

## LOCAL PLAN REPORT UPDATE AND OVERVIEW

**Head of Service/Contact:** Ruth Ormella, Head of Planning

**Urgent Decision?(yes/no)** No

**If yes, reason urgent decision required:**

**Annexes/Appendices (attached):**

**Other available papers (not attached):** [Licensing and Planning Policy Committee 7 March 2019 Report on the Progress on the Local Plan](#)

### Report summary

Progress on the new Local Plan continues to be maintained. Work on the supporting evidence base continues. Work on the Transformation Masterplan is also underway.

Following the election and constitution of the new Licensing & Planning Policy Committee this report provides a brief overview of the existing and emerging evidence base that is informing the preparation of the new Local Plan. This includes a brief overview of the Transformation Masterplan.

### Recommendation (s)

The Committee notes the continued forward progress being made in preparing the new Local Plan.

#### **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 new Epsom & Ewell Local Plan is critical as it will set out how sustainable growth, particularly in relation to new housing, will be delivered during the plan period.

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## 2 Background

- 2.1 At the November 2018 Licensing & Planning Policy Committee, Members agreed to receive a regular report that provides an update on the progress being made on the preparation of the new Local Plan against the milestones identified by the Local Plan Programme (July 2018). This is the fourth Local Plan Progress report to the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee.
- 2.2 The Borough Council continues to make progress against the timetable and milestones set out in the Local Plan Programme. The current focus is on preparing a robust evidence base to ensure the new Local Plan meets the tests of soundness by being “justified”. Work on the evidence base is already advanced. The technical studies which have already been published and are available to view from our website include –
- [Strategic Housing Market Assessment v.1 \(2016\)](#)
  - [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(2017\)](#)
  - [Urban Housing Capacity Study \(2018\)](#)
  - [The Longmead and Nonsuch Industrial Estates Capacity Study \(2018\)](#)
  - [Traveller Accommodation Assessment \(2017\)](#)
  - [Primary Constraints Study \(2017\)](#)
  - [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment \(2018\)](#)
  - [Surrey Landscape Character Assessment \(2015\)](#)
  - [Epsom & Ewell Green Belt Study Stage 1 \(2017\)](#)
  - [Epsom & Ewell Green Belt Study Stage 2 \(2018\)](#)
- 2.3 Other technical studies, which compile a longer term overview of the development of the evidence base that informs the Local Plan is available to view from [our website](#).
- 2.4 This report provides the Committee with a summary of the technical studies that are currently in the process of either being commissioned or prepared. This report also provides an overview and update on the emerging Transformation Masterplan.

## 3 Forthcoming Technical Studies

- 3.1 The following schedule identifies the technical studies that are being prepared to inform the production of the new Local Plan. The schedule includes a brief summary of the work being undertaken. The majority of the studies will provide headline intelligence as they progress towards completion. This information will be used to inform the forthcoming Regulation 18 (Part 2) Consultation stage. It is anticipated that all of these studies will be in a complete final format by early 2020.

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- Revised Strategic Housing Market Assessment – this study seeks to break down the housing need identified through the government's standard method<sup>1</sup>. For example, it will identify the scale of affordable housing need.
- Strategic Development Viability Assessment – this will assess the financial viability of new development taking place during the plan period. It will front load a process that was previously applied to individual proposals through the development management process. This study will help inform our development strategy – particularly in relation to the delivery of new affordable housing. It will also help inform the review of our Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.
- Spatial Economic Development Strategy – this will evolve our existing approaches towards new economic development and place them within a geographic Local Plan context. It will inform our decision making as to the identification of the locations where we will concentrate and optimise future economic growth
- Retail Needs Study and Town Centres Health Checks – this study will provide an assessment of future food/ convenience retail need across the Borough. It will also make recommendations on how we will shape new policy that will manage proposals for new retail uses – particularly outside of existing retail centres. In addition to informing the new Local Plan it will provide valuable data to support the determination of retail related planning applications.
- Sports Facilities (indoor and outdoor) Assessment and Playing Pitch Strategy – these inter-related documents will provide a demand assessment of our sports facilities. This will encompass existing provision and the anticipated need to expand those facilities – in order to take account of population growth. The Strategy will set out how we will achieve this both operationally and through borough-wide growth.
- Open Space Study – this Study will provide an assessment of open space provision across the Borough. This work is being undertaken internally, with the Planning Policy Team receiving valued input from the Ranger Service, and the Countryside and Grounds Maintenance Teams
- Habitats Regulations Assessment – this technical study will provide an assessment of the impact of growth in Epsom & Ewell upon the Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) that lie beyond our administrative boundary<sup>2</sup> - there being no SPAs or SACs located in the Borough.

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 60 – the standard method is a nationwide methodology that all local planning authorities have to use and apply in order to identify the scale of their housing need. The government has already undertake the calculation, for all local planning authorities, and determined that the Borough's housing need is expressed as being 579 new additional homes per annum.

<sup>2</sup> The closest of these being the Wimbledon Common Special Area of Conservation.

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- 3.2 The above studies will be reported to the Committee as appropriate and will inform the preparation of the emerging new Local Plan.

### **4 The Borough-wide Transformation Masterplan**

- 4.1 The Planning Policy Team started work on this project during February 2018 – it having flowed directly from previous housing capacity and supply studies undertaken by the Borough Council. The focus of the Masterplan is to identify the potential for delivering new sources of housing land supply, across the Borough that will deliver new types of higher density housing. This being a response to a changing housing market and the scale of housing need being identified through the standard method.
- 4.2 The Masterplan is being prepared with input from a wide variety of different technical professions, including architects; urban designers; masterplanners; economists and town planners. The Borough Council has secured much of this specialised expertise from external consultants, who are being led by Allies & Morrison<sup>3</sup>. The specification for the Masterplan was developed by the Planning Policy Team and was the subject of reports to this Committee and the Council's Strategy & Resources Committee.
- 4.3 Visualising the transformation process will be a key output from the Masterplan. The visual content will range from basic urban design treatments illustrating intensification (at appropriate locations) – comprised of projections showing mass, bulk and scale; through to detailed treatments that identify specific new housing types that will be recognised as being distinctive to Epsom & Ewell. Achieving high quality visual character and appearance from new development is a key output of this project.
- 4.4 The following are other outputs anticipated from the Masterplan –
- A clear and coherent vision of how the Borough will be transformed;
  - Visualisations of what the transformation will look like;
  - Evidence that the transformation is achievable and deliverable during the Local Plan period; and
  - Additional support to the Local Plan process – specifically at the examination stage.
- 4.5 Initially the Masterplan will sit alongside the Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft. It will help to demonstrate the Borough Council's commitment to responding to housing demand. Ultimately, it is likely that the Masterplan will become a planning policy document in its own right – guiding the evolution of residential development in Epsom & Ewell.

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<sup>3</sup> Allies & Morrison have previously contributed to the production of the Upper High Street, Depot Road and Church Development Brief – a supplementary planning document adopted by the Borough Council.

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- 4.6 It is anticipated that initial outputs from the Masterplan process will become available in the early Autumn 2019. At that point, opportunities for Members to engage in the Masterplan will be identified.

### 5 Housing Delivery Test and Action Plan

- 5.1 The Housing Delivery Test is an annual assessment of the performance of local planning authorities in delivering their identified need over the previous three years. This is an annual Test that uses existing data, submitted as part of the Housing Delivery return. The Borough Council made its first return to this Test during the final quarter of 2018. The results of the Test were published on 19 February 2019. The results of the Housing Delivery Test have been published on [the Government's website](#).
- 5.2 The result of the Housing Delivery Test and its implications for the Borough Council were reported to the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee on 7 March 2019. The results of the Test show that we are not delivering a sufficient number of new additional homes. This was anticipated. On the basis that our housing delivery is below 85% housing requirement; the Housing Delivery Test indicates that we are at 57%; we will now be required to prepare a Housing Delivery Action Plan (within the next six months) and have an additional 20% buffer applied to our OAHN. There is no mechanism to appeal or challenge the outcomes of this test.
- 5.3 The Housing Delivery Action Plan will set out how the Borough Council will respond to under delivery. It will identify the interventions, both through planning policy and the development management process that will be introduced to raise delivery. The overall objective will be to secure a five year housing land supply. Work on a draft Housing Delivery Action is underway. It is anticipated that the draft version will be the subject of specific report to this Committee during the late Summer 2019.

### 6 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 6.1 The preparation and implementation of our new Local Plan imposes significant demands on staff in the Planning Policy Team and the wider Planning Department. The Local Plan Programme provides a relevant and appropriate series of performance indicators that can be utilised to monitor progress and identify whether additional resources will be required.
- 6.1 The increasing level of complexity to the local plan process (introduced through the revised NPPF), particularly in relation to the housing delivery test, review of the CIL schedule and strategic viability mean that further resources may be required. Approval from the Strategy & Resources Committee will be sought identifying the additional resources, whether staff or financial, required.
- 6.2 ***Chief Finance Officer's comments: none for the purposes of this report***

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## **7 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)**

- 7.1 The new Local Plan will need to demonstrate that it meets the four tests of soundness set out in national planning policy. By providing evidence that we have considered all reasonable and available sources of housing land supply, and the factors and constraints that impact upon supply, we will be able demonstrate that our new Local Plan has been positively prepared and is justified.
- 7.2 ***Monitoring Officer's comments: none arising from the contents of this report.***

## **8 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications**

- 8.1 None for the purposes of this report.

## **9 Partnerships**

- 9.1 None for the purposes of this report.

## **10 Risk Assessment**

- 10.1 Having an up-to-date Local Plan Programme is a key measure in mitigating possible risk of direct intervention by the government. Ensuring that our agreed milestones towards Submission and examination are met is important. Should we fail to meet our targets we are likely to face criticism and the possibility of intervention. This regular item provides the Committee with a mechanism to monitor and engage in the process progressing towards the Submission stage. In particular it provides an early warning system in identifying possible areas of risk – including delay – and the mitigation measures that could be deployed in response.
- 10.2 The preparation and production of the evidence base and the closely associated Transformation Masterplan will ensure that the new Local Plan is comprehensively supported by technical data. This will help us demonstrate that we have an appropriate and deliverable strategy for future growth. Failure to demonstrate the soundness of our strategy could result in our new Local Plan being found unsound.

## **11 Conclusion and Recommendations**

- 11.1 The Committee are requested to take note of the progress being made in preparing the new Local Plan. The Committee are also asked to note the scale and breadth of new technical studies being undertaken as part of the Local Plan evidence base production.

**Ward(s) affected:** (All Wards);