

Somerset West and Taunton

Executive – 18 June 2019

Local Plan Issues Document – Approval for Public Consultation

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mike Rigby

Report Author: Laura Higgins, Strategy Specialist

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the first public consultation stage (the Issues Document) in the Local Plan making process.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Executive resolves to:

- 1) **approve** the Somerset West and Taunton Local Plan Issues Document for public consultation (Appendix A);
- 2) **authorise** the Head of Strategy to make any necessary editorial corrections and minor amendments to the documents, and to agree the final publication style.

3 Risk Assessment

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
Not undertaking this Issues consultation will mean that the Council is less informed about the local issues that are important to residents, businesses and organisations. This would adversely affect the quality and robustness of the next stages in the Local Plan process.	Likely (4)	Moderate (3)	Medium (12)
<i>The mitigations for this are the proposed changes as set out in the report.</i>	Rare (1)	Negligible (1)	Low (1)

4 Background and Full details of the Report

4.1 There is a statutory requirement for Local Planning Authorities to have an 'up-to-date' Local Plan. This is primarily concerned with ensuring Councils have a housing requirement figure based on up-to-date evidence/guidance. The West Somerset Local Plan was adopted in Nov 2016 and is deemed up-to-date at present as it is based upon the most recent housing need assessment guidance and adopted within the past 5 years.

- 4.2 However, the Taunton Deane Core Strategy was adopted in September 2012 and its housing requirement figure was not based on the most recent housing need assessment. The Core Strategy is also more than 5 years old which is a threshold in the National Planning Policy Framework for determining whether a Plan is up-to-date. Given the position of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, and the introduction of the Government's Standard Method for calculating housing need, there statutory need to produce a new Local Plan.
- 4.3 Furthermore, the creation of the new Council administrative area provides a positive justification to producing a new Local Plan to reflect the aims, aspirations and direction of travel for the new Council. In accordance the Local Government (Boundary Changes) Regulations 2018, we must adopt a local development document under section 23 of the 2004 Act to apply to the whole of the area within a period of 5 years starting with the reorganisation date.
- 4.4 The geographical scope of the new Local Plan is the administrative boundary of Somerset West and Taunton but excludes the Exmoor National Park which has its own Local Planning Authority.
- 4.5 The Local Plan plan-making process must comply with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. We are at the very first stage of the process where we gather evidence, identify issues and present options for consultation (Regulation 18). Regulation 18 should involve some public consultation but it is up to us to decide what form this consultation takes and what each stage covers before the more formal consultation required at Regulation 19.
- 4.6 We have set out in the Local Development Scheme (for approval at Full Council on 19 June 2019) a proposal for the stages of the Local Plan which is, in summary:
- Consultation on the Issues Document (Reg 18) document in Q2 of 2019/20;
 - Consultation on an 'Options' style for the Local Plan policies (Reg 18) in Q3 of 2019/20;
 - Publication of a Draft Local Plan (Reg 19) in Q2 of 2020/21;
 - Submit the Plan to the Secretary of State (Reg 22) in Q3 of 2020/21.
 - Examination hearings (Reg 24) with appointed Planning Inspector - Q1 of 2021/22.
 - Local Plan adopted in Q3 of 2021/22.
- 4.7 The Issues Document (**Appendix A**) summarises the social, environmental and economic issues we face in Somerset West and Taunton including any differences across the District. It also presents thoughts and ideas for how we could address these issues. In some cases, these ideas are purposely suggestive or bold to generate reaction and discussion. The consultation asks for views on the issues and ideas presented.
- 4.8 Consultation will be in line with our Statement of Community Involvement (see Agenda of this Committee) and will take place for a period of a minimum of 6 weeks starting in July 2019. We also intend to consult on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report at the same time.

4.9 Following the consultation, we will review the comments received and produce a consultation report which will form part of the evidence base for the next stage (Options) of the Plan-making process. We will also be producing an evidence base to inform the next stage as well as Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment.

4.10 The Issues document will be desktop published before publication.

5 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities

5.1 Officers are in the process of preparing a new Corporate Strategy to replace those previously prepared for Taunton Deane and West Somerset. The Local Plan is an important document which will help articulate and translate the Council's emerging strategic objectives into planning policy.

6 Finance / Resource Implications

6.1 There is an agreed budget and reserves to support the delivery of the Local Plan process.

6.2 The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport and the Head of Strategy has reviewed and approved this report with no issues arising. Minor changes to the text were suggested and incorporated.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 The Council's Constitution describes how Somerset West and Taunton will discharge its responsibilities, including responsibilities for the preparation and adoption of the Local Plan, which must be considered and endorsed by Full Council, prior to adoption.

8 Environmental Impact Implications

8.1 The Local Plan is ultimately examined against its sustainability credentials as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. This is tested through an Examination in Public by an independent Planning Inspector and through Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment which will be prepared as part of the plan making process.

9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

9.1 None at this stage.

10 Equality and Diversity Implications

10.1 None at this stage. In order to comply with the public sector equality duty: an Impact Assessments (IA) accompanies this series of reports and agenda items on the Local Plan (enclosed as Appendix 2). Further Impact Assessments will be prepared in due course as part of the plan making process. Further, details of the process are also available from: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/equality-and-diversity/>

11 Social Value Implications

11.1 None at this stage.

12 Partnership Implications

12.1 As part of the Duty to Co-operate requirement (Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012), we will be expected to work with other public bodies, particularly neighbouring planning authorities and the County Council on any cross boundary strategic plan making issues to develop sound Local Plans.

13 Health and Wellbeing Implications

13.1 None at this stage.

14 Asset Management Implications

14.1 None at this stage.

15 Data Protection Implications

15.1 With permission from the consultee in line with the GDPR, personal data will be collected as part of the consultation on the Issues Document.

16 Consultation Implications

16.1 The consultation on this document will be in line with the Statement of Community Involvement (see Agenda of this Committee). This is the first stage of the Local Plan process and no previous consultation on this document has taken place. The results of this consultation will inform the next stage.

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny – Yes**
- **Executive – Yes**

Reporting Frequency: Once only

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Local Plan Issues Document for consultation
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Contact Officers

Name	Laura Higgins
Direct Dial	01984 600197
Email	l.higgins@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk