



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

An Extraordinary Meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **WEDNESDAY 15 JANUARY 2020 AT 7.00 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage', with a long, sweeping tail stroke.

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 7 January 2020

This meeting will be filmed for inclusion on the Council's website.

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, an even better place to do business

Our Priorities

Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential

Invest in regenerating towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging business growth

Ensure strong sustainable communities that are vibrant and supported by well designed development

Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough

Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services

The Underpinning Principles

Offer excellent value for your Council Tax

Provide affordable homes

Look after the vulnerable

Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life

Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency

Deliver quality in all that we do

MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

John Halsall	Leader of the Council
John Kaiser	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Housing
Parry Bath	Environment and Leisure
UllaKarin Clark	Children's Services
Charlotte Haitham Taylor	Regeneration
Pauline Jorgensen	Highways and Transport
Charles Margetts	Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services
Stuart Munro	Business and Economic Development
Gregor Murray	Climate Emergency
Wayne Smith	Planning and Enforcement

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
66.		<p>APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence</p>	
67.		<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest</p>	
68.		<p>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME To answer any public questions</p> <p>A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice.</p> <p>The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the item included within this agenda.</p> <p>Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to the item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions</p>	
69.		<p>MEMBER QUESTION TIME To answer any member questions</p> <p>A period of 20 minutes will be allowed for Members to ask questions relating to the item included within this agenda</p> <p>Any questions not dealt with within the allotted time will be dealt with in a written reply</p>	

A decision sheet will be available for inspection at the Council's offices (in Democratic Services and the General Office) and on the web site no later than two working days after the meeting.

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Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

TITLE	Local Plan Update: Draft Plan Consultation
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Wednesday, 15 January 2020
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement - Wayne Smith

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The purpose of this report is to seek Executive's approval to carry out consultation on a Local Plan Update (LPU): Draft Plan, the document that will guide how development will be managed. Once adopted, the LPU will replace the Council's current planning policies that are set out in the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) local plans. Adoption of the LPU will enable the production of subordinate or supplementary planning guidance such as the Borough Design Guide, which just be based on adopted planning policy.

The Regulations governing the preparation of local plans require that plans are prepared in consultation with the local community and other stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) agree the Local Plan Update: Draft Plan (as set out in Appendix 2 to the report) and other supporting documents for consultation;
- 2) agree the proposed consultation framework;
- 3) agree that any minor changes to the Draft Plan and material produced to support the consultation be delegated to the Director of Locality and Customer Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning and Enforcement; and
- 4) adopt the Local Development Scheme 2019 (as set out in Appendix 3 to the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is a requirement to regularly review and where necessary update local plans – the documents that contain a council's planning policies and are used as the starting point for determining planning applications. Whilst the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans are still working to manage development within Wokingham Borough, they are intended to do this to 2026.

The preparation of a new local plan – the Local Plan Update (LPU), will look further forward and so ensure that our planning policies continue to be effective in managing decisions by the council, and where these are appealed, by Planning Inspectors.

Without effective planning policies, there would be no real control or influence over where and how new housing and other types of development take place.

Local plans must be prepared in consultation with the local community and other stakeholders. The next stage of preparing the LPU is consultation on a Draft Plan which sets out the proposed vision, objectives and strategy for how development is managed. This is proposed to start no later than 3 February and end 20 March

Through consultations held to date, respondents have expressed clear preferences for development needs to be met through large scale developments, where infrastructure can be planned, funded and provided alongside and for infrastructure to be provided early, and where possible, ahead of development.

The draft vision for the LPU is:

- I. A borough that focuses on the needs of our residents
- II. A borough that will be sustainable for years to come.
- III. A borough where people choose to live, learn and work because the places we build and the places we protect are valued and enriching.

The draft vision has had regard to the views expressed to date, and are in line with the priorities of the emerging Council Plan.

Analysis of the housing market clearly shows a number of failings with the way the government has calculated the minimum number of homes a council must plan for. A case will be advanced to demonstrate exceptional circumstances exist to deviate from the normal application of this government planning policy reducing the requirement to 769.2 dwellings per annum. We will review and adjust this figure downwards if the future circumstances permit.

In line with the expressed preference of residents, the draft development strategy seeks to meet the majority of development needs through the continued delivery of our existing strategic development locations as defined and specified in the Core Strategy adopted in 2010, and through the creation of a garden town at Grazeley. This has been endorsed by the cross party Planning and Transport Policy Member Working Group as the most sustainable and suitable option. The Grazeley proposal will provide a significant supply of housing beyond the plan period of 2036, into the 2050s, helping to reduce or eliminate the need for large scale development elsewhere. It also allows opportunity for the SDL developments to fully form and mature.

With the delivery of a highly sustainable garden town at Grazeley, only a handful of the 300+ areas of land promoted by landowners for development are required for allocation. Due to the proximity of Grazeley to the Shinfield/Spencers Wood/Three Mile Cross SDL, the spatial strategy expressly seeks to provide a protective buffer in the form of a limitation to further large scale development in this area.

The Draft Plan also proposes a wide range of planning policies to ensure its quality and to protect the environment. These include policies in response to the challenge of climate change, air quality, and the identification of a brand new (nationally) type of local plan designation to bring protection to valued landscapes and Local Green Spaces. The Draft Plan also seeks to secure a high proportion of affordable housing to assist those who are unable to access suitable housing via the market.

Whilst separate to the local plan process, we know through the 'Enough is Enough' campaign, that residents have concerns over the scale of house building being required by government. The council will continue to convey to government the strength of public feeling and frustration in this regard and to try to ensure that future changes to the planning system are more sensitive and reflective of places, and recognise that local authorities that deliver new housing are given greater assurances that local decisions will be respected and upheld.

A key part of this is to continue its dialogue with government through the Garden Settlement Programme and the HIF bid with a view to securing freedoms and flexibilities in recognition of our housing delivery.

BACKGROUND

The Council's current planning policies are contained in the Core Strategy (adopted 2010) and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) (adopted 2014) local plans.

Councils are required to regularly review and where necessary update their local plans. Whilst the Core Strategy and MDD are still working to manage development now, they are intended to do this to 2026. While they contain some flexibility to coordinate development for a longer period, the preparation of a new local plan – the Local Plan Update (LPU) - looking further forward will ensure that planning policies continue to be effective in managing decisions by the council, and where these are appealed, by Planning Inspectors.

Without effective planning policies, there would be no real control or influence over where and how new housing and other types of development take place. This could lead to housing and other forms of development being allowed in poor locations, being of lower quality, and in places where infrastructure cannot be improved to help deal with the impacts, e.g. pressures on roads, schools and community facilities. The lack of control and coordination is likely to lead to a higher scale of housebuilding across the borough, as has been experienced in the period before the adoption of the Core Strategy local plan.

CONSULTATION

Local plans must be prepared in consultation with the local community and other stakeholders. The council previously consulted on an Issues and Options in 2016 and the Homes for the Future Consultation in 2018/2019.

Through these consultations, respondents have clear preferences. These include:

- Preference for development needs to be met through large scale developments, where infrastructure can be planned, funded and provided alongside.
- Preference for large developments to be located where there is good accessibility to transport links, they are adjacent to existing settlements and ensures the delivery of new infrastructure.
- Recognition that a range of approaches are required to meet development needs, including size of site and location across the borough.
- Preference for infrastructure to be provided early, and where possible ahead of development, to limit limits.
- Acknowledgement of the need to understand changes in the employment and retail markets, and allowing areas to adapt positively to future requirements.
- The need to protect the identity of places, and the role of the countryside and Green Belt in achieving this,

Further details are provided in the Statement of Consultation (see Appendix 1 - available via the Council's website or on request from Democratic Services).

NEXT STEPS

The next stage of preparing the LPU is consultation on a Draft Plan, setting out the proposed vision, objectives and strategy for how development is managed. The proposed consultation will facilitate further engagement, with comments received helping to confirm or refine the policy approaches and allocations.

The amended Plan will be subject to further consultation and subsequently submission to the government for examination later this year.

DRAFT PLAN OVERVIEW

The strategy and policies presented in the Draft Plan has been guided and endorsed by the cross party Planning and Transport Policy Member Working Group. The full Draft Plan is provided in Appendix 2 (available via the Council's website or on request from Democratic Services).

Vision and objectives

Establishing a vision is the starting point for the LPU, in that it sets out the broad philosophy of what is trying to be achieved. To aid the delivery of the draft vision, a number of strategic objectives have been defined.

The draft vision is:

- I. A borough that focuses on the needs of our residents
- II. A borough that will be sustainable for years to come.
- III. A borough where people choose to live, learn and work because the places we build and the places we protect are valued and enriching.

Whilst the LPU looks towards 2036, the vision takes a much longer term view.

The strategic objectives include:

- Making the fullest contribution possible to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change and the transition to a low-carbon economy.
- Reduce the need to travel and widen travel choice, by providing local opportunities to access learning and employment, services and facilities, through ensuring that options for walking, cycling and public transport are attractive, accessible for all, convenient and safe, and by enabling digital connectivity.
- Maintain and strengthen the sense of place by securing quality designed development through protecting and enhancing the distinctive historic environment, landscape character, townscape character and biodiversity value, assisting vibrancy, and by keeping settlements separate.
- Champion thriving town and local centres to provide the focus of their communities both in social and economic activity, ensuring they can adapt to the challenges they face.
- Enable conditions to allow the economy to creatively grow by being adaptable to structural and technological change, ensuring the economic benefits are felt by all.
- Facilitate timely provision of new and improved infrastructure by working with providers to achieve focused investment and by securing appropriate benefits from new development.

The draft vision and strategic objectives has had regard to the views expressed to date, and are in line with the priorities of the emerging Council Plan.

Development needs

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It is a requirement that local plans are consistent with the NPPF.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that local plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area, and that the strategic policies within them should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing, as well as needs that cannot be within neighbouring areas.

Paragraph 60 states the minimum number of homes needed, should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals.

Demonstrating exceptional circumstances requires the presentation of a set of factors that come together to justify diverting from the normal application of national planning policy and guidance. There is no formal definition or standard set of assessment criteria.

Analysis of the housing market clearly shows a number of failings with the standard method as it applies in the context of Wokingham Borough. These include the impact of new house building increasing the median house prices (contrary to the premise of the standard method), and the failure to recognise the geographical and functional relationship between Wokingham Borough and Reading and the associated impact on median workplace earnings.

When these factors are addressed in the standard method calculation, local housing need calculates as 769.2 dwellings per year from April 2019. Applying the standard method unaltered results in a local housing need of 804 dwellings per year. The concerns expressed by residents earlier this year (see the section 'Safeguards of the Plan-Led System' below) were in response to a housing requirement of 800-900 dwellings per year. The 769.2 dwelling figure is substantially lower. We will review and adjust this figure downwards if the future circumstances permit.

Spatial strategy and sites proposed for allocations

The strategy established by our existing local plans – the Core Strategy and MDD focus the majority of development in the four Strategic Development Locations (SDL) (North and South Wokingham, Arborfield Garrison and Shinfield/Spencers Wood/Three Mile Cross), with a lesser level of development supported within towns and villages subject to consideration of accessibility and impacts. This approach has enabled significant new infrastructure to be delivered alongside new homes so helping to mitigate impacts and allowing us opportunity to retain the character of our towns and villages through actions such as the retention of gardens.

The four SDLs will continue to make a significant contribution to meeting housing needs in the LPU. Further land is required to help meet the longer term needs and to address a new government requirement that a proportion of new housing is delivered on small sites under one hectare.

In line with the expressed preference of residents, an assessment of strategic scale development opportunities has been undertaken. This shows that the creation of a garden town at Grazeley is the most sustainable and suitable option to meet the majority of additional housing needs in the plan period to 2036 and beyond into the 2050s. It offers the opportunity to create new community, well supported by infrastructure so limiting the need to travel by car for everyday journeys, and with rail link to both Reading and Basingstoke, and dedicated public transport routes into Reading, providing a viable alternative to the car.

The proposal to create a Grazeley garden town was unanimously supported by the cross party Planning and Transport Policy Member Working Group.

The creation of the garden town has been investigated jointly with West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council. It has the potential to deliver 10,000 dwellings within Wokingham Borough and 5,000 dwellings in West Berkshire District over an extended period.

To achieve the upfront delivery of key infrastructure, again a key priority of residents, a joint bid to the government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) has been made for £252m. A successful outcome will enable the upfront delivery of a wide package of infrastructure including measures designed to mitigate traffic effects.

The delivery of a garden town at Grazeley supplements the existing SDLs and similarly reduces or eliminates the need for large scale development on the edge of other towns and villages. It also allows opportunity for the SDL developments to fully form and mature.

Due to the proximity of Grazeley to the Shinfield/Spencers Wood/Three Mile Cross SDL, the spatial strategy expressly seeks to protect this area with a buffer to limit further large scale development in this area. This provides some assurance regarding further unplanned change in the area, and seeks to overcome issues of displacement, where housing markets compete to the detriment of delivery.

With the continued delivery of existing SDL as originally defined in the Core Strategy local plan adopted in 2010 (with minor amendments) and the proposed allocation of Grazeley garden town, only a handful of the 300+ areas of land promoted by landowners for development are proposed for allocation for further housing development (18 sites, providing a minimum of 940 dwellings) and all these have been discussed with and are preferred by the relevant town and parish council. These are spread across the borough, and include the continued support for the regeneration of Wokingham town centre.

Other key policy areas

Many of the draft policies in the Draft Plan provide a continuation of the current policy approach. However, in line with the above-mentioned vision and objectives, the Draft Local Plan includes some changes. These include the following policy areas.

a) Climate change (new policy area)

Climate change is challenging the way we do things and, by declaring a climate emergency, the Council has committed itself to leading by example.

By locating the majority of development in places that reduce car dependency will help achieve this. In addition, the Draft Plan proposes a range of policies that seek to make the fullest contribution towards transitioning to a low carbon society. These will include requiring all new major developments to be carbon neutral and a permissive approach towards renewable energy generation provided the impacts are acceptable.

b) Valued landscapes (new protective policy)

In line with the objective of strengthening the sense of place, objective analysis has been undertaken to create a framework of valued landscapes. These are landscapes where a combination of attributes show them to be particularly important. In total, the Draft Plan proposes the designation of 10 valued landscapes.

c) Local Green Space (new protective policy)

The NPPF introduced a new optional designation of Local Green Space (LGS). This allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. The Draft Plan proposed the designation of 12 LGS, helping to ensure that the value of these areas are reflected in the consideration of any development proposals.

d) Affordable housing

Access to affordable, high quality housing is a challenge for people living and working in the borough, and in particular the young given that they are more likely to be on lower incomes. In recent years, the supply of affordable housing in the borough has increased significantly, largely due to delivery across the four existing SDL, with delivery being one of the highest in England. Despite this, the net need for affordable housing remains high.

The government advises through the NPPF that the provision of affordable housing should not be sought from developments of 9 or less dwellings, other than in designated rural areas.

The strategy established by our existing local plans – the Core Strategy and MDD require proportionate provision from developments of 5 or more dwellings. Given the ongoing need for affordable housing, the Draft Plan proposes to continue seeking a proportion of affordable housing from schemes below the government's advice.

e) Air quality

Air quality will be a key consideration when looking at proposed developments, with applicants required to provide information and ensure air quality is maintained.

f) Rural exceptions

Rural exception sites are scale developments for affordable housing on land that would not normally be acceptable for housing. They are used to meet specific local housing need. We will actively promote this type of development to local communities.

Sustainability Appraisal

All local plans are required to be appraisal through a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).

The SA considered ways that the plan can contribute to improvements in environmental, social and economic conditions; as well as a means of identifying and mitigating any potential adverse effects that the plan might otherwise have. In doing so, it helps make sure that proposals in the plan are appropriate given reasonable alternatives.

Alternatives to a garden settlement at Grazeley explored through the SA include building more homes in or adjacent to the Shinfield/Spencers Wood/Three Mile Cross SDL, Arborfield Garrison SDL, and along the A4 corridor including the release of land from the Green Belt at Twyford / Ruscombe.

The HRA considers potential impact of the plan on sites of international importance to nature consideration, including Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation. In doing so the HRA ensures the proposals in the plan maintain the integrity of these important sites.

PROPOSED CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

The council is required under the Regulations governing the preparation of local plans to consult with key stakeholders. The arrangements adopted by the council are expressed in the Statement of Consultation (SCI).

Taking the Regulatory and SCI requirements into account, the following actions are proposed:

Consultation will start no later than 3 February and end 20 March 2020.

The consultation will involve the following:

- Notification of all those on the existing Planning Policy consultation database;
- Notification to all those people and organisations registered on the major development sites, vulnerable groups information databases;
- Making the documents available on:
 - The Council's website;
 - At the Shute End offices;
- Distributing a summary leaflet to households across the borough via Royal Mail;
- Using social and traditional media to promote the consultation;
- Staffing four drop-in sessions across the borough in keeping with the proposed development strategy.

Whilst the drop-in events will focus on the Draft Local Plan, the events will also be attended by the council's transport planning team who will be seeking views on transport issues across the borough. The views gathered will assist with the preparation of the Local Transport Plan. This will look at issues including roads, congestion, public transport, cycling and walking across the borough.

SAFEGUARDS OF THE PLAN-LED SYSTEM

Separate to the local plan process, through the 'Enough is Enough' campaign lead by elected Members, we know that residents have strong concerns over the scale of house building being required by government (800-900 dwellings per year). The council will continue to lobby the government showing the strength of public feeling and frustration in this regard and to try to ensure that future changes to the planning system are more sensitive and reflective of places, and recognise that local authorities that deliver new housing are given greater assurances that local decisions will be respected and upheld.

A key part of this is to continue its dialogue with government through the Garden Settlement Programme and the HIF bid with a view to securing freedoms and flexibilities in recognition of our housing delivery.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

A Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a public statement of the programme for the production of local plans required by Regulations governing the planning system.

Since the publication of the last LDS in 2018, there has been a change in circumstances, resulting in the need to revise the programme. This includes the decision to undertake a further consultation on the joint minerals and waste local plan being prepared with Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead; and to reflect the timing of the Draft Plan consultation.

Amending the LDS will ensure that residents and others are able to understand when future stages in plan preparation are anticipated. An amended LDS is provided in Appendix 3 (available via the Council's website or on request from Democratic Services).

BUSINESS CASE

The council is required under legislation and national planning policy / guidance to maintain an up-to-date local plan. The next stage of preparing the LPU is consultation on a Draft Plan. The proposed consultation will facilitate further engagement. The Draft Plan provides sustainable strategy that will allow for a new local plan to be progressed on a sound basis

Clearly as part of a consultation and engagement process, the comments received will help to confirm or refine the policy approaches and allocations, prior to the plan being submitted to the government for examination. Changes in national policy and guidance will also need to be considered and may lead to amendments.

To achieve the upfront delivery of key infrastructure, again a key priority of residents, a joint bid to the government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) has been made for £252m. The proposed plan is based on a successful bid. In the event that the bid is unsuccessful, consideration will need to be given to the delivery profile of housing to ensure adequate supply is maintained. This may require amendments to the proposed strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Circa 315k	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Circa 350k	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Circa 150k	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

The table above sets out the project costs associated with producing the Local Plan Update.

This is a multi-year project and therefore the costs will be spread across a number of financial years, the exact timing of which will be subject to external influences such as the Planning Inspectorate's availability for the examination. The profile of the budget may vary according to external other factors, and unless exceptional costs arise, is expected to be covered by agreed budgets.

Not progressing the Local Plan Update will result in increased costs through the planning application and appeal process.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

The Draft Plan has had regard to the outcome of earlier consultations alongside technical studies and assessments. The proposed consultation on the Draft Plan will facilitate further engagement, with comments received helping to confirm or refine the policy approaches and allocations.

The proposed consultation framework is based on the council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

Public Sector Equality Duty

An Initial Impact Assessment is attached.

List of Background Papers

- [National Planning Policy Framework](#)
- [Planning Practice Guide: Housing and Economic Needs Assessments](#)
- [LPU Issues and Options \(Aug 2016\)](#)
- [Issues and Options Summary of Responses](#)
- [Homes for the Future \(Nov 2018 - Feb 2019\)](#)
- [Wokingham Strategic Growth Locations Report June 2018](#)
- Housing Infrastructure Fund bid

Contact Ian Bellinger	Service Place Commissioning
Telephone Tel: 0118 974 6231	Email ian.bellinger@wokingham.gov.uk

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: Initial impact assessment

If an officer is undertaking a project, policy change or service change, then an initial impact assessment must be completed and attached alongside the Project initiation document.

EqIA Titular information:

Date:	7 January 2020
Service:	Strategy and Commissioning (Place)
Project, policy or service EQIA relates to:	Local Plan Update (LPU): Draft Plan Consultation
Completed by:	Ben Davis (Growth and Delivery Specialist)
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	Yes
Signed off by:	Nigel Bailey
Sign off date:	07/01/2019

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1. Policy, Project or service information:

This section should be used to identify the main purpose of the project, policy or service change, the method of delivery, including who key stakeholders are, main beneficiaries and any associated aims.

What is the purpose of the project, policy change or service change , its expected outcomes and how does it relate to your services corporate plan:

The purpose of the consultation is to seek views on the Local Plan Update (LPU): Draft Plan, the document that will guide how development will be managed. The Draft Plan includes proposed site allocations. Other supporting documentation including the draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and draft Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) amongst other technical studies also form part of the consultation. The Draft LPU comprises:

- Vision and objectives for the plan period 2018-2036

- Strategic matters (including sustainable development and locational principles, sites to be allocated for development to help meet needs (housing and economic development), infrastructure (including identifying areas of land to be safeguarded for strategic highway schemes) and responding to climate change)
- Policies to assist the council when making decisions on planning applications, covering topics such as:
 - Development in the Green Belt and countryside
 - Design
 - Protection of existing housing stock, specialist housing for older people and vulnerable people, rural exception sites, housing mix, criteria for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites and criteria for houseboat dwellers
 - Change of use within retail areas, and protection of community services and facilities (including a new policy to protect green areas important to the local community)
 - Heritage
 - Natural Environment (including biodiversity and nature conservation, the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, valued landscapes and green and blue corridors)
 - Pollution (air quality, noise, water and light) and hazards, land potentially affected by contamination, flood risk and drainage
 - Transport, movement and connectivity

Public consultation on the Draft Plan LPU is planned to start no later than 3rd February 2020 and end 20 March 2020. The report to Executive seeks the agreement of the Draft Plan for consultation, agree delegation of minor changes and updates the programme moving forwards.

Public consultation on the draft plan is a legal requirement under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2017. The consultation will be undertaken in line with the principles set out in the council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and all relevant legislation and regulations governing that process. The draft plan will also be supported by a detailed Communications, Engagement and Marketing Plan setting out when and how consultation on the Draft Plan will take place and who will be consulted. The Communications, Engagement and Marketing Plan will set out the overall programme for the consultation period, including details of public consultation events (to be held at Grazeley, Wokingham and Woodley) and other engagement activities with stakeholders, local communities, town and parish councils and hard to reach groups. The plan also sets out the methods for communication and engagement on the draft plan for the consultation, including a social media campaign, press and news releases and website updates.

Outline how you are delivering your project, policy change or service change. What governance arrangements are in place, which internal stakeholders (Service managers, Assistant Directors, Members ect) have/will be consulted and informed about the project or changes:

The consultation framework for the Draft Plan will be undertaken in accordance with the council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement for planning policy consultations. A summary of the proposed wider public consultation is set out in the previous section of this EqIA but in addition our consultation will involve seeking feedback from a range of interested organisations and other parties (including general and specific consultation bodies specified in the Regulations) as well as councillors and officers.

Members (including the Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement and Leader of the Opposition) have been engaged during the preparation of the draft plan through the cross party Planning and Transport Policy Member Working Group. Other internal stakeholders have been engaged on a general or specific basis throughout the preparation of this consultation draft including Corporate Leadership Team and lead specialists from across the Council.

Outline who are the main beneficiaries of the Project, policy change or service change?

The Draft Plan has been produced by the Strategy and Commissioning (Place) team, with the input of internal officers, communities and stakeholders through previous stages of consultation (Issues and Options; Homes for the Future). In the longer term and once adopted, all residents of the borough will benefit from having a new local plan, ensuring that planning policy remains and effective in managing decisions by the council. This provides greater certainty on the future delivery of development across the borough, including new housing, infrastructure, jobs and services and facilities.

Adoption of the new Local Plan will also reduce the risk of unplanned speculative planning applications and appeals being granted. This can lead to housing and other forms of development being allowed in poor locations, being of lower quality, and in places where infrastructure cannot be improved to deal with impacts, e.g. pressures on roads, schools and community facilities.

Planning policies in the new local plan will also provide a clear reference point for any town or parish council that is considering preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Outline any associated aims attached to the project, policy change or service change:

Public consultation on the Draft Plan will generate comments from individuals and organisations (including statutory bodies). These will be used to confirm, refine or amend the proposed approach.

An amended Plan will be prepared and consulted under the next stage of the local plan process - the pre-submission plan (Regulation 19). This version will be submitted to government for independent examination.

2. Protected characteristics:

There are 9 protected characteristics as defined by the legislation:

- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Age
- Religious belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership:

To find out more about the protected groups, please consult the EQIA guidance.

3. Initial Impact review:

In the table below, please indicate whether your project, Policy change or service change will have a positive or negative impact on one of the protected characteristics. To assess the level of impact, please assign each group a Positive, No, Low or High impact score:

For information on how to define No, low or high impact, please consult the EQIA guidance document.

If your project is to have a positive impact on one of the protected groups, please outline this in the table below.

For details on what constitutes a positive impact, please consult the EQIA guidance.

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Race:	Positive	<p>There is likely to be a positive impact.</p> <p>The council will seek to meet the identified needs of different groups, or enable needs to be met, within the community (which includes gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople and houseboat dwellers).</p>
Gender:	No	<p>Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Draft Plan would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the Draft Plan.</p>
Disabilities:	Positive	<p>There is likely to be a positive impact.</p> <p>The Draft Plan includes policies relating to affordable housing, housing mix and specialist accommodation for older and vulnerable groups in the borough.</p> <p>The council will also seek to meet the identified needs of other different groups, or enable needs to be met, including older people, people with physical, mental or learning disabilities and other vulnerable groups.</p> <p>A policy is included in the Draft Plan to support the provision of specialist housing for older people and vulnerable people who suffers from issues such as reduced mobility and dementia. Requirements are also set out in policy for a proportion of new homes to be constructed to meet wheelchair and accessibility standards.</p> <p>Policies to improve accessibility and infrastructure are likely to benefit those with reduced mobility and physical and visual impairments, for example policies relating to walking and cycling, green and blue infrastructure and Public Rights of Way.</p> <p>The Draft Plan includes a policy relating to place making and design which ensures the design of building and places are fully accessible and inclusive for all users, including people with mobility impairments or other health issues.</p>

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Age:	Positive	<p>There is likely to be a positive impact.</p> <p>The delivery of development will include a proportion of affordable housing which is an important part of ensuring that no particular groups are unfairly disadvantaged.</p> <p>The council will also seek to meet the identified needs of different groups within the community, or enable needs to be met, including older people and younger people. The addition of the new homes will provide opportunities for first time buyers. A policy is also included in the draft plan to provide specialist housing for older people, including a proportion of new homes constructed to meet wheelchair and accessibility standards.</p> <p>The draft LPU also includes policies on housing for older people and vulnerable people, play space, open space, leisure and sports facilities, protection of community facilities and services. A new policy is included in the plan to protect areas of open/green space that are demonstrably special to the local community.</p> <p>The Draft Plan also includes a policy relating to place making and design to ensure the design of buildings and places are fully accessible and inclusive for all users, including people of all ages.</p> <p>Proposed allocations will need to mitigate their impact as appropriate, for example in relation to education facilities and youth facilities. The creation of a new garden town at Grazeley will deliver a mix of housing to meet different needs within the new community and significant infrastructure including open space, education, youth facilities and other services to accommodate all ages within the new community.</p>
Sexual orientation:	None	<p>Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Draft Plan would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the Draft Plan.</p>
Religion/belief:		<p>Potential for some positive impact, for example proposed allocations will need to mitigate their impact as appropriate, which may include improved/new community facilities (which could be used by all sectors of the community). The creation of a new garden town at Grazeley will provide substantial infrastructure and services, including a town centre, providing facilities that can be used by all sectors of the community.</p> <p>A policy is included in the Draft Plan to protect existing community services and facilities (including places of worship).</p>

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Gender re-assignment:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Draft Plan would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the Draft Plan.
Pregnancy and Maternity:	Positive	<p>Potential for some positive impact, for example proposed allocations will need to mitigate their impact as appropriate, which may include new/improved community services and facilities (which have ability to be used by health practitioners and children's/nursery facilities). The creation of a new garden town at Grazeley will also deliver substantial infrastructure, services and facilities including a new health care hub.</p> <p>Policies to improve accessibility and infrastructure are likely to benefit those with reduced mobility, for example provision for green and blue infrastructure, Public Rights of Way (including Greenways) and walking and cycling should be designed to meet the needs of all users, which may include pregnant women and those with babies/young children.</p> <p>A policy is also included in the draft plan relating to place making and design to ensure buildings and spaces are accessible and inclusive for all users, which may include pregnant women and those with babies/younger children.</p>
Marriage and civil partnership:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the draft LPU would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the Draft Plan.

Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment for any groups you have identified as having a low or high negative impact. If No impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must report on this initial assessment and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy or service change.

Initial impact assessment approved by

Nigel Bailey: Interim Assistant Director Housing & Place Commissioning

Date: 7th January 2020

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