

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE: SEPTEMBER 2018

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a brief update on how key pieces of work, including the development of policy documents and supporting evidence are currently progressing. It aims to give a broad indication of the projected work programme for the Council's new Local Plan in particular, and provide an update on the preparation of a Joint Strategic Plan for South Essex.
- 1.2 This report provides an update, where applicable, to the work programme update dated August 2018 (attached at Appendix A for reference).

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The latest plan-making timetable adopted by the Council on 17 July 2018 identifies the key milestones for the development of the Council's new Local Plan and the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan. These are the two main planning policy documents which the team will be focussing on delivering over the next three years. Such documents must be underpinned by robust, proportionate evidence. These technical background documents are important in supporting local decision-making and emerging policy proposals. The team are also responsible for commissioning, project managing and generally overseeing the preparation of such technical documents to ensure that they are independent, comply with relevant guidance and are based on appropriate local-level data.
- 2.2 This report outlines these two policy documents, and the key evidence and work tasks that the team are responsible for undertaking to provide Members with a comprehensive update to note.

3 NEW LOCAL PLAN

Local Development Scheme (LDS)

- 3.1 The most recent LDS (adopted 17 July 2018) provides the framework for the preparation of the new Local Plan and a Joint Strategic Plan. The team will work towards this timetable and keep its contents under review. It is intended that the team will regularly review this timetable, as required by national policy, and report back to the Sub-Committee, when appropriate.
- 3.2 The LDS may need updating depending on the preferred course of action recommended by the Sub-Committee for progressing local plan-making, which will be considered under agenda item .

Issues and Options Document: Consultation Feedback Report

- 3.3 Work is continuing on the Issues and Options Feedback Report. As of August 2018, the team have finished processing incoming representations and are continuing to provide an initial officer response to the key issues identified. The consultation received over 550 individual submissions, and two petitions, which, in combination, represent the views of over 1,100 respondents. The Feedback Report is expected to be completed and presented to the Sub-Committee in October 2018. There has been a minor slippage in timescales compared to that which was previously indicated in the August 2018 Work Programme Update (Appendix A), largely resulting from operational issues outside of the team's control.

Communication and Engagement

- 3.4 The 'cleanse' of the planning policy mailing list has now been completed. This exercise asked existing subscribers to renew their consent for the Council to continue to store and manage their personal data in line with the Council's privacy notice. This was necessary to comply with GDPR regulations introduced in May 2018. We are continuing to look at improving our communication using the Council's 'Tell Me More' service through more regular e-bulletins to over 6,000 current subscribers. This is likely to include information on adopted documents, committee meetings and forthcoming consultations.

4 SOUTH ESSEX JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 4.1 Officers are continuing to support the preparation of the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan (JSP). There remains an intention to commence the first stage of public consultation in Spring 2019. To deliver against the LDS, each partnering authority has committed an officer (team leader or other) to work on the JSP for two days a week from October 2018.

5 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

- 5.1 The Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to support the preparation of the new Local Plan was adopted on 19 July 2016, following a period of public consultation. Since the SCI was adopted, however, there have been legislative changes which have had a minor impact on its contents.
- 5.2 The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 has introduced further guidance on the detail which SCIs should include on Neighbourhood Planning. The amendments required to comply with the Act are not onerous but require an addendum to the 2016 SCI to be prepared, specifically relating to neighbourhood planning. An Addendum has been prepared by the team and will be considered under agenda item 5.

- 5.3 Alongside the above amendments, the team has been working with the other South Essex authorities to draft a common addendum to each individual SCI to reflect the consultation and engagement needed to support the preparation of a South Essex Joint Strategic Plan (JSP). An Addendum has been prepared and will be considered under agenda item 5.
- 5.4 The GDPR regulations were introduced in May 2018, changing the way that personal data is collected, processed and stored. The team has completed its 'cleanse' of its mailing list and updated its privacy notice. Additional information has been included within the SCI to reflect changes in practice because of the GDPR. A further Addendum has been prepared and will be considered under agenda item 5.
- 5.5 The intention is for these Addendums to be subject to public consultation in the future, subject to Member approval.

6 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- 6.1 There has been no change or update in relation to Neighbourhood Planning within the District since the August 2018 Work Programme Update (Appendix A).

7 MONITORING

- 7.1 Monitoring arrangements and priorities remain unchanged from the August 2018 Work Programme Update (Appendix A).

8 STATUTORY REGISTERS

- 8.1 The team's obligations and priorities regarding the maintenance of Statutory Registers (i.e. the Brownfield Land and Self- and Custom- Housebuilding Registers) remain unchanged from the August 2018 Work Programme Update (Appendix A).

9 EVIDENCE BASE DOCUMENTS

- 9.1 Provided below is an update on the preparation of evidence documents since the August 2018 Work Programme Update (Appendix A).

Rochford District Local Wildlife Sites Review

- 9.2 As previously indicated, the Council has commissioned Place Services to undertake a review of Local Wildlife Sites within the District; these are sites of locally significant wildlife value that the planning system should seek to conserve, restore and enhance in accordance with the NPPF. This Review will help to inform the Council's new Local Plan by providing an up to date and robust source of evidence on the condition and value of sites of nature conservation importance.

South Essex Playing Pitch Strategy/Built Facility Strategy

- 9.3 The preparation of South Essex Playing Pitch and Built Facility Strategies is ongoing, with support from Sport England. As previously indicated, the purpose of these strategies is to gather and analyse qualitative and quantitative information about existing playing pitch and built facility provision in each authority area, and assess the adequacy of existing provision to meet projected future demand. The strategies will make recommendations on how each authority should plan for its facilities in the future, from both a planning policy and operational perspective, and how future facility needs could be met and funded.
- 9.4 Officers continue to liaise with the consultants, Knight Kavanagh Page, on draft reports as they are prepared. The final strategies are expected to be completed in Autumn 2018, and will be considered at a future meeting of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee.

Rochford District and Southend Borough Landscape Assessment

- 9.5 Chris Blandford Associates have been commissioned by Rochford District and Southend Borough Council to undertake a detailed assessment of the landscape in south east Essex, assessing its character, sensitivity and capacity for change. Officers have now held an inception meeting with the consultants and its preparation is underway. It is expected that the outputs from this assessment will be complete in late 2018 and will be considered at a future meeting of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee.

Rochford District and Southend Borough Green Belt Assessment

- 9.6 The Council, jointly with Southend Borough Council, appointed Land Use Consultants (LUC) to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the Metropolitan Green Belt in line with relevant guidance and best practice. This will comprise a two staged assessment consisting of a strategic assessment followed by a more detailed one. Officers have now held an inception meeting with the consultants and its preparation is underway. It is expected that the outputs from this assessment will be complete in late 2018 and will be considered at a future meeting of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee.

South Essex Strategic Growth Locations Study

- 9.7 As previously indicated, ASELA have appointed Peter Brett Associates to undertake a Strategic Growth Locations Study to inform the development of the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan and the respective individual Local Plans which will sit beneath it.
- 9.8 Officers are continuing to support this work by providing information on land availability and constraints. The study is estimated for completion in Autumn

2018 and will be considered at a future meeting of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee.

Rochford District Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)

- 9.9 There remains a need to review the Council's evidence on land availability to ensure it is up to date and robust, including to consider 63 additional sites that were received after the preparation of the last SHELAA in 2017. As of September 2018, the review of the Council's SHELAA has yet to be commenced. Subject to resources, this review is expected to be finalised later in 2018.

Essex Recreation disturbance and Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS)

- 9.10 The team has continued to support the preparation of the Essex Coast RAMS project, as part of a Steering Group comprising the 10 local authorities and Natural England, and offering input and feedback on drafts as they emerge.
- 9.11 The preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to enshrine the proposed RAMS tariff in policy is ongoing and is estimated for completion in Winter 2018. This SPD will be presented to Members once complete.

10 CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 Since the August 2018 Work Programme Update (Appendix A), the team has responded to one additional consultation, namely the Castle Point Borough Council 2018 Local Plan consultation in August 2018. This consultation focussed on the contents of the 2014 and 2016 Castle Point Draft Plans, which the team also responded to when originally consulted on.
- 10.2 The Team will continue to engage with relevant statutory bodies on strategic, cross boundary issues, including by responding to future public consultations on policy matters, as appropriate.

11 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The team fulfils a strategic role in planning for the future growth of the district and ensuring that the Council's statutory plan-making functions are advanced in a timely manner. This is critical, given that the Government is taking an increasing interest in how efficiently and effectively Councils are not only reviewing, but preparing, Local Plans.

11.2 15 Councils across the country received intervention letters from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)¹, as they have persistently failed to adopt an up-to-date Local Plan for their areas. Three Councils in South Essex (Basildon, Brentwood and Castle Point) received these letters. Given that Basildon and Brentwood had made some plan-making progress between November 2017 and March 2018, the Secretary of State concluded that he would continue to closely monitor their progress, hold them to account and will use his delegated powers to ensure a plan is in place in a timely manner.

11.3 However, in the Secretary of State's March 2018 letter to Castle Point Borough Council, he has decided to continue with the intervention process and has advised that:-

“This will involve a team of experts, led by the Chief Planner, providing me with further advice on next steps. My officials will be in contact with your officers to discuss the next steps. My officials will also begin formal discussions on the options of inviting Essex County Council to prepare a Local Plan for Castle Point and with the neighbouring authorities on the possibility of directing an accelerated Joint Plan, as part of considering whether to use my statutory powers and if so which ones.”

11.4 It is important, therefore, that the Council continues to work jointly and proactively with other authorities in South Essex to address cross-boundary issues. A timetable to deliver a Joint Strategic Plan has been included in the Council's LDS 2018-2021 (adopted 17 July 2018).

12 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None.

13 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Policies within emerging plans – whether at the local or strategic level – could have environmental implications particularly if new development is proposed. Any environmental implications will need to be considered at each stage of plan making; such consideration will be informed by Sustainability Appraisal to ensure the most sustainable options are identified.

14 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The team's work programme, publication of the revised NPPF and any potential legislative changes may have resource implications (both time and cost), and these will be considered through budget reviews as work progresses. The Council has committed to a timetable for the preparation of its new Local Plan (and CIL), and the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-plan-intervention-letters-to-councils>

through the adoption of the LDS 2018-2021 on 17 July 2018. The current costs of delivering the new Local Plan and CIL can be met from the existing budget provision.

- 14.2 To support the delivery of a Joint Strategic Plan for South Essex, the six South Essex authorities and Essex County Council successfully bid for £871,000 from the Government through the Planning Delivery Fund (announced in the housing White Paper). It is anticipated that there will be further opportunities to bid for monetary support from the Planning Delivery Fund. However, should the bid be unsuccessful, provision may need to be made from within existing budget provisions to continue to support its delivery, given the Secretary of State's discretion to use his intervention powers to accelerate plan-making.
- 14.3 Enabling a robust local planning framework will facilitate delivery of sustainable growth in the district. The planning system directly contributes income to the Council through Section 106 agreements, CIL (with the intention to bring this forward alongside the new Local Plan) and the New Homes Bonus to enable infrastructure and service delivery district-wide

15 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The Council is required to prepare a Local Plan under Section 17(3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 in order to set out its policies relating to the development and use of land in its area. Section 13 of this Act requires the Council to keep under review matters which may affect the development of its area. Section 17(6) of the Act also requires the Council to keep under review its Local Plan in light of any review of its policies.
- 15.2 Other sections of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 provide the legal basis for the current plan-making system. These are supported by the recently revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 15.3 The Secretary of State has powers to intervene in plan-making under to Section 27 of Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 where he considers a Council to be failing or omitting to do anything necessary in connection with the preparation, revision or adoption of a planning policy document. He may prepare or revise a plan or direct that the Council or another do so.
- 15.4 Furthermore, the Localism Act 2011 requires Rochford District Council to cooperate and work with other prescribed bodies as part of the Duty to Cooperate on strategic cross boundary issues. Such issues include, amongst other matters, planning for new homes and jobs, infrastructure (such as utilities, schools and healthcare), open spaces and roads.

16 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

16.1 None.

17 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

17.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed as no decision is being made.

18 RECOMMENDATION

18.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RESOLVES**

That the Strategic Planning team's responsibilities and delivery of key work streams be noted, subject to resource constraints.



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Background Papers:-

None.

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