

## Report to Planning Scrutiny Panel

**Date of meeting: 2 September 2014**

**Portfolio:** Planning

**Subject:** Local Plan – progress report

**Officer contact for further information:** Anna Cronin (4119)

**Committee Secretary:** Mark Jenkins (4607)



# SCRUTINY

 Epping Forest District Council

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**Recommendations/Decisions Required: That the Local Plan progress report be noted.**

**Report:**

### Project Management/Local Plan timetable

1. 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.
2. **Options for Growth:** 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, and have worked with the Council's retained consultants 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.

### Update on Evidence

3. **Strategic Housing Market Assessment update:** 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 the inception meeting held. 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. A report is scheduled to go to Cabinet in December 2014.
4. **North Weald Airfield and Village Masterplan:** Progress has been made on the masterplanning 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. A draft report on the second phase of the work and the development of options for the settlement has been received following the exhibition on Saturday 28 June 2014. The final report will go to Cabinet in October for acceptance into the evidence base.
5. **Plan viability:** The 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 programme is on course to meet the timetable.

6. **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.
7. **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. September Cabinet will be asked to note this evidence and accept it into the evidence base.
8. **Green Belt Review:** A draft 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. 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 the end of September. It is proposed to share the findings of this with the Town and Parish Councils in accordance with the Cabinet's decision, before undertaking more detailed work.

#### Other Matters

9. **Developer briefings:** In conjunction with Harlow and East Herts Councils, Developers Briefings have been held to allow those who have put forward large SLAA sites on the edge of Harlow to set out their current thinking on their proposals for the development of these sites. This will assist officers in assessing which sites are deliverable (an important test at examination), the timing of delivery, any infrastructure requirements, and thus provide supporting evidence not only for Epping Forest's plan, but also for East Herts' plan. Further developer briefings are proposed for the other key settlements in the District – the team have been identifying the strategic sites outside the Harlow and North Weald areas where this might be appropriate. Harlow and Epping Forest 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 and an initial meeting was held on 20 August 2014.
10. **Other Councils' Plans:** Responses have been prepared to the publication of the Pre-Submission Local Plan for Uttlesford, which has now been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination, and to the Harlow Emerging Strategy and Further Options consultation. 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. These matters will be considered at the Examination scheduled to commence in September 2014.
11. **Duty to cooperate:** Officers 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. These meetings are being used as a mechanism for

sharing methodologies for undertaking these pieces of work. As such it is providing at officer level a very useful forum for dealing with duty to cooperate matters in a positive manner. A meeting is scheduled to discuss governance arrangements for members to mirror the officer group on 15 September 2014.

12. **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.

**Reason for decision:** The Panel has requested regular updates on the progress of the Local Plan

**Options considered and rejected:** None

**Consultation undertaken:** The Cabinet considered an updated timetable for the Local Plan in July 2014.

The Management Board receive regular updates on the progress of the Local Plan

**Resource implications:** The resource implications of the revised Local Plan timetable were set out in the report to Cabinet on the Local Development Scheme in July 2014.

**Background papers:** Cabinet agendas and minutes for June, July 2014

Cabinet key decisions list (forward plan)

Local Plan evidence on Epping Forest District Council website

**Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:** None specific

**Key Decision reference:** (if required) N/A