

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 December 2014

Subject: Planning Policy

Portfolio Holder: Councillor R Bassett

Recommending:

That the report of the Planning Policy Portfolio Holder be noted

Local Plan

Local Plan timetable/workshops

The Local Development Scheme agreed by Cabinet in July 2014 proposes that the next stage of consultation on the draft plan/preferred option is to run in the summer of 2015. This would be followed by analysis of the responses and the preparation of a pre-submission plan for publication in early 2016.

A series of three member workshops, organised on an Area Planning Committee basis, were held in September/early October to further involve members in the process of identifying options to be tested. A similar session was held for officers within the Council on 17 October 2014 as part of the ongoing work of the Officer Working Group. A summary note will be sent to all members on the outcomes of the workshops shortly.

Update on key evidence work

Strategic Housing Market Assessment update: One of the key pieces of work 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. A draft report with the emerging findings was received by SHMA District Members at the end of October and we are still to receive a final report. However following this and a meeting to discuss some of the economic trends it has been decided to commission a small piece of additional work is to be undertaken to ensure that the economic activity scenarios match with the appropriate job growth projections for each District. This has become an increasingly important issue with Inspector's questioning the relationship between the housing need evidence in the SHMA and employment forecasts.

Economic and employment evidence: Hardisty Jones has provided their interim findings on economic and employment evidence to support both the Local Plan and Council's overall Economic Development Strategy. This will be reported to Cabinet alongside the report on the SHMA.

Green Belt Review: The fieldwork for Phase 1 of the Green Belt Review in the District 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 is substantially complete and is being written up. 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. We will be sharing the findings of the Phase 1 review with Cabinet in January 2015. Following this Town and Parish Councils will also have view of the findings in January 2015 in accordance with the Cabinet's decision and the Planning Advisory Service have offered to assist by providing a "critical friend" support session with the Town and Parish Councils. A report to Cabinet in March 2015 is proposed which will also set out the proposed methodology and work programme for Phase 2.

Strategic Land Availability Assessment: An update of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment is due to be reported to Cabinet on 15 December 2014.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment: The joint Essex-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment has been completed with officer and member briefings provided by the consultants in July 2014. This has now been reviewed by Cabinet and accepted into the evidence base.

Duty to cooperate: Officers have been meeting regularly with the appropriate authorities to consider cross boundary issues including the update to the SHMA 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. The next officer meeting is on 15 December 2014. Following the PAS facilitated member meeting on 15 September a member group met on 20 October 2014. Governance arrangements were agreed including a Chairman until May 2015 who will be Councillor Sue Barker from Uttlesford. Members had a presentation on the emerging findings of the SHMA and following a presentation agreed in principle to support Junction 7a. The next meeting of the member group is being arranged for January 2015 (Uttlesford are providing the administrative support for the member group).

Following the meeting Councillor Whitbread wrote on 27 October 2014 to the Chairman (copied to all other members of the group) to advise that we had concerns that the emerging figure for the Objectively Assessed Housing Need for the SHMA might mean we will be unable to meet our full housing need. This is a precautionary measure in the context of the recent planning practice guidance published on 6 October 2014 which reiterates the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework that local planning authorities should meet objectively assessed needs. Once need has been assessed the authority should take account of any constraints such as green belt which indicate that development should be restricted. The Leader has asked that the next meeting of the Member Board should discuss how the objectively assessed need could be met by the wider SHMA area.

Neighbourhood Plans: Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers have now submitted a revised draft Plan following the critical friend advice received from an NPIERS examiner. Officers are currently considering this and undertaking a screening opinion on the requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment which is a necessary part of the process. We will then need to agree with the parish whether the plan is ready to go for examination. Epping Town Parish was designated by Cabinet on 6 October 2014 as a neighbourhood area for the purposes of making a plan. At that meeting the Cabinet gave delegated powers to the Director of Neighbourhoods in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder to designate future areas subject to the proposal covering the whole parish area and if there were no objections following the consultation period. Buckhurst Hill Parish Council has

recently applied for their parish to be designated, there have been no objections and a delegated report has been prepared. North Weald Bassett Parish has also submitted an application. We have received one comment from the developer of Latton Priory about the area to be designated. As a result we are setting up a meeting with the Parish to discuss. This will then be the subject of a future report to Cabinet.

Planning Policy Team staffing

Appointment has been made to the Planning Policy Manager post and Ken Bean joined the Council on 3 November 2014. The structure of the rest of the team has been reviewed as part of the phase two restructure and is being taken through a job evaluation panel meeting in November.

Lea Valley Food Task Force Update

The partnership has been refocusing its work programme around three work streams.

Planning policy, a draft paper has been produced following consultation with neighbouring councils in Broxbourne and Enfield that explores a more coherent and coordinated approach to the glasshouse industry across local boundaries. A workshop with relevant planning officers is being convened to look at how this might be progressed operationally. London Borough of Enfield has confirmed a grant of £10,000 to enable work on this and the projects below to be supported.

Employment Bridge, this work stream is exploring ways to ensure that unemployed people in the participating council areas can be supported to access existing jobs in the industry across the Lea Valley area. Negotiations with the Dept of Work and Pensions are at an advanced stage to enable a full time secondment of an officer to One Epping Forest to manage and support this programme across three jobcentres.

Institute of Food Security, £20,000 funding from POD West Essex has been secured, with support from Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils, to commission consultants to examine the feasibility/desirability of establishing a research centre of excellence in Lea Valley. The Brief for Consultants is currently being drawn up on behalf of the Task Force by Adap+ based at the University of East Anglia.

NVQ/Glasshouse/Horticulture Qualification, the partnership is participating in a national Trail Blazer programme with LANTRA and central government to support skills development in the industry. In addition up to £35,000 from Essex County Council has been identified to potentially support the development locally of new specialised qualification specifically designed around the needs of commercial organisations linked to the industry.

EU Partnerships, the Task Force has been recently contacted by organisations representing the growing industry in Holland to potentially participate in a joint approach to EU Funding. This is at a very early stage and officers are currently exploring opportunities and potential benefits to a combined approach.