

COUNCIL

27 NOVEMBER 2014

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

8

TITLE OF REPORT: ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET: 24 NOVEMBER 2014 – NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN - PREFERRED OPTIONS

The following is an extract from the Draft Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 24 November 2014.

67. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN – PREFERRED OPTIONS

[Note: Prior to the consideration of this item, the following interests were declared:

- (1) Councillor T.W. Hone – made a Declarable Interest, in that since June 2013, he had been the nominated representative on the Board of Trustees of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (LGCHF) for Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). During that period, the Board took a decision to make land north of the Grange available to NHDC as being for inclusion as land available for development. At this and any debate at LGCHF on this subject, he declared an interest, listened to the Governor's deliberations, and left the room prior to any vote being taken to recommend to the Board to make the site available. Similarly, when the Board took the final decision, he declared an interest, listened to the Board's deliberations, and left the room prior to any decision being taken.

As Deputy Executive Member at HCC, Councillor Hone was involved in the process to make the north of Baldock site available for NHDC to consider – but which sites across the District were ultimately brought forward was a decision for NHDC alone, based on the criteria applied by its Planning Team. He retained an open mind as to the approach NHDC should take and would listen to the consultation responses received. HCC officers had been acting under delegated authority, following this consultation with the executive Member, and would probably continue to do so for some time. Assuming it survived the consultation and enquiry process, it may be some time before any firm decisions were required by HCC Members, particularly as HCC may be looking at other mechanisms for development other than a straight sale. Councillor Hone stated that he was party to the officer briefing and expressed support for the plan to make the land available.

- (2) Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham – made a Declarable Interest, in that she was NHDC's appointed representative on the Board of the LGCHF. At all times when the Board took decisions relating to the land at the North of the Grange she had declared an interest and left the room before deliberations commenced. In terms of the Cabinet meeting, she would be remaining in the room and voting on the matter.]

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enterprise presented the report of the Strategic Director of Planning, Housing and Enterprise in respect of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan – Preferred Options. The following appendices were submitted with the report:

Appendix A – Local Plan Preferred Options Paper; and
Appendix B – Proposed amendments to Statement of Community Involvement.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enterprise stated that the majority of the recommendations in the report were for Council approval, following the Cabinet's consideration of the matters. The one matter for Cabinet approval were the proposed

amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement, as set out in Appendix B to the report. This set out the process for consultation, and he summarised the major changes as:

- updating to reflect legislative changes;
- clarifying the position with regard to petitions;
- updating to provide for the use of social media in expressing opinions; and
- advice for councillors on forwarding any correspondence received by them to the Planning Team if they wished these to be included as part of the consultation process.

In terms of the recommendations from Cabinet to Council, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enterprise advised that Recommendation (2) referred to approval of the background information relating to the Preferred Options document and Recommendation (4) sought approval for the Head of Development and Planning, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to approve minor amendments and typographical corrections to the documents as may be necessary before the consultation period began. In relation to Recommendation (1), which sought approval to the Local Plan Preferred Options paper, the Portfolio Holder made the following comments:

- the Preferred Options paper was not the Final Local Plan. It did not say which sites would be developed, but merely indicated sites which had been made available for possible development, which the Council was seeking the public's views on as Preferred Options;
- this was the first stage in preparing the Local Plan - the Council could have proceeded to draft stage, but the Preferred Options Stage provides a further opportunity to consult North Herts communities and receive their views; and
- it was acknowledged that the proposals, if implemented, would involve changes to the Green Belt around a number of the District's settlements – but he reminded those present that, for example, Lordship Estate was once Lordship Farm and Grange Estate was once farmland, both of which were formerly in the Green Belt.

Cabinet debated the matter, and their comments included:

- all Members had received significant amounts of correspondence regarding this matter. The importance of public involvement in the consultation process was stressed, as the Council wanted to receive, and listen to, feedback from the public;
- it would not be NHDC that would be building any of the required dwellings. The Preferred Options paper set out the sites where housing could be developed and the underlying reasons why;
- the sites may or may not all be included in the Plan, but any building would take place over the 20 year Plan period, and would be subject to the planning process. All development proposals would be judged against the criteria set out in the Plan, in terms of roads, infrastructure and sustainability;
- if a Local Plan was not produced, the District would be at greater risk from speculative applications from developers which would be more difficult to resist;
- all of the major sites would be subject to Master Plans, which would include infrastructure proposals;
- it was clarified that the 12,100 dwellings required over the Plan period referred to North Hertfordshire only. It was estimated that a figure nearer to 100,000 would be required for the whole of Hertfordshire;
- any brownfield sites put forward as part of the consultation process would be given serious consideration; and
- the Local Plan process required adjoining local authorities to co-operate with each other. The figure of 12,100 dwellings related North Hertfordshire's needs. The unmet needs of Luton were considered in the Preferred Options document, and NHDC was co-operating with Stevenage Borough Council and all other adjoining Councils.

In order to clarify a number of points raised during the debate, the Principal Strategic Planning Officer stated:

- the figure of 12,100 dwellings had been derived from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Household Projections and NHDC's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and that reference should be made to the Housing and Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper;

- the provision for Luton's unmet needs related only to the 3 adjoining sites in Cockernhoe; and
- in terms of the Council's 5 year supply of housing land, should the Plan be approved then a 5 year supply should be achieved by 2017.

The Cabinet supported the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enterprise's proposal that the recommendations be forwarded to Council for approval.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- 2.1 That the Local Plan Preferred Options paper, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be approved for consultation purposes;
- 2.2 That the Local Plan Preferred Options paper's supporting evidence studies listed at Paragraph 8.16 of the report, be published alongside the paper, to inform the consultation process; and
- 2.3 That delegated authority be given to the Head of Development and Building Control, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enterprise, to approve minor amendments and typographical corrections to the documents as may be necessary before the consultation period begins.

RESOLVED: That the proposed amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement, as set out at Appendix B to the report, be approved for consultation purposes.

REASON FOR DECISION: To allow consultation to be undertaken on the Local Plan Preferred Options paper and Statement of Community Involvement.