



## Local Plan Committee

Item  
**11**

30 June 2014

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Laura Chase ☎ 282473
Title	Process for Full Review of the Local Plan		
Wards affected	All		

**The Local Plan Committee is asked to note the overall process for development of a new Local Plan, to agree as an initial stage to the generation of options for future growth and to agree to a 'call for sites'**

### 1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To note the process for developing a new Local Plan for the Borough to guide growth to 2032.
- 1.2 To agree to generate options for future growth for inclusion in an initial Issues and Options consultation document.
- 1.3 To agree consultation takes place inviting individuals and organisations to suggest sites within the Borough that they think would be suitable for future development.
- 1.4 To note that a training session has been arranged with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) on 9<sup>th</sup> September. All members of the Committee and Cabinet are invited to attend.

### 2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To ensure the Council's planning policies are updated to provide a robust basis for guiding future growth in the Borough. National planning policy states that 'it is highly desirable that local planning authorities should have an up-to-date plan in place' (para. 12, National Planning Policy Framework)

### 3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The Council could delay work on revision of its Local Plan, but failure to generate realistic options to accommodate forecast demand for new development sites would not be in accordance with national policy and would leave the Council vulnerable to 'development by appeal' in less sustainable locations.

### 4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Council is carrying out a two-stage review of its Local Plan to update it and bring it into compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework. The short Focused Review first stage is now nearing completion and the limited changes to selected policies are scheduled to be adopted by Full Council in July (see separate report on this agenda). The Spatial Policy team is now devoting itself to the much more substantive process of developing a new Local Plan, including updating all

policies and allocations. The team is developing a detailed project plan, with the assistance of the Planning Advisory Service, to guide development of a new Local Plan from initial options through to adoption.

- 4.2 The adopted Local Development Scheme provides the overall milestones for this process and notes the various member approval, consultation and publication stages that lead up to examination and adoption of the plan in 2016/17. An Issues and Options consultation is proposed for early 2015.
- 4.3 At this early stage, the team is developing the overall framework for the plan. This includes generating broad issues and options to kick-start the initial Sustainability Appraisal and subsequent Issues and Options consultation. The broad options will be based on national planning policy guidance; Council priorities as set forth in the Strategic Plan; existing local policies; and the current evidence base.
- 4.4 The local plan development system provides for an iterative process for developing options which includes several rounds of public consultation along with a Sustainability Appraisal process to test the environmental, social and economic performance of the options against a set of sustainability objectives. To initiate this process, the Council will issue a Scoping Report to stakeholders for consultation in July. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening opinion will also be prepared to assess the likely significant effects of the Focused Review policies on European Sites. The results of these appraisals will be made available for each stage of consultation alongside proposed policies and supporting evidence base documents.
- 4.5 The Council has a comprehensive evidence base which supports its existing Local Plan documents, but these documents will now need to be reviewed and updated as necessary to provide a robust basis for a new plan. A key change in the plan development process post-NPPF is the new requirement to generate a local Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing and employment land since these targets are no longer set regionally. As part of developing this OAN figure, Colchester has published a joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in partnership with Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford and Maldon Councils.
- 4.6 The current adopted Local Plan is based on a target set through the now abolished Regional Plan of an average of 830 dwellings per year. The SHMA figures indicate that the new target will need to rise to accommodate rising population pressures. The housing need identified in the SHMA then needs to be translated into firm targets and allocations in the Local Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework requires councils to use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area.
- 4.7 The most important findings of the SHMA are as follows -
  - 1,065 new homes will be needed each year for the next five years.
  - 1,225 new homes will be needed each year for the next 20 years.
  - These figures are based on a stock flow analysis in the SHMA which looks at stock turnover, size of properties, availability and migration.
  - Based on the need for 1,065 homes, there is an annual shortfall of 721 market homes and 344 affordable homes.

- 4.8 It is important to note that the above housing need figures are “unconstrained” which means that the Council is not expected to simply translate housing need figures into actual housing targets that need to be met without considering relevant constraints on development such as capacity and viability. Planning inspectors have made it clear that if there is deviation from the full housing need figure, this must be strongly evidenced and justified.
- 4.9 The Council must consider how it addresses the findings of the SHMA including how it translates these findings into a robust housing target. The effects of a housing target much higher than what has historically been built in the Borough will need to be considered (the previous RSS housing target for Colchester was 830 units per year and the Council has met this target over an extended period). One effect of an increased housing target will be the allocation and release of more land for housing which may, for example, necessitate working with neighbouring authorities to ensure that housing targets are met and additional burdens placed upon existing infrastructure sufficiently mitigated.
- 4.10 The Council will also need to produce an updated Employment Study to inform the Issues and Options consultation, particularly since the last Employment Study was completed in 2007 prior to the recession.
- 4.11 Given the historic and continuing high levels of demand and delivery in Colchester, finding sufficient sites to meet the OAN for housing and employment sites will be a challenge that will need to include consideration of large new schemes with the critical mass required to create sustainable new communities that can fund new infrastructure and provide a full range of mixed uses.
- 4.12 The Issues and Options consultation material will need to make it clear that all reasonable options are genuinely up for consideration at the initial stages of plan development. Equally, however, the policy and practical factors noted above mean that the number of reasonable options is constrained.
- 4.13 For the first round of Issues and Options consultation, the Council will need to present sufficient material on contextual issues to allow consideration to begin on the most plausible range of choices that could produce sufficient sites to meet Objectively Assessed Need for new sites. The range is expected to span different principles for delivering growth including both ‘Garden City’ greenfield options as well as urban extension options. Additionally, the potential role of rural growth within these options will need to be explored.
- 4.14 To help inform the development of the Plan it is proposed to undertake a ‘Call for Sites.’ This is an early opportunity for individuals and organisations to suggest sites within the Borough for development. The site suggestions received will be used to inform the preparation of the Local Plan. It is important to note however that the call for sites exercise will not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development, given the need for sites to be in compliance with overall policies in order to be allocated. Details of specific sites and their potential capacity will begin to be generated following consultation at the Issues and Options stage.

## **5. Proposals**

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Council progress development of a new Local Plan by developing options for future development to inform an Issues and Options consultation.
- 5.2 The first consultation is intended to be undertaken over the summer and will invite people to put forward sites they think should be considered by the Council for future development.
- 5.3 As work progresses update reports will be produced for the Committee and the Issues and Options Document is expected to be published for approval at the meeting scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> December.

## **6. Strategic Plan References**

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan Action Plan includes a commitment to regenerating the Borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure. There are also commitments to attract investment and provide more affordable homes. The Full Review of the Local Plan will contribute towards achieving these objectives.

## **7. Consultation**

- 7.1 Consultation on the Local Plan will be carried out in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Because of the significant strategic nature of the Local Plan Review process, the Council will ensure a comprehensive and accessible consultation programme that reaches a wide range of stakeholders.

## **8. Publicity Considerations**

- 8.1 Press releases will be issued at every significant milestone in the Local Plan process. The consultation is likely to generate publicity for the Council, particularly around some of the sites/land which cross borders with Tendring and Braintree.

## **9. Financial Implications**

- 9.1 The Local Plan Review will be undertaken within a budget allocated for its production, including updating of evidence documents, consultation and examination.

## **10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Development Framework and is available to view on the Colchester Borough Council website by following this pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Commercial Services > Local Development Framework.
- 10.2 There are no particular Human Rights implications.

## **11. Community Safety Implications**

- 11.1 Development of a new Local Plan will address the community safety implications of creating sustainable communities.

## **12. Health and Safety Implications**

- 12.1 Development of a new Local Plan will address the health and well being implications of creating sustainable communities.

## **13. Risk Management Implications**

- 13.1 The Focused Review of the Local Plan will help ensure that the Council's planning policies are robust and up-to-date and help to reduce the risk of inappropriate development being permitted.

## **14. Disclaimer**

- 14.1 The information in this report was, as far as is known, correct at the date of publication. Colchester Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any error or omissions.