

Agenda Item IMD19

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD: 2017/19

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| TITLE | Wokingham Borough Council response to the consultation on Runnymede Borough Council's Local Plan 2035: Additional Sites and Options (Regulation 18) |
| FOR CONSIDERATION BY | Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Highways, Cllr David Lee |
| ON | 10 July 2017 |
| TIME | 11:20 am |
| WARD | Non-Specific |
| DIRECTOR | Interim Director for Environment, Josie Wragg |

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

That development proposed through Runnymede Borough Council's Local Plan 2035: Additional Sites and Options document has minimal negative impacts upon Wokingham Borough and that any positive benefits are maximised.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Highways agrees that Wokingham Borough Council:

1. Welcomes the additional work undertaken by RBC, and
2. Lodges a holding objection to Runnymede Borough Council's Local Plan 2035: Additional Sites and Options (Regulation 18) until such time as RBC demonstrate that housing needs are addressed across their wider HMA.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) has published their Local Plan 2035: Additional Sites and Options document. RBC has amended its proposals relating to the provision of housing over the Plan period and amended its preferred approach for its spatial strategy and is currently undertaking an additional round of public consultation, in attempt to meet its housing need.

Background

In summer 2016, Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) published their Local Plan Issues, Options and Preferred Approaches consultation (Regulation 18). RBC's preferred approach was to meet between just 56% and 82% of its proportion of the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for Housing.

In response to this consultation a number of Duty to Cooperate bodies and interested parties, including Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) raised concern that RBC was proposing a housing target that fell well short of the proportion of the OAN for housing. RBC previously stated: '*Runnymede places greater weight on the need to protect the overall integrity and function of the Green Belt than to fully meeting objectively assessed needs from more poorly performing sites*'. WBC requested that RBC reconsidered its preferred approach to its spatial strategy and work to ensure that it could accommodate its housing need within their housing market area in order to potentially avoid putting further strain on neighbouring authorities to accommodate any unmet housing need. There was no commitment from Local Authorities in the area surrounding area to assist in meeting RBC's unmet need.

RBC has now published the Additional Sites and Options document, amending its proposals relating to the provision of housing over the plan period and amending its preferred approach for its spatial strategy and is currently undertaking an additional round of public consultation, in attempt to meet its housing need.

Analysis of Issues

Housing Need

RBC is within a Housing Market Area (HMA) with Spelthorne Borough Council, according to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) prepared by the two local authorities. The SHMA identifies that within the HMA, there is a need for between 1,018 and 1,292 dwellings per annum (dpa) to be delivered between 2013 and 2033. The housing need apportioned to Runnymede is between 466 and 535 dpa and with Spelthorne Borough's need is between 552-757 dpa.

RBC appears to acknowledge the need for increased housing delivery within their borough with the consultation material suggesting this will be achieved through:

- A reassessment of the capacity of the preferred site allocations
- The inclusion of further site allocations in the Local Plan
- The adjustment of several assumptions factored in to the Council's evidence base relating to housing supply.

Notwithstanding these actions it remains unclear whether RBC will plan to meet their housing needs with the consultation material appearing to suggest a level under the assessed need. It is noted however that in October 2016 RBC undertook a Call for Sites. Newly promoted sites have not yet been subject to assessment, but RBC state they will be analysed moving forward.

Moving to the wider HMA the consultation material contains no commitment to the housing needs of both RBC and Spelthorne Borough Council being addressed.

It is recommended that WBC welcomes the additional work that RBC has undertaken since its last Local Plan consultation to increase the housing land supply within their borough but expresses strong concerns should the housing needs arising from both RBC and Spelthorne Borough Council not be fully accommodated within the HMA. Not fully addressing housing needs is likely to lead to WBC objecting at future stages.

It is further stated that WBC express that housing provision within Wokingham Borough would not suitably address unmet housing needs arising within RBC or Spelthorne Borough Council.

RBC should be mindful of the proposed standardised Objectively Assessed Need methodology within the government’s Housing White Paper that was published in February 2017. RBC may need to reconsider the level of housing need and potential allocations should the level of assessed need change.

Conclusion

WBC:

1. Welcomes the additional work undertaken by RBC;
2. Expresses strong concerns should the housing needs across the wider HMA not be addressed in full and that a failure to address this is likely to lead to an objection to the plan;
3. Express that housing provision in Wokingham Borough would not suitably address housing needs in RBC or Spelthorne Borough Council, and
4. Further engagement between the authorities is welcomed as RBC progresses its Plan.

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) | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Next Financial Year (Year 2) | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Following Financial Year (Year 3) | N/A | N/A | N/A |

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| Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision |
| None anticipated |

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| Cross-Council Implications |
| Decisions in RBC regarding meeting housing needs across the HMA may lead to unmet housing need. This could affect the housing targets of other neighbouring local authorities, and potentially WBC. |

| SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES | |
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| Director of Corporate Services | No comment |
| Monitoring Officer | No comment |
| Leader of the Council | No comment |

| List of Background Papers |
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| Information published by RBC relating to the Local Plan 2035: Additional Sites and Options: Strategy and Sites – see https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/localplanconsultation |

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