

# **Report to Neighbourhoods and Community Services Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 19 January 2016**

**Subject: Local Plan Update**

**Officer contact for further information: Ken Bean**

**Committee Secretary: A Hendry**



---

## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**To note the progress on the Local Plan**

## **Reasons for Report:**

Under the terms of reference, the Neighbourhoods & Communities Select Committee has requested a regular review and update on the Local Plan.

---

## **1) Local Plan Member Workshops**

Many of the issues that our Local Plan needs to address are complex. To assist understanding, obtain Members' views in order for the planning policy team to develop policy options for the Draft Local Plan Preferred Approach consultation later this year, Local Plan workshops are being held. District and Town and Parish Council representatives attended three workshops during November 2015 that considered in turn: the Historic Environment, the Natural Environment and Green Networks, the economic strategy (including food production, glasshouse industry, tourism and live/work) and affordable housing / housing for an ageing population.

All three workshops were very well attended and afforded an opportunity to advise Members of emerging key issues on these matters. Members provided valuable information and opinions on the matters presented.

Feedback received indicates that most Members found that the format worked well having officers first explain the issues, national policy and what the evidence says before then having the opportunity to debate possible policy options. Further Local Plan Member workshops are planned – the next one will consider high quality design.

## **2) Key Local Plan Evidence**

Work continues on finalising the evidence base reports which will be used to inform the policies included in the Draft Plan Preferred Approach that we consult on. In particular work has been completed on key pieces of technical evidence relating to potential housing and jobs numbers and can be viewed via the Local Plan evidence base page of the Council's website.

## ***Green Belt Review***

Government guidance and emerging Inspectors' reports make clear the need to undertake a comprehensive Green Belt Review of the entire District before the release of any Green Belt land is considered. It is important to remember that the outcome of the Green Belt Review is only one, albeit an extremely important, piece of the evidence base that will inform the Council's future plan-making decisions.

Following completion of the Stage 1 work reported to Cabinet in September, work on the Green Belt Review Stage 2 has commenced. This work is being undertaken by external consultants appointed in the autumn. The fieldwork and analysis are underway and will provide an assessment of the broad locations identified in stage 1 work. In particular it will provide the Council with detailed evidence and information concerning the contribution different parcels of land make to the Green Belt purposes identified in the NPPF. This in turn will assist the Council in deciding:

- The areas where the Green Belt policy designation should remain;
- Any historic anomalies in the existing boundaries or locations where development has taken place, which may therefore suggest minor amendments to the Green Belt boundaries are required;
- Areas that may be least harmful in Green Belt terms if released from the Green Belt.

It therefore follows that, simply because a parcel, or part of the parcel, is being appraised as part of the more detailed work, this does not necessarily mean that it should / will be allocated for development in the emerging Local Plan, or that the Council would look favourably on a planning application.

The consultants' brief includes provision for workshops with officers, District Council members and Parish/Town Council representatives to feed into the work. Once the Stage 2 study has been completed, together with the other evidence, the findings of the Green Belt Review will be used to inform the Draft Plan Preferred Approach for consultation.

## ***Settlement Capacity Work***

The Council is also undertaking a settlement capacity analysis of the 10 largest settlements in the District, namely Epping, Theydon Bois, Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Loughton/Debden, Waltham Abbey, North Weald Bassett, Chipping Ongar, Lower Nazeing and Roydon. The purpose of the work is to ensure that the District can address as much of its housing requirement as possible within our existing settlements, and so minimise the potential need to utilise Green Belt land for development. Like Stage 2 of the Green Belt Review, the results of this work will be used to inform, and be published alongside, the consultation Draft Plan Preferred Approach.

## ***Transport***

To help inform the best way to meet the objectively assessed housing need for the Strategic Housing Market Area identified in the work by ORS, and reported to Cabinet in October 2015, further transport modelling work is being undertaken by Essex County Council. This will look at the implications for the transport network of growth and how it can be distributed across the Housing Market Area. The outputs will then be considered by the districts and jointly by the four authorities at the Cooperation for

Sustainable Development Board. This work is being progressed using support from ATLAS and facilitated by AECOM to undertake a sustainability appraisal on the impact of strategic growth options in the four authorities to meet the overall housing and employment figures for the SHMA area. Officers will shortly be meeting with Natural England to consider the impact on air quality in particular for Epping Forest.

Officers have also been involved in transport work being undertaken by the London Borough of Enfield and continue to keep a watching brief on wider transport work being undertaken as part of Enfield's Northern Gateway Access Package (NGAP).

### **3. Duty to Cooperate**

Officers and Members continue to meet regularly with appropriate authorities, principally through the Cooperation for Sustainable Development officer group and Member Board, to consider a wide range of cross boundary issues. In addition to the post SHMA, Employment and Green Belt Review work reported above, the Lea Valley Food Taskforce continues to develop a programme for growth around one of the District's historic and still important sectors.

The four SHMA authorities have recently jointly appointed a Strategic Sites Coordinator who starts shortly and whose role will be to technically assess and appraise sites around Harlow.