

**EPSOM & EWELL LOCAL PLAN PROGRAMME 2017**

Report of the: Head of Place Development  
Contact: Karol Jakubczyk  
Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No  
If yes, reason urgent decision required:  
Annexes/Appendices (attached): Epsom & Ewell Local Plan Programme 2017  
Other available papers (not attached): National Planning Policy Framework  
Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

**REPORT SUMMARY**

**A new Local Plan Programme has been prepared to set the process and timetable for a partial review of the Epsom & Ewell Core Strategy.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Committee**

- (1) considers the draft Local Plan Programme and makes any changes they deem fit**
- (2) Resolves that the Local Plan Programme (as revised) has effect on 12 July 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 partial review of the Core Strategy is a critical part of the Local Plan review process as it will set out how sustainable growth will be delivered during the plan period.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The primary purpose of the Local Plan Programme, or Local Development Scheme as it was previously known, is to set out the processes and timetable for the preparation and production of the Borough Council's Local Plan. We have always envisaged our Programmes providing a rolling three-year project plan - that seeks to inform both the process and all of the interested parties and partners about how and when the Local Plan will be brought forward.
- 2.2 Progress against the Local Plan milestones identified in the Programme is monitored through our Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report. In the past we have amended and revised our Local Plan programme to take account of circumstances that have necessitated a change in our plans. Previous Local Plan Programmes and Development Schemes have typically been reviewed after being in place for two years or so. Revisions have normally been triggered by changes in national planning policies, such as the revocation of regional plans and the publication of the NPPF; and consequential changes in our approach to plan-making.
- 2.3 Our last Local Plan Programme was published during the Summer of 2016. It was the seventh Programme since the publication of our first in March 2005. Our last Programme was published during a period that we can now identify as having relatively high risk and uncertainty. At that time the Planning Policy Team had been reduced to one person – the Planning Policy Manager – with the remaining complement unavailable either being on maternity leave, or unfilled posts. Although this situation had been anticipated, the full extent of the difficulties that arose during this period had not been fully understood. Consequently, whilst the Planning Policy Team were able to make good progress on other high priority projects, specifically the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy, progress on the Local Plan fell behind during the second half of 2016.
- 2.4 Following the successful recruitment of a new Senior Planning Policy Officer and Planning Policy Administrator, and the return of our Planning Officers from maternity leave, the Planning Policy Team is now once again at full complement. On that basis, we believe that we can revisit our Local Plan Programme with increased confidence that our ambitions will be met. A draft version of a new Programme is included under Annex 1.

## **3 Local Plan Programme**

- 3.1 The latest Local Plan Programme provides an update of the 2016 document. The Programme focuses on the partial review of the Core Strategy. It sets out a timetable outlining the processes involved in the preparation, production and consultation of the revised policies and their supporting evidence. The timetable identifies key milestones during document production. We will use these milestones to monitor the progress of the Programme.

- 3.2 The timetable remains ambitious, seeking progress throughout the remainder of 2017; with an anticipated Issues & Options Consultation during the Autumn 2017; and Pre-Submission Consultation during the first half of 2018. Such a timetable continues to be reliant upon a proportionate deployment of resource; in terms of internal staff, external expertise where necessary and financial support. If successful, it will reduce the level of risk of government intervention and unsustainable speculative approaches for higher levels of housing growth from the development industry. Critically it will ensure that Borough Council remains in control of the Local Plan's growth strategy.
- 3.3 A key milestone will be the Issues and Options Consultation, which will consider the scale of growth and the specific site allocations needed to deliver that growth; specifically new housing. The Programme identifies that the draft Issues & Options Consultation will be considered by the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee during September 2017, with a recommendation that it go out for public consultation thereafter. We anticipate that there are potential risks associated with this stage of the process. In particular there is the possibility that the consultation will generate a significant level of comments, which will require a quick and decisive response from the Borough Council. These areas of risk can be managed, to a degree, through the deployment of resources and leadership. However, there remains the possibility that the timetable may need to be revisited.
- 3.4 Once the process passes into the Pre-Submission stage, our ability to manage risk is reduced as control is taken by the Planning Inspectorate. The key objective for the Borough Council must be to ensure that the draft document submitted for examination meets the four tests of soundness set out under National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 182<sup>1</sup>. As long as these tests are comfortably met the risk of the Submission document failing will be extended.

#### **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. Since the preparation of the last Local Plan Programme additional staff resources have been secured and deployed. It is anticipated that these new resources will make a valuable contribution towards managing the process and meeting the milestones set out in the new Programme.
- 4.2 However, it may prove necessary to deploy other corporate resources, such as the Communications Team and/ or Senior Officers of the Borough Council, in order to maintain 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 can be best deployed.

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<sup>1</sup> The NPPF requires that submitted local plans be sound, namely that they are i) positively prepared; ii) justified; iii) effective; and iv) consistent with national policy.

- 4.3 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** : *In 2016/17 approval was granted for an additional funding of £54,000 per annum for 2 years to provide additional staffing resources within the Planning & Policy team to assist in the delivery of the Council's Local Plan. The additional staffing cost over the 2 year period totalled £108,000 with £80,000 being funded from CIL admin fee and £28,000 coming from S106 monitoring fund.*
- 4.4 *Any request for further funding to increase the level of resources required to deliver the Local Plan will need to be referred to Strategy & Resources Committee for approval with an explanation on how it can be financed.*

## **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:** *Under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, a local planning authority must prepare and maintain a local development scheme (what we now seemingly now refer to as our Local Plan Programme). The scheme must specify a range of things. Most pertinently it must specify "the timetable for the preparation and revision of the development plan documents"*
- 5.3 *To bring a local development scheme (or a revision to a scheme) into effect, the local planning authority must resolve that it have effect and, in the resolution, specify the date from which it is to have effect.*
- 5.4 *The Scheme is of critical importance, as section 19(1) of the 2004 Act provides that development plan documents "must be prepared in accordance with the local development scheme"*
- 5.5 *The Council must make available to the public:*
- a). The up-to-date text of the scheme*
  - b). a copy of any amendments made to the scheme, and*
  - c). up-to-date information showing the state of the Council's compliance (or non-compliance with the timetable contained in the scheme*

## **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 will form an integral part of the plan-making process. The Sustainability Appraisal Report will be subject to public consultation at an appropriate point in the process.

## **7 Partnerships**

- 7.1 The Localism Act and national planning policy state that public bodies have a duty to cooperate 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. This deadline has been pushed back to 2018. We are now making good progress to meet this requirement – we have identified an objectively assessed housing need (through our Strategic Housing Market Assessment) and we are in the process of identifying and quantifying potential future sources of housing land supply (through our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment). 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 draft Local Plan Programme and subject to any additions or amendments agree to its publication and implementation.

**WARD(S) AFFECTED: (All Wards);**