

Main considerations

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The council is updating its current adopted Local Plan (2011-2029). Consultation on a draft updated Plan took place in 2024. Work has progressed since, in line with the published timetable (referred to as a Local Development Scheme, LDS). The draft Plan was due to be published for a second consultation (Regulation 19 consultation) this winter. However, the Government published a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024, introducing several changes which impact significantly on the evolving Plan, most notably the substantial increase in the number of homes to be delivered.
- 1.2 The council continues to consider the most suitable course of action to take considering the new NPPF, including the relevance of different transition arrangements. The Council remains committed to progressing the Plan as quickly as possible and has talked directly with Government Ministers to explore all options to enable quick progress. It is clear that the Council cannot take advantage of transitional arrangements.
- 1.3 This report reflects the outcome of the above considerations and outlines what is currently considered to be the most suitable way forward for plan-making. The approach must ensure that the Plan will be found sound and legally compliant under the new national planning requirements whilst achieving the best outcome for the borough and its residents.
- 1.4 The report includes an updated Local Development Scheme (appendix 1) which contains a new timetable for plan making. Given the scale of the changes introduced by the NPPF, most notably the immediate 36% increase in the housing need figure for the borough, a reconsideration of the spatial strategy set out in the previous draft Plan will be needed, particularly relating to housing but also in terms of other land uses including those relating to the economy.
- 1.5 The report reflects the council's ambition to continue to progress with plan making as quickly as possible. It recognises that given the scale of the required changes, the council is likely to need to rerun previously completed stages of the process, including another Regulation 18 consultation.

3 Key issues for consideration

Proposed New Local Development Scheme

- 3.1 The implications of the new NPPF have been fully considered, with a view to progressing the Plan as quickly as possible. Given the scale of the changes introduced and the lack of transitional arrangements that apply to the council, the current plan-making timetable needs to be updated. A revised LDS has been drafted, reflecting the additional work that will now need to be completed to accommodate the NPPF changes including updating previously completed evidence.
- 3.2 The LDS is set out in appendix 1 to this report and will be added to the council's website in due course. It will also be submitted to MHCLG in line with Government requirements to publish an updated LDS within 12 weeks of the publication of the NPPF. The Government's commitment to quick plan making,

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which meets its ambition for new homes to be delivered, has been strongly expressed and Ministerial powers strengthened to enable intervention where progress is not being made.

- 3.3 The proposed new LDS (February 2025) reflects that some previously completed elements of the plan making process will need to be repeated. Whilst the council is keen to build upon the work done so far, an updated evidence base and Integrated Impact Assessment will be required to fully consider the impacts of the new and increased local housing need requirement and establish how it will be delivered. The previous draft spatial strategy will need to be revisited and additional sites will need to be allocated to meet new requirements for homes. As such, the new LDS includes an additional Regulation 18 consultation later this year, to enable stakeholders to comment on proposed changes. The scope of this consultation will be determined in due course, taking account of the scale of changes ultimately required.
- 3.4 Whilst the council is committed to progress plan making as quickly as possible, ultimately the new NPPF will result in a lengthening of the Local Plan timetable and will incur additional cost. Both implications are recognised by Government which has set a deadline of December 2026 for Plans to be submitted under the current planning system. This deadline reflects Government's desire to ensure plans progress quickly but also reflects the work involved in plan-making where a return to Regulation 18 is required. The LDS sets out how the council intends to meet the December 2026 deadline. The council is also exploring the possibility of securing funding from Government for work that must be re-done.
- 3.5 Following the publication of the new NPPF the council immediately started a Call for Sites consultation inviting submissions for new sites for a variety of land uses including sites for renewable energy and biodiversity net gain. Information on new sites considered suitable for housing are welcomed to ensure that the council is fully aware of all potential opportunities for growth. The consultation is due to end on 17th February and promoted sites will be subject to a site assessment process, in the same way as previously promoted sites to date.
- 3.6 In addition to the new timetable for the Local Plan, the proposed LDS also sets out a timetable for reviewing the council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) rates. This is a charge on liable new development floorspace, calculated on a £/sqm basis. The council can set differential rates in different parts of the borough, for different uses, and for different scales of development, based upon viability. The rates are published in a CIL Charging Schedule, which is informed by public consultation and a formal examination process.

Corporate implications

6 Legal

- 6.1 Under [regulation 10A of The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 \(as amended\)](#) local planning authorities must review local plans every five years from their adoption date to ensure that policies remain relevant and effectively address the needs of the local community. Such reviews must be completed within five years starting with the date of adoption of a local plan. The Plan was reviewed and the decision was taken by Council in May 2019 to update the Plan.
- 6.2 Local planning authorities are required to prepare a Local Development Scheme (LDS) under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). Section 15(8) of the 2004 Act requires that local planning authority must revise their local development scheme at such time as they consider appropriate or when directed to do so by the Secretary of State. Following the publication of the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local planning authorities are required to produce an updated Local Development Scheme within 12 weeks of the publication of the NPPF, i.e. by no later than 8 March 2025. The updated LDS is required to include clear, realistic, and specific dates for consultation and submission of the local plan.
- 6.3 The Council is expected to progress its Local Plan Update and for this to be submitted for examination by no later than December 2026.

7 Financial

- 7.1 The council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) includes budget provision of £1.16M to 2028/29 for delivery of the updated Local Plan. This includes £0.13M of budget additions to be approved by Council in February 2025 as part of the MTFS and Budget Update Report 2025/26 to 2028/29. However, additional resources may be required as a key stage of Plan making (Regulation 18) is likely to require a repeat, whilst the Local Plan's evidence base will also need to be updated.