from 458 homes in option 1, to 1021 homes in option 2 and 1540 homes in option 3) whilst maintaining a maximum distance from the High Road and a minimum distance from the Ongar Redoubt. New homes are designed to strengthen the existing commercial centre, establish a small secondary centre at Tyler's Green and provide leisure and commercial uses between the settlement and the airfield. Green walking routes to the surrounding fields are established, with a particularly broad green area around the river corridor. The proposal includes the possibility of a country park around the Ongar Redoubt as an aspiration that could potentially be enabled through housing to the south. All three

options provide for new health facilities to be developed and a new primary school is proposed to the west of the village centre in options 2 and 3.

10. **Scenario B** proposes new homes to the north and west of the village only (ranging from 463 homes in option 1, to 1202 homes in option 2 and 1540 homes in option 3), designed to strengthen the existing commercial centre, establish a small secondary centre at Tyler's Green and provide leisure and commercial uses between the village and the airfield. As in Scenario A, green walking routes to the surrounding field are established, with a particularly broad green area around the river corridor. All three options within this scenario provide for new health facilities to be developed and a new primary school is proposed to the west of the village centre.

11. It is important to understand that the receipt of the Masterplan study does not pre-empt any decisions by the Council as to the location of future development in the emerging Local Plan. However, the consultants were asked to advise on the infrastructure and implementation considerations inherent in taking any of the options forward. To this end, the final report includes a delivery plan and risk assessment and advice on delivery structure and procurement.

Resource Implications:

Preparation of this work forms part of working towards the new Local Plan, and features within the existing Local Plan budget.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The delivery of a Local Plan, informed by a robust evidence base, will contribute to safer, cleaner, greener objectives by planning for sustainable development.

Consultation Undertaken:

Internal consultation has taken place with senior officers, the Chief Executive, the Portfolio Holder, key stakeholders and the Local Plan OWG on 12 August 2014. A copy of the final report is being supplied to the Parish Council.

Background Papers:

- Report to Cabinet on Review of North Weald Airfield 22 July 2013.
- Final Masterplan report prepared by AMUP September 2014.
- Exhibition boards from the community exhibition on 28 June 2014.

Risk Management:

Preparation of the Local Plan is a key priority for the Council.