

Agenda Item IMD20

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: IMD 2018/20

TITLE	Wokingham Borough Council updated response to the Rushmoor Borough Council Local Plan
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning- David Lee
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	17 April 2018 David Hicks 2 09:00
WARD	(All Wards);
DIRECTOR	Director of Corporate Services - Graham Ebers, Interim Director of Environment - Josie Wragg

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To ensure that Rushmoor Borough Council's Local Plan 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 remove the objection previously raised to the Rushmoor Borough Local Plan.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Rushmoor Borough Council submitted their Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate for examination on 2 January 2018. Rushmoor Borough Council contacted Wokingham Borough Council seeking to address concerns raised in the previous objection.

This report outlines how Wokingham Borough Council's concerns have been appropriately addressed through a Statement of Common Ground and the recommendation that the objection to the Local Plan be removed.

Background

In June and July 2017 Rushmoor Borough Council (hereafter referred to as Rushmoor BC) consulted on their Draft Submission Local Plan (hereafter referred to as the Plan). This was a Regulation 19 consultation under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

At this stage, Wokingham Borough Council raised an objection to the Plan (dated 14 July 2017) on the basis that we were not satisfied that the issue of housing need had been adequately addressed by Rushmoor BC and the other local authorities in the relevant Housing Market Area. The specific objection was:

1. Failure under the duty to cooperate to achieve the necessary cooperation on the strategic cross boundary matter of meeting housing needs,
2. Failure of the plan to consider the likely unmet need arising from elsewhere in the Housing Market Area.

Analysis of Issues

A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) undertaken in 2014 showed Rushmoor Borough, Hart District & Surrey Heath Borough formed a Housing Market Area (HMA). At the time Rushmoor BC consulted on their submission plan, it was evident that whilst Rushmoor intended to meet the housing need attributed to their authority, unmet need would be arising from Surrey Heath Borough. This was demonstrated by Surrey Heath BC writing to other local authorities, including Wokingham BC, to request they accommodate some of their unmet need.

In the absence of a clear acknowledgement across the HMA and with no suitable actions agreed to meet the need within the HMA itself, Wokingham BC did not consider that the Duty to Cooperate had been complied with, or that the plan was justified or effective.

Discussions on housing need have since progressed within the HMA. Rushmoor BC jointly prepared a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (dated 24 January 2018) with Hart District and Surrey Heath Borough Councils, which sets out the agreed position between the parties on the strategic matters of housing and economy. This states that these authorities will use their best endeavours to meet their individual housing needs and 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.”

Following consideration of the Government’s proposed standardised methodology (due to be published in summer 2018), Rushmoor BC has chosen to continue with the Plan based upon the need identified in the SHMA, the higher figure of 436dpa (142dpa higher than the proposed standardised methodology figure of 294dpa). The SoCG states that Hart DC and Surrey Heath BC are satisfied that Rushmoor have maximised its contribution to meeting the needs of the wider HMA.

Through the SoCG, Surrey Heath has indicated that there is still potential for a level of unmet housing need. However, as the plan is in the early stages, it is acknowledged that further sites may come forward through the Regulation 18 stage and Surrey Heath BC agree to continue to look at all opportunities. The SoCG demonstrates a clear commitment that “the three authorities will work together to ensure that the shortfall is addressed elsewhere within the HMA. Based on current information all three authorities are confident that this will be achieved.”

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.

Wokingham Borough Council requested and received confirmation from Rushmoor Borough, Hart District 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 acknowledges the positive engagement and cooperation between Rushmoor and its neighbouring authorities and considers previous concerns regarding the duty to cooperate and unmet housing need within the HMA to have been allayed. Wokingham Borough Council therefore withdraws the objection to the Rushmoor Local 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

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None anticipated

Cross-Council Implications

Decisions in Rushmoor BC regarding meeting housing needs, including unmet housing need across the HMA can potentially 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

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
n/a

List of Background Papers
<p>Previous IEMD report dated 14 July 2017 Information published by Rushmoor Borough Council relating to the Local Plan Submission is available at: http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/article/10619/Rushmoor-Local-Plan-examination-library. (Statement of Common Ground is contained within the updated Duty to Cooperate Statement – January 2018)</p>

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