

Agenda Item IMD18

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: IMD 2018/18

TITLE	Wokingham Borough Council response to the consultation on Hart District Council's Proposed Submission Local Plan
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning- David Lee
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	4 April 2018 Shute End FF12 09:00
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR	Director of Corporate Services - Graham Ebers, Interim Director of Environment - Josie Wragg

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

That development proposed through the Hart District Council Proposed Submission Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 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:

- a) Supports Hart District Council's plan to meet its own housing need
- b) Expects any unmet housing need within the Hart District, Rushmoor Borough and Surrey Heath Borough Housing Market Area (HMA) to be met within the HMA.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Hart District Council has published their Proposed Submission Local Plan: Strategy and Sites. The Proposed Submission document details the spatial strategy for Hart District, detailed policies and site allocations up to 2032. This version of the plan is the final prior to submission to the Planning Inspectorate and includes all supporting documents and evidence studies.

This report outlines Wokingham Borough Council's response to the proposed housing requirement in the plan, including the issue of potential unmet need in Surrey Heath Borough, which sits within the same Housing Market area as Hart District and Rushmoor Borough.

Background

Hart District Council (hereafter referred to as Hart DC) previously consulted on their Draft Local Plan: Strategy and Sites between 26 April and 9 June 2017. This was a Regulation 18 consultation under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

In 2016, Hart DC, Rushmoor Borough Council and Surrey Heath Borough Council published a new assessment of housing need through the 2016 Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 – 2032. At the time of consultation, information on housing need was provided by this updated SHMA. This identified a housing need for the HMA of 1,200 dwellings per annum (dpa) with 382 per annum being the contribution for Hart DC.

In response to this consultation Wokingham Borough Council raised concerns regarding the potential unmet need from Surrey Heath BC and that housing need should be fully met within the Housing Market Area (HMA) as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Further concerns were raised around four proposed housing site allocations within close proximity to the Wokingham Borough boundary.

Hart DC has now published their Proposed Submission Local Plan: Strategy and Sites between 9 Feb and 26 March 2018. This is a Regulation 19 consultation under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The plan includes an amended approach to housing development and covers a plan period of 2016-2032.

Analysis of Issues

The Hart District Proposed Submission Local Plan: Strategy and Sites (hereafter referred to as the Plan), demonstrates that the housing need attributed to Hart District will be met by that authority. The Plan demonstrates that Hart DC is actively working with the other authorities within the HMA, Rushmoor Borough and Surrey Heath Borough, and together they are planning to meet the housing needs arising in the HMA in full. Seeking positive opportunities to meet need is a central element of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

While the 2016 SHMA identified a need for 382dpa in Hart District, the Government's proposed standardised methodology (due to be published in Summer 2018) identifies a need figure of 292dpa (90 less than the SHMA figure). This is used as a starting point for the housing requirement in the Plan. An uplift is then added based upon a recognition of a need for contingency, as the standard methodology is in the consultation stage and could change. It also includes flexibility to allow for non-delivery of sites, the need for affordable housing and ensuring the best use of previously developed land. The Plan therefore has an overall housing requirement of 6,208 dwellings over the 2016-2032 plan period, with a projected delivery of 6,346 dwellings.

Whilst Hart DC are planning for housing based on the standardised methodology, Rushmoor BC have submitted their local plan to the Planning Inspectorate for examination (on 2 February 2018) with a housing requirement based on the need figure from the 2016 SHMA, which is a higher need than the draft standard methodology. Surrey Heath Borough Council are further behind in the plan process and are likely to consult on a draft plan in Spring 2018 and therefore will be using the standardised methodology.

Unmet need is expected to arise from Surrey Heath Borough. This was initially evident from a letter from Surrey Heath Borough Council to Wokingham Borough Council in January 2017, indicating that the unmet need was likely to be in the region of 1,700 dwellings. The Hart DC Duty to Cooperate Statement states that Surrey Heath BC has now indicated a likely shortfall of 950 homes (2014 – 32). However, as the plan is in the early stages, it is acknowledged that further sites may come forward through the Regulation 18 stage. The likely unmet need is therefore unclear at this stage.

A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG), dated 24 January 2018, has been produced for the Rushmoor Borough Local Plan, between the three authorities of Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath. This supporting evidence states that these authorities will use their best endeavors to meet their individual housing needs. The SoCG also states that should unmet need arise from Surrey Heath, “the three authorities will work together to ensure that the shortfall is addressed elsewhere within the HMA.” Hart are preparing for this upfront through the contingency considered within the housing requirement and commitment to planning and delivering a further new settlement, with an area of search identified in the Plan.

The SoCG also outlines the employment land position in the Functional Economic Area, which consists of the three authorities as in the HMA: Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath. A joint Employment Land Review (ELR) was undertaken in 2009 and 2015 and then updated in 2016. The identified floorspace requirement can be met by the FEA through existing allocations and extant permissions. However, the position in Hart District will be kept under review due to the uncertainty over the level of office to residential conversions under permitted development rights.

Wokingham Borough Council requested and received confirmation from Hart District, Rushmoor Borough and Surrey Heath Borough Councils, that they are all signed up to the SoCG and therefore the principle of meeting both housing and employment need within the HMA/FEA.

Wokingham Borough Council therefore supports Hart District Council’s plan to meet its own housing and employment needs and the agreement that any unmet need within the Hart District, Rushmoor Borough and Surrey Heath Borough Housing Market Area (HMA) to be met within the HMA.

Sites

Wokingham Borough Council previously raised concerns regarding four proposed sites within proximity to the borough boundary. The site at Riseley (SHL92) has since been granted outline planning permission, whilst sites at Eversley (SHL112a & SHL112b) and Yateley (SHL272) are not considered to be developable at this stage and not proposed for allocation in the Plan.

Where development is close to the borough boundary and would place pressure on infrastructure and facilities in Wokingham borough, we would seek that Hart DC and the developer work with us to secure adequate mitigation to contribute towards this in order that the development is acceptable and to meet the needs of future residents.

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

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None anticipated

Cross-Council Implications

Decisions in Hart DC regarding meeting housing needs, including unmet housing need across the HMA could lead to pressures to deliver housing elsewhere. This could affect the housing targets of other neighbouring local authorities, and potentially WBC.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Director – Corporate Services	No comments received
Monitoring Officer	No comments
Leader of the Council	No comments received

List of Background Papers

Information published by Hart District Council relating to the Proposed Submission Local Plan: Strategy and Sites – see <https://www.hart.gov.uk/Local-Plan-Publication-2018>

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