

Local Plan Review - Issues and Options Document for Consultation

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Purpose of the Report

1. The report relates to a consultation document setting out the range of issues that need to be addressed in the Review of the Local Plan and a series of options on which representations are sought. This is an early stage in the preparation of the Local Plan Review covering the period 2014 - 2034 and will be followed by consideration of responses and, in due course, publication of a Preferred Options Document for further consultation.

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of October 2017.

Public Interest

3. It is important that there is early and meaningful engagement in the Local Plan process. The Local Plan Review Issues and Options consultation document has been prepared to support engagement with the general public, statutory consultees, local communities, businesses, voluntary groups, other public organisations, landowners and Duty to Cooperate bodies.
4. The Council is seeking views on the alternative options for addressing spatial planning issues in the District. The document sets out a number of questions and accompanying options in order to focus responses on the key issues going forward.
5. Consultation on the Local Plan Review (LPR) must be prepared in accordance with the Council's adopted 'Statement of Community Involvement'. The consultation will take place over a period of eight weeks and will include an interactive website, notices in the press; and public exhibitions and drop-in sessions. A summary leaflet will be prepared and copies of relevant documents will also be made available at all District Council offices and libraries.

Recommendations

6. That the District Executive:
 - a. approves the consultation document on the Issues and Options identified through the Review of the Local Plan (contained in a separate supplementary pack).
 - b. delegates responsibility to the Director of Service Delivery in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning to make any final text amendments which may be necessary to enable the Local Plan Review Issues and Options consultation document to be published.

Background

7. The Local Plan includes policies to support the Council's long term vision and strategic context for managing and accommodating residential and economic growth across South Somerset. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights that Local Plans are key to delivering

sustainable development. Planning decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The adopted Local Plan covers the period 2006-2028. The Local Plan Review will be re-based and roll forward six years covering the period 2014-2034.

8. The South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) was adopted in March 2015. The Inspector, in accepting that the Local Plan was 'sound', stated that the Council should undertake an early review of the policies relating to housing and employment provision in Wincanton. This early review was to be completed within three years of the date of adoption, which would have been no later than March 2018.
9. The Council previously stated that it will produce a Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) to provide the additional detail on proposals for the 'Sustainable Urban Extensions' in Yeovil and 'Directions of Growth' in Market Towns. It has now been agreed though that it would be more efficient to produce the additional site-specific detail on growth locations in parallel with the work to carry out a review of housing and employment provision in Wincanton. Hence a whole Local Plan Review. This report relates to the issues and options that have been identified in that Review and the consultation that now needs to take place on these.

Local Plan Review Issues and Options

10. Options for addressing key issues are presented in each section of the document. The options for addressing the overall distribution of growth are considered in the Strategy Section and site specific options for where additional growth could be located are discussed in the settlement specific sections. The inclusion of potential site allocations for development does not imply that such development will automatically proceed as this will be determined later in the process in accordance with the preferred strategy for the spatial distribution of growth.
11. Issues have been identified through various mechanisms; for example, changes in national policy and legislation, evidence base documents and internal monitoring. They combine to highlight the key spatial planning issues facing South Somerset at the present time. The section below highlights some of the main issues on which views are sought, but is not comprehensive.
12. Evidence shows that, during the new plan period from 2014 to 2034, a total of 13,200 new dwellings will be required. Once the number of new dwellings already completed and those that are under construction or not yet started are taken into account, the residual requirement for the whole District is around 6,000 dwellings.
13. The current Local Plan distributes housing growth according to the role and function of each of the settlements throughout the District. The majority is directed to Yeovil as the Strategically Significant Town, with lower amounts going to the Primary Market Towns of Chard, Crewkerne, Ilminster and Wincanton. Lower amounts still are anticipated at the Local Market Towns and then designated Rural Centres. A proportion is expected across the remaining Rural Settlements.
14. However, monitoring shows that, over the plan period so far, housing delivery in the Rural Settlements has been far greater than expected. This is also true of delivery in Wincanton, Langport, South Petherton, Milborne Port, Ilminster and Bruton. Delivery in Yeovil and Chard has been considerably less than the annualised average through to 2017.
15. One of the key issues that the consultation needs to address is therefore whether an alternative approach needs to be adopted and several options are suggested, including a more dispersed strategy based on where the market is delivering; or even providing for a new settlement.
16. Economic forecasts suggest that, over the new plan period to 2034, there will be around 8,500 (net) additional jobs in the District, spread across a wide range of sectors, including town centre

activities and education, for example, as well as the more traditional ones such as manufacturing. These will equate to a requirement for 3-8ha of land for office development and 42-85ha for industrial development.

17. A similar strategy to that for housing is currently in place for the distribution of new employment land. Monitoring shows that, again, actual delivery has not corresponded to where the Local Plan anticipated. Rather than the majority being within Yeovil and the strategic allocations at locations like Ilminster, Chard and Crewkerne, the single largest proportion has been made at settlements across the 'Rest of the District', at locations like Lopen Head and North Cadbury Business Park.
18. The overall amount of new land provided has also been lower than expected, whilst the amount of new floorspace has been significant. This seems to be because, rather than establishing new sites, existing businesses are consolidating and expanding on their existing sites, like Oscar Mayer and Brecknell Willis in Chard. Gross Value Added in the District has also grown significantly by 31% between 2001 and 2015, suggesting the amount of new employment land may not be the best way to measure economic success.
19. This raises two principal issues: It may be appropriate to re-assess the overall scale of employment land set out in the current Local Plan; and it is possible that the District Council needs to reconsider its approach in focussing its economic development strategy on the five large towns. For example, it may be necessary to implement a policy that recognises opportunities across the rest of the District, such as along locations on the A303.
20. Yeovil has been the town with the single largest number of dwellings provided since 2006, albeit at a lower rate than expected. The key sites at Wyndham Park, Lufton and Brimsmore are progressing; and applications submitted for the Sustainable Urban Extensions at Keyford and Upper Mudford. Over the next Plan period, however, further allocations are going to be necessary and the consultation document identifies fourteen potential sites that are suitable; views are being sought on which of these should be taken forward.
21. Yeovil has the largest town centre in the District. Whilst there is significant capacity for additional comparison goods floorspace, such as for the sale of durable goods like clothing or footwear, there is comparatively little for additional convenience floorspace (food shopping). The majority of supermarkets are located outside of the town centre, and spending on convenience goods in the centre is less than half of that spent in the rest of Yeovil. There is also competition for comparison goods shopping from out-of-centre locations, like the Babylon Hill Retail Centre.
22. The number of shops in the town centre that are vacant is higher than the national average and some of these may be suitable to accommodate some of the retail growth. There are though a number of vacant or underused sites, many in need of regeneration, which could also be allocated for further retail development. The consultation suggests nine such sites and seeks views on which if any of these may be designated for retail or other town centre uses.
23. There are separate sections in the consultation document relating to each of the designated Primary Market Towns, Local Market Towns and Rural Centres; and views are also sought on which potential sites for additional growth of housing and employment should be allocated in these locations.
24. The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan Update (2015/16) identifies the requirements to support the growth in the current Local Plan, but additional infrastructure will be required to deliver the further new homes and economic development identified in the Local Plan Review. The consultation document therefore seeks comments on what this additional infrastructure should include, both in general and specifically in relation to each settlement.

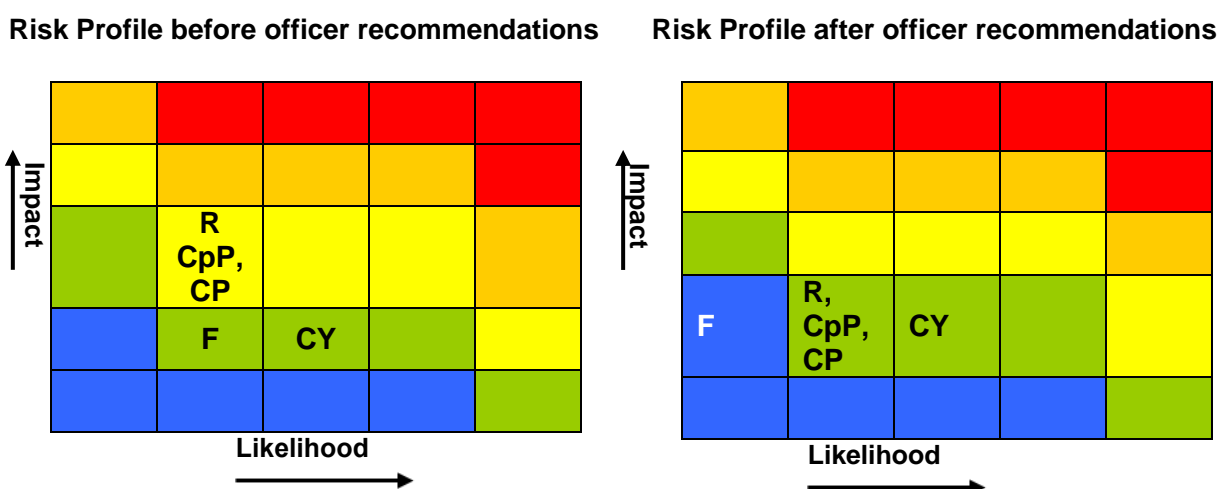
- 25. There are additional sections on Housing, Transport and Accessibility, Health and Wellbeing and Environmental Quality.
- 26. A summary of key issues, the Consultation Strategy; and The Local Plan Review Issues and Options Consultation Document are appended.

Financial Implications

- 27. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report or the recommendation.

Risk Matrix

- 28. The following matrix sets out the risks associated with District Executive recommending that the Issues and Options Consultation Document is approved.



Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R = Reputation	Red = High impact and high probability
CpP = Corporate Plan Priorities	Orange = Major impact and major probability
CP = Community Priorities	Yellow = Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY = Capacity	Green = Minor impact and minor probability
F = Financial	Blue = Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

Council Plan Implications

- 29. Delivering the Local Plan Review is a high priority for the Council by virtue of the recommendation in the Inspector’s Report and the acceptance of the requirement within the Council’s currently adopted Local Plan.
- 30. The Local Plan is a key land use policy document and ensuring it remains up-to-date and aligned to the specific challenges and opportunities in the District will help the Council to realise economic vitality and prosperity, improve the health and wellbeing of citizens; create safe, sustainable and cohesive communities; and promote a balanced natural and built environment.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

31. The Local Plan includes policies to limit the impact of development on Climate Change, with development being directed away from high-risk flood areas and encouragement given to sustainable drainage systems. Policies also relate to low carbon travel, sustainable transport solutions and Pollution Control

Equality and Diversity Implications

32. The Local Plan Review will be publicised in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and normal procedures. Evidence base reports are made available on the Council's web site.
33. The Local Plan for 2014-2034 will be prepared in accordance with the legislative and statutory requirements of Habitats Regulations Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal; and undergo an Equality Analysis.

Privacy Impact Assessment

34. No personal data handling is involved.

Background Papers

Attached in separate supplementary pack.
