

# Local Plan Review – Preferred Options consultation

Councillor Iain Eadie, Cabinet Member for Investment, Economic Growth & Tourism

Date: 12 November 2019  
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Key Decision? Yes  
Local Ward All  
Members

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**CABINET**

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to agree to a period of public consultation on the next stage of the review of the Council's Local Plan. This is an additional stage that has been inserted following Cabinet's approval of a revised Local Development Scheme (September 2019).
- 1.2 The Preferred Options stage represents an emerging stage in the plan's preparation.
- 1.3 Consultation on a Preferred Options document provides the opportunity to receive comments from interested parties that can inform the Regulation 19 consultation, which is programmed for May 2020.
- 1.4 The report sets out the proposed level of growth and how this could be distributed across the District as part of the Local plan. In addition, other spatial themes of the plan are identified along with the accompanying evidence base.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet approves the Local Plan Review: Preferred Options ([Appendix A](#)) and policy maps ([Appendix B](#)) for public consultation.
- 2.2 That delegated authority be given to the Cabinet Member for Investment, Economic Growth and Tourism in consultation with the Head of Economic Growth and Development to make any minor changes to the appearance, format and text of the Local Plan Review: Preferred Options document or the supporting documents in the interests of clarity and accuracy prior to their publication for consultation.

## 3. Background

*What is the Local Plan Review?*

- 3.1 The Local Plan Review provides a full review of the existing Local Plan. It will ensure that there are appropriate and up-to-date planning policies for the District. There have been a number of important changes in recent years including the publication of a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its associated planning practice guidance (PPG).

### *Why are we reviewing the Plan?*

- 3.2 A commitment to an early review of the Plan was set out within the Local Plan Strategy (2015). This was further embedded through the Local Plan Allocations. During the examination of the latter document the Inspector inserted a modification which requires the Council to submit its Local Plan Review for Examination by 2021.
- 3.3 The Review provides the Council with the opportunity to set a new direction for growth, which the draft Plan seeks to take forward, as set out within the preferred options document.

### *What has been completed to date?*

- 3.4 Two stages of consultation have already been completed. The previous rounds of consultation have assisted in informing the draft plan now being considered for consultation. Following the last round of consultation it was agreed by Members at Cabinet on the 10<sup>th</sup> September to insert an additional round of public consultation in November 2019. This will ensure that at the next stage the proposed draft plan will be as robust as possible having regard to the overall vision, strategy and policy base.
- 3.5 To inform the emerging plan a range of evidence base has been completed which informs the direction and amount of growth, along with the drafting of policies. Further evidence will be needed to allow a draft plan to be formulated at the next stage.

### *What is being proposed?*

- 3.6 Officers have prepared a pro-growth plan and where possible minimised the impact on Green Belt. The Preferred Options version of the plan represents an emerging stage in the plans preparation. It contains a vision and spatial strategy which aims to deliver pro-growth aspirations.
- 3.7 A range of strategic housing allocations have been identified in recognition of this ambition. The plan period will cover the years 2018 – 2040 and it is expected that the proposed strategic allocations will be delivered over this period. The plan period is different from the previous version (previously 2016 – 2036). This change provides the authority an opportunity to plan for growth and also aligns with the base date of a range of the evidence collected. Additionally this will start the plan period in the most recently completed financial year, a year in which the Council demonstrated a high level of delivery in terms of new homes and new employment delivery (see [Authority Monitoring Report 2019](#)).
- 3.8 Taking account of the above and the direction provided to officers in terms of considering a pro-growth plan which minimises the impact upon the Green Belt, a level of growth has been identified which is considered deliverable. The plan identifies a housing requirement of approximately 11,780 new homes including a 4,500 contribution to the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area shortfall, an annual requirement of approximately 536 dwellings per year. To assist with delivery of a pro-growth plan it is also suggested that an additional buffer of housing sites should be identified through the local plan review of around 20-25%. Emerging evidence suggests that alongside the suggested housing requirement approximately 61 hectares of land for employment uses will need to be provided. This is informed by the emerging evidence as well as the results of previous consultations.
- 3.9 The [Local Plan Review: Scope, Issues and Options document](#) (April 2018) and [Local Plan Review: Preferred Options & Policy Directions](#) (January 2019) set out a range of potential options for delivery across the district. The January 2019 document included a preferred settlement hierarchy, based upon evidence available at that point in time. This identified a broadly similar hierarchy to that set out within the currently adopted local plan. This version of the plan recognises the historical approach, however

this emerging version of the plan seeks to take forward the following different approach to delivering growth:

- Growth to north of Lichfield;
- Sustainable growth of Burntwood;
- Growth of sustainable villages, for Fazeley, Mile Oak and Bonehill, and Whittington this requires the release of Green Belt;
- Marginal growth of the rural settlements/catchments;
- Minimise the release of Green Belt; and
- Areas of Development Restraint.

- 3.10 The breakdown of proposed settlement growth is identified at **Appendix C**. Members will note that the emerging plan identifies a mix of strategic sites along with the opportunity for Neighbourhood Plans to take forward the allocation of smaller sites. As part of the forthcoming consultation exercise officers will need to assess the responses to this approach to ascertain the appetite for this and its deliverability. At this stage the intention is for Neighbourhood Plans to deal with any residual numbers. Were this were not to occur officers would review the situation and determine whether there was a need for a part 2 Plan akin to the existing Local Plan Allocations document.
- 3.11 With regards to potential employment land to meet the need, this version of the emerging Plan identifies a requirement of 61 hectares. Some of this provision will be delivered by existing allocations that are already confirmed within the adopted local plan. However, an assessment of potential opportunities to meet the 61 hectares has resulted in a current shortfall being identified. The primary options available are in Fradley with the only other options beyond the District's current employment area are located within the Green Belt around Fazeley and Bassetts Pole.
- 3.12 An important concept the emerging plan introduces is that of a new settlement in the region of 10,000 new dwellings and associated infrastructure which in the future could offer the ability to take the pressure for growth away from our main settlements and the Green Belt. However, at the time of preparing the emerging plan the track record of delivering strategic sites in the District does not provide justification for taking this option forward. However, in the longer term a new settlement option could lead to a more sustainable approach to delivering growth in the District. The consultation provides the opportunity to obtain views on this concept and draft policy wording.
- 3.13 The emerging plan includes a range of other draft policies which support the delivery of the vision of growth agenda. These focus on the following components:
- Sustainable communities;
  - Infrastructure;
  - Sustainable transport;
  - Housing
  - Economic growth, enterprise and tourism;
  - Healthy and safe communities
  - Natural resources;
  - Built and historic environment; and
  - Settlement chapters.

### *What has this been informed by?*

3.14 The emerging plan has been informed by previous consultations. Specifically the comments received during the previous consultations have informed updates to emerging policies, as well as accompanying evidence base. In addition the positive approach to growth informs the content of the emerging plan, in particular its vision. In order to be compliant with national policy requirement the plan will need to be accompanied by evidence. The following evidence has been completed to date:

- Authority Monitoring Report 2019;
- Ecology assessment;
- Employment Land Availability Assessment 2019;
- Green Belt Review 2019;
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment;
- Habitat Regulation Assessment;
- Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment;
- Five year housing land supply paper 2019;
- Playing Pitch Strategy – stage 1;
- Site selection;
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019;
- Sustainability Appraisal; and
- Urban Capacity assessment 2019.

### *Next steps*

3.15 While a significant amount of evidence has been completed there is still further work to be undertaken. The following identifies the fundamental next steps to inform the final draft plan which will be prepared in due course and following the forthcoming consultation:

- Detailed infrastructure analysis and modelling is required in support of the strategic allocations and overall quantum of growth. This should be commenced imminently and will feed into the viability analysis of the strategic sites;
- A detailed viability appraisal is required to test the Plan policies, inform the affordable housing requirements and site analysis;
- Some pieces of evidence will require minor updates to reflect the end date of the Plan. This is likely to be in the form of a short addendum updates;
- After the consultation officers will need to analyse the responses received and report back to Members on the next steps, this may require additional evidence to be produced. Members should also note that through the process of consultation alternative sites will come forward that will require assessment;
- Some of the existing evidence that has been produced will require finer grain analysis/ updates;
- There is a need to identify more employment land because the emerging plan does not identify a sufficient proportion of land. Further work is required to seek out alternative employment land opportunities to ensure the plan represents a balance of housing and employment; and
- Consult with neighbouring Authorities within Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing market area. This engagement will make reference to the Council's proposed Green

Belt releases and seek to verify if this is needed/ supported in the context of meeting the shortfall arising from the housing market area.

### *Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment*

- 3.16 The Local Plan Review needs to be supported by a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) because of the District's proximity to a number of European designated sites. The updated HRA focuses on the contents of the emerging plan. The HRA will need to continue to be updated as the Plan develops. A summary of the HRA is provided at **Appendix D**
- 3.17 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a fundamental document for any Local Plan. It assists in ensuring the policies and allocations are appropriately developed when taking into account the agreed sustainability objectives. The updated SA focuses on the contents of the emerging plan. The SA will need to continue to be updated as the Plan develops. A non-technical summary of the Sustainability Appraisal supporting the emerging Plan is provided at **Appendix E**.
- 3.18 As part of the consultation on the emerging Local Plan the SA and HRA will be consulted upon. As the emerging plan progresses to a draft plan both of these supporting documents will need to be updated.

### *Consultation*

- 3.19 The following means of consultation on the Preferred Options are to be arranged and undertaken by officers:
- Drop in events across the District;
  - Drop in sessions at the District Council house;
  - Circulation of an Executive Summary of the Plan to encourage interest and stimulate involvement from local residents, businesses and other key stakeholders;
  - Use of social media to highlight key themes.
- 3.20 The consultation will run from the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019 until 24<sup>th</sup> January 2020. This is in excess of the minimum period of consultation set out in our adopted Statement of Community Involvement and takes account of the Christmas period.

### *Duty to Cooperate*

- 3.21 The Council have actively continued with Duty to cooperate engagement to inform this Plan. This is something that will need to continue and it is recommended that the Authority establishes Statements of Common Ground with partners ahead of plan submission.

Alternative Options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Cabinet identify changes to policies contained within the draft plan. This is not recommended because the current set of policies have been established based on evidence collected to date. The consultation provides the opportunity for interested parties to engage in the process. The outcome of consultation will then be reported to Members.</li><li>2. An alternative level of growth could be considered. This could be linked to the local housing need or in excess of what is being proposed as part of this consultation. The consultation provides the opportunity for interested</li></ol>
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	<p>parties to consider the level of growth being proposed. Officers will consider these responses ahead of the consultation.</p> <p>3. Cabinet could identify other consultation methods to inform the November consultation. These can be considered as part of any consultation exercise.</p>
Consultation	<p>1. Consultation has taken place with the Economic Growth, Environment and Development (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019.</p> <p>2. A minimum of 6 weeks public consultation will be required.</p>
Financial Implications	<p>1. The cost of preparing the plan has been factored into the MTFS.</p> <p>2. The cost of running consultation will be met from existing budgets.</p> <p>3. Future evidence base requirements will need to be considered as part of budget planning</p>
Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	<p>1. Supports the priority of a vibrant and prosperous economy as it assists in the delivery of the planning function of the Council.</p> <p>2. Supports the priority of Healthy and Safe communities by ensuring the provision of housing.</p> <p>3. Supports the priority of clean, green and welcoming places to live by assisting in allocating land for affordable housing, as well as supporting the delivery of residential and commercial developments.</p>
Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	<p>1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken as part of preparing the Local Plan Review (<b>Appendix F</b>).</p>
Crime & Safety Issues	<p>1. None.</p>
GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment	<p>1. A Privacy Impact Assessment has been undertaken.</p>

	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	Limited growth at Burntwood is challenged in the context of the council settlement hierarchy.	Officers will consider the responses received during the public consultation.	Yellow
B	The risk of changing legislation during the preparation of the Local Plan is a challenge. Publication of national policy statements can generate new issues that the Local Plan or its preparation must address.	Officers will continue to keep abreast of legislative changes. Updates will be considered and implications will be reported to Members.	Yellow
C	Lack of infrastructure evidence is challenged during consultation	The next step of the Plan is to ascertain the detailed strategic infrastructure needs in combination with their respective impacts on viability.	Yellow

D	The Air Quality Management Areas are negatively impacted by the proposals within the emerging plan.	Officers will need to undertake adequate assessment regarding the impact of growth across the District. The impact on the A38 will need to be assessed and where appropriate mitigated. This can be considered as the plan progresses.	Yellow
E	Staff turnover and difficulties in recruitment	Management will consider resource implications and where a gap exists consideration will be given to what alternative options are available.	Yellow
F	A general election is called and the Local Plan consultation is manipulated as part of electioneering.	Officers will continue to monitor an announcement of a general election. If an election is called Leadership will consider whether the consultation should proceed.	Red

### Background documents

Local Plan Strategy 2015

Local Plan Allocations 2019

Local Plan Review: Scope, Issues & Options

Local Plan Review: Preferred Options & Policy Directions

Local Development Scheme

### Relevant web links

[Local Plan Strategy 2015](#)

[Local Plan Review webpage](#)

[Local Plan Review: Preferred Options & Policy Directions](#)

[Local Plan Review: Scope, Issues & Options](#)

[Local Plan Allocations 2019](#)

[Local Development Scheme](#)