

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 30 September 2014

Subject: Planning Policy

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bassett

Recommending:

That the report of the planning Policy Portfolio Holder be noted.

Local Plan

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

One of the key pieces of work that is underway is an update of our Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in conjunction with the other authorities within our Housing Market Area: East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford. This work has been commissioned and we have appointed Opinion Research Services to undertake the update without further delay. We are anticipating a draft report will be available at the end of October. This will help to identify the Districts' Objectively Assessed Housing Need and what would constitute a sensible range for future housing provision. Further workshops are proposed with members to advise them of the outcomes of the work and the implications prior to a report which is scheduled to go to Cabinet in December 2014.

Duty to Cooperate

We have been meeting regularly with the appropriate authorities to consider cross boundary issues including the update to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and identifying the objectively assessed housing need, the approach to Green Belt reviews being carried out by several authorities, and identifying the functional economic area.

We had a member and officer meeting on 15 September in Harlow facilitated by the Planning Advisory Service to take forward work on DtC and discuss governance arrangements for members to mirror the current officer group. Members and officers were present from Epping, East Herts, Harlow, Uttlesford, Broxbourne and Brentwood. A provisional way forward was agreed and a member group structure proposed. A follow up meeting is being arranged where we agree a memorandum of Understanding and terms of reference.

The next six authorities meeting has been set for 2nd October at Epping where we get an update on what is happening with our neighbouring authorities and the City of London.

Local Development Scheme

A revised Local Development Scheme was agreed by the Cabinet at its July meeting. The timetable is on the Council's website and proposes the next stage of consultation on the draft plan/preferred option to run between May and July 2015. This would be followed by analysis of the responses and the preparation of a pre-submission plan for publication in early 2016.

Options for Growth Workshops

In accordance with the guidance and advice in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance officers have been using sustainability appraisal to support the development of reasonable alternative options to progress the development of options so

that initial transport testing can be progressed. We have had some initial results back but further work is required. The Council will use this evidence, together with other evidence already available or in hand, to consider what other options should be tested.

In line with the approach requested by Cabinet members, a series of three workshops, organised on an Area Planning Committee basis, are being held in September/early October to engage members in the process of identifying options to be tested.

Local Plan Viability

A contract for the work on plan viability being undertaken by Dixon Searle Partnership, which will also inform policy choices on CIL/S106, is well underway. The timetable has been revised to enable the general direction from the Members' workshops on options to inform the consideration of viability. However, this should not hold up other work. The initial and informal view of the consultants is that it should be possible to charge Community Infrastructure Levy if the Council wishes to pursue this option.

Economic and Employment Evidence

We have engaged consultants Hardisty Jones to undertake further work on economic and employment evidence to support both the Local Plan and Council's overall Economic Development Strategy. This is due to report later this year.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Stage 2

A report on the findings was prepared for the Cabinet on 8 September 2014 for noting as part of the evidence base but was deferred to enable some questions to be discussed with the consultants. This will be resubmitted shortly

Green Belt Review

A methodology for a comprehensive Green Belt Review in the District was reported to and approved by the June Cabinet, outlining the further work which is now being undertaken in the light of experience in recent examinations and in particular the Dacorum Core Strategy examination. It has also been shared with neighbouring DtC councils, and with Mark Beard of counsel, resulting in helpful comments which have been taken on board.

The main purpose of the work is to undertake a comprehensive high-level review of all Green Belt land across the District to identify its contribution to the Green Belt, as stipulated in the NPPF. It will identify both the primary functions of the Green Belt, which deliver the national purposes, and identify whether there are areas of the Green Belt land which no longer contribute towards the national purposes or contribute the least to these. The site survey work for the high level review of the land parcels is currently underway and is due to be completed by early October. It is proposed to share the findings of this with members as well as the Town and Parish Councils in accordance with the Cabinet's decision, before undertaking more detailed work, and the Planning Advisory Service have offered to assist by providing a "critical friend" to support discussion with the Town and Parish Councils.

North Weald Bassett Airfield and Village Master Planning

Progress has been made on the master planning work commissioned from AMUP for North Weald Bassett to consider the way the Airfield relates to the wider village and ensure that the implications of the Airfield 'mixed use' option for North Weald Bassett settlement as a whole are considered. The final report has been received following the exhibition in June 2014 and will go to Cabinet in October for acceptance into the evidence base.

Gipsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

The Assessment was entered into evidence at the Cabinet meeting on the 8th September. The GTAA suggests that there is a need to make provision for an additional 112 Gypsy and Traveller permanent pitches in the period 2013 to 2033 – this is in the context that the district currently (May 2014) has 117 permanent pitches. Of these 112 pitches 74 are from new household creations from existing families. The GTAA also suggests a need for an additional 2 yards for Travelling Show people has also been identified.

The study provides information on an aspect of future accommodation provision with its own specific national planning guidance (Planning policy for traveller sites) and which the National Planning Policy Framework recognises as an important issue for Local Plans. Its inclusion in the evidence base and its use to identify suitable policy approaches in the Local Plan will help develop a Local Plan which is more likely to be found “sound”.

The assessment concludes that the net overall requirements for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Essex in the period 2013 to 2033 is 786, and for this district is 112. These numbers result from total current need comprising unauthorised developments seeking to stay in the area, concealed households and net movements from bricks and mortar; and total future needs which consist of pitches with temporary permission, net migration and net new household formation

Options for phasing provision over the next 20 years, and for identifying suitable sites for the next 5 years, will need to be considered as the Preferred Option Plan is developed ready for public consultation in spring 2015. It will be necessary to satisfy an Inspector at the Examination in Public that all reasonable options for making additional provision have been considered. The Council will be expected to make every effort to make adequate provision before exercising the option of requesting its neighbours, under the Duty to Co-operate, to take any unmet need.

Consultation on Planning and Travellers

The Department for Communities and Local Government has also just published a consultation on planning and travellers between 14th September and 23rd November. It seeks views on proposed changes to planning policy and guidance ensuring fairness in the planning system and strengthening protection of sensitive area and Green Belt. Further information and our response will be sent to the Planning Scrutiny committee.

Developments around Harlow

Following on from developer briefings for the strategic sites around Harlow officers have been identifying the strategic sites outside the Harlow and North Weald areas where a similar approach might be appropriate. Harlow and Epping Forest District have made a formal approach to ATLAS (Advisory Team for Large Applications which is part of the HCA) requesting their support in considering the delivery of major sites. ATLAS has suggested that they develop a template to allow the consistent assessment of site information, for use by both Harlow and EFDC, and at the time of writing this is awaited.

Other Councils' Plans

The Council is a signatory to a letter sent from local authorities in the South East to the Greater London Authority in response to the consultation on the draft Further Alterations to the London Plan, expressing concern that it potentially undershoots the provision of future homes that London needs by a considerable margin and fails to adequately plan for the interim level of need identified in the FALP of 49,000 dwellings per annum because only

42,000 are specifically allocated to London boroughs. A key issue for these councils is that any expansion into the Metropolitan Green Belt which may prove necessary in the longer term is undertaken in a strategic way. These matters will be considered at the Examination currently in progress, which commenced in early September 2014.

A response to the Mayor's Infrastructure Delivery Plan to 2050 has been prepared and was considered by the Planning Scrutiny Panel and the O & S Committee on 16th September 2014.

Uttlesford District Council has submitted their Plan for examination and has received a preliminary letter from the Inspector outlining issues for consideration. The examination is scheduled for November 2014.

Neighbourhood plans

Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers have consulted on their draft Neighbourhood Plan, and have used the "critical friend" service provided by the NPIERS panel of neighbourhood plan examiners to review the draft Plan. Comments have been received and consideration is being given to them by the Parish before submitting the Plan for examination.

The Theydon Bois Parish applied to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area in order to progress with a Neighbourhood Plan and following publication of the proposed area this was agreed at the July Cabinet. Epping Town Council has also requested the designation of their parish as a Neighbourhood Area and the Council is currently consulting on this from 11 August 2014 until 19 September 2014. A report on designation will be taken to Cabinet in October 2014. We have also received requests from North Weald and Buckhurst Hill for designation which will be processed.

Lee Valley Food Task Force

As previously stated the task force is progressing rapidly with our focus on five major work streams;

- Planning
- Food Summit
- Employment Work stream
- Skills Work stream
- National Institute for Food Security

Our next meeting will be on the 3rd October where we will be reviewing our progress and approving an interim report which we will publish.