

TITLE	Council Sites for the Local Plan
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 31 January 2019
WARD	Winnersh;
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Executive - Interim Heather Thwaites
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning – Stuart Munro.

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To ensure the most effective use of Council assets to support the Local Plan and the future development ambitions within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) approves sites listed for submission and consideration, as part of the Local Plan Call for Sites;
- 2) delegates authority for the submission of a detailed assessment as part of the Local Plan process to the Assistant Director of Commercial Property and the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An assessment has been undertaken of the Councils property portfolio to obtain a list of potential sites for consideration within the Local Plan Update. This assessment included views from all Service areas and key stakeholders, and has resulted in a list of sites (attached) that appear most effective and appropriate in supporting future development needs.

BACKGROUND

The Council is currently undertaking an update of the Local Plan, which sets out how the borough will develop over time to guide future development. Part of the Local Plan Update is to identify and allocate sufficient land for housing, employment and other uses up to 2036.

A number of the Council's land holdings have already been promoted as part of the Local Plan process for a variety of uses. For completeness, these sites and their uses are outlined in appendix B.

The list of sites has been assessed across all Service areas and they have considered the likely future needs of the borough and the anticipated assessment framework to be used (based on good practice elsewhere).

Analysis of Issues

A range of assets (building and land) held by the Council were considered. Given the number involved and resources available to undertake an assessment and submission, it was decided that only larger sites would be fully assessed at this stage.

The assessment therefore made several assumptions;

- Woodlands, significantly wooded and other nature conservation areas were removed from consideration due to the likely reduced viability of the sites
- Areas within the active flood plain were removed due to the reduced viability of the sites and the limited likelihood of being acceptable for development in planning terms.
- Where farms have a succession clause they were removed due to the reduced viability of the sites and the limited likelihood of being acceptable for development in planning terms.
- All sites will be assessed for inclusion in to the Local Plan by the Local Planning Authority under a methodology that will consider if they are suitable, available and achievable.

The Local Plan is not only seeking housing but also other uses e.g. leisure, economic and utility infrastructure hence sites are assessed against all such opportunities and a suggested allocation made.

The list of sites was reviewed by officers from across all Service to determine the final list for consideration. This removed sites where there was not perceived to be a benefit from submission.

The final list is attached in Appendix A. This outlines the sites that are suggested for submission.

As outlined above Appendix B provides a list of sites previously promoted by the Council together with their proposed use. Appendix B also illustrates a proposed widening of the previously promoted use, where relevant.

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)	Nil	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	Yes	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	Yes	Capital

Other Financial Information

There may be a need to appoint consultants to produce further relevant documentation to promote and represent the Council as landowner, throughout the process. This will include identifying physical site constraints, potential impacts on landscapes, delivering a more detailed understanding on deliverability and to submitting and presenting evidence to an inspector at the Local Plan examination.

This work would only be carried out on sites that are agreed for submission through this Executive report. The actual costs and budget approvals will be part of a future report to be considered by Executive if necessary.

Not promoting these sites through the Local Plan Update process would forgo the opportunity to realise a capital receipt or service use for the properties.

The Council has an extremely ambitious capital programme and will need to generate the capital resources required to fund this ambition. Capital receipts from the disposal of assets could play an important part in responding to this challenge.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

There is a limited impact on other services, however all Service areas have been fully involved in the process of assessing sites and determining our preferred submission.

Resourcing and Timeline for Next Steps

The sites as listed will be promoted to the LPA following Executive approval.

Timeline for Review and Evaluation

N/A

List of Background Papers

Appendix A and associated plans; Appendix B

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