

Local Plan Review Update

Report of the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy and Local Plan

Councillor I. Eadie

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Local Ward Members: All Members



**Economic Growth,
Environment and
Development
(Overview and
Scrutiny) Committee**

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Members will recall the previous update report presented to this committee on the 9th June 2020. This outlined progress of the Local Plan review including the comments received to the Preferred Options consultation held between 29th November 2019 and 24th January 2020 and responses to the points raised. The report also identified the evidence base work still to be completed for the publication version (regulation 19) of the Local Plan and the next steps.
- 1.2 This report updates the position and sets out the next steps for local plan preparation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the update on progress of the local plan evidence base and the relevant steps being taken to prepare the regulation 19 publication version of the Local Plan.

3. Background

- 3.1 Members will recall the previous update report presented to this committee on the 9th June 2020 which outlined progress of the Local Plan review including responding to the matters raised in respect of the Preferred Options consultation held between 29th November 2019 and 24th January 2020. In addition, the report identified the evidence base work still to be completed for the publication version (regulation 19) of the Local Plan and the planned next steps.

Local Plan review progress

Evidence base

- 3.2 The previous report to this committee indicated that further evidence base collection was required in regards to:
 - The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Viability Evidence
 - Staffordshire Climate Adaption & Mitigation Strategy
 - Stage 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)
 - Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study

- Statement of Community Involvement Update
- Heritage Assessments for each of the Strategic Sites identified in the Preferred Options Plan (as required by Historic England)
- Sustainability Assessment of the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Plan
- Infrastructure evidence and updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Further strategic transport work to identify the impacts of the proposed developments contained in the Plan

- 3.3 Taking these items in turn, most have continued to progress well. The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation visitor survey and zone of influence work has progressed and officers are now awaiting a final draft to read through. The viability evidence is continuing to be amassed and a draft report relating to this is now being reviewed by officers prior to completion in mid-September. Further work on viability will be undertaken once the final wording of the Proposed Submission Plan is agreed.
- 3.4 The Climate Change and Mitigation Strategy and Strategic Flood Risk assessments (SFRA), details of which were described in the June report, are now complete and awaiting sign off from officers. The results of these are positive and don't present any issues for plan preparation. The detailed SFRA work concludes that the sites identified for allocation in the Preferred Options Plan can be taken forward at the numbers of units set out in the Plan.
- 3.5 The Open Space and Green Infrastructure study is a large piece of work, but is on-going. However, this work is not impeding plan progress, and has already produced information helpful for plan making. It is possible that some of its outputs from this work could be the subject of a subsequent Supplementary Planning Document, aligned with the Plan, as they would represent suitable guidance for managing green infrastructure.
- 3.6 An updated Statement of Community Involvement which reflects social distancing measures put in place by the Government on an ongoing basis, and allowing for more documents to be released in electronic form only, is scheduled to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on the 8th September.
- 3.7 The Heritage Assessments, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessments have all been commissioned, and the team is working with specialists to deliver these in time for the Local Plan consultation. This is an expected timescale, since these assessments can't be fully completed until a final version of the Plan is available; and relevant evidence base items such as strategic transport work can be assessed. They are therefore some of the last evidence to be completed in any plan making cycle.
- 3.8 With regard to the infrastructure evidence, specifically transport modelling, the impacts of Covid 19 are hindering the ability of the Highway Authority, Staffs County Council, to begin the work required. It is unclear if modelling work can take place in September, since transport networks are not yet fully in normal operation and it is important to gather reliable data on existing travel patterns. Lichfield Local Plan officers, and the County Council are in regular talks to see if there is a way this can be expedited – but at present (especially with the potential for further local lockdown which could affect traffic flows) this remains a significant risk to delivery of the programme. The lead Cabinet member will be kept informed as and when the position for the potential or otherwise of Autumn survey work becomes clearer

- 3.9 Officers' have commenced preparation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which will be informed by the content of the Regulation 19 plan. The IDP will also be informed by the development of an Infrastructure Funding Statement for Lichfield District which will set out funding priorities moving forward and need to be submitted to the government by the end of the year. At the present time, notwithstanding the impacts of Covid 19 on the ability to undertake some data collection related to traffic modelling, it is considered these documents can be prepared and duly submitted within the timescales.
- 3.10 Having regard to all of the above, and in light of the impacts of Covid 19, as reported to Committee in June submission of Local Plan by the Spring of 2021 remains achievable, with the proposed submission plan targeted for Cabinet decision in January 2021. An update to this Committee will be provided at the next meeting on progression on all of the evidence including in relation to traffic modelling.
- 3.11 Overview and Scrutiny Committee have delegated the review of emerging evidence papers to Local Plan Subcommittee. The notes of the subcommittee will be available to O&S members on request, and updates given in subsequent Local Plan Progress Reports to O&S. Upcoming scheduled dates for Local Plan Subcommittee and evidence base item to be reviewed are below:

Session description	Date	Session Type
Update on local plan progress/ getting ready for Reg 19 (Papers out 21/8/20)	26/08/20	Local Plan Subcommittee
Update on evidence base - Housing and Employment Demands and Needs Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 (papers out 7/9/20)	09/09/20	Local Plan Subcommittee
Evidence base - Settlement Sustainability Study / Annual Monitoring Report (papers out 18/9)	23/09/20	Local Plan Subcommittee
Update on evidence base - Climate Change Strategy / Green Belt update (papers out 2/10)	07/10/20	Local Plan Subcommittee
Update on Employment Paper/ need and supply position statement General Plan update, getting ready for Cabinet	21/10/20	Local Plan Subcommittee
Meetings after end of October to be scheduled on topics closer towards the date, but will include: Habitats Regulation Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal, Transport, the Reg 19 submission plan etc.		

Alternative Options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are currently no viable alternatives to the production of the evidence base as described. Whilst it would be possible to submit the Proposed Submission Plan for examination without the inclusion of all the evidence detailed in this paper, it would be very unlikely that the Plan would be found sound. This failure would incur significant additional expense and time costs for the council and have consequences as regards the ability of the Council to properly consider planning proposals submitted to it.
Consultation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultation has been undertaken on the previous stages of the Local Plan Review. The Preferred Options document consultation has now closed and responses recorded. 2. The Proposed Submission Plan version of the Local Plan when agreed will be open for interested parties to comment on.
Financial Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer time will be needed to undertake future consultations on the Local Plan Review. 2. The costs of consultation will be met within approved budgets. 3. A budget has been established to support the Local Plan Review evidence base.
Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports the priority of 'Enabling People' through Local Plan preparation which makes provision for growth in housing and other land uses informed by public consultation so they can live healthy and active lives. 2. Supports the priority of 'Shaping Place' through the Local Plan preparation for allocation of new land uses, preserving the districts assets and ensuring growth is done sustainably and with balanced infrastructure provision. 3. Supports the priority of 'Developing Prosperity' through the Local Plan preparation which makes provision for land use allocations including employment and residential use, thereby encouraging economic growth, enhancing the district and providing certainty for investment. 4. Supports the priority of being a 'Good Council' by accountability, transparency and responsiveness as the update enables the community, business, developers, service and infrastructure providers and other interested organisations to know how the Local Plan review is progressing.
Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An Equality Impact Assessment accompanies the Local Plan Review document. This will require ongoing update as the Proposed Submission Plan is finalised.
Crime & Safety Issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None.
Environmental Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council is required to assess the environmental impacts of any plan which it produces. Accordingly, a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping report accompanied the earlier Scope, Issues and Options version of the plan. Subsequent versions of the emerging Local Plan have been accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal and a Habitat Regulations Assessment. The Preferred Options Local Plan review version published in November 2019 was accompanied by updated versions of the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat

Regulations Assessment which were also subject to the consultation process. These documents form an important part of the supporting evidence to the local plan review and help the council to assess the possible impacts of the plan and its policies and therefore how impacts can be addressed or mitigated against. The Proposed Submission Plan will also be released for consultation alongside an updated Sustainability Appraisal which appraises any new elements of the plan not previously tested, and the history of previous reasonable alternatives considered.

GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment

1. A privacy impact assessment was completed for the Preferred Options document. This will also be conducted for the forthcoming Proposed Submission Plan.

	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	The quantum of comments received means that officers do not meet the deadlines programmed.	The revision of the LDS approved by Cabinet in May 2020 has allowed for the logging of all of the comments received to the previous consultation.	Green
B	Evidence base requirements emerge that were unforeseen.	Officers will need to continue to assess the need for evidence. Whilst officers are confident that the full ambit of evidence base requirements has been considered, which would usually be required for the preparation of a Development Plan Document, there is always the potential for something unforeseen to arise.	Yellow
C	Evidence base being undertaken now identifies a risk to the Plan being sound.	Officers will need to continue to monitor emerging evidence base outputs. Where the risk of soundness is identified officers will need to consider all aspects of this risk before recommending an alternative Plan. At present the evidence emerging does not indicate this.	Yellow
D	Covid 19 work restrictions cause delay in the collection of the evidence base to support the local plan	It is considered that any delays can currently be accommodated within the timelines set out in the up to date Local Development Scheme. However, the impact of COVID19 is still being felt, especially in regard to transport evidence, which is outside the Council's control. Despite this, officers are doing all possible to	Red

	reduce the risk and expedite the work.	
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Background documents

[Local Plan Review Preferred Options](#)

Relevant web links

[Local Plan Review](#)

[Local Plan Review Preferred Options](#)

[Evidence Base](#)

[Neighbourhood Plans](#)