

TITLE	Local Development Scheme (LDS)
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 28 July 2016
WARD	None Specific
DIRECTOR	Heather Thwaites, Director for Environment
LEAD MEMBER	Mark Ashwell, Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Local Plan will provide a robust strategy for well-designed development, which will help to regenerate the Borough's towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging economic growth.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is asked to approve the updated Local Development Scheme to be effective from 29 July 2016

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Council has to maintain and publish a programme (timetable) showing what Local Plan documents are to be produced over a three year period – the Local Development Scheme. Local Plan documents are very important when deciding planning applications. The current programme covers 25 September 2015 to 24 September 2018 and it requires updating.

The main changes to the Local Development Scheme (LDS) are due to:

- Amendments to the timetable for the production of the Council's Local Plan Update
- Incorporation of the Gypsy & Traveller Local Plan into the Local Plan Update
- The timescales for producing the Minerals and Waste Local Plan changing

Background

A Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a document that sets out a local planning authority's programme for producing planning policy documents. Local planning authorities are required to produce a Local Development Scheme under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended by the Localism Act 2011. This will set out which planning policy documents the authority will be producing and when. It must be made publically available and kept up to date.

The Council produced a new version of the LDS in September 2015 due to the emerging Local Plan Update at the time. However, due to further review of the stages required for an effective Local Plan and additional issues set out below, a further revision is proposed.

Analysis of Issues

The Council needs to maintain an up to date 3 year programme for Local Plans in its Local Development Scheme. The timetable for Local Plans within the current Local Development Scheme need changing because:

Local Plan Update (LPU)

A two stage Options Stage is not included within the current scheme. Separation of this initial public consultation stage into an initial Draft Options and a subsequent Preferred Options stage is considered preferable for a number of reasons as follows:

- Wider opportunities for the community to be able to inform at an early stage what the LPU should cover – initial informal engagement, particularly with the Parish / Town Councils has already indicated that they would welcome this approach
- The timetable and stages will be better aligned with the other Berkshire authorities in the Western Housing Market Area
- To ultimately maximise the likelihood of the Planning Inspectorate (who will 'examine' the LPU) finding that the LPU is legally compliant and 'sound' in line with para 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Local Plan Update will also ensure that the Council can maintain its 5 year housing land supply through to 2036. The scheme envisages adoption in May 2019.

Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan

The current LDS envisaged that the authority would progress a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (GTLP) through to eventual adoption in March 2017, covering a plan period of 2014 – 2029. This has now been incorporated into the Local Plan Update in order to ensure consistency both with regards to the plan period (up to 2036) and the assessment and allocation of housing and traveller sites. There are also associated cost savings, such as having one examination on the Local Plan rather than the need for the GTLP to be examined separately by the Planning Inspectorate

Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP)

The current Local Development Scheme recognised that the authority was considering the potential to produce a joint Local Plan with at least one other Berkshire local authority. Hampshire County Council has now offered to produce a joint Minerals and Waste Plan on behalf of Wokingham, Reading, Bracknell Forest and RBWM Councils. The timetable for production of the joint Minerals and Waste Plan is shown in the Local Development Scheme.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £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) are these costs relating to the decision? Or just context for other financial information box?	LPU circa £300k M&W circa £60k	Yes – the costs of producing the LPU will be covered by the existing budget, which is £800k, therefore covering the circa £760k, which is expected to be spent in the future. Yes – the costs of producing the M & W Plan can also be covered by separate existing agreed budget of £300k	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	LPU circa £90k M & W circa £120k		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	LPU circa £370k M&W circa £120k		
	Total – circa £760k for LPU and circa £300k for M & W	Please note that these same figures for the LPU are used in the LPU Issues and Options Executive Report	

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The agreement of the Local Development Scheme does not commit the Council to the production of the documents. The Council will make some savings based on amalgamating the GTLP work into the Local Plan Update.

The discussions on Joint work for the Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP) may affect the cost of the plan since there should be opportunities for economies of scale i.e. sharing the cost of the necessary examination between several authorities. The timescale for the MWLP is in the process of being finalised so some spending may take place beyond Year 3.

A special item of up to £800,000 has been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan for the period from 2015 – 2018 for the Local Plan Update although this budget can be re-profiled to reflect the altered timescales for the LPU. The split across the three financial years will be altered depending on when, for example, it is appropriate to commission different parts of the wide evidence base that supports the LPU

Cross-Council Implications

Whilst the Scheme itself does not impact upon Council Services, the Local Plans which the authority subsequently produces in line with the timetable will. This is because the Local Plans will help to provide a robust strategy to help shape places and guide development.

List of Background Papers

Draft Local Development Scheme for 29 July 2016 to 28 July 2019.

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