

EPSOM & EWELL LOCAL PLAN - CONSULTATION PAPER

Report of the: Head of Place Development

Contact: Karol Jakubczyk

Urgent Decision?(yes/no)

If yes, reason urgent decision
required:

Annexes/Appendices (attached): Annexe 1: Draft Issues & Options Consultation
Paper

Other available papers (not
attached): Core Strategy 2007
Local Plan Annual Monitoring Reports 2007 –
2016
The Housing White Paper 2017
The National Planning Policy Framework

REPORT SUMMARY

The Borough Council is carrying out a partial review of the borough-wide Local Plan. This specifically relates to policies relating to housing need and housing land supply. The review is necessary because our current policies are no-longer up-to-date or consistent with national planning policy.

The first stage of the process, a comprehensive review of the technical evidence used to inform the preparation of the Local Plan, is now substantially complete. The outputs from these technical studies have been used to prepare a Consultation Paper. This document sets out the challenging issues and the choice that we now face in respect of how we respond positively to demand for new housing.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee considers the draft Issues & Options Consultation Paper and that, subject to any amendments, it be approved for consultation during the Autumn 2017.

Notes

1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 The delivery and implementation of the Epsom & Ewell Local Plan contributes towards all of the Council's Key Priorities. The Local Plan review process will set out how sustainable growth will be delivered during the next plan period 2015-2032.

2 Background

- 2.1 Our current Local Plan includes a suite of core policies that relate to housing. These identify the scale and nature of housing that we have been planning to deliver, in addition to the sites considered appropriate and sustainable as locations for new housing. These policies are contained within our Core Strategy 2007, which we have been successfully implementing over the last ten years. We monitor the performance of our policies through our Local Plan Annual Monitoring Reports.
- 2.2 Since we adopted our Core Strategy policies there has been considerable change to national policy and planning in general – specifically in terms of how we meet future housing need. The regional planning tier is now gone and the responsibility for determining future housing demand now rests with each individual local planning authority.
- 2.3 The government has, over the past five years, conceded that the supply and affordability of new homes has been overtaken by demand. Their recent Housing White Paper confesses that the housing market is now broken – with not enough houses being built. The solution, which all local planning authorities are being tasked with implementing, is to build more houses faster.
- 2.4 Under this backdrop it is clear that our Local Plan housing policies are no longer up-to-date or in accordance with national policies. This is in spite of our having a good record of meeting the housing needs identified in our current policies. This requires us to review our housing policies.
- 2.5 Work on the partial review of the Core Strategy has been underway since 2015. During that time the focus has been upon developing an up-to-date evidence base that is consistent with national planning policy. Key elements of this work include the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 (SHMA), which identifies the nature and scale of housing demand across the Borough; the Green Belt Study 2017, which provides an assessment of how well our Green Belt performs; and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2017 (SHLAA), which seeks to identify potential sources of housing land supply that are available, deliverable and developable. All of these technical studies have come before the Committee over the last eleven months.
- 2.6 The outputs from our Local Plan evidence base have been used to prepare a consultation paper, which is brought before the Committee for consideration. This is included under Annex 1.

3 Consultation Paper

- 3.1 The objective of the consultation exercise is to invite responses from local residents and local communities. Ideally those responses will help build consensus and support us through the challenges that lie ahead (specifically during the examination of the Local Plan). The responses will be used to inform the identification of the most appropriate strategy to positively deliver the objectively assessed development needs of the Borough. By doing so we place ourselves in a strong position to be able to demonstrate that we have met two of the four tests of soundness¹.
- 3.2 In order to fully explain the growth challenges that face the Borough, every effort has been taken to make the Consultation Paper accessible to as wide an audience as possible. The content is concise, to the point and written in plain English. The Paper addresses the frequently asked questions relating to housing growth and a selection of 'infographs' that clearly explain the outputs from the Local Plan Evidence Base.
- 3.3 The Consultation Paper itself follows the established format by first setting out the reasons behind the Local Plan review. This includes an overview of the evidence base; where the demand for new houses has come from; and an insight into the national context – namely, that almost all local planning authorities now find themselves facing challenging housing growth-related issues.
- 3.4 The Consultation Paper continues by setting out the 'Options' that we could pursue in order to plan positively for growth – and meet the national planning policy requirement of 'significantly boosting the supply of housing'². These options are supported by a series of frequently asked questions and answers that will provide respondents with a greater understanding. Respondents are provided with questions that focus upon the options.
- 3.5 The Town & Country Planning Regulations³ require us to invite representations from residents, local communities, consultation bodies, statutory consultees and any other person or body with an interest in our Local Plan.
- 3.6 It is proposed that the Consultation Paper, subject to any amendments, be published and made available for consultation for a six week period during the Autumn 2017. Notification of the consultation will be sent to all contacts on the Council's consultation database – with the focus being upon residents and local community groups. There will be an appropriate level of publicity to promote the Consultation Paper.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 182 requires that our Local Plan be **positively prepared, justified, effective** and **consistent with national policy**. In order to be found sound and get through the examination process we must meet these four tests.

² National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 47

³ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 Regulation 18.

- 3.7 The Consultation Paper will be available to be viewed and commented upon via our website. We will continue to engage with local groups; providing them with opportunities to attend surgery sessions where the issues can be discussed.
- 3.8 We will run a further evening session open to all Members. This is scheduled for Thursday 21 September 2017. This will provide an opportunity for all Members to express their views.
- 3.9 Subject to the agreement of the Committee, it would be possible to start the consultation on Monday 25 September 2017. This would allow a closing date Monday 6 November 2017.

4 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 4.1 The preparation and implementation of the Council's Local Plan imposes significant demands on staff in the Planning Policy Team and the wider Place Development Service. The processes, timetable and staff resource implications are set out in the latest version of the Local Plan Programme (July 2017). Additional staff resources have been secured and deployed to ensure that the Local Plan Programme is met in accordance with its timetable. It is important that these resources are maintained – any losses in staff resources may have an adverse impact in our ability to deliver the Local Plan on time.
- 4.1 It may prove necessary to deploy other corporate resources, for example the Communications Team and Senior Officers of the Borough, in order to sustain progress. Contributions from these sources may be particularly sought during the public consultation and Duty to Co-operate stages of the process, when their input may be most necessary.
- 4.2 ***Chief Finance Officer's comments: Costs and budgets required for Local Plan are contained and addressed in the Council's Medium Term Financial and Efficiency Plan.***

5 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 5.1 All statutory Local Plan documents are subject to public examination. The recently adopted "Your Involvement in Planning" document addresses those equality issues related to consultation and engagement.
- 5.2 ***Monitoring Officer's comments: The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 build on the statutory framework in relation to the preparation and adoption by local planning authorities of local plans. The Regulations set out the procedure to be followed by local planning authorities in relation to the preparation of local plans, including as to consultation with interested persons and bodies and the documents which must be made available at each stage.***

- 5.3 *As noted above, Regulation 18 provides that the Council must notify certain persons and bodies of the subject of the local plan which the Council proposes to prepare and invite them to make representations about what that local plan ought to contain. In preparing the local plan, the Council must take into account any representations. This report seeks to comply with the statutory requirements for preparation of the local plan.*

6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 The partial review of the Core Strategy will contribute towards delivering the Council's objectives for maintaining and enhancing the Borough as a sustainable place to live, work and visit by providing guidance to new development proposals.
- 6.2 A Sustainability Appraisal of the policy options forms an integral part of the plan-making process. The Sustainability Appraisal Report is subject to consultation. An Appraisal Report of the proposed consultation options will be available for consultation in parallel to the Consultation Paper.

7 Partnerships

- 7.1 The Localism Act and national planning policy state that public bodies have a duty to co-operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries. We will seek to meet this duty by working collaboratively with our partners in neighbouring boroughs and districts on issues of common interest. This is a continuous and evolving process that will help guide future policy development. Where it is necessary and appropriate we will seek the active involvement of the Committee in order to secure agreement on strategic cross-boundary issues.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 In 2015 the government issued a requirement that all local planning authorities must produce new local plans for new homes by 2017. They have indicated that this deadline may be pushed back to 2018. We are now making good progress to meet this requirement – the preparation of the Consultation Paper provides a good indicator of progress. Nevertheless risks remain, most notably those associated with public consultation and the Duty to Cooperate. We will attempt to manage these risks through regular engagement with members of this Committee and Senior Officers.

9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 The Committee are asked to consider the Consultation Paper and subject any additions or amendments agree to its publication for consultation.

WARD(S) AFFECTED: (All Wards);