

TITLE	Local Plan Update (LPU) Towards our Strategy Consultation
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 25 October 2018
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Director of Corporate Services - Graham Ebers, Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning - Stuart Munro

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The Local Plan Update (LPU) will provide a robust strategy for managing development to ensure that it occurs in suitable and sustainable locations and that it is deliverable, well-designed, helping to regenerate towns and villages within the borough, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging economic growth.

This report seeks approval to undertake public consultation to assist the development of the Local Plan Update, specifically inviting views on the role of different places across the borough and inviting comments on the land that has been promoted by landowners and developers as being available for development.

Through this engagement, the views of residents and local businesses can be taken into account alongside government requirements and technical evidence when future decisions are made on the preferred strategy for the Local Plan Update.

The report also recommends the adoption of an updated Local Development Scheme, the programme for preparing Local Plans.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is advised to:

- 1) approve 'Local Plan Update: Towards our strategy' for consultation, including supporting engagement activities;
- 2) authorise the Director of Corporate Services and Director Locality and Customer Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning, to agree minor amendments, if necessary, prior to consultation;
- 3) adopt the Local Development Scheme 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local Plans are the key documents through which local planning authorities can set out a vision and framework for the management of future development.

The Local Plan Update will review and put in place up-to-date planning policies seeking to cover the period to 2036. When completed, it will replace the council's current principal planning strategies the Core Strategy and the Managing Development Delivery documents both of which look to the year 2026.

This report seeks approval to undertake public consultation to assist the development of the Local Plan Update, specifically inviting views in the role of different places across the borough and inviting comment on land that has been promoted by landowners and developers as being available for development. The report also seeks approval to update the programme for preparing the Local Plan Update, and other plans, known as the Local Development Scheme.

BACKGROUND

Local Plans are the key documents through which local planning authorities can set out a vision and framework for the management of future development.

The council's current planning policies are set out in the [Core Strategy](#) (adopted 2010) and [Managing Development Delivery](#) (adopted 2014) plans.¹ Notwithstanding the relatively recent adoption of these plans, changes to national planning policy and guidance necessitate their review.

The Local Plan Update will review and put in place up-to-date planning policies seeking to cover the period to 2036. When completed, it will replace both the Core Strategy and the Managing Development Delivery documents both of which look to the year 2026.²

This report seeks approval to undertake consultation to assist the development of the Local Plan Update, specifically inviting views in the role of different places across the borough and inviting comment on land that has been promoted by landowners and developers as being available for development. The report also seeks approval to update the programme for preparing the Local Plan Update, and other plans, known as the Local Development Scheme.

Analysis of Issues

The big challenge for the Local Plan Update is how to achieve high quality and sustainability whilst providing for new infrastructure, new jobs and new homes.

At the outset it is important to note that the strategy for the Local Plan Update must be deliverable. Options which are not supported by evidence will not succeed when tested at examination by an independent Planning Inspector.

The central aspect of the Local Plan Update is the spatial strategy. This will set out the answers to the three questions:

1. How much development is required?
2. Where should it go?
3. Where shouldn't it go?

At this stage we do not know and have not committed to any particular approach to managing development or sites that might be allocated to provide new jobs, new homes or other types of development, with activity focused on gathering the necessary information and views to support a decision at a future time.

Key inputs into the local plan process are the consideration of what land may be available for new housing, jobs and other uses such as leisure development, and how development should be managed in different places (e.g. town centres, towns, villages etc.).

Land promoted by landowners/developers

¹ Separate plans sets out planning policies for minerals and waste development.

² A separate process will review both the minerals and waste plans. This work is being undertaken jointly with Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and West Berkshire Council.

The council made an open invitation for anyone to promote land that may be suitable for development through the 'call for sites' exercises in 2016. Through these exercises, and in the subsequent time around 280 sites across Wokingham Borough have been promoted by landowner or developers. Details of promoted land are available on the council's website.³

The council must follow the process set out in legislation and government planning policy in the Local Plan Process. All promoted land will be assessed for their suitability, availability and achievability (deliverability).

To ensure the council has the best available information, various technical studies have or are being undertaken on a wider range of matters. These include studies considering landscape character, water infrastructure capacity, Green Belt, flood risk, and retail, economic and housing needs. To assist with the analysis of larger and more complex areas of land, consultants were engaged to gather holistic evidence of the constraints and opportunities these areas present, including viability given the greater infrastructure demand requirements. Undertaking specific analysis of larger areas of land does not mean these are any more or less likely to be proposed for development. It simply reflects a sensible way of gathering evidence.

Technical evidence will continue to be evolved as the Local Plan Update process continues, and the preferred approach to managing development is defined.

Management of development across different places

Another key consideration is how development is managed in different places. Generally, areas which benefit from a wider and larger range of services and facilities are more sustainable in terms of minimising the need to travel in particular, and being able to travel by more sustainable methods, e.g. walking and cycling.

As part of our future decision on how best to manage development, we will need to consider the contribution such areas can make to meeting our needs. By way of illustration, to what extent should higher development densities be sought in town centres compared to surrounding sub-urban areas? Or how far should development be directed towards more sustainable towns and villages which have better access to local services and facilities?

The council's approach under the current Core Strategy seeks to focus the majority of development in the four Strategic Development Locations, with a lesser level of development supported within towns and villages subject to consideration of accessibility and impacts. Back land development and the inappropriate building on residential gardens is specifically resisted. This approach means that the council manages the location and rate of development and has enabled significant new infrastructure to be delivered alongside to help mitigate impacts and to try to alleviate pressure on other areas.

Consultation

Through the recommended public engagement, the view of residents and local representative organisations such as parish and town councils will be sought on the

³ See 'Call for sites update' on the [Local Plan Update webpage](#).

roles of places across the borough and the promoted land. This allows local opinion to be taken into account alongside government requirements and technical evidence when making future decisions on the preferred strategy for the Local Plan Update.

The consultation presents an overview of the information gathered from our technical studies to assist the submission of informed responses. The full technical studies will be published as background evidence alongside.

It is recommended consultation be undertaken from Monday 12 November until Friday 15 February, a period of over 13 weeks. The extended period reflects the Christmas holiday period. The consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. A copy of the recommended consultation document is provided in Appendix B.

Future programme

The government requires that all local planning authorities produce a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which is a public statement of the councils programme for the production of Local Plans.

Since the publication of the last LDS in July 2016, there has been a change in circumstances, resulting in the need to revise the LDS. This includes agreement to prepare a joint minerals and waste Local Plan with Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead; and a re-evaluation of the Local Plan Update programme in light of the amount of promoted land and changes in government planning policy.

The recommended programme now envisages consultation on a draft Local Plan in autumn 2019, with pre-submission publication towards the summer 2020. The detailed LDS is provided in Appendix A.

Other Options Considered

There is no realistic alternative option that could be considered for taking the Local Plan Update forward to adoption. The only other option now available is not to progress the plan any further. This is not recommended.

Risk Management

The main risk is whether the Local Plan Update is ultimately found to be 'legally compliant' and 'sound' by a Planning Inspector who will conduct an independent public examination. This consultation ensures the plan making process continues to progress, and is informed by the views of all interested parties.

Legal Compliance

In producing the Local Plan Update, the council has to assess whether the document is compatible with the legal requirements associated with plans of the council. This includes the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012; the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010; the Human Rights Act; compliance with

Directives of the European Commission and subsequent UK Regulations and ensuring that no segment of the Borough’s community is likely to be unfairly penalised.

BUSINESS CASE (Including Options and Evidence of Need)

The preparation of a local plan is a statutory requirement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), with the process governed by statutes and government guidance. The government’s revised National Planning Policy Framework, published July 2018, requires local plans to up reviewed every five years. With the Core Strategy adopted in 2010, the council is obliged to update its planning policies.

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)	Circa 308k	Costs total costs for producing the LPU will be met from the existing multi-year budget.	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Circa 306k		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Circa 295k		

Other Financial Information

The table above sets out the project costs associated with producing the Local Plan Update as whole. The recommended engagement forms only part of this overall cost. Key costs include the preparation of technical evidence base on such matters as highway impact, and the costs of the examination process itself which is governed by the Planning Inspectorate.

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 other factors but can be covered by existing agreed budgets.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and include press notices, public events, and email notifications.

Resourcing and Timeline for Next Steps

As set out in the Local Development Scheme, it is anticipated that a Draft Plan will be brought to Executive for consideration in autumn 2019. The Draft Plan would set out the

Council's preferred spatial strategy and list of proposed sites, in addition to draft planning policies to guide future development.

Timeline for Review and Evaluation

None.

List of Background Papers

Appendix A: Draft Local Development Scheme (LDS)
Appendix B: Draft LPU Consultation document

Evidence documents available on the website during the consultation, including:

- LPU Issues and Options Consultation (2016)
- Wokingham Strategic Growth Locations. Growth Scenarios Report: Grazeley, Barkham Square, Twyford/Ruscombe.
- Wokingham Strategic Growth Locations. Growth Scenarios Report: Hall Farm and Ashridge
- Settlement Hierarchy Assessment

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